



MYSTARA

# Vaults of Pandius

## History of Dragonkind

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**Foreword:** This booklet was intended to be part of an unofficial fifth book of the *Creature Crucible* series, who should have detailed the Dragon races, rules for playing Dragons ad PCs, the most important draconic locations and Dragon NPCs of Mystara, and so on. As the whole project is far from seeing the light, I've decided to publish the Dragons' history I wrote in the meantime. At the end of the booklet, I've also included an important appendix about my take on the whole nature of Dragons, which is instrumental to understand the role of Dragons in their history and in that of the Multiverse.

# HISTORY OF DRAGONS

The Dragons are perhaps – together with Draedens – the most ancient race of the Multiverse as a whole. Therefore, it's rather evident that their history must be long and complicated.

## Origins and Prehistory

Dragons inhabited the Multiverse long before the Immortals were born<sup>(1)</sup>. They were one of the two most powerful races of the Multiverse at that time, the other being Draedens. Who or what had created them both is a mystery to everyone save perhaps the Draedens themselves and the Old Ones, the supreme beings thought by the Immortals to be at the beginning of the Multiverse. Because Dragons and Draedens were the first known advanced races of the Multiverse, some Immortals believe there is some sort of relationship between them<sup>(2)</sup> – something that's also shown by some mysterious, otherwise-unexplainable events (like the rumored presence of Draedens at the ceremony which took place when the current Great One became the Greater Ruler of Dragonkind)<sup>(3)</sup>.

At the beginning, Dragons lived in the Multiverse ruled by Draedens<sup>(4)</sup>. When the first Immortals were born as manifestation of primal forces, they challenged the Draedens' dominion over the existing and a huge planar war ensued. Dragons stayed neutral in this conflict, and when the Immortals eventually won the war, they retreated in a section of the Multiverse that would become the so-called Draconic Cluster, a set of four Outer Planes inhabited solely by Dragons.

It's likely that about this time – or possibly before – some sort of organization among Dragons came into being, with some of the most powerful individual Dragons being appointed Lesser Rulers of Dragonkind, and the most powerful of them all being chosen to be the Greater Ruler of Dragonkind. Traditionally, the three Lesser Rulers are called the Moon, the Sun and the Star Dragon, and each of them rules over Dragons of one alignment – respectively chaotic, neutral and lawful Dragons. The Greater Ruler of Dragonkind is always called the Great One.

At this time, moreover, Dragons didn't exist on the Prime Plane; the most curious of them roamed the Outer Planes and only a few wandered in the Inner Planes. Finding a Dragon on the Prime Plane was – at this time – an event of the rarest kind.

## Metempsychosis Begins

After millions of years, when Mystara was in its prehistory, the Dragons of the Draconic Cluster began to lose physical form and to incarnate in reptilian beings of the Prime Plane. Actually, their Essences lost any knowledge of their past lives and traveled to the Prime Plane, where they lived within the body of reptilian creatures, dinosaurs and the like – which at that time were prevalent of Mystara. Why this process had begun is unknown, but it had a strong influence on the evolution of Mystaran lifeforms<sup>(5)</sup>.

The presence of intelligent – if unaware – draconic Essences in Prime Plane reptilian creatures slowly caused changes within those species, and in part directed a branch of the evolution of reptiles. This is the reason why specialized species substantially different from dinosaurs, like Wyverns, were born, and why some advanced species developed supernatural abilities – like the Flapsails, which developed six limbs (four legs and two wings) and a breath weapon<sup>(6)</sup>.

It should be noted that the evolutive processes were influenced by the highly-magical nature of draconic Essences. Moreover, it seems that the Essences ceased to incarnate in one type of creature as soon as a new, more advanced species, had evolved from it. That's why Wyverns and Flapsails, among others, didn't evolve anymore after a time – while Dragons continued to evolve.

Finally, a winning species was born, that of Ancestral Dragons. These beings were large (20'-40' long) intelligent reptiles with grey-hued but brilliant scales, able to use magic and breath weapons<sup>(7)</sup>. Generally these Ancestral Dragons were six-limbed and were able to fly (two of their six limbs were wings). However, the highly-magical nature of draconic Essences which lived in them sometimes influenced their growth, generating other draconic forms (like a four- or two-limbed one, for example).

## Sublimation

As said in the last chapter, at the beginning of their metempsychosis cycle Dragons didn't know about the Ceremony of Sublimation. In fact, their Essences were almost unaware of their true nature; they only felt the need to transcend their current form somehow. When metempsychosis first began, no Dragon managed to reach the Dragon Guardian status and

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<sup>(1)</sup> *D&D Immortal Set, DM's Guide to Immortals*, page 39: "Dragons certainly predate Immortals, as they were neutral bystanders during the great Draeden-Immortal war of the distant past."

<sup>(2)</sup> *D&D Immortal Set, DM's Guide to Immortals*, page 39: "Immortals believe that dragons and draedens are closely related, despite the extreme differences in their physical forms and abilities." See also *The Mightiest of Dragons*, in 'Dragon Magazine' #158: "Draedens, the ancient kin of the dragons, appeared at the same time as dragons (and probably from the same source). Their constant ties with the dragons have bewildered sages for centuries."

<sup>(3)</sup> See *The Mightiest of Dragons*, in 'Dragon Magazine' #158: "[...] some of the most ancient Immortals say that there was a ceremony near the Dimensional Vortex for the winner. In this little-known meeting, draedens were also said to have attended."

<sup>(4)</sup> *D&D Immortal Set, DM's Guide to Immortals*, page 39: "Draedens are the descendants of beings that existed before the Immortals, beings who may have actually created part or all of the multiverse [...] Draedens still consider the entire multiverse to be their domain. When Immortals assumed the responsibility for all of existence, the draedens became resentful. But after long strife and negotiations, they agreed to peace." See also note (1).

<sup>(5)</sup> One of the possible causes behind the beginning of the draconic metempsychosis could have been the punishment imposed to the Dragons by the Immortals, victorious in their war against the Draedens for the dominion over the Multiverse. If this was true, it would establish a parallel between Dragons and the Fairy Folk, who stayed neutral in a later war between Immortals (see supplement *PCI: Tall Tales of the Wee Folk*).

<sup>(6)</sup> Flapsails are described in *Hollow World campaign set, Adventure Book*, page 23.

<sup>(7)</sup> This is the Dragon race to which the current (AC 1000) Great One belonged during his mortal life (see *Wrath of the Immortals, Book I: Codex of the Immortals*, page 21: "The Great One hatched in a time when the dragon races were not quite so distinct from one another; he was a glossy grey hue not found in any of today's dragons"). Note that his draconic breed was going to be extinct very slowly, as the Great One was one of the last Ancestral Dragons, and the very last of them all is presumably Saerna, an Ancestral ("grey") Dragon featured in the *Dragonking of Mystara* novel (set at the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century AC).

they all died to become Dragon Souls in the Draconic Cluster.

However, slowly, the incarnated draconic Essences of the Prime Plane searched for and discovered hints to perfect their ascension to the Dragon Guardian form. This process was slow also because the species they were incarnated in were not highly-intelligent creatures.

Eventually, after the birth of the Ancestral Dragon species, the full cycle of the Cerimony of Sublimation was discovered and it spread among Dragons of the Prime Plane, which began to embark on its cycles to reach their ultimate goal. With time, the first Dragons of the Prime Plane reached again the Dragon Guardian form; those which didn't manage to succeed, after millennia reincarnated again and tried once more their chance to become Dragon Guardians. Draconic generation after generation, the knowledge of the Cerimony was handed down from older Dragons to younger ones.

## EVOLUTION CONTINUES

While the development of new species among Dragons somewhat slowed with the birth of the Ancestral Dragon species, it didn't stop either. Within the course of thousands of millennia, new Dragon species began to develop from the Ancestral species, mainly because of habitat and different areas of settlement; they were the ancestors of the modern chromatic Dragon species, like the White, Black, Green, Blue, Red and Sea species<sup>(8)</sup>.

Some Immortals argue that also Red Hawk Dragons could have spawned in this time, owing their evolution from Ancestral Dragons to magic or to intermingling with some avian creatures<sup>(9)</sup>.

## The Age of Eldars

Meanwhile, another race was spreading on Mystara, and indeed it was a powerful one. They were the Eldars, ancestors of modern elven races, humanoid beings perhaps related somehow to the High Elves of the Outer Plane of Alfheim. The Eldars were taller than modern humans, with lifespans of thousands years, had bronze skin, usually dark hair; they were a race especially in tune with the flowing of magic, and were able to master the practice of it with great ease<sup>(10)</sup>.

While they never were a numerous race, the Eldars used their great powers to build many realms and kingdoms scattered on the surface of the Outer World, realms where they lived in tune with nature and where their wizards benevolently and peacefully ruled over lesser races thanks to the power of magic. About two millions years ago, their civilization reached its height<sup>(11)</sup>.

However, what was behind the Eldars' rise was also going to cause their fall. Their race became so strong in magic, their wizards so infused with power, that they became beings partly magical and partly mortal; their wizards, which admired the powerful Ancestral Dragon, became even able to assume themselves the shape of small Dragons. Eventually, they could no longer contain the magic within themselves. A time of great turmoil came upon them, and their entire race was ripped asunder by its own magic.

Many of their more powerful magic-users evolved into exemplars of the race of Ancestral Dragons. But, while a part of the Eldars became Dragons, the magic was ripped away from other members of their race, and those became the modern elven races, diminished in power, in stature, and in their span of years<sup>(12)</sup>.

## Eldar Blood in Dragon Veins

The upheaval which had hit the Eldar civilization ultimately shattered it; most of the Eldars who had not evolved into Dragons slowly began to die, their very self broken by the upheaval they had suffered. While some sparse group of Eldars managed to survive, becoming the ancestors of the modern Silver, Platinum, and Bronze Elves, most could only survive thanks to the direct intervention of the Immortal Ordana, who recreated the physical form of those Eldars that were dying and sheltered them in the forest continent known as Evergrun, where they'd eventually become the Wood Elves<sup>(13)</sup>.

The Eldars which had transformed into Dragons, instead, were scattered around the Outer World; even if their physical appearance had changed, their blood was still substantially different from that of Dragons, as they were a different species. With time, some Ancestral Dragons which had been Eldars before their transformation mated with true Dragons, causing a spread of the Eldar blood among the Dragon race.

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<sup>(8)</sup> Sea Dragons are found in *AC9 – Creature Catalogue* (1986 edition), page 64, and in *DMR2 – Creature Catalogue* (1993 edition), pages 31-32.

<sup>(9)</sup> Red Hawk Dragons are featured in *Monstrous Compendium: Savage Coast Appendix*, pages 24-25.

<sup>(10)</sup> Details about the Eldar civilization are found in the three novels of the Dragonlord Trilogy. “The Eldar were more heavily built and taller than other elves - taller even than most men - with black hair and large, dark eyes. They were also extremely long lived, their average lifespan closer to the thousands of years of the dragons rather than the mere hundreds of other elves. Their kind had been all but forgotten by the other elves and were thought to have disappeared long ago.”

<sup>(11)</sup> From the Dragonlord Trilogy: “The Eldar lived many thousands of years ago. We built great kingdoms of our own at a time when we were alone in the world, long before the coming of men or dwarves. Ours was a race of powerful wizards, far stronger in our magic than the modern elves. In time we became beings partly of magic and partly mortal, like the dragons themselves.”

<sup>(12)</sup> From the Dragonlord Trilogy: “Then, at the very height of our civilization, our race become so strong in magic, our wizards so infused with power, that we could no longer contain the magic within ourselves. A time of great turmoil came upon us, and our entire race was ripped asunder by our own magic. Many of our more powerful magic users evolved into the race of dragons, that being the reason why the higher dragon forms retain the ability to assume the Eldar form, just as many Eldar can take the form of a small grey dragon. This would also seem to explain the origin of drakes, an intermediate form.”

“But while a part of our people became dragons, the magic was ripped away from other members of our race, and those became the modern elves, diminished in power, in stature, and in their span of years, for modern elves live only a few hundred years, while the Eldar, like the dragons, live for thousands.”

<sup>(13)</sup> This version of the story has been devised to concile the canonic double origin of elves. One story about that is told in the Dragonlord Trilogy books (basically saying that the elves spawned from declining Eldars), the other in *Hollow World* and *Wrath of the Immortals* boxed sets (according to which it was Ordana who created the elven race). Given the fact that canonic sources place elves also outside Evergrun (see the Red Woods elves of the *DA* modules, who live near Blackmoor, in Skothar), and the fact that elves seem to appear under a wide variety of appearances in canon sources, I thought the Eldars' story was an excellent opportunity to explain both those facts in the way I did.

Basically, according to the Dragonlord Trilogy the Eldar race was the ancestor both of elves and dragons. HW and later sources however say us that elves were created by Ordana, while dragons are told to be one of the oldest races of the Multiverse by the Immortal Set and Dragon Magazine articles by Ziets and Heard. So I had the Eldars spawning only the Gold Dragons, and Ordana creating only the Wood Elves, thus twisting as little as allowed to keep almost all canon sources intact.

As a side note, I group under Wood Elves all “classic” elves (about 5' tall, fair-skinned, blonde-haired), while Bronze Elves include all Flamenco-type elves (dark skin and hair), Silver Elves all Shyie-type elves (6' tall, fair-skinned, dark- or silver-haired), and Platinum Elves all high-type elves (like the Red Wood elves, and the Icevale Elves – over 6' tall, pale-skinned, fair-haired).

When former-Eldar Dragons mated with individuals belonging to the new chromatic species, their offspring only benefited from an enhancement of their magic skills and, sometimes, gained the ability to turn into an Eldar once every given time<sup>(14)</sup>. Matings of former-Eldar Dragons with Ancestral Dragons, instead, gave birth to a whole new race of Dragons, which possessed far greater magical skills and more powerful supernatural abilities in regard to other Dragon species; they were the Gold Dragons, which since then have always been the nobility among Dragons, both because they're the most powerful ones and because they're the most lawful<sup>(15)</sup>.

## The Death of the Great One

After the fall of the Eldars, Mystara was in turmoil as lesser races warred among themselves. Evolved from the obscure race of the Garls, soon the Giants were to begin their age of supremacy on the planet.

The Dragons didn't look at these development with much concern, because they had begun to consider themselves one of the eternal races of the cosmos, and didn't care about the achievements of lesser races, as they called them, like Eldars and Giants. In fact, they thought those races would have never been able to challenge the Dragons in power.

So, while the Giants founded their civilizations, the Dragons continued to live as they always had done, partly warring among themselves or against lesser races, partly befriending them, but always struggling to succeed in the performance of the Cerimony of Sublimation. Sometimes it happened that one Dragon managed to reach the Dragon Guardian status; this was usually a time of great rejoice for Dragons living in neighbouring lands. Under the watchful eye of Dragon Rulers – which strictly oversaw the cycles of the Cerimonies performed by Dragons and sent their Dragon Guardian servants to influence the action of Dragons toward the greater goals of their species – the Dragons lived to see the end of the Age of Giants and the slow beginning of the Age of Man.

It was some tenths of millennia before the rise of Blackmoor, around the time the first human migration were taking place, that an unexpected event shocked the whole draconic race: the destruction of the Great One during the course of some sort of dispute with Immortals of the Sphere of Entropy<sup>(16)</sup>. Thus, left without a guide, while the Lesser Dragon Rulers fought among themselves to occupy the Great One's charge, anarchy slowly descended upon the Dragons of the Prime Plane.

## Ancient History of Dragons

Chaos reigned among dragonkind thousands of years ago, many millennia before even the city of Blackmoor was built in the northern marches of the Thonian Empire. After the

death of the Great One, the Greater Ruler of Dragonkind, happened many thousands of years before, the Dragons were divided and without a guide or any type of organization among them. The three Lesser Rulers of Dragonkind, the Moon, Sun and Star Dragons, had fought, each with its followers, one against the other to seize the position of the Great One, but no one had managed to get the upper hand against its rivals.

Thus, while they were still the most feared creatures of Mystara, Dragons were scattered around the Outer World, each Dragon caring only about itself and fighting each other for treasures and supremacy in a given region. With the past order of the Draconic Cluster lost because of the Great One's death and of the squabbles among Lesser Rulers, succeeding in becoming a Dragon Guardian through the Cerimony of Sublimation became more and more difficult as time passed, and the knowledge of the Cerimony waned among dragonkind.

Some Dragons began to disregard the possibility of becoming a Dragon Guardian, focusing instead on their lives in the Prime Plane and trying to become the most powerful of their race through the use of magic, guile or sheer power. The first truly mighty Dragons remembered in the ancient legends of other races belong to this age; there, they're portrayed as overlords of many lesser Dragons, laying waste to and terrorizing other races' countries and becoming the acknowledged rulers of vast regions.

One example of the Dragons of this age was **Yealeletherveri**, a huge and ancient Red Dragon remembered in the legends of Giants, Dwarves and Beastmen, whose domain extended from his volcanic lair under the arctic icecap (modern Altan Tepes region) many tenths of miles to the south. Yealeletherveri ruled over many Dragons and often led his followers in savage raids to ravage the domains of southern races. His climatic battle against the greatest of anellids, a creature named Iscranin (perhaps a Burrower) – which saw the death of both monsters – has been a favourite topic of epic tales among Dragons and Giants for thousands years<sup>(17)</sup>.

But not all Dragons chose to abandon their chances to acquire a higher form of existence. Some of them, disregarding the traditional neutrality held by Dragons before the five Immortal Spheres of Power, began to search alliances with those Spheres with the aim to understand the way to reach Immortality within them. Some Immortals were indeed appealed by the chance to have powerful Dragon followers, and lured some of them into trying to embark in one of the paths to Immortality. Nevertheless, achieving Immortality in one of the Spheres of Power usually meant that a Dragon had to obey the authority of another non-Dragon creature (an Immortal) – a state of thing which only some Dragons – and, even among them, only the most lawful ones – liked.

Moreover, enmity of Dragons against those of their kind

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<sup>(14)</sup> This infusion of Eldar blood in Dragon offsprings has been conceived to explain why in the Dragonlord Trilogy novels it's described the ability of some Red Dragons to assume Eldar form, and also because in the novels Black and Red Dragons, besides Gold Dragons, are considered the Dragon breeds most skilled in arcane doings (thus, likely it's easier to find Eldar blood in a Black or Red Dragon rather than in other chromatic species).

<sup>(15)</sup> This origin of the Gold Dragons from the mating of former Eldars and Ancestral Dragons could also be used to explain the origin of some metallic Dragon species introduced by AD&D<sup>®</sup> supplements for the Mystara campaign setting, like Bronze and Silver Dragons mentioned in *Glantri: Kingdom of Magic boxed set*, or the Copper Dragon featured in *Poor Wizard's Almanac & Book of Facts III*. Other metallic breeds apart from Gold should however be extremely rare on Mystara.

<sup>(16)</sup> See *The Mightiest of Dragons*, in 'Dragon Magazine' #158: "In an even more unclear story, handed down for centuries by certain Alpathian sages and hinted at in the writings of the dracologists of Glantri, the Great Dragon himself was killed in some sort of dispute with Immortals of Entropy. It is said that the three dragon rulers competed for the Great One's position during this time. While there was no Great Dragon, there was no order on the planes of the dragons; open war raged across the Draconian Cluster for a century, with the only rule being that the survivor would win."

<sup>(17)</sup> The tale of Yealeletherveri and Iscranin is featured in the *Son of Dawn* novel, where it is told by Blethinferleth, an ancient Blue Dragon living in the Altan Tepes Mountains (see note 20).

which broke their ancient neutrality before the Spheres of Power was still great, so most of the Dragons who tried to undertake the path to Immortality were cut down at one point or another by their kins.

However, as time passed and chaos among dragonkind grew, some Dragons tried that way, entering the service of the Spheres of Power (some even as clerics of one Immortal), even if it seems no one among them ever succeeded in achieving Immortality. As millennia passed, most Dragons even began to tolerate that some of their kin could try the paths to Immortality and Immortal worship (mostly of elemental or nature-oriented Immortals) spread among some Dragon circles.

## The Birth of Gemstone Dragons

Even if there was no Great One to guide and protect the Dragons, they had been nevertheless gaining power and knowledge through the Ceremony of Sublimation, and their breeds had continued to evolve, becoming larger and wiser. Magic became even more a part of their very being.

Around BC 3,500, a fellowship of powerful Dragon sorcerers was formed<sup>(18)</sup>. They had observed the slow advancement of their race and wished to gather and direct the magic they would need to accelerate the Ceremony of Sublimation. They wished to evolve rapidly into higher forms rather than be content to wait the completion of the stages needed to inherit the power and wisdom that would be their birthright. Among them there was a learned Ancestral Dragon named Raakthyl; he was a cleric in the service of the Immortal Terra, and he supported anything that might benefit the evolution of Dragons.

At first the desires of the fellowship were pure and noble. But in time they came to believe that they could become more powerful than the Immortals and wrest from them the control of the Multiverse; that became their ultimate goal. Raakthyl and other Dragons argued with them, warning them that they expected too much, but they didn't listen, and so he and his fellows withdrew from the sorcerers' company.

In time the Dragon sorcerers managed to work great magic upon themselves, but the energies they meddled in were more powerful than they had expected, and their experiment failed. They did not become Dragon Guardians nor true Immortals, but their physical appearance changed and they were instead transformed into the new breeds of the Gemstone Dragons.

These creatures had their skin becoming like some sort of shining gemstone and they could use more powerful form of breath weapons; moreover, they could work magic more

easily and their spells were more powerful than those of other Dragons. In sum, they had become the most powerful beings on Mystara, even more powerful than the mightiest among their former kins.

Embittered by the failure of their spells but emboldened by the fact now they were the most powerful creatures on the planet, the Gemstone Dragons began to think that, if they couldn't rule the Multiverse, they had at least the right to rule the world. With time, words of the power of the Gemstones spread, and they began to force lesser nations and races to their will. Eventually, they realized that the main hindrances between them and the achievement of their goal were other Dragons and the Blackmoor Empire, which ruled most of Skothar and parts of Brun around that time<sup>(19)</sup>.

## The Time of the First Dragonlord

The Gemstone Dragons devised a plan to eliminate both their adversaries at the same time, causing a war between the Dragons and the Blackmoor Empire. In the last years, the Blackmoor Empire had been battling against the Beastmen and had pushed them toward the North Pole; during the decades of war against the Beastmen, the Blackmoorian armies had passed through Dragons' territories many times, and isolated squabbles against some Dragons had become frequent during the last years of the campaigns against the Beastmen. Thus it was even too easy to instill in the Dragons' minds the fear that the Blackmoorian strategy was in the long run to get rid of the Dragons once and for all. On their side, the Blackmoorians thought they were the most advanced civilization on Mystara, and thus arrogantly felt they had the duty to gather together all nations and races under their own empire – and to crush those who opposed them<sup>(20)</sup>.

War eventually broke out on a large scale. For the first time in thousands of years, the Dragons were united against a common enemy and poured all their rage against it, ravaging cities, laying waste to fields and killing the human population. In their opinion, after millennia of scattering and decline which had allowed the human civilizations to grow, they were finally retaking what was theirs. Against the full fury of dragonkind, Blackmoor's might was in check, and the empire found itself on the defensive for the first time in centuries.

The Emperor of Blackmoor, frightened to discover that his armies and weapons couldn't defeat the Dragons, entrusted the war to his wizards. Those, using their most powerful arcane skills and lore, created a terrible technomantic artifact then known as the *Dragonlord Arms*; the *Arms* consisted of an *armor* and *shield* which could turn any physical or magical attack the Dragons could muster, and of a *sword*

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<sup>(18)</sup> The tale of the origin of the Gemstone Dragons comes from the Dragonlord Trilogy, where it's related by the Great One himself: "In this time, there was a fellowship of powerful dragon sorcerers who had observed the slow advancement of their race and wished to gather and direct the magic they would need to accelerate that natural process. They wished to evolve into higher forms rather than be content to wait for their descendants to inherit the power and wisdom that would be their birthright [...]"

"I must confess that I was a part of their band, at first, for I was a cleric in the service of the Immortal Terra, and I supported anything that might benefit the dragons. At first their desires were pure and noble. But in time they came to believe that they could become Immortals, and that became their ultimate goal. I argued with them, warning them that they expected too much, but they would not listen. And so I withdrew from my company."

"In time these dragon sorcerers worked great magic upon themselves, but their experiment failed. They did not become true Immortals but were instead transformed into the gemstone dragons, far more powerful than most modern golds and reds. Believing that they had the right as the most powerful being in the world to rule the world, they became to force lesser nations to their will. Eventually they made war with Blackmoor."

<sup>(19)</sup> This version of the history of Dragonkind considers Blackmoor's location to be on Skothar, with the precataclysmic Known World located under arctic icecap, and the North Pole (alongside with the "small" precataclysmic polar openings to the Hollow World) in the Ethengar area. Thus, the precataclysmic world map featured in Hollow World boxed set is supposedly wrongly rotated. The assumption here is that, after Blackmoor begins its technological rise and inglobates its mother empire of Thonia, it founds its own empire, which then expands further on Skothar and on Brun. Take a look at this article by LoZompatore for reference: [http://pandius.com/blk\\_pcat.html](http://pandius.com/blk_pcat.html).

<sup>(20)</sup> From the Dragonlord Trilogy novels: "The men of Blackmoor were arrogant; history agrees on that point. They believed that the world would be best served if all nations and races were gathered together into a single large nation, and they naturally believed that nation should be their own. The dragons wanted no part of such plans. They fought back and quite possibly found that they were stronger than they had expected."

which could easily slay the Dragons, penetrating their defenses. The *armor* was even capable to imprison and store the souls of defeated Dragons, and use their energy to fuel its own powers. The *Arms* were devised so that they could be worn only by Aryan Bejnok, a powerful wizard-warrior enhanced by technomantic magics to the point that his power was almost equal to that of a lesser Immortal<sup>(21)</sup>.

Aryan led the men of Blackmoor and successfully continued the war against Dragons – which would have been remembered as the War of the Dragonlord –, managing to subdue and destroy most of them. The Dragons, powerless against him, nevertheless fought bravely with the strenght of desperation – but ultimately they were to be inevitably defeated. Tenthhs of Dragons were killed and soon they began to scatter in front of Aryan’s terrible powers<sup>(22)</sup>.

The Blackmoorian Emperor gave Aryan the honorific title of “Dragonlord” for his victories against Dragons. Aryan, perhaps gone mad by the excessive use he did of the *Dragonlord Arms* or by the technomantic magics that were used regularly on him, didn’t stop there, but wanted to satisfy his ambition and to celebrate his victory against Dragons battling the Lesser Dragon Rulers themselves and proclaiming himself true overlord of the Dragons. Using knowledges taken from tortured Dragon prisoners, the Dragonlord managed to open a *gate* and reach the Outer Planes known as the Draconic Cluster, where the Dragon Rulers were said to dwell. Even the power of the three Lesser Dragon Rulers wasn’t enough to defeat Aryan, which one by one faced the Moon, the Sun and the Star Dragon, defeating them in turn, destroying their physical bodies and draining their very souls inside the *Dragonlord armor*.

Now there were no more Dragons to oppose the Dragonlord; using the draconic might which derived to him by the hundreds of Dragons he had defeated and which the artifacts he wore allowed him to use, Aryan asserted his position as the renewed Great One, the new Greater Ruler of dragonkind which would have spawned a new, enlightened age for Dragons<sup>(23)</sup>. He swore to subdue all the Dragons of the multiverse, and to kill those that would have not subdued, thus bringing on his ever stubborn war against the Dragons. To demonstrate his might even further, the Dragonlord helped the wizards of Blackmoor to forge another powerful artifact of tremendous magic and wondrous beauty, the *Collar of Dragons*, which allowed its wearer to exert control over the very souls of living Dragons; Aryan entrusted the *Collar* to Blackmoorian wizards, so that they could establish

a durable dominion over Mystara’s surviving Dragons<sup>(24)</sup>.

## The Return of the Great One and the Gemstones’ Exile

The rise to Greater Ruler of Dragonkind of a human – even if one with near-Immortal powers – was matter of great concern among some Immortals, in particular those that were interested in the survival of species and in the preservation of natural balance. The destruction of Dragons as mayor force of the multiverse could easily bring in an age of terrible upheavals which would have certainly threatened many life forms with extinction. Moreover, after the war against the Dragonlord, the Dragons themselves were so much reduced in number that they could easily suffer the same fate as well. Therefore, the rulership of Dragons had to be wrested from the Dragonlord and given to a Dragon, so that proper draconic order could be restored. But this could be risky, both because having another Immortal seizing the title of Great One from the Dragonlord was not guarantee toward the restoration of the draconic order, and because the powers of the Dragonlord were feared – perhaps excessively – even among lesser Immortals. Anyway, if the Dragons were to be saved, the war had to be stopped.

It was Terra, an ancient and powerful Immortal belonging to the Sphere of Matter, which always cared about the survival of the living species, who finally chose to take the thing in her own hands. She sent omens to one of her most wise and learned Dragon clerics, the Ancestral Dragon Raakthryl, to guide him as swiftly as possible on the path to Immortality. Slowly, she had him realizing that his fate was to restore proper draconic order<sup>(25)</sup>. During the last stages of his path toward Immortality, Raakthryl discovered the terrible truth: the true masterminds behind the war which was threatening to destroy the Dragons were the foolish Gemstone Dragons – whose plan of wordly domination had clearly gone out of their hands since the Blackmoorians had created the *Dragonlord Arms*.

Finally Raakthryl, sponsored by Terra, achieved Immortality in the Sphere of Matter – the first known Dragon to become Immortal in one of the Spheres of Power. Now knowing the causes of the devastating war between the Dragonlord and the Dragons were futile, he went to face the Dragonlord himself to explain him what he had discovered.

What Raakthryl didn’t know was the fact that the *Dragonlord Arms*, their technomantic nature further imbued with an overflow of draconic might drained from the dragons de-

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<sup>(21)</sup> Again from the Dragonlord Trilogy novels: “Long ago, the men of Blackmoor employed their most powerful arcane skills to create armor and weapons capable of turning any physical or magical attack the dragons could muster. It could only be used by the Dragonlord, a wizard-warrior of almost Immortal status. The Dragonlord led the men of Blackmoor in a great war that subdued and almost destroyed the dragons.” Further passages found in the *Dragonlord of Mystara* novel describe the artifacts’ appearance and powers.

<sup>(22)</sup> See the Dragonlord Trilogy novels: “Thus the men of Blackmoor, frightened to discover that they couldn’t defeat the dragons, created the Dragonlord. When the Dragonlord began defeating the dragons, they fought back even harder and more desperately than ever, fearing that the Dragonlord meant to destroy them utterly.”

<sup>(23)</sup> The rise of Aryan to Great One has been devised to justify the following passage found in *Wrath of the Immortals, Book I: Codex of the Immortals*, page 32: “He has since learned that there have been other Immortal dragons before him, with one Dragon-Lord bearing the title of the Great One...” Now it could well be that here the term ‘Dragon-Lord’ is used to signify simply ‘Lord of Dragons’, thus a normal Dragon, but I liked the way this passage could be linked with the Dragonlord story told by the Dragonlord Trilogy novels; moreover it connects with the definition of “almost Immortal status” given for the Dragonlord by the novels (see note 13).

<sup>(24)</sup> From the *Dragonking of Mystara* novel: “The Collar of the Dragons was not a gift of the Great One, but an offering of peace to the dragons from the wizards of Blackmoor at the time of their truce with the first Dragonlord. It was indeed very costly, and it supposedly granted the dragons certain powers they desperately needed to survive at a time when their race had nearly been destroyed.” And from *Dragonmage of Mystara* novel: “The wizards of Blackmoor created the Collar of the Dragons [...]”

<sup>(25)</sup> See the Dragonlord Trilogy novels (again the story is told by the Great One himself): “At that time the Immortals, especially Terra, became convinced they must intervene to save the dragons and stop the war. I had withdrawn to the ancient forests as a cleric of Terra. Terra conceived a plan that seemed to her the only hope to put an end to the conflict. Terra sponsored me, and in a relatively short time, she succeeded in making me the first dragon Immortal [...] I eventually defeated the first Dragonlord, that being the only way to force him to listen, and then we joined forces together with the wizards of Blackmoor against the gemstone dragons. Subsequently the gemstone dragons were defeated and escaped through a world gate.”

feated by Aryan, had become a sort of sentient artifact. Now they had almost completely established their hold on Aryan's mind, and were slowly driving him mad with the obsession to be the new ruler of dragonkind and destroy the rebel Dragons. Aryan's will had lost any power to resist the *Arms'* influence over his mind. Thus, when Raakthyl told the Dragonlord the truth about the war, Aryan, dominated and driven mad by the *Arms*, refused to listen and told him to submit.

Induced by his patron Terra to confront anyway Aryan in the incoming, seemingly suicide battle, Raakthyl refused to submit and fought against the Dragonlord. It was a long and costly battle for Raakthyl, one which he was aware he couldn't win – unless something unexpected by him happened: as Raakthyl landed on the Dragonlord's body what he thought was to be his last blow against him, a sudden surge of energy came out of the *Dragonlord Arms* and flowed through him. As Terra had hoped, the souls of the three Lesser Rulers of Dragonkind, trapped inside the artifact worn by Aryan, poured their remaining forces together and freed themselves from their prison, entering Raakthyl's body and merging with his own soul. A great flash of light invested Raakthyl's body, and made it appear brilliant and rainbow-hued: the sacrifice of the three Lesser Rulers' souls had now truly transformed Raakthyl into the multihued lord of all Dragons. Now he had indeed sufficient power to defeat Aryan.

The *Dragonlord Arms* were weakened by the loss of draconic might, and Aryan – free for a moment from their domination – was disoriented. Raakthyl caught the opportunity to attack him with all his new power, managing at the end to separate the artifact from Aryan, and to free the confused man from the *Arms*. Having defeated the Dragonlord, Raakthyl became the Great One himself – after thousands years, a Dragon was again the Greater Ruler of dragonkind.

Raakthyl cast Aryan out of the Draconic Cluster along with the nefarious artifacts. As the sudden loss of the *Arms* seemed to restore Aryan's mind, Raakthyl chose not to kill him, and the Dragonlord atoned for his misdeeds against dragonkind. Together with Raakthyl, he worked to modify the *Dragonlord Arms*, so that they lose their own will and could no longer imprison the souls of defeated Dragons.

Then Raakthyl gave Aryan the duty to go back to the Blackmoorians and explain them the trickery of the Gemstone Dragons, in order to suggest them to sign a truce with their former enemies, as to join forces together against the Gemstones. The Blackmoorian Emperor and his councillors were at first suspicious of Aryan's words, but the prospect to fight the now-bolstered Dragons without the support of the Dragonlord convinced them to comply.

Meanwhile in the Draconic Cluster, the new Great One was immediately acknowledged by the Dragon Guardians and, in turn, by all the Dragons Aryan had subdued and which had been freed from the *Dragonlord armor*. The new Great One's first actions were to rise the three most powerful Dragon Guardians to the Lesser Rulership of Dragons, to send omens to all Mystaran Dragons to announce his return, and to have them making a truce with Blackmoor. Ancient draconic legends say that the new Great One' charge was

ratified in a great and unusual ceremony held near the Vortex, even with some Draedens attending.

Thanks to the Great One's and Aryan's deeds, Blackmoor and the Dragons soon signed a truce; the Great One gave back to Aryan, as a newly-found ally, the *Dragonlord Arms* – by now weakened in power but also deprived of their most dangerous side effects – in order to use them to fight the Gemstone Dragons. Under the guidance of the Dragonlord and of the Great One's emissaries, Blackmoor and the Dragons joined forces against the Gemstones, whose plot had caused so many sufferings. In a series of huge battles, the Gemstone Dragons were defeated and forced to flee through a *gate* to a remote Outer Plane called Veydra. After years of hate and destructions, Dragons and men were at last in peace again.

## The Restoration

Now that the Gemstones had been defeated and exiled, the leaders of Blackmoor and the Dragons worked together so that the truce they had signed could become a durable oath of peace. The War of the Dragonlord had been the most frightening and terrible event in all the entire history of the Dragons so far, and they feared the *Dragonlord Arms* and everyone who could use them almost beyond reason. The Great One feared that if the artifacts had fallen again in the wrong hand, woe would have descended again on the draconic race. So, together with Aryan, he decided to fake the destruction of the artifacts at the end of the war against the Gemstone Dragons, while secretly entrusting them to Aryan himself with the duty to keep them away from anyone's eyes.

During the peace talks with Blackmoor, the only promise that the Dragons demanded was that the former Dragonlord should stay completely out of their lives, their affairs, and their territories. At the same time, they also wanted the assurance of knowing where the Dragonlord was and what he was doing at all times. The Blackmoorians consented to this, agreeing to bound Aryan to a remote fortress at the western borders of their colonies on Brun, called Dragonwatch Keep, in the western (nowadays northern) Endworld Line. Obviously, all this was part of the secret agreement between the Great One and Aryan: the former Dragonlord would have earned the Great One's ultimate pardon if he'd have worked as the *Dragonlord Arms'* keeper for the time to come. Aryan, now bound to Dragonwatch Keep, his life supernaturally extended by technomantic energies used on him, hid the artifacts within the depths of the castle's dungeon, where the *Dragonlord Arms* were to rest forever<sup>(26)</sup>.

As a token of their goodwill, the Blackmoorians also gave the Dragons what they considered one of their greatest treasures, the *Collar of Dragons*; the artifact was given to a fellowship of properly-selected Gold Dragons which would take care to keep it safe. They were known as the Wardens of the Gold.

Now that the Dragonlord thing had been settled, the Great One had to rebuild the draconic order which was lacking since the former Great One had been destroyed thousands of years before. It was not an easy task to accomplish because, while all Dragons were grateful to the Great One for

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<sup>(26)</sup> From the Dragonlord Trilogy novels: "The War of the Dragonlord had been the most frightening and terrible event in all the entire history of the dragons, and they feared him almost beyond reason. The only promise that the dragons demanded was that the Dragonlord should stay completely out of their lives, their affairs, and their territories. At the same time, they also wanted the assurance of knowing where the Dragonlord was and what he was doing at all times."

In the novels, Thelvyn later journeys to Dragonwatch Keep to retrieve the *Dragonlord Arms*; from *Dragonlord of Mystara* novel: "In perhaps another day, we will come to the Citadel of the Ancients, which is also known as Dragonwatch Keep. This is where the armor and weapons of the Dragonlord have awaited your coming for nearly four thousand years. Dragonwatch Keep is the last of the hidden fortresses of Blackmoor."

About the gift of the Collar from Blackmoor to the Dragons, the novels say: "The men of Blackmoor finally made peace with them [...] As a token of their goodwill, they gave the dragons their greatest treasure, the Collar of the Dragons, an artifact of tremendous magic and wondrous beauty." See also note (13b) about the gift of the Collar.

the defeat of the Dragonlord, many were not used anymore to follow the traditional rules of the old draconic order: stay neutral between the Spheres of Power, only seek achievement of a greater form through the Cerimony of Sublimation, and so on. The fact that the Great One was an Immortal himself, sponsored by Terra and thus sharing some sort of link with the Sphere of Matter, further complicated things.

The Great One decided not to enforce the new order harshly, but let individual Dragons choose which path they'd like to follow: that of Dragons – through the Cerimony of Sublimation – or that of the Spheres of Power – through an Immortal sponsor. However, from the moment they had embarked on one Path toward Immortality in one of the Spheres of Power, they could no longer have the chance to further perfect themselves through the Cerimony of Sublimation and were considered to be out of the draconic order forever. In regard of this choice, they were not hunted down, persecuted or hated as far as the Great One was concerned, quite the opposite – some of the Dragons that chose to follow the Sphere of Powers had been friends of him during his mortal life; simply put, the Great One had to exclude them from the draconic order if that order had to be restored.

On the other hand, mortal Dragons didn't always consider the "betrayal" of their Immortal-following kins so kindly; under many circumstances, anyway, guided by the Great One's tolerance, they simply considered the "traitor" as someone who was doing a bad choice for his life, one who was limiting his own existence to something much lower than what was traditionally allowed to Dragonkind. Those Dragons who chose to serve an Immortal Sphere of Power were called "Mavericks"<sup>(27)</sup>.

With time, the draconic order was slowly rebuilt – even if differently from the past. The Immortal Terra was content to have averted the Dragons' extinction and to have helped the rebuilding of balance among them. Therefore, she apparently withdrew any open support from the Great One as to not embarrass him, even if the friendship between the two continued. This is the reason behind the success of the cult of Terra among Dragons, especially in past centuries; many Dragons, in fact, saw her as the true saviour of their race. It's rumored among Immortals that the very existence of so many Dragon clerics of Terra was even secretly favored by the Great One himself, as a way to thank her of the help she gave him in rising to the rulership of Dragonkind.

What wasn't still clear at the moment was the position of the Great One himself within the new order: he was an Immortal, in fact the first Dragon-Immortal who also held the Greater Rulership of Dragonkind; he pretended not to be associated with the Sphere of Matter, but in fact he was. Mortal Dragons obviously respected and worshipped him without being regarded as Mavericks – as they would if they'd have served another Immortal of the Sphere of Matter. And while at the moment the Great One seemed unintentioned to sponsor other Dragon candidates to Immortality, what would have happened to the new draconic order if

he'd have begun to do that? How the charges of the Lesser Rulers would have been affected? Could the Great One sponsor other Dragon Immortals with the explicit purpose to fight out of their charge the current Lesser Rulers?<sup>(28)</sup>

## The Great Rain of Fire and its Aftermaths

The Dragons had survived their struggle for life against the Dragonlord, but another catastrophe was at hand. About two centuries after the War of the Dragonlord, the foolish men of Blackmoor seriously misused some of their technological devices, causing a series of tremendous explosions which rocked the planet's surface, filled the skies with ash and fire, and whose potency was so high to move the planet's rotation axis. This event was to be remembered by future generations as the Great Rain of Fire.

Destruction on the planet was widespread: Blackmoor and many other civilizations and races were wiped out from the face of Mystara, the seas engulfed whole regions while the ocean floor raised above the water-level to form new lands; earthquakes hit many parts of the globe, with volcanoes and new mountain ranges rising from the earth, while making others crumble. Within a short time, the surface of the planet was changed.

Obviously, Dragons didn't pass the catastrophe unharmed. Their number already greatly reduced by the past War of the Dragonlord, many of them died because of the cataclysm and its aftereffects. After the Great Rain of Fire, their number was dwindling again and they were now even more a dying race. However, thanks to the help of the Great One and of the three Lesser Dragon Rulers, which sent among them their Dragon Guardians to help and guide their followers, the Dragons managed to survive this umpteenth time of misery. At least, now that the whole planet had been ravaged, they had not to fear other races anymore and they thought they had time to rebuild their number, trusting their might.

One thing did worry the Dragon Rulers: at Dragonwatch Keep, Aryan – the former Dragonlord – died during the Great Rain of Fire, likely stricken dead by a surge of technomantic energy; the other human wizards had departed from Dragonwatch Keep on the eve of the great catastrophe, bringing with them everything had been stored inside the building. Now, with the subsequent destruction of Blackmoor, no one was watching anymore the dungeons in which the dangerous *Dragonlord Arms* had been hidden by Aryan. Dragonwatch Keep, indeed, was the only Blackmoorian building to resist the Great Rain of Fire nearly undamaged thanks to its powerful enchantments, so the chance that someone could stumble upon it, find the artifacts and use them again was real.

So the Dragon Rulers gave a group of Gold Dragons, rightfully considered the more faithful and steadfast among Dragons, the duty to occupy Dragonwatch Keep to ward it and the artifacts it contained from intruders and wrong-doers.

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<sup>(27)</sup> In *From Hatchling to Dragon Guardian*, in 'Dragon Magazine' #170, the term "maverick" is used to identify a Dragon Guardian (i.e. a Dragon who has completed the last stage of the Cerimony of Sublimation, becoming immortal in the Draconic Cluster) who decides to associate himself with one of the Immortal Spheres of Power and keep followers in the Prime Plane. This definition blurs with the one given later in the same article for the "renegades" – Dragons who serve one of the Immortal Spheres of Power during their mortal existence on the Prime Plane. As the term "renegade" is used differently in the Dragonlord Trilogy novels, I've decided to unify under the same term "maverick" both categories of Dragons identified by Heard (that is mavericks and renegades); thus, I assume the term "maverick" identifies a Dragon who decides to follow one of the Immortal Spheres of Power – be it a mortal or a Dragon Guardian. See also note (18).

<sup>(28)</sup> These unanswered questions try to contextualize the doubts which could have spawned in some Dragon's mind about the Great One's role in the draconic order after his ascension to Immortality and his rise to the Greater Rulership of Dragonkind. I've tried to contextualize this aspect in order to reconcile the conflicting canon sources about Dragons. Some of them (D&D Immortal Set, Ziets' and Heard's articles on Dragon Magazine) have the Dragons neutral and autonomous from the Spheres of Power, while other sources (Wrath of the Immortals) have the Rulers of Dragonkind as Immortals belonging to the Sphere of Matter.

The Gold Dragons did as they were told by their Rulers and they became known as the Keepers; slowly, the castle became also the seat of a great shrine devoted to the Great One, and the valley below the mountainous peak where the keep rested became the location of the great occasional gatherings of Gold Dragons. The Citadel of the Ancients, as Dragonwatch Keep is today known to the Dragons, preserved to this day this religious and historical relevance<sup>(29)</sup>.

## The Dragon Nation is Born

After the terrible events of the Great Rain of Fire, the Great One sought to give the Dragons their own nation, one founded not on territory, but on unity of their race. If Dragons were united, they could better defend themselves against other races while controlling their own rogue kins (like the Gemstone Dragons were in the age of Blackmoor); the ultimate goal of the Greater Ruler of Dragonkind was to establish peace and respect between the Dragons and the other races – and, if war turned to be unavoidable (like it had been during the time of Dragonlord), at least the Dragons would have been united against their common foe.

Thus, soon after the cataclysm, the Great One sent omens to his most faithful servants, his Gold Dragons priests, with commands to bring together in a safe place most of the few Dragons that had survived the global catastrophe. The priests chose a great and impervious mountain range, filled with secluded valleys and hidden gorges, located in eastern Brun, in a region which, because of the axial shift of the planet, had recently been moved from the arctic to the subarctic area and thus was now seeing a slow local thawing. It was this mountain range that would become the famed Wurmsteeth Range.

Over the course of the years, the Gold Dragons spread the will of the Great One among their kins, and slowly they managed to gather as many Dragons as possible in the Wurmsteeth Range. There, the Gold Dragons communicated the goal of their Greater Ruler to other Dragons, that the Dragons had been spared from the Great Rain of Fire to be united into one nation which would have lived in peace with other races. Many Dragons agreed to the Gold Dragons' commands because they felt that was the only way for their race to survive in these harsh times. Many of them realized in fact that the world wasn't theirs anymore, and that other races had risen – beings with which the Dragons would have had to live side by side.

So, under the guidance of the Golds, the so-called Dragon Nation was born<sup>(30)</sup>. It was not to be a nation with borders, but it included the whole draconic population of Mystara. Whenever a Dragon which had never heard about the Nation was found, it was immediately invited to join the Nation.

The Gold Dragons decided that the Nation had to have a ruling body, a Parliament of Dragons which would include

the most powerful and learned Dragons of Mystara and which would have gathered once every given time. Each Dragon race should have had its Speaker, while a First Speaker chosen by all the Speakers together should have acted as a first among equals and like a sort of “president”. The priests of the Great One had also an important role in the Parliament.

The draconic people began to build a seat for their Nation, a place where their Parliament could easily meet when summoned. They chose a large, dead volcano in the middle of the Wurmsteeth Range to host the capital of their Nation, Windreach, starting to build a huge temple devoted to the Great One and then many surrounding buildings and houses. Hidden in the impervious mountains, the city of Windreach grew and, for a while, the Dragons took relief from the hard times of the past centuries, very slowly rebuilding their number, left alone by the other races in this wild land<sup>(31)</sup>.

## The Renegades

Most Dragons were happy at the foundation of the Dragon Nation and the building of Windreach, but soon differences began to emerge as the first meetings of the Parliament of Dragons were summoned. Most of the quarrels revolved around the laws that the Dragon race should have given to itself. The Gold Dragons, claiming this was the will of the Great One, were trying to compel other Dragons to the respect of lesser races' territories, to avoid eating intelligent beings and to sustain themselves only by eating wild animals. Their lawful alignment naturally led them toward those aims – which ultimately should have ensured a future of peace to the Dragons. Another faction of Dragons recalled instead the ancient times in which the Dragons were the most powerful race of Mystara and disliked the idea to settle in peace aside the other races, which had sized what rightly belonged to Dragons. Dragons of the three alignments were almost equally divided among these two parties, and there were also many intermediate opinions.

Unfortunately, not all the Dragons did receive so well the Gold Dragons' suggestions about the unity of the draconic race. Some Dragons believed that there wasn't anything like one “Dragon race”, and that Gold or Green Dragons were too different from Reds or Blues or Whites to be called “one” race – between them there were the same differences to be found between Orcs and Elves, for example. While their adversaries argued that all Dragons shared a common ancestry, while Orcs and Elves didn't, these dissident Dragons felt no need to share a common nation with their kins, and went on their own.

These individuals – which included some of the most chaotic and wildly independent Dragons – openly defied and broke the laws of the Dragon Nation, eating intelligent creatures, attacking them, and ravaging and pillaging their lands. The Parliament of Dragons was offended by this open lack of

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<sup>(29)</sup> From *Dragonlord of Mystara* novel: “«The original name and purpose of the Citadel of the Ancients is unknown, but it seems to have been built by the wizards of Blackmoor to serve as a safe, remote place to keep some of their most powerful creations, things they probably did not dare to keep in inhabited regions. Since everything except the armor of the Dragonlord was removed, it is possible one was the very device that destroyed Blackmoor.» «But how could this place have survived the destruction of Blackmoor and the Rain of Fire, when nothing else in the world did?» the mage asked, insatiable in his curiosity. «We do know something of that secret,» she told him. «This citadel was originally protected by very powerful magic, the exact means long since forgotten. Perhaps it was magically shielded with impenetrable barriers.»”

<sup>(30)</sup> From *Dragonlord Trilogy* novels (from a speech of the Gold Dragon Marthaen): “The gold dragons and their allies believe that our best place is as a nation among many nations, and that our greatest power and security will come with honest respect. We are tired of being treated as beasts. Many of the wiser and more powerful reds and blacks agree.”

<sup>(31)</sup> Windreach is featured in the *Dragonking of Mystara* and *Dragonmage of Mystara* novels, where it's described as a hidden draconic city, located in the middle of the Wurmsteeth Range; the city is the seat of the Parliament of Dragons (the ruling body of the Dragon Nation), and day-to-day activities are managed by Gold Dragon priests of the Great One. The city hosts also the last living members of the Eldar race on Mystara.

deference regarding its laws, and it was decided that any Dragon behaving in a such senselessly destructive and violent way had to be cast out of the Dragon Nation. Therefore, among their kin, these Dragons became known as the “Renegades”<sup>(32)</sup>. The Dragons belonging to the Dragon Nations should have hunted them down when they encountered them – but in fact, outside the Wyrksteeth Range, this duty was rarely carried on.

It’s interesting to note that the Great One didn’t speak openly against the Renegades. He didn’t because their very existence appealed his balanced nature – at his eyes, the Nation should exist to fulfill the aims of the more orderly Dragons which liked the idea of the “unity” of their race and felt the need of it should a great danger arise for Dragons in the future; on the other hand, the Great One was feeling he should guarantee the independence of the Dragons which disliked the idea of unity and which nevertheless incarnated a part of the Dragon ideals. So, both the Dragon Nation and the Renegades fulfilled a role in the draconic cosmic order, and both should exist – even if in perpetual conflict.

## MODERN HISTORY OF DRAGONS

In the centuries following the Great Rain of Fire, the Dragons struggled for survival against the climate and other races which were also recovering themselves from the global catastrophe. Many Dragons living away from the Wyrksteeth Range became Renegades, ignoring the commands of the Dragon Nation and those of the Gold Dragon priests of the Great One.

Many more Dragons enjoyed attacking other races’ territories to pillage, destroy, or avenge, out of sheer hate or just because they were trying to fulfill one of the stages of their Cerimony of Sublimation. Other races were determined to defend their lands and lives, while the Dragons were not anymore united and too few in number to easily shatter them all.

### CHANGES IN DRAGON RULERSHIP

After the War of the Dragonlord, the Dragons had gradually regained and increased their knowledge of the Cerimony of Sublimation; with time, more and more Dragons managed to reach the uppermost power of their mortal form, and some even transcended it to become Dragon Guardians in the Draconic Cluster. Of course, this meant there was an even greater threat for the Lesser Dragon Rulers to be challenged by a Dragon Guardian and, if defeated, to loose their charge in favor of the winner.

It’s difficult to tell how many times – if any – this sort of replacement of the Lesser Dragon Rulers could have happened in Dragon history since the War of the Dragonlord;

the Dragons are extremely secretive about this issue, and even most of the mortal Dragons don’t know for certain when such a things have happened. Some of the knowledge about this matter has anyway passed into the other races’ legends, so there are some hints starting from which the historians have speculated when the Dragon Rulers’ replacement coul have happened.

One of the first recorded occasions in which a Dragon Rulers was replaced was around BC 1,000, when the Moon Dragon lost favour with the Great One and forfeited his position<sup>(33)</sup>. It seems very likely that the reason behind the abdication of the Moon Dragon was its meddling in the Immortal Spheres’ affairs, perhaps in order to gather enough power to seize even the Greater Ruler’s role from the Great One. The most powerful Dragon Guardians then fought among them to occupy the Moon Dragon’s position.

### THE NIGHT DRAGONS

Some Dragons, finding too difficult to reach the Dragon Guardian form through the Cerimony of Sublimation, were allured by the Sphere of Entropy, which centuries before had already begun to grant more power to some of the Dragons who had chosen to follow it; these Mavericks were turned into Night Dragons after their death or when they had demonstrated their utter loyalty to the cause of Entropy – terrible undead beings of darkness. Even some Renegade Dragons began to listen the promises of Entropy, and to chose the path of evil, enlisting to become Night Dragons, and widening the ranks of Entropy.

The existence of Night Dragons is a secret unknown to most mortal races, and even to the mayority of Dragons themselves. These cruel undead beings have never shown up openly on Mystara, as they like to act through guile, trickery and deceit, fulfilling the ruthless and long-term plans of their entropic masters<sup>(34)</sup>.

Only one time in recorded history did the Night Dragons showed up, attacking in force the human civilization on the isle of Oceania. Around BC 1,200 that advanced and flourishing culture, heir both of the Oltec peoples and of the Tangor immigrants, was obliterated. The few survivors escaped in nearby Cestia, which is the only country on Mystara which has regular contacts with the Night Dragons – who occasionally fly from Oceania to pillage Cestian coasts.

The reason behind Oceania’s invasion by the Night Dragons is a total mistery, even for the Oceanians themselves. It’s rumored that some Immortal of Entropy – perhaps even Thanatos himself – sent the Night Dragons here to guard some great secret of him, and that they’re still guarding it while ruling over the island, which has become an undead haven.

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<sup>(32)</sup> In *From Hatchling to Dragon Guardian*, in ‘Dragon Magazine’ #170, the definition of “Renegade” almost matches that of “Maverick”, given in the same article; according to Heard, a Renegade is a Dragon who choses to follow one of the Immortal Spheres of Power during his mortal life, while a Maverick is a Dragon Guardian who keeps followers in the Prime Plane and must choose one of the Immortal Spheres of Power as its ethos. In the Dragonlord Trilogy novels, instead, the term Renegade is used to tag those Dragons who don’t submit to the rules and laws of the Dragon Nation.

I’ve chosen to merge both definitions given by Heard under the same term “Maverick”, while keeping the word “Renegade” in the meaning used by the novels. Thus, as far as this version of draconic history is concerned, the term Maverick indicates a Dragon (mortal or not) who chooses to serve one of the Immortal Spheres of Power – from that point on, he can’t no longer perfect himself through the Cerimony of Sublimation; the term Renegade indicates a Dragon who is out of the Dragon Nation (because of his choice or because he has been cast out of it after some crime) – a Renegade can still use the Cerimony of Sublimation, unless he also becomes a Maverick.

<sup>(33)</sup> See *The Mightiest of Dragons*, in Dragon Magazine #158: “A similar circumstance was recorded in ancient scrolls of nearly 2,000 years ago. This time, however, it was the Moon Dragon’s position that was fought for. The scrolls say that the former Moon Dragon had not died, but had lost favour with the Great One or had somehow forfeited its position, which seems to suggest that the Great One has something to do with the vesting of power in prospective dragon rulers.”

<sup>(34)</sup> Night Dragons are described in the article *The Voyage of the Princess Ark, Part 10: The Return of Darkness*, in ‘Dragon Magazine’ #163. They were already introduced (albeit not by that name) in *The Voyage of the Princess Ark, Part 2: Into the Mountains, to meet... with Doom*, in ‘Dragon Magazine’ #154, and *The Voyage of the Princess Ark, Part 3: To Seek Out New Life and Civilizations*, in ‘Dragon Magazine’ #155.

## TIME FOR LEGENDS

The centuries between BC 2,000 and AC 0 were filled with battles between Dragons and Giants, Elves, Dwarves, humanoids, and men – tales of the great Dragons of those times and of the brave heroes that slayed or were slain by them are still told in epic legends of modern times. The names of at least three of these Dragons can't be omitted here.

**Blethinferelth**, a female Blue Dragon born some decades after BC 2,000, was one of the first Dragons to meet the humanoid horde of Akkila Khan in Ethengar, where she had her lair. Akkila tried to win her alliance in BC 1,711 in order to get the upper hand over the Great Horde of King Loark, but to no avail. Thus, the humanoid khan tricked her with the promise of gold and treasures in exchange for peace, and when Blethinferelth came to Akkila's camp, his shamans tried to trap her with their spells. The Dragon's will was too strong for the humanoid shamans, and thus Akkila called his warriors to have the Dragon killed; after a fierce fight, Blethinferelth managed to flee. The so-called Battle of Many Days was more a hunt than a battle, in which the humanoids tried to catch the wounded Dragon and kill her. They never managed to succeed and Blethinferelth became a solitary Dragon which survives to this day in her lair in the Altan Tepes mountains, where sometimes members of other races visit her to seek advices<sup>(35)</sup>.

**Gorkalk**, a fierce Red Dragon, was not as friendly as Blethinferelth. He was the overlord of the vast region which, from the part of the Altan Tepes and the Dwarfgate ranges which formed the western border of Rockhome, ruled the vast plain which extended west of it and the sparse humanoid and human communities which were found there and which regularly gave him tributes. He also had battled successfully against the Dwarves, and once even against Nithian adventurers. When the Elves came in this vast arid steppe from the Sylvan Realm and started to settle there and grow their forest, Gorkalk was upset and around BC 750 began a series of vicious raids against them, destroying a large part of the Emerlas, the northern part of the newly-growth Canolbarth Forest. It was the elven hero Galannor Nightflame, chosen by a Faedorne named Karelia, that embarked in the quest to slay Gorkalk, reaching him in his lair in the foothills of the Dwarfgate mountains and killing him. Galannor was mortally wounded in the great final fight with Gorkalk, but the legends say that Karelia carried him away in the skies on a silver boat. Today the Elves of Alfheim still honor Galannor's sacrifice<sup>(36)</sup>.

No list of legendary Dragons would be complete without **Calor**, the most powerful and cruel of all the Red Dragons that had flight above the Known World before the crowning

of the first Emperor of Thyatis. This huge wyrm was born in an unknown year after BC 1,000 and around BC 690 he began to terrorize the petty humanoid and human kingdoms, tribes and clans that dotted the Darokin region from Alfheim to the Lake Amsorak in those times. Soon, he gathered a vast orcish following and was able to send his orc armies against his human enemies, laying waste to their territories. Within some decades, he became known as Calor the Great and was considered the most powerful Dragon of his days. Many heroes had tried to bring down the foul beast, but none of them had succeeded. It was the human hero Balthac, armed with his magical sword Camb, and aided by his friend and lover, the elf Sinan, who finally slew Calor in BC 205. Balthac was mortally wounded himself in the final battle, and Sinan took care to have a shrine built to the hero in a faraway valley of the Dwarfgate Mountains, where the battle had taken place and where also Calor had been buried under a pile of boulders. Today Balthac is still one of the most popular Darokinian characters of epics<sup>(37)</sup>.

## The Wallaras' Tragedy

Another event which took place in those years was the intervention of Dragons in the affairs of Araneas and chameleon men called the Wallaras in the western Savage Coast<sup>(38)</sup>. There, the shapechanging intelligent arachnids known as the Araneas had built their kingdom of Herath in the woods; they used to keep their presence hidden from the neighbouring races, masquerading into humanoid forms. Only the Wallaras knew the Araneas' secret and this spread fear among the Herathian ruling classes. The Wallaras were a peaceful and advanced culture, friendly to anything natural, and, as a race with ancient ties with the Dragons, they were particularly devoted to the Great One and to the Lesser Dragon Rulers, which they worshipped as gods. At that time, a good number of Dragons lived in the Savage Coast region.

Eventually, around BC 500, the most powerful Herathian wizards created a powerful spell, the *spell of forgetting*, to erase from the minds of the Wallaras every knowledge of the Araneas' true identities. Unfortunately, the spell backfired and the result was catastrophic. While removing knowledge of the Araneas from the Wallaran minds, the Wallaran racial memories kept shifting – over and over, distorting and nearly wiping them from their minds. The Herathians were at a loss to halt the spell, and the hapless Wallaran civilization fell back to the stone age. Only obscure, jumbled memories and legends of their past survived in their minds.

This tragedy caused the Great One to seek revenge, because the Wallaras were not only related to Dragons, but also worshipped them. A plague of Dragons commanded by the Mortal Form of the Great Dragon itself attacked Herath. The

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<sup>(35)</sup> Blethinferelth appears in the *Son of Dawn* novel; she also has a daughter in the novel, named Bluestrinel. The story of Blethinferelth's meeting with Akkila Khan and the Battle of Many Days is told in the novel by the Dragon herself to one of the novel's main characters. The story told here elaborates only a little on the causes of the struggle between the Dragon and Akkila Khan.

<sup>(36)</sup> The story of Gorkalk is told in adventure module *O2: Blade of Vengeance*, page 2: "Two thousand years ago, the red dragon Gorkalk flew out of the northern mountains and destroyed large tracts of the Emerlas. Seeking a champion to combat the dragon, Karelia's attention lighted on Galannor Nightflame, an elfin hero of great renown, dwelling in Alfheim to the south. Karelia sent a raven as her messenger to Galannor Nightflame to lead him from Alfheim. Galannor made haste to the Emerlas and sought out Gorkalk's lair in the Misty Hills. There, a terrible fight ensued and, in spite of his wounds, Galannor slew the dragon. Karelia was impressed with Galannor's bravery. In her silver ship, she carried the wounded hero to the Shining Isle where he now lives beyond his span of years."

If you suppose the adventure is set in AC 1000, the story of Gorkalk should date back to BC 1000 – but at that time the Canolbarth Forest didn't exist (and neither did the Emerlas, which are the northernmost part of the forest); thus, Gorkalk's story has been moved ahead a couple of centuries (to BC 750), when the Canolbarth Forest was already there (even if still growing). The "two thousand years ago" mentioned in the adventure should thus be read as "about two thousand years ago".

<sup>(37)</sup> Calor's and Balthac's legend comes from the adventure *IM2 – Wrath of Olympus* (page 34 and following), and from *Wrath of the Immortals boxed set, Book II: Immortals' Fury* (page and following). For the dating of the events of the legend, I've used A. Nowack's article, *The Expanded Darokin Timeline*, found at Vaults of Pandius website (<http://pandius.com/darokitime.html>).

<sup>(38)</sup> The events regarding Wallaras, Araneas, and the latter's conflict against Dragons are told in *Savage Coast campaign setting, Campaign Book: Characters of the Savage Coast* (pages 60-61). The same version of the story is found in *Red Steel campaign setting, Campaign Book* (page 47).

Araneas were experienced and organized enough to survive the wrath of the Great One, and with their most powerful magics they managed to hold off the Greater Ruler of Dragonking until its form was considerably weakened and forced to withdraw – although at a dreadful cost to their nation. After the withdrawal of the Great One, the war continued unchecked, while horrible deeds were accomplished by one side or another. During those years, the Dragons created the dread creatures known as the Frelôn, aimed at hunting the Araneas, while the arachnids of Herath, trying to increase their powers to fight Dragons, created the undead Yeshoms<sup>(39)</sup>. Very little was accomplished during this war besides a permanent animosity between the two races.

Trying to achieve victory for the Dragons, the Great One unleashed the final power necessary to form the Red Curse of the Savage Coast into what it is today. While the spell was directed toward Herath, the Araneas' great magic was able to contain it in a remote, unpopulated area of the Savage Coast (the future Savage Baronies).

Herath had survived, but the country had faced such horrendous devastation that the Immortal Korotiku, the Herathian patron, met with the Great One and explained the error of his Aranea followers. It cost Korotiku dearly to persuade the Great One to halt the attacks, in addition to a promise from Herath never to interfere with the Wallaras again.

After the war, Dragons and Araneas lived in uneasy coexistence, lashing out at each other when the opportunity arose, but neither side made any actual progress toward victory. Many Dragons eventually began relocating away from the Savage Coast, concerned with the effects of the Red Curse. By this time, the curse had also already brought about the creation of a new type of Dragon: the Crimson Dragon<sup>(40)</sup>.

## The Dawn of the New Millennium and the Dragonking Prophecy

On the turn of the millennium, the swift rise of human civilizations was putting the Dragons again on the defensive. While Dwarves' and Elves' advancement was relatively slow and those races tended more to keep to themselves than to expansion, the humans' ever-growing number spurred them to colonize, invade, settle and conquer other lands. Humans were founding realms and kingdoms at a rate unseen since the fall of Blackmoor, and the Dragons soon realized that their number was too few to oppose the whole advance of man.

Now more than ever, the Gold Dragons successfully recruited new members for the Dragon Nation and they and their fellows fought fiercely the Renegades, whose number was greatly reduced. The message of the Golds was clear: it was only matter of time before another struggle against man, like the one who had happened during the age of Blackmoor, took place; it'd be better if Dragonkind was ready for it and

united, else the Dragons would have fallen again. Thus, Dragons preferred to retire in remote places, trying to have as few contacts as possible with the other races, and many went regularly to Windreach. They were unwilling to start a war on their own – a war they knew they could lose by now –, but wished to be ready to fight again, united.

This behaviour of the Dragons was also part of a scheme of the Great One. When the Gemstone Dragons had been defeated, more than three thousands years ago, they had been exiled in a faraway Outer Plane called Veydra, but they didn't abandon their plan of supremacy, now fueled by the wish for revenge. The Great One knew that they were gathering new strength and that they'd be back sooner or later, to try once again the conquest of Mystara. So the need to have the Dragons united was great, because only all together they'd have been able to defeat the Gemstone Dragons again. So, the Great One created and spread through omens sent to his clerics the so-called "Dragonking prophecy". Should the Gemstone Dragons have returned, the champions chosen by the Great One would have worn the *Collar of Dragons* and the *Dragonlord Arms* to lead the Dragons again, and to claim the unquestioned support of all Dragonkind. The Dragon that would have worn the *Collar* (the first time in history) would have been proclaimed the "Dragonking" and would have spawned a new age of greatness for Dragons<sup>(41)</sup>.

Draconic activity in the first five centuries after the crowning of the first Emperor of Thyatis was rather low, and this is confirmed by many historical sources and accounts. The only recorded Dragon of those years that put a serious threat to nearby peoples was the Red Dragon **Kardyer**, an ancient and powerful wyrm and a great sorcerer<sup>(42)</sup>. In his past, Kardyer had been sitting in the Parliament of Dragons, but around AC 0 he went mad, fleeing from Windreach and starting to defeat and subdue a series of young rogues and Renegade Dragons. Around AC 50, Kardyer settled in the ruins of the old dwarven city of Darmouk, in the Makkres mountains; with time, he gathered a terrible band of twentysix Dragons bound to him, and also a small army of Orcs and Goblins. From Darmouk he launched raids and attacks against the Alasiyan tribes of the south, the Dwarves of Rockhome and the Giant and human clans of the Northern Reaches. At the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century AC, Kardyer was the undisputed master of the Soderfjord region. He would have been killed by the hand of the hero Thelvyn Foxeyes in AC 510.

## The Overlord Threat

Unfortunately, the Gemstone Dragons issue was far worse than the Great One had expected. An alien and evil exalted-status being, known simply as the Overlord, came to Veydra and made it its new home. The Overlord's origins were unknown, but thanks to its great powers it began to enslave, conquer and exterminate the peoples of Veydra and then

<sup>(39)</sup> Both the Frelôn and the Yeshom are featured in *Monstrous Compendium: Savage Coast Appendix*, respectively on pages 35-37 and 123-124.

<sup>(40)</sup> Crimson Dragons are found in *Monstrous Compendium: Savage Coast Appendix*, pages 22-24.

<sup>(41)</sup> From *Dragonking of Mystara* novel: "I should point out that a collar is the draconic equivalent of a crown, although no dragon has ever worn it as such. There is a prophecy that someday the Dragonking will appear, a mystical figure who will lead his people into a new age of greatness, and he will be the first dragon to wear the collar." And from *Dragonmage of Mystara* novel: "We were aware from the first that the gemstone dragons had only retreated, and we suspected that they would withdraw for a time to gather new strength, then return. We had to be certain that the dragons would always be ready to face them. The wizards of Blackmoor created the Collar of the Dragons, and I created a prophecy so that, if the gemstone dragons did indeed return, my chosen hero could use the collar to claim the unquestioned support of all dragons..."

<sup>(42)</sup> From the *Dragonlord* Trilogy novels (set at the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century AC): "Darmouk had lain abandoned and forgotten for centuries. In recent years, it had been rediscovered by Kardyer, one of the largest and strongest red dragons in the world. He was also a sorcerer so skilled in magic that his abilities rivaled those of a gold. In his long life he had sat on the Parliament of Dragons. But five hundreds years ago, he had gone mad, defeating a series of young rogues and renegades one at a time and binding them to his will until a band of twenty-six dragons recognized him as their king. Moreover, he had gathered a small army of orcs and goblins to serve him, raiding westward into Rockhome, south into the Emirates and east into the Northern Reaches to enrich his treasures."

those of the neighbouring worlds. The Overlord, for reasons unknown, seemed unable to move from Veydra anymore; nevertheless, it possessed great mental powers which allowed him to easily take control of the subject peoples, thus enlarging his armies and using them to create a tyrannical empire founded on terror.

Many were the races and peoples which fell under the Overlord's mental sway. Among them there were the wandering Flaems, a group of Alpathian peoples fled from the Outer Plane of Old Alpathia thousands of years before, which had randomly stumbled into Veydra. The Gemstone Dragons, in spite of their great powers, were another of the races enslaved by the Overlord. However, thanks to their great magical and physical powers, the Overlord chose to make them the commanders of its armies, with the title of "Masters". Moreover, the Overlord took care to further augment and empower the abilities of the Gemstone Dragons, making them by far the most powerful of its servitors.

Now, the Overlord had heard news about Mystara from the Gemstone Dragons and coveted that planet because of the presence of great, natural magic sources and of the mysterious energy known as the Radiance. Thus, in AC 395 it sent through a magical gate the Flaems to Mystara with false memories about their coming place; they had the secret duty to garrison the Highlands (nowadays Glantri, the area where the Radiance had been first found) and try to study the Radiance; in the meanwhile, the Flaems would have passed to their master informations about the planet and would have readied the field for the full-scale invasion of Mystara.

The Overlord was shielded from Immortal magics by the protection that some entropic Immortals secretly gave him, so the only way some informations could be gathered about him was direct investigation on Veydra. The Great One charged with this duty the faithful Star Dragon and a squad of his Dragon Guardians. They went on Veydra and learned some informations about the Overlord. But when those Dragon Guardians came back to the Draconic Cluster to tell what they had discovered, no one suspected they were being controlled by the Overlord's mental powers. These Dragon Guardians then caught the Star Dragon by surprise and, aided by some Gemstone Dragons in disguise, they managed to defeat and kill the Star Dragon in its own plane, effectively destroying it<sup>(43)</sup>.

## The Disappearance of the Great One

After the destruction of the Star Dragon, happened some time after AC 400, concern about the Overlord among the Dragons of the Draconic Cluster was great. It was very likely – given its enslavement of the Gemstone Dragons – that the Overlord had some plan regarding Mystara. The Great One thought that an invasion coming from Veydra could be likely, but was unable to discover just how, when and why. Moreover, the mysterious powers the Overlord possessed on Veydra and the type of shielding it was provided by the entropic Immortals were also feared by the Great One, who was reluctant to go on that plane by himself. The best solution would have been to send a mortal on Veydra to investigate, but on the other hand a simple mortal being would have had no chance to survive an encounter with the Overlord or with its mental powers; perhaps a mortal at the end of his path toward Immortality could have managed to succeed, but it would have taken too much time to bring a mortal to that

point, while the Great One thought the Overlord's invasion was imminent. Besides, given the size of the Overlord's armies, if an invasion of Mystara was on its plans, the Dragons alone would have been unable to successfully oppose it; they would have needed the help of the other races.

The Great One long thought about a solution to the Overlord problem, and finally came to a drastic decision. For reasons unknown to the Moon and Sun Dragons, the Great One suspended fighting among Dragon Guardians aimed to seize the dead Star Dragon's position as Ruler of Lawful Dragons; simply, the Great One avoided to give the needed legitimacy to any Dragon which seemed to prevail one way or another. Then, he retired into the Hearth of his plane in the Draconic Cluster, effectively disappearing and communicating with his followers only by omens and dreams.

The withdrawal of the Great One from direct contact with Lesser Dragon Rulers and Dragon Guardians caused great concern. The plane of the Star Dragon was in turmoil, as the lawful Dragon Guardians fought among themselves without hope that any one of them would prevail. On the Prime Plane, the Great One's priests felt their powers decrease and their authority among other Dragons lessen. A manifestation of the Great One, which usually showed up once every decade in Windreach, ceased to appear.

While the Great One sent to his priests omens about his return in the future, rumors about the destruction of the Greater Dragon Ruler started to spread among Dragons. Of course, these rumors fueled many Dragons' wish for independence and mastery over lesser races. Following the Great One's disappearance, many Dragons broke the laws of the Dragon Nation and escaped the binding rules set by the Gold Dragons regarding relationships with other races. Thus, the 5<sup>th</sup> century AC was again a time of renewed draconic activity in the Known World, and some races which had thought the Dragons had been a dying race in the past five centuries had to rethink about that. The number of Renegades grew, as the frequency of Dragon attacks against neighbouring peoples did. For the first time in thousands years, some Dragons felt free to choose their place over the lesser races, without the restraints put by the Gold Dragons' laws. Another faction instead, led by the Gold Dragon priests of the Great One but also including many of the wiser Dragons (Reds and Blacks in particular), stayed faithful to the omens of the Great One, hoping for their patron's timely return.

The reasons behind the apparent senseless behaviour of the Great One were linked to his plan to oppose the Overlord. Only a mortal could bypass the entropic protections against Immortal magic of whom the Overlord enjoyed; only a mortal at the end of his path toward Immortality could have had a chance to survive a battle against the Overlord; only someone who had enough authority and power could unite the Dragons and the other races in the joint defense of Mystara against the Overlord's invasion. Thus, the Great One decided to put his hopes to defend Mystara on a mortal, one which would wear both the *Dragonlord Arms* and the *Collar of Dragons* and be hailed as Dragonlord and Dragonking, one who could therefore unite the Dragons and the other races, one who could embark on the path of Immortality and try to fight and defeat the Overlord. But time was short. Then, with the consent of other Immortals interested in opposing the Overlord's threat to their favourite Prime Plane world, the

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<sup>(43)</sup> The death of the Star Dragon has been devised to "make room" for the ascension of Thelvyn as Immortal Diamond; the Dragonlord Trilogy novels, in fact, seem to ignore the whole issue regarding the presence of the three Lesser Rulers (the Star, Sun, and Moon Dragons) among Dragons.

Great One decided that some of his personal power had to be poured in the birth of a spawn of him which, thanks to being the son of the Greater Ruler of dragonkind, could swiftly complete his path toward Immortality<sup>(44)</sup>.

Eventually, around AC 480, the Great One chose to mate with Arbendael, one of his Gold Dragon priestess, to generate a son in which he poured a part of his very essence. The sudden loss of power caused the Great One to withdraw completely from contacts with his followers, further fueling the rumors about his destruction. Thelvaenir, the son had by Arbendael, was born in the Shadowmere shrine in the Foxwoods (southern Wendar) among the Gold Dragons and then, before he grew too much, they had him assume Eldar form and sent him to be raised by human peasants of the Wendarian Ranges. Among them, the boy became known as Thelvyn Foxeyes and was thought to be one of the half-elves of Genalleth<sup>(45)</sup>.

## The Time of the Second Dragonlord

After about twenty years since the Great One's disappearance and alleged destruction, the Dragons were in turmoil. Within the Parliament of Dragons, with the Gold Dragons and their authority in disarray, the expansionist party prevailed and many Dragons began to assemble in southern Norwold from the Wurmsteeth Range in order to launch an attack on the Known World, with the goal to conquer the human realms.

As the first Dragon attacks hit Suthwold (nowadays Heldannic Territories) and the Highlands, Thelvyn discovered that he was the one who'd have fulfilled the Dragonking prophecy. Together with some adventuring fellows and a Gold Dragon of the moderate party, Khaerendaen, in AC 504 Thelvyn embarked in a long trek across Brun and reached Dragonwatch Keep, where the *Dragonlord Arms* were stored since thousands of years ago. After having worn and mastered them, one year later he came back to the Flaem Highlands, which were about to be invaded by a large host of Dragons. He fought against the leader of the invading Dragons and, thanks to the powers of the *Dragonlord Arms*, managed to defeat him easily. The draconic army disbanded and the Dragons, out of sheer fear for the powers of the Dragonlord, decided to sign a durable truce with the humans, withdrawing again into the Wurmsteeth Range. Thelvyn was hailed as the Highlands' saviour by the Flaem, recognized as the Dragonlord and the likely subject of the Great One's old prophecy<sup>(46)</sup>.

Five years later, in AC 510, the *Collar of Dragons* was suddenly stolen from the vaults of Windreach. Thelvyn didn't know that Byen Kalestraan, the Master of the Flaemish Fire Mages, was behind the theft and that he had been acting under the mental domination of the Overlord itself. The

Dragons were furious because of the theft and thought it was the new Dragonlord himself who, in order to further weaken the Dragons and the destroy them all, has stolen the *Collar*. The Dragons were already readying for war and began to assemble a huge army in the Wendarian Ranges. Thelvyn offered to go searching for the artifact in order to calm the Dragons, but his researches – which led him also to fight and kill the feared Dragon Kardyer – were vain. As the war seemed inevitable, the King of the Highlands, Jherridan Maarsten, called back Thelvyn to put him in command of the Flaemish forces; Thelvyn tried to gather as many allies from neighbouring countries as he could, and Darokinian, Thyatian, Ethengarian reinforcements came to Braejr, along with dwarven soldiers from Rockhome and elven ones from Alfheim. Soon after, King Jherridan was murdered by Byen Kalestraan himself, and Thelvyn was made temporarily regent of the Highlands.

The Dragons and the allied forces met around Braejr in a long battle-siege which is remembered as the Battle of Six Kings in AC 511<sup>(47)</sup>. After the fightings had been raging for days around the city walls, a Dragon stopped the battle to reveal that Thelvyn was in truth Thelvaenir of the Foxwoods, son of a Gold Dragon priestess of the Great One and now under the look of one of the ancient Eldars. The other Dragons were startled by this revelation – as was Thelvyn himself – and the Dragon which had uttered it invited him to go in Shadowmere, the place where he was born, to have confirmation of this truth. While the allied army gathered for the defense of Braejr disbanded after hearing the truth about Thelvyn, the hero went to Shadowmere, where, at the end of a strange dream, he transformed into a Gold Dragon. The other Dragons present tried to kill him, but suddenly an avatar of the Great One appeared, stopping them from killing Thelvaenir and from going on with the war against humans, because Thelvaenir was the one destined to fulfill the Dragonking prophecy, to recover the *Collar of Dragons* and to wear it in order to become the first Dragonking<sup>(48)</sup>.

## The Coming of the Dragonking

After his abdication of the Highlands' government in capable hands in AC 512, Thelvaenir, always followed by Khaerendaen, decided to continue the search for the *Collar of Dragons*. They discovered that someone or something was controlling the author of the theft and, on his traces, entered a gate that led them to the Outer Plane of Veydra. Searching the plane, they learned of the Overlord, of the slavery of the Flaems and of the Gemstone Dragons; Thelvaenir also managed to finally find the *Collar* in one of the Overlord's strongholds, and to bring it back to Mystara.

Back home, the Great One appeared to Thelvaenir and revealed him all the truth about his birth, the Great One being his father, and that his birth had been planned as the only hope to defeat the Overlord. By wearing the *Collar of Dragons*,

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<sup>(44)</sup> From *Dragonmage of Mystara* novel (from a speech of the Great One to Thelvyn): “We had always anticipated that when the time came, both a Dragonking and the new Dragonlord would be chosen, but unforeseen problems necessitated that you should both Dragonking and Dragonlord... You possess nearly immortal powers: those that you have inherited from me, the most powerful enchantments of ancient Blackmoor and the authority of the Dragonking.”

<sup>(45)</sup> This is the background of the first novel of the Dragonlord Trilogy, *Dragonlord of Mystara*. Actual dating for the beginning of the events featured in the novels is arguable, even if most agree they should be placed somewhere between AC 495 and AC 505. Following LoZompatore's dating theory, I placed the beginning of the first novel in AC 504.

<sup>(46)</sup> This is where *Dragonlord of Mystara* ends, the year after the beginning of its story, in AC 505 here. The second novel of the trilogy, *Dragonking of Mystara*, begins five years later, thus in AC 510.

<sup>(47)</sup> While the battle itself is featured in the *Dragonking of Mystara* novel, the name “Battle of the Six Kings” is taken from adventure *CM8 – The Endless Stair*, page 23. The “six kings” of ballads about that battle would be the six high leaders of the allied army (a Flaem, a Thyatian, a Darokinian, an Alfheimer, an Ethengarian, and one from Rockhome) fighting the Dragons around Braejr.

<sup>(48)</sup> *Dragonking of Mystara* ends here; it's AC 511. The last novel, *Dragonmage of Mystara*, begins immediately after the end of the second novel.

Thelvaenir should have become the first Dragonking and lead the defense of Mystara against the Overlord's armies.

As soon as Thelvaenir had recovered the artifact from Veydra, the Gemstone Dragons were commanded by the Overlord to accelerate the time for invasion. Already they had attacked without being detected many countries (Alphatia, Thyatis, Rockhome and Ethengar among others). Now they sent two large vanguards – formed by various races of creatures enslaved by the Overlord – to invade Mystara through two magical gates.

The Dragonking managed to convince the Dragons to join the humans and other races in the war against the Overlord and the Gemstone Dragons. The Parliament of Dragons was summoned and this time, out of the danger, many Dragons answered, even some of the Renegade ones: almost all Mystara's Dragons were going to war against the Gemstones. From Wyrksteeth the two largest armies of Dragons ever seen since the first War of the Dragonlord flew to help the dwarven army in Rockhome and the allied humans' one in the Highlands. While the army attacking Rockhome was defeated, the other one was only halted at Braastar because the Flaems, under the mental control of the Overlord, betrayed the allies. Looking forward to free the Flaems from the Overlord's mental sway, Thelvaenir created four magical stones which, using the energy of the Radiance, could shield the Flaems' minds.

Then, while other reinforcements were coming from neighbouring allied countries to aid the Flaems in the Highlands, Thelvaenir decided to go on Veydra and face the Overlord himself. Unfortunately for him, the creature was far more powerful than he had thought, and, after having been captured and tortured, he barely managed to escape by chance with his life.

Meanwhile, the Gemstone Dragons had succeeded in bringing through a gate in the Adri Varma's plateau the huge army of the Overlord – perhaps even two millions in number –, which started to march toward the Highlands. The Dragons of Wyrksteeth faced the army in a huge battle on the Adri Varma's lands, trying to bring down the Gemstone Dragons in order to leave the Overlord's army without leaders. The advance of the army was halted, but the Gemstone Dragons which were still alive used all their magical might to summon the physical form of the Overlord on Mystara. There the Overlord – a strange, alien creature with a crystal-line structure – finally appeared.

Aware of the danger, the Great One decided it was time to give Thelvaenir the powers he was born to bear, and summoned him in Dragonwatch Keep in front of a council formed by himself, and the Immortals Ilsundal, Terra and Kagyar. There, having completed his swift path toward Immortality, the Great One elevated Thelvaenir to the rank of Star Dragon, with the name of Diamond, and explained him his new powers. The consent of these Immortals (which were Hierarchs themselves or acting in their place) was needed because Thelvaenir was going to use Immortal powers in the Prime Plane – something Immortal law had always forbidden. With all the powers of his new Immortal form, Diamond then went to face the Overlord itself on the Adri Varma's plateau, and in a huge, final battle ultimately destroyed the evil creature<sup>(49)</sup>.

## The Return of the Gemstone Dragons

The death of the Overlord freed all the races it had enslaved from its mental dominance. Many of the soldiers and beings the Overlord had enlisted in its armies and sent to conquer Mystara were beast-like monsters, which had to be hunted down, while some others were intelligente races. The former were exterminated by the Dragons and their human allies as far as possible (even if many of them managed to flee in the wilderness), the latter were helped to return in their original worlds or to settle among Mystara's inhabitants<sup>(50)</sup>.

The Flaems were one of the races that did stay on Mystara, continuing to occupy the Highlands. Another race without a home were the Gemstone Dragons. Their number reduced and their dream of supremacy cancelled by the wicked treachery they had been subjected, they agreed to settle peacefully among Mystara's Dragons. The Gemstone races tried to settle among the Dragon races which were more similar to them – for example, Crystal Dragons settled among White Dragons, and so on – because they shared some traits, like a favoured environment and the same breath weapon. The leaders of Mystara's Dragons, however, feared the day in which the Gemstones could unite again and pose a threat to the Dragons of Mystara, so they demanded that the Gemstones spread among the Outer and Hollow World lands, never allowing too many of them to stay together.

In the following centuries, the Gemstone Dragons would integrate within the draconic society of Mystara, trying not to trespass the rules set by the Parliament of Dragons in order to draw not the suspicion they were coveting additional power. Moreover, their great powers, because of intermingling with other Dragon species, somewhat lessened and the fear of them slowly disappeared among Mystara's Dragons.

## Peace and Disunion

The Dragons' victory over the Overlord in AC 513 was the eve of some decades of peace between Dragons and other races, which had fought and had died together in the defense of their world. The memory of the deeds of Thelvaenir, now the Immortal Diamond – a figure that had been a hero both for men and Dragons – held together the races for some time, which was put to use to rebuild what had been destroyed during the past wars. It was a time of solidarity and mutual help. But it wasn't destined to last too long.

The memory of Thelvaenir was alive mostly in the Dragons which had fought for him. Many Dragons had died during the recent wars, and most of those Dragons that had born after them couldn't see any need to cooperate with humans; while only few of those who had been Renegades before the war redeemed.

Moreover, the way Thelvaenir had become the Star Dragon also displeased some of the more older and traditionalist Dragons. He had risen swiftly to Immortality thanks to the direct help of the Great One and the consent of other Immortals, without carrying out the Cerimony of Sublimation and without fighting other Dragon Guardians for the conquest of the charge or Ruler of Lawful Dragons. It was rather obvious that the Great One had acted in the best interests of Dragonkind, and that Thelvaenir had been clearly the most powerful of them all (also thanks to his artifacts), but at least, the whole thing had been unusual, to the point that now an

<sup>(49)</sup> *Dragonmage of Mystara* ends here with the Overlord's defeat, in AC 513. Note that here Immortal Diamond's background from *Wrath of the Immortals boxed set, Book I: Codex of the Immortals*, page 18, has been discarded in favor of Diamond's background as Thelvyn, as told in the novels of the Dragonlord Trilogy.

<sup>(50)</sup> *Dragonmage of Mystara* features an "aftermath" last chapter, which is set some years after the end of the novel, and which tells how the Known World is slowly recovering from the dramatic events of the Overlord's invasion. The events briefly summed up here are taken from that chapter.

Immortal – and not a former Dragon Guardian – was occupying the Star Dragon charge.

In the eyes of many Dragons, Thelvaenir's ascension mirrored that of the Great One – both had become Immortals, seizing the rulership over Dragonkind, and their rise – in defiance of draconic traditions – had been nevertheless justified with emergence and need. Some of the most traditionalist among the Renegades spoke openly of Diamond as a Maverick, and while they still respected the Great One because he had saved the Dragon race thousands of years ago, they were worried by his choice to rise an Immortal to the role of Lesser Ruler of Lawful Dragons.

Thus, within some decades the old alliances formed during the war against the Overlord loosened, and after a century from the ascension of Diamond the Dragons were again fighting among themselves and many of them again regarded humans as a lesser race to be dominated. With time, the Dragon Nation's influence among Dragons slowly decreased, as did the number of Dragons answering the summons of the Parliament of Dragons.

On his part, Diamond did his best to preserve unity at least among lawful Dragons, furthering the goal of Gold Dragons to impose respect and peace between Dragons and other races. Unfortunately, the deeds of many other Dragons which only showed token respect for the Dragon Nation's laws contributed to recreate the image the Dragons had always shared among other races in the past: that of fierce, greedy and terrible beasts of great power, which coveted treasures and laid waste to whole regions when angered. Beasts, indeed, to be slain by those humans, dwarves or the like who in turn coveted their riches. As centuries passed, the Dragon Nation lost its primacy among Dragonkind, and as new generations of Dragons arose, the Parliament of Dragons came to be seen only as an yearly (or so) gathering of Dragons where informations from all over Mystara were shared but where few things were decided, and whose attendance was more a matter of curiosity and draconic etiquette.

The Great One, on the other hand, thought the Dragon Nation had fulfilled the foremost goal for which it had been created and enforced, that is defending Mystara's Dragons against the Gemstone Dragons and the Overlord. The Great One's appearances at the gatherings of the Parliament of Dragons began to be less frequent, and many more times it was Diamond who appeared above it. Nevertheless, the Great Dragon continued to give some support to the idea of a draconic unity, because, should a new threat for Dragons arise, the Nation would have been useful again.

## The Rise of Dragon-Immortals

In the following decades, opposition to the current draconic order increased among Renegades. Those traditionalists weren't willing to see Dragonkind ruled by Mavericks, and certainly weren't willing to see the Dragon Rulers slowly replaced by Immortals, had they been Dragons or not during their mortal life. They didn't trust the Great One anymore,

whose goal – according to them – was to enslave Dragons to the Sphere of Matter. To them, the Great One was a Maverick because he had served the Sphere of Matter, as was his puppet Diamond – and both were usurpers because they had seized through guile (i.e. rise to Immortality) what true Dragons should have gained through the Ceremony of Sublimation and a battle against the current Ruler. To the Renegades, ascension to Immortality was a totally unnatural way to acquire Rulership over Dragonkind. While these beliefs spread among Renegades, the fundamentalists came to represent the fiercest opposition to the Great One's (and to Diamond's) draconic order. Even the Moon and the Sun Dragon were puzzled about the ascension of Diamond, and about the Great One's true aims.

The Great One, on the other hand, began to see the advantages of sponsoring Immortal candidates to the Lesser Rulership of Dragons. First of all, he had control over the choice of who to raise to the charges of Lesser Rulers (whereas, according to draconic tradition, one of the older and most powerful among Dragon Guardians of the same alignment took the place of the Lesser Ruler after the latter's demise, if he managed to defeat other candidates; or whoever defeated in combat the Lesser Ruler became Lesser Ruler himself); second, the candidates would have been utterly loyal to him, and to the Sphere of Matter to which he belonged. Raising to Immortality prospecting candidates to Dragon Rulership which the Great One favored would have been a way for him to reestablish a solid order and a strict hierarchy within draconic society, and to improve his control over it. Moreover, having Dragon-Immortals as Lesser Rulers improved stability of the whole draconic order – it'd have been very difficult for a Dragon Guardian to defeat an Immortal and take his place as Ruler.

Thus, little more than a century after the Time of the Second Dragonlord, it was the death of the Sun Dragon – perhaps destroyed by rogue mortal adventurers or vengeful Immortals – that offered the Great One the chance to impose another Dragon-Immortal as Ruler of Neutral Dragons. This time it was Opal, a powerful Davanian Jade Dragon of the northern jungles who had completed the Path to Immortality under the sponsorship of the Great One around AC 650. As thousands of neutral Guardian Dragons were fighting since months in the presence of the Great One for the Sun Dragon charge in the caves of the Maze, the plane of the Lesser Ruler of Neutral Dragons<sup>(51)</sup>, the Immortal Opal showed up and prevailed over other candidates, becoming the Sun Dragon. She was the first Gemstone Dragon to attain Dragon Ruler status, and also the first Gemstone Dragon Immortal.

Some centuries later instead, around AC 850, the Great One sponsored to Immortality in the Sphere of Matter Pearl, a fierce and cruel female Red Dragon of Skothar. The Great One knew that Pearl was ambitious as only a Dragon can be, and that once she had become an Immortal, she'd have immediately challenged the Moon Dragon – which she did, defeating him and claiming the Lesser Rulership of Chaotic Dragons<sup>(52)</sup>.

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<sup>(51)</sup> See *The Mightiest of Dragons*, in *Dragon Magazine* #158: "From what has been seen and heard following the alleged death of the Sun Dragon several centuries ago, it is said that thousands of neutral dragons fought in the presence of the Great One for Opal's position. Supposedly these battles lasted for an entire year, but they were subduing battles, so that no candidate was killed. It is true that the sightings of neutral dragons were decreased that year, but this could well be luck or coincidence. After this time, sages believe a new Sun Dragon was chosen, though nothing is known about how the winner of the contests was given the power of his predecessor."

For Opal's history as a mortal Dragon, see *Wrath of the Immortals, Book I: Codex of the Immortals*, page 30. Here I've tried to concile the two stories, having a just-risen to Immortality Opal intervene in the struggle that was going on among neutral Dragon Guardians to occupy the deceased Sun Dragon's charge. In the passage from Ziets' article cited above, references to Opal must be intended as references to the Sun Dragon (a generic Lesser Ruler preceding the rise of Opal).

<sup>(52)</sup> This is the mortal life of Immortal Pearl as told in *Wrath of the Immortals boxed set, Book I: Codex of the Immortals*, page 32. Here has only been added her struggle against the former Moon Dragon and the latter's defeat – which must be conceived in order to have her rise to that charge.

Obviously, the presence of a cadre of four Immortals on the seats of Dragon Rulership spurred even more the Renegades' distaste for the current situation, and hate for the Great One's management. The Great One, always true to his neutral nature, was more than content to have such a proud opposition to uphold "old" draconic traditions, but still felt that the Dragons' alliance with the Sphere of Matter and the presence of Immortals as Dragon Rulers suited better the need to defend their race and support its interests in a Multiverse nearly dominated by Immortals.

Today, along with Diamond, Opal and Pearl flank the Great One as Dragon Rulers. Diamond, the oldest of them, is the most powerful, but recently lost much of his prestige when he was defeated by a human dracologist (see below) – thus being obliged to leave the Star Dragon charge. Opal is content of her position, while Pearl, as ambitious as ever, is trying to gather much more power in order to attempt to challenge the Great One himself and take his place as Greater Ruler of Dragonkind. Currently, the Great One's prestige, deeds, authority, and charisma have preserved unity in the Draconic Cluster and prevented a real schism; even those Renegades who reach Dragon Guardian status through the Ceremony of Sublimation keep a low profile and serve the Dragon-Immortals – but should the Great One disappear, or be destroyed, what would happen? Would the struggle between Renegades and loyalist extend to the Draconic Cluster, with supporters of the "old ways" waging war against the three "unnatural" Lesser Rulers?

## The Secret Craft of Dracology

Dracology is one of the seven arcane Secret Crafts practiced by the wizards of Glantri. The development of this craft has had a great influence on the recent history of Dragonkind, so it's useful to sum up its history here<sup>(53)</sup>.

When the Flaems arrived in the Highlands and settled the region in AC 395, they discovered the existence of Dragons living in the mountains, and were awed by the power of Red and Gold Dragons, who were able to breath fire more powerful than the Flaems' own fiery spells. The Flaemish wizards started creating a collection of magic spells and arcane rituals with the purpose of imitating the powers of those Dragons, protecting themselves from their attacks and controlling them for their own purposes. In time, this became the basis of the body of knowledge of Dracology.

## The Dragonwars

During the following century, the Flaems and the Dragons waged a cold war and competed over the Radiance. The Dragons had already discovered Radiance when the Flaems arrived, but they refrained from using it, for they feared its corrupting power, after one of them, a particularly power-hungry Green, had been transformed into a horrible undead creature. The Flaems, on the other hand, had been sent on Mystara by the Overlord to watch over the Radiance itself and study it, and were also drawn to it by their innate attraction for magic. They quickly gathered many clues about the mysterious energy, which led them to believe that the Dragons owned the key of the great magical power. Therefore, they tried to capture as many Dragons as possible, to exact from them the prized knowledge. The Dragons feared and hated this type of magical researches, because the spells

which it led to discover leached the power of the Dragon Souls from the Draconic Cluster, thus weakening as well Dragonkind as a whole; moreover, it seemed that Dragons had no way to resist many of the powers of those dracologists.

It was the beginning of a half-century of skirmishes known as the Dragonwars. The war was always fought by Dragons through mercenaries, especially humanoids, or through intrigue, espionage, and assassination. More than once, draconic emissaries were able to persuade greedy Khans of Ethengar to raid the Flaemish territory. The Flaems responded with Dragon-hunts, which were costly in terms of men and money, and rarely ended with the capture of a Dragon. In the end, some Dragons were killed, and so were many of the top Flaemish wizards.

The Dragonwars culminated during the Time of the Second Dragonlord. During the wars of the Flaems against the Dragons first, and then against the Overlord, the hate between the Dragons and the Flaems reached its climax. While the Dragons continued to hate and despise with all their strength Flaemish Dracology, the deeds of Thelvyn forced them to make peace with the Flaems also; instead of continuing to oppose the development of the craft, they simply retreated to the unreachable mountains of the Kurish Massif and of the Wendarian Ranges. This happened also because many younger Dragons were not aware of the Radiance, and the older ones had noticed that the Flaems were not able to advance much in their researches. Thus, after the ascension of Diamond, the Dragons decided to leave the humans to their devices, and to send only a few spies to report on the Flaems' magical progresses, and eventually to murder those wizards who went too far.

## The Craft Spreads

During the 6<sup>th</sup> century AC, Dracology was formalized as a Secret Craft among the Flaems, and there were many High Masters, though few lasted long, either murdered by Dragons or killed in a duel by one of their own ambitious Dragon Masters. In the end, in AC 631, the ducal family of the Van Agts prevailed, establishing a line of High Masters destined to last for a hundred and fifty years.

When the Thyatians and other settlers arrived in the Highlands around AC 730, the Van Agts shared their knowledge of the craft with some Hattian wizards. The Dragons, worried by the possibility that the knowledge of Dracology would spread too much, persuaded the more racist Flaems, particularly the Flaemish wizards belonging to the Order of the Flame, that Dracology had been tainted by the sharing of knowledge with the Hattians, and so it was no longer worthy of much academic attention. The Dragons had also led the Flaems to believe that Dracology had always been an inferior form of magic, because it was not based on the purest strength of elemental fire, and that it was polluted by the passage through an intermediate race, the Dragons, who were clearly inferior to the mighty Flaems. The Dragons heavily used their polymorph abilities and mind-controlling spells to carefully spread these ideas, and they found a good ear among the racist Flaems. Due to this subtle influence, the Flaem wizards were deterred from pursuing the study of Dracology, and focused their study on Fire Elementalism alone. The sudden hostility which broke out between Hattians and Flaems con-

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<sup>(53)</sup> The history of Dracology is mostly borrowed from the article *The Secret Craft of Dracology* by G. Agosta, which was hosted on the Glantri Personnel Division website, now gone. I've only tried to integrate that article with the background of the Dragonlord Trilogy novels, and added the last part about the defeat of Diamond by the hand of Jaggar von Drachenfels.

tributed to the success of the ultimate plan of the Dragons. The Hattian Drachenfels line, however, improved its knowledge and shared it with Alphatian wizards and Erewan Elves for common defense against the Flaems in the ensuing wars.

## The Von Drachenfels

The von Drachenfels remained in control of the Secret Craft of Dracology until the death of Prince Friedrich von Drachenfels in AC 886, whose heirs had no magical aptitude. A few years later, an ambitious Dracologist from Klantyre, Lord Conan McDougall, Count of Glenargyll, achieved High Mastery of Dragons. High Master Conan was a Red Dragon Master, and had discovered the possibility to attaining the Rulership of Dragons belonging to one alignment through the most powerful Dracology powers. Unable to see the risks of such an endeavor, Lord Conan transformed into the Moon Dragon, but was immediately discovered and challenged by the true Lesser Ruler of chaotic Dragons, Pearl. Conan was a formidable wizard, but he was not strong enough to defeat the Immortal Dragon, who destroyed him.

The news of High Master's death by a powerful draconic creature from the Outer Planes spread like fire among the Secret Craft. The dracologists of the higher circles became fearful of achieving too much power and attracting the attention of extraplanar beings, and for a time no dracologist claimed the High Mastery of the craft. The next High Master of Dracology was the greatest Aalbanese wizard of all time, Herr Johann von Drachenfels, who claimed High Mastery of Dracology in AC 928. From his time on, the von Drachenfels have always kept the High Mastery in their hands.

## Jagggar Defeats Diamond

In AC 999, the current High Master of Dracology, the Prince of Aalban, Jagggar von Drachenfels, decided again to test the highest powers of Dracology to see if they could grant him Immortality. He transformed into the Star Dragon and was immediately challenged by Diamond. For the surprise of other Lesser Rulers, however, the clever Glantrian wizard was able to defeat the former Thelvaenir and became the Star Dragon himself. Jagggar discovered also the truth behind his power: Dracology only allowed the High Master to attain Rulership over Dragons, not Immortality itself. Therefore, remembering the fate of Lord McDougall and fearing the consequences that his ambitions could have both on him, and on the draconic order, he withdrew his claim on the Rulership of all lawful Dragons, in exchange for which he earned the Great One's absolution<sup>(54)</sup>.

The truth is that Diamond willingly lost the battle against Jagggar; he saw great potential in the Aalbanese Prince, and wanted to let him understand what the consequence of his victory would have been. For the same reason, keeping Jagggar as the head of the Secret Craft is a benefit in the eyes of Diamond – as long as he's the High Master, no one else will try to challenge again the draconic order. Otherwise, who knows what could happen? Perhaps even a new great war

between humans and Dragons, and the coming of a new Dragonlord...<sup>(55)</sup>

Jagggar now refrains from abusing Dracology in order to spare the Dragon Souls. He presently works on a project to reform the Secret Craft of Dracology to further goodwill toward Dragonkind rather than the misuse of draconic power. Because of this, lawful Dragons have become more respectful of the High Master and his disciples. The same does not hold true for chaotic Dragons, and as a result of the reform proposal there is great dissension among the three aligned branches of Dracology.

On the Draconic Cluster, lawful Guardian Dragons are presently competing to become the new Star Dragon, under the Great One's watchful eye. Immortals of various spheres are following the developments in this affair with interest. Diamond, which was defeated but not killed by Jagggar, is still an Immortal but he's not the Star Dragon anymore; he returned to the role of a Dragon Guardian, and now spends his time in the Palace, awaiting for the new Lesser Ruler but now devoid of any ambition, wishing only to spend his time with his beloved Kharendaeen.

## A Draconic Timeline

**Beginning of time:** Dragons, along with Draedens, are among the first advanced races of the Multiverse.

**Billions of years ago:** Dragons stay neutral during the war between Draedens and Immortals for the dominion of the Multiverse. After the Immortals' victory, they retreat into the Draconic Cluster.

**Several tenths of millions of years ago:** Dragons begin their metempsychosis cycle, reincarnating in mortal reptilian creatures of the Prime Plane.

**Several millions years ago:** On the Prime Plane, the advanced Ancestral Dragon species able to use magic and breath weapon is born. Dragons discover the Cerimony of Sublimation.

**Five millions years ago:** "Modern" chromatic, Sea and Red Hawk Dragon species begin to evolve from the Ancestral Dragon race.

**Two millions years ago:** The Eldar civilization flourishes on Mystara. Then, a magical upheaval hits their whole race. Most of them are transformed into the elven race, while the most powerful wizards into Ancestral Dragons.

Influx of Eldar blood in the Dragon race during the following thousands years spawns the Gold Dragon breed.

**BC 5,500:** The Red Dragon Yealaletherveri dies in the final battle near the North Pole against Iscranin, the great anel-

<sup>(54)</sup> The defeat of Diamond by the hand of Jagggar comes from the article *From Hatchling to Dragon Guardian*, in 'Dragon Magazine' #170.

<sup>(55)</sup> This part about the willing defeat of Diamond had to be included because it'd have been unconceivable to have a mortal – it doesn't matter how powerful – defeating an Immortal. In Heard's article the defeat of the Star Dragon by Jagggar was believable, but since the printing of *Wrath of the Immortals boxed set* the three Lesser Rulers are also three Immortals belonging to the Sphere of Matter, so the whole story becomes too much unusual.

Quoting an idea by M. Dalmonte, it's even possible that Diamond has lost the duel with Jagggar to purposely revert to Dragon Guardian status; that would be his first stage to become again a mortal Dragon, something he'd want to do to earn again the Star Dragon position, this time using the Cerimony of Sublimation. If he succeeds, he'll be the first Dragon Ruler to reunite both ways (ascension through the draconic Cerimony and ascension through Immortal Paths), and in fact Diamond's cosmic destiny could well be that to reunite the two draconic factions (the Renegades and those faithful to the Great One). If this is the case, perhaps he could have even inspired by the Draedens or by the Old Ones themselves.

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**BC 3,500:** Some Dragons try to use magic to reach a higher form, but they are unsuccessful; they become the Gemstone Dragons.

**BC 3,200:** War of the Dragonlord between Dragons and Blackmoor. Blackmoor wizards forge the *Dragonlord Arms*; Aryan Bejnok becomes the first Dragonlord. Dragons are decimated. The Ancestral Dragon Raakthyr is sponsored by Terra to become the Great One; he defeats the Dragonlord and then allies with Blackmoor against the Gemstone Dragons. The Gemstones are banished to Veydra. Peace between Blackmoor and the Dragons: the *Dragonlord Arms* are returned to Dragonwatch Keep, and Blackmoor gifts the Dragons with the *Collar of Dragons*.

**BC 3,000:** The Great Rain of Fire; Blackmoor destroyed, the planet shifts its axis. Many Dragons die because of its consequences. Gold Dragons occupy Dragonwatch Keep to watch over the *Dragonlord Arms*.

After some time, by the will of the Great One and of the Gold Dragons, the Dragon Nation is born. Some Dragons prefer to stay out of it, and become the Renegades.

The Ancestral Dragon breed becomes almost extinct.

**BC 2,800:** The city of Windreach is built in the Wyrksteeth Range.

**BC 1,711:** The female Blue Dragon Belthinferelth is tricked by the shamans of Akkila Khan. The Battle of Many Days is fought.

**BC 1,200:** Human civilization in Oceania destroyed by Night Dragons. Survivors flee to nearby Cestia.

**BC 1,000:** The Moon Dragon is deprived of its charge by the Great One.

**BC 750:** The great Red Dragon Gorkalk is killed by the elven hero Galannor Nightflame in Alfheim.

**BC 500:** The Araneas of Herath cast the *spell of forgetting* on the Wallaras. Dragons, bent on avenging the Chamaleon Men, nearly destroy Herath.

The Great One unleashes the Red Curse upon the Savage Coast. Birth of the Crimson Dragons.

**BC 205:** The Red Dragon Calor the Great is killed by the human hero Balthac.

**AC 0:** Crowning of the first Emperor of Thyatis.  
The Great One spreads the Dragonking prophecy.

**AC 395:** The Flaems are sent on Mystara by the Overlord; they reach the Highlands via a magical gate from Veydra.

**AC 420:** The Star Dragon is destroyed by an ambush of Gemstone Dragons and Dragon Guardians mentally dominated by the Overlord.

**AC 440:** Beginning of the Dragonwars between the Dragons and the Flaems.

**AC 485:** Thelvyn Foxeyes is born, son of the female Gold Dragon Arbendael and of the Great One itself. The Great One disappears.

**AC 505:** Thelvyn Foxeyes takes the *Dragonlord Arms* from Dragonwatch Keep and becomes the second Dragonlord. He successfully defends the Highlands from a group of Renegade Dragons.

**AC 510:** The *Collar of Dragons* is stolen from Windreach; Dragons threaten to wage war against the Known World. Thelvyn begins a fruitless search of the artifact. The mad Renegade Red Dragon Kardyer is killed by Thelvyn.

**AC 511:** The Dragons attack the Highlands. Battle of the Six Kings between the Dragons and the humans' allied armies around Braejr. The war ends when Thelvyn is revealed to be a Gold Dragon, Thelvaenir of the Foxwoods, and confirmed subject of the Dragonking prophecy by an apparition of the Great One itself.

**AC 513:** Thelvaenir finds the *Collar of Dragons* on Veydra; he becomes the Dragonking. The Dragons ally with the peoples of the Known World to fight back the Overlord and its armies, commanded by the Gemstone Dragons. Eventually Thelvaenir becomes Immortal Diamond, and defeats the Overlord once and for all. The Gemstone Dragons return to Mystara.

Thelvaenir returns the *Dragonlord Arms* and the *Collar of Dragons* to Dragonwatch Keep and the vaults of Windreach, respectively.

**AC 550:** Dracology is formalized as a Secret Craft by the Flaem wizards.

**AC 631:** The Flaem family of the van Agts manages to seize High Mastery of Dracology.

**AC 650:** The Sun Dragon is destroyed. The former female Jade Dragon Opal rises to Immortality under the sponsorship of the Great One and takes its place.

**AC 730:** Knowledge of Dracology passes from the van Agts to the Hattians, Elves and Alphatians.

**AC 850:** The female Red Dragon Pearl, sponsored to Immortality by the Great One, successfully challenges the Moon Dragon and takes its place.

**AC 928:** The von Drachenfels family claims High Mastery of Dracology.

**AC 999:** Jaggar von Drachenfels defeats Diamond and becomes the Star Dragon. However, he prefers to resign the charge and is offered absolution by the Great One.

**AC 1,000:** The present. All the D&D® GAZETTER modules are set in this time.

# APPENDIX: DEFINING DRAGONS

Legends and folk tales regarding Dragons abound in most human and demihuman cultures; there, Dragons are often portrayed as very old race of huge, winged lizards breathing fire, acid or other type of energies, and with a particular taste (some would say greed) for treasures and magic items. Sometimes Dragons appear in tales as long limbless serpents, sometime they can't fly; some types of Dragons are told to live in underground caves, some other on mountaintops, in jungles or under the waves. In some tales, Dragons are master of magic and of many types of lores, and are overly wise – and sometimes helpful. In others, Dragons are fierce beasts of great power bent on dominating lesser races or, in the worst event, destroying them. Learned men and adventures, instead, know that there are many types of Dragons, each with its own habitat and with its own abilities; they know that some of them are good and some other are evil, some can use magic and some cannot – but they know for sure that all Dragons have long lives and tend to accumulate treasures, magic, knowledge and power in the course of them. In areas where Dragons are uncommon, for the common people they're a source of trouble at best, living nightmares at worst; in areas where Dragons are common, humans and demihumans know they can befriend and work alongside them for common purposes.

All these sentences are true in a way or another. But, generally speaking, what a Dragon is?

## The Nature of Dragons

Dragons are not creatures native of the Prime Plane. In fact, as a race they're older than the Prime Plane itself, and older than the Immortals. They were among the first creatures to inhabit the Multiverse when the Old Ones left for beyond the Vortex. In that time, Dragons lived in the Multiverse ruled by the Draedens, to whom they're somewhat related. However, they stood neutral in the war between Draedens and Immortals, and after the Immortals defeated the Draedens and seized from them the control of the Multiverse, the Dragons retreated in a portion of it that would become later their cosmic home, the Draconic Cluster.

As such, the origin of Dragons is shrouded in mystery. Why they exist is a secret that perhaps only the Old One could unveil. Some Immortals believe that Dragons as a race were created by the Old Ones to be part of the natural cycle of life of the advanced life forms: according to this theory, Dragons would provide a challenge to mortal beings to strive toward greatness and ultimately to Immortality.

Dragons of the Prime Plane are not the true ones. As it'll be explained below, the Dragons encountered on the Prime Plane are only embodiments or incarnations of the true Dragons – which are called Dragon Guardians. These live in the Outer Planes which form the Draconic Cluster, have an exalted status of existence, and are some of the most powerful creatures of the planes. The appearance of Dragon Guardians isn't the same for them all; each individual Dragon Guardian is likely to be rather different from its kins – one could be a huge, winged black serpent, another could be a traslucent wyvern-like being, still another a rainbow-hued dinosaur-like creature. Anyway, even if they appear to be different, what they've in common is their mystical nature and cosmic fate.

## The Draconic Metempsychosis

Dragons participate in a cosmic cycle that is unique of their race. From a given time eons ago, the Dragon Guardians of the Draconic Cluster began to abandon their physical bodies – which dissipated – and their essences started to incarnate in reptilian mortal creatures of the Prime Plane. This cycle is called the “draconic metempsychosis”, that is the “transmigration of draconic essences”. The reason behind it is unknow and likely a mystery also for the Dragon Rulers. The same Immortals which believe that Dragons have been created by the Old One as a challenge to mortal advanced beings, also state that the metempsychosis started to happen when advanced life forms began to develop in the Prime Plane: then, the Dragon Guardians also began to incarnate in mortal reptilian creatures to continue in the Prime their cosmic duty. In fact, the draconic metempsychosis isn't intentional, and after millions of years, the Dragons simply accept its existence as a natural part of their cosmic lives. Also, some sort of link between Dragons and some reptilian mortal species seem evident, as their essences have never incarnated in a different kind of beings.

Once a Dragon essence incarnates in a mortal reptile, it loses any memory of its past and any knowledge of its real self; the essence doesn't remember anymore any of its past lives (if any), nor the fact that its true physical form is that of the Dragon Guardians of the Draconic Cluster. During its life inside a mortal body, the Dragon essence begins an unconscious search to discover its true, advanced nature, and to get it back. Its goal is to transcend the mortal body and become a true Dragon again, going back to the Draconic Cluster from which the essence descended in the beginning. This path, from a draconic point of view, configures as a sort of ascension to Immortality – except for the fact that the status attained by the Dragon essences which complete it is not that of an Immortal, but that of a Dragon Guardian. Those who succeed are few, and they go to live in the Draconic Cluster, a sort of draconic paradise, where they represent the archetypes of the Dragon species; there, they serve the Dragon Rulers for the time to come.

Naturally, for any Dragon that succeeds in getting back its true being, there are scores of mortal Dragons that die of old age or violent death without managing to attain the Dragon Guardian status. When their mortal body dies, their essences become the Dragon Souls, the weakest form of Dragon essences, and they must stay in the Draconic Cluster for thousands of years before being allowed to incarnate again and get a new chance to reach their true Dragon form. After 6,000 years, a Dragon Soul evolves into a more powerful – but nevertheless minor – form of Dragon essence, that is a Dragon Spirit. Then, after another 4,000 years as Dragon Spirit, the essence is able to incarnate again in a mortal reptile of the Prime Plane.

Once a Dragon successfully manages to ascend to Dragon Guardian form, the cycle ends and the Dragon becomes an immortal, exalted-status being. It's not known if in the future the Dragon Guardians are destined to begin the cycle again, as none of those which actually exist in the Draconic Cluster has ever incarnated again after having attained that form; moreover, all of them have passed through the cycle at some point in the past, and have successfully completed it, but

don't remember anything about their existence (if any) before their first incarnation. Thus, it's possible that all mortal Dragons are destined to complete the cycle and ascend to Dragon Guardian form; what will happen when all the Dragons will have regained their true being is unknown. Some Immortal believe that this event will happen together with the recovery of Immortal status by the members of the Good People (the fairy folk) – at the end of the current Great Cycle of the Multiverse, when chaos will rule again.

### **The Ceremony of Sublimation**

Soon after the whole metempsychosis process started, and for many millennia after that, the Dragon essences incarnated in mortal reptiles akin to dinosaurs and the like. None of them, save for the exceptional one, managed to regain the Dragon Guardian form. As hundreds of thousands of years passed, the Dragons perfected an optimal method that granted them the better chances to succeed in the path to regain their true form. This method is called the Ceremony of Sublimation, and consist in catalyzing the energy the Dragon gets from various sources (treasures, magic, power, and knowledge) and using it to become larger and more powerful, until the final passage to true Dragon form is accomplished.

### **Dragon Stages**

To define what a Dragon is, it's necessary to familiarize with the stages the Dragon essences must pass through to complete the metempsychosis cycle. The various stages are detailed in this paragraph.

### **Dragon Essences**

We call Dragon Essence the simplest being of a Dragon, the part of it that continues to exist even if the body it inhabits dies, or decays, or transforms into something else. The Essence represents the eternal part of the individual Dragon – something like what humans would call a “soul”. As such, Essences are insubstantial, immaterial and cannot be perceived by any mortal or Immortal, magical or mundane mean. They also seem indestructible, as they're part of the Multiverse itself. Dragons cannot be encountered in “Essence” stage; in fact, almost never they are found in this stage alone – i.e. when an Essence, for example, leaves its body in the Draconic Cluster, it immediately incarnates in a mortal body and, on the opposite, when a mortal Dragon dies, its Essence immediately becomes a Dragon Soul. Therefore, no game statistics are given for Dragon Essences, which exist only from a metaphysical point of view.

### **Mortal Dragons**

This is the Dragon stage the inhabitants of the Prime Plane are mostly familiar with. During the mortal stage, Dragons come in many different shapes, sizes and colours. This great variety is partly due to draconic evolution during the ages, partly to the shaping that the individual Dragon Essence operates on the mortal body before birth, according to its tastes, preferences and characteristics. Mortal Dragons, besides their differences, share the metempsychosis cycle and the same evolutionary process based on growth up to a certain size; then, the Ceremony of Sublimation is the only way for them to grow further and acquire more power.

Mortal Dragons include most specimens of Dragons which are found all over Mystara. The most commonly known specimens are the chromatic ones, including White, Black, Green, Blue, and Red Dragons, and the metallic Gold

Dragons. Additional types include the Sea Dragon, the Crimson and Red Hawk Dragons of the Savage Coast, and the Gemstone Dragons.

### **Small, Large and Huge**

In game terms, according to the *D&D Rules Cyclopedia*, mortal Dragons are classified into three stages of growth, called Small, Large and Huge. From the Dragons' point of view, these stages coincide with three major steps of their growth.

The **Small** step is reached naturally thanks to normal growth; when a Dragon becomes Small it's considered an adult specimen and will not grow further without performing the Ceremony of Sublimation. Usually a Dragon reaches the Small step between 25 and 50 years of age, depending on its breed.

The **Large** step is reached when Dragons have performed the Ceremony of Sublimation a number of times high enough to gain the number of Hit Dices fit for that step. The number of Cerimonies needed varies according to how much successful each of them is. Generally, Dragons reach the Large step between 50 and 300 years of age.

The **Huge** step is usually reached by old Dragons, which have performed successfully the Ceremony of Sublimation so many times to gain the number of Hit Dice fit for this step. Usually the Dragons reaching the Huge step are 300 years old or more.

### **Gemstone Dragons**

The Gemstone Dragons are ancient Dragons which, thanks to their powerful magics, evolved into a more powerful type of draconic specimens. They're similar to true Dragons in all respects, including their growth, the Ceremony of Sublimation and the draconic metempsychosis. However, their skin is more similar to the gemstones' surface, they have a more powerful breath weapon and their magic is usually stronger.

### **Dragon-Kins**

Dragon-Kins, instead, are beings related (by ancestry or descentance or magical mingling) to true Dragons. They're not Dragons at all, but they have in their veins some draconic blood. Dragon-Kins can be the most different species, each with its evolutionary process. Dragon-Kins don't share any of the characteristics of dragonkind, don't participate in the draconic metempsychosis, cannot perform the Ceremony of Sublimation and generally take no part in the cosmic cycles of Dragons.

### **Dragon Souls**

When a mortal Dragon ends its life in the Prime Plane with a natural death or because it's killed, thus without managing to reach the Dragon Guardian form, its Essence goes back in the planes of the Draconic Cluster, where it becomes a Dragon Soul. There, the Soul stays for 6,000 years in service of the Dragon Guardians of its same alignment. The Dragon Soul starts with 1 Hit Dice but, during that time, it gains slowly additional Hit Dices, up to a total of three (usually the second HD is gained after 2,000 years of service, the third after another 2,000 years). After the 6,000 years have passed, the Dragon Soul become a Dragon Spirit and must serve for another 4,000 years before being allowed to incarnate again. For all its existence, and also after the upgrade to Dragon Spirit until it's ready for a new incarnation, a Dragon Soul keeps memory of its last past life – but not of the lives it could eventually have lived before that one.

Prime Plane's Dragons are totally unaware of Dragon Souls. Their primary function is to provide the necessary en-

ergy to fuel draconic Cerimonies of Sublimation and Omens of Coming. Moreover, they link the Essence of a mortal Dragon to that of its suzerain, thus generating Dragon Might.

Their secondary function is to provide the energy to fuel Dragon magic. When a Dragon casts a spell on the Prime Plane, a number of Dragon Souls is suddenly summoned to power the spell. Thereafter, the Souls dissipate and slowly reform in the Draconic Cluster.

Sometimes Dragon Souls also act as heralds and messengers of Dragon Rulers, and are given simple duties and missions; if they behave in an adequate way, the Dragon Rulers could give them the chance to incarnate in a Dragon hatchling on the Prime Plane before they've passed the 10,000 years required. This is considered a great privilege, as that Dragon Soul can try again to walk on the draconic path to reach the Dragon Guardian status.

### Dragon Soul\*

Armor Class:	9
Hit Dice:	1-3* (S)
Move:	420' (140')
Attacks:	Nil
Damage:	None
No. Appearing:	0 (4d100)
Save As:	F20
Morale:	6
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	14
Alignment:	Any
XP Value:	1* HD = 13 2* HD = 25 3* HD = 50

*Monster Type:* Dragon, Planar Monster (Very Rare).

Dragon Souls appear in a great variety of shapes, which go in size from that of an apple to that of a pumpkin; their colours also vary, and are based on the color of the Dragon they last incarnated in while on the Prime Plane. Therefore, one could appear as a translucent ball of golden light, a flickering red flame, a crackling node of blue lightning, a throbbing green haze, a billowing puff of white smoke, a gloomy shadow, and so on.

Dragon Souls don't have physical attacks; if they're attacked, they flee to the nearest Dragon Guardian and tell it of the aggression. When they're led by a Dragon Guardian and commanded to do it, Dragon Souls can spontaneously generate an impressive amount of magical energy, duplicating any magical or clerical spell up to 7<sup>th</sup> level. Every 10 Dragon Souls can generate the equivalent of one level of spells in this way. Once the spell is cast, the Dragon Souls which participated in it dissipate and take 24 hours to reassume their form in the Draconic Cluster.

Dragon Souls can be hit only by magical weapons and are immune to sleep, charm, and to all mind-affecting attacks. As they have not a physical form, they're immune to all attacks like diseases, poisons, and the like. Dragon Souls move by flying and can communicate telepathically with any intelligent being. On the Inner Planes, Dragon Souls are permanently invisible, but can see normally and cast spells as described. In other planes, they can see and cast spells normally, but are fully visible; this means that a Dragon casting a spell in an Outer Plane suddenly seems to be surrounded by Dragon

Souls until these become the energy that produces the spell itself.

Dragon Souls hold Dragon Essences and cannot be permanently destroyed. If they're reduced to 0 hit points, they disappear and will reform in the Draconic Cluster after one month has passed.

*Terrain:* Outer Planes of the Draconic Cluster.

### Dragon Spirits

Dragon Spirits are advanced forms of Dragon Souls. Usually a Dragon Soul becomes a Dragon Spirit after about 6,000 years; after another 4,000 years the Dragon Spirit is given the chance to incarnate again in a mortal Dragon and to try again to reach the Dragon Guardian status. A Dragon Spirit incarnates in the same type of Dragon (i.e. White, Onyx, Sea, and so on) in which it has lived its last mortal life; Dragon Spirits who did particularly well during their years of service are given the chance to incarnate in an advanced Dragon race of the same alignment (for example, a Green could be given the chance to incarnate in a Red).

Dragon Spirits keep memory of their last mortal life – but not of the preceeding ones – and of the millennia passed as Dragon Souls until they incarnate again. However, that memory tends to be foggy and to be forgotten as time passes, unless the Dragon Spirit doesn't face something that could recall its past (e.g. a best friend, a lover or a hated enemy). A Dragon Spirit doesn't preserve any knowledge of spells that it knew during its last mortal life.

### Dragon Spirit\*

Armor Class:	3
Hit Dice:	10*** (L)
Move:	120' (40')
Flying:	300' (100')
Attacks:	3 touches
Damage:	1d4 Str drain each
No. Appearing:	0 (1d100)
Save As:	F30
Morale:	11
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	16
Alignment:	Any
XP Value:	3,250

*Monster Type:* Dragon, Planar Monster (Very Rare).

Dragon Spirits appear as a sort of "phantom" Dragons; they're immaterial and transparent. Their appearance remembers somewhat the one they had in their last mortal life. Whatever their appearance, they can always fly.

While it's in the Draconic Cluster, once per day, a Dragon Spirit can assume for 1 turn the material form of the mortal Dragon in which it had incarnated during its last mortal life, at the highest level of power it reached. If forced to fight, a Dragon Spirit usually employs this ability. If it can't, it attacks three times with whatever attacks it has in its current form – that is bites, claws, kicks, tail slaps, horns, wings, and so on. Whatever the attack types, any hit by a Dragon Spirit passes through the victim's material body and drains 1d4 Strengh points. A victim whose Strengh is reduced to 0 or less dies; otherwise, lost Strengh points heal at the rate of 1 per day.

A Dragon Spirit can also use a breath weapon (a cone 80' long and 40' wide at its end) three times per day. The breath is made up by some sort of opaque and ephemeral substance.

The targets that fail to save against Breath Weapon are affected by a *cause fear* spell (no additional save is allowed to resist the effect of the spell).

Dragon Spirits can be hit only by magical weapons and are immune to sleep, charm and any mind-affecting attacks. Like Dragon Souls, they have not a physical form and are therefore immune to all attacks like diseases, poisons, and the like.

Dragon Spirits cannot be destroyed permanently; if reduced to 0 hit points, they disappear and reform as Dragon Souls in the Draconic Cluster within a month.

*Terrain:* Outer Planes of the Draconic Cluster.

## DRAGON GUARDIANS

Once a mortal Dragon has managed to successfully complete the Ceremony of Sublimation a due number of times, it again takes possession of its “true” form. Its mortal body merges with its Essence and together they disappear from the Prime Plane, entering Draconia, the central plane of the Draconic Cluster.

Dragon Guardians can be encountered only in the Outer Planes belonging to the Draconic Cluster. There, they’re the undisputed rulers of the plane and exercise their command on the Dragon Souls and Spirits which reside there. In turn, they obey to the respective Dragon Ruler. The most powerful and wise among Dragon Guardians act as lieutenants, wardens and messengers of the powerful Dragon Rulers.

Dragon Guardians help the Dragon Rulers to further the strengthening and the development of the draconic breeds on the Prime Plane. They have the duty to report to their Ruler any irregularity regarding Dragons which is happening of the Prime Plane. In extraordinary emergencies, a Dragon Guardian is sent on the Prime Plane by its Ruler to bring a message or an important omen in front of a large Dragon meeting. Dragon Guardians are treated with great respect and awe in the Prime Plane because they’re known to be the messengers of Dragon Rulers.

### Dragon Guardian\*

Sphere:	None (Matter)
Status:	Exalted
Power Points:	30
Anti-Magic:	25%
Armor Class:	-10
Hit Dice:	32*****
Hit Points:	160
Move:	210' (70')
Flying:	450' (150')
Attacks:	2 claws/1 bite (on land) Up to 6 (while flying)
Damage:	10d6 (bite, crush) 4d6 (claws, kicks, tail, wings)
No. Appearing:	0 (1d10)
Save As:	F36
Morale:	10
Treasure Type:	Nil
Intelligence:	18
Alignment:	Any
XP Value:	48,000

*Type:* Dragon, Planar Monster (Very Rare).

Dragon Guardians are huge (100' or more in length) draconic-shaped reptiles who represent the ultimate status that mortal Dragons can reach. No two Dragon Guardians seem

alike; each one is different from the other, and represents an unique creature. A Dragon Guardian can have any of the shapes and forms allowed to mortal Dragons, but usually with some peculiarities and with skin of a mixed or unusual shade of colour. Dragon Guardians have the ability to *polymorph self* into any of the shapes of mortal Dragons corresponding to their alignment; they can keep that shape indefinitely and, even in that form, they resemble the archetype of that Dragon species. Dragon Guardians have the ability to fly, whatever their form.

Dragon Guardians can use the Immortal power Call Other (at the normal cost of 10 TP) to summon 1d4×100 Dragon Souls or 10d10 Dragon Spirits if they’re going to face a fight or in case of particular events on the Prime Plane. Dragon Guardians can use their Power Points normally to acquire daily spellcasting abilities, and they usually select the option which enables them to cast spell as a 36<sup>th</sup>-level cleric, druid or magic-user at the cost of 18 PP.

Dragon Guardians are immune to all clerical and magical spells of level 6<sup>th</sup> and lower, and they can only be hit by magical weapons with a +3 bonus or higher. Dragon Guardians share all the immunities of Dragons belonging to their same alignment (e.g. a chaotic Dragon Guardian is immune to normal gas, acid and fire and makes automatically any save against magical attacks of the same types). Contrary to Dragon Souls and Spirits, Dragon Guardians are destroyed once and for all if they’re reduced to 0 hit points; that happens because they represent a materialization of their Essence, the destruction of which means the destruction of the Essence itself.

Dragon Guardians can use all attack forms allowed to mortal Dragons of Huge size (unless their form prevents them to – e.g. a Dragon Guardian in Serpent form wouldn’t be able to use claws or wings) – crush, swoop, kicks, tail slaps, wings and so on. They can use the breath weapons of any mortal Dragon corresponding to their alignment in any combination, for a total of four times per day. For example, a lawful Dragon Guardian could use cold and crystal, lightning and vaporize, fire and melt, fire or chlorine gas breath weapons – each time as desired but no more that four times per day in total.

Dragon Guardians can also use an aura attack similar to that of Immortals; this attack affects all creatures within 60' which have a number of Hit Dices equal or less than half the Dragon Guardian’s Hit Dices. The affected creatures which fail their save against Spells suffer the effects of terror (like a *cause fear* spell, but with a duration of 3 turns). Dragon Guardians are not allowed to use any other aura attack effect.

*Terrain:* Outer Planes of the Draconic Cluster.

## DRAGON RULERS

Dragon Rulers are the overlords of the draconic race in the Multiverse. There are four Dragons Rulers. Three of them are the Lesser Dragon Rulers, which are called the Moon Dragon (the rulers of all chaotic Dragons), the Sun Dragon (the ruler of all neutral Dragons), and the Star Dragon (the ruler of all lawful Dragons). Above them there’s the Greater Ruler of dragonkind, true Ruler of all Dragons, the Great One itself. These four Dragon Rulers are named this way apart from who is really holding that charge.

The personality, goals and statistics of Dragon Rulers vary with the individual occupant of that charge. Anyway, the Great One has always a power comparable to that of an Immortal of Eternal status, while the Lesser Rulers are usually less powerful and their actual power depends on how long they’ve been holding their charge. At the moment, the Moon

Dragon is the least among Dragon Rulers, but things could change if Pearl manages to hold her charge longer than the current Sun Dragon (Opal) and Star Dragon (Diamond – which has recently been beaten already).

The only way a Dragon Guardian can become one of the three Lesser Rulers is combat. Once a Dragon Guardian feels to be powerful enough to challenge the primate of the Lesser Ruler of Dragons of its alignment, it challenges it; if the challenger wins, it become the new Dragon Ruler of that alignment and the former Dragon Ruler reverts to Dragon Guardian status or it's killed (according to the choice of the challenger during the duel); otherwise, that fate is reserved for the challenger itself.

If a Lesser Dragon Ruler is deposed or dies or leaves its charge, the most powerful and old Dragon Guardians of that alignment will fight one against the others to determine who of them will have the right to hold that charge. If the Greater Dragon Ruler is destroyed, the three Lesser Rulers will fight among themselves to see who of them will become the next

Great One.

Theoretically, Dragon Rulers shouldn't belong to any of the Immortal Spheres of Power – in fact, they shouldn't be Immortals at all. However, since the current Great One's ascension to the status of Greater Ruler, the Dragon race as a whole has shared a certain affiliation to the Sphere of Matter (see the history section), and the Great One has replaced the three Lesser Rulers during the last centuries with Dragon Immortals sponsored by him. Thus, while theoretically they don't belong to any of the Spheres of Power, actually the current Dragon Rulers are allied to the Matter and traditionally considered to be part of that Sphere.

The term Dragon Immortal, of recent birth, is used to identify a Dragon who has risen to Immortality. A Dragon Immortal needs not to be also a Dragon Ruler, and certainly a Dragon Guardian needs not to have reached Immortality to become a Dragon Ruler. The fact that the current Dragon Rulers are all Immortals also, is due to a specific goal of the Great One.

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*Simone Neri*

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