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Foreword

Ever since I walked with Bilbo Baggins into the lair of Smaug, I've been hooked on dragons. The power, the majesty, the ferocity, the overwhelming godliness...I was terrified for Bilbo, and along with Bilbo, to tell the truth. That first glimpse of mighty Smaug stands in my mind as one of the seminal moments in *The Hobbit*, which remains to this day my favorite fantasy book. Nothing would have worked there as well as the specter of the dragon, the great and mighty danger burying everything beneath its shadow.

What's not to love?

Speaking from the perspective of the hero, could there be a greater conquest? One of the greatest allures of fantasy is the idea that one person can actually make a difference in the world, and in that regard, dragons represent the ultimate enemy, the Big Bad Guy. Killing a dragon equals saving a town, or more. Instant hero! Poof! Instant title to carry around: "dragonslayer." There is no other creature in mythology, not even demons or devils, that evokes such a feeling of power and maliciousness, no other creature that stirs the imagination quite as well. Say "dragon" to anyone even remotely familiar with the tropes of fantasy, and you've conjured so many images, and all of them fearful and inspiring all at once.

As a fantasy writer, my love for dragons goes much deeper than even that, however. They serve multiple purposes, and do so better than any other being. First and foremost, the dragon can be the ultimate embodiment of evil. One of the joys of fantasy is that it's adventure, war, without guilt. No need to dehumanize an enemy who isn't, right? Well, with dragons, you've got the personification of pure evil if that's the way you choose to portray them in your work. Dragons rain death and destruction wholesale upon unsuspecting villagers; they pillage all wealth and leave no one alive in their fiery wake. Reptilian, inhuman, inhumane, snake-like, and fiery—all fit together to make a rather easy target for the writer's heroes, the ultimate fight, and the last battle in a D&D campaign or a video game. Once you've beaten the dragon, really, what's left to kill?

Or, for those who love putting a twist on the predictable, with a dragon, you've got the ultimate embodiment of the power of nature. Think about it. A dragon is Everest, or a volcano, or an earthquake, or all three and more rolled into one. Taking good and evil out of the equation might change the characterization of a dark dwarf or a hobgoblin, but a dragon is still a dragon! There's nothing one-dimensional about these beasts, unlike, say, a demon. A demon is bad. Period. No reason to discuss the matter. Just take out your sword and slay the vile beast and send it back to the Abyss where it belongs. Not so with dragons. They can be everything a demon can be, to be sure, but they, unlike their devilish and demonic counterparts, aren't limited to that role.

Or, for those who love irony (that'd be me), with a dragon, you've got the ultimate embodiment of a misunderstood character—I remember reading Barbara Hambly's excellent dragon books from the '80s, offering a diametrically opposing view to the standard fantasy dragon. Brilliant stuff, and even making the dragon in such a way did nothing to diminish the grandeur and power of the creature.

I've been writing about dragons for twenty years now and the versatility of the beasts keeps them from ever getting old to me. Whether I've got Drizzt and Wulfgar killing a somewhat dumb and relatively weak white dragon in my earliest work, or Drizzt running from one in a later book, or Artemis and Jarlaxle tricking one into destroying the Crystal Shard in another, or Artemis and Jarlaxle being employed by a pair of dragon sisters (shapeshifted to appear as human merchant women) in the latest books, dragons always seem to find a way into my work.

That's not a bad thing.

R.A. SALVATORE

Book Clans of the Dragon

In an age when stars were born and dreams began, the gods of light and darkness gave to the world their children, the first dragons. These regal serpents soared in the skies over Krynn, numbering but ten in all—five favored daughters of Paladine, and five more bold sons of Takhisis.

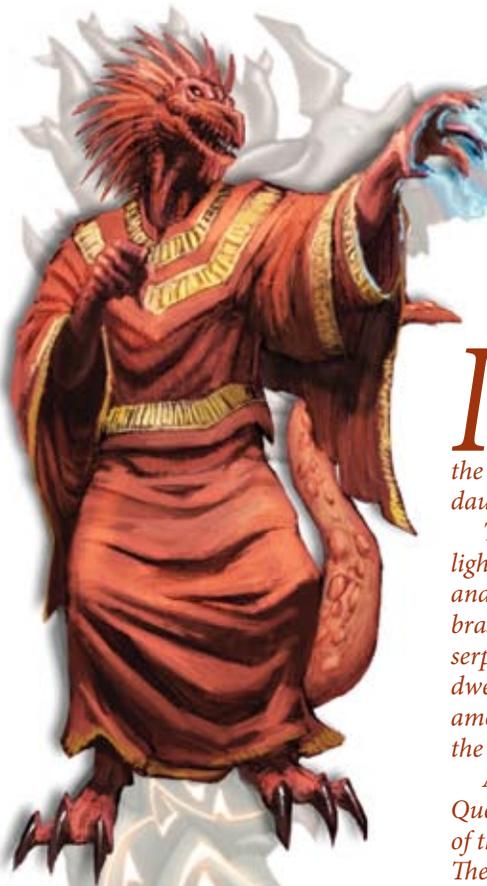
The dragons of the Platinum Father were creatures of light and goodness, formed of the metals that brightened and gave strength to the world. They were gold and silver, brass and bronze and copper. Females all, the quintet of serpentine sisters made their lairs in the west of Ansalon and dwelled there for countless eons, singing praises of Paladine among the vast swaths of peaks that would one day be called the Kharolis.

Arrayed against them were the five sons of the Dark Queen, wyrms of implacable evil arrayed in the colors of their matriarch: red, blue, black, green, and white. They spread wickedness and destruction in the name of Takhisis, each serpent a blight of chaos and waste upon a great section of the world. Ultimately, like the daughters of Paladine, these chromatic dragons settled, making their lairs in the great mountains of central Ansalon. This smoldering, volcanic region would later be known as the Khalkist.

For the better part of an era, the number of the ten dragons remained constant. Ancient beings, they did not age beyond their full maturity, but neither did they procreate. Naturally, Paladine and Takhisis each wished for wyrmlings born of their mighty offspring, that all Krynn might be populated with dragonkind.

“Aurora’s Eggs” in *Dragons at War*

By Douglas Niles





THE blind eyes stared meaningfully at Huma, who was beginning to understand what the dragon was leading to.

“For a long time, I believed he meant one of his fellow gods, and I raged and roared. Then I came to understand the trickery in his words. A god was not what he meant. A warrior, straight and true in the path, could do what I could not, and are not the Knights of Solamnia the sons of Paladine? Does that not make them brethren in spirit to Kiri-Jolith?”

Huma stared at the gleaming sword buried deep in the mound of jewels and coins. In him there was a yearning so strong that he nearly ran to it. But suddenly the terrible visage of Wyrmfather was again before him. The hot, sulfurous breath stung the knight’s eyes.

“Free me, Knight of Solamnia, and anything here is yours! Even the mirror, which served me so well before the darkness came!”

The mirror. Huma looked at it. If he could learn its secrets... His own bluster amazed him. “How does it work? I might consider, then.”

“You must think of a place you wish to go and then ask—No! Release me first!”

The very mountain trembled as Wyrmfather went into another berserk rage.

The hammering began anew—louder, if at all possible. Wyrmfather raised its massive head and shrieked, “I will not be cheated again!”

The Legend of Huma
By Richard A. Knaak

The clan dragons are those most recognizable as dragons; they are also known as “true dragons” to differentiate them from their lesser cousins. Ten clans predominate on Krynn, with a handful of other minor clans also represented. These are the dragons sent into exile after the defeat of the Queen of Darkness by Huma Dragonbane, the dragons that returned to Krynn in the Age of Despair, and the dragons about whom legends are many and varied. This chapter describes some of these legends and provides historical information about true dragons as a larger group—their nature, language, and connection to the magic of the world.

ORIGIN MYTHS

The origins of dragonkind are as mysterious as the dragons themselves. The River of Time reaches deep into the earliest days of Krynn and there, in the Age of Starbirth, the story of the dragons’ creation takes form. Although scholarship and

study continue to provide details of that period, all history prior to the Graygem is as much myth as it is fact, and every source has its potential bias.

What follows is a selection of common stories that feature the origin or creation of dragonkind. Others exist, of course; these are the primary tales. Perhaps within them lies the germ of truth.

DWARVES—THE FORGING OF THE FALSE METAL

Once on a time, Thak the Hammer and his sister, Tamex, came to Reorx, Lord of the Forge, and said to him, “The world is created, yet it is empty.”

Reorx took the world in his hands and studied it, and he agreed. He asked the gods what their desires were, and they said, “Make for us children of this world, which you have named Krynn, that we may give them dominion over it.”

So Reorx said, “I shall need metal with which to make these children and spirit by which to animate them.”

Tamex responded, “Here are five metals,” and she gave Reorx tin, and lead, and zinc, and nickel, and iron, drawn from the earth.

Reorx took these metals and fashioned five serpentine statues.

“Here is spirit,” Thak said, and he gave Reorx five spirits drawn from Chaos.

Reorx cooled the metal dragons with the spirits, and the gods set the dragons forth onto the world, and they ruled over it.

Tamex was true to her nature, however, and desired the dragons for herself. She sent Morgax the Rustlord to them, and the Rustlord informed the dragon kings of their mother’s wishes. Such was the power of Tamex’s desire that the dragons agreed to be hers alone, though zinc resisted longer than the others out of duty, and tin resisted out of instinct. At the Rustlord’s touch, their metal bodies grew tarnished and corroded. Iron became red, nickel became green, zinc became blue, lead became black, and tin became white.

Reorx saw this and said to Tamex, “You have taken what is not yours. Henceforth you shall be known as the False Metal and bear the mark of your base desires for all to see.” And Tamex’s form became that of a five-headed dragon, one head to match each of her new children.

Thak grieved, but Reorx came to him and said, “The Balance must be served. Find me more metal, and I shall fashion you children of your own.” And so Thak plucked precious metals from the earth: gold, and silver, and copper.

Because tin and zinc had resisted Tamex's seductions, Thak took some of each and combined them with copper to produce bronze and brass, for loyalty and for instinct.

Reorx took these metals and fashioned five more serpentine statues. Once again, Thak gave him the spirit in which to cool the dragons, and five new dragons were born.

"Now you each have dragons," said Reorx. "Five good and five evil, ten to rule the world." And with that, he went back to his forge, for he had his own children to make. And that was that.

ELVES—THE SONG OF CREATION

There is a tale of the beginning, and this is the way of it. When the world was young and newly-made, E'li looked upon it with his brother and sister gods, and he was happy, for it would be the dwelling place of his children the Colinesti, the firstborn elves.

"Alas," spoke Astarin, "I must first compose the Song of Creation, and I have neither instruments nor musicians to play them."

Matheri counseled E'li and said, "Bring forth spirits from the world so that they might give voice to Astarin's Song."

Quenesti-Pah counseled E'li and said, "Give these spirits hearts that they might understand their sacred duty and know it to be good."

Kiri-Jolith counseled E'li and said, "Let them be strong and hale that the Song will be strong within them."

Blue Phoenix counseled E'li and said, "Let the elements of the earth be quick within them, that they might give the Song potency."

Solinari counseled E'li and said, "Let them be one with the magic of the Song, so that it might carry forth across the world and they within it."

So it was that E'li called forth spirits from the world, and gave them hearts, and strength, and union with the magic of the world, and quickened the elements within them. And thus were born the dragons, who were to sing the Song of Astarin, and they were taught the words to usher in Creation.

Before the Song could be sung, the Queen of Darkness looked upon the world herself, and she saw what E'li had done. "Alas," she said, "This Song is woefully incomplete, for it holds no place for my Ogres or me." Thus she visited the dragons, taking their form that they might know her as one of them. And with guile and whisper she added words to the Song as the dragons knew it; and when she was done she withdrew. Thus the dragons sang the Song of Creation. The first five verses rang out clear and bright, as Astarin had composed them. The dragons who sang these verses felt their hearts fill with joy, the elements quicken within them, their bodies strengthening in it; the magic of the world rang in pure alignment. The scales of these dragons shone gold and silver, copper and bronze and brass.

But the Song did not end, and E'li wept when he heard the discordant verses that followed. The dragons that sang them roared and grew wrath. Their hearts twisted black, the elements corroded dark and monstrous within them, their bodies reveling in violence and discord; the magic of the world danced wicked in their eyes. The scales of these dragons gleamed red and blue, black and green and white.

Thus was the world made ready for good and for evil, sung into being by the dragons. So it is told, and so it is done.

GNOMES—A BRIEF ABSTRACT CONCERNING THE ORIGIN OF DRACONIC SPECIES

Historical records improperly maintained during previous chronological eras established under Act XXD of the Guild of Progress and Factual Representation give credence to a sociobiological development of draconic species from a single *ur*-dragon or (more likely) pair of *ur*-dragons. Incomplete statements culled from these records by the Guild posit that these *ur*-dragons either:

- Spontaneously came into existence; or
- Were a manifestation of cosmological urges accorded the gods *qua* creators; or
- Existed prior to the known creation of the universe.

Members of the Guild are divided among their scholarly support of these three potential origins, although the Committee for the Establishment of Consensus in the Matter of the Origin of Draconic Species agreed to put weight behind Statement 2 following an extended six-day debate. During the debate the following were added to the list of qualifying traits of the *ur*-dragons:

- Names of *ur*-dragons are iterations of early Draconic linguaforms *dei* and *pro*, e.g. *Dei Onus*, *Pro Cyanus*
- Location of *ur*-dragons identified as the Quasispatial Coterminous Multiphase Reality known as "The Gray"
- Locus points of early interaction of *ur*-dragons with Krynnish reptilian lifeforms include Schallsea, Taman Busuk

Additional study followed. Manuscripts transcribed by linguistic experts in the Guild resulted in further corrections, edits, and alterations of the *prima facie* text. It became clear that the *ur*-dragons were regarded by pre-Graygem sources as the progenitors of the draconic species, including all known clans and dracoforms, but several dissenting votes were cast against the inclusion of such apocryphal elements as "cosmic chaynes" (sic) binding the *ur*-dragons together (see article: "Feasibility of mating and procreation in the case of the *ur*-dragon," Mt. Nevermind, 419 AC) and marsupialoid dracoforms acting as scribes or agencies of the *ur*-dragons (see article: "Mass, magic, and megallo-optics: a coda for dragonlets," Mt. Nevermind, 422 AC).

In its third and final meeting (the so-called Redaction and Retroactive Causality Summit) the Committee for the Establishment of Consensus in the Matter of the Origin of Draconic Species ruled that in all internal documents and archival summations, the *ur*-dragons would be assigned the status of "Unverified but Plausible." Collected data from non-gnomish records (including the Great Library of Palanthas, the Library of Khrystann in Tarsis, and the assorted archives of the Bardic Colleges of Ergoth) inexplicably leave out any such references, and so the Committee's advisement has been not to bring it up in seminars with non-gnomish scholars.

For further analysis and doctrinal assessment together with a lengthy account of physiology supplied by the sivak draconian Granak Red-Silver of Teyr, interested scholars and students of dracology are referred to the Guild's upcoming editorial, "I For One Welcome Our New Dragon Overlords" and the considerable correspondence that resulted in seminar presentations herewith.