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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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





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

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

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

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

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

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





## CONCERNING THE NATURE OF DRAGONS

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

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

### The Master of Secrets Speaks

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

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

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

### Of Form Most Noble

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

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

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

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

At birth, we dragons possess sharp teeth and talons, with hides able to turn aside the little injuries that threaten such as you. Why, I've seen newborn hatchlings kill and devour several bears with no more difficulty than a dwarf dispatching a few rabbits. We also recover quickly from any injury we do sustain, using the power of our magic to knit damaged flesh and bone anew. These natural defenses are sorely needed because, as you will see, the life of a dragon can be a harsh one compared to those of the Young Races. We are challenged by Nature in many ways—ensuring that only the strongest and most able of us survive.





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

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

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

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

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

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

## On the Life Cycle of Dragons

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

## On the Rite of Mating

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

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

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

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





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

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

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

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

## On the Care of Eggs

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

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

## The Hatching

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

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





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

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

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

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

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

## On the Stages of Draconic Life

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

### Hatchling

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

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

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

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







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

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

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

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

### Adolescent

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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





Yes...

*Then they appear much like wyverns, do they not?*

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

*But Master Vasdenjas...*

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

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

### Metamorphosis

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

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

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

*Master?*

Yes, Tiabdjin?

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

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

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

### Adult (Named)

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

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

Why do you insist that something have a Name in order for it to be identified? Are Names truly necessary for communication? To answer your question, it is through dragonspeech, we are able to communicate with our young, in





ways far more efficient and effective than mere speech. Tiabdjinn, though you are indeed a most learned scholar, there are times when you think entirely too much like a dwarf. May I continue? Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Great Dragon

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

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

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

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

### On the Rites of Death

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





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

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

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

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

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

## Of Culture Most Polite & Complex

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

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

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

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

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

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





## On Proper Etiquette

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Gatherings? Under what conditions or circumstance do dragons gather?*

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

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





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

*Has paid? But... ?*

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

## On the Importance of Names

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

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

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

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

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

*Master, I have a question about this subject.*

Yes, what is it Tiabdjin?

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

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

## On the Many Types of Communication

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





## Speech

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

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

## Dance and Gesture

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

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

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

## Dragonspeech

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

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

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

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





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

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

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

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

### Writing

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

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

### Memory Crystals

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

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

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

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







## On Dragon History & Beliefs

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

### The Origin of the World

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### The Role of Dragons

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





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

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

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

### The Passions

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

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

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

### On Relations with other Name-givers

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

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

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





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

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

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

### The Kingdom of Throal

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

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

### The Blood Wood

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

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

### The Theran Empire

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

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

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





## On Worship and Service

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

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

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

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

## A Dragon's Life

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

### Lairs

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

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

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

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

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

Our inherent understanding and sensing of the astral world and its effects upon the material world allow us to choose our lairs with great care, ensuring a place safe from the taint of the Horrors, where we can work our magic freely. I





am sad to say that such places have become increasingly rare since the Scourge. Only the dragon lairs which remained sealed throughout the Scourge have avoided any touch of corruption. New lairs are becoming harder to find, and young dragons have been known to fight for control of a prime lair, or even to settle for lairing in more questionable territory, restraining much of their magic to avoid the notice of the Horrors.

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

## Shal-Mora

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

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

## Hunting & Eating

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

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

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

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





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

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

## Correspondence

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

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

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

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

*Drakes, Master?*

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

## Hoarding

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

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

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

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





## Personal Interests

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Walking on Two Legs

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

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

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

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

There is a legend among your people of how King Varulus the First would disguise himself as a commoner using illusion magic and walk out among his people. He desired to hear their opinions and concerns, and to debate important issues with them without the separation of king and commoner. I can tell you he got that idea from us (from Doll-Maker, to be specific). We already knew the value of seeing the world through another set of eyes. Our knowledge of





form-changing also allowed us to give our drake servants the inborn ability to assume Name-giver form, blending the most useful aspects of the Young Races with draconic resilience and strength.

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

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

I also quite like your hands.

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

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

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

*Excuse me, Master, did you say mating?*

What? Oh, yes. Yes, I did.

*Then you have... ?*

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

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

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

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

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

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







## Dragon Magic

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

### Innate Magic

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Spell Magic

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





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

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

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

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

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

## Thread Magic

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

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

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

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

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





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

## Spirit Magic

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

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

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

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

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

## Blood Magic

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

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

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

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





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

## Ritual Magic

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

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

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

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

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

*I needed to hear nothing further.]*





## CONCERNING THE DIVERSE TYPES OF DRAGONS

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

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

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

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

### Common Dragons

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

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

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

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

Other than those traits, western dragons differ greatly in appearance. Our dragon scales come in all the colors of the Earth itself: from nearly black to deep green, brown, golden, silvery or deep blue. Most are a single color, and are usually darker towards the back and paler towards the belly, underside and wings. A rare few dragons are multiple colors, or decorated with patterns of stripes or even spots.





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

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

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

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

## Leviathans

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

## On the Form of Leviathans

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

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

A leviathan's jaws are generally larger than those of a land dragon, with long, sharp teeth. They are capable of swallowing entire schools of fish, or fishing boats, for that matter. A leviathan's bite is its strongest attack, for they lack powerful talons and wings such as my kind have. Some also strike with their whip-like tail, a blow powerful enough to





smash a small boat. I have encountered some leviathans with venom nearly as strong as that of a land-dragon, including ones who retain a powerful stinger in their tails, not too dissimilar to that found on wyverns.

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

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

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

## On Leviathan Culture

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

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

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

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

## On Leviathans and Name-Givers

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

Leviathans rarely welcome any Name-givers into their watery realm. Even other dragons are treated with grudging respect, and a leviathan is quite likely to invoke a Rite of Challenge on any dragon so foolish as to disturb its domain unbidden. Fortunately, they have no concern about the skies over the sea, and other dragons can soar high over





the waters without offering insult to the kings of the sea, provided they do not hunt or seek to collect goods the leviathans consider their own. In general, adult leviathans do not attack ships on the surface without provocation—usually only when their domain is threatened. The same is not true however of adolescent leviathans, who are quite likely to assault any ship or creature that gets too close.

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

## On the Magic of Leviathans

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

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

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

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

## Cathay Dragons

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

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

## On the Form of Cathay Dragons

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







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

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

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

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

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

## On Servants (and Slaves)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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





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

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

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

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

*But did you not say that Cathay dragons keep slaves?*

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

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

## On the Culture of Cathay Dragons

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

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

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

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

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

As part of that appreciation, Cathay dragons collect many diverse items that capture their attention. The hoard of a Cathay dragon is a sight to behold, containing artworks and fine things from far and wide. Cathay dragons are less





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

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

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

## On the Magic of Cathay Dragons

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

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

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

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

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

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





## Feathered Dragons

The remaining children of Dayheart chose to dwell in the hot, sunlit lands of the south. They are the brightly colored Dragons of Fire, known as feathered dragons by your scholars and those of the Theran Empire. They are the rarest of dragons in this part of the world, rarer even than the legendary Cathay dragons. Feathered dragons are most often found quite far from Barsaive, in the warm, tropical lands across the great ocean, near Araucania, where they are called Quetzal by the native Name-givers. Feathered dragons are also known to live in the warm regions closer to this land, such as Indrisa, and in the central and southern regions of Fekara near the ancient Nuboz Empire.

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

### On the Form of Feathered Dragons

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

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

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

### On the Life and Culture of Feathered Dragons

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

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

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

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





hazards. Only when the visitors are outside the jungle confines do they look back to see a brightly-feathered form vanish back into the foliage.

Beyond this, feathered dragons have little to do with other Name-givers who live nearby. In fact, most Name-givers in lands that are home to feathered dragons consider them little more than large, dangerous creatures, and do not afford them the same respect and awe dragons are shown elsewhere in the world. These members of the Young Races do not realize that the feathered ones are vast fonts of knowledge and wisdom, and avoid them. I believe it is this misunderstanding that drives feathered dragons to treat other Name-givers in the manner described above. Those Name-givers should see that surely any beings who enjoy playing pranks and aiding lost travelers are more than mere beasts.

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

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

## On the Magic of Feathered Dragons

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

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

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

Along with their knowledge of blood magic, feathered dragons make considerable use of other magic, as I have mentioned. Many are spellcasters of considerable skill, particularly with illusion magic. Others practice elementalism and study the forces abroad in their jungle homes, in particular the different types of elemental spirits and animals. Some few





feathered dragons also study nethermancy, particularly those with a strong interest in blood magic as well. These dragons have a great understanding of the netherworlds and astral space, perhaps too great an understanding for the comfort of others, as there are many things in the netherworlds that are best left alone.

Like the great dragons of Barsaive and Cathay, great feathered dragons are masters of magic far beyond that practiced by adult feathered ones. Great feathered dragons create drake servants just as we do, though not as often. Drakes are used by feathered dragons primarily as their eyes and ears in the cities and lands of other Name-givers, and are less often used to pursue a particular agenda. As you might expect, these drakes resemble small feathered dragons, as our drakes resemble us. As with other drakes, they can assume Name-giver form if necessary.

## Great Dragons

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

### On the Abilities of Great Dragons

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

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

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

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

### On the Role of Great Dragons

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

The first duty of a great dragon is to look to the future. We care for the eggs and the young who hatch from them. The future of all dragonkind is placed in our care. Young are quite rare among dragons. We mate only once in one of your lifetimes, and the hatching of an egg requires another dwarf lifetime or the passing of perhaps five or more generations of orks. While you Young Races breed rapidly (so rapidly that it's a wonder there is room enough for all of





you), we dragons do not. Every new life is precious to us, which is why only the most experienced and learned among us are entrusted to guard and raise the young.

I have seen how you Young Races deal with your children. Anyone is permitted to be a parent simply because they feel the need to mate. Some parents are loving and raise their children well, but many are foolish or uncaring or simply unprepared for the responsibility. In fact, many care nothing for their offspring, casting them aside, while others treat children as no better than pets or possessions. Your vast numbers seem to make you value a single life far less. Why be concerned, when there will always be more children, more Name-givers? I suspect it is the cause of much of the social unrest among your kind.

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

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

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

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

## On Dragon-Like Creatures

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

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

### Drakes

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

*Servants of the past, Master?*

Don't change the subject, Tiabdjin.

Drakes are not Name-givers. They are not born from others of their kind, but made using powerful magic. The enchantments used in creating a single drake are complex, lengthy and involved, far beyond the understanding of any of





your people. These enchantments are so complex that they are beyond the skills of even most adult dragons, never mind magicians of the Young Races. The enchantments are also quite exhausting, for the spark of life to create the drake must come from its maker. Drakes are our magical children, in a manner of speaking, rather than children born of mating. Once the drake is formed, it is given a Name of its own.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### False Drakes

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

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

*I find it curious that even a great dragon like Vasdenjas can speak so easily about magically creating life from nothing, a feat only the most powerful magicians can accomplish. When we first talked years ago, while compiling the Creatures of Barsaive*







collection, Vasdenjas spoke often of the “tampering” Name-giver magicians performed on the natural development of certain creatures, experiments which led to the creation of things like the naga and the hydra.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Hydras

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

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

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

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

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

When she discovered what had happened to her children, Thermail went mad from grief. She flew over the lands of Barsaive, burning villages and razing cities, killing any Name-givers who stood in her way. Still, no matter how





many she killed, she could not find the thief who caused the awful metamorphosis, nor could she bring back her lost children. Finally, to end her pain, she impaled herself on the pinnacle of a high mountain, which other Name-givers called Mount Wyrmspire—the same peak under which we sit, Tiabdjin. Thermail was one of the finest of our kind, and I honor her memory here in my lair Named for her, not me.

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

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

## Wyverns

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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





*Although the Master of Secrets describes wyverns as stupid and savage beasts, he speaks quite highly of their combat abilities. If I did not know better, I would almost think he was exaggerating the threat posed by a wyvern to make them seem more fearsome. They are deadly creatures, to be sure, but wyvern hunters manage to kill them fairly often. One would think the great dragon wished to give other Name-givers a reason not to hunt wyverns. Unfortunately, I have no facts to offer, only the speculations and musings of a humble scholar.]*

