



a dozen ancient DRAGONS

BY PHILIP REED

The signature monster of the world's top fantasy role-playing game, the dragon is a majestic and imposing creature that puts fear into even the most powerful of adventurers. In most campaigns, dragons are rarely seen, mostly spending their time in deep slumber on their massive treasure hoards. The whispered threat of a dragon can sometimes be a more powerful story device than including an actual dragon in the adventure.

What follows are twelve dragons, NPCs that GMs may use as they feel is appropriate to their campaigns.

"These creatures vary in size and capabilities, but are generally huge winged reptiles that can spit fire, acid, cold, or other fell creations."

*– Cyclopedia of the Realms,
Ed Greenwood and Jeff Grubb*

These dragons include background (and, at times, personality) info, as well as suggestions on how the dragons could interact with the adventurers (if at all). As always, it is your responsibility as the GM to generate any necessary statistics. An encounter with a dragon should always be a memorable experience for the party; please don't make meeting a dragon a common event.

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anatomy OF a DRAGON

1. Every dragon includes an illustration to help spark your imagination as you think through how to best use the creature in your campaign.
2. The dragon's name.
3. Each dragon includes background information to setup the dragon's possible place in your campaign. At times, when appropriate, a description of the dragon's personality has also been included.
4. Involving the party. This section describes the way(s) in which you may introduce the dragon to the adventurers. At times, it is less of a direct introduction between the two and more of how they could become involved with the dragon and/or the events in motion around the beast.



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2 **XEDDRARYT**

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Captured at the Battle of Shadow's Crash, the great wyrm Xeddraryt is a powerful green dragon who is being held against his will by the mercenary company Hell's Regulars. Xeddraryt has been chained and imprisoned for the last decade, hidden in the mercenary company's keep some twelve days ride from Toothgate. During his time of imprisonment, Xeddraryt has been under the influence of dark magicks that keep the dragon from being truly aware and conscious of his surroundings. The leaders of Hell's Regulars worry that if the dragon were to ever become aware of his predicament, the beast would do everything in its power to escape and destroy the company.

Before his capture, Xeddraryt was a cruel creature who enjoyed terrorizing the lands and taking whatever treasures that he could to add to his hoard. One thing that the Hell's Regulars have been unable to do in the time that Xeddraryt has been their prisoner is to find the dragon's lair and treasures.

Unknown to the mercenary forces' grunts, the spells that keep the dragon weak and powerless are starting to slowly, one by one, wear off. And the wizards who first subdued the dragon are no longer with the group. It is only a matter of time before the dragon wakes.

Involving the party. There are two ways in which the adventurers could get wrapped up in the fate of the Hell's Regulars and Xeddraryt, neither one of which will lead to a happy ending.

- One of the mercenary company's scouts is met in a city where he is attempting to hire powerful mages to ensorcell the dragon and keep it weak for another decade. The scout is authorized to enlist others in the quest to find wizards capable of the magic necessary to ensorcell the dragon; he meets the party at a tavern and offers them 1,000 gold for every high-power wizard that they convince to visit the keep in the next week. Payment will be made after the visiting wizard(s) cast their spells.
- Servants of Xeddraryt know that the magics that prevent their master from escape have to be wearing off by now. They've kept an eye on the company's scout and doing all that they can to thwart his efforts. The servants of Xeddraryt, if they figure out that the party is now assisting the scout, offer to double the scout's promised reward if the party promises to attack and murder any wizard who is traveling to the keep. Such spellcasters are sure to be powerful, so battle may prove especially dangerous to the party.

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USING THE DRAGONS

Most campaigns never see a single dragon, let alone twelve, so the dragons that have been detailed on the following pages should last for your entire career as a gamemaster, right? Or not. I know that some are far more liberal when tossing dragons into their campaigns; if you're running a game world that is swarming with dragons, it is possible that you will burn through all twelve of these dragons in a single session. I certainly hope not; your player characters won't know what hit them if you do that.

Background. You may never even introduce the PCs to the dragons, instead keeping the stories of the various dragons as background matter for your game world. When used in this way, these dragon descriptions are used to help add flavor and depth to your world.

Adventure. You're an insane one, aren't you? You truly plan to bring one of these dragons into the campaign and pit the party against the wyrm and its situation. When used in this way, you'll want to take time to prepare the dragon's game stats, using your preferred game system and the description that follows as a guide in your efforts.

Inspiration. Maybe none of these dragons are an exact fit for your campaign and you instead find the dozen wyrms a source of inspiration when writing up your own dragon. Awesome. I am always honored and excited to learn when someone uses my work as a guide to devising something of their own. If you do create a dragon after reading the twelve I've detailed, please let me know on Twitter: [@philipjreed](https://twitter.com/philipjreed).

MOKAELMIAKRA



A giant of a black dragon, Mokaelmiakra – also known as The Betrayer – lives in the ruins of Castle Graymaw several days ride from the port cities of the eastern plains. The castle, once home to King Graymaw, was reduced to its current state during a battle between the king and the dragon. The king was defeated, his home destroyed, and his army scattered, though the dragon paid a serious price for the victory; Mokaelmiakra tapped into dark magicks and traded his soul to a devil for the power necessary to defeat Graymaw. Now, when the dragon dies, he will forever suffer in the hells of the devil who owns his soul.

Mokaelmiakra is working on the problem and thinks he has found a way to break the bond and free his soul from the devil's grasp. Mokaelmiakra has uncovered the resting place of an artifact, the Crown of Holy Defense, that is rumored to make the wearer strong enough to bend a demon's will to his own. If true, he can use this artifact to make the devil release his soul from captivity.

The crown is in a distant dungeon, too far for the dragon to risk visiting since it would mean passing through the lands of competing dragons. Mokaelmiakra has issued a reward for the item, paying rogues to spread leaflets to the larger cities in an attempt to spur adventurers into seeking out and recovering the artifact.

Unfortunately for the dragon, the stories of the artifact are inaccurate. While the Crown of Holy Defense truly does exist, it is not the powerful magic item as told in the tales of bards and sages. The crown provides good-aligned characters with protection against attacks, and nothing more. The crown will not free the dragon's soul from its hellish prison.

Involving the party. The group comes across one of the parchment notices, tacked to the wall of a tavern, and may either leave the promise of a ruby worth hundreds of gold or seek out one Noqia Anyll, the dragon's representative in their city.

Anyll is a human male thief, forty-odd winters of age and missing his left hand, who shows them sketches of the promised ruby as well as a promissory note signed by a local magistrate promising that the ruby is being held safely and will be traded for the powerful crown.

If they accept the assignment, Anyll provides them with a map and directions to the distant dungeon. The thief has no knowledge or information on the dungeon beyond its location; what is inside, or where the crown may be resting, are details that are unknown and will have to be learned on the fly. Will the party go weeks out of their way for a chance at finding the crown?



ZAZZURRI

Reddish-brown in color, Zazzurri's scales are thicker and sturdier than those of many dragons. Centuries ago, the dragon came into possession of a wish scroll and used the magic to strengthen his armored hide. The magic turned the red dragon's scales the brownish color that they are now, but the spell also functioned as promised; Zazzurri's natural defense against physical attacks is greater than that of many dragons.

Zazzurri lives on an isolated, distant island off the coast of the eastern cliffs. The island was once populated by a colony of dwarves; the dragon's invasion of the island was swift and deadly and it was only hours after Zazzurri reached the island that he was the only living, sentient being on the small island.

After murdering the dwarves, Zazzurri used his magic – as well as several stone shaping scrolls he found in the ruins of the dwarvish homes – to reshape parts of the island and construct a suitable nest for himself on a low mountain on the island's southern edge.

Since assuming control of the island several years ago, the dragon has raided passing ships for both food – eating the sailors, as well as the livestock they sometimes transport – and for riches. Zazzurri has a thirst for raw metals and is thankful that some of the merchant ships that sail within sight of his home are transporting silver, gold, and mithral from a distant quarry to the populated lands where the metals are turned into goods.

Involving the party. Maybe they are signed on to serve as guards for one of the ships that sail near the island, or maybe the adventurers are unwitting passengers who race to the upper decks when they hear screams of a dragon's attack. Either way, almost any encounter with Zazzurri will be on a ship; it is unlikely that the party can reach the dragon's island home without being spotted.

Combating the dragon from the deck of a rolling, unsteady ship will test the skills of the party. Many tactics that they would use in battle are useless in such a confined space. Fighting the dragon could prove fatal.



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Roameidirth

The greatest warbeast of the Army of Azahr Innuneas, the dragon Roameidirth fights for the frightening and powerful human anti-paladin for a single reason: The promises of treasure. Innuneas has sworn that the dragon gets first claim on any riches captured in battle, and the dragon has used this deal to amass more and more magic items for his constantly growing hoard.

The relationship between the anti-paladin and the dragon is stronger than many would have guessed. The pair have worked together for two centuries; Innuneas uses evil potions to extend his life and, when unhelmeted, looks to be no more than fifty years of age.

Roameidirth's lair is far to the north; the anti-paladin calls the dragon to battle through a magic ring that summons the beast. The evil knight had the ring created several decades ago and it tells him at all times where the dragon is and how much time it will take for the dragon to fly to his location.

Recently, Innuneas has been calling on the dragon far more often. Years ago, the dragon was only summoned to battle once every decade or so. Lately, Roameidirth has been called once every few months.

The dragon is fine with this increase in activity. The fighting excites Roameidirth, and every victory means more and more treasures for his hoard. Why Innuneas is escalating his attacks is unknown, but there can be no good reason for the increase in brutality.

Involving the party. Two ways in which the player characters could encounter the dragon include:

- They are hired by a town that has captured and interrogated one of Innuneas' many spies. It seems that the town is on the anti-paladin's list and the town, with advance knowledge of the attack, is doing what they can to hire mercenaries and adventurers to help defend them in the coming battle. They are promised a bonus if they can kill the dragon.
- Innuneas puts out a call for soldiers, offering to pay any and all who join him in an upcoming fight. If the PCs choose to fight on the side of evil, they are assigned to the group of guards who are tasked with defending Roameidirth during combat. Are the PCs truly working for the anti-paladin, or have they found a way to get close to the dragon and possibly kill it before the attack gets underway?

naygeiss



One of the largest, most powerful dragons known to ever exist, Naygeiss is said to be in a deep sleep somewhere miles beneath the surface of the world. It has been over seven centuries since the dragon last terrorized the surface world and now, after so many years in slumber, many people consider the dragon little more than a fairy tale that was created to scare children.

Unfortunately for the unbelievers and the people of the lands, the stories of Naygeiss are true. The dragon is taller than even the tallest of towers and is too big to fit in the courtyard and market square of many castles and towns. Naygeiss may be sleeping, but that doesn't stop the dragon's influence from reaching out and affecting the world above his lair.

Naygeiss, through dreams and magic, has infected a few dozen humans and halflings of the lands, assuming control of their minds. These unwitting and unknowing sleeper agents are preparing for the dragon to awaken. They are purchasing livestock and workers, preparing for a subterranean journey.

The waking sleepers are collecting the livestock and the workers to feed to the dragon when he fully awakens. Little do these agents know, they will also be consumed by the dragon, transformed into the fuel he will need to fully awaken after centuries of sleep.

Involving the party. The party hears of a demand for workers and guards for an underground expedition and the pay sounds more than reasonable. The group meets a woman, Zeless Muhaen, who tells them that they would make excellent guards for the caravan.

If the party accompanies Muhaen on her journey, they're provided with horses (if they do not have them) and one-quarter of their pay at the outset of the journey. Of course, Muhaen is unaware that the dragon has enslaved her mind; no amount of prying will reveal the truth behind the caravan.

Skilled adventurers will start to suspect something is wrong after a few days of travel. Gods help them if they make it as far as the dragon's underground lair.



QIEZUSDESS

Many evil dragons dislike others, but few have a hatred as strong for mages as the ancient copper wyrm Qiezusdess. While many of the metallic dragons are known as good, if aloof, protectors of the lands, the dragon named Qiezusdess is far from good or a protector. 500 years ago, during a battle with demonic forces from the demiplane of Lavask, Qiezusdess was the sole survivor when her companions were murdered when their commander, a human paladin, was possessed by dark forces and transformed into an agent of evil.

The destruction of her friends broke the dragon's spirit and mind, changing Qiezusdess forever in a negative way. She swore to never again trust others and soon devolved, her mind giving way to a brutal instinct for survival and destruction that few can match.

Ever since the battle, Qiezusdess has focused on actions that would be more fitting of a chromatic dragon than one of the noble, powerful metallics. Former friends shake their head in sadness when they hear her name.

Qiezusdess has made her lair in the ruins of a cathedral that she helped to build in her youth. Working closely with the human clerics and priests of the Goddess of Stars, Qiezusdess spent two decades constructing the cathedral. After the battle, where her mind was shattered, the dragon's first act was to return to the cathedral and slaughter all who were unfortunate enough to be there on her return.

Involving the party. The adventurers may be hired by the council of dragons to put an end to Qiezusdess and her miserable life. They reason that she has had plenty of time to overcome her grief and realize her mistakes, and now it is time for the council to act and prevent her from continuing her thoughtless, evil ways.

If the party accepts the assignment, the council provides them with a magic lance that has been in their possession for a thousand years. The lance, if it strikes the heart of any dragon, will burst into flames and unleash an arcane bolt into the dragon's heart, killing it.



GOMRYNAESS

The chromatic dragon Gomrynaess is a half-breed beast with a (now dead) red mother and a (still living) blue father. Gomrynaess has spent the last 852 winters growing stronger and stronger and is almost ready to attack his enemy, his blue dragon father, Cagorth.

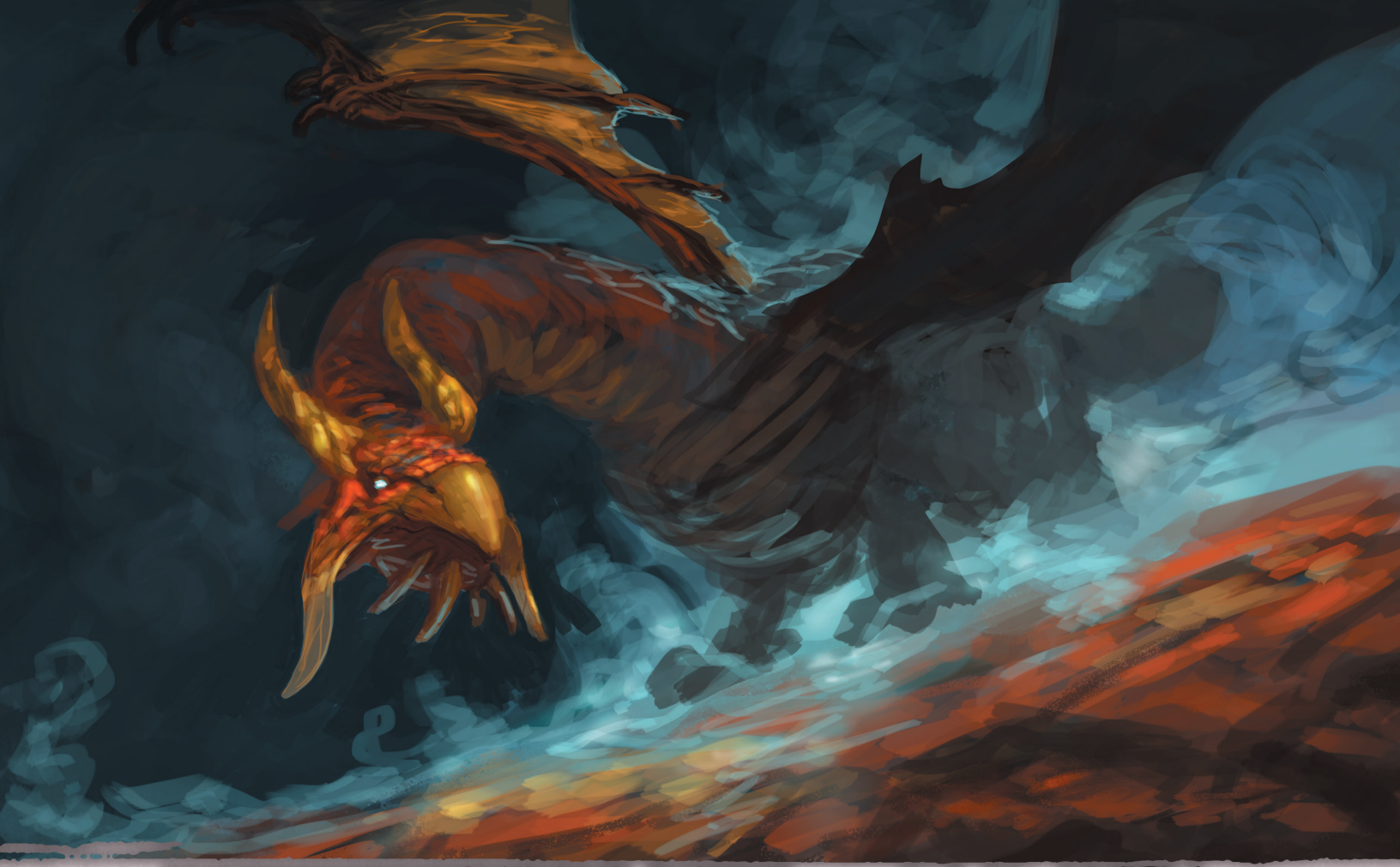
Why does Gomrynaess wish to kill his father? Cagorth killed the dragon's mother three hundred years ago when the two had a falling out and Cagorth decided that he deserved his former mate's most valued possession, the spellbook of Vepanth Arulth, a human wizard that the two dragons had captured and killed centuries before Gomrynaess was born.

Cagorth knows that his son intends to try and kill him, and now both dragons are taking the steps necessary to come out ahead in the inevitable conflict. Both are using their servants and hirelings to wage a war, with Cagorth the likely victor since he possesses more treasures to share with his followers.

What Cagorth does not know, though, is that Gomrynaess has managed to find the second of the wizard Arulth's spellbooks. Gomrynaess has been studying the spellbook for the last decade or so, memorizing the powerful spells described within so that when it is time, he will be ready to slay his father and capture the hoard of both parents.

Involving the party. Standing between two battling dragons is not the best place to be, even if you have happened to partner with one of the two. Both Gomrynaess and Cagorth are hiring warriors to serve in their armies, and word soon spreads through the largest of cities that there is good coin to be made by signing on with one of the two evil wyrms.

The party may choose to hire on as mercenaries to either dragon, or they may attempt to take advantage of the situation and try to infiltrate one – or both! – of the lairs when the two dragons finally face each other.



SHARGYNT

The scales of Shargynt shimmer like gold, the armored plates colored a coppery red that is unforgettable and unlike any other great wyrm in recorded history. Shargynt is an unnatural being, the result of a planar accident that happened the day a gate between this world and the demiplane of Shargaunt was destroyed. The destruction closed the gate, yes, but it also killed seven powerful sorcerers and two dragons who worked together to shatter the gate.

In place of the gate, which was once a small drawbridge over the Sonnata river, remained only rubble and the corpse of one of the dragons. The bodies of the others were consumed in the blast. Surprisingly, none of the scavengers would touch the dragon's body and, over a few weeks, those keeping a close eye on the incident noticed that the dragon was healing, the broken and burned body slowly reconstructing itself through unknown magic. Two months after the destruction of the gate, the corpse rose and proclaimed itself alive.

Shargynt possesses the memories, powers, and intelligence of the wizards and dragon who died to close the gate, and he has spent the last 600 years keeping an eye on the since rebuilt drawbridge. Shargynt is making certain that the gate is not reconstructed or reopened and has made a lair for himself within an hour's flight of the site of the former gateway.

Involving the party. Two possibilities:

- The sorceress Annesinore has heard of Shargynt and wishes a meeting. She seeks a group of brave souls willing to locate the dragon and convince him to meet with her. If the dragon refuses a meeting, she'll pay even more if the group will cut out the dragon's brain and bring it to her tower.
- Shargynt has heard rumors of a new gate that leads to Shargaunt and wishes to hire the party to investigate. If it is a true gate, the dragon will destroy it.



CANDIOLANTH

The ancient red dragon known as Candiolanth lives deep beneath one of the coastal cities of the land, the only entrance to its lair a cavernous chamber beneath the ocean. The dragon has spent hundreds of years hiring workers to find and seal all other entrances into the lair; a network of tunnels – both natural and dwarvish-made – have been collapsed over the years in the dragon’s efforts to limit access to her home.

Candiolanth keeps the location of her lair secret by both killing all who may discover the caverns beneath the city and by only rising from the ocean miles from the coast. The dragon prefers to swim a great distance rather than risk discovery. Little is quite as terrifying to a sailor as the sight of a large, powerful dragon breaking from the waves and soaring into the sky.

The dragon dislikes being wet and is always angry and in a foul mood when it first exits from the ocean. For this reason, Candiolanth has learned to give herself some time between leaving her lair and meeting any human agents that she may have hired. It does no good to eat everyone she hires before they finish their work.

With almost no contacts in the city, the dragon relies instead on magical constructs to keep her informed of the activities of the city. Candiolanth has 2d10+6 golems acting in the city at any time, each stone golem in the shape of a statue or gargoyle on any one of the taller towers or walls in the city.

Involving the party. The dragon is always after information and sometimes changes to human form to enter the city and collect news. While her magical constructs do a good job of notifying her of the bigger issues of the city, Candiolanth has found that nothing is as enjoyable as joining humans in a tavern and engaging with them as “equals.”

In her human form, Candiolanth appears as an elderly, attractive woman dressed in red robes and a dark, black cloak. She identifies herself as a sorceress and sometimes hires out her services to adventurers who might be preparing an expedition to a dungeon complex or ruin that the dragon has not yet visited. Candiolanth goes on these adventures for two reasons: The thrill and the chance to collect more treasures for her hoard.



AMONONTH THE BRUTAL

This great green dragon is from another realm, brought here weeks ago by a spell gone wrong. Amononth has no lair on this world and wants nothing more than to return to his home. The dragon has been ravaging the towns and villages of the plains, spreading devastation as he seeks out those responsible for ripping him from his lair and dropping him into this strange and unknown world.

Those who brought the dragon into this world were seeking to open a gateway between this world and the demiplane of Amononth; a mistake when pronouncing the demiplane's name is what sucked the dragon from his lair. The responsible casters have fled, and several of them were killed by the dragon within moments of his arrival on our world.

Involving the party. There several ways in which the adventurers may become involved with Amononth and the dragon's current situation. Some options benefit and enrich the group, while others are more noble and lead to a tense, though strong feeling of respect and admiration between the dragon and the player characters. Three possible connections:

- The party learns of a dragon loose in the distant plains of the north and set out to protect the people from the beast. Once there, they learn of how the dragon was brought to their world and hear whispers that there is a spell that will return the dragon to its rightful home. Can they convince the dragon to be patient and wait for them to locate the spell and a wizard powerful enough to send the dragon home?
- One of the player character spellcasters looks a little like one of those who tore the dragon from his home. The dragon has been trading with a few towns; promising to spare their lands in exchange for information on the whereabouts of the survivors of his entry to our world. The town sends word to the dragon that they have located one of the casters.
- The city elders put out word of a bounty on the head of a rampaging dragon, promising 5,000 gold coins to any who bring them the dragon's eyes. Of course, slaughtering a dragon is difficult and one with no treasure on this world makes the task even less appealing to many who seek riches. Still, coin is coin, right? How strong can the dragon really be?



XZOMONTH

Unlike many dragons, Xzomonth prefers to make her presence known to the world as often as she can. So long as she is strong and unwounded, this vile blue wyrm will launch attacks on small towns in an attempt to destroy and slaughter whatever and whoever is in her path. Xzomonth doesn't care if the people put out the call for dragon hunters and offer rewards for her death. In fact, she revels in the attention and is always hoping that the price offered for her death will be higher and higher every time the bounty papers are circulated.

Xzomonth lives in a cave near the peak of a tall, craggy mountain known commonly as Dragon's Tower. The climb up the mountain – which is mostly sheer cliffs and jagged rocky outcroppings scattered here and there – is extremely dangerous and it is the safety of her lair that has led the dragon to be so destructive and reckless.

Some towns close to Dragon's Tower have spent time and money on training the citizens in archery, though all of this effort has come at a great cost as these towns spend less time in collecting food for the winter months and more time preparing to fight the dragon. One year, this will prove to be their undoing.

At the moment, there are seven different rewards being offered for the dragon's head. A clever group of hunters will try to claim each of the offered rewards, but that will take some skill to convince seven towns to each pay for the head (when there is only a single head).

Involving the party. Three possible ways in which the adventurers could get caught up in the action:

- They make the decision to try and claim one of the rewards being offered for the dragon's death. The climb is too dangerous, so they try to ambush the dragon and murder it near one of the affected towns.
- The party enters a town shortly after the dragon attacked. One of the townspeople was captured in the fight and his relatives will pay for his return.
- The party offers themselves as defenders, asking for a weekly stipend for so long as they are in town and promise to fight the dragon if it should appear. Are they cowards who soak up the town's gold for weeks, maybe months, and then flee at first sign of a true dragon?



SEIDREORTH and QATOIS

The dragon twins, Seidreorth and Qatois, ancient black wyrms born over five centuries ago, are linked by birth and personality. The two beasts are wicked, destructive, and have only become more unbearable since one of the two, Seidreorth, was cursed by a wish spell that has trapped the dragon in the form of a human mage.

Seidreorth, the elder of the two by five minutes, often takes charge of any situation and often commands his brother, Qatois, even though Seidreorth is currently in a less noble body. Qatois may, one day, realize that Seidreorth's powers have been diminished and may very well turn against and devour his brother. The day that happens, Qatois will become the sole owner of the treasure that they have shared since birth.

Seidreorth maintains his position as leader of the two because he is both smarter and more ruthless than his brother. Seidreorth allows his evil nature to dictate almost all of their actions, giving in to the most terrible and evil of impulses and willing to do anything it takes to add more treasure to their shared hoard.

Their lair is near the summit of one of the mountains in the Arcahaian Range, a line of volcanoes – both active and inactive – that stretches far to the south of the civilized lands. The two visit cities less often since Seidreorth was turned into a human.

Involving the party. It is possible that the adventurers hear rumors of a dragon who was changed into a human and decide to set out in search of the creature's treasure. Whether or not the rumors mention Qatois, who is still very much a dragon, is up to the GM to decide.

Other ways in which the draconic pair can be used in the campaign include:

- The dragons spread the rumor in hopes of attracting adventurers – and the riches that they carry – to their lair. Kill the PCs and keep their stuff!
- Qatois has turned on his brother and is looking to hire adventurers to “attack” the lair. The dragon promises to pay if the group kills his brother.