

A Rampaging Dragon

Stories about dragons rampaging across the countryside are almost always false. The creatures are just too intelligent, too crafty, and too strategy-minded to “rampage.” Rampaging brings the wrath of oath-bound knights, powerful mages and divinely-protected priests. Why would a dragon want such attention, unless it had some special secret, or unless it was insane?

Or both.

The northern reaches of the Derideth Swamp were once plagued by a rampaging dragon. This black dragon, named Storamere, attacked human villages, wiped out orc camps, drove off the lizardfolk, and decimated farmland. Storamere had inherited an impressive lair perhaps more fitting for a dragon of much greater stature. He attacked settlements in order to draw vengeful heroes into this lair to defeat them utterly within its dangerous confines. Storamere took a great deal a mad glee from this.

Over two hundred and fifty years ago, however, he met his untimely end. The monks of the Order of St. Chausle goaded him into attacking what appeared to be a defenseless monastery, and then slew him outright in a sudden surprise ambush. Storamere died with a curse upon his draconic tongue. “You could not have defeated me in my lair,” he told his slayers. “I am forever invincible in my lair.”

Adventure Synopsis

The player characters are contacted to help a small community in need. Iversham, a village on the edge of a dismal swamp, is plagued by a black dragon. This seemingly routine (if challenging) mission proves to be much more than it appears, however. Reports from witnesses who have seen the dragon and survived turn up some strange facts. The dragon has been seen to pass through trees. Its gaze seems to inflict harm all by itself. The dragon’s touch saps the life from

living things. If any of these things are true, this is no ordinary dragon.

More poking around town reveals this important bit of information: it refers to itself as “Storamere,” a dragon that hasn’t been seen for several hundred years. If this is Storamere, he should be much older (and thus bigger) than reports describe the dragon being. These clues alone might lead smart players to figure out that Storamere is dead — or rather, undead. Of course, many won’t. The same information can be learned by traipsing into the swamp looking for the dragon. After some other encounters, eventually the PCs run into the ghost of the dragon. They can either flee from Storamere or defeat him; it doesn’t matter. Ghosts just come back unless permanently laid to rest.

THE MAD MONKS

Advice from people in Iversham suggests that the PCs visit an old monastery in the swamp that may hold information about the dragon. The Monks of St. Chausle were Storamere’s original slayers. Now, unfortunately, there are only two monks left, and they are not up to the task that their forebears once undertook. In fact, they are both quite mad. It’s tricky to get information out of them, but once the PCs manage it, they learn that while Storamere was alive, he was supremely haughty, and overconfident. He always bragged about how powerful he was within his own lair. He stressed that he simply could not be defeated there. While at the monastery, the PCs must help defeat one of Storamere’s progeny, a terrible half-dragon stone giant.

And if the PCs get the information about its demise, they learn that in fact, Storamere wasn’t defeated in his lair — he was killed when he was attacking the monastery. That is the trick to laying Storamere to rest permanently: he must be defeated in his own lair. This lair has never been found, but clues learned at the monastery, linked with some other deductions (like, why

Storamere's ghost is showing up now, after all these years), lead the PCs to a strange old ruined tower recently plundered by some other adventurers. A broken bridge leading halfway across a river turns out to be a gateway to the Ethereal Plane.

THE ETHEREAL PALACE

Storamere wasn't joking when he said he was tough in his palace. His palace exists on the Ethereal Plane, on a floating island accessible by crossing the "broken" magical bridge near the ruined tower.

The palace itself is magical, in that the walls are made of solidified acid. Fecund and twisted, Storamere created a number of half-dragon creatures while he was alive — a half-dragon manticores, a half-dragon constrictor snake, and a few half-dragon dark elves. Many of his children remain in the palace with their ghostly sire.

Since they're on the Ethereal Plane, Storamere is more like a traditional dragon here than before. However, he has pools of acid to hide in, secret tricks for moving around the palace



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unseen, and other challenges for the PCs to deal with. Eventually, though, one epic battle later (or possibly two), the world is hopefully rid of the ghostly threat once and for all.

ENTER THE CHARACTERS

There are a number of ways the Game Moderator can get the Player Characters involved in the adventure.

- **A Plea for Help.** Perhaps through a common link (a friend, past associate, or relative local to the area around Iversham), or perhaps because of the PCs' reputation as heroes, the PCs receive a message from Iversham stating their problem with the dragon and the need for help. Mayor Unnis Mavin is offering a 1,000 gp reward — probably not enough to interest the characters, but enough to show that things are serious.

The plea includes the large size of the black dragon, cluing in-the-know characters (or players) that it's a mission well within their capabilities.

- **Just Passing By.** The characters are near the Derideth Swamp on other matters (a different adventure) when they hear that the area is being seriously threatened by a black dragon of Large size, cluing in-the-know characters (or players) that it's a mission well within their capabilities.
- **An Obscure Reference.** The PCs learn that something that they need regarding a different adventure (a lost magic item of importance, a key, a spell, etc.) is located in “the forever-hidden, always-burning fortress, deep in the Derideth Swamp.” This clue refers to Storamere's lair. It should not refer to Storamere — leave that to be a connection that the players must deduce for themselves.

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