

Dragon Fanciers of Quirm

Trading Gate Watch House Patrol no.1 get given a lot of special cases in exchange for a couple of extra dollars a month. Well, it's nice to be well regarded by Commander Vimes, and less boring than most police work. But this latest case looks set to be a bit tricky. It's a crime that nobody has reported, and you're definitely not investigating it as a personal favour for the Commander, or Lady Sybil. On top of which, the stolen property – if there is any – is violently dangerous, sometimes explosive, and possibly inbred. The same may go for its owner.

On the other hand, you have a free hand to investigate this however you like. Just so long as you don't break regulations, annoy the Commander, embarrass his wife, burn down the city, or fail to find out what's going on and make someone stop it. Who knows, you might even be able to put in for some overtime.

Background

The Marchioness of Molton, Lady Veronica Molton-Marrowby, is one of the Ankh-Morpork dragon fancy's leading members, but she has taken badly against Lady Sybil Vimes, out of sheer snobbery; she considers that Lady Sybil lets the side down by failing to preserve the dignity of her position – most of all by marrying a vulgar commoner (a *watchman!*) and somehow getting him elevated to a dukedom. So she has focused her dragon-handling skills on a breed to which Sybil has never especially taken; the **Quirmian Spinetail**, a large, aggressive but loyal variety, on which Lady Molton-Marrowby has thus become the acknowledged authority.

However, she, or rather her household, recently had the misfortune to employ a new undergardener, **Rokwill Plugg**, with an agenda. Plugg had engaged in a little unlicensed thievery in his time, which had come to the attention of **Little Fiona**, a new would-be gang boss (and herself unlicensed criminal); she used this as a blackmail hook to get Plugg to spy out the household. When Plugg mentioned the dragons, Little Fiona, for reasons of her own, took an interest and realised that she could find a use for them – and because they were kept in outbuildings (and aren't something which anyone with any sense normally tries to steal), they were quite vulnerable – especially as Little Fiona and her gang are gnomes.

So one night recently, Fiona and her henchmen slipped into the grounds of **Marrowby House**, got up on the roof of the dragon shed, levered up a couple of tiles, dropped in, and stunned several of the dragons with a version of the classic gnomish bird-taming powder. This gave them just enough control over the dragons that they were able to break them out, burn neatly through the back door of the shed, and make their escape via the sewers.

Lady Molton-Marrowby was of course outraged when she discovered that her best dragons were missing, presumed stolen. She immediately spoke to the Thieves' Guild (she has a full policy with them), but they denied all knowledge, though they did of course promise to hunt down the perpetrators, discretely. (They're trying, but they really don't have a clue what happened; they can be effective against human freelancers and people who sell their loot to known fences, but there's nowhere for them to start with this business, which has thrown them – especially as Lady Molton-Marrowby is demanding discretion.) She won't even consider speaking to the Watch; such people are beneath her notice, and she assumes that Lady Sibyl would laugh at her. However and in any case, **Crisps**, a major dragon-fancy show, is due to be held in Quirm in a couple of weeks, which leaves her with a problem.

If she can't get her prize beasts back *soon* to begin preparation, turning up to the show at all will be a humiliation. So she's probably going to have to cry off, blaming unspecified "personal reasons". Meanwhile, though, she's complained to her friends about the situation (she can't really keep it secret), and because she overestimates how many people share her opinion of Lady Sybil, word has got back there.

And now, Sybil has discussed this with Sam, who dislikes having people commit crimes in his city and getting away with them because of snobbery – so he's going to put the PCs onto the case.

Meanwhile, Little Fiona and her gang are improving their control over their new mounts, giving Fiona an air force for use in her campaign to undermine the Thieves' Guild and the Breccia. It'll take them a day or two, after which roofs start catching fire and unlicensed second storey work starts getting a lot more *incendiary*. The PCs have some chance to stop them first, but will probably end up (literally) fighting fires.

Oh, and Rokwill Plugg is hitting the bottle while not at work, because he's now seen Lady Molton-Marrowby *angry*, and he isn't sure that he's all square with his mystery blackmailer, so he feels potentially caught between a rock and a hard place.

Running the Game

The Briefing

One morning, as soon as they arrive at work, the PCs are sent to Pseudopolis Yard, as Commander Vimes himself apparently has a job for them. He's sitting in his office amid mounds of paperwork, as usual; what's unusual is that his wife is sitting on a chair beside the desk, looking concerned. However, the Commander launches straight into an explanation.

"This is a bloomin' nuisance," he says, "but Lady Sybil here tells me that there's probably a crime been committed, but not reported. We might let that go, I suppose, but this sounds like it was a big enough robbery that we can't just ignore it.

"I dunno if any of you have ever heard of Lady Veronica Molton-Marrowby, but she's the Marchioness of Molton, so she's more the sort that I have to put up with. Except that I don't, because apparently she doesn't like me very much. I don't ask why not, because that's one less set of parties I have to go to." (*Lady Sybil looks mildly irritated.*) "I get the impression that honest working coppers aren't good enough for the likes of her. But like my good wife here, she has something of a fondness for, well, swamp dragons. Charming creatures, I'm sure that you'll agree." (*He stares hard at the PCs.*) "In fact, I gather she's a bit of an expert on one variety, the, what was it..."

"The Quirmian Spinetail," Lady Sybil says. "A robust breed, and appealing enough if you like a strong-backed dragon, but a trifle high-spirited for my tastes. Loyal to their owners, once they are convinced to accept you – more of a pack breed than some – but let's just say that the show judges need double-thickness gloves for that class. I'm happy to leave them to Veronica... Oh, I'm sorry dear."

"Yes, well." The Commander shrugs. "The trouble is, it seems like someone else is taking an interest in her hobby. According to my good wife's friends on the circuit, a bunch of Lady Molton's best dragons were swiped from her own dragon sheds in the middle of the night."

"Two weeks before Crisps, in Quirm," Sybil comments sadly. "I imagine that she's quite upset..."

“And maybe I can’t feel that much sympathy for her,” Sam cuts in, “but like you people, I’m a copper, so that isn’t supposed to count, is it? Those dragons are worth a few dollars, I’m told, which makes this a serious offence. But the Marchioness has chosen not to report it.

“Well, I suppose that she’s got the usual contract with the *Thieves’ Guild*, but this doesn’t look like something they’d be involved in, and the word among the, ah, dragon fancy, is that she’s not seeing much sign of her dragons coming back. We could leave it there, we’d have every excuse, but I’m not making any damned excuses for this Watch not doing their job. Just because Lady Veronica can’t bring herself to report a crime, doesn’t mean that anyone should get away with it in *my city*.

“So I want to find out what’s happened here, but it would probably be bad politics for me to stick a nose in m’self, so you lads are going to have to earn your extra pay. But we can’t go marching onto some Marchioness’s private property without a damned good excuse, which we don’t have, so you’re going to have to be subtle about it.

“So you’ve got my permission to do this one in plain clothes, and it’s official business so you can use Watch equipment, but you *haven’t* got my permission to break the law. If Lady Molton finds out that we’ve been digging into her business without her permission, I’ll have Mr Slant from the Lawyers down here bending my ear for a week, and I may have to follow his advice about enforcing the rules that some idiot constable has broken.

“Oh, and one other thing. You’re *not* doing this as a personal favour for me or for Lady Sybil. So far as we’re concerned, Veronica Molton-Marrowby can stew in her own snobbery. You’re not doing this to score a point for us, or to get us in her good books. You’re doing this because there’s a crime been committed, and I can’t see what’s behind it, and that’s giving me an itch.

“Now, any questions?”

(GM to play Vimes and Lady Sybil at this point, including Vimes’s capacity for impatience. Lady Sybil has difficulty believing that this was somebody trying to take the Marchioness out of the running for Crisps; if she drops out, the actual winner in that category will forever be known as “the person who could only win when Lady Molton-Marrowby dropped out”. And so far as anyone knows, there’s no significant gambling on the show results.)

Playing Through

This now becomes a bit of a sandbox adventure. The PCs can blather their way into places in plain clothes (aside from their shortage of Acting or Fast-Talk skills...); **Law** at +3 will tell them that, provided they don’t directly *deny* being coppers, or break any actual laws, they’ll be safe enough with this. They can also try direct approaches while in uniform, which helps persuade a lot of people; good Reaction rolls (p. 172) are the main thing to hope for. Plausible places to try and what can be learned there are as follows.

Marrowby House

The scene of the crime is a substantial house in its own grounds, somewhere near **Deosil Gate** in Ankh. It’s surrounded by a rather rough 8’ stone wall (-1 to Climbing, which itself defaults to DX-5) with iron spikes along the top. Or there’s a gate and front and servants’ doors.

It’ll need a *very* good story to get through to Lady Molton-Marrowby in person, with at least two levels of servants (doorman and butler) to get past – and she’s irascible, and suspicious but distracted at the moment, so she’s unlikely to be much help. If anyone actually persuaded her to express her suspicions about the theft, she’d immediately suggest that **Samuel Vimes**, the “so-called” Duke of Ankh, is a likely suspect; after all, he somehow has “that foolish woman” under his

thumb, and eliminating her “greatest rival” for standing in the dragon fancy might be his way of keeping her happy. And he has all those “clomping dull-witted watchmen” at his beck and call...

Getting into the dragon sheds would be much easier, one way or another. Those still contain a fair number of dragons; try not to get them excited. Obvious points to note are a half-dozen empty pens and a temporary repair to the back door of the shed; cursory inspection of that will show that it’s been efficiently burned through; **Criminology** (*default IQ-5*) at +3, however, notes that it was burned through *from the inside*. The resulting gap is certainly large enough to allow a large swamp dragon through, but would be a squeeze for a human or dwarf. Two subtler **clues** are available with some looking and successful skill rolls (which can be allowed some modifications for specific character actions or player ideas):

- (1) Looking for signs of entry – success with **Criminology** suggests that this building is quite secure, but the roof is often a weak point in such places, allowing a **Search** roll at +3 – otherwise, make a straight **Search** roll. Success determines that three or four tiles have been pushed up and away on the roof, and the felt under them has been cut loose. There’s no sign of burning, and again, the gap is nothing like big enough for a human being.
- (2) Looking for other clues – well, **Criminology** says that criminals are no better than anyone else about dropping stuff in the dark, which suggests carefully checking the floor, so that’s +1 to the **Search** roll that people will likely be making anyway. On a success, the character ends up rummaging behind a coal-scuttle, and finds a wooden tube, about 6” long, somewhat singed at one end. There’s some odd silvery dust inside it; it doesn’t detect as magical, but an alchemical lab, twenty minutes, and an **Alchemy** roll at +2 will say that this is an odd herbal derivative that might have a befuddling effect if inhaled. (Sergeant Littlebottom will help with this if asked, with her Alchemy-14 being highly applicable, but the job will then have to wait a few hours.) This is a standard gnome bird-tamer tube, but only a gnome is going to recognise it as such. Wee Mad Arthur, the Watch’s resident gnome, certainly will, but the problem is getting hold of him; he’s kept quite busy flying air patrols.

Outside the sheds, by the back door, there’s no obvious trail, but a bit of casting about and a **Search** roll at +2 will find a manhole cover part-hidden behind some bushes. This was designed to be secure to prevent intrusion from underneath, but this one has been unlatched from above and shifted recently – the scraped-away rust and earth are obvious. Lifting it will reveal an outflow from the house to the main sewer – about 3’ diameter, with sewage flowing along the bottom third, with only small patches of luminous fungi, so not really human-usable...

In case anyone checks – there are no traces of magic around here, and while this isn’t definitive, one might expect a substantially magic-based robbery to leave a bit of a footprint.

Rokwill Plugg

Also, while in the gardens, the PCs are likely to encounter a nervous gardener who is attempting to use Observation on them at default (*level 5*), and who will say that (a) he’s just concerned about strangers in the gardens, and (b) if asked, he wants to be helpful, but that he “*really doesn’t want to annoy her ladyship*”. This is Rokwill Plugg, who can also be encountered while off-duty if the PCs try staking out **the nearest thing to an ordinary pub in the vicinity**; The Crippled Oak (*map A5*). While there, he will be hitting the booze quite hard.

Plugg will deny knowing anything about the burglary, which may let PCs use **Detect Lies** (*default Per-6*) to spot that he’s lying. He’s a poor liar (Acting-9, IQ/Will 10, with at least -1 to both after he’s been drinking a while), and of course knows far too much for his own peace of mind, but he doesn’t

actually know very much of *use*, and he has very good cause to avoid admitting to some facts as they could get him killed (+4 to relevant Will rolls).

The full story is that he was at a financial low point recently and engaged in a little unlicensed burglary. He thought that he'd got away with it, but somebody very sneaky evidently saw him, because next thing he knew, somebody got into his bedroom at night, woke him up, told him not to try getting any light, and explained that he had a choice; explain his recent actions to the Thieves' Guild, or do some little favours for *them*.

These favours turned out to be mostly casing out locations that were subsequently very expertly and cleverly burgled, along with a few jobs fetching and carrying small packages (that he definitely didn't open), generally picking them up from shady types met in bars and leaving them hidden in an odd spot down a back alley in the Ankh docklands, or vice-versa. Then, when he landed his current respectable job, the visitor took an interest, demanded a lot of details about the grounds, and then this business with the dragons happened, and *oh gods* her ladyship has been going spare lately and he doesn't want to think what'll happen next...

(Which is of course up to the PCs really.) **Current Affairs (Ankh-Morpork)** will confirm his stories about the burglaries; the Thieves' Guild are known to be most unhappy about them. On a critical success, it will also give mention of rumours of a bold new freelance gang, led by somebody named "Little Fiona", who are humiliating the Thieves to some public amusement...

The back alley he can mention if pressed is a nameless passage just off the Stawks, hubwards of Harsh Language Dock (**D7, rimward edge**). This is A Clue.

The Thieves' Guild (*map F4*)

Guild thieves aren't great fans of the Watch, but if approached tactfully and brought to an adequate reaction, will discuss the problem and possibly help. Yes, the Marchioness of Molton has recently had grounds to complain about unlicensed thievery, and embarrassingly, she has a point. But who'd steal *dragons*? It feels like some lunatic showing off...

More general conversation can get around to the other recent unlicensed incidents, but those looked more conventional, if annoyingly adept – clever second-storey jobs, lifting small items of high value which haven't since shown up on the market. Probably some out-of-towner who's planning to take the stuff away with them. Yes, okay, they've heard that name – "Little Fiona" – which may be relevant. The Guild are onto it, but if the Watch hears anything, they wouldn't mind having it passed on.

(Which is *not* Watch policy. Commander Vimes puts up with the Thieves, but doesn't like their irregular enforcement policy.)

Other Dragon Fanciers

Lady Sybil can say that she's already been asking, and there really is no sign that anybody else in the hobby would be behind this. It would be a very difficult crime to turn a profit from, as previously explained, after all. However, if the PCs let her introduce them to some of her friends, they're welcome ask for themselves... Which is how they may come to hear about another incident. *The Sunshine Sanctuary for Sick Dragons (map E6)*, Ankh-Morpork's leading dragon sanctuary has suffered a recent burglary. Somebody somehow got into an upper floor room and stole a bunch of veterinary supplies. "*Respiratory treatments, mostly. **Flame Improvers**. But I doubt that any of Veronica's dragons would need those. They breathe hot enough already...*" The report on this is

making its way through Watch paperwork, but it doesn't look like there's much for anyone to go on; the constables dealing with it will be happy if the PCs look likely to take it over.

(The players may guess around now that these dragons are going to be used as weapons, not pets. If the players ask, **Criminology** at +2 or **Current Affairs (Ankh-Morpork)** at -2 will recall previous occasions when dragons were abused in similar ways, though come to think of it at least one of them was supposed to have been Commander Vimes's doing...)

The scene of the crime at the Sunshine Sanctuary is a plain store-room on the second floor. There's no sign of forced entry there, but then it has a door with no lock. (Veterinary treatments for dragons are rarely of much interest to non-dragon owners. They don't do much for humans or even trolls. Not much pleasant, anyway.) However, a quick look round (and **Per** or **Search** at +3) finds a window at the other end of the corridor where somebody has chiselled away some woodwork, extracted a pane of glass and carefully lowered it to the floor – which creates a hole no more than 18" in the longest dimension. And the window is painted solid and won't open. The store room itself appears to have been ransacked, though not violently; a couple of bottles have been broken, and several things carelessly moved around, but successful use of **Criminology** at +3 says that somebody came in here knowing what they wanted, and found it fairly efficiently.

The Sunshine Sanctuary may serve as a useful temporary point of contact for matters regarding dragons. If the PCs want a dragon specialist to come out to assist them with anything, they get **Clarissa Thornburg-Yellington**, an amiable young woman of Status 3 with an Alice band, expensive asbestos-lined floral dress (DR 5 vs. fire), and upper-class accent and mode of speech (Yah?).

The Gnome World

By now, the PCs may be looking to get in touch with the city's gnome community – which is not very large (ho ho), but which has its place in the Ankh-Morpork tapestry. However, they will know (as they nearly all have **Area Knowledge** of the city) that there is really no gnome *community* as such; just a number of gnomes to be found plying their trades and getting drunk very cheap in assorted spots around the city. A **Streetwise** roll (unmodified) or just asking at the Thieves' Guild will determine that there are one or two in the Guild, employed by high-class burglary partnerships who can do your house over so politely that you may never notice it happened; these would be quite offended by any suggestion that they might be associated with unlicensed activities.

Random gnomes in bars will frequently be drunk, and will generally be scrappy or difficult, using the word "copper" in an aggressive tone. The PCs might do better to find Wee Mad Arthur, the watch's resident gnome (who now knows that he's a Pictsie, but never mind), but he's quite busy; take some kind of random guess as to how soon the PCs can get hold of him. **(Note that he can definitely identify the bird-tamer tube.)** Either way, all that the PCs will eventually learn is that there's no gnome rumour network. However, asking around about gnomes might lead the PCs almost by accident to...

The Streets and What They Know

The PCs might try asking round the underworld for traces of gnome criminal activity. Anyone with **Streetwise** skill will realise that trying to go undercover is unlikely to be a good idea; either you get made as a copper and people will clam up, or you don't and people think you're a stranger asking nosy questions, which can be downright dangerous. A copper can lean on barmen and meet people out the back for the price of a drink, with an implied threat that any information that proves inaccurate will lead to *trouble* later.

Anyhow, with an hour or two in bad-ish bits of town and a successful **Streetwise** roll, with **Intimidation** optionally complimentary, a character can pick up hints (mutters, side-eye glances, tacit nods...) that yes, there may be some gnomes on the loose in town, buying and selling stuff with no questions asked. They seem to be a bit of a cult; their boss is supposed to be quite formidable, though rumours are vague on the subject. They may be based in the docklands part of rimward Ankh.

Ankh Docklands

If the PCs get the pointer to the nameless alley off the Stawks, they find a typical docklands alleyway, with enough rubbish for Rokwill Plugg to have hidden those packages as described. However, **Criminology** or common sense should suggest that if the recipients always want their deliveries here, they may just possibly be based somewhere in the neighbourhood – which is, however, a warehouse district, so you'll not find many legitimate residents. This might be a good cue to start going door-to-door...

Of course, that mostly means getting under the feet of a lot of busy dock-workers, which probably leads to an education in advanced vernacular. Social skills can work, but there may be some DX rolls required to get out of the way of heavy loads being moved at speed. Also, although Little Fiona's gang *are* in the neighbourhood, they're actually holed up in the attic space of an unused between the Stawks and Maltsideway; they previously gained access by use of gnome-sized climbing routes, and will soon often be climbing in and out. So it'll take a few hours and some careful questioning to establish that workers round here have noticed a bit of activity on the upper floors of a certain empty warehouse – and going in there will, technically, require a warrant. The owners are a shipping company who meet intermittently, fronted by a lawyer who enjoys playing by the book.

Escalation

If the PCs don't have a handle on the problem by the end of the first day, as may well be the case, things happen overnight. Little Fiona and her gang, having decided to launch their criminal careers with *style*, hit three fancy houses in Ankh in quick succession, landing on rooftops, smashing or burning their way in, and ransacking whatever they could lay hands on – but necessarily limiting themselves to small high-value items. Being just about smart enough to want to keep people confused for a while, they mostly avoided attention, but twice, Little Fiona used her Dagger of Leadership to intimidate people into flight.

So when the PCs get into work at Trading Gate Watch House, they are summoned to the regular morning briefing, where the first word is that three posh houses over in Ankh were done over last night, and the circumstances seem to be a bit confused – *“Sounds like some gang got up the roofs, scared the families witless, nicked some jewellery and suchlike, and set light to the places on the way out. Commander Vimes is talking to the Patrician, and the Thieves' Guild is bloody furious. It's all well off our territory, but people will be talking about it, and if you hear anything useful, we'll want to know.”* If the PCs suggest that this may be related to their current assignment (and offer minimal reasons why), the desk sergeant will tell them he supposes he trusts their instincts, and tell them to report in to Pseudopolis Yard.

At HQ, everyone is looking interested and a bit nervous – posh houses getting done over means that the Commander gets *spoken to*, which means that everyone else gets scowled at, and Vimes and a lot of the top officers are out shaking down anyone who might be able to provide answers. The PCs can go out and talk to the Commander, who's a bit preoccupied, and get his permission to follow their leads, or just follow up on their own initiative.

They can get hold of initial reports from the Night Patrols, or go visit the houses that were attacked; either way, they can find various relevant facts:

- (a) The intruders came in through the roofs on each occasion. There's no evidence of anything happening at ground level.
- (b) Nobody *saw* the attackers. A couple of householders were woken up, but all anyone can say is that a terrifying, impressive woman spoke from the shadows and told them to run or they would die. They decided to run. **Savoir-Faire (Police)** gets some hints of tone from the reports that can also be picked up in person; the witnesses were *deeply* unnerved by this voice.
- (c) Only a few small items seem to have been taken. **Criminology** notes that these were things of obvious value – jewellery and such. These probably weren't specialist cat burglars, though they weren't stupid.
- (d) However, they were a bit *vandalistic*. All three houses had fires started, though fortunately all three were doused fairly promptly. A bit of lengthy examination and an IQ roll, or the assistance of a dragon expert like Clarissa Thornburg-Yellington, will confirm that this looks like the sort of damage you get when swamp dragons get a bit over-excited (but not to the point of explosion).

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The Opposition

The secret opponents here are Little Fiona and her gang. They're holed up in the attic of an unused house in the Morpork docklands. Fiona has dreams of being some kind of miniature dragon queen, and her dagger has helped her gather a bunch of followers...

Little Fiona

A blonde, statuesque gnome who's picked up her nickname, with typical streets humour, because she's large and muscular *for a gnome* – 18" tall and about 5 lbs (SM -4).

ST 5, DX 13, IQ 11, HT 12

HP 5, Will 12, Per 12, FP 12

Speed 6.25, Move 4, Dodge 10.

Catfall, Combat Reflexes, DR 2 (Tough Skin) + 15 vs. Falling Damage, High Pain Threshold, Megalomaniac, Silence 2, Short Arms.

Acting-11, Camouflage-12, Climbing-13, Dagger-14, Intimidation-12, Leadership-12, Riding (Dragon)-12, Stealth-14.

She wears ornate but not very useful "high fantasy" armour that she's put together over the years, and has acquired a magical "Dagger of Leadership" that not only gives her +1 to hit and 1d-3 imp damage, but gives her voice a resonant booming quality (enabling her to convince people that she's human when speaking from darkness) and +4 reactions from everybody she addresses, even including animals. However, if she loses hold of that near the end of the game, the effect may wear off *instantly*, leading her followers to question their life choices – and the swamp dragons to get confused and start squabbling with each other.

Fiona's Followers

These are smaller (SM -5) but think she's *really cool*:

ST 4, DX 12, IQ 10, HT 11

HP 4, Will 10, Per 11, FP 11

Speed 6, Move 4, Dodge 9.

Catfall, DR 2 (Tough Skin) + 15 vs. Falling Damage, Fanaticism, Silence 2, Short Arms.
Camouflage-11, Climbing-13, Dagger-12, Riding (Dragon)-11, Stealth-14.

HP:

- (1) 4
- (2) 4
- (3) 4
- (4) 4
- (5) 4

Dragons (of All Sizes)

Being a fantasy world, the Disc has dragons. Fortunately, most of them aren't overly fantastic. The fantastic ones are bad news.

Swamp Dragons

Most Discworld dragons are in fact *swamp dragons* – a natural species, but bizarre all the same. They are vaguely reptilian, with four legs as well as wings, and usually grow to about 2' long (SM -3, typically ST 4); however, adult sizes ranging from 6" (SM -6, ST 1) to a yard (SM -2, ST 6) have been reported. They mostly trot around on foot (although one that has to run too much may get dangerously excited), but they can fly for short distances, and indeed they mate in the air. They do not manoeuvre well.

Their most unusual attribute is a truly phenomenal digestive system, which can reconfigure itself to handle almost anything and use that material to generate quantities of flammable gas. Thus, they can quite literally *breathe fire* (combat details appear below); a dragon is likely to have enough gas for 2d-2 flame attacks when first encountered. Swamp dragons recharge by eating bizarre meals (high-grade coal is good). Their senses of taste and smell are highly refined, enabling them to perform instinctive chemical analysis on anything they might consider eating. However, they have to store these gases internally, and they're insanely excitable; consequently, they frequently explode. This seems to constitute a suicidal sort of species defence mechanism.

Swamp dragons will explode because of almost any strong emotion, including boredom. In the breeding season, males fight duels that mainly consist of attempts to provoke each other into screaming, detonating rages; sadly, the excitement of victory can also lead to explosion. (Swamp dragons aren't gentle victors – if the loser rolled over and acknowledged defeat, the winner would disembowel it.) It's very easy to make a male dragon explode by showing it its own reflection in a mirror. Even the sight of any sort of flame can look like a challenge to a swamp dragon.

Indeed, almost anything will make a swamp dragon detonate. In rules terms, any time one gets into a fight or a screaming contest, roll 3d every turn from the third onward, subtracting 3 from the result for males in the breeding season. The dragon explodes if the total is less than or equal to the number of turns fought so far. An exploding swamp dragon usually does 2d crushing damage to

everyone nearby, rising to 3d or more for a large, well-fed male with lots of flame-gas. Divide damage by the distance in yards between dragon and victim. In addition, anyone within three yards takes one point of burning damage, and flammable materials in that radius may catch fire.

A dragon killed by a cutting or impaling weapon probably won't detonate (only on a roll of 6 or less on 3d). One that's battered to death might (9 or less) – and one that's killed with fire almost certainly will (15 or less). Hence, fighting swamp dragons tend to finish each other off with fang and claw.

Swamp dragons are prey to a huge range of diseases, some beyond the realm of conventional biology. As well, most of their internal fluids are corrosive – or at best disgusting – and their stomachs sound like antiquated plumbing. Nonetheless, rich and/or silly people occasionally adopt them as pets. They aren't exactly domesticable (the damage they do to carpets by dribbling is too expensive for the word to fit), but they sometimes demonstrate the personality of a particularly dim and messy dog. However, too many owners become bored with them and abandon them on the streets. They may then be rescued by sentimental dragon-lovers, if they're lucky.

Otherwise, they might end up being used as cigarette-lighters or paint-strippers. (One, of a breed with a very hot flame, was once used as a cutting torch in a bank heist.) This is considered heartless by true dragon-lovers, but the biggest danger is that the dragon will get excited by something. They've also been used as *ad hoc* weapons, although that runs even more of the same risk. There's at least one case of a dragon being used as a demolition charge (in a box, with a mirror to provoke it).

The GM may modify all swamp dragon capabilities for large, small, or mutant specimens.

ST: 1 to 6	HP: 1 to 6	Speed: 5.00
DX: 11	Will: 9	Move: 6 (Ground)
IQ: 4	Per: 10	
HT: 9	FP: 9	SM: -6 to -2
Dodge: 9	Parry: N/A	DR: 1

Bite or Claw (11): 1 point cut. Reach C.

Flaming Breath (12): Treat this as Short-Range Flame (see *Burning Attack*, p. 87) doing dice of burning damage equal to half the swamp dragon's ST score (rounded up), but with two changes.

First, this costs no FP; instead, the dragon gets a limited number of uses (see above). Second, at the GM's option, a well-fed dragon may achieve a range of two or three yards if sufficiently provoked.

Traits: Acute Taste and Smell 5; Bad Temper (9); Berserk (9); Burning Attack (Short-Range Flame, with limited uses instead of FP cost; see above); Cast-Iron Stomach; Combat Reflexes; Discriminatory Smell; Flight (Winged, with air Move reduced to 9 and a cost of 1 FP per second); Quadruped; Self-Destruct (see above); Sharp Claws; Sharp Teeth; Short Legs.

Skills: Innate Attack (Breath)-12.

These dragons are large specimens: **ST 6, 3d burning attack.** HP:

- (1) 6
- (2) 6
- (3) 6
- (4) 6
- (5) 6
- (6) 6