

Alteir Legends: Astral Dragons

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"It was the eeriest thing I ever seen. I was lookin' up at the sky one night to get my navigational bearings, you know from the stars and all. I swear to you now on my mother's grave I saw one of the stars looked like it was moving. I rubbed my eyes a bit and thought it must just be the swells of the ocean rocking the boat. When I looked up again well then there was two stars moving! The second one seemed to glow brighter, then dimmer, then brighter again. They didn't seem all that far apart either. So I took out my telescope and looked closer, and I tell you now what I saw was an honest to goodness monster. The first star lit up its massive head, which was whiter than the whitest sand dollar. It had this eerie red sheen to it when the light moved just right and it had a mouth that could swallow a ship whole. The other light was on its tail, and I swear it moved through the sky like some kind of sea serpent. I knew this monster was bigger than a whale at least, so I had the crew douse all the lamps..."

- Captain Hod of the Fisherman's Wrath

Behold them in the sky, our glorious ones

For each of them is god and star

Their light upon us, who know each by name

Their darkness upon us, whom know us each by name

Balance created them, whom created balance

And from them, was it gifted to us

Know them, our gods, and uphold their light

So that every night shall glitter with beauty

- Ancient Translated Manuscript recounting a Proto-Druidic tale, Pre-Tearing

"So there all of us were on deck, all weapons and screaming, and I think the Sea-Witch was casting spells too, fighting off the sea serpent that was attacking our ship. I think it's called a Devil Eel or something. Well anyway it dove down under the water, and Big Guts bein' the touch slow one that he was looked over and got snatched right off the railing like the crack of a whip! We all huddled in the middle of the deck and waited for it to surface again. So moments pass, and we can't tell if it's us sweatin' or the sea spray, when finally the beast bursts up out of the water and rears its head back but then we saw the water start to swell huge like a big wave going the wrong direction and out burst this big weird lookin' thing that had a red stripe on huge wide wings! It looked like some kinda great eel 'cept white as bone! It had lots of teeth and a mouth inside looked black as tar! It grabbed the sea serpent by the neck with its huge maw, then wrestled it all like this with its front legs and there was water flyin' everywhere! It crunched its jaws down and shook the serpent like a piece a' rope in a windstorm until it was dead! Then it flew up out the water and I tell you this thing, pardon me ignorant crewmates, this dragon was so big its wingbeats made our ship rock so hard we nearly capsized didn't we boys?"

- Account of the crew of the Star of Aquilah, explaining exactly why they deserved a free round of drinks

Astral Dragon

Occurance: Legend

Perception: Colossal Dragon

Threat Level: Immeasurable

Height: Variable

Metabolism: Presumed warm-blooded, draconic

Ecology: Unknown. Folkloric claims of roosting in cliffs or coastal areas.

Overview:

Legendary dragons said to have existed in great numbers before the Tearing. Little scholarly evidence or accounts remains. It is presumed they all disappeared into the Astral before it collapsed.

Appearance:

Varying accounts place these beasts among the largest classes of dragons, descriptions of heights ranging from 45 to 750 feet tall at the shoulders.

Given that all stories and depictions describe them to be longer rather than tall, these creatures are considered to be of epic proportions regardless of what is accurate. Astral Dragons are of a color similar to that of alabaster, with hides smooth enough to project no easily discernable scale pattern from a distance. Combined with almost fin-like black frills and tail fans it is easy to see why some accounts confuse them for monstrous eels. One of the most striking features of these dragons are their heads, all long jaws adorned with four red eyes and a nose similarly shaped to a mask. Their two pairs of horns are said to be completely rounded in a singular shape not unlike a gateway, with some describing a ball of light hovering in the first ring and more rarely others speaking of a ring filled with unspeakable darkness. One way to identify this creature at great distances is its unmistakable red patterns along its body and wings. When flying, it appears from below as having wings similar in coloration to a red-orange sunset or some types of starlight.

Attacks:

Like all dragons of such incredible proportions, it should be expected they have many ways of merely bludgeoning or crushing their prey to death with great effectiveness. To the greater danger is likely its massive jaws, which are long enough to simply swallow most opponents whole regardless of living or dead. Though all dragons are known to have breath weapons, no accounts of these dragons using such have been recorded. What is believed to be an intensely bright ray of an indeterminate property is purported to be capable of projecting from these beasts, leaving their victims utterly destroyed.

-Bestiary in The Hexspire

"It feels like a dream when I try to remember it. Our ship was flying on smooth air currents. The rush of wind in my ears, the feeling of being chilled by the airflow and warmed by the sun at the same time. I was telling the Bosun an order the captain was having me relay when the nearby clouds began to distort. They twisted strangely and then seemed to just suck inward. There was a perfectly shaped sphere where the cloudscape had been, with the clouds and light around it...warped like melted slag. I walked to the railing to look into the sphere and saw something in it. It was so distorted, some entity stretched impossibly thin. That's when he started to come through. First the head, the rest of him still stretched out. The rest of his body seemed to just...catch up to him and when I blinked he was there, like a white mountain in mid-air. And he was the size of a mountain, honest.

I can't even describe the sound of the air when he beat his wings. He only did it once. Then he was moving straight towards our ship. Just...moving through the air. It's mind-breaking how motion looks when you see something that big move towards you. The rest of the world doesn't look right. You don't feel like it's moving so much as you feel like you're moving towards it. Something within me snapped my gaze from its face. All I could think to do was to cast a teleportation spell. I don't know what happened after that."

- Account of Chalindra, last surviving crew member of The Merchant's Glee

"This dragon was unlike anything I had ever seen. As dark as it was under the new-moon sky I could make him, and it was definitely a him, out perfectly from the light he cast about from between his horns. It was strange to see something as big as he was, as tall as a tree and much longer, move through the forest so carefully. I've never known many dragons to be concerned with not crushing or breaking the foliage. Nor have I known them to eat some of it along the way! His light cast the most fascinating, haunting shadows in the forest as he slipped through. There was something in those eyes. As red as poisonous holly berries, but within such a pensive gaze I felt such wisdom and understanding. I would have dearly loved to speak to him, but he looked away and was gone so quickly. My path has been changed forever since."

-Story circulated from a Druidess originally speaking to her circle.

"So I get asked this more times than I can count at this point, "Hey so what was it like flying in front of the "Big Guy?" For one, to say that he was simply big is like claiming you're significant in the multiverse. We were all a mere speck of feather down compared to him. As for what was it like? I wasn't the one that saw into that eye of oblivion, but I did witness it from afar. It was like hovering on the threshold of eternity before time was even allowed to move. A blackness so utter you could conceive yourself simply tearing apart from the hopelessness you felt when looking at it, let alone actually getting pulled in. It was Sir Theodore that stared into the Eye, not me. There is a damn good reason why he won't talk about it either."

-Account of Topaz Siruss'Thunder, Circle member

The old Gnome paused in the middle of his lecture, staring hard at the pupil that had blurted out the completely off-topic question. So startled by such an upstart was he, that he could find no immediate words of reprisal.

The class held its breath as it awaited what would undoubtedly be a scolding for interrupting the Headmaster of the Lyceum. Old Whitby tugged at his beard for a moment as he thought, considering the inquisitive

faces before him. "Very well." He said, his voice like rasping sheets of parchment. "I shall illuminate. Yes, I was present at the struggle against Niodenimous. Some of you know him by the common parlance "The Black Sun". He was what is known as an Astral Dragon or "Starlight Dragon". It is difficult to speak of such beings in short, I'm afraid. Try to imagine what it is like to scry into the vast expanses outside of our world, all of its beauty and mystery. I am uncertain from where they come, whether truly from the Astral plane or from somewhere else. Perhaps it is all merely conjecture and they are just as native as the other Elder Dragons. He was an unusual specimen among their kind, I am of the opinion that he was of unnatural size perhaps due in part to effects of the collapsed Astral plane he dwelt on for nearly a millennia." A curious face opened its mouth to speak but was silenced by the elderly Archmage with but a look. "I am perhaps one of the few in the position to make such a judgement, and while it is by no means a fact it is reasonable to consider. Do not let the terror wreaked by the mad Niodenimous color your perceptions, my bright ones, for he is not the only of his kind. Before you ask how I will state that I respect the privacy of others, doubly so for those that I know to be friends. The might of an Astral Dragon is great and terrible. One day I shall record my knowledge of them, but until that day comes pray you never incur the wrath of such. Oh, and no they do not have four eyes, two of those eyes are false eyes. Now, back to the lesson."

-Lord Whitby Flawed, Headmaster of The Emerald Lyceum