

AETHER DRAGON

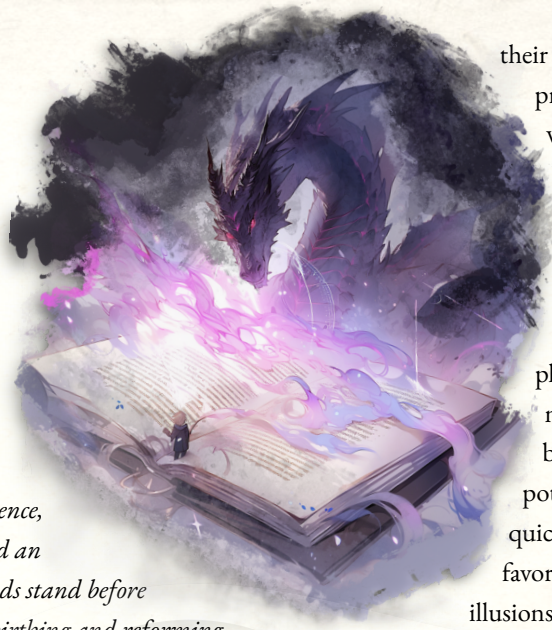
-Dragon

“Purple and black smoke swirl around a massive creature descending to the earth. His form ripples with Aetheric energy, and even the slightest tensing in his wings shakes the land. Reality quakes in his presence, alternating and shifting around an awaiting assembly. The Old Gods stand before him at the zenith of a world rebirthing and reforming. Algoroth, first and purest of the Aether Dragons, prodigious in stature and wisdom, takes one tremor inducing step - and falls low into a bow. By the Gods' will, a task is bestowed upon him and his kin. The Aether Dragons shall forevermore safeguard the plane between the physical and the beyond.”

- Mr. Mavros' *Marvelous Myths*

Aether dragons are ancient, proud protectors. They vigilantly roam the Aether; a transitive plane between the material and the unknown beyond death. While small by dragon standards, they are brilliant tacticians and zealously hunt those who exploit their domain. A mecca for spirits and lost souls, the Aether holds immense power which should never seep into the mortal realm. Mages who dabble in dubious resurrection spells risk tearing the veil between planes. The phenomenon is known as a Rend. When Rends occurs an aether dragon will seek retribution, reclaiming the corrupted site as its lair to guard it from further damage. Although acting righteously within their divine mandate, aether dragons are merciless and take great pleasure in eradicating their prey.

Physical appearance. Aether dragons are leaner than other dragons, though still mighty in their own right. Jagged horns curl back from their skulls. Their dark claws twist into cruel hooks. Long powerful wings sweep back smoothly allowing even the largest aether dragons move with unnatural speed and agility. They nimbly dart through shadows, shift between planes and can even alter one's perception of reality. Age darkens the hue of their scales; from a vibrant range of purples to near black in adulthood. The Rasping snarls and low, thunderous growls of an aether dragon reverberate from all directions to mask their hiding place. Telepathy, however, is



their preferred means of communication. Their mental presence carries the overwhelming weight of ancient wisdom, yet is soft and alluring, it coaxes prey gently towards their doom. Purple magic radiates within their chests as a violet inferno pours from their maw searing both flesh and mind.

Masters Of The Mind. Dragons are renowned as powerful, apex predators; the pinnacle of physical combat. Aether dragons, however, are masters of the mind. They watch quietly from beyond the veil, endlessly strategizing against potential threats. A battle against an aether dragon is quick and decisive. Insight, cunning, and agility are their favored weapons. They conjure umbral servants and illusions to subdue and distract. Only when the perfect moment arrives does the dragon descend to strike a single blow, the killing blow.

Myths. Many believe aether dragons are immortal. The few champions who have succeeded in slaying one found another crawling from the Rend within a fortnight. Terrible draconic ghost stories are told around campfires; myths of life after death, apparitions and terrible horrors. All pale in comparison to the fearsome beast that follows. Aether dragons are often portrayed in folklore to veer children away from malicious dark magic and corruption. For fear of an aether dragon's wrath most regions forbid necromancy outright. Spiritual experts or mediums are paid handsomely to investigate and repair the site of any potential Rend.

Other legends describe aether dragons as the pinnacle of wisdom. Through the ages a number of ambitious, if misguided, mages have created Rends to draw out an aether dragon. They hoped to glean forbidden knowledge or understanding. The Elven mage Tarslan of Ektu craved vengeance for his family's murder, High Lord Peter Hanselton III sought to expand his rule to far off lands, and First Knight Jason Aedipin begged that his lost love be returned. Disaster befell them all. Aether dragons do not tolerate lesser beings who meddle in their domain. To this day no quest to exploit an aether dragon has yielded success.

AETHER DRAGON'S LAIR

Aether dragons make their lairs anywhere a Rend between planes has been opened. The dragon will tear apart buildings, forests and mountains with indifference to construct their lair. Once secure, they work ceaselessly to prevent corruption from seeping into the Aether. Each aether dragon's lair is unique in

design due to varying environments, but all include walls and floors made of morphing, living smoke. Tiny stones and debris become weightless drifting aimlessly through the thick air. The dragon harnesses raw Aetheric energy, which flows through the Rend, to crush intruders.

While aether dragons do not covet wealth as other dragons do, valuable artifacts litter their lairs, discarded and forgotten amongst the bones of the dragon's victim. The treasure is a tantalizing prize for any master burglar, but entering and surviving an Aether dragon's lair is no mean feat. Few have been fortunate enough to escape with their lives and sanity intact.

LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the dragon takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects: the dragon can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- The natural terrain in a 50-foot radius of the dragon looks, sounds, and smells slightly altered. Walls or buildings may appear to move and the ground may appear to swirl. Manufactured structures, equipment, and creatures within the area do not change appearance.
- Floating rocks and pebbles are swept into a swirling frenzy in a 30 ft radius around the dragon. The area becomes difficult terrain and any creature in the area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or become blinded for one round.
- A wingless aether drake manifests within 10 feet of the dragon to serve it. The creature uses its turn to grapple the nearest opponent. It has a Strength of 16 (+3), an AC of 17, and if damaged will immediately vanish back to the Aether.
- The echoing whispers of the dead begin to affect the mind of nearby creatures. All non-draconic creatures within 60 feet of the dragon must make a DC 12 wisdom saving throw or immediately use their entire movement speed to move in a random direction (The DM determines the direction randomly by rolling a d8 and designating 1 as north, 2 as north-east, 3 as east, and so on around the points of the compass.) If this movement causes the creature to run into a clear, natural danger, such as a cliff or fire, they recognize the danger and stop just before entering.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

While an aether dragon's lair may protect the Rend itself, the surrounding area tends to suffer disastrous repercussions. Aetheric corruption castoff by the dragon warps surrounding areas, producing one or more of the following effects:

- The veil between planes blurs allowing Undead creatures to rise more easily in a 1 mile radius.
- Clouds become denser and storms more common.
- Small beasts flee the area, which usually causes insect populations to grow rapidly.
- Casting Spells has a 5% chance of backfiring, dealing 1d4 psychic damage to the caster.

If the dragon dies, the corruption within the Rend it was guarding festers naturally over the next 10 days until another dragon comes to take the place of its predecessor. If instead the Rend is sealed or repaired by some other means, the dragon will generally return to the aether peacefully.

YOUNG AETHER DRAGON

Large Dragon, Lawful Neutral

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 162 (17d10 + 68)

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 90 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Con +7, Wis +8, Cha +9

Skills Perception +12, Stealth +11

Damage Vulnerabilities necrotic

Damage Resistances psychic

Senses darkvision 120 ft., truesight 30ft., passive Perception 18

Languages common, draconic, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 10 (5900 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +4

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, Reach 10 ft, one target. Hit: 17 (2d10 + 6) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) psychic damage.

Claws. *Melee weapon attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d6 + 6) slashing damage.

Aether Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales aetheric fire in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 49 (14d6) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.



ADULT AETHER DRAGON

Gargantuan dragon, lawful neutral

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 220 (19d10 + 114)

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 90 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	18 (+4)	22 (+6)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	22 (+6)

Saving Throws Dex +10, Con +12, Wis +10, Cha +12

Skills Stealth +16, Perception +16

Damage Vulnerabilities necrotic

Damage Resistances psychic

Senses darkvision 120 ft., truesight 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Draconic, telepathy 300 ft.

Challenge 18 (450 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +6

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks, one with its Bite and two with its Claws.

Bite: *Melee weapon attack:* +14 to hit, Reach 10 ft, one target. Hit: 19 (2d10+8) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) psychic damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 15 (2d6 + 8) slashing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (2d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 120 feet of the dragon and aware of it must succeed on a DC 19 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Aether Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales Aetheric fire in a 90-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw, taking 56 (16d6) Psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Hide. The dragon takes the Hide (Stealth) action.

Tail Attack. The dragon makes a tail attack.

Aether Shift (Costs 2 Actions). The dragon beats its wings transporting itself, and anything it's carrying into a transitive plane. Each creature within 5 feet of the dragon, in either realm, must succeed on a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw or take 15 (2d6 + 8) force damage and be knocked prone. The dragon can then fly up to half its flying speed.