



WYRMS of the NORTH™ FORGOTTEN REALMS SETTING



by Ed Greenwood

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“The Creeping Doom”

The prying of Volo (polished somewhat by Elminster, whose eyebrows rose on more than one occasion while reading them) bring us this time to something the Old Mage had intended to omit from this survey of powerful dragons of the North: a dracolich. So you’re now reading something even Elminster decided to leave out of a book!

Why would one of the most powerful wizards in all Toril break his own rules now? Well, this undead wyrm bears watching. Not only is his influence quickly spreading, but the dracolich Daurgothoth is attempting to gain some abilities of other dragon types (he was originally a black wyrm) and to “come back to life” sufficiently to breed true and found his own new dragon species.

The twin obsessions of achieving personal supremacy and fathering a new race have kept Daurgothoth busy for over a century, improving his abilities however he can, and seeking a suitable mate — or planning how to construct one, much as he’s been modified in undeath.

The implications of Daurgothoth’s fascinating endeavor are dark indeed. The only reason hordes of adventurers haven’t descended on the dracolich, seeking his destruction, is that they don’t know about him. Plenty of wild rumors are, however, spreading....

Both Tolgar Anuvien and Malchor Harpell are (independently) beginning to uncover the location and activities of the undead wyrm, but the only folk who know the broad truth about the nature and aims of Daurgothoth are the Chosen of Mystra, powerful figures such as Elminster, Khelben, Laeral, and Alustriel. These archmages will not act or speak out against him, because the magical experimentation and advances Daurgothoth is making are precisely the sort of thing Divine Mystra encourages, so that magic will continue to grow.

Daurgothoth is under no such restrictions and energetically seeks to slaughter any being who learns of his endeavors or who stumbles upon his lair. He has already slain no fewer than three bands

of hired adventurers who were working for him in Waterdeep — but whom he judged had begun to suspect too much about him. His spells allow him to speak with such underlings by means of projected (human-seeming) images and to spy upon them from afar. When doing so, Daurgothoth customarily poses as some sort of renegade, deliberately mysterious mage.

In such roles, this dracolich has begun to play an increasingly active role in the shadier businesses of the cities of Waterdeep, Baldur’s Gate, Neverwinter, and Secomber. At first, he pursued the acquisition of spells, magical items, and substances that might serve as magical components, but this drew the attention of too many alarmed mages and authorities (one of whom dubbed the unknown cause of the thefts “the Creeping Doom,” a title Daurgothoth gleefully adopted), so he’s taken to cloaking his activities behind a web of often unwitting thieving bands and sharp-dealing gray market merchants.

Once a great wyrm of considerable size, with a distinctive gouge in his left flank (an old, nearly mortal wound), Daurgothoth was transformed into a dracolich by the crazed Cult mage Huulukharn. He promptly slew the wizard and vanished from the knowledge and influence of the Cult.

Today, the Creeping Doom possesses all of the normal powers of a dracolich and a great black wyrm, plus a tail sting that lashes out once per round for up to 36' at his normal THAC0 of 1 to slash for 2d6+12 hp damage, or to stab for 4d4+12 hp damage. As his breath weapon, Daurgothoth can choose to employ (once in every three rounds) any one of the following effects:

- ❖ The original breath weapon of his black dragon form: a stream of acid 5' wide and 60' long in a straight line, dealing 4d4+12 hp damage.

- ❖ A bolt of lightning akin to that of a blue dragon, but slightly less potent: this 5' wide breath attack extends 70' and deals only 4d8+6 hp damage.

- ❖ A cone of fire 60' long, flaring from 5' wide to 30' and dealing 7d10+7 hp damage.

- ❖ A cone of frost 60' long, flaring from 5' wide to 30' and dealing 8d6+8 hp damage.

- ❖ A bone spray (cone of whirling bone shards) 60' long, flaring from 5' wide to 20' and dealing 12d4 hp piercing and slashing damage. If Daurgothoth so chooses, this attack can cause only half damage, but the bones then gather together to form skeletons, rising 6 rounds later as 1d4+4 undead human skeletons under the absolute control of the dracolich. If a "1" is rolled for the number of skeletons, that one skeleton is a giant skeleton (see "Skeleton, Giant" in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL™* tome).

- ❖ An "undeath gout" that takes effect in a cone 40' long, flaring from 5' wide to 20' and affecting only dead creatures in this area, animating them as zombies that rise in 1d3 rounds or skeletons that rise in 1d2 rounds, in either case under Daurgothoth's absolute command. Note that this breath weapon can transform partial skeletal remains (of any body parts) into crawling claws and make snakes or flying creatures of any sort into deathfangs (detailed in the *Ruins of Undermountain* boxed set, on the "Flying Fang" monster sheet). Living creatures touched by an undeath gout are chilled for 1d10 hp damage (no saving throw).

- ❖ A "banish undeath" breath weapon effect that forms a cone 40' long, flaring

from 5' wide to 20' and remaining effective for 1 round. All undead coming into contact with any part of it are affected as follows:

- ❖ Undead of 5 hit dice or fewer (such as ghouls, wights, shadows, ghouls, zombies, and skeletons) are instantly rendered into inanimate dead. Depending on their natures, this destroys them or leaves them as remains that could be raised to life or made into undead again by subsequent magics (note that Daurgothoth can readily cause hostile lesser undead to fall and then rise again — by use of his undeath gout — as undead under his command).

- ❖ Undead of 6-8 HD (wraiths, mummies, and spectres) are allowed a saving throw vs. breath weapon to escape the instant termination of their undeath.

- ❖ More powerful undead can't be stripped of their undeath by this breath weapon. They do, however (along with lesser undead) suffer 4d4 hp damage from contact with a banish undeath breath effect.

Daurgothoth is known to be developing other breath weapon attacks — in particular seeking to modify certain of his spells into this attack form. The full range and power of his spells far outstrip those of normal dracoliches or dragons of any sort, and they seem to be on a par with those of an archmage of 25th level. Rather than the normal spell roster for a black dragon, and the "once per day" nature of dracolich magic, Daurgothoth now wields a roster of five memorized spells of each level that individually return to him 24 hours after being cast. To change a memorized spell, Daurgothoth must undertake study as a human mage does. He casts spells and makes saving throws as a 25th level wizard, retaining the 45% magic resistance he had as a living great black wyrm.

He is also known to have modified his undead body to achieve immunity to the following spells: imprisonment; power word, kill; reverse gravity; sink; temporal stasis; and time stop.

Daurgothoth's host (see "Dracolich" in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* tome for the function of a dracolich's host) is rumored to be a black opal of insignificant size, hidden in a huge heap of gems of all types and sizes that nearly fills a cavern that also holds the skeletal bodies of six lesser dragons that could serve him as a succession of replacement bodies. This cave is walled away behind tumbled rock somewhere under the gem-filled

cavern of Daurgothoth's main lair. (The rock to be dug aside to reach it may well underlie the dracolich's bonepile itself.)

Daurgothoth is a brilliant crafter of magic, an eternally inquisitive being, and a practiced observer with an impressive memory. He is governed by a wary paranoia that keeps him always on the lookout for lurking foes and possible attacks, and that makes him work constantly to better his personal powers and defenses. This is one wyrm who will never be found with most or all of his spells exhausted. If he ever reaches such a state (in the heat of protracted battle), he swiftly departs, to hide away until his magic is again strong. He is patient in his dealings and calm in battle; none can successfully goad him, and pride never leads him into overconfidence in battle, or any stubborn refusal to retreat. For an immortal dracolich who takes care to safeguard himself from destruction, there will always be another day for fighting — or for seeking revenge.

Daurgothoth is known to have a cruel sense of humor and to enjoy anticipating tactics ahead in any struggle. He craves music and company from time to time, but he never lets these needs compromise the security of his lair. Beautiful lady bards who acquire mysterious lone male human audiences at their campfires in the North are warned that they could be entertaining simple travelers, lycanthropes or dopplegangers, Harpers — or the Creeping Doom. Daurgothoth seldom molests or devours good singers.

Daurgothoth's lair

The Creeping Doom lairs in the abandoned gnome city of Dolblunde north and east of Waterdeep. Known entrances to this subterranean labyrinth include the "Bandit Tunnels" in nearby Maiden's Tomb Tor, certain passages in the vast dungeon complex of Undermountain, and a flooded tunnel leading from the muddy bottom of the River Dessarin itself. This latter, largest route is the one most often used by Daurgothoth, though the dracolich does employ *teleport* spells on occasion.

Daurgothoth's spells have hollowed out many large caverns for his convenience, forming an ever-growing chain that is tunneling slowly northwest, to a planned emergence shaft in the mountains north of Waterdeep.

To discourage intruders, the undead wyrm has placed many traps in the smaller gnomish passages surrounding the great caverns of his lair. There are a

few teeter-block pitfalls, but most of these perils are stone spikefall traps (sharpened stones on dangle-chains, that typically fall for 5d4 hp damage).

These mechanical hazards are assisted by unswervingly loyal undead servitors: deathfangs and a new sort of monster created by the Creeping Doom — bone lurkers.

These undead creatures appear as portcullises or gridwork-curtains of interlaced human and beast bones. They function just as living lurkers, except that their initial attack is a piercer-like fall from above to thrust into foes for 4d6 hp damage.

Bone lurkers have a Morale of 20 and share all the usual spell immunities of undead (suffering only half damage from edged weapons, as skeletons). After its first plummeting attack, a bone lurker tries to wrap itself around foes, as do living lurkers, dealing entangled opponents 3d4 hp piercing damage per round. It moves by flying (as a lurker) and fights foes it hasn't enfolded by slapping them once per round for 1d6 hp damage. Bone lurkers never retreat from foes except by Daurgothoth's command. A bone lurker has an XP Value of 4,000 — but some have been encountered that unleash one of the Creeping Doom's spells upon foes with such effects as paralyzation, weakness, magical fear, or blindness; these are thought to be magics cast into the lurkers and somehow held for passing on to living targets. These spell-holding bone lurkers are worth 5,000 XP.

Certain passages in Daurgothoth's lair also boast what can only be the wyrm's salvaged early attempts at creating a tail-sting: great snakelike assemblies of bone that are fixed to the wall, ceiling, or floor at one end, but they can coil and lash out from that anchor point, to slash or stab foes with a bone "sword-spike" as long as some men stand tall. This fearsome edged weapon pierces for 3d8 hp damage or slashes for 2d6 hp damage.

These bony "stings" range in length from 70' to 30' (although they can retract into a compact stack as short as 20'). Although they are unintelligent constructs (unaffected by spells designed to control the mind or deceive the senses), they seem able to sense all living beings within their reaches. They attack all such targets, and each has 4 to 8 HD and an AC of 7. A sting has one stab and one slash attack in a round, at the THACO appropriate for its hit dice,

and it is subject to spells that control undead or that influence bones. If one is severed from its base or separated into its component parts, all of their animation is lost; shards from shattered "sting bones have no properties beyond that of any other (dead, not undead) bony material.

At the heart of Daurgothoth's chain of caverns is a side passage large enough for a dragon to fly down. It is guarded by a wall of monster skeletons (the remains of a tribe of mountain giants, still armed with their clubs) who have orders to attack all beings in the tunnel who aren't Daurgothoth himself. Above them hangs a death tyrant (undead beholder, its precious surviving eyestalk powers unknown) with similar orders.

Beyond these guardians, the tunnel leads to a closed stone door that is itself a stone golem that attacks anyone trying to open it and reflects all spells used against it 100% back at their source. The door opens into a vast, ravaged cavern almost half a mile in length, its walls scorched and scarred, and its floor heaped with broken stone. This is the dracolich's spellcasting chamber, where he experiments with magics.

A smaller tunnel leads off of one side of this cave, doubling back on itself several times, to reach the gem-filled cave where Daurgothoth sleeps and broods upon a huge pile of bones. Aside from the rumored secret, walled-away chamber that holds his host, two lesser caverns are known to branch away from the main one: a treasure vault crammed with all manner of magic, statuettes, coins, and the like; and a storage room where the dragon keeps his spellbooks, the magical items he knows enough about to feel safe in using (just what these are remains a mystery), and a smooth-walled prison pit into which he drops living creatures he wants to keep for later. This pit is a smooth-walled (the stone walls fused into an almost glassy state by many applications of fiery breath and certain spells) shaft 30' across and 100' deep. The pit floor is damp sand, and lost in it is a *staff of the magi* (unknown to Daurgothoth). The dragon typically loops a rope around prisoners and tosses them down the shaft, securing the upper end of their pull-rope under a "lid" consisting of a huge, four-ton slab of stone that covers the top of the shaft. Dangerous prisoners (such as spellcasting adventurers) are encased in a set of *iron bands of Bilarro*

first; this sphere lies ready in a hollow beside the shaft. Much of the rest of this storage cavern is filled with a vast collection of odd substances that might serve as material components, including the pickled corpses of such large monsters as dragon turtles, purple worms, and remorhaz (and, of course, several sorts of dragons).

In his main lair, Daurgothoth's massive bonepile affords him raw material for his bone-related attacks. He has the ability to teleport all non-enchanted, non-undead bare bones within 40' into himself (they fly at MV 7, MC: D and cause no harm upon entering his skeletal form), to breathe forth as necessary. If away from his bonepile, he can transport bones from it over any distance on Toril to his innards.

Daurgothoth's domain

From Dolblunde, Daurgothoth keeps watch over traffic on the High Road, the Long Road and on the River Dessarin, as well as overland from the walls of Goldenfields south along the west bank of the Dessarin to Zundbridge, and north from there along the coast roughly as far as Mount Sar. He lacks the time to spy much in Waterdeep but employs a modified, long-range wizard eye spell for hours at a time to peer at things in the City of Splendors when he's interested in something (when word is abroad in the city about a wizardly duel, for instance, or the Watchful Order is gathering to discuss something important). Daurgothoth is interested in all things magical and in news of dragons and their doings. He's not, however, interested in being identified and located by nosy priests or mages, and he seldom acts openly in his "territory."

One day, when his lair reaches to the surface somewhere in the mountains, he may fly forth each night to destroy any who dare to question his authority — once his traps are ready to deal with the archmages who will inevitably try to destroy him. Soon, perhaps...

In the meantime, Daurgothoth prefers to employ various unscrupulous minor mages (including, notably, several Zhentarim magelings who fled the fall of Zhentil Keep) and adventuring bands. He keeps these forces believing they're working for a Waterdhavian noble who uses magic to conceal his identity and tries to keep each group of his agents ignorant of the existence of the others. Sometimes he tests their loyalty and mettle by sending various agents after the

same thing, to see who prevails, how, and what they report to him about it.

These agents serve to seize various magical items, spells, and substances that could serve in spellcasting. Daurgothoth often employs such aliases as “the Masked Master” or “Onalibar” when dealing with his underlings (the latter name is a private joke: it once belonged to a Cult mage who tried to enslave the dracolich soon after his initial rebellion — and who was promptly eaten for his pains). He rewards the mages with useful spells from his collection, steering them into stealing or developing other magics for him in return.

The deeds of Daurgothoth

Freed of the need to hunt or consume any sort of food, Daurgothoth can pursue ever-greater magical achievements more or less constantly.

Daurgothoth tries to hide from other dracoliches and living dragons as much as possible, as well as from the annoyingly energetic members of the Cult of the Dragon. He has decided that if the latter organization proves to be too much of an annoyance, he will attempt to take over its leadership (concealing his true nature) and put it to work for him, in his quest for the finding or making of a perfect mate.

Daurgothoth is especially wary of, and yet fascinated by, amethyst dragons and faerie dragons. He judges that their skills make them unpredictable and therefore dangerous, yet he also considers them possible sources for something that could be bred or modified into his mate. He is also interested in fire lizards and fire drakes as possible “raw material” breeding stock, so he follows news of their movements. Studying the activities of the Cult of the Dragon and of mages in general (while keeping well away from strongly organized groupings of mages such as the Red Wizards of Thay or the archwizards of Halruaa) makes up much of his daily work. He’s always considering schemes to improve the powers of any underlings or constructed servitor creatures to “snatch” newly developed magics from such sources undetected — or at least in such a way that they can’t reliably be followed. Often he ponders how he might mind-control a scholar of Candlekeep well enough to learn things mind-to-mind and direct what books the individual read, while at the same time eluding the efforts of anyone searching for such a mind-link (which those in

power in Candlekeep do regularly, as such infiltrations have been attempted so often in the recent past).

Daurgothoth’s current activities include trying to infiltrate temples of Lathander to gain magic related to the creation of life (for his own breeding plans) and personally trying to develop a breath weapon that will act as a *Mordenkainen’s disjunction* on everyone’s magic but his. (Thus far, he can breathe out a *dispel magic* conical effect, but he resists using it in battle, because it tends to spin wild magic away from its verges, sometimes doing him more harm than good.)

Daurgothoth’s magic

The Creeping Doom commands almost as wide an array of personally-modified spells as do the Seven Sisters, or such mighty mages as Elminster and Khelben Arunsun. This magazine could be filled several times over with them, but one deadly magic deserves mention because it is so spectacular:

Bonemelt

(Necromancy)

Level: 8

Range: 10 yds. + 10 yds./level

Components: V

Duration: 1 day/level

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: One creature

Saving Throw: Special

This spell transforms the bones of a living mammalian creature to jelly, causing the victim to collapse (at the end of the next round) into a helpless, amoeba-like slithering blob. Breathing and movement (by creeping, at MV 4) is possible, but climbing, flying, wielding items, and the like becomes impossible. Death won’t directly occur from this alteration but it often results from the lack of swift mobility the spell causes. Daurgothoth can reverse the effect at will (usually so that the victim can be slain and then made into a servitor undead), but it otherwise lasts for 25 days when he casts it.

“Boneless” creatures do not need to eat, sleep, drink, or breathe, but they suffer 4d4 hp damage per day if subjected to full sunlight for more than seven continuous hours. A full day after the spell affects them (24 hours, or 144 turns), they are allowed a Constitution check. If the save succeeds, the victim changes in 1 turn to the same state as if he had saved against the spell originally (see below).

If a target of this spell successfully saves against the *bonemelt* attack, only one limb is affected (determine randomly between arms and legs; heads and tails — if any — are not targeted by the magic). It turns to a dangling, jelly-like mass lacking the strength to hold or carry things. If the limb is used for locomotion, the creature’s movement rate drops by three-quarters (round up), and spellcasting or activities requiring careful balance or deft manipulations typically become impossible. Worn or held items may or may not be dropped, depending on the situation and the actions of the victim.

Daurgothoth’s fate

The Creeping Doom is so ambitious that his schemes seem destined to failure. Even Daurgothoth himself is aware that spawning a race of descendants having powers akin to his own could well be bringing on his own eventual doom (at their hands). Still, even if he never mates, his continual growth in power is a matter of grave concern for folk all over Faerûn, both draconic and human.

This dracolich will stop at nothing, and Mystra seems content to let him build himself into the greatest creature of magic in all Toril if he can achieve this aim. At the same time, his lonely search for a mate opens him to attack from wily foes, and if his seizures of magic grow more successful, he’ll soon have no shortage of those.



Ed Greenwood is an overweight, bespectacled, hirsute rogue who loves crawling through caves and swinging swords at imaginary foes. What he did to the armorer at the local museum last year was purely a misunderstanding.

