

Resurrection

„Ok, so let's resurrect him!“ - „Uh, oh, errm...I'm not so sure about this...after all it's a RED dragon...“

A Fantasy Roleplaying Game Adventure by Andreas Hartmann

Plot overview

The players hear from a legend that tells the tale of an ancient castle. The lord of this castle vowed he would defend the realm of any danger coming from the south (and in exchange married the beautiful princess, of course), but when danger came in form of an ancient red dragon sweeping to the north over his castle, he and his knights failed to stop him, thus breaking his vow. So they still roam the castle as spirits, void of voice, till they fulfill the vow. It is said that upon the right constellation of stars, the castle reappears and they have a chance to right their failure. Unfortunately, the dragon did not return, so still the castle reappears and the knights wait.

As chance happens, the players find out that the next appearance is due and set out to watch the spectacle...The castle appears, the players enter the castle and the lord begs them to get the dragon to attack the castle, so he can fulfill his quest and find peace. He promises them the castle and its treasures if they succeed in their quest.

So the players set out, find the dragon's lair after some difficulties, and stand before the skeleton of an ancient red dragon and the burnt platemail of the knight that killed him. Hmm...you need the dragon alive to let him get killed again by the lord and his knights. „Ok, so let's resurrect him!“ Considering that this was a really evil dragon that scorched several cities, ate dozens of virgins, and so on, this might not be easy choice for the players, Wha ha ha, ha!:) They do it (scared out of their socks, hopefully) and have to persuade the dragon 1,) not to eat them, 2,) to let himself get killed by the lord, 3,) eat them after he scorched the castle (hoping the knights succeed killing the dragon...they're only phantoms after all...), 4,) generally let them alive.

In short, they have to think about what they do with the dragon after they fulfill their quest.

But the dragon suffers from a permanent alignment change and can now be considered chaotic good, with a slightly pyromanic or sadistic (err...He's got this hungry look in his eyes again, guys!) touch maybe... It's hard to get used to being good if your only experience with normal social interaction with other beings consists of setting them afire (knights) or eating them (virgins). Maybe the players get just good friends with him. Note that this plot itself involves no fighting, if the players do right. It would be better for them if they did, anyway.

A silent night in town

The players arrive in their favorite tavern, maybe returning from some awesome adventuring, and are looking for some fun, which consists of relaxing and having a drink with their buddies there. The overall atmosphere in the tavern is relaxed and joyful, with some people playing darts and an old grandpa telling stories to his audience.

If the players decide to listen, he will just happen to tell the legend of *Lord Shibban and the Dragon* (See page 2). If they decide not to listen, he tells the story and after finishing it will take a seat close to the players, mumbling things like „the young don't listen to the stories of old anymore...where will it end when the virtues of honour are not spread any more...“ and „ahh...they don't believe me...Ignorant little rats!“ while ordering some spirit.

If the players talk to him, asking about his anger, he will eventually tell them the legend. If they don't („Ignorant little rats!“), well, they just missed a chance for glory, wealth, attractive women/men and instant death, if you don't come up with another way to let them swallow the hook.

The Storyteller:

His name is Grundar, and he is an old guy from around here, who has spent his time in the service of a knight, thus hearing much legend and lore. He now tells his stories to whoever wants to listen, hoping to earn a drink or meal. He firmly believes that every legend has truth in it.

Depending where your players are located, there are several possibilities to gather more info:

In a large town or city, a walk to the library may yield additional information, for example about the location of Caldoran, that fell several years after the dragon attack, and the location of Lord Shibban's realm. A sage may be able to give the same information.

In a small village, Grundar may give the information above, or they will have to travel to the next city.

A PC skilled in Legends&Lore or history will also probably know some basic info. You will

have to decide where they get the info, how they get it, and what the info is; the decision where to place Caldoran is up to you, as well as when the events outlined in the legend took place (I suggest 400-500 years). Finding the right places in your campaign world should be an easy task. The castle should be placed somewhere near the player's current location (about 50 to 150 miles away), in a mountainous area that is not much civilised. Placing Caldoran is quite obvious, it stretched north of Lord Shibban's Castle. The dragons cave should be further away, involving a longer journey.

The trigger for the castle's appearance is the right constellation of stars and moon(s), the constellation that took place when Lord Shibban broke his vow. Finding this out should involve consulting a mystic or astrologer, who can give them the time when it will happen next.

LORD SHIBBAN AND THE DRAGON

Once, in times past, when the knights' armours shone as they don't in our times, there lived a mighty lord, Lord Shibban was his name, in his vast castle in the ragged, wooded foothills of the Krilgar Mountains. He ruled over his wild land in the time of the realm of Caldoran, now lost in the river of time. His people respected him, and things were good as they aren't in our time. His small realm lay south of Caldoran, and when he fell in love with King Arundar's beautiful and refined daughter princess Anwyn, he vowed to do everything if the King allowed her to marry him. The King agreed, and as part of the contract, Lord Shibban integrated his realm into Caldoran and vowed to defend the southern border of Caldoran. Several years later, when he settled for dinner with his beautiful lady, a messenger arrived with word that Ember, the evil dragon, was sighted near the castle. Lord Shibban was so outraged of the disturbance, that he threw the messenger into the deepest dungeon, and intended not to set out before having finished his dinner. But meanwhile, the red dragon Ember swept over the castle, killing many with a single fiery breath, and sailed on northwards into the kingdom, killing many and bringing great destruction and havoc across the land, before he disappeared again in the shroud of myths.

Lord Shibban had thus violated his oath, putting him and the knights into an eternal state of restlessness after their deaths. For they did not find peace, for they had to wander the world until they fulfill their quest, forever bound to the castle, till they either kill the dragon or die at the attempt. Still the castle appears somewhere in the mountains, and it will do so until Ember the dragon sweeps past again.

One possibility of research:

- 1, Travel to a near library and find out about the location of Caldoran and Lord Shibban's castle.
- 2, Find out the date of this event.
- 3, Consult an astrologer to tell them what the constellation was at this date and when it will happen again.
- 4, Travel to the castle's suspected location.
- 5, Asking locals about the castle, which will point them to the exact location.

Arriving at the castle

The castle is nothing more than some crumbling ruins, situated on the top of an idyllic wooded hill. It was abandoned due to the phantoms that roam it several hundred years ago, and not much is left of it. (Note that the castle is always here, but the phantoms exist only when the constellation is right, contradictory to what the legend says.)

The Phantoms

The phantoms of Lord Shibban and his knights and men-at-arms appear as dark shades of their former selves, still recognizable with their armour, clothes and weapons, but can't interact with their surroundings. The only method of communication is telepathically through pictures. They perceive their surroundings as a mental image of the lifeforces that surround them and don't know about the castle's state of disrepair. For them it exists as they remember it, which can be quite weird when they open and walk through doors that only exist for them, and avoid obstacles that aren't there, following hallways and avoiding walls where there are none.

When the PC's arrive, they will be greeted (by gesture only, of course, by phantoms that hover in the air where once the castle wall stood. If they ride into the castle before the guards „opened the door“, this will give them some suspecting looks.

They will then be lead into the former throne room of Lord Shibban (have fun on the way!), who already sits on his throne as he has done for centuries. He will then telepathically show them pictures of his story, which are essentially the same as stated in the legend, and then the dragon that sweeps over the castle again and again, always attacked by Lord Shibban and his followers. The final pictures then show a peaceful burial ceremony for the fallen soldiers and the corpse of the red dragon, with the player characters as bystanders.

For the PC's, the next step should be obvious: locate the dragon and get him to the castle, which involves further informaton gathering first. It is assumed that the PC's will do it, for the castle and its treasures should be a worthwhile prize. If they object, I'm afraid you have to come up with something yourself... Maybe if you got a knight/paladin or cleric in the party, these characters can be motivated by reminding them of their faith/oath or whatever, that it would be a good deed to lay these restless spirits to their peace. And the dragons treasure is there to be found, too... (At least this is what the players might think.)

In pursuit of Ember

Some questions the PC's have to answer:

- 1, Where lives the dragon now?
- 2, Is he still alive?
- 3, How to get him to the castle?
- 4, What to do to get rid of him?

What happened to the dragon:

The dragon travelled eastwards over the sea, found a new cave, a country to devastate as well as a knightly order with some potent members. One of these, Sir Reginald set out to find the dragon and kill him before he was able to wreak havoc. He succeeded, but never returned from his quest, as the dragon burnt him before he died. So noone knows what happened to the dragon and Sir Reginald, nor about their whereabouts. And all this happened some centuries ago.

What the players can find out is that the dragon was last seen flying eastwards, and the year when this happened (again in the library), but this should be all for now.

They then probably have to travel east to find more evidence of the dragon. I suggest this involves a shipjourney, as it will make things a little more difficult for them if they intend to first bring the dragon skeleton to the castle and then resurrect him. Throw in some encounters or subplots as you like.

Upon their arrival, they have to check out if the dragon was sighted here, and indeed, old reports point to the center of the country, as well as giving a clue about the knight that set out to destroy the dragon. A visit to the knights order will reveal that Sir Reginald set out, but never returned, likewise the dragon was not sighted anymore. But they will be shown the general area where the dragons lair was suspected (the exact location is again up to you, as are so many other things;)

Arriving in the area, one thing that could lead to the lair can be the name of a local geographic feature, maybe a mountain is called Dragon Mountain or Knights Demise. The players will then have to search this feature thouroughly and eventually stumble across an old cave, the entrance nearly overgrown with bushes. Making their way through the tunnelsystem (make this as big as you like, if your players enjoy some good dungeon crawl), which is well too small for a full-grown dragon, they enter a huge cave. The first thing they notice is a scorched, very old platemail, then a huge white draconic skeleton. Obviously, the ceiling/exit of the cave collapsed during the battle, capturing the Ember who was already mortally wounded.

If you are a nice GM, you may have noticed that pile of gold and gems beneath the skeleton.

But as the players should come pretty easy to the conclusion that they have to bring the dragon back to life if they want to succeed, this might not be that nice...who dares to steal from a dragon, after all?

The players are facing several problems now: most important the decision whether to resurrect the dragon or not (in my campaign, this was MUCH FUN to watch;)), drop in any nasty remarks as you like ("You REALLY want to do it? Are you absolutely sure? Don't blame me afterwards..."). Someone who has the might to bring a dragon back to life has to be found, and maybe the problem of transport has to be solved, if they decide to resurrect Ember at the castle, not here.

Maybe the players come up with some other idea, and if it sounds reasonable, let it work, as long as they don't avoid that critical moment when the dragon actually turns alive.

Who has the power to resurrect the dragon is up to you, I suppose.

Several possibilities:

- 1, A cleric resurrects him (this should only work if the PC's have good connections to their church, it would help if one of the PC's is a really faithful paladin or if the PC's already served a church in some major way)
- 2, Travel to the place where dragons go after their demise and bring him back
- 3, Animate Ember as a major undead (combined with the alignment change this would probably turn out rather interesting...a chaotic good undead red dragon)

Possibility one would be the safest of all in terms of plot advancement, but is somehow too simple in my opinion, the second one is ok, but way from imaginative. The third is good in my opinion, as it offers the most possibilities in terms of roleplaying, but also the most problems if you don't handle it carefully, but imagine the players proving to everyone that this dracolich friend of theirs is a really nice guy! Finding a potent Necromancer can also be quite messy, cause who knows what his aims are?

I regret not being able to offer you a solution for this part of the plot, but it depends heavily on your campaign and your PC's resources, and with the suggestions made above, you should be able to wing it...Therefore, I suppose that they manage it somehow to get back to the castle with a living Ember.

Ember, the dragon

The stats are up to you, but I suggest that he is quite powerful (adult to old in AD&D terms). He once was a really evil being, destructive, enjoying to watch people burn and so on...quite the standard red dragon. What is special about him after the resurrection/animation or whatever is that he is not the same anymore...the long time dead or a small error in the spell has caused an alignment change.

Of course he still has problems getting used to being good, as old habits are difficult to change, but small "mistakes" should be seldom and more fun than a nuisance to the players, who have to play "babysitters" to prevent any accidents.

Peoples reaction are rather strange, anyway.

Back at the castle

After the resurrection, Ember will slowly lift one eye, then the other one, take some time to reorient himself...and then focus the PC's, demanding to know what happened etc. The PC's have to persuade him to attack the castle, which should not be THAT much of a problem, considering Ember's alignment change. Of course, the players have no possibility to know this, so let them sweat!

After some discussion, he will agree and fly towards the castle, where the phantoms are hurrying to the walls and towers, the alarm bells start ringing etc. Then the Lord Shibban, followed by his knights will ride forth and attack the dragon without being able to hurt him, but perishing and disappearing with the dragons deadly blows (that sweep through them without noticeable effect other than phantoms dissipate and find their peace.

(If your players haven't noticed the dragons alignment change and thought that lord Shibban would kill the dragon, thus saving their lives, this is serious fun!)

With this, the adventure is essentially over, with just one thing to do: reward the players.

Depending upon what you want to give them, they might keep the castle (as the ruin it is, or maybe it appears as it was in former days upon the dragons attack), Lord Shibban could show them the way to the castles dungeon and treasury before his spirit leaves (they have to dig where the Lord walks down the stairs that exist only in his memories, and discover the castle's dungeon), or/and Ember might give them a small part of his treasure (one item each character maximum or one item for the group, he will not give away gold), and his friendship if they are clever/good roleplayers, which could prove to be the most precious reward after all - he is thankful for being alive again and might well relocate near the castle if the players keep it.

Some more words:

I know there are lots of gaps in this plot, things I didn't think about but the players will (as always), and some lack of explanation and rationale. Especially the part where the players have to resurrect Ember is not that well worked out, but if you play it and come up with another idea, please let me know, and I will add it to this

adventure, to help other DM's. If you liked this adventure, give me feedback. I intend to do some more, and your suggestions will surely help and, most important, encourage me to do add new stuff soon.

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