

# Prologue Quests

## *Dragons of Stormwreck Isle*

“Wait, why are we here again?” That’s a question no Dungeon Master wants to hear. It means your adventure has a weak hook.

In the new D&D Starter Set, what’s your party’s reason for adventuring? As written, *Dragons of Stormwreck Isle* provides each character with separate reasons for traveling to Dragon’s Rest.

- ✦ The **cleric** is investigating visions of impending doom emanating from the island.
- ✦ The **fighter** is looking for guidance in their path to fulfilling their heroic destiny.
- ✦ The **paladin** is on a pilgrimage to the cloister to contemplate their place in the world.
- ✦ The **rogue** is tracking the NPC Tarrack who reportedly stole a fortune.
- ✦ The **wizard** is searching for hidden magical knowledge rumored to be at the observatory.

Although some of these hooks are great, with five different motivations pulling the party in five different directions, it could muddy the story’s focus and make the adventure unnecessarily confusing.

To fix this, during your session zero character creation, you need a solid prologue quest to unify the party and point them in the right direction.

## A shared adventure hook

The party’s shared goal should be to find Lord Aidron, the bronze dragon wyrmling. This character is a partial catalyst for every problem in *Dragons of Stormwreck Isle*. If this guardian were less headstrong and dutifully remained at his post in Dragon’s Rest, he could deal with the harpy, he could help myconids; but because he’s foolishly left to battle his rival Sparkrender, the players have to resolve these issues.

Here’s a formula for crafting this adventure hook with the party:

- ✦ Before the campaign begins, the party has partially-completed a dragon-themed prologue quest which ended in a situation that is unresolvable without the intervention of a benevolent dragon — because dragon problems require a dragon solution.
- ✦ The party has heard of a nearby island temple called Dragon’s Rest which has a bronze dragon protector named Lord Aidron. The party *does not know* Lord Aidron is missing.
- ✦ The party boards the Compass Rose and sails toward Dragon’s Rest.

## Example quests

The question is: what should this dragon-themed prologue quest be, and how should it play out?

This quest *should not* be treated like a regular adventure. Instead, approach it like a little game of Mad Libs, where each player nominates themselves fill in the blanks and craft the story. The rest of this document provides three examples to illustrate how this should play out.

PROLOGUE



## THE HONORED ONE

The party is headed to a coastal town to deliver an important letter to the temple there. They join a procession of pilgrims on the road and the entire group stops for the night at a wayside inn. As the common room fills, the party seeks out an empty table.

*PC: One character notices an assassin's guild tattoo under a pilgrim's collar, revealed as the man leans forward while sitting. How does the character recognize it? A general knowledge of history? A past encounter with that guild? Perhaps an association of some sort?*

The party quietly discusses the disguised assassin. He could be a threat to anyone. The characters decide someone must enter the rooms rented by the pilgrims and search their luggage, hopefully finding a clue as to the assassin's business before the pilgrims finish eating.

*PC: One character slips out of the common room and finds the assassin's luggage. A live viper is coiled in the bottom of the bag atop a leather folder. How does the character safely examine the folder's contents without harming the snake or leaving other evidence of having been there?*

The case contains coded orders. The decipherable bits instruct the assassin to destroy someone called "the honored one" at the same temple the party is carrying a letter for. With proof of his intention to murder, the party reunites in the common room and confronts the assassin. The man draws curved knives and attacks wildly. Pilgrims flee in every direction.

*PC: One character herds the pilgrims out of the common room, protecting them from the assassin's wild cuts. How does that character overcome the pilgrims' panic and get them out safely?*

The assassin is a deadly foe but is no match for the party. He is quickly surrounded.

*PC: During the fight, one character manages to subdue the assassin. What kind of attack or spell brings the man down without killing him?*

When the commotion dies down, someone notices that the man isn't breathing. A search reveals a tiny dart in his back. The assassin was poisoned during or after the melee, perhaps to keep him from talking! Fearing that more killers hide among the pilgrims, the party leaves immediately, intending to warn the temple. But the narrow road is treacherous at night and hard to follow.

*PC: One character guides the party, preventing them getting lost or stumbling into hazards. What specific dangers does that character help the party avoid?*

The exhausted party arrives at the coastal town just before dawn. They find the temple closed; a tired priest calls from a window, telling the party to come back later.

*PC: One character convinces the priest that the danger of assassination is real. How does that character accomplish this? A convincing argument? A spell? Evidence taken from the battle?*

The party is finally let inside. The temple's two priests escort the party into a secret chamber where "the honored one" resides. It's not a person at all, but a bronze dragon egg, and it will soon hatch into a powerful goodly creature. The two elderly priests are convinced that some nefarious force is trying to destroy the egg. They beg the party to find a suitable protector for the egg, telling tales of a benevolent dragon who dwells on a faraway island. Dragon problems require a dragon solution.



## THE BLOODFIRE CRISIS

A year has passed since the Bloodfire Crisis rocked this large port city. Soldiers sponsored by the local temples rooted out a dragon-themed cult that was committing arsons. Last night, the inn where the party was staying burned down. Though everyone escaped, the locals are still wary of arsons and a cloud of suspicion lingers over the guests. The party feels compelled to investigate and clear their names.

*PC: One character confirms that the fire was set on purpose, though not who did it. How was the arson accomplished and how did the character discover this information?*

Residents of the neighborhood gather to help the innkeeper's family recover what they can. A small group starts interrogating guests, making threats and insisting that the culprit is linked to the exterminated dragon cult.

*PC: One character calms the group and prevents a mob from forming. How were the neighbors' fears prevented from turning into violence?*

Then the innkeeper's son describes a suspicious event from last night. The teenager reports seeing two people loitering across the street for over an hour before disappearing down an alley with no outlet. The party investigates the dead end and finds a metal grating missing from an old sewer entrance.

*PC: One character sneaks into the old sewers and scouts the area, finding and disarming a trap. What was the nature of the trap this character saved the party from encountering?*

Leaving the crowd behind, the party descends into the sewers. They soon find a pack of smugglers who have made a base in the old tunnels. A fight ensues!

*PC: One character dramatically stops a smuggler from summoning reinforcements. How was the smuggler calling for aid? Ringing a gong? Fleeing to a location occupied by its allies? And how did the character interfere with the attempt?*

A fearsome wererat leads the smugglers, a monster that is immune to most weapons.

*PC: One character overcomes the wererat. Was it a spell that affected the creature? A silvered spear borrowed from the innkeeper? Was the monster grappled into submission and tied up?*

Some of the smugglers surrender after the fight. They reveal that one of their lookouts saw someone sneak out of the inn last night and (unsuccessfully) try to light the attached stable on fire. The description of that person matches the innkeeper's son. Perhaps he tried again and was successful the second time! The party returns to the surface to confront the teenager, only to find that he's fallen into a coma.

*PC: One character identifies the same magical affliction that was going around during the Bloodfire Crisis. Is that character familiar with magical healing or curses? Or just local history?*

The family begs for the party's help and discretion. They have summoned a local priest who confirmed that the Bloodfire affliction is back; regular folk get infected by the dragon cult's curse and feel compelled to commit arson. The innkeeper's son isn't the first local now in the priest's care. Breaking this curse requires the blood of a dragon, freely given. A small dragon is known to dwell on a nearby island, one that might help. Dragon problems require a dragon solution.



## FAMINE OF THE BLACK DRAKES

The party stops at an inn for a midday meal. The innkeeper, a monk from the village's monastery, explains that there is no food and that the area is undergoing famine. The monk offers a reward if the party will investigate a missing grain shipment that was coming from a coastal city. Up the road, the party discovers the next village abandoned, its buildings boarded up and its crops lingering unharvested in the fields.

*PC: One character discovers a clue among the boarded-up structures; the villagers have fled from a black-scaled monster. What was the clue and how was it found?*

The party searches for the creature's lair. It seems to be somewhere in the hills. The search continues late into the evening.

*PC: One character leads the party to the right cave where the monster is lairing. What signs did that character find? Were skills or features employed? Or just blind luck?*

Suddenly, a black drake leaps onto the party from its hiding place above the cave mouth. The creature looks like a dragon but without wings. Caustic mist wafts from between its long fangs.

*PC: One character was not surprised by the monster and heroically distracts it, suffering an injury so the rest of the party won't be taken unaware. What is the nature of the injury suffered?*

The battle is a fierce one. Though small, the drake is a deadly foe, even for a party of adventurers. It's clear why the villagers chose to flee rather than fighting the monster. Finally, the drake is defeated.

*PC: One character finally finishes off the monster with a heroic effort. Identify the final blow or spell that ends the monster and describe how it dies. Put some drama into it!*

With the black drake defeated, the villagers return to their homes over the coming week. They celebrate the party's success and send a share of their harvest to the monastery. The party returns to their employers to collect a reward but the neighboring village is attacked again. Refugees arrive at the monastery with stories of dozens of black drakes, monsters that will surely come here too!

*PC: One character organizes the defense of the town. What defensive measures are ordered in anticipation of the monsters coming?*

The battle for the town and monastery claims the lives of several villagers, but the defenses hold. For now. More drakes are spotted in the outlying hills, perhaps biding time until enough of them gather for another assault. Something must be driving the beasts.

*PC: One character deduces that the monsters are undergoing an unusually hellish breeding season, hatching faster than they can be culled. Is this answer gained from old stories? Knowledge of nature or magical beasts? A vision from a deity?*

With the threat identified, the monks begin researching it in their library. They find a record of this happening centuries ago: the solution was the intervention of a true dragon, one that asserted authority over the drakes to stop their frenzied breeding. Unfortunately, the only benevolent dragon the monks know of dwells on a faraway island. Dragon problems require a dragon solution.

## Credits

**Writers:** Randall Right, Matthew Perkins

**Steel Patrons:** Erin McKee, Kyle Pietrovito, Humberto Hoffmann, ADD4ever, Aclian Lore, xFreshyJx, Michael Dodds, Justin Rossman, William Bond, Jill Potter, Phillip Brown, BlackbirdofTx, Luke Hermann, Platypulogist, Tim  
**Everything Else:** Matthew Perkins

*Originally published 18/10/2022*

*Latest version 18/10/2022*

### OPEN GAME LICENSE Version 1.0a

The following text is the property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and is Copyright 2000 Wizards of the Coast, Inc ("Wizards"). All Rights Reserved.

1. Definitions: (a) "Contributors" means the copyright and/or trademark owners who have contributed Open Game Content; (b) "Derivative Material" means copyrighted material including derivative works and translations (including into other computer languages), potation, modification, correction, addition, extension, upgrade, improvement, compilation, abridgment or other form in which an existing work may be recast, transformed or adapted; (c) "Distribute" means to reproduce, license, rent, lease, sell, broadcast, publicly display, transmit or otherwise distribute; (d) "Open Game Content" means the game mechanic and includes the methods, procedures, processes and routines to the extent such content does not embody the Product Identity and is an enhancement over the prior art and any additional content clearly identified as Open Game Content by the Contributor; and means any work covered by this License, including translations and derivative works under copyright law, but specifically excludes Product Identity. (e) "Product Identity" means product and product line names, logos and identifying marks including trade dress; artifacts; creatures characters; stories, storylines, plots, thematic elements, dialogue, incidents, language, artwork, symbols, designs, depictions, likenesses, formats, poses, concepts, themes and graphic, photographic and other visual or audio representations; names and descriptions of characters, spells, enchantments, personalities, teams, personas, likenesses and special abilities; places, locations, environments, creatures, equipment, magical or supernatural abilities or effects, logos, symbols, or graphic designs; and any other trademark or registered trademark clearly identified as Product identity by the owner of the Product Identity, and which specifically excludes the Open Game Content; (f) "Trademark" means the logos, names, mark, sign, motto, designs that are used by a Contributor to identify itself or its products or the associated products contributed to the Open Game License by the Contributor (g) "Use", "Used" or "Using" means to use, Distribute, copy, edit, format, modify, translate and otherwise create Derivative Material of Open Game Content. (h) "You" or "Your" means the licensee in terms of this agreement.
2. The License: This License applies to any Open Game Content that contains a notice indicating that the Open Game Content may only be Used under and in terms of this License. You must affix such a notice to any Open Game Content that you Use. No terms may be added to or subtracted from this License except as described by the License itself. No other terms or conditions may be applied to any Open Game Content distributed using this License.
3. Offer and Acceptance: By Using the Open Game Content You indicate Your acceptance of the terms of this License.
4. Grant and Consideration: In consideration for agreeing to use this License, the Contributors grant You a perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free, non-exclusive license with the exact terms of this License to Use, the Open Game Content.
5. Representation of Authority to Contribute: If You are contributing original material as Open Game Content, You represent that Your Contributions are Your original creation and/or You have sufficient rights to grant the rights conveyed by this License.
6. Notice of License Copyright: You must update the COPYRIGHT NOTICE portion of this License to include the exact text of the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any Open Game Content You are copying, modifying or distributing, and You must add the title, the copyright date, and the copyright holder's name to the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any original Open Game Content you Distribute.
7. Use of Product Identity: You agree not to Use any Product Identity, including as an indication as to compatibility, except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of each element of that Product Identity. You agree not to indicate compatibility or co-adaptability with any Trademark or Registered Trademark in conjunction with a work containing Open Game Content except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of such Trademark or Registered Trademark. The use of any Product Identity in Open Game Content does not constitute a challenge to the ownership of that Product Identity. The owner of any Product Identity used in Open Game Content shall retain all rights, title and interest in and to that Product Identity.
8. Identification: If you distribute Open Game Content You must clearly indicate which portions of the work that you are distributing are Open Game Content.
9. Updating the License: Wizards or its designated Agents may publish updated versions of this License. You may use any authorized version of this License to copy, modify and distribute any Open Game Content originally distributed under any version of this License.
10. Copy of this License: You MUST include a copy of this License with every copy of the Open Game Content You Distribute.
11. Use of Contributor Credits: You may not market or advertise the Open Game Content using the name of any Contributor unless You have written permission from the Contributor to do so.
12. Inability to Comply: If it is impossible for You to comply with any of the terms of this License with respect to some or all of the Open Game Content due to statute, judicial order, or governmental regulation then You may not Use any Open Game Material so affected.
13. Termination: This License will terminate automatically if You fail to comply with all terms herein and fail to cure such breach within 30 days of becoming aware of the breach. All sublicenses shall survive the termination of this License.
14. Reformation: If any provision of this License is held to be unenforceable, such provision shall be reformed only to the extent necessary to make it enforceable.

### 15. COPYRIGHT NOTICE.

Open Game License v 1.0a Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

System Reference Document 5.0 Copyright 2016, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.; Authors Mike Mearls, Jeremy Crawford, Chris Perkins, Rodney Thompson, Peter Lee, James Wyatt, Robert J. Schwab, Bruce R. Cordell, Chris Sims, and Steve Townshend, based on original material by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.