

McFarlane's DRAGONS

The Fall of the
Dragon Kingdom

McFARLANE'S DRAGONS SERIES 7

The world has fallen to war.

The evil sorcerer dragon Dy'Grunus has been defeated by King Draako,
but the threat to the dragon kingdom has only just begun.

With his final act of deception, Dy'Grunus released the fabled Hydra
dragon from its volcano prison, and nothing will ever be the same.

THE FALL OF THE DRAGON KINGDOM

WAR: BOOK TWO

CHAPTER I: THE GUARDIANS OF BONE

The Boneyard of Nag'Ryul, a hidden and desolate place.

In dragon lore, there are two sacred places held in high regard. The first is the Royal Speaking Chamber, which houses the much-revered Rune of Lo'gos. This mystical object is credited with jumpstarting dragonkind's evolution and granting them deeper understanding of the world around them. Located in a spire high above the Throne City, all dragons are allowed to visit the Speaking Chamber to gaze upon the glory of the Rune.

The Boneyard of Nag'Ryul was the only place held in higher regard than the Speaking Chamber, but only two dragons per generation knew the location — the king and his heir.

Though the existence of the Boneyard was known to all, it was deemed necessary to keep its actual location a well-guarded secret. The Boneyard served two purposes. It was a burial site for lost nobility and the last defense against dragonkind's greatest foe, the Hydra. Fearing his lust for world domination, the Seven Dragons of Destiny

imprisoned the Hydra within a fiery volcano. Afraid the beast would escape and seek vengeance on those who had stood against him in his quest to rule the world, one final defensive measure was put in place. At the request of the Seven, the Spell of Nag'Ryul was cast on the Boneyard at the base of the volcano. Should the Hydra ever break free, the spell would summon an army of undead dragon warriors to stand between the Hydra's fury and the serenity of dragon society.

It was always hoped that this failsafe would never become a necessity, but now, as a result of the evil Dy'Grunus machinations, the Hydra had been unleashed.

As the Hydra emerged from the ash and flame of his volcanic prison, a crackle of energy buzzed through the air, triggering the ancient Spell of Nag'Ryul. Rivers of lava and molten rock spewed forth, and the ground surrounding the volcano began to pulsate and shift, as if it were alive. Jagged bones of dragonkind's greatest leaders rose from the sacred burial ground, no longer dead, but not wholly of the living world.

The Fossil Clan had risen.

CHAPTER II: THE HYDRA'S WRATH

The broken earth is a crisscross pattern of lava flows. The air is so thick with ash, the sun barely shines through. The fight for the glory of the dragonkind is at hand; scores of undead dragon kings stand against the massive fury of the ancient Hydra.


The myths and folklore of eras past tell of dragonkind's rise from mindless beasts to creatures of wisdom and passion. Long ago, the Seven Dragons of Destiny defeated the Hydra and set the course for future dragon society, working as agents of peace and harmony. Legend held that the Hydra was larger than could be imagined, a creature of pure evil, more demon than dragon, with five equally savage heads upon his broad, powerful shoulders. The reality was somewhat different than the ancient stories. While bigger than any other dragon, the Hydra was not as "large as a mountain," as some tales had suggested. Though of a decidedly sinister nature, the Hydra was all dragon —with the heart of a demon, perhaps, but a dragon nonetheless.

The most noticeable difference between the myth and the reality was that the Hydra now had three heads, not five. It seems that during his long imprisonment, the Hydra had devoured two of his own heads. But, three heads or five, the Hydra was an imposing sight. He emerges

from the crumbling volcano with a deafening roar, signaling the beginning of the end.

Hundreds of undead kings rise from the ground with fire in their eyes, intent on stopping the Hydra's inevitable advance toward the Throne City. The skeletal warriors surround the Hydra. Without hesitation, the two sides — the hulking beast with three heads, and the army of undead — clash in an epic maelstrom of violence. Fossil dragons lunge forward with no regard for their own safety. The first wave is easily vanquished as the Hydra's massive heads whip from side to side. Bones crunch under his powerful jaws and the remains of once-proud kings fall in pieces to the ground.

Lead by the resurrected bodies of the Seven Dragons of Destiny, the army of the Fossil Clan strikes hard and fast, hitting the Hydra in wave after wave. One group swoops from above, while others come from the beast's sides, to catch him off-guard. Steadily, the Hydra beats back his attackers, and one-by-one the Seven Dragons of Destiny are eliminated. The battle rages for hours. Clawing and biting, the Fossil Clan fights against the Hydra, but against such an opponent, it is not enough. When the battle is finished, the Hydra, bloodied, but not beaten, stands on the bones of his enemies. At long last, he has his first taste of vengeance.



The Hydra senses the pull of the Rune of Lo'gos. It is a sensation he has not felt for tens of thousands of years, but it is a feeling he has never forgotten.

The Hydra heads south, beginning his journey toward the Throne City. And destiny.

CHAPTER III: KING DRAAKO'S LAST STAND

King Draako, ruler of the dragon kingdom, had seen enough of war. Making his way from the frozen wastes of the far north back to the Throne City, he was overwhelmed with the feeling that an end must come to the bloodshed and hatred, once and for all.

Though Draako had defeated his nemesis, the twisted sorcerer Dy'Grunus, a pitched battle was still being fought in the Throne City. Draako had hoped Dy'Grunus' death would weaken his followers, but the revolutionaries held fast to their belief in the old sorcerer's teachings: dragonkind should rule the world, not serve it. This blasphemous rhetoric was as old as dragon civilization itself. It had first been used as a platform by the infamous Hydra — the five-headed villain of eons gone-by. It had no place in the peaceful, honor-bound culture dragonkind had become. As he soared through the clouds, Draako was aware that it was not the dark beliefs of the Hydra that would be his kingdom's undoing, but the Hydra himself.

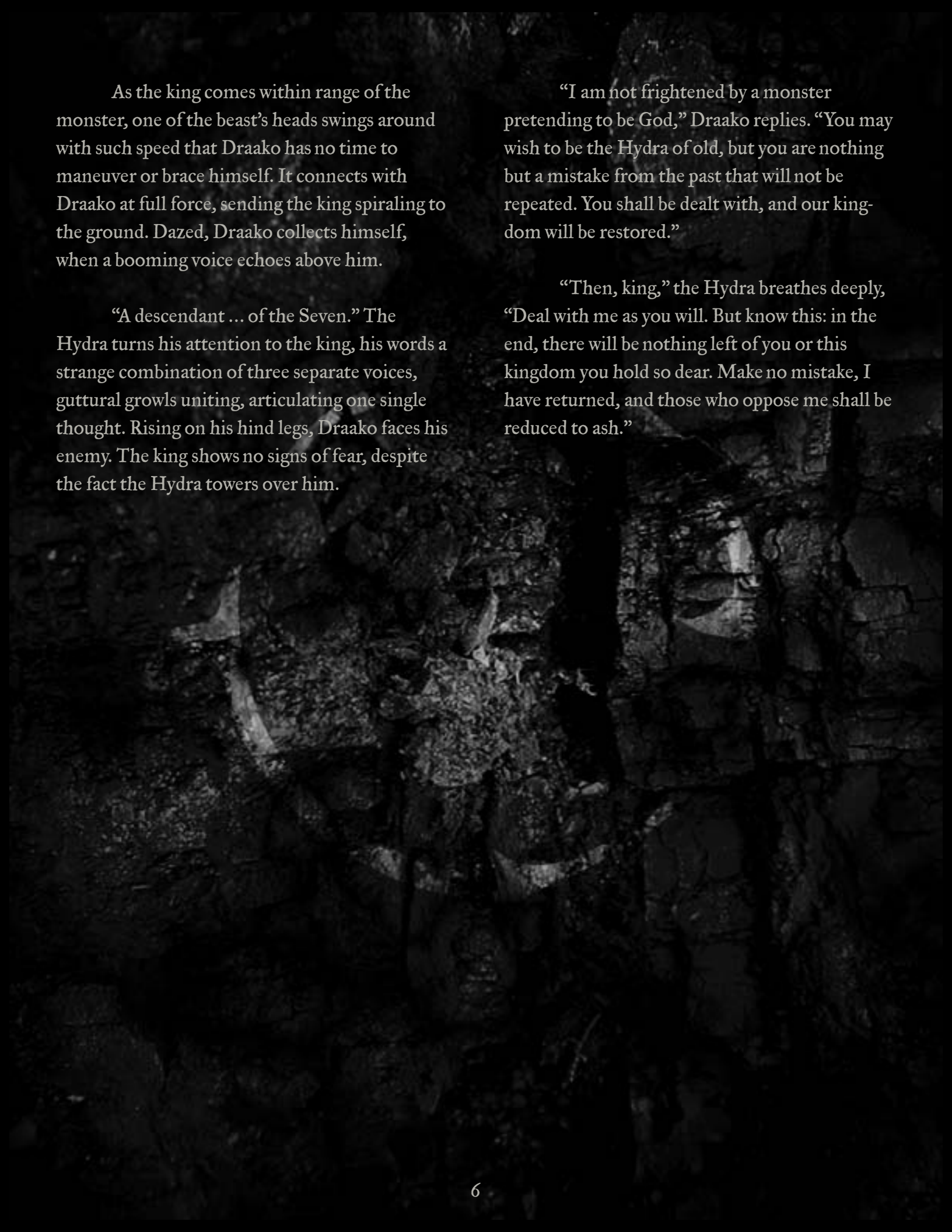
The cloud of smoke and debris covering the Throne City could be seen from miles away. The city had fallen deeper into chaos since Draako left to travel north to visit his son, the heir to the throne, who had been secreted away in an effort to keep the regal lineage secure. He felt strongly that his legions would hold back the advance of

the remaining revolutionary forces. He had not, however, counted on what he saw through the smoke and flames. A massive creature, larger than any dragon he had ever seen, standing in the wreckage of the Throne City. Dragons, both rebels and soldiers loyal to the king lay in heaps, their bodies broken, while others continued to launch futile attacks on the great beast.

The Hydra has returned, somehow freed from his volcanic prison, and nothing is safe from its ravenous appetite for vengeance.

With a few powerful swipes of his wings, Draako picks up speed, heading straight for the Hydra. If this is the king's day to fall, so too will this ancient beast whose wicked ways have haunted everything dragonkind had built. With his last breath, Draako must slay the Hydra.

As Draako draws nearer, he notices something peculiar. The Hydra, while multi-headed as the legends told, had only three heads upon his shoulders, not five. Could it be that this creature, though imposing and capable of great destruction, is not in fact the Hydra of lore, but some other abomination sent forth to test the might of dragonkind's resolve? This thought gives Draako hope, if only momentarily. If this is just another dragon, and not that which all dragons feared most, maybe all is not lost. But Draako's hopes are quickly dashed.



As the king comes within range of the monster, one of the beast's heads swings around with such speed that Draako has no time to maneuver or brace himself. It connects with Draako at full force, sending the king spiraling to the ground. Dazed, Draako collects himself, when a booming voice echoes above him.

"A descendant ... of the Seven." The Hydra turns his attention to the king, his words a strange combination of three separate voices, guttural growls uniting, articulating one single thought. Rising on his hind legs, Draako faces his enemy. The king shows no signs of fear, despite the fact the Hydra towers over him.

"I am not frightened by a monster pretending to be God," Draako replies. "You may wish to be the Hydra of old, but you are nothing but a mistake from the past that will not be repeated. You shall be dealt with, and our kingdom will be restored."

"Then, king," the Hydra breathes deeply, "Deal with me as you will. But know this: in the end, there will be nothing left of you or this kingdom you hold so dear. Make no mistake, I have returned, and those who oppose me shall be reduced to ash."

CHAPTER IV: THE FALL

Hours pass.

The great Throne City is all but rubble, save for one solitary landmark, the Royal Speaking Chamber. Amidst the destruction, the Chamber's tall, intricately detailed spire stands nearly unscathed by the combat. Home to the Rune of Lo'gos, the Speaking Chamber is dragonkind's holiest site, and Dragons fighting the revolution see its refusal to crumble as a call to arms.

This conflict has split dragonkind to its core. One side is led by the deceitful Dy'Grunus, others, still loyal to King Draako, fight valiantly to preserve the long-held belief that dragonkind's place in the world is one of nurturing and healing. The war wages for years, both factions determined to obliterate the other. Now, in the shadow of the Speaking Chamber, both sides have come face-to-face with evil's true nature.

A fog covers the ground as night falls. Blood and broken bodies cover the land.

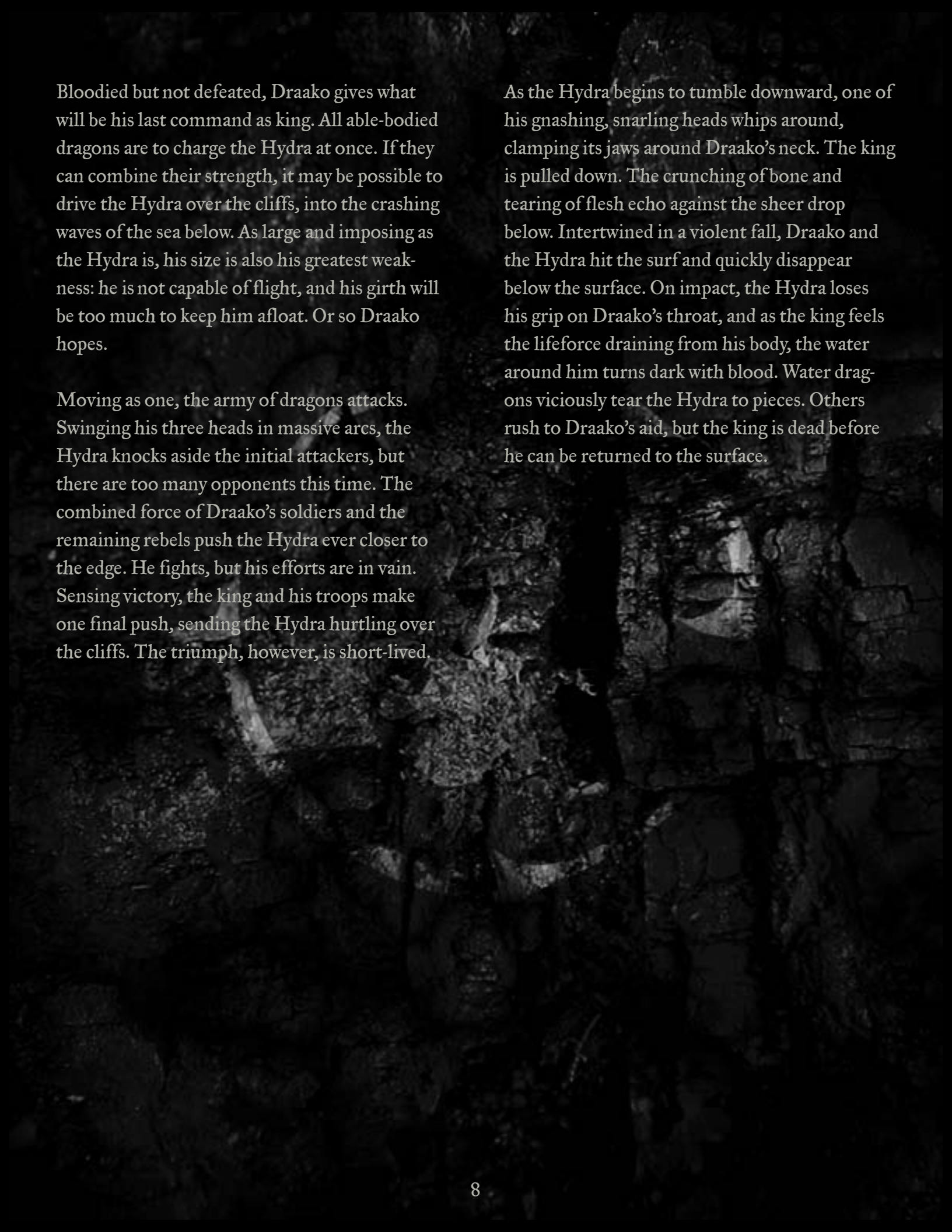
Battered and weary from what seems a never-ending conflict, King Draako stands defiant against the Hydra — a huge beast with three savage heads upon its massive shoulders and an

unquenchable thirst for chaos, spawned from his long imprisonment in the base of a volcano.

Though the revolutionaries who had fought at Dy'Grunus' side had felt a connection to the Hydra's teachings, they quickly see that there is no future under the Hydra's rule. Destroying anything that stands in his path, the Hydra cares nothing for allegiances or for the battle the rebels have fought in his name. His only concern is annihilation — this world will be his, and his alone.

The bodies of King Draako's brothers and sisters — both ally and enemy — lie on the ground. Thousands have died, but in their loss, a bond has formed. Clans who have been at war with one another for the past few years have now come together for a common cause. And as a united group, they await Draako's command.

Working as a unit, wave after wave of dragons throw themselves at the Hydra. Nothing seems to slow the great beast as he comes ever closer to the Speaking Chamber, intent on tearing it to the ground and crushing the Rune of Lo'gos between his mighty jaws. Draako cannot allow this to happen. Regardless of the consequences, the Rune must be saved for dragonkind to continue to thrive.



Bloodied but not defeated, Draako gives what will be his last command as king. All able-bodied dragons are to charge the Hydra at once. If they can combine their strength, it may be possible to drive the Hydra over the cliffs, into the crashing waves of the sea below. As large and imposing as the Hydra is, his size is also his greatest weakness: he is not capable of flight, and his girth will be too much to keep him afloat. Or so Draako hopes.

Moving as one, the army of dragons attacks. Swinging his three heads in massive arcs, the Hydra knocks aside the initial attackers, but there are too many opponents this time. The combined force of Draako's soldiers and the remaining rebels push the Hydra ever closer to the edge. He fights, but his efforts are in vain. Sensing victory, the king and his troops make one final push, sending the Hydra hurtling over the cliffs. The triumph, however, is short-lived.

As the Hydra begins to tumble downward, one of his gnashing, snarling heads whips around, clamping its jaws around Draako's neck. The king is pulled down. The crunching of bone and tearing of flesh echo against the sheer drop below. Intertwined in a violent fall, Draako and the Hydra hit the surf and quickly disappear below the surface. On impact, the Hydra loses his grip on Draako's throat, and as the king feels the lifeforce draining from his body, the water around him turns dark with blood. Water dragons viciously tear the Hydra to pieces. Others rush to Draako's aid, but the king is dead before he can be returned to the surface.

EPILOGUE

As King Draako lay dead on the ground far beneath the Speaking Chamber, a sense of calm and sadness overcomes the survivors who witnessed his final moments. Their hope for a prosperous future is quickly dashed as the true horror of the war becomes known. The Rune of Lo'gos, which gave dragonkind ability to think, reason and communicate, which they had fought so bravely to protect, and which their King had died for; is gone.

A search reveals the full extent of the dire situation. Not only is the Rune missing, so are the four shards that had been placed around the globe.

For years dragons seek the Rune, or any sign of it, but it is never found. And as the earth's once-great rulers regress down the evolutionary ladder, a new species begins to make a play for control of the globe, relegating dragonkind to myth and legend.

Many thousands of years later, dragonkind is nothing more than folklore, while mankind rules over life on Earth with an iron fist.

THE BEGINNING.