

DUNGEONS
&
DRAGONS[®]

DROW of the UNDERDARK[™]



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DROW^{of the} UNDERDARK™

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Introduction

To survive in the wilds of the Underdark, one must not delay when the Spider Queen bestows her gifts. For with even the slightest hesitation, the briefest moment of doubt, the Flesh-Carver will snatch back her blessing, depriving her chosen of the wonders of her favor. This was a fact not lost on Vorn.

He spent an entire century of his life looking for such chances, waiting for the moment that would propel him toward his destiny, to advance his status and free him from the drudgery of being a lowly common soldier. Thus far, Lolth had been silent—to him at least. He had watched others rise to take their place as fangs or consorts, while he languished as a foot soldier, little better than a thug.

Now, of course, was not the time for such idle thoughts, but it was hard to rein in the mind after spending eight hours crouched in a dank cavern. He and a dozen other drow soldiers hid in positions throughout a large gallery in the depths of the shadows, behind draperies and stalagmites, waiting and watching for the first sign of their prey.

And then it came. Light shone forth from the mouth of the cavern, piercing the perfect blackness and plunging Vorn's vision into swollen, shifting spots. Vorn had known it would happen, had tried to ready himself, but he was not prepared for its intensity. He shook his head, rubbing the palms of his hands into his eyes to clear his sight, but even when the blindness abated he found it hard to focus. Through the painful glow, he looked for his commander, waiting for the gesture to attack. Soon. It would be very soon.

The intruders' fear was obvious, naked on their pale faces. They were of all shapes and sizes: a dwarf, some small figure that resembled a halfling, what Vorn guessed was a human, and an elf maiden. The interlopers fanned out from the entrance, their weapons drawn, casting about for the signs of the enemies they had to suspect were near.

A tense moment passed. And then, like fools, they relaxed. The dwarf uttered something. The intruders laughed, their vigilance dropping.

Vorn's commander made a sharp movement with his hands accompanied by a quick lift of his shoulders. The signal. The time was now.

Globes of darkness quenched the light. Ghostly flames of flickering reds and violets limned the forms of the surface dwellers. Crossbow bolts, laden with potent toxins, slashed through the air, and the cries of pain revealed the accuracy of the drow archers. Vorn aimed his hand crossbow, when he realized that his chance, his one opportunity, stood before him.

His commander had his back to him, watching the combat unfold. Always careless, this commander.

To survive in the Underdark, one must not delay. . . . Vorn fired the bolt, knowing that the poison would make short work of the officer. With one smooth motion, he crossed the gap, pulling his sword from its sheath, to finish the job.

Such are the ways of the drow.

Bards sing of bold heroes who brave the depths of the earth, who plunder the vaults of ancient peoples, exploring and mapping the endless passages and corridors that honeycomb the Underdark. Although much of this lightless world is empty and devoid of life, it contains terrifying monsters, sprawling alien civilizations, swathes of molds, oozes, slimes, and countless other hazards. But no threat the Underdark conjures compares to the drow. Their name is a curse, their presence a cancer. They are the despised, the exiled, the shunned—and yet they are powerful, and conquer nearly all who come before them. They are the dark elves, cursed by Corellon Larethian, condemned to spend their days languishing in their own corruption.



Illus. by T. Giorello

USING THIS BOOK

Drow of the Underdark is the definitive resource for dark elves in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® roleplaying game. Within these pages, you will find exhaustive detail on their culture and society, rules and options for building drow characters, new equipment including a broad selection of drow-themed magic items, new monsters, and a fully detailed drow city just waiting to be explored.

Just as *Draconomicon* presented extensive information on dragons and the *Fiendish Codex* supplements described demons and devils, *Drow of the Underdark* does the same with the drow, offering Dungeon Masters the tools to create memorable encounters with one of the game's most popular adversaries. But it also gives players the knowledge and tools to effectively fight this menacing race.

The material presented in *Drow of the Underdark* is spread throughout seven chapters, with their contents summarized here.

Chapter 1: All About the Drow. This chapter presents an unflinching look at the society of dark elves, exploring their history and myths, traditions and culture.

Chapter 2: Drow Options. Moving away from thematic descriptions, this chapter offers several new uses for skills, new feats, alternative class features, and spells to reflect the disturbing techniques employed by the drow.

Chapter 3: Prestige Classes. This chapter presents a selection of eight prestige classes that demonstrate the various interests of these evil elves.

Chapter 4: Equipment. This chapter offers a survey of useful tools: new alchemical items and poisons, new magic weapon and armor properties, and new rods and wondrous items.

Chapter 5: New Monsters. From the spiders they breed, to the brutes they enslave, to the wretched forms of those who have displeased the Spider Queen, this chapter presents a detailed look at the kind of servants the drow employ and the allies they make.

Chapter 6: Campaigns and Adventures. This chapter offers guidance and tools for using drow in adventures, as well as techniques for designing campaigns with a drow focus.

Chapter 7: Erelhei-Cinlu. The final chapter examines one of the most infamous cities of the Underdark: Erelhei-Cinlu, located in the subterranean cavern known as the Vault of the Drow.

ADVICE FOR DMS

Drow of the Underdark is designed with the Dungeon Master in mind. This book helps you create exciting and memorable encounters featuring drow antagonists, and to construct entire adventures or even campaigns with strong drow themes.

The cultural and setting information is of particular use, since it reveals important details about the drow—how they think, what they do, why they do it, and so forth. More important, it portrays the Spider Queen as an active force for evil, and her priestesses as a terrible threat to the world. This book positively brims with adventure possibilities—sparks of inspiration that will provide all you need to tell your own tales of the Underdark.

The supporting mechanics are designed for drow characters. The skill options, feats, alternative class features, and prestige classes give you the tools to surprise your players with unexpected strategies and tactics.

SWIFT AND IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

Miniatures Handbook introduced the concept of a new action type: the swift action. Likewise, *Expanded Psionics Handbook* introduced another new action type: the immediate action. Some of the class features, feats, and spells described in *Drow of the Underdark* use these concepts. A description of how they work follows.

Swift Actions: A swift action consumes a very small amount of time, but represents a larger expenditure of effort and energy than a free action. You can perform one swift action per turn without affecting your ability to perform other actions. In that regard, a swift action is like a free action. However, you can perform only a single swift action per turn, regardless of what other actions you take.

You can take a swift action any time you would normally be allowed to take a free action. Since swift actions usually involve magic or psionics, or the activation of magic or psionic items, many characters (especially those who don't use magic or psionics) will never have the opportunity to take a swift action.

Casting a quickened spell, or manifesting a quickened psionic power, is a swift action. In addition, casting any spell or mani-

festing any power with a casting time or manifesting time of 1 swift action is a swift action. Casting a spell or manifesting a power with a casting time or manifesting time of 1 swift action does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

Immediate Actions: Much like a swift action, an immediate action consumes a very small amount of time, but represents a larger expenditure of effort and energy than a free action. Unlike a swift action, an immediate action can be performed at any time—even if it's not your turn.

Using an immediate action on your turn is the same as using a swift action, and counts as your swift action for that turn. If you do use an immediate action in this way, you cannot use another immediate action until your next turn (effectively, using an immediate action before your turn is equivalent to using your swift action for the coming turn). You also cannot use an immediate action if you are currently flat-footed.

Under these rules, casting a *feather fall* spell is an immediate action (not a free action, as stated in the spell description in the *Player's Handbook*).

Magic Items and Potions: Activating a spell completion item, activating a spell trigger item, or drinking a potion is a standard action, even if the spell with which the scroll, potion, or item is made can be cast as a swift action.

FOR PLAYERS

The drow might be an evil race—and one that is permanently at odds with other races—but many players are nonetheless attracted to playing drow characters. *Drow of the Underdark* discusses the underpinnings of drow societies and beliefs, their Lolth-dominated religion, and an example of an archetypal drow city—all of which is vital information to players of drow characters. This material enables a player to flesh out his character's history, as well as providing guidance for conceptualizing personalities, goals, and mannerisms.

For players of other races, *Drow of the Underdark* can be equally effective as a reference for enemies of the drow. The study of drow society included in this book not only tells you how the drow operate, but why they do what they do—and the best way to defeat a foe is to understand that foe's motivations.

New uses for skills, guidelines for creating new poisons and magical poisons, an expanded description of Drow Sign Language, and rules for training vermin all support the cultural considerations. Over 50 new feats help define the fighting techniques of this unusual race: Several new style feats are included, as well as a number of general and metamagic feats that improve drow racial talents but are equally useful for characters of any race.

As with any new game element, you should always consult your DM before you start using this material. The viability of these gameplay options depends on the role the drow will play in your DMs campaign, and by discussing your choices ahead of time, you give your DM the chance to help fit the character into her game.

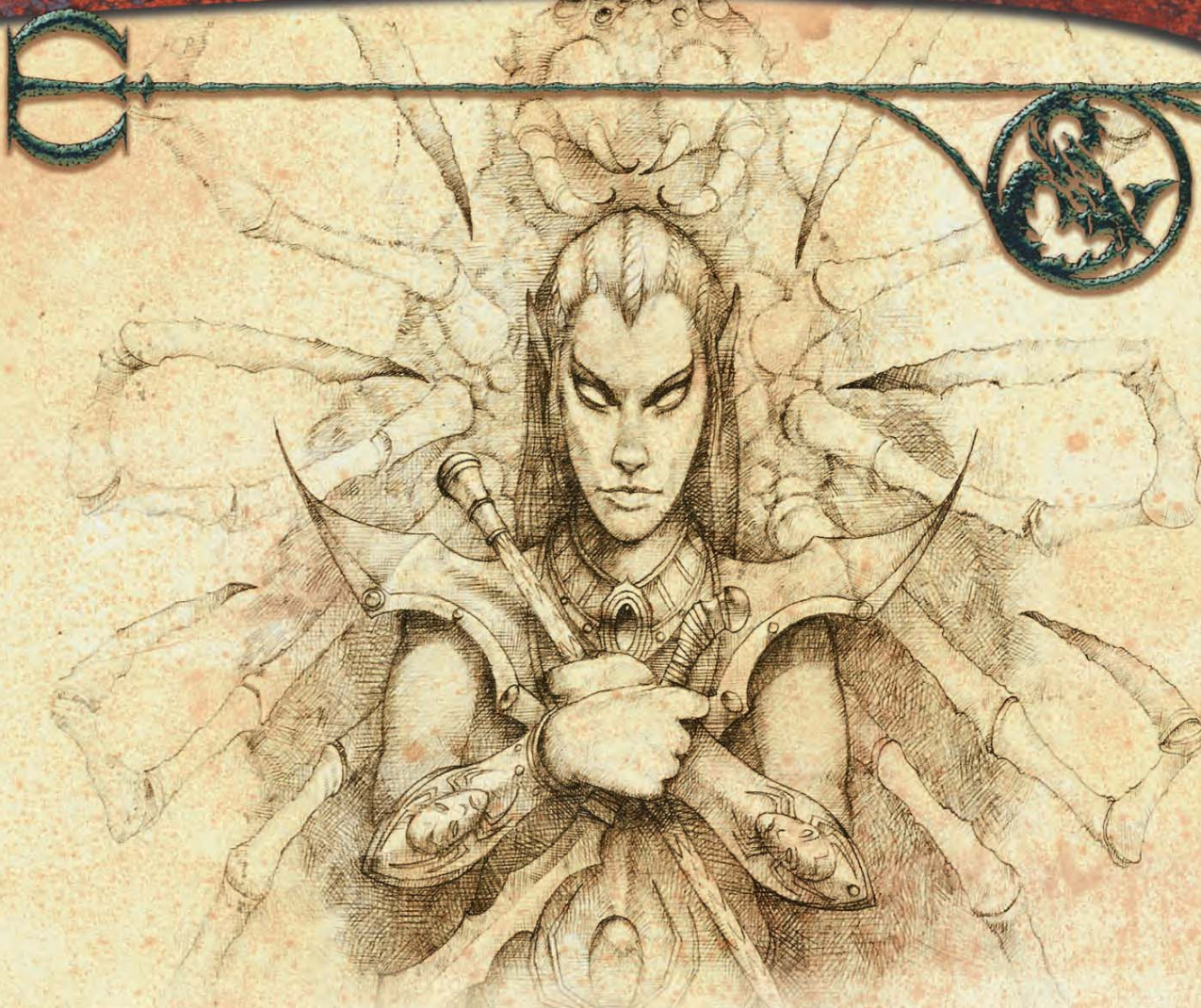
WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

To use this book, you will need the three D&D core rulebooks—the *Player's Handbook (PH)*, *Dungeon Master's Guide (DMG)*, and *Monster Manual (MM)*. Though no other books are strictly necessary, a few will undoubtedly enhance your enjoyment of this product. *Underdark* is an excellent resource for exploration of the subterranean world, offering additional mechanics that complement those found in this book. *Spell Compendium* includes domains and spells used by various NPCs presented in this book, and *Book of Vile Darkness* offers additional rules suitable for this evil race.

Throughout this book, superscript abbreviations are often used to denote game elements and other materials that appear in certain supplements. Those supplements and their abbreviations are as follows: *Book of Vile Darkness (BoVD)*, *Complete Adventurer (CAAd)*, *Complete Arcane (CAr)*, *Complete Divine (CD)*, *Complete Psionic (CP)*, *Complete Scoundrel (CS)*, *Complete Warrior (CW)*, *Dungeon Master's Guide II (DMG2)*, *Expanded Psionics Handbook (EPH)*, *Fiend Folio (FF)*, *Fiendish Codex I (FC1)*, *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting (FR)*, *Lords of Darkness (LD)*, *Lords of Madness (LoM)*, *Miniatures Handbook (MH)*, *Monster Manual II (MM2)*, *Monster Manual IV (MM4)*, *Planar Handbook (Pla)*, *Player's Handbook II (PH2)*, *Spell Compendium (SC)*, and *Underdark (Und)*.



Welcome to the Underdark . . .



Illus. by W. England

The drow are a paradox among the races of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. They are elves, but dark and cruel. They are infamous, known far and wide by players and characters alike, yet they are mysterious and subtle beings. Because everyone knows of the drow, they assume they understand the drow.

They could not be more wrong.

For all their infamy, for all their prominence as the most insidious of D&D villains, the drow remain largely unknown. Those who would claim to understand them and their ways have been misled by the foolish myths and deliberate propaganda of surface elves, by incomplete tales brought back by delving adventurers, or by cultural treatises specific to a particular world or setting, but not to the drow nation as a whole. Come, now, and see for the first time who the drow are, how they truly live—and why the surface-dwellers, grown complacent in their false and incomplete knowledge, would do well to fear them once more.

A DAY IN THE LIFE

The great stone bells chime from atop the enormous temple of the Spider Queen, signaling the start of yet another rite. Drawn from her trance by the reverberating sound, Velthura Vae stretches once, luxuriating in the feel of the spidersilk sheets. Then she rises, padding barefoot to her “window”—actually a crystalline mirror, enchanted to provide her a clear view of

Yvoth-Lened’s market without allowing prying eyes to spy upon her in return. Her lip curls in disdain as she gazes upon the bustle of the darkened streets below, the echoing sounds of shopkeepers and slave traders both cheating and being cheated by their clients. It is a scene of controlled chaos, and it disgusts her even as it calls her to rule it with blooded teeth and an iron fist. *They are flies*, she muses, not for the first time. *They are flies, when they should be spiders.*

She turns away, to face instead the shrine carved into the far wall. With lifelike precision—and possibly lifelike color, though she has never allowed any light within the room to make sure—a stone image of a great spider returns her gaze, its front legs extended from the wall, its face that of a beautiful drow. She kneels before the icon of Lolth, the stone floor cold and painful on her bare knees. Head bowed, she raises her hands, intertwining her fingers with the spider’s legs. “Queen of Spiders, Weaver of Webs,” she intones in a rite she has performed every morning, without fail, for more years than a human lifetime. “I offer to you all my efforts and all my triumphs of the day to come.” She does not ask for Lolth’s blessing, or the goddess’s aid; she knows better.

Her chamber door opens, revealing a bevy of servants led by Ashirza, her personal maid. She has no need to summon them; they all know the time their mistress rises, and they know too the penalties for tardiness.

With the door guarded by loyal bugbear sentinel-slaves and several male drow servants making the bed, she allows her maid to approach. At this very moment, she is at her most vulnerable, for she turns her attention inward, suppressing her body's innate resistance to the outside energies that other races call "magic." She and the rest of the drow know better: She understands that those mystical energies are just another element of the gods' will in the world of mortals. Watching from the corner of her eye, alert for any sign of betrayal, she shivers once as Ashirza's cantrips ripple across her skin, cleansing her of nighttime sweat and dirt, untangling her ivory-white hair. She nods once, satisfied with the result, and raises her arms for her servants to clothe her in the black leathers and gossamer silks of her rank and station.

She swiftly descends the many stairs of her tall and narrow home, finding a table already laid out with a breakfast of mushrooms and lizard eggs. Under the respectful and nervous gaze of the cook, she whispers a brief spell in Lolth's name. The drow are connoisseurs of poison, and though they rarely use poison against one another—precisely because such efforts are often anticipated—one can never afford to become complacent. That was, after all, how she earned her current station, and her current home, from their former owner.

The food proves poison-free, and the cook retreats in relief. He knows full well that had the food been tainted, or simply not to his mistress's pleasure, being flayed alive would be the best he might hope for.

Normally she would sit back and relax, eating slowly and indulging in the excellent fare, but today promises to be full indeed. She eats swiftly, snatches up a decanter of lichen wine to sip throughout the day, and departs.

Her first errand is to the bustling bazaar at the center of the city, with the temple of Lolth looming above. On any other day, her servants would handle such menial tasks for her, keeping the larder stocked. Tomorrow, however, she hosts the elders of her house, traveled all the way from Erelhei-Cinlu, and that is far too vital a gathering to leave in the hands of mere servants. She must go herself, select only the freshest fungi, the choicest cuts of rothé, and—of course—the spider-meats for the ceremonial joining of the meal.

She pushes her way through the crowded market, her maid and bugbear guards in tow. Most of the drow recognize her status, by her garb and posture if not her face, and clear a path. The members of other races, slaves of the drow, or the rare foreign traders are less cooperative. She and her entourage literally run down a kobold slave who fails to step aside swiftly enough, and once she is forced to order her guards to subdue a hobgoblin who refuses to yield the way. Irritated by these interruptions, she flows through the market like a wind, sipping from her lichen wine, pointing out this item or that to be delivered back to her home or carried by her servants.

The attack, when it comes, is almost too simplistic to be believed. A ragged drow with filthy hair lunges from the crowd, fist clenched tight around a wicked dagger. With contemptuous ease, she swats aside the attack and utters a spell. The air thunders and the drow falls writhing to the ground, blood spilling from his ears, his innate resistance crumpled like paper before her power.

She waves off her bodyguards, reminding herself to have them maimed for their failure to act, and kneels beside the would-be assassin. She wonders briefly which of her many enemies could have sent him. That they would try to kill her is no surprise, but that any would do so in such a pathetic manner is shocking. No chance to question him now, for her spell has deafened him. She decides to have him sent back to her home, where he can be interrogated at leisure. She rises, and continues through a crowd that has not reacted at all to the sudden violence in its midst.

The incident, feeble as it was, has thrown off her schedule. Angrily threatening—and even, once or twice, whipping—shopkeepers who move too slowly, she rushes through the remainder of her purchases. By the time she reaches the Amphitheater, the opening ceremonies have already concluded with the sacrifice of a captured surface elf upon the altar of Lolth. As the first of the games begins—giant lizard races, on which she herself has two hefty wagers—she slips into a private booth, leaving Ashirza and her bodyguards outside.

"You are late," the room's other occupant remarks, reclining on a silk-covered divan.

She swallows her bile and hatred of the other female. "I am here now, Reverend Mother Dultha," she replies, hoping the use of the full honorific will smooth over any irritation without the humiliation of apology or excuse.

"So you are. And how go your preparations for the feast?"

"Well enough. They would go better, of course, if I knew how many of my family would be in attendance."

The Reverend Mother of Lolth, and Matron of House Inlindl, smiles an ugly, tooth-filled smile. "My servants in the passage to Erelhei-Cinlu tell me you should expect one fewer than you were told."

She cannot help but smile in return. After her cousin's "accidental" death on the long journey, none of her relatives has the power to challenge her claim to the title of matron of the house's families here in Yvoth-Lened.

The Reverend Mother's expression darkens. "And your end of our agreement?"

She nods. "I have Shenthral's wretched half-breed in the care of my guards. At the moment of the wedding, I will reveal the child for all to see. Shenthral will be shamed, and her alliance with House Eilservs will fail before it begins."

For a time they drink together, watching the games through the shuttered window, watching each other through narrowed eyes. Finally, her triumphant mood only lightly dampened by her loss of both slaves on the lizard-race wagers, she rises, nods politely to her drinking companion, and sweeps through the door. Already she is plotting the death of the Reverend Mother, who is far too cunning and knows too much. But this, alas, must wait until she has consolidated her own power in Yvoth-Lened.

She has hours yet before the rejuvenating comfort of trance will call to her once more, and in that time she must oversee the bustling scurry of dozens of servants throughout her house. The day's purchases must be delivered, checked, prepared, and stored; the doors and windows checked time and again for both mystical and mundane security; the errant bugbear bodyguards branded and blinded for their poor performance; and a dozen other niggling details made utterly perfect before

the family arrives the following day. She barely takes a moment to eat, though even in the chaos she does not forget to check the food once more for poison. She has already survived one attack today, incompetent as it was; it would be humiliating to fall to another.

It is only when she has shed her clothes, cleansed herself of the dust and sweat of the day, and lain down for a night's trance, that she feels the first burning in her stomach, the first swelling of her throat, the first tightening of muscles that signify the onset of a poison. For even with all her paranoia, all her safeguards, she has indeed become complacent. She checked her breakfast when she awoke, the drink served by the Reverend Mother, her dinner before she retired . . . but she never thought to consider that the decanter of lichen wine from which she had sipped all day had been tainted by her own maid Ashirza, who slipped poison into the beverage—and also a potion that postponed the onset of the poison—during the distraction of the staged assassination attempt in the market.

Tomorrow, when the powerful members of the family arrive, it will be Ashirza who greets them. Velthura Vae will not rise again.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

It is one of the aforementioned paradoxes of the drow that their culture, while encouraging selfish ambition and advancement through deception and murder, is still one that focuses—almost in spite of itself—on the good of the community over the good of the individual. Drow society, as a whole, lacks any concept of personal worth. An individual's abilities or accomplishments are not, in and of themselves, of any importance whatsoever. The culture does not reward skill for skill's sake, or celebrate individual success or ability. It's not that the drow choose to downplay these factors; rather, they literally have no notion that they *should* matter. It is as foreign an idea to them as judging a person's worth based on shoe size would be to most surface-dwelling races.

The only true measure of importance in drow society is how thoroughly and effectively an individual can direct, shape, and change that society—in other words, by how much



Poisoning is a popular means of advancement among the drow

authority an individual has over other drow and the community's needed resources. Although personal ability and accomplishment, or birth into a powerful bloodline, often leads to such control, it is the influence itself that determines a drow's station and status.

Like many other sentient beings, the drow think in terms of dichotomies: If something is not good, it must be bad; if it is not strong, it must be weak. Thus, if a drow with authority over others is worthwhile, a drow with little or no authority is worthless. When nothing but status and influence determine individual value, and life itself is of no intrinsic worth, a weak drow is nothing but a commodity to be traded, abused, and eventually exhausted by those

more powerful. Enslavement, torture, and even murder are not crimes, when the perpetrator is a drow of high stature and the victim is not. Drow do avoid randomly slaughtering others who offend them, but this is due to a concern that they might accidentally slay the relative, servant, or slave of someone more powerful, not out of any sense of the value of life.

This core belief in power has developed the drow culture as it exists today: a society in which every interaction is determined by a dominant/submissive hierarchy. A drow divides everyone—drow or otherwise—into only three categories: someone with more power, who must be appeased and placated (at least until she can be replaced); someone who is a useful tool to one's own advancement, who must be exploited in all possible ways; and the weak, who are worthless except as labor or disposable troops. From a general giving orders to her soldiers to a shopkeeper bargaining with a customer, everything is about who holds the most power. Hagglng, for instance, is all but unheard of. If a client is of higher station than a vendor, she pays what she chooses; if she is lower, she pays what the vendor demands or receives no goods. Only when it comes to trade with non-drow is bargaining an option, and even then vendors must take care, for fear of accidentally offending the slave of a powerful drow. A drow who refuses the orders of one with more power has earned whatever tortures that act brings down upon her, and can expect no pity or aid from by others.

The drow are experts in the application of pain and death; they are considered cruel by other races. This, too, is an outward sign of the beliefs at the heart of their cultural development. Pain caused to a superior or a rival is a necessary means to an end; pain caused to a subordinate is unimportant because the subordinate is unimportant. The drow are cruel, in part, because they literally see no difference between torturing an underling, whipping a horse, or even repairing an old garden tool. It cannot be stressed enough that societal authority is the only measure of worth the drow understand.

These philosophical underpinnings result in a culture of constant scheming, in which every member of a community is perpetually conspiring to gain greater power over her neighbors while struggling to keep others from gaining power over her. Paranoia is rampant, with every word and deed carefully examined to ensure that it does not contain a hidden danger. Although visitors certainly expect to find back-room deals and constant betrayals among the ruling castes of the drow, such as the priestesses of Lolth and the matriarchs of the great houses, they are often surprised to find them equally as prevalent among less powerful drow. A shopkeeper conspires to destroy a rival's supply of goods, or frame him for some offense against Lolth. A soldier weakens another soldier's armor with carefully applied acid, hoping that her death in battle will open a path to promotion. A favored servant conspires with slaves to poison the mistress of the house so that she can take over, only to later poison the slaves as well rather than provide the freedom she had promised. When every interaction is a challenge for dominance, no drow can afford to drop her guard or cease her constant plotting to get ahead.

Roleplaying Application: React to others based primarily on their perceived value to you. Your adventuring companions are vital to your survival, so you won't want to alienate them. In other cases, though, react with anger when someone you perceive as inferior disagrees with or disobeys you. Judge all individuals by how much power they wield, and offer them respect accordingly. You do not revere life for its own sake, and are puzzled by those who speak about the inherent value or dignity of living beings. This doesn't make you a wanton murderer; it simply means that you have no compunctions about killing if doing so is the most expedient or convenient means of handling a situation (and you feel you can get away with it with minimal repercussions).

DROW ALIGNMENT

The drow are a highly chaotic, individualistic people, a fact addressed multiple times throughout this chapter. They worship a deity who dwells in the Abyss and is a paragon of chaotic evil. Yet for all that, the *Monster Manual* gives drow alignment as "usually neutral evil."

The truth is, the drow are at least somewhat cooperative with one another, almost in spite of their own nature. Their ambitions

LAW, TRADITION, AND GOVERNMENT

Perhaps one of the strangest dichotomies of drow culture is that they are both heavily tradition-bound and highly innovative, a bizarre combination found rarely among the other races.

Drow innovation is, as with so much else in their lives, driven by the constant drive to achieve dominance over other drow. A creative battle plan, a brand-new spell, a shorter method of production for manufactured goods—none of these have any value to the drow in and of themselves. Creation for creation's sake is yet another virtue foreign to their way of thinking. When such innovations are put to use to increase the creator's station, however, then they have proven their worth.

Thus, the very same traditions that keep the drow at one another's throats also encourage innovative thinking. The most powerful drow have lived for centuries, and as a race they have been competing with one another for millennia. They are far too wary, and too well prepared, for traditional schemes to work against them. A drow who seeks to get ahead must be creative in her approach—and they all seek to get ahead.

These traditions, although binding, are rarely codified into law. The drow are an innately chaotic people, both in terms of individual temperament and religious doctrine. They bow to tradition due to social pressure and the efforts of those in power, but they react poorly to formalization of those traditions. Most of these conventions, as they apply to governance, religion, gender roles, and other cultural mores, are discussed in the following sections.

The lack of formal codes of law in drow society also equates to a lack of formal law enforcement. A drow community has no watch or police force per se. Rather, each aspect or segment of the community is responsible for enforcing its own power as far as its authority extends. An offense against a major house is answered by members of that house. The Church of Lolth punishes those who transgress against the Queen of Spiders and her faith. Individual drow react to slights and offenses as their own abilities and status permit. If a lone drow or an institution lacks the capacity to strike back against someone who has wronged her or it, then that individual or institution is clearly not entitled to retribution—and that failure to retaliate might mark the wronged party as weak enough to be overthrown by rivals.

On rare occasions, a drow institution might request the aid of another organization in seeking justice or vengeance against an adversary. A priestess might ask that one of the houses send soldiers to deal with a troublemaker, rather than making use

and desires require that their society remain at least somewhat stable. They employ few true laws, but they are tightly bound by traditions and codes, and even if they follow them primarily out of fear, they follow them nonetheless. It is ironic that a lone drow is likely to drift toward chaos, but that despite their rivalry with one another, the presence of multiple drow in a given community literally forces them into a level of cooperation beyond what truly chaotic individuals would maintain.

of her own resources. Alternatively, the reverse might happen, wherein a powerful drow in a community requests that the priesthood punish a wrongdoer. Such temporary agreements normally occur when an individual wishes to keep her own faction out of direct involvement in a conflict. For instance, if a member of House Eilservs insults or attacks a member of House Inlindl, and Inlindl responds in kind, the result could be a feud that envelops both houses in protracted conflict. If Inlindl wishes to avoid that result—likely, since it holds far less power than Eilservs—it might instead request that the Church of Lolth punish the transgressor. Doing so, of course, puts the house in debt to the priestesses, so it would take such an action only if the offense was dire.

Drow punishment, regardless of whose hands deliver the sentence, is brutal and efficient. In some instances, the punishing force simply strips the transgressor of power and property. More frequently, the individual becomes a bound slave to the house or church. Torture and execution are common as well.



Priestesses and house matriarchs hold great power over other drow—just so long as they have the might to enforce it

The drow do not believe in imprisonment as a punishment in and of itself, nor do they believe in second chances.

Roleplaying Application: You find the notion of a communitywide police force or city guard a foreign one, as well as the notion that certain activities are “illegal.” You think in terms of whether a particular individual has the power to seek vengeance if you wrong him, and you often forget (at least at first) that a community itself might seek to punish you for transgressions against a specific person.

Drow Government and Rule

To say that the drow are governed by a matriarchal theocracy is both accurate and misleading. It is certainly true that the ruling members of drow society are the priestesses of Lolth and the matrons (and other matriarchs of the great houses), but calling them a “government” is a misnomer. Just as the drow are guided by tradition but have no formal law, they are overseen by these influential personages but have no formal government. A drow city has no duchess, reeve, or mayor; a drow nation has no empress or queen.

A drow community is governed, so to speak, through the unsteady cooperation of its three most powerful institutions. The Church of Lolth is the most influential faction among the drow. The priestesses of this church interpret and disseminate the will of Lolth, conduct rites and rituals to honor the dark goddess, and technically have the authority to demand anything in her name. If the drow were to have a formal government, it would be made up of these individuals.

On a practical level, however, although the priestesses are indeed the social leaders of the drow, the church often lacks the power to take drastic action without the support of the great houses. Powerful matriarchs frequently hold power in both the church and a house—thus, what is self-interest for one must often be self-interest for the other. It is also important to understand that the church is not a monolithic entity, guided by a single voice or a single goal. It is made up of individual priestesses, all of whom are loyal to Lolth, but all of whom have the same drive to dominate the weak and advance their own cause as any other drow. Thus, although a drow priestess can bring substantial might to bear against a lone individual or small family who offends her, she cannot muster the resources of the church against an entire house, unless the house has blatantly and conspicuously turned against Lolth as a whole.

The houses of the drow hold the bulk of the community's economic and military power in their hands. In some communities, a specific house might be a greater power even than the priestesses of Lolth, directing the activities of religious leaders with behind-the-scenes threats or open shows of force. The high priestess of a community might also be a highly ranked matriarch of a great house, using one to advance the schemes of the other. No single house has ever managed to rise to dominance across multiple drow cities, however, and few maintain a permanent position of authority even in individual communities. Each house is tied to the other houses in a complex web of treaties and conflicts, alliances and betrayals. Should one house become too powerful, others ally to bring it down

(even while appearing, on the surface, to support them, playing both sides against the middle). Further, although the church usually lacks the power to single-handedly destroy a house, neither can a house afford to make an enemy of the church. Too much of the power in a community is held by Lolth's priestesses, and a house that fails to work with those priestesses loses access to those channels of influence. Although such an occurrence is rare, the church can decree that a house has earned the disfavor of Lolth, essentially giving all other houses blanket permission and encouragement to openly turn against it. Some houses are strong enough to withstand even this sort of assault, which invariably leads to a dilution of the church's position in the community. But more often, such a decree results in the house being weakened sufficiently for another to rise and take its place. When one adds to this already volatile mix the constant scheming of house members against one another, in the hope of gaining higher status within the house, it's quite understandable that no single house has ever managed to hold widespread power for long.

The military is the final drow institution that, in some communities, could be a governing body. Drow communities do not have standing armies, since this would require a formal government. Multiple smaller forces make up the larger soldiery of a drow city. These consist primarily of house-loyal militias, church soldiers, and independent mercenary companies. For the most part, then, the "military" is simply the enforcement arm of a house or the church. In some rare instances, however—particularly in communities engaged in a constant war with a hostile power—the military takes on an authority of its own. Its generals, under the guise of protecting the community, usurp authority from the matriarchs who normally hold it. The house soldiers become the dominant members of the house, or at least carry sufficient authority that the matriarchs and matrons cannot ignore their input. The army might even come to guide the Church of Lolth, directing priestesses in the defense of the city and in attacks on the enemy. The generals of differing factions, such as rival houses or a house and the church, have been known to cooperate behind the scenes, artificially extending or even creating military crises to wrest supremacy from the houses and the priesthood.

It is worth noting that rank in a military unit is the only pathway male drow have to any position of authority, so they are the military officers most likely to attempt this sort of power grab.

For more information on the priestesses of Lolth, see the Religion section; for more on the great houses, see Houses of the Drow; and for more on the military, see the War header under Drow Life, all below.

Roleplaying Application: You assume that, with the exception of military rank, females hold all true positions of authority. When addressing a mixed group of nobles, priests, or similar powerful individuals, you instinctively direct your words and attention to any females present, and you are always startled when a social or political leader turns out to be male. You normally assume that any military force is, if not independent, loyal to a church or a bloodline; you're certainly aware that other cultures have armies devoted to cities or nations, but it still strikes you as odd when you encounter it.

Gender Roles

The supremacy of the female is deeply ingrained in drow culture. Females are seen as stronger, smarter, and more emotionally controlled than males, and—above all—holier and more devoted to Lolth. Males, on the other hand, are viewed as spiritually, intellectually, and physically inferior, useful primarily for physical and skilled labor and breeding purposes. A male drow is seen as superior to a member of any other race, but inferior even to female drow of lower status.

This attitude comes from a variety of separate but related sources. The first and most obvious is Lolth herself. The goddess has, over the course of drow mythology and history, taken multiple consorts, all of whom have been eventually discarded. Whether this is the cause of Lolth's opinion of males or a symptom of it, Lolth believes that only females are worthwhile servants.

Much like the spiders they revere, drow females also hold power due to biological reasons. In many spider species, the females are far larger and stronger, and males often do not survive the mating process. Drow childbirth is a physically strenuous occasion (see the Pregnancy, Birth, and Childhood sidebar, page 24), and though the drow feel little if any affection for their young, they understand the importance of continuing the family and house lines. Thus, the females, who are both essential to reproduction and capable of withstanding it, are clearly both stronger and more blessed than the males. Whether the drow think as they do because of their emulation of spiders is unclear and ultimately unimportant.

Finally and perhaps most important, females are already ascendant within drow society. Matriarchs and priestesses have enough trouble clinging to power in the face of other ambitious females; the last thing they want is to double the pool of potential rivals. Thus, the tradition of female dominance continues, in large part, at the behest of the females who are already dominant.

Male drow hold little if any power, but not all of them are mere property, even if many females see them as such. Some of the most skilled crafters, warriors, and arcane casters among the drow are male. In fact, the submissive status of males in drow society actually inspires many of them to excel. Male drow can lay claim to little authority, and they are constantly at risk of being discarded by their female leaders, so only those with skills and abilities that are not easily replaceable can be relatively confident of their positions.

Denied the right to formally influence society, male drow have become masters of finding subtle and nontraditional roads to power. Many become teachers of arcane magic or military strategy, attempting to form strong bonds with their students—particularly the females who might well hold power in the next generation. Others join the soldiers of a powerful house or the priestesses of Lolth, working their way up in the ranks. At the very least, these positions grant them *some* measure of authority, and if they are fortunate enough to be officers during wartime (or devious enough to start a well-timed war), that authority can grow to rival that of some matriarchs. And of course, some drow males attempt to seduce powerful females, using lust—and even the rare emotion of love—to influence drow leaders behind the scenes.

In the lower echelons of drow society, away from the movers and shakers, males and females hold similar roles. A member of either gender might be a household servant, a shopkeeper, a soldier, or an artist. The males tend more toward physical labor and the females toward skilled crafts—not because females are weaker, but because they often have more opportunities to choose their own path than males do—but this is only a tendency, not a societal constant.

DROW PSYCHOLOGY

The drow are, to the last, a motivated and driven race. The perception that a drow's individual worth is determined only by the influence she wields over society isn't simply a cultural attitude; it's a psychological one as well. A drow who holds no power is a failure in her own eyes, and this more than anything else drives her behavior. It is thus not merely external pressures that cause the drow to plot and scheme; it is an ingrained need that borders on instinct.

For the most part, drow are driven by a trinity of emotions that exist, to varying degrees, in every member of the race.

Pride: So far as each drow is concerned, she is a superior specimen of a superior race—or at least she should be. Drow who obtain power do so because they are worthy of it; those who lack authority find themselves resentfully chafing under the rule of others, their pride demanding that they blame everyone else for their failure. A drow never forgets either a victory or a slight.

Anger: Closely intertwined with their pride is a current of rage that runs through the entire drow population. They are a primal and instinctive people, quick to lash out at those who offend them. A drow grows wroth at a subordinate who fails or defies her, a superior for holding the power she herself craves, a foreigner for failing to offer unquestioned submission to the drow, an ally for imagined future betrayal, and even herself for not having accomplished more than she already has. Drow are quick to resort to violence, and revenge is one of their most potent motivators.

Fear: They are not often aware of it, and would be insulted if someone else were to suggest it, but the drow live every day of their lives in mortal terror. They fear their masters and priestesses, they fear the treachery of underlings, they fear displeasing their deity, they fear losing power and falling into disgrace. This fear engenders the paranoia and distrust that keep the drow from growing close, and the secrecy in which they orchestrate their schemes. For all their cruelty, all their power, the drow are bitterly fearful creatures, always afraid to lose what they have, yet driven to risk it all for just a little bit more.

Everything the drow do stems from the interactions between these three emotions, bolstered by societal pressures. Even their fanatical devotion to Lolth is based on fear: fear of invoking the goddess's anger should they abandon her, and fear of being cast adrift in the world without divine guidance.

Long-Term Planning

Drow have a shorter average life span than surface elves—due primarily to violence, rather than any innate biological cause—but they still live far longer than most other humanoid races. Thus, the drow often take a longer view of the world than humans or others. This attitude is manifested in drow plots and schemes, which often take decades or even centuries to unfold.

Whereas this long-term view of life manifests in surface elves as a seeming unwillingness to make decisions quickly or to understand urgency, the drow are just as busy and active as anyone else. Rather than acting slowly because they have more time, drow prefer to squeeze as much out of their extra years as possible. Where a surface elf might take ten times as long as a human on a given task,



Despite their chaotic nature, the drow are consummate long-term planners

to ensure he gets it right, a drow instead works at a feverish pace, but might undertake ten tasks at once. This “hurry up and wait” mentality—rushing through numerous plans that might not come to fruition for years or longer—only adds to the highly emotional and easily frustrated nature of the drow psyche, but it also ensures that if one plan collapses, a wise drow has half a dozen more to fill in the gap.

All drow are schemers, but not all drow are effective schemers. Laying out a multiyear plot, having the foresight to anticipate relevant changes in the political landscape, and remaining patient enough to see the effort through all require mental and emotional control that many drow sorely lack. If a drow bursts into a rage at an inopportune moment, or fails to anticipate the machinations of her rivals, years of planning can be swept aside in an instant.

Dominant and Submissive Interaction

The drow view all interaction between individuals—not just members of their own society—as hierarchical.



Interaction among the drow is always a matter of superiority over inferiority

They have no ability to treat another person as an equal. Every communication between two or more people, regardless of its purpose, falls into a dominant and submissive pattern.

Unless a drow has reason to believe otherwise, she always assumes that she is the dominant individual in a discussion, and grows irritated if others do not behave accordingly. If she is speaking to someone who clearly holds higher status, she accepts the fact that she is, instead, in a submissive position, but instantly begins considering ways to eventually gain the upper hand.

This is not something drow choose to do; it's simply how they think. The notion of a society of equals is a foreign one, and though drow who deal frequently with other races learn to accept that others do not believe as they do, they never entirely lose the urge to establish dominance in each and every interaction they enter into.

Part and parcel of this notion are the drow ideas of kindness and individual privacy—or, more accurately, their complete lack thereof. Drow are thoughtlessly and effortlessly cruel because they assign no value to

THE BEST LAID SCHEMES

It's easy enough to characterize the drow as long-term plotters, but what exactly does that mean? Presented here are a few brief examples of the sorts of forward-looking plans in which some drow engage.

- A young member of a powerful house appears helpful and supportive of her elder siblings over the years, slowly building up a web of debt and favor that binds almost every member of her family to her. Decades later, when the matron of her house has grown old, she calls in those debts for seemingly minor favors that involve travel, ensuring that her siblings are absent when the matron dies (likely due to poison or some other effort of the schemer herself). By the time her siblings have returned, she has already established herself as the new ruling power of the house.
- For years, a drow stockpiles a particular resource—perhaps something as simple as foodstuffs, or material necessary for the building of magic items and weapons of war. Using other connections, she subtly encourages overuse of that resource, or even arranges to have quantities of it destroyed in an “accident” or an attack of some sort. Suddenly, she is the only supplier to the community, granting her substantial political and economic influence over even the houses and the Church of Lolth.
- Through a combination of bribes, sabotage, and intermarriages, one particular family slowly intertwines itself with many of the individual bloodlines of a great house. This likely grants the family no direct access to the house's matriarchs or other leaders, because these wary individuals would never trust strangers. But if the family members choose carefully, they not only have a direct line of intelligence on the house's activities, which they can trade to others for wealth and favors, but they might be able to gain a stranglehold over the house's economic and military aspects. If the house is no longer receiving income from its various mercantile endeavors, and if many of its soldiers are of divided loyalties, it is ripe for outside takeover or destruction.

their subordinates beyond how useful those individuals are. Similarly, the concept of privacy is ludicrous in their eyes. A drow who is not strong enough to keep her affairs secret deserves to be exposed and exploited.

Arachnid Veneration and Emulation

One of the greatest and strangest influences on drow psychology and culture stems from their religious beliefs. Most humanoid races have humanoid-form deities. When they seek to emulate the behavior and attitudes of their gods, either to gain the deity's blessings or simply because they see it as the "right" way to act, they are not acting counter to their own physiological and biological natures.

Not so with the drow. They are a humanoid, mammalian race with all the associated needs, urges, and instincts, yet they revere the spider, a creature of mindless predation. They are a community that seeks to become a swarm. They are an innately emotional people who revere a creature of no emotion at all. (And all this doesn't even touch on the fact that they worship a deity whose physical likeness they cannot begin to emulate.)

This conflict of desires shapes much of the drow psyche. It is at least partly responsible for the culture's sole measure of self-worth through power and authority, and is responsible too for much of the society's inherent violence. Their fear of their goddess, their shame at being unable to fully live up to her demands, their anger at the world around them—all of it can, at least in part, be traced to their deep-seated veneration of a deity they cannot emulate and cannot truly please. It is not too much of a stretch to suggest that, due to the conflict of their religious beliefs with their own physical and mental nature, every member of drow society is at least a little insane.

Instinctive or Cultural?

One question of drow psychology that never occurs to the drow themselves, but is of great interest to outside scholars, is whether all these attitudes are ingrained and instinctual, or whether they are a product of culture and upbringing. Many believe that, due to the influence of Lolth and countless generations of violence and scheming, drow attitudes are now entirely innate. Take a drow infant to the surface and raise her among kind humans or elves, they say, and she would still grow into a calculating, violent manipulator.

Others contend, however, that the drow are not unlike abused children. They perpetuate a cycle of viciousness and cruelty because it is all they know, because they are both learning from example and lashing out at an unkind world in anger and resentment. If that cycle could be broken, they argue, if a population of drow could be raised away from the influence of Lolth and the culture as it currently exists, they could grow to be very different individuals.

This is, perhaps understandably, the minority opinion among those who study the drow, and in any event it seems unlikely to be tested anytime soon.

RELIGION

If drow life and culture are driven by a single force, it must be their faith. The drow are pantheistic in only the loosest sense of the word. Humans worship a variety of deities equally. Elves revere Corellon Larethian above all others, but their religion is replete with other deities that are nearly as important. But for the drow, there is only Lolth.

This comes as a surprise to many scholars, who believe the drow pantheon to consist of multiple deities. This is particularly true in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, where entities such as Ghaunadaur and Vhaeraun appear in drow religious practice. But these deities, no matter how strongly an individual drow might revere them, are secondary at best, barely visible in the shadow of the Spider Queen. The drow honor them, but they do not consider them true gods and do not worship any of them with the same devotion—or fear them half as deeply—as they do Lolth. It is she, and she alone, who stands as the heart of drow religion.

Religious practice is not a voluntary activity among the drow. Because the priestesses rule drow society (to the extent that any one institution can be said to do so), they ruthlessly enforce the worship of Lolth, demanding participation in her rites and often punishing failure to take part by making the transgressor their next sacrifice. The priestesses rarely find themselves forced to take such steps, however. Worship of Lolth is so heavily ingrained in the culture that most drow participate willingly, out of a mixture of reverence and terror for their goddess.

rites and rituals of Lolth

As should be expected from so violent a society and so rapacious a deity, the holy rites of Lolth are brutal and bloody affairs. Living sacrifice is a central tenet of all but the most minor of rituals. The drow worship not out of love, but out of fear, and their faith demands that their fear be spread to others. Lolth watches, Lolth tests—and above all, Lolth consumes.

Prayers

Prayers to Lolth are always uttered in Elven. Undercommon is fine for normal conversation, but devotions to the goddess are not to be sullied with words adopted from other races.

The drow frequently pray before entering into a dangerous situation, beginning an endeavor, or simply preparing for a day's work. They do not, however, ask Lolth's aid in the coming trials, or seek her blessing on a task. Requesting help is a sign of weakness, insulting to the goddess, and just begging to be stricken with some horrific malady or misfortune. Instead, prayers to Lolth are requests to be tested, so that the petitioner can display her strength and skill, or promises that the day's successes will be achieved in Lolth's name and devoted to her glory. "Elliya Lolthu," Elven for "Test me, Lolth," is among the most common phrases uttered in drow prayer.

Minor Rites

An individual drow might perform a minor rite when she is celebrating a personal victory, and seeks to offer Lolth her due. More than a simple prayer, these rites usually involve some form of symbolic sacrifice, such as poured wine, burnt riches,

Lolth's temples dominate almost every drow community



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THE DROW

Illus. by F. Tsai

or a small amount of the petitioner's own spilled blood. Such rites require an icon, idol, or symbol of Lolth, before which they are performed. They include the recitation of long prayers asking Lolth to accept the offered gifts and to provide even greater challenges in the days to come.

Unlike prayers, which are often uttered in public, and major rites, which are large affairs, minor rites are personal activities. They rarely involve more than one drow, and never more than a handful.

Major Rites

The drow conduct two types of major rites to Lolth, both of which involve the participation of multiple individuals and blood sacrifice to the goddess.

The first is a religious ceremony, in which drow gather to pay homage to their dark queen. Priestesses lead the ceremony with prayers and chants, normally within a temple of Lolth or

before a great altar or idol. At least one sacrifice—normally of a captive or slave, but occasionally of a drow citizen—occurs at this time, blood spilled to feed the Spider Queen.

The second is a contest between priestesses or, more rarely, other powerful drow, designed to prove worthiness in the eyes of Lolth. Most of these events include direct combat and competition, either in melee or spellcasting, but others involve tests of knowledge and ritual, or even the acquisition of specific goals. The winner proves her worth and gains additional magic, higher position in the priesthood, and similar prizes. The losers, assuming they survive, are often demoted, maimed, or transformed by Lolth's anger into driders or other horrific creatures.

The drow conduct major rites to celebrate communitywide events and victories, whenever a priestess seeks advancement to a high office, and at regular intervals for no purpose other than the veneration of Lolth.

SACRIFICES TO THE SPIDER QUEEN

Lolth's tastes in sacrifices are very specific. She prefers sentient creatures over nonsentient ones, humanoids over nonhumanoids, elves over other humanoids, and drow over elves. She prefers more powerful (higher level) sacrifices to weaker ones, and her own priestesses over all others. Obviously, this last type of sacrifice occurs only rarely. To keep the church from falling apart, the priestesses seldom initiate violence among

themselves, and if one priestess does come to blows against another, the lot of them likely come to the aid of the victim, if only to preserve the status quo. They do sacrifice their own as punishment, however, or if one makes too many enemies among the others. This factor keeps all the priestesses wary of one another and constantly scrabbling for sufficient power to ward off sudden attacks—exactly the way Lolth wants it.

SERVANTS OF LOLTH

The drow's priesthood is unusual—perhaps even unique—because it is not inherently any more faithful or zealous in its worship than the rest of the population. Almost all drow venerate Lolth, for they understand the consequences of failing to do so. The Church of Lolth is less a haven for the society's devout and more a reliable path to power. Short of working one's way up through the ranks of a powerful house, the priesthood is the surest means of advancement in drow society. And although the priesthood rarely accepts drow of low station, it does so with more frequency than the houses do.

That said, the drow understand that the life of a priestess is not one of ease. The church not only conducts Lolth's rites and rituals, it serves as the glue that holds

together a society of scheming and bickering houses. Its members must be strong and merciless, and—perhaps hardest of all—must moderate their own schemes to consider the needs of the church as a whole. This doesn't mean that drow priestesses do not plan to achieve their own ambitions at the expense of others; in fact, the priesthood is filled with more political infighting and secret deals than in any three houses put together. The priestesses understand, however, that although Lolth favors drow who advance their own power, she also wishes the race as a whole to thrive, and a priestess whose personal schemes threaten to weaken the community swiftly finds herself falling out of favor with both the goddess and her church.

Becoming a Priestess

To become a priestess of Lolth, a female drow must meet two specific requirements. (Male drow are never accepted into the priesthood, and can at best hope to be a favored servant of a priestess.) First, she must show an aptitude for divine magic.

Among the drow, every priest must be a cleric or other divine caster, such as a favored soul^{CD}, even if she has only a few levels in the appropriate class.

Second, a would-be-priestess must subject herself to the first of many Tests of Lolth. Many lay drow face these trials at various points, but priestesses endure them on a relatively regular basis. Strictly speaking, these tests are between the individual and Lolth, and outside interference is forbidden. On a practical level, however, drow priestesses are

rarely accepting of new competition (unless the newcomer is somehow indebted or subservient to them, of course) and might provide new initiates with a bit of extra challenge. Poisoning and sabotage are not uncommon, and as long as the priestesses' meddling goes undetected, Lolth seems not to object. Of course, a priestess who is caught sabotaging a newcomer, or whose efforts fail to prevent the new initiate from succeeding, often suffers her own trials and punishment at Lolth's hands—or the hands of rival priestesses looking to tear down an experienced enemy as a younger one takes her place.

Once one has become a priestess, the hard work is far from over. Advancement requires constant effort to prove loyalty to Lolth, to exercise control over other drow, and to take advantage of the other priestesses' weaknesses. The



Lolth loves nothing so much as the taste of a sacrifice's agony

DAUGHTERS OF DEMONS

One exception exists to the rule that all drow priestesses must be divine spellcasters. Lolth resides in the Abyss, and many of her favored servants and minions are demons. If the powers of a drow warlock^{CAr} stem from bargains with (or descent from)

Lolth-associated demons, she is considered blessed by the Spider Queen. If these individuals meet all the other priesthood requirements, can hold status even though they are technically arcane spellcasters.

best route to promotion among the priesthood is to open up a position by discrediting or assassinating someone of higher rank. Combined with the requirements of surviving regular Tests of Lolth, this climate of backstabbing makes the life span of a priestess relatively short for all but the most clever and powerful of drow. Thus, the Church of Lolth remains relatively low in membership, but those few drow priestesses who survive more than a few years are truly potent and merciless individuals.

One very important distinction exists among the drow, one that visitors often fail to notice or to comprehend. Although a priestess of Lolth must be a cleric (or other divine caster), not all divine casters are officially priestesses. A drow might



The Tests of Lolth are hideous to behold and far, far worse to experience

Church of Lolth lacks layers of ranks and official designations, and those titles that do exist often vary from community to

be fully devoted to her goddess, and even have levels as a cleric, without formally joining the church. The ability to cast divine spells indicates that a drow has Lolth's favor, but it doesn't inherently grant her any authority beyond what she can take for herself. She does not speak for the church and cannot count on the authority of the priesthood to support her actions.

Hierarchy of the Priesthood

A strict formal hierarchy would be antithetical to the chaotic mentality of the drow. The

TESTS OF LOLTH

Only the strong can be allowed to thrive; the weak must be culled. This is a central tenet of drow culture and a primary law of Lolth. To better ensure that only the strongest of her subjects obtain power, Lolth occasionally subjects them to tests of their abilities. Many drow, usually those who live unremarkable lives, never receive such a test. Those who hold power must endure at least one or two in their lifetimes, and priestesses and powerful matriarchs are tested on a regular basis.

In most instances, failing a Test of Lolth results in death. A significant minority of the time, however, the failed subject is instead transformed into a drider (or, more rarely, some other hybrid horror). Until recently, the drow shunned and hated the driders, seeing them as nothing but failures and signs of Lolth's displeasure. Recently, however, that attitude has begun to change; see page 41 for details.

The two most common trials are described below.

The Test of Loyalty: A relative or ally of the drow to be tested is granted a vision by Lolth, claiming that the subject of the test has turned against her and must be slain in ambush. As the attack begins, the subject hears Lolth's voice telling her that she is being tested; she must prove willing to slay an ally at Lolth's command.

The Test of Strength: This is simple combat against a rival drow or a monster of power equal to or greater than the subject of the test. Defeat, or showing mercy to the foe, results in failure of the test.

Although these are the most common Tests of Lolth, they are also the least important. Other tests that drow must occasionally endure include, but are not limited to, the following:

The Test of Lies: The subject must manipulate certain individuals—revealed to her by the voice of Lolth—into believing specific falsehoods. Even under threat and torture, she must continue to make these lies fully believable.

The Test of Mettle: The drow, in a confined space, is abruptly covered with swarms of venomous spiders. She must extricate herself without harming any of the arachnids, and survive their poisonous bites in the process.

The Test of Doubt: The drow is stripped of many, or even all, of her powers, including her racial abilities and spellcasting (both arcane and divine). This degradation can even include the sudden acquisition of negative levels. In a few instances, the drow is turned into a drider or other creature, as though she had already failed a test. The drow must not only survive, but thrive in her weakened state—often for days, weeks, or longer—without losing faith in Lolth. Only the most powerful and highly placed drow suffer this test, and those who pass are the stronger for it. (Any levels a drow gains to make up for her newfound vulnerabilities—for instance, a cleric stripped of her magic who gains several levels of rogue before her powers return—do not count against her for the purpose of multi-classing penalties.)

community. Three titles are common among the drow, though even these are far from universal.

An elder, experienced, or powerful priestess is often called Reverend Mother.

A priestess of moderate age, experience, or power is often titled Reverend Daughter.

All others are simply called Priestess, or sometimes addressed with the honorific Revered, as in “Revered Thezildra, I seek an audience.”

In most cases, when the drow speak of rank in the Church of Lolth, or a priestess talks about promotion, what they’re referring to is a simple measurement of authority and seniority. An underling doesn’t assassinate her superior to obtain a particular title; she does so to ascend one step higher on the ladder of power. In this regard, the church is no different from the rest of drow society—a priestess’s power is as potent as her ability to force others to acknowledge that power.

Duties of the Clergy

Anyone who has read this far and still expects drow priestesses to counsel the faithful in times of emotional turmoil or crises of faith has clearly not been paying attention. Lolth’s church is not a sanctuary for other drow in times of trouble, but a home for her primary minions and enforcers.

The duties of Lolth’s priestesses are twofold. One, they are responsible for leading the drow in the rituals demanded by the Queen of the Demonweb Pits. Although any cleric of Lolth can lead others in prayer or minor rites, only a true priestess can lead a community as a whole, or conduct the formal sacrifices Lolth demands.

Their second purpose, closely related to the first, is enforcing the worship of Lolth and Lolth’s dictates. Priestesses have the authority to demand attendance at Lolth’s rites and to levy punishment on those who fail to participate or otherwise act against the Spider Queen’s interests. The drow rarely sacrifice one of their own, normally choosing slaves or prisoners instead, but Lolth prefers the taste of drow to all others, and when the church finds an excuse to offer up a drow as punishment, it is quick to jump on it.

Beyond this, Lolth’s priestesses have no strict duties. Some perform various social ceremonies such as marriages, but this is usually done as a favor (eventually requiring repayment, of course) to another powerful drow. They often serve as leaders in times of conflict, crisis, or war, but such roles are filled equally often by house matrons. Priestesses, when not conducting rites to their Queen, are engaged in the same sorts of schemes as all other drow—they simply have the advantage of divine mandate, or at least of powerful allies and resources, when doing so.

LOLTH

The Spider Queen, Queen of the Demonweb Pits, Flesh-Carver, Weaver of Webs

Intermediate Deity

Symbol: The head of a female drow with spider’s legs

Home Plane: The Demonweb Pits, 66th layer of the Abyss

Alignment: Chaotic evil

Worshippers: Drow

Cleric Alignments: CE, CN, NE

Domains: Chaos, Destruction, Evil, Trickery, Drow^{SC}, Spider^{SC}

Favored Weapon: Whip



Holy symbol of Lolth

Lolth is the single true deity of the drow; she is their guide and ruling power. The elves and other surface races believe that she was Corellon Larethian’s original consort, cast out of the pantheon when she turned to evil. The drow, and Lolth herself, teach a much different version; see History and Folklore, below. In either case, it was Lolth who first spread evil among the elves, and who led the drow away from the rest of the elves thousands of years ago. Now she focuses on breeding and conflict among the drow to make the race ever more powerful, and on using them to conquer the vast cavern-realms beneath the surface of the earth. Lolth relishes the chance to test her followers by pitting them against each other, culling the weak from the strong.

Lolth appears as either a tall, beautiful female drow, or a massive black spider with a female drow’s head.

Cleric Training

Beyond the requirements and Tests of Lolth discussed above, clerics and priestesses of Lolth undergo no formal training. Lolth requires these tests of her priestesses frequently.

Quests

Lolth has set her worshipers to the task of conquering the vast network of caverns in the underground realm, as well as killing surface elves. Typical quests include attacking a rival drow community, raiding a mind flayer lair for its magic, and building an artifact that turns surface-dwelling elves into spiders.

Prayers

The precise nature of prayers to Lolth is discussed above. Clerics and priestesses often pray before undertaking even mundane daily activities, dedicating everything they do to their queen.

Temples

Lolth's temples dominate (in every sense of the word) the communities that surround them. They are large, imposing edifices, intended to make all who enter feel small and humbled—a sensation that truly strong drow are expected to resist. These temples are defended by clever and capable priestesses, soldiers, and minions of Lolth, and frequently by hordes of arachnids as well. They often serve as storehouses of dark lore and powerful magic as well as places of ritual.

Rites

The specific details of rites and rituals to Lolth are discussed above. Although any cleric can conduct these rites for small or family groups, only a formal priestess has the authority to demand attendance of a community. (Or at least, only a priestess officially has such authority. As with all else among the drow, if a single individual has the power to force participation, then she has the right to force participation.)

Heralds and Allies

Lolth's most common herald is a bebilith demon with 18 Hit Dice. Her allies are succubus demons, bebilith demons, and marilith demons. In the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting, this group also includes the hideous yochlols.

Lolth manifests an aspect of herself (essentially an avatar representing only a tiny portion of her true power) with relative frequency, often attending major rites or rituals directly and feeding upon the sacrifices.

HOUSES OF THE DROW

The Church of Lolth might be the primary driving force in drow culture, but it is certainly not the only one. Standing beside the priesthood as equals on the political and societal playing fields are the great houses. These monolithic institutions are the closest things the drow have to a formal government. In some respects, it could even be said that the houses, and not the actual physical communities, are the true form and representation of the drow nation.

Other races studying drow culture are often taken in by the outward appearance of the houses. Unlike the priesthood of

Lolth, which bears little resemblance to what surface-dwellers normally consider a church, the houses appear synonymous with the various dynasties and noble bloodlines of human, elf, and dwarf culture.

This assessment is accurate only to a point. The houses are indeed extended families, but that extension goes far beyond anything even the most intricate of human genealogies would recognize, and the “familial bonds” are often purely symbolic.

STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION

To fully understand the drow houses, one must first understand how they are structured. With very few exceptions, each house is ruled by a single powerful drow. Always a female, she is normally referred to as the Matron Mother—or simply the matron—of the house. A great many matrons are also priestesses of Lolth, leading to a blurring of the distinctions between church power and house power.

As stated above, not all clerics of Lolth are officially members of her priesthood. This fact becomes important when studying the nature of the drow houses. Although only a fraction of matrons are priestesses of Lolth, nearly all of them are clerics of Lolth. (Those few who are not are invariably other divine casters or warlocks with strong connections to the Spider Queen.) These matrons—along with their close female relatives, who are also often clerics of Lolth—lead the members of their house in religious observance, just as the priestesses do for the community as a whole.

At the center of a house is a single-family unit, made up of blood relations to the matron. It is from this family that the house's authority figures—priestesses, spellcasters, teachers, military leaders, merchants, and the like—descend. It is quite probable, in fact, that in the early days of drow history, these powerful families made up the entirety of the houses.

This is no longer the case. Assuming they have not been exiled, or have not chosen to secede, everyone with the slightest of blood ties to a house's central family is now considered a part of the house proper. Anyone who marries into the house is considered part of the house. Most confusing for others studying the drow, an individual—or even an entire family—can also be “annexed” as part of the house, if the matron agrees to

THE CULT OF THE ELDER ELEMENTAL EYE

For all Lolth's influence over drow society, and the infiltration of her priesthood into all aspects of life, other religious cults do spring up among the drow from time to time. Most such sects are discovered and crushed in short order, but a few are secretive and widespread enough that, by the time the Church of Lolth becomes aware of them, they are not easily destroyed.

The greatest of these organizations, at least until recently, was the cult of the Elder Elemental Eye. The Eye is a chaotic, destructive adherent of entropy and the most primal aspects of the four elements. It never communes directly with its clerics, but instead seems to speak through the great elemental princes: Imix of Fire, Ogrémoch of Earth, Olhydra of Water, and Yan-C-Bin of Air. Drow followers of the Elemental Eye seek one day to

supplant Lolth's priesthood as the primary religious force in society. These cultists are among the race's greatest schemers, for secrecy is not only vital to their success, but their very survival.

For a time, their greatest bastion was the infamous Temple of Elemental Evil, and its recent destruction at the hands of adventurers has reduced the cult to its weakest state yet. It survives in the darkest reaches of drow society, however, and slowly works at rebuilding itself. A drow discovered to be a member of the cult can expect immediate torture and execution, unless she has something of substantial worth to offer in exchange for silence.

Some of the few sages that are intimately familiar with the Cult of the Elder Elemental Eye suggest that the Eye itself might be an aspect of the mad deity known to the surface-dwelling races as Tharizdun (CD 123).

this. No tie of blood, or even of marriage, is necessary, though those relationships certainly make such connections stronger. If a house sees political advantage in claiming someone as one of its own, and if that individual wishes to join the house, then she is part of the house, pure and simple. These “adoptions” involve rituals and ceremony of some sort, to show the community that the house has accepted a new member, but even these displays are not essential.

Many houses wield influence in multiple communities. For example, House Eilservs, at the height of its power, had member families dwelling in almost every major drow city. Even today, though its star shines more dimly, the house is represented in the vast majority of communities. Dozens or even hundreds of separate families, related tangentially if at all, can make up a single house. Some of the greatest houses possess thousands of members and have larger populations than most drow cities.

In some cases, a house might have more than one drow who claims the title of matron. If House Inlindl has powerful branches in the city of Erelhei-Cinlu and the city of Yvoth-Lened, and both branches are led by a powerful priestess of Lolth, which priestess is the true Matron of Inlindl? If the two rarely interact, or do so only through couriers and the occasional emissary, both might claim the title without negative repercussions. In many cases, though, having more than one claimant to the title of Matron Mother leads to civil war within a house; see below for details.

HOUSE AUTHORITY

Why do houses hold so much power? The drow have no formal or organized government, so it's not the dictate of law that allows them to govern industries, districts, and even entire communities. Rather, the political and social power of a house is largely self-perpetuating. The family at the heart of a house consisted of powerful drow to begin with. Some were priestesses, with all the authority that title implies. Others were

military leaders, with numerous troops at their beck and call. Still others were powerful merchants, whose slaves and servants had final say over what products entered or left a community, or who controlled a valuable trade route. As always, this authority belonged to those powerful enough to take it and keep it, and these drow were powerful indeed.

As others flocked to it and the house expanded, so too did its power. Even more merchants fell under its sway, granting the house that much more influence over a community's economic life. The house gained more soldiers, more priestesses, and more drow powerful enough to call in favors or make demands of others. It is a simple and irrefutable syllogism: The members of a house have power, and the members of a house cooperate under the sway of a single matron; therefore, the house and the matron have all the power of their underlings at their beck and call.

A moderately powerful house can sway the behavior of an entire community. A truly mighty one can challenge all other houses, and even the priesthood, for what amounts to dictatorial control over a given region. If it succeeds, its members can enforce whatever control they wish—despite the chaotic nature of those they dominate—for the simple reason that no available force has the power to refuse them.

This opportunity, of course, is why a drow would wish to be a member of a house, even though it means a life of constant politicking, treachery, backstabbing, secrecy, and paranoia. With the power of a house to back up one's own authority, and its resources to draw on for one's own schemes, a clever and patient drow can accomplish almost anything.

HOUSE INTERACTION

The power of the drow houses, like the power of specific drow, waxes and wanes over the course of years. How well a house manages to hold onto its influence depends in part on the personal successes of its members, but also on how it handles its interactions with the rest of society.



Even other priestesses lack the power wielded by a house's Matron Mother

Other Houses

Houses interact with one another almost exactly as drow individuals interact with one another; they are very literally a reflection in macrocosm of drow society. One great house might ally with another; engage in economic conflict with a third (perhaps by using its own merchants to undercut the other's profits); conspire to weaken a fourth by revealing that its matron was briefly a member of the Cult of the Elder Elemental Eye (possibly using manufactured evidence to frame her); order the assassination of a powerful priestess who favors a rival fifth house; and slowly amass troops for a sudden and overwhelming strike on yet a sixth enemy house. This dizzying assortment of plots wouldn't even represent an especially busy period in the house's history, since these sorts of machinations and manipulations occur regularly and constantly. Just as an individual drow cannot hope to advance in society without establishing authority over other drow, so too must the houses constantly work to keep on top of their competition.

Alliances between the great houses are usually matters of political, economic, or military convenience. Most are short-term, lasting only until the involved parties have attained a particular goal. The drow are more than willing to betray their closest allies if doing so nets them a worthwhile advantage. Such betrayals of one house by another have sometimes resulted in civil war. (See War, page 30.) If two or more houses find a political partnership more profitable than working alone, however, such alliances can last generations, or even result in the merging of two houses into a single entity.

The Priesthood

The attitudes of a given house toward the Church of Lolth depend largely on who holds the power in that house. Where the matron is also a formal priestess, the house might act as little more than a political arm of the priesthood. Or the matron might play both sides of the field, using her church authority to quash enemies both inside and outside the house, and wielding the power of her house to best rivals within the church.

In most cases, however, a solid demarcation between house and church does exist—even if the lines are faint. Although houses might have an open rivalry with one another, any conflict with the priesthood is subtle and secretive. In some communities, a house might be so powerful that even the church cannot move against it; in others, the priesthood holds so much political authority that no house can challenge it. In most cases, the balance of power is the result of a give-and-take between the two institutions. A house cannot blatantly refuse to acknowledge the priesthood for fear that the church might declare it traitorous against Lolth and turn the other houses against it. On the other hand, the church relies on goods over which the houses have economic influence, and might require the aid of some houses in enforcing the dictates of Lolth, so it will not turn on most houses without extreme cause. Further, if the priesthood should attempt to turn the community against a house and fail (perhaps because the house holds so much power that the other houses are unwilling to move against it), the priesthood loses all credibility in the eyes of the community and can never attempt such a show of force again.

Internal Interactions

Drow will be drow, and the monolithic, unbreakable face that houses present to the world is a thin façade, barely sufficient to cover the writhing cauldron of scheming and betrayal beneath. Houses represent the pinnacle of power for the drow, and every house member wants to be the one in control of that power. Various matriarchs—particularly relatives of the core family—lie, cheat, and murder to become the next matron, and those farther from the heart of power do the same simply to bring themselves to the matron's attention. They hope perhaps to receive a plum assignment or even simple acknowledgment, which they can then pass off to others as favor from above.

To maintain their influence, both over the community as a whole and over their own members, houses have established traditions and codes of behavior. A house might follow a relatively precise hierarchy of ranking and seniority, or its members might have to assemble for house rituals at specific times. The house might determine a regimen of training and education for its young, using them to bolster the family's needs. It might even have particular laws forbidding members from engaging in certain activities: assassinations during wartime, for instance, or cooperation with other houses on personal projects. If a house has almost total control over a community, it might even enforce these laws on others outside the house itself. These are drow houses, of course, and the chaotic and ambitious nature of the race means that many house members will not follow these strictures. Nonetheless, the regulations remain in place, and the punishments for violating them are heartless and draconian. Torture is a common penalty, and exile and execution are both viable options. In this regard, house dictates are often the closest thing a drow community has to a government or code of laws.

DUTIES AND BENEFITS

In simplest terms, a drow who belongs to a great house is obligated to do whatever the matron, or another high-ranking member of the house, requires of her. Depending on the situation, she might be ordered to undertake a journey, deliver a message, construct an item, or even marry a political ally. Of course, the individual can refuse, at which point the question becomes whether the one giving the orders truly has the ability to enforce obedience. If that authority figure is the matron of the house, she almost always does, and the disobedient drow is punished. Other cases might not be so clear-cut, and some members of a house have been overthrown and replaced simply because they lacked enough minions and personal might to enforce their own edicts.

Drow houses have sufficient structure that they do not assign random tasks to random individuals. A house member has specific duties required of her by her position. A blademas-ter, for instance, is responsible for teaching the art of combat to younger members in times of peace, and leading house soldiers into combat in times of war. A cleric must lead, or aid others in leading, house rituals to Lolth, and ensure that all members of the house are faithful in their devotion to the Spider Queen. A wizard must study new spells, create items for house use, or cast spells against house enemies, depending on her areas of

specialization and the current political climate. Even hunters and adventurers, though they certainly seek to advance their own standing, also quest to aid the house's endeavors.

More mundane drow also work for the good of the house. Shopkeepers and vendors sell goods brought into the community by house mercantile interests, and funnel the income back into house coffers. Soldiers practice and train for the day they are ordered to move against enemies of their house. Drow houses are pragmatic, and they assign their members responsibilities based primarily on their capabilities, putting them where they will do the most good.

Where the houses vary is less in what they require of their members, but how much. In some houses, a drow must merely

devote a bit of her time to the house when requested, and is otherwise left entirely to her own devices. Other houses require that their members work for them at all times; the only personal objectives and tasks they can undertake are those that also further the house's own needs, allowing them to achieve both at once. The most powerful houses lean toward the latter option, making full use of their available resources, but those houses also see the most political infighting and deal-making as their members realign their personal goals along house lines. After all, if one must spend all her time working for the house, one might as well also gain as much from that house as possible.

HOUSE AFFILIATION

The following table makes use of the affiliation system (*PH2*, Chapter 7). If you are not using this system in your campaign, ignore the numeric values below, and simply judge advancement through the ranks by means of age, accomplishments, level, or whatever method you think best.

When a character gains access to spells and equipment, it means the house provides that material for the duration of a single endeavor. Although no formal limit exists for how often a member can do this, the DM should watch for abuse. A house grants its favors to those who prove effective. If a character constantly achieves great wealth and power for a house, it assists her in further endeavors far more frequently than it does a member who focuses primarily on her own objectives, or who regularly fails in her tasks. On average, assume that this advantage is available at most three times per year.

Criterion	Affiliation Score Modifier		
Character level	+1/2 PC's level	Immediate member of house's central family ²	+8
Age	+1 for each 20-year period spent as a member of the house (or since attaining adulthood, if born a member)	Male	-20
Born into the house	+2	Participated in at least one military conflict against an enemy of the house	+2
Cleric or divine caster of Lolth ¹	+5	Publicly known to have passed at least one Test of Lolth	+2
Formal priestess of Lolth ¹	+10	1 These benefits overlap (do not stack) with each other; apply the higher of the two if both apply.	
Distant but confirmed relative of house's central family ²	+4	2 These benefits overlap (do not stack) with each other; apply the higher of the two if both apply.	

Affiliation Score

Title: Benefits and Duties

3 or lower Not affiliated, servant, or junior member with no benefits.

4-10 **House Member:** +5 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Intimidate checks made against other drow who hold a lower rank, or no rank, in a house. Can call on the house for assistance with endeavors that directly benefit the house. Assistance will be spells and equipment equal to one-tenth of the total equipment value for your level. Must contribute four-tenths of all adventuring/mercantile profits to the house and undertake whatever tasks or quests the house demands.

11-20 **Favored of the House:** +5 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Intimidate checks made against other drow who hold a lower rank, or no rank, in a house. Can call on the house for assistance with any endeavors. Assistance in house quests will be spells and equipment equal to one quarter of the total equipment value for your level, or up to one-tenth total value on personal quests. Must contribute three-tenths of all adventuring/mercantile profits to the house and undertake whatever tasks or quests the house demands.

21-29 **House Scion:** +10 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Intimidate checks made against other drow who hold a lower rank, or no rank, in a house. Can call on the house for assistance with any endeavors. Assistance will be equal to one-quarter of the total equipment value for your level. In addition, you gain Leadership (*DMG* 106) as a bonus feat; all your cohorts and followers are drow. Any cohorts or followers who are lost are not replaced until you gain further status in the house. Must contribute two-tenths of all adventuring/mercantile profits to the house and undertake whatever tasks or quests the house demands.

30 or higher **House Noble:** You are one of the most powerful house members, likely a matriarch or military general, and have the ear of the matron herself. +15 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Intimidate checks made against other drow who hold a lower rank, or no rank, in a house. Can call on the house for assistance with any endeavors. Assistance will be equal to one-quarter of the total equipment value for your level. Any followers you gained through your bonus Leadership feat, but have since lost, are now replaced, and further losses are replaced at the rate of one individual every 1d4 weeks. The house no longer demands tasks of you, but you should still work on its behalf to keep its strength and yours at its peak.

Although the obligations of house membership are substantial, the benefits are equally so. The specifics vary from house to house, just as do the duties, but certain advantages are, if not universal, at least quite common. All drow respect and fear the power of the houses, so house membership offers advantages to social interaction in the form of skill bonuses. Rivals who might not think twice about sabotaging or assassinating a particular drow might hesitate to do so if that individual is part of a great house, for fear of reprisal. (The drow in a given house might constantly fight each other, but they frequently band together in the face of outside aggression, and a house rarely lets an insult or attack go unanswered.) Although the house demands a portion of its members' income, it also provides supplies and equipment for house-mandated activities and even for some personal endeavors. Most important, the house can provide other resources, such as ancient lore, intelligence, and even (in some cases) soldiers or other assistants. Precisely how thoroughly an individual can draw on these resources depends on her status within the house, but even the lowest-ranked members can often beg some small amount of help.

For an example of how a specific house might view the duties and benefits of its members, see the House Affiliation sidebar on page 23.

Roleplaying Application: Consider every quest or endeavor you undertake not merely in terms of how it benefits you, but how it advances the house. This attitude doesn't stem from feelings of loyalty—that term is practically meaningless to drow—but because you understand that the stronger your house grows, the stronger you grow, and that the more you provide for it, the more you can ask of it in exchange. You think in terms of houses and families when considering even non-drow politics, and are often surprised at the relatively small sizes of other races' noble families. You think less of those who would claim authority without a house or similar institution to back them up, and you might even fail to recognize their authority at all until forced.

FAMILY UNITS

Most humans are familiar with the saying "Blood is thicker than water," representing that race's philosophy that one can always

turn to the unbreakable bonds of family. The drow have a saying about family, too. Roughly translated, it states, "In a female's own home, she knows where the knives are hidden."

It would be easy to assume that the drow do not value family ties at all, and that they treat their own relatives as viciously and cavalierly as they do others of their race. This conclusion is not entirely accurate. It's true that most drow feel, at best, only slightly more affection for relatives than they do for others, and that members of a given family might hate and scheme against each other as thoroughly as they do anyone else. Sibling rivalry among drow, for example, often results in actual bloodshed. Most drow, however, do not betray family members without good reason, and when they seek allies in an endeavor or protection from outside threats, they often turn to their relatives first. This tendency stems not from any true sense of endearment so much as from simple logic. A drow knows members of her family better than she does others, and so has at least a somewhat better understanding of their goals and secrets. Further, since families focus on a particular arena of influence—commerce and trade, magic, soldiering, stonemasonry, blacksmithing, or what have you—the odds are good that what advances one member of a family advances the family as a whole. For instance, if a family is well known for producing military leaders, then advancing one of its members to the head of a house's guards raises the esteem of that family in the eyes of both the house and the community at large.

Most drow families consists of everyone in a direct line of descent from a single individual and relatives removed by only a single step. That group would include grandparents and parents, children and grandchildren, nieces and nephews, brothers and sisters, aunts and great-aunts, uncles and great-uncles, and first cousins. Some families go farther afield, claiming more distant cousins, aunts several generations removed, and the like. A family that is part of a house is more likely to extend itself—at least for the sake of skilled or important distant members—than one that is not. In some cases, an appropriate marriage can bring two families together into one larger unit, but in most cases the male is simply subsumed into the female's family line. The head of a family's household is usually the eldest matriarch.

PREGNANCY, BIRTH, AND CHILDHOOD

The drow are notably more fertile than are their surface-dwelling cousins. They become pregnant more easily and have a slightly shorter gestation period.

The drow do not believe in using magic or anything more than basic herbal medicines to aid a mother through the pain and danger of childbirth. Should she die in the process, she is clearly too weak to contribute further to the race anyway.

Once drow children are born, they are raised by servants (drow parents rarely spend much time with their offspring) in communal living areas used by families or even entire houses. Drow children are no less temperamental than drow adults, and are in fact encouraged to resolve their difficulties through violence. If a child is not strong enough to survive and thrive in this environment, well, better that it not live to an equally violent

adulthood. Perhaps spurred on by these hostile circumstances, drow children develop much faster than other elves—almost as swiftly as humans, in fact—often beginning schooling as early as age eight or ten.

Drow schooling is heavily focused. Although the children receive a sufficient grounding in all the basics of learning, they are trained primarily in the drow faith, as well as in one or two other areas for which they show both an aptitude and an interest. Once they have reached adolescence (at about age 20, by which time over a third of them have been murdered or sacrificed), their training shifts from a group endeavor to apprenticeship with a single mentor. Assuming their mentor doesn't slay them for some minor infraction, they eventually become skilled enough to adopt their trade on their own—which often involves competing with other apprentices to take the mentor's place when she dies.

The interrelationships
that define House Inlindl

Phaeanis
(Matriarch
Varae Phaeanis)

Quarein
(Reverend
Mother Syn
Quarein)

Tsul
(Reverend
Mother Pavarda
Tsul)

Kaldrá'iv
(Reverend
Mother Vlara
Kaldrá'iv)

Vonneth
(Reverend Mother
Sithrael Vonneth)

Arvouze
(Reverend Daughter
Khyryn Arvouze)

Nubvelith
(Reverend
Mother Ylid
Nubvelith)

Sa'arress
(Matriarch
Voruls Sa'arress)

Vicloth
(Reverend Daughter
Olice Vicloth)

Jallavey
(Matriarch
Balameth Jallavey)

Inlindl
(Matron Mother
Dultha Sael Inlindl)

Liliir
(Reverend
Mother Jaseyu
Liliir)

Matheld'de
(Reverend Daughter
Val Matheld'de)

Woklyr
(Reverend
Mother Sacvul
Woklyr)

Mohvgol
(Reverend
Mother Kala
Mohvgol)

Guluit
(Reverend
Mother Mirist
Guluit)

Olesril
(Matriarch
Ralith Olesril)

Aunen
(Matriarch
Xilist Aunen)

Rikant
(Reverend
Mother Imena
Rikant)

Chessirin
(Reverend Daughter
Quen Chessirin)

Shiphrin
(Matriarch
Genuey Shiphrin)



Within a house, families rise and fall in stature just as specific individuals do. The matriarchs and other family elders might work together to topple or discredit another family, hoping to rise in the Matron Mother's esteem. The action of a specific individual can impact the station of a family as a whole. A drow who obtains a position of great authority within a house lifts her family up by association, and one who is punished or exiled leaves an indelible stain upon the reputation of her bloodline. In extremely rare cases, one family might take the place of the house's central family, an event that can alter the entire political identity of the house in question. (Such an event has occurred once in recent history, when the central family of House Eilservs—secretly worshipers of the Elder Elemental Eye—were removed from power by a bloodline loyal to Lolth.) In some of these cases, the house changes its name, adopting the appellation of the new central family, but most of the time (including House Eilservs) it keeps the old name simply for the sake of community recognition.

Although house families seek to advance both their own agenda and that of the house proper, the two do sometimes come into conflict. One house family might decide to move against another family during a time of crisis, an act that would weaken the house's ability to face the external threat. Similarly, a family might conspire with members of an outside house or the priesthood to weaken a house's central family, in the hope of taking its place, though this step would leave the new house in debt to an external power.

Obviously, drow are expected to report such disruptive ambitions to the house, allowing the matron or her proxies to deal with the problem. Whether a drow chooses to inform, of course, is a matter of whether they believe they can personally benefit from the act. If a member of the family thinks it is to her advantage to collaborate with the schemes, she does so; if she thinks there is more benefit to turning in her relatives, well, power really is more important than family.

Individual drow who threaten or betray a house can be tortured, exiled, or slain, but it's a bit harder to punish an entire family tree (or "family web," as the drow think of genealogical diagrams). If a family makes a power grab and fails, their resultant loss of respect, influence, and economic advantage is often penalty enough. In other cases, however, the house might actually expel the family from its ranks, or even—in a few rare cases—slaughter the bulk of them in a sudden overwhelming offensive and make the survivors into slaves.

A FINAL WORD ON DROW SOCIETY

By this point, some of you might be wondering how drow society has survived at all. How can a culture this sadistic, this prone to betrayal and infighting, this bereft of any legal or moral code, possibly last for more than a few generations without obliterating itself?

The truth is, it can't. Drow society is absolutely and utterly nonviable. By all rights, it should have murdered itself into oblivion eons ago.

It is only the will of the goddess Lolth that prevents this circumstance from coming about. The Spider Queen likes her drow just as they are—violent, vicious, murderous, and

treacherous. It suits her for their society to continue in this manner, and so continue it does.

Lolth works her will partly through her church. If a single house, a single family, or even a single drow grows so violent and dangerous that it threatens to tear down the community as a whole, Lolth sends signs of her displeasure to her priestesses. They, in turn, move to squash the troublemaker, often recruiting the aid of other houses and families (who are usually all too happy to gain the favor of the priesthood and eliminate a dangerous rival in one fell swoop).

The Queen of Spiders is not a subtle or patient goddess, however, and if she feels that her priestesses are unable to take effective steps in such a matter, she steps in directly. As much as she encourages infighting and bloodshed, she grows wroth indeed at drow who threaten to collapse their entire precarious social system. These drow often begin receiving divine visions ordering them to cease their destructive actions. Should they refuse—or should Lolth just not be in the mood to offer a warning—they might be abruptly stripped of their powers, attacked by endless swarms of arachnid monsters, diseased, physically deformed, transformed into driders, or simply and inexplicably dead.

DROW LIFE

Drow life consists of more than plotting to step on one's neighbors and competitors. In fact, the "common" drow allots a relatively small amount of time to scheming, leaving the political and religious elite to spend almost every waking hour in such matters. Like other races, the drow seek to excel in personal pursuits, from obtaining enough wealth to live comfortably to mastering a favored form of art. Granted, all these efforts must be undertaken with at least one eye perpetually open (lower-caste drow plot, scheme, and assassinate less, but "less" isn't "not at all"). Nonetheless, this vigilance still leaves sufficient time for the development of a rich culture and lifestyle.

A few aspects of drow life strongly differentiate it from surface cultures. First and foremost is the drow sense of time—put shortly, they don't have much of one. True, drow are quite precise when it comes to coordinating a military strike, arranging a clandestine meeting, or performing a religious or magic ritual. In a larger sense, however, they tend not to divide the day into formal intervals, and even the concept of "day" itself varies from drow to drow. Dark elf culture is unconstrained by the rising and setting of the sun. A drow shop is open for business at whatever hours its proprietor chooses to operate it; drow rise whenever they choose, or whenever their duties and masters require them to do so.

Obviously, a group must have some means of coordinating events to function as a community. A few drow cities use magic timekeepers—pillars that glow in set patterns or intervals, precisely timed chimes, or the like—but most simply rely on the Church of Lolth. The priesthood holds regular rituals to the Spider Queen, and they use various signals—often horns, bells, or sacrificial shrieks—to indicate when a rite is beginning. Most drow choose to begin their "day" at one of these times, purely for convenience.

Similarly, the drow have no innate concept of seasons. Thus, their daily routine does not change over the course of the year. Farmers grow various fungi and deep-dwelling vegetation constantly, and ranchers never cease herding rothé (cattlelike creatures bred to thrive underground; see page 157), giant lizards, monstrous spiders, and other beasts used for food and/or labor.

One constant in the life of any drow is the ubiquity of spiders and other arachnids. This is not merely an aspect of art and architecture, but an actual fact: Swarms of real arachnids, both normal-sized and monstrous, dwell within every drow community. They hang from roofs, scuttle across roads, build webs in common rooms, and adorn walls like decorations. Though this situation would highly disturb most other individuals, the drow are absolutely comfortable with it and don't give this state of affairs much thought. It is as natural to them as grass is to surface elves. The drow suffer surprisingly few bites—perhaps through the grace of Lolth—even though many of these arachnids are venomous and irritable. A drow who is bitten usually assumes she is either being punished for some minor infraction or being tested. The drow have no particular taboo against killing spiders, but they don't make a habit of doing so for no apparent reason.

In fact, despite (or perhaps because of) their reverence for these arachnids, spiders make up a regular portion of the drow diet. They are rarely the main course, but are instead consumed as a symbolic portion of the meal, usually at the beginning—almost the equivalent of asking Lolth's grace. Beyond this, the drow diet consists of numerous fungi and lichen; meats from rothé, lizard, and other subterranean creatures; and, on occasion, the flesh of humanoid slaves. Drow do not eat other drow, but beyond that, they do not consider the consumption of humanoids to be cannibalism. A surface elf, a human, a goblin, or a grimlock is an inferior creature, useful only as a slave or other beast of burden; if such a creature is best used as a supply of meat, why would the drow even hesitate to utilize them as such? They do not frequently feed on other humanoids, not out of any moral objection, but because it is easier to breed other animals for food and because humanoids are usually more useful in other capacities.

LEISURE

Drow do spend time in relaxation and leisure. For the upper classes, much of this free time is spent in debauched pursuits that feed their lust for violence, while others engage in sports and games not dissimilar from those of the surface races.

Despite their innate distrust for one another, high-caste drow enjoy throwing and attending the occasional feast or ball. Such events are usually held under the guise of a celebration for a particular event or victory, or even on a religious occasion, but quite often it is the gathering itself that is the true purpose. At these festivities, drow reaffirm both alliances and enmities, take the opportunity to size up the (apparent) success and wealth of their rivals, and attempt to eavesdrop on conversations and solicit useful rumors. Overt violence is frowned upon at such events, but the occasional back-room murder or poisoning is not unheard of. These parties, though popular, are rare, since putting that many powerful and com-

peting drow in one place is a recipe for disaster. Most drow are too paranoid to attend more than one every few years.

Potent wines, brewed from underground fruits, mushrooms, and fungus, are quite popular among the drow. Almost as well loved are various herbs and incenses that, when consumed or burned and inhaled, cause euphoria, hallucinations, or trance states. Some drow consider these sensations akin to a religious experience; others simply enjoy them for their own sake or because they allow for a temporary loss of control and inhibitions. (Not that drow are terribly inhibited to begin with.)

When they go out on the town, as it were, richer and more powerful drow often enjoy observing a wide variety of events at the community's arena. These events include such (relatively) innocuous spectacles as giant lizard or spider races, though these often involve the capture of humanoid prey at the end of the course. Gladiatorial duels, though not as popular as they are in some surface communities, arise from time to time. The drow watch plays that reenact famous triumphs, often with slaves or prisoners forced to act out the parts of all the characters who die—and who are actually slain in the course of the performance. They might even gather to watch a famous torturer practice her art, or the priestesses conduct a particularly creative sacrifice. These events often involve brand-new contraptions with features such as slicing blades or dripping acid. Or the event might showcase a magical enhancement that allows the drow to partake of the victim's thoughts and memories as he suffers. All these gatherings attract traveling bards, jugglers, vendors, and anyone else seeking to make some coin by amusing the audience. (Those who fail to amuse their clients sometimes find themselves a part of the next performance.)

The drow have a strong literary tradition, mostly involving the fictionalized retelling of historical events or religious myths. Reading is a popular pastime among drow of all social statuses, and many seek to learn how to succeed in life by studying their historical and fictional forebears.

Finally, the drow have several sports and board games in which they compete against one another. The sports often involve stealth and physical prowess, like a strange combination of capture the flag and hide-and-seek. Their most popular board game is a tactical game called Shelza Ir. It superficially resembles chess, though the board is far larger. The two opposing sides do not have an equal number of pieces, but they do have an equal point value. The more valuable a piece is, the farther it can move in a turn, and the more unusual maneuvers—such as moving diagonally, or jumping other pieces—it can make. When a piece captures an enemy piece, it not only removes it from the board, it gains a portion of the enemy's value, raising its status to a more powerful piece. Under certain circumstances, a player can actually capture one of his own pieces, removing it from the board but granting some of its points to the victorious piece—thus teaching even the youngest of drow tacticians the benefits of sacrificing a portion of one's own forces for a larger gain.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

Most drow art incorporates some degree of religious symbolism. It might represent Lolth or some sort of arachnid, or it

might depict a powerful ancestor of the artist. The drow are fond of abstract weblike patterns, and rarely create landscapes or still-life images. Even when the images are not abstract, they are relatively simplistic.

The overwhelming majority of drow art has some three-dimensional or tactile component; sculpture, statues, embossing, and engraving are all popular. Simple painting is considered a far lesser art form, a mere intermediary step toward “true” artistic ability. Sculptures and paintings both tend toward black, white, and shades of gray. Color is rare in drow artwork, for the simple reason that the art is often created and/or displayed in the darkness, visible by darkvision only. When a drow does include color in a piece of art, it is frequently intended to alter the meaning of the image. For instance, one famous artist was best known for an image of drow priestesses sacrificing surface elf maidens clad in grasses, flowers, and everything else the drow associate with surface weakness. When viewed in the light, however, what appeared to be the shadows of the priestesses over the victims turned out to be the victim’s skin, as dark as any drow’s. This suggests that the artist was equating some drow—perhaps a political rival—with the elves of the surface.

When they create jewelry, the drow do so to show off wealth (and power, by extension), not to be attractive. Dark elf baubles are quite gaudy by surface standards, made of precious metals and containing far more gemstones than a human or even a dwarf would feel comfortable with.

Drow architecture is functional first, with aesthetics considered a distant second priority. The primary exception to this rule is, as might be expected, imagery of spiders and Lolth. All temples, most public buildings, and many private residences are replete with such images, because nobody wants to be accused of being insufficiently faithful.

Perhaps the strangest of drow art forms is their music. The children of Lolth enjoy strange, prolonged, wavering sounds that other races consider unappealing or even uncomfortable. These often seem atonal at first, but when combined through the

proper techniques they produce a symphony of alien, haunting appeal. The dark elves possess a variety of unique instruments, including the vazhan-do, a complex lute with sixty-four strings that can be plucked swiftly for a torrent of notes, or bent slowly, producing a ghostly wail; and the ezhirkiri, a wind instrument that transforms the air blowing through it into the sound of agonized, yet strangely melodic, shrieks.

TECHNOLOGY AND MAGIC

Even though the drow consider magic a normal part of everyday life, they are also a remarkably high-tech society when it comes to mundane arts and sciences. These cunning people know far better than to rely entirely on magic; not all of them are skilled in that field, after all, and as magic-resistant creatures themselves, they know that even the most powerful spellcaster cannot always attain a desired goal.

Much of drow technology is focused on stealth, secrecy, and miniaturization. It is believed that the drow developed the first hand crossbows, and their arsenal also includes spring-loaded dagger sheaths and telescoping blades. Their arms, armor, and fortification are based on the same techniques used by the surface elves (including their pendant with mithral), but they have evolved to make use of more stonework and heavy metals after generations underground. Although the drow appreciate an attractive tool or weapon, they are far more concerned with functionality and, when appropriate, ease of concealment, than they are with appearance.

The drow are masters not only of metallurgy, but of stonemasonry, engineering, and alchemy as well. They are particularly skilled at the art of brewing poisons, and a single drow community might include a wider variety of toxin samples than an entire nation of surface-dwellers. Many of these poisons utilize spider venom as their primary ingredient, but venom extracted from animals, fungi, plants, or any other source is also a common baseline. As might be expected, the drow are almost as skilled with antidotes as they are with poisons, and sometimes the winner of an interhouse conflict is the one who first comes up with an obscure poison for which the other lacks an antidote.

Many drow throughout the years have been truly inspired alchemists and inventors. One or more drow have possessed the secret of spring-and-cog-driven clocks, tinderless lighters, moveable type, black powder, and even (briefly) very primitive steam-powered pistons. The individualist nature of the drow, combined with their constant exposure to conflict, inspires creation and discovery at almost the rate of the human race—sometimes even faster. Those same factors prevent drow from sharing their discoveries with others, and such wonders are frequently lost when the inventor’s enemies learn of her new innovation and strike before it can be turned against them. Every one of the above examples, and more besides, have been invented over and over throughout drow history, only to be lost and forgotten just as often.



An assassin warily examines the body of his latest victim

The drow attitude toward magic is blasé, at least as other races might see it. To the drow, magic is just another science or art: a part of the world no less natural than any other, albeit one that follows different rules. The drow make frequent use of magic in everyday life, putting it to such utilitarian purposes as lighting, transportation, and security, or using it to their advantage in politics and in war. Other races might use magic equally as often, but they do not view it as natural the way the drow do. This idiosyncratic attitude among the drow likely springs from their innate magical abilities. After all, if even an untrained and unskilled drow has access to magic, it must be an ordinary part of the world.

Of course, the fact that the drow are both naturally magical and naturally resistant to magic causes them to think that they are, by definition, the world's greatest magical practitioners. This attitude leads to an urgency and competitiveness among their magical researchers that dwarfs the machinations of their mundane scientists. Drow are constantly seeking to create (or steal from other races) the next great spell, one to use against current rivals and intimidate potential enemies. As borne out by their technology and architecture, the drow are great believers in function over form. A minor spell that's pretty to look at is valuable only to entertainers, but a new spell that allows a spy to see through the eyes of a spider, or rips the kidneys from an enemy, is truly worthwhile. Even when researching and creating new spells, however, the drow don't see what they're doing as particularly special. They are simply creating new tools, like any other inventor.

The drow appreciate magic that plays upon their racial strengths and bolster their weaknesses. Spells that increase their immunities or broaden them to cover effects not normally subject to spell resistance are popular topics for research. Similarly, spells that enhance their racial spell-like abilities, increasing their power and range or transforming them into other effects, are also frequently subjects of experimentation. To date, however, the drow have had more success in developing new techniques of training and concentration along these paths than they have had in creating new spells. See the New Feats section, page 47.

The drow see little distinction—certainly less than other races—between the arcane and the divine. They acknowledge that the two forms of magic function differently, but they believe that they ultimately flow from the same source. Magic represents the ongoing influence of the gods (especially Lolth) in the natural world. Mortals might learn various ways of manipulating that influence and harnessing those energies, but they are, at their core, the same energies. The only reason the drow favor the divine over the arcane is that the former requires the grace of Lolth, and thus indicates that its practitioner holds some favor with the goddess.

The drow are enormous believers in the efficacy of magic items and weapons, and a large fraction of their casters specialize in the creation of such goods. Minor magic items are bought and traded with little fanfare in drow bazaars, treated like any other commodity. More potent items are eagerly sought by matriarchs, priestesses, and adventurers alike. For generations, the drow utilized a process that caused their

magic items to disintegrate when exposed to sunlight, in the hope of making them less attractive to potential thieves and invaders. This practice has all but died out in modern times, partially because it didn't function as a deterrent, and also because many drow found their campaigns against the surface races hampered by the time limits such items placed on their activities.

A few male arcanists have obtained such a potent mastery of the mystic arts that they are accorded great respect, and even some true political power, in drow society. Although the female elite resent such individuals, not even the priesthood or the houses are willing to ignore the value a mighty wizard or sorcerer can offer as an ally—or the devastation he can cause as an enemy.

LOVE

Most of the trappings of love in drow society are better defined as either lust or politics. Drow seek to sate physical desires with whatever partners arouse their attentions; the culture does not, in any real way, associate sex or reproduction with love, or even necessarily with marriage. Drow seek to slake their lust with partners of lower status—so as not to imply that they have given in to a drow of higher station—and rarely with members of an enemy house or family, for fear of compromising their position. Beyond these limitations, however, anything goes.

Marriage is primarily a political or financial arrangement. Drow marry to formalize alliances, to combine family resources, or—in some cases—to cement their dominance over a weaker ally or companion. No stigma is attached to children born out of wedlock, but a child born of a marriage has a stronger claim to her parents' wealth and power if something happens to the parents. Thus, some drow marry before procreating, to ensure that everything they have achieved remains in the family line.

Most drow marriages are monogamous, not due to moral or religious doctrine, but because few drow are willing to allow more than one other individual that close to them on a regular basis. A few drow marriages do involve multiple partners, however. These arrangements usually involve a single drow female taking numerous male partners, but other combinations are not unheard of.

Although such an occurrence is rare indeed, some drow do fall in love with other drow—or, although it happens so rarely that it's practically a myth, members of some other race. For the drow, who are accustomed to thinking only of their own good, the sudden urge to consider someone else's well-being is a strange and frightening experience. Many drow react violently to love, seeking to destroy the object of their affections before they are further "corrupted" by the odd sensations.

Those who don't become violent usually make every effort to either impress or dominate the object of their affections, depending on their relative social standing. A drow in love with someone of a higher status seeks to increase her own authority, hoping her desired paramour will notice her and consider her worthy of an alliance, or at least of increased socialization. If the smitten drow is of higher status, she often seeks to acquire the object of her affection as a servant or slave,

for even the most loving drow sees little difference between intimacy and possession.

The rarest event in drow culture is when two drow share affection for one another equally. The number of loving partnerships throughout drow history can probably be counted on a single drow's fingers, but they often become an almost unstoppable force in society. Two drow willing to combine efforts and resources to that great a degree, particularly if they have influence in different but synergistic areas of society, are potent indeed. However, because even the most loving drow can never fully trust one another—it just isn't in their nature—these rare couples often fall apart under the weight of betrayal, or even suspicions of a betrayal that never actually occurred.

WAR

The drow have a saying regarding the waging of war. "If you allow the enemy to strike back, the first battle is already lost." The drow do not believe in large, overt confrontations, with soldier meeting soldier on the field of battle, arrows and spells flashing by overhead as spear meets shield and sword meets sword. They'll fight that way if they must, but they greatly prefer tactics that involve stealth, surprise, multipronged assaults, or sabotage—anything that allows them to win a battle before the foe has an opportunity to retaliate.

Almost all drow learn the basics of combat during their schooling—the better to survive in their violent society—but only a few of them study warfare, strategy, and tactics to a professional degree. The drow instinct for self-preservation discourages them from becoming career soldiers, so those who do are valuable commodities: Many obtain surprising amounts of influence with a house or the church, or make a good living as mercenaries. Military officers train not only in standard tactics of siege and battlefield confrontation, but in techniques of covert troop movement, counterintelligence, and diversionary tactics (up to and including the sacrifice of one's own personnel). Drow tactics involve mundane weapons and magic in equal measure. If given the resources, they are as likely to use teleportation as a means of infiltration as anything else. Their strategies usually involve small, carefully placed strike teams. These highly skilled units carry out assassination or sabotage, and often reduce or eliminate the need for a larger force.

When drow do wage war, they focus their might primarily on the opposition's officers and rulers, making every effort to behead the opposing leadership and thus render the army ineffectual. Barring that, they target supply lines or poison food stores, resorting to direct confrontation only when all else has failed.

Drow prefer to be the aggressors in any military action, and their strategies are designed with offense in mind. When faced with an attacking force, they still attempt to make use of smaller groups as described above, but they are far more likely to field a large force of troops—if only to delay the advance while their operatives work, or while the drow leaders retreat to safer, better-hidden locations. Some drow fortresses have no viable mundane entrance and require magic to access. Although this method of construction makes supplying the fortress difficult, many drow have found the effort worthwhile when an enemy proved incapable of breaking in.

The greatest problem the drow have with fighting a defensive battle, as opposed to an offensive one, is determining who is in command of the war effort. Drow do not have standing armies that answer to the community itself; all military forces belong to a house, the priesthood, or other private factions. Most drow attacks are launched by a specific house, or at the instigation of the church, and thus have a clear chain of command. Conversely, more than one drow city has fallen to aggressors because local houses could not cooperate sufficiently to coordinate their soldiers, even in the face of outside invasion. The best-defended drow cities have a house (or two) potent enough to force the others into obedience, or a priesthood strong enough to assume citywide command for the duration of the assault. A few forward-thinking communities even have treaties in effect between the church and the major houses, dictating who controls what in the event of outside attack.

The majority of drow warfare consists of battle against other cities—be they drow or other races. Sometimes, however, the constant spying, sabotage, and assassinations between rival houses erupts into civil war within a city. This sort of conflict can easily destroy an entire community if it is allowed to drag on; thus, the drow have very strict customs for dealing with civil wars. If one house can destroy another in a single overwhelming attack, the community assumes that the victim was weak and ripe for takeover. In this case, the victorious house is entitled to the spoils of war, including the resources of the fallen house and the right to take its surviving members as slaves. Should a house's offensive fail to destroy another house immediately, however, the other local houses and the priesthood of Lolth collaborate to aid the target house in destroying the aggressor. This action ensures that no civil war lasts longer than a few days in any drow community, and that no house launches an open attack on a rival unless it is certain it can win.

The vast majority of drow soldiers (and, for that matter, hunters and adventurers as well) are males. Female drow have

THE FIGHTING SOCIETIES

Among the fiercest, best trained, and deadliest of drow warriors are the members of the fighting societies. These forces, divided into male and female battalions, are the primary military arm of the Church of Lolth. Each fighting society is made up of units contributed by the great houses, for use by the priesthood as it sees fit. This system allows each house to maintain a presence in the church's power base, while allowing the church to maintain an equal balance of power between houses. Officially,

the fighting societies are loyal to the priesthood of Lolth above all other considerations. In practice, fighting society soldiers are rarely asked to participate in actions against their native house, for fear of which way they might turn in such a conflict of interest. Instead, the fighting societies defend the community or enforce church dictates against independent families, individuals, rogue religious sects, and houses too small to have contributed soldiers.

other avenues to power that are quicker and relatively safer. Military rank is one of the few positions of real power available to male drow, making it a favored goal of the gender. That said, many drow soldiers, hunters, and adventurers don't necessarily seek authority, but simply relish the opportunity to thrive away from their domineering female relatives.

For more on how drow conduct themselves in combat, and on specific battle tactics, see *Drow Tactics*, page 42.

Drow who die in disgrace are often hung from the walls of their homes, dishonoring their families as well



DEATH

Death is not a glorious end to a life of accomplishment. It is not the doorway to some idyllic paradise in Lolth's domain. It is not a reward of rest earned after centuries of travail. Rather, death is the ultimate defeat that strips a drow of her hard-earned position and possessions, granting them to others who are far less worthy. Death is the fate of prey, not predator; it is the final and eternal declaration of weakness.

The drow instinct for self-preservation is a powerful one. It drives them to survive at all costs, yet advancement in drow society requires risk—including, at times, the risk of life itself. Much drow scheming is a careful balancing act, a measure of risk versus reward. If a scheme's failure threatens death, most drow undertake it only if the benefits are truly substantial. Drow do not, under any circumstance, believe in self-sacrifice—better to sacrifice a dozen allies than to die oneself. It can be satisfying to watch an enemy suffer, but true victory is attained only with that enemy's death. Anything less is transitory. Drow frequently not only slay their rivals but utterly destroy the bodies, to make any form of resurrection difficult if not impossible.

Drow almost never die of old age, and they do not bury or entomb their dead. Those who do not fall in battle or at the hands of other scheming drow are often selected as sacrifices to Lolth. After all, if a high-level drow is growing old, what greater purpose has she left to serve? Drow who die of old age or natural causes are considered shamed for their failure to die in Lolth's service. Their bodies are left to rot, or hung from their family's home with webbing as a sign of disgrace. Many drow cremate relatives who die in this fashion—not out of respect, but to hide the evidence.

Undeath

Drow do not inherently shun the undead as many other races do, though they do not particularly enjoy their company either. They consider undeath a poor state of existence, since it strips drow of their inherent racial superiority, but they do respect the power and will of one who is capable of remaining beyond death's call.

DROW HISTORY AND FOLKLORE

Although the drow are nearly as ancient as the surface elves—or even older, according to one of their various origin myths—their ancient history and folklore is rather sparse. This stems from the fact that drow aren't especially concerned with their people's past, except when it influences their present and future. They study ancient victories to replicate them, defeats to avoid them, and famously successful drow to emulate them, but that's essentially it.

For all that, the drow do have a body of legend and folklore they study and repeat to one another, even if it's smaller than one might expect from so old a race. Many of their myths are similar to those of the surface elves—albeit

with a different perspective attached to them—and others are unique to the drow.

Roleplaying Application: You're not much interested in what's gone before, unless you can learn or somehow benefit from it. When you feel you can gain an advantage by studying the past, you do so fervently, determined to unearth details missed by others. You scoff at elves' myths and tales, for you know the truth about such matters.

DROW MYTHIC ORIGINS

It is perhaps unsurprising that a race as chaotic and wide-spread as the drow cannot agree on a creation myth. No fewer than three such myths vie for dominance throughout their society. Two of them are somewhat familiar to surface sages who study the drow, and the third is largely unknown outside the drow except to a very rare few—some of whom believe that the surface elves might themselves have helped to keep the secret.

All three myths agree on some basic points. In an age before recorded history, the elves and the drow were one people who worshiped a pantheon of deities called the Seldarine. Something happened to sunder the elf nation: an event that tore both the mortals and their pantheon apart, setting the elves to dwell in the forests and other natural regions above, while the drow made their homes in the darkened caverns below. The elves, of course, have their own version of this tale (which can be found, among other places, in *Races of the Wild*). The drow, depending on their community, family, and individual preference, believe one of the following.

Expulsion of the Drow

In the first primeval days of the world, the elves were already old. They dwelt in the first cities, and they watched with curious and unaging eyes as other races appeared and began to walk the fields, climb the mountains, and hunt the great and endless woods. Among these races were the humans, capable of changing and adapting to almost any environment, and the orcs, who though bestial were warriors of great strength and savage cunning.

The gods, too, watched the growth of these other races, and some grew concerned. They took no action, however, for even then the elf deities were chaotic and individualistic, with no

true leadership or guidance among them. One day Lolth (see sidebar, note 1), strongest and wisest of the elf gods, approached Corellon Larethian, for he was the most charismatic and convincing of the Seldarine. "The other races have not the life span of our children," she told him, "but they grow far, far more numerous. They are quick to learn and adapt, where our elves are slow and set in their ways. They are swift to battle, where our elves seek only the best and most beautiful in life. They are strong, where our elves are weak. Let us, then, spread wisdom and skill among the elves. Let us teach them to hold what we have given them, to not only survive the coming of these new races but to dominate them, since we always intended them to be the masters of the world we provided."

But Corellon Larethian was a vain and foolish deity. It was he who had convinced the Seldarine to create the elves as they were, in an image that he preferred, and he was loath to allow any changes to "his" creations. He deceived Lolth (see sidebar, note 2), agreeing to speak to the assembled elf gods, but when he did so, he launched into an eloquent argument that the elves should remain exactly as they were. "We have created perfection," he argued, playing upon the vanity of the other gods just as he puffed up his own. "As we are gods to our children, so far are our children above these other, lesser races. Let us not allow fear and worry to cloud our judgment. Let us not sully the perfection we have created by changing our elves, reducing them to the level of these new beasts."

Lolth raged in fury at the deception, and at the shortsightedness of her fellow gods, but the Seldarine were in agreement, taken in by Corellon's honeyed words, and they would not heed her warnings.

So Lolth visited her children in secret. Choosing only the strongest and most skilled among the elves, she taught them great wisdom behind the backs of the other gods. To them she granted the gift of skill with bow and blade, that they might meet the orcs on the field of battle; the gift of deception, that they might not be at a disadvantage against the flexible humans; and above all, the gift of magic, both arcane and divine, that they might prove dominant over all other races. She instructed them, too, in the value of survival, in the need to fight to keep what was theirs, and in the doctrine of strength over all. She came in the night to deliver her teachings, and her followers named themselves *duaral* (see sidebar, note 3),

SCHOLARLY COMMENTARY ON THE EXPULSION OF THE DROW

1 Note here that in drow mythology, Lolth was always Lolth. The elves name her "Araushnee," and claim she was Correlon's consort before turning to evil, only taking the name "Lolth" after the elf/drow schism. The drow, of course, believe none of that. Lolth was always the strongest and most dominant of the pantheon, and she was, ever and always, Lolth.

2 It's interesting that Lolth is deceived here, since although the drow do not consider their goddess infallible, their surviving mythology rarely speaks of any of her faults or blunders. Scholars believe that the priesthood (and Lolth herself) has allowed this event to remain a part of drow legend not to suggest a weakness in the deity, but to always remind the drow how convincing and conniving Corellon Larethian can be.

3 Quite obviously, "duaral" was the source of the eventual term "drow," though the exact point at which the later evolution of the word came into common usage is unknown.

4 This seems to be the biggest logical hole in the drow creation myth. If the Seldarine had the power to transform the race physically like this, why did they not simply destroy the drow utterly? The drow themselves maintain that the gods were too weak to do so, that—thanks to Lolth's grace in those early days—it was all the combined elf gods could do simply to mark their flesh. The elves, of course, would claim that Corellon and the others were too kindhearted to perform such a vile act, that they hoped even then that the drow would repent and turn away from their evil goddess.

or “Hunters of the Crescent,” for the martial skills she offered and the moon that heralded her coming.

But some among Lolth’s new followers grew frightened of the coming war, and ran to the elves still taken in by Corellon and the Seldarine. What they learned, the gods learned, and they grew angry at Lolth for her disobedience, and frightened that her *duaral* might come to dominate elf culture. In a twist of sheerest irony and arrogance, Corellon—who had prevented the gods from teaching the elves the arts of war when the elves were faced with outside threats—was the first to show his children the bow and the blade when the threat came from one of his own.

“But, great Corellon,” the elf leaders asked their deity, as they lifted their swords for war, “how are we to know our enemy from our brothers and sisters? For we all look alike, and you have said that the traitor Lolth has taught her followers to lie.”

This worried the Seldarine greatly, until the goddess Hanali Celanil, weakest and most pathetic of the pantheon, arose. “We shall solve this problem,” she said, “by marking all those who are not loyal. For while Lolth is the mightiest among us, she cannot stop us if we work together. As day is to night, so shall you be to those who follow the traitor.” And the Seldarine worked their will and wrought great change upon the *duaral*, turning their skin from the pale of the elves to black as pitch (see sidebar, note 4).

The elves of the Seldarine marched against Lolth’s *duaral*, and though the *duaral* were stronger and more skilled, they could not stand up to the elves’ greater numbers. Led by their goddess, the survivors retreated deep into the caverns beneath the earth, where the nature-loving elves were too frightened to follow. And there did they begin to thrive.

The Drow Exodus

This second version of the drow creation myth parallels the first, up until the point where Lolth decides to teach the *duaral* behind the backs of the other gods. This narrative picks up at that point.

Drow historians debate Lolth’s motivation for what happened next. Was she concerned that the other elves would unite under the banner of the Seldarine and obliterate her *duaral*? Or did she simply view those weaker elves as unfit to receive her teaching, and indeed unfit for survival? Whatever the case, before the other elves and the other gods learned of her actions, Lolth led the *duaral* away in the middle of the

SCHOLARLY COMMENTARY ON THE DROW EXODUS

1 It should come as no surprise that although surface-dwellers believe the Expulsion of the Drow is the primary drow creation myth, drow prefer the Exodus version. It satisfies both their own pride, and their faith and fear in Lolth, to maintain that it was she who chose to lead them from those who were unworthy, rather than that they were driven out by the elves.

2 On a similar basis, the drow prefer to believe that their physical appearance was a gift from their own goddess, rather than a curse laid upon them by another.

night. They crept from the elf villages and cities, summoned by a call only they could hear. A trickle became a stream, a stream became a river, and eventually thousands of Lolth’s elves joined one another on the journey to a new home, away from those who would weaken them (see sidebar, note 1).

To facilitate their ability to hunt in the shadows of night, and to differentiate them from the feeble elves of the Seldarine, Lolth wrought a physical change in her followers, transforming their skin to a light-absorbing ebony (see sidebar, note 2). She separated the massed *duaral* into smaller groups, the better to hide from any elf pursuers, and she chose for them great kingdoms under the earth, where they could grow strong and learn to rule without the interference of their weaker cousins.

First among Elves

This is the rarest of the drow creation myths, but one that is catching on swiftly with the younger generations. It mirrors the Drow Exodus tale, with one fundamental difference.

According to this version of the myth, the elves were initially an underground race, and when Lolth chose only the strongest and most skilled as her followers, they banished the weak elves to the surface. Those who espouse this version claim that all elves originally shared the dark skin of the drow, and that it was Lolth who cursed the surface elves to appear as feeble and weak without as they were within.

LEGENDS AND TALES

The majority of drow tales fall into two categories: They either speak of a great drow who proved victorious through a combination of strength, skill, and devotion to Lolth; or of a drow who suffered horribly for showing insufficient strength, skill, or devotion to Lolth. These are all very much of the “If you’ve heard one, you’ve heard them all” variety, for though the details change, the underlying concepts do not.

Still, the drow do retain a few truly mythic tales, stories that explain aspects of drow physiology or culture, and stories that speak of great events in the race’s history. One of the most commonly told tales of this sort is presented below.

SCHOLARLY COMMENTARY ON FIRST AMONG ELVES

It seems remarkable that a myth that places the drow in the dominant position, historically and militarily, hasn’t become the standard for the race, and yet this is by far the least widespread of the drow creation myths. The only theory as to why this might be—or at least the only one that makes sense—suggests that the Church of Lolth deliberately repressed it to maintain the drow’s resentment of the surface elves. It’s much easier to ignore an enemy you’ve already defeated, after all. Eventually, after so many years of suppression, the myth was all but forgotten, but it has recently been unearthed and latched onto by a few among the current generation.

It is also worth mentioning that some conspiracy-minded scholars believe that the elves are aware of this myth, and that they too have made efforts to keep its existence secret from the other surface races. Those scholars cannot help but wonder: If the elves want such a “ridiculous” myth kept silent, perhaps it’s not quite so ridiculous at all. . . .

The Capture of Zinzerena

One of the greatest heroes of the drow, her deeds still spoken of and emulated in their cities around the world, was the mysterious Zinzerena. An illusionist and assassin of unmatched skill, she slew at will both personal rivals and those whom she was hired to dispatch. Her trickery is legendary, and it is said that her illusions were so realistic and her lies so subtly woven that she could convince anyone of anything. To this day, Zinzerena is spoken of almost as a divinity, and indeed some drow do worship her as a demigod.

There came a day, however, when Zinzerena was many hundreds of years old—aged even for a surface elf, let alone a drow—that the assassin was hired by a priestess of Lolth named Acalantra. Acalantra had long coveted the position held by her older sister, who had obtained higher authority in both the Church of Lolth and the ranks of their house, whose name remains untold in any of these tales. Zinzerena knew that a priestess of Lolth and matriarch of a great house would prove a challenging target, yet she did not hesitate, for Zinzerena had never been caught and never been thwarted.

For days, Zinzerena watched from afar, her senses augmented by her magics, and observed her target. She learned where the matriarch went, and when. She saw, as though they glowed in the dark, the mystical defenses that surrounded the house, and knew that she could stride between them as easily as a spider navigating its own web.

When the night came, and the matriarch had but recently returned from a tiring day of rituals, Zinzerena swept through the property. Cloaked in illusion, wearing the shadows like a second skin, she passed the guards and was not seen. As though it were flat earth, she scaled the walls of the great stone structure, and did not slow. Wires and magic both reached out for the locks of the window, from which the matriarch watched over her property; she opened it, and was not heard.

But Zinzerena had been betrayed, the only way such a skillful assassin could ever have been caught. The priestess who had hired her, and the matriarch who was her target, sought together

to form a new guild of assassins, and they could not abide so skilled a competitor for their services. Convincing the priesthood that Zinzerena was a threat—for followers of her exploits had begun to worship her—they drew upon all the resources the community had to offer in springing their trap.

Created by the church and kept hidden from Zinzerena's scrying by layers of powerful magics, golems lumbered from the shadows of the chamber—golems crafted of immense masses of webbing. Against such beings, all the assassin's illusions, all her poisons, all her skills could not help her. By the betrayal of one whom Zinzerena had no cause to suspect, the great assassin was finally laid low.

Wrapped in thick layers of webbing, she was brought by the golems before the assembled priesthood, including the one who had hired her. "No more will you flout Lolth's rule," they told her, convinced that it was her own intention to set herself up as rival to the Spider Queen. "Soon the name of Zinzerena will vanish from the lips and the ears of the drow."

But Zinzerena only laughed. "You are cowards, and you are fools," she told them.

"It is only your fear, and your lack of faith, that makes you think that a few awestruck souls who worship me could ever threaten the Weaver of Webs. And you are a fool to think that you can truly slay Zinzerena.

For I am a scream on the wind, a flicker of shadow in the corner of the eye. For centuries I have come and gone, and none have stopped me, nor even seen me unless

I wished it, for I am illusion. Try though you might, you can never slay what you cannot touch."

"We can touch you now," they replied, "and we can slay you." Then the priestesses moved in toward the assassin, held helpless by the golems, and tore her limb from limb.

Yet when the webs settled to the earth, nothing remained but a few wisps of black cloth and leather, with no trace of a body at all.

Zinzerena never appeared again, but neither did the church ever find her body. And who knows—perhaps she was truly the insubstantial illusion she claimed, now freed of physical form to



Zinzerena attempts to defend herself while a web golem approaches from behind

roam the world unhindered. For it was the day after Zinzere-na's death that the drow first discovered the abilities they all share today: the ability to manipulate darkness and light, the fundamental basis of all secrecy and all illusion.

DROW SETTLEMENTS

Although a few small drow settlements can be found sporadically throughout the Underdark, the drow primarily live in great cities of many thousands of citizens (and that's not even counting the hundreds of thousands of non-drow slaves). This tendency might seem to run counter to drow attitudes, given their utter inability to trust one another, but it is the only arrangement that allows them to seek the power and influence they crave. It also allows them to work together against other denizens of the Underdark, most of whom are either prey or rivals to the children of Lolth.

Unlike their surface cousins, the dark elves do not pay attention to the size of their city's population, or declare that a set number of them must leave if said population grows too large for available resources. As with all else they do, population control comes down to survival of the fittest. If a community runs low on the necessities of life, the strong take what they need and the weak are left to starve. Occasionally, conflict over resources causes stronger houses to drive out weaker ones, which either die in the lightless depths of the Underdark or survive to found their own communities.

The drow look for three features when seeking a site for a new community. First, the region must have adequate natural resources. Although they're willing to fight and struggle for survival, the drow aren't stupid enough to found a new town in a region incapable of sustaining them. Fresh water, edible fungi (or at least the appropriate environment to grow it), and room for grazing herd animals are all essential. Almost as vital is the presence of ore—in accessible veins—for the forging of weapons and armor. Mithral is preferred, but the drow settle for usable iron.

Second, the position must be defensible. Enclosed caverns are optimal in this respect, since they can contain a complex of streets and passages that is only approachable from a few select vantage points. In other situations, the drow select areas sufficiently enormous and open that they can build walls and fortifications around the city. In either case, only workable stone (which must be hard and sturdy enough to form a viable barrier) suffices. The drow have ignored otherwise perfect locations because the local rock was too brittle.

For a time, the drow preferred to make use of natural chambers, modifying them only as much as necessary to produce viable work and living spaces. For hundreds of years now, however, they have tended more toward open areas that allow them to construct their own buildings. This allows them to shape the structures exactly as needed, and serves as yet another symbol of their dominance over their own environment.

Finally, the area must allow room for expansion. Whether through procreation or the acquisition of slaves and captives, the drow know that any given community must grow, lest it fall stagnant and perish. This last is the most variable of the three requirements, since a community of only a few hun-

dred can safely assume that it will never expand as far as the greatest drow cities.

The drow are still quite happy, however, to inhabit a conquered city built by another race. Although the buildings of (for instance) the duergar or the illithids are rarely built to drow specifications, the drow enjoy the symbolism inherent in occupying someone else's territory. Over the course of time, they tear down existing structures and use the material to rebuild to their liking, slowly transforming someone else's domain into their own.

Although they can vary dramatically, drow communities have certain features in common. First and foremost, each contains a temple of Lolth. This is the largest and most intimidating building in the community, as well as one of the most defensible. Drow communities also include an arena, amphitheater, or some other platform on which they can stage sporting events, performances, and sacrifices—which are, at times, one and the same. Beyond these two landmarks, the details of homes, the estates of the great houses, fortifications for the training and housing of soldiers, and stores for vendors are all community-specific.

The drow don't bother lighting some sections of their cities at all. Their 120-foot darkvision is, given the cramped confines and limited lines of sight in these underground communities, more than sufficient for them to function normally. In fact, it gives the drow a distinct advantage over other races in their cities, since the slaves and merchants of many surface races have no darkvision at all, and most underground races cannot see as far in the dark as the drow can. In those areas that other races frequent, such as markets, or in those rare locations where line of sight extends beyond 120 feet, the drow make use primarily of magical light sources. Torches and lanterns see use on an occasional basis, but they are not viable in regular practice, because the smoke and soot accumulate dangerously fast in all but the largest caverns.

For a sample drow community, see Chapter 7, which details the infamous city of Erelhei-Cinlu.

ECONOMY

The drow economy consists of three separate yet inextricably intertwined systems of exchange, each of which is largely specific to a particular social and political caste.

When dealing with drow of a lower station, such as when a matriarch or priestess purchases goods from a vendor, the race makes use of coinage—just as do most surface dwellers. Gold, silver, and other precious metals have roughly the same buying power in drow communities as they do elsewhere, though the rate of exchange varies somewhat based on available metals, scarcity of resources, and the mood of the drow doing the shopping. The drow rarely mint their own coins, preferring to make use of foreign monies brought in by outside traders or taken in raids on other races. On those rare occasions when they do mint coins, the results are exceptionally plain, either totally unadorned or stamped with the signs of Lolth and/or the house who produced them. The drow also use coins when trading with others, unless the foreigner has something of particular interest to sell.

Although one low-ranking drow might use coins to purchase goods or services from another low-ranking drow, the standard form of exchange between relative equals is a system of barter. A swordsmith might offer the neighboring baker a new blade in exchange for a few weeks' worth of bread. A cleric might heal a wounded soldier, if the soldier in turn agrees to kill someone to whom the cleric owes a debt. A priestess might perform a marriage ceremony in exchange for several barrels of fine lichen wine and a *potion of invisibility*. At the upper levels of society, drow might trade slaves, individually or by the dozens, in exchange for exotic animals, valuable works of art, or access to a fertile mushroom farm.

The third practice, common only among the drow elite, is the exchange of favors. This system creates a web of debts and obligations that often stretches across the entirety of the house and church leadership, frequently binding drow to complete strangers by only one or two "steps." A typical agreement of this sort might resemble the following: "If you ally with me to prevent the Matron of House Inlindl from gaining control of the northern trade route, I will owe you a great favor in exchange." The interesting thing about this system of boons is that drow actually prefer to pay off their debts as soon as possible. For a drow, having too many obligations hanging over one's head is tantamount to political and social suicide. She cannot afford to directly challenge anyone to whom she owes a great favor, for fear of that favor being called in and ruining one of her ongoing schemes. Additionally, high-caste drow often trade favors to third parties, meaning that a matriarch might find herself suddenly obligated to someone with whom she would never willingly have cooperated, or even someone she doesn't know. One might imagine that the drow would simply ignore these commitments, but despite their selfish nature, very few actually do so. They know that if they refuse to acknowledge a legitimate debt, word will spread swiftly and nobody will deal with them in the future. They might even find the other houses turning against them, seeking to eliminate the threat to the system and the status quo.

Not even enlightened self-interest is always enough to keep the drow honest, so a wise dark elf making one of these deals often demands the exchange of promise tokens. These are small baubles or pendants, often made of silver, that are engraved with the symbol of the drow's family or house. They are often also marked invisibly, such as with the *arcane mark* spell. If a drow refuses to honor a debt, the creditor might present the promise token as evidence of the arrangement when besmirching her name and seeking redress. Of course, it's not impossible to fake a promise token, but their frequent usage does make renegeing on a debt—or making one up—somewhat difficult.

APPEARANCE

The drow closely resemble surface elves in terms of physical build, though they are often even slimmer. Some appear wiry, muscled like a gymnast, and others are truly slender, sometimes to the point of gauntness. They boast the same pointed ears and almond-shaped eyes as other elves, though their features are slightly more refined and attractive than those of

their surface cousins. Additionally, the drow's constant pursuit of physical perfection has bred a lot of the flaws—but also a lot of variety—out of the race.

All drow have black skin. This is not the dark hue common to some humans, but true black, the color of onyx or pure darkness. Skin tone varies only slightly from individual to individual, perhaps appearing a shade lighter on one, or faintly violet-tinged on another when viewed under very bright light; in any case, these distinctions are both subtle and rare. The drow show a little more variety in their hair color. Stark white is most common by far, but other pale shades such as light gray, silver, platinum blonde, and even the occasional faint golden blonde exist as well. Some male drow (roughly one in ten) are capable of growing facial hair, and often wear elaborate mustaches and/or goatees. Most drow wear their hair long, though many soldiers choose to crop it—or, in rare cases, to shave bald—to avoid providing easy handholds for the enemy.

Eye color varies about as much as hair: Red, white, purple, green, and gold all appear with roughly equal frequency (red being, perhaps, slightly more common than the others).

Adult drow range from 4-1/2 to 5-1/2 feet tall and weigh between 85 and 130 pounds. Females are usually slightly taller and heavier than males, though the differences are minuscule enough, on the average, to be hardly noticeable.

DROW RACIAL TRAITS

- +2 Dexterity, +2 Intelligence, +2 Charisma, –2 Constitution.
- Medium size.
- A drow's base land speed is 30 feet.
- Darkvision out to 120 feet.
- Immunity to *sleep* spells, +2 racial bonus on Will saves against spells, spell-like abilities, and enchantment effects of other sorts.
- Spell resistance equal to 11 + class level.
- Spell-Like Abilities: Drow can use the following spell-like abilities once per day: *dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*. Caster level equals the drow's class level.
- Weapon Proficiency: A drow is automatically proficient with the hand crossbow, the rapier, and the short sword.
- +2 racial bonus on Listen, Search, and Spot checks. A drow who merely passes within 5 feet of a secret or concealed door is entitled to a Search check to notice it as if she were actively looking for it.
- Automatic Languages: Common, Elven, Undercommon. Bonus Languages: Abyssal, Aquan, Draconic, Drow Sign Language, Gnome, Goblin.
- Light Blindness: Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.
- Favored Class: Wizard (male) or cleric (female).
- Level adjustment +2.
- Challenge Rating: Drow with levels in NPC classes have a CR equal to their character level. Drow with levels in PC classes have a CR equal to their character level +1.

CLOTHING

If the drow are known for anything as much as their cruelty, cunning, and selfishness, it is their penchant for dressing in ways that other races would find revealing at best and positively scandalous at worst. In point of fact, only a portion of drow dress in such a provocative manner, and it has less to do with sensuality than it does with yet another show of social dominance.

Drow notions of modesty are, essentially, defensive. Clothing is a protection, not merely against temperature and the environment, or (in the case of armor) against attack, but also against a perception of weakness. A drow who is not physically perfect dresses to hide her flaws, lest her rivals humiliate her or even take advantage of her shortcomings in combat.

Thus, drow who feel they have more to hide dress in greater amounts of clothing. Those who are confident in their physical appearance, or who are powerful enough personally and politically that they do not fear public mockery, dress in far less. Even though it's not always accurate to say that the skimpiness of a drow's clothing correlates directly with that drow's social standing,

such does frequently prove to be the case. On the other hand, a drow slave might dress scantily because that is what his master demands, so it is never safe to make assumptions.

Of course, though drow fashion does not have its roots in sexuality, that doesn't mean the drow ignore its sexual repercussions. Powerful drow females are well aware of the effect they have on males—both drow and others—and are more than willing to use sensuality and seduction to their advantage. To the drow, physical attraction and even intimacy are more tools in their arsenal. The drow are attracted to physical perfection and to strength—as well as to political and social power—meaning that those drow who feel safe dressing provocatively are the ones more likely to attract an interested mate anyway. This combination of scanty dress and drow aesthetics often leads others to believe that the race as a whole is wanton and sexually indiscriminate, when in fact most drow are particular about those with whom they choose to become intimate.



Like other races, drow dress differently as a mark of status

The specific nature of drow garb is based primarily on what resources the Underdark makes available. Fabrics like those used by surface races are largely unknown in the lightless depths below. Most drow garments consist of gossamerlike materials made of webbing, fabrics composed of mushroom fibers or animal hair, metal or bone buttons and buckles, and—most commonly—leather. Leather is the favored material because it is the most readily available, and because it provides the greatest degree of protection and strength. Web-based

garments are restricted primarily to the wealthy, and are often partly transparent—these provide little protection or modesty, but rather serve exclusively as a surface on which to hang jewels and other adornments.

All but the most flimsy and transparent of drow clothing contains at least one small concealed pocket or compartment, in which the wearer can hide a weapon, emergency funds, poison, spell components, or some other secret item. Since many powerful drow wear little at all, they

have become quite creative in positioning these secret pockets, often sliding items between layers of leather or positioning them high on the back, beneath the hair.

Roleplaying Application: Moderate how you dress based on your physical abilities—or at least your perception of your physical abilities. This attitude doesn't in any way make you foolish. You dress functionally, first and foremost, protecting yourself as needed against weather, the environment, or injuries in combat. When no such defenses are necessary, however, your sense of fashion might well shock your companions, and might even stir social trouble in other communities until you learn local mores and customs of modesty.

GROOMING

Drow are scrupulous groomers—yet another symptom of their obsession with strength, perfection, and dominance. Those capable of doing so make use of cantrips and other magical means to keep themselves clean and blemish-free. Those without access to such tools use strong soaps made from mildly

acidic fungi, scrubbing themselves with fistfuls of webbing, coarse animal hair brushes, or even pumice.

Combs made of bone, precious metals, or the mandibles of large spiders are commonly used for hair maintenance. Most drow wear their hair straight or held back by a simple tiara or hairpins, but some prefer elaborate braids. (It is not uncommon for drow to use hairpins sharp and strong enough to double as stilettos, or even to make use of small wands as hairpins.) The wealthy use alchemical liquids to clean their teeth, swishing them about as food particles and dead skin are dissolved away, while the poor use picks and brushes made of tiny lengths of bristly spider hair.

Because they are often at their most vulnerable when bathing, the drow often bathe with groups of family members, or have (relatively) trusted servants assist them.

LANGUAGE

It surprises many foreigners to learn that the drow do not have their own language. Rather, they speak Undercommon and various dialects of Elven that (though clearly the same language) are different in accent, tone, and nuance from surface Elven. There are many theories as to why the drow haven't developed their own unique language. One hypothesis is that, due to their long life span, they haven't been separate from other elves long enough for their language to more thoroughly evolve. Alternatively, the drow inability to cooperate reliably in large groups might have prevented them from developing their own terminology.

Despite this fact, drow communication is often initially confusing to others, since the drow use Elven and Undercommon interchangeably, frequently switching back and

FIRST ROLL

d%	Result
01–30	Roll once on Prefixes table and once on Suffixes table.
31–70	Roll once on Prefixes table and twice on Suffixes table.
71–90	Roll once on Prefixes table and once on Suffixes table for a first name, then once on Prefixes table and once on Suffixes table for a second name.
91–100	Roll once on Suffixes table, add an apostrophe, then roll once on Prefixes table and twice on Suffixes table.

PREFIXES

d%	Prefix	Meaning
01	Adin	Awaken, Awakening
02	Ak	Hidden
03	Al	Blade
04	Am	Beauty, Beautiful
05	Ang	Valuable
06	Aun	Tooth, Mandible
07	Balt	Stone
08	Bar	Courage, Fearless
09	Bel	Jailor, Warden
10	Bri	Small
11	Cha	Commander, Leader
12	Chess	Scholar
13	Cir	Bolt, Quarrel
14	Daug	White, White-Haired
15	Dhaun	Danger, Hazard
16	Din	Hunting Lizard
17	Div	Ghost, Stealthy
18	Dris	Ranger
19	Durd	Curved, Crescent
20	Ec	Matriarch, Mistress
21	El	Green
22	Elk	Blue
23	Elv	Water
24	Er	Rothé
25	Faer	Champion
26	Fil	Dark, Dark One
27	Gel	Swift, Winged
28	Ghaun	Slayer

29	Gul	Predator
30	Hael	Free, Unstoppable
31	Houn	Tireless
32	Il	Obscured, Unseen
33	Ilm	Invisible
34	Im	Lookout, Scout
35	In	Vanguard
36	Ir	Variant of "Im"
37	Ist	Master (as in master of a craft, not one who leads)
38	Jhael	Magician, Spellcaster
39	Jhan	Magic, Mystical
40	Jhul	Treasure
41	Kal	Dragon
42	Kel	Wind, of the Wind
43	Kren	Earth, of the Earth
44	Lael	Of the Night
45	Les	Light (specifically the glow of certain fungi)
46	Lir	Queen, Ruler
47	Lual	Conundrum, Puzzle
48	Ma	Death
49	Mal	War
50	Min	Daughter
51	Molv	Burning, Fire, of Fire
52	Myr	Priestess
53	Nal	Ancient, Old One
54	Nath	Bastion, Bulwark
55	Nul	Variant of "Nal"
56	Nym	Deep
57	Ol	Sister (as in an organization or cause, not a relative)
58	Om	Companion
59	Or	Brother (as in an organization or cause, not a relative)
60	Pell	Scribe
61	Phae	Shadow
62	Phar	Alien, Foreign
63	Qil	Poet
64	Quar	Archer, Sniper
65	Qew	Patience, Patient
66	Rauv	Ceiling (not the ceiling of a building, but the top of a cavern, the "sky" of the drow)

67	Rel	Travel, Traveler
68	Rik	Spear
69	Ryl	Mithral
70	Sab	Nimble
71	Shi	Cat, Feline
72	Shri	Hunter (connotatively one who works through ambush)
73	Shyn	Water, of the Water
74	Sol	History, Memory
75	Tal	Sword
76	Tar	High, Up
77	Tath	Prepared, Ready
78	Teb	Low, Down
79	Tlu	Truth
80	Tri	Column, Pillar, Support
81	Tsa	Skilled
82	Ulv	Wizard
83	Um	Cold, Emotionless, Frigid
84	Url	Illusion, Illusionist
85	Val	Finger or Hand
86	Vic	Heir, Successor
87	Vier	(This does not translate into an English word. It refers to one who takes full advantage of peace to prepare for the next war.)
88	Vlon	Ice
89	Vor	Doorway, Passage
90	Waer	Watcher
91	Welv	Seeker
92	Wo	Oracle, Seer
93	Xu	Weaver
94	Xul	Demon
95	Yas	Irresistible
96	Yaz	Demanding
97	Zak	Noble, Royal
98	Zar	Variant of "Zak"
99	Zeb	Cook, Quartermaster; One Who Prepares
100	Zil	Musical (implies not only beautiful to listen to, but believable; a good liar)

forth in the middle of a conversation—or even the middle of a sentence—if they feel that one language conveys the proper nuance or emphasis better than the other. Additionally, when creating new terms for objects, creatures, or other items not covered by either existing language, they often combine the grammatical and phonetic rules of both. The result is that the drow frequently speak a pidgin combination of the two tongues that might, generations in the future, form the basis of an actual drow language.

On those rare occasions when they speak with surface elves, the drow customarily refuse to speak Elven, despite their fluency in the language. They prefer forcing the surface-dwellers to learn and understand Undercommon—yet another small sign of dominance.

DROW PHRASEBOOK

The following phrases and idioms, common to drow culture, make use of both Elven and Undercommon. Drow PCs might wish to use these where appropriate, using either the actual Elven/Undercommon or the English translation, as they prefer.

Inorum lo'athi, uvrastes. “In darkness, there is opportunity.” This, one of the greatest of drow axioms, admonishes them to always be on the lookout for the advantage.

Su lidos verith. This phrase literally translates as “Only the strong survive,” but it has a different connotation from that phrase as used by humans. When used by the drow, this expression reverses cause and effect: It might more accurately be translated as “Those who survive are strong.”

Resilsh nielquosthos nilt resilsh. “Help unasked for is never help.” (Alternative translation: “Help freely offered is not

SUFFIXES

d%	Suffix	Meaning
01	-ae (-aen)	Whisper
02	-agh	Strong
03	-ala (-alan)	Organized
04	-an (-anam)	Make, Maker
05	-ana	Create, Creator
06	-anis	Terrifying
07	-ant	Great
08	-ao (-aol)	Messenger
09	-arra (-arral)	Hot-blooded, Temperamental
10	-as	Bow, Fletcher
11	-aste	By, With
12	-auf	Commander
13	-aun (-aum)	Consort, Spouse
14	-brak	Craft, Crafter
15	-car (-cari)	Bridge, Emissary
16	-daer	World
17	-dan	Cavern
18	-de (-deln)	Eternal
19	-dra	Grace, Graceful
20	-dril	Crawl, Crawler (implies mobility, like a spider)
21	-e	Of
22	-ee	Of (implies higher birth than “e”)
23	-ein	First
24	-el (-ell)	Spy
25	-eld	Patient
26	-en	Bearer, Bringer
27	-esril	Drow, of the Drow
28	-eth	Potent
29	-ey	Clever, Shrewd
30	-fay (-fal)	Lake, Pool
31	-fein	Vengeance, Vengeful
32	-gar	Wise
33	-gol	Grief
34	-gos	Unbound
35	-idl	Rise, Rising
36	-iir	Darkness, Sleep
37	-il (-iln)	One who holds another in debt
38	-in	Relative (any)
39	-int	Relative (close)
40	-ira	One who arrives with darkness
41	-irin	Dream, Dreamer
42	-iss	Parchment, Scroll
43	-ist (-isn)	Sister (Brother)
44	-ith	Quick-Thinking, Smart
45	-iv	Observant
46	-klyr	Silence, Silent
47	-lau (-laul)	Mistress (Master)
48	-lav	Ambitious, Passionate
49	-li (-lim)	Daughter (Son)
50	-lice	Poison, Toxic
51	-lith	(This does not translate into an English word. It refers to the assumed innate superiority of the drow over other races, and of female drow over male.)
52	-loth	of Lolth
53	-lyn (-llyn)	Bolt, Ray
54	-mir (-min)	Bond, Obligation, Promise
55	-mma (-nma)	Mage
56	-mys	Ally (implies no closer relationship than working toward a common goal)
57	-na	Distant, Far
58	-naf	Reach
59	-nar	Guide, Guidance
60	-nay	Destination
61	-ne	Variant of “-na”
62	-neth	Center, Heart
63	-nim	Rite, Ritual
64	-nol	Beginning
65	-nor	Variant of “-nar”
66	-olg (-ong)	Gate, Gatekeeper
67	-onia (-onin)	Keeper
68	-or	Growth, Plant
69	-phrin	Spectral, Spiritual
70	-qel	Forgotten, Lost
71	-qos	Chant, Chanting, Song, Singing
72	-ra (-ran)	Beast
73	-rae	Hunter
74	-raen	Tracker
75	-rath	Arcane
76	-ri (-rin)	Walker, Walks
77	-ry	Footsteps, Trailblazer
78	-ryn (-ryl)	Noble
79	-shal	Rise, Steep
80	-ston	Fist
81	-tlar	Armor, Protection
82	-ton (-tom)	Soldier
83	-tra	Wall
84	-tre	Ward (mystical)
85	-ue (-uel)	Sacred
86	-uit	Abyss, Abyssal
87	-ul	Of the Temple
88	-une	Art, Artist
89	-uth	Lance
90	-va	Fortune, Fortunate
91	-ve	Enduring
92	-vir (-virl)	Mother (Father)
93	-vol	Blood, of the Blood
94	-vra	Vicious
95	-ya	Variant of “va”
96	-yas	Success, Successful
97	-yl (-ym)	Better, Superior
98	-yn	Higher, Larger
99	-yr	Careful, Cautious
100	-za	Electricity, Lightning

free.”) This is a simple admonishment to watch for ulterior motives.

Arenas Lolthu, nilos dulhar. “Before Lolth, all are weak.” A common religious invocation, but also a maxim that essentially means “Nobody is perfect.” Often used as an excuse for one’s own failure, or as a backhanded way of mocking another drow for failing.

Nilodi orhasitho shiorell e farul. Literally, “Weakness is the spawn of contentment and affection.” This is a common drow admonishment against growing too happy with one’s station, or too fond of the people who share it.

Artolth nilat unelte nilt peralath. “A spider without a web is no hunter.” One who goes unprepared into any endeavor cannot expect, and does not deserve, success.

DROW NAMES

Although a drow’s own name is of vital importance to her, parents are often relatively careless in assigning names to their offspring. Thus, many drow choose to take on a new name upon reaching adulthood.

The random name generator presented here is intended to demonstrate a range of potential name choices. Feel free to invent your own names using from the table entries.

Each drow name consists of a prefix and one or more suffixes. If a suffix’s use differs based on the gender of the drow, the standard form is considered the feminine, and the masculine is given in parentheses.

DROW SIGN LANGUAGE

Initially developed as a series of quick signals and commands for use by military bands sneaking through enemy territory, the drow system of signs has developed into a complex language all its own. Though it is not as varied or expressive as most spoken languages, it is capable of conveying a surprising array of complex concepts in a relatively short time.

The meaning of a word is indicated by the patterns formed by the hands and fingers. Tense and subject/object links are conveyed through the precise angle of the hands from the “speaker,” and emphasis and emotion are conveyed through facial expression and body language. This makes Drow Sign Language difficult to interpret if one is not the intended recipient.

Interestingly enough, many of the hand and finger motions of Drow Sign Language are exceedingly close to those that make up the fundamental basis of arcane somatic components. It is unclear whether this was a deliberate choice back when the language was first being developed, or was simply a natural outgrowth of the fact that many drow are arcanists and were most comfortable with those motions.

The drow have a written version of Drow Sign Language that consists of simple dot-and-line arrangements that vaguely imitate the positions of the hands and fingers. This pictographic script is less detailed and comprehensive than the sign language on which it is based, but it is more than sufficient to convey essential information, such as a warning about a hazard or directions for a following column of soldiers.

DROW AND OTHER RACES

No other sentient race considers the drow to be friends. They stand alone in the world, and would have it no other way. Some hate the drow as bitter foes, some fear them as madened slavers and conquerors, and some simply resent them for being . . . different.

The drow, in turn, feel a racewide disdain for all non-drow, seeing them as inferior beings good only as slaves or sacrifices.

Although they look down on other races, the drow aren’t idiots. Their disdain and hatred is, where appropriate, moderated by an understanding of the abilities of the race in question. The drow might view the illithids as an inferior race, but that doesn’t mean they don’t acknowledge the dangers a community of mind flayers can pose. The drow are even willing to work with other races when necessary, if doing so brings them closer to a goal or if open conflict would be too devastating for the drow community to survive.

ABOLETHS

The drow aren’t entirely sure what to make of the aboleth. When it comes to other humanoid or arachnoid races, the dark elves can, at least to an extent, envision what it is they want, and what they can offer the drow as slaves or victims. The aboleths, however, have alien patterns of thought and rule an aquatic environment in which the drow have neither the interest nor the ability to function. If circumstances were different, the drow would be content to simply ignore the presence of aboleth entirely.

Unfortunately for the drow, the aboleths take their slaves and minions from the same races the drow seek to conquer, and even from the drow themselves. Accustomed to their power to intimidate their foes, the drow are disconcerted when faced with aboleth minions, who are often so thoroughly magically dominated that they feel no fear of anything. Further, the notion of becoming a slave to such a horrific being, of having their free will stripped and their opportunities to advance stolen, fills the drow with intense dread. Thus, they avoid the aboleths when they can, negotiate agreements to stay out of each other’s way where possible, and—when conflict becomes inevitable—strike fast, strike hard, and then run like hell.

ARANEAS

The drow see the araneas as betrayers of Lolth. Some believe the araneas are like driders—a race of beings that were formerly drow, until they were hideously transformed for failing the Spider Queen. Others maintain that the araneas were Lolth’s first attempt at creating life, before she hit upon the perfect design that became the drow. Whatever a given drow believes, however, she knows that the araneas do not now worship the Weaver of Webs, making them weak-minded fools as well as traitors.

Still, the drow make use of aranea abilities when they can. Powerful drow constantly seek aranea slaves, and offer prime treasures or even political favors to those who provide them. Others are willing to swallow their bile and hire or cooperate with an aranea to achieve a particular goal, frequently planning to betray the creature afterward.

For their part, the araneas hate the drow with a blazing fury uncommon to these relatively passionless creatures. They resent the drow's innate assumption of superiority, as well as their tendency to make slaves of the araneas when they can and to slaughter them when they cannot. Still, the araneas are selfish beings, and if the offer is good enough, they will work with the drow as readily as they will with others.

DRIDERS

The ultimate symbols of Lolth's whim, these hybrid horrors long shared a mutual loathing with their drow relatives. The drow viewed them as worthless beings, failures in the eyes of Lolth and reminders of the drow's own fallibility. The driders, in turn, despised those who drove them from their former homes, stripping them of any possibility of advancement in the society from which they came. The best a drider could hope for, if it was unfortunate enough to encounter the drow after its transformation, was a quick death. More often, enslavement or torture was the result.

In recent years, however, this attitude has begun to shift, particularly within the current generation of up-and-coming drow. Breaking free of the shackles of tradition, and seeking advantages their forebears would never consider, these drow have taken stock of drider abilities. Their transformation might have been a punishment from Lolth, but it also grants them substantial physical and mystical power. Is it possible that while Lolth was castigating an individual, she was also granting a favor to the community as a whole? That a drow who proved too weak on his own could be a workable tool for other drow strong enough to seize and wield it?

These drow have made overtures to the exiled driders, offering them an opportunity to belong once again. Obviously, they cannot regain their prior status and can never be considered the equal of true drow, but they can fill the roles of favored servants and agents, with powers and privileges greater than other non-drow in the community. The driders, of course, are greatly suspicious of this sudden shift in attitude, but a few have taken the drow up on the offer—and found it, in many cases, preferable to eking out a lone and savage existence in the wilds of the Underdark. Should this pattern continue, mem-

bers of the younger generation of drow might find themselves at the head of sizable bands of driders, eagerly champing at the bit for a chance at revenge against the entrenched drow power structure that drove them out.

DUERGAR

The drow consider the duergar slow, weak-willed, and unimaginative, while the duergar think of the drow as undisciplined, temperamental, and intrusive. Moreover, the dark elves and the gray dwarves frequently compete for territory, making conflicts between the two relatively common. Although the drow emerge victorious from a majority of these encounters, it is a majority only by the slimmest of margins. They have been forced, almost despite themselves, to recognize the military abilities of the duergar. Their rigid thought patterns, combined

with their stamina, make them favored slaves of the drow. For their own part, however, the duergar rarely take drow slaves, seeing them as uncontrollable and preferring instead to kill them outright.

ELVES

Utter loathing. Absolute, searing, indomitable hatred. The drow despise other elves with a passion almost unimaginable by other (saner?) races. Some drow raids on surface communities have no other purpose than to slay elves, and a drow will go out of her way—sometimes even endangering an ongoing agenda—to harm an elf. Drow rarely take elf slaves, preferring to kill them on sight or offer them as sacrifices to Lolth, and on the rare occasions they do take an elf as a slave, it is often for no greater purpose than regular abuse and torment.

The elves, of course, return this hatred in equal measure. Being more inclined to good, they rarely make a deliberate effort to find drow to fight. When the drow make themselves available, however, the normally peaceful elves are more than happy to nock their arrows and unsheathe their blades. The elves' antipathy for orcs, or the dwarves' hatred for goblins, is as nothing compared to the burning abhorrence these cousins feel for one another.



A few young drow have begun to cooperate with the driders, but much animosity and suspicion remains

HUMANS

The drow don't have a unified opinion on humanity. This is the only species the dark elves find as unpredictable as themselves. The short human life span and lack of innate mystical abilities inclines the drow to think them weak, but they also recognize that humans are more adaptable to environments and circumstances than any other humanoids. Perhaps because of that life span, many of them are truly dedicated to a cause or a deity—equals of the drow's most fervent Lolth-worshippers. But others are easily swayed by promises of wealth and power. (The drow, naturally, prefer to deal with the latter type.) Humans make some of the best slaves, but they are also among the most difficult to control and frequently require execution before they can be worked to death.

The drow consider humanity a young race, and some worry what humans might accomplish if they are allowed to grow into the wisdom and experience currently possessed by some of the longer-lived species. Their solution, of course, is to either destroy or enslave the race before that happens.

ILLITHIDS

If the drow fear any race as thoroughly as the aboleths, it must be the mind flayers. The illithids are almost as alien, and they too threaten the drow with the most horrific of fates: the complete loss of personal identity and control. Even a drow who is a slave to another drow has, if she is clever, the potential to advance her position. A drow mentally bound to a mind flayer, however, is nothing but a husk, and possibly an eventual meal. As strong as their self-preservation instinct is, most drow prefer death to such a fate.

That said, the drow do more frequently come into contact with the illithids, because the two races sometimes compete for territory. This rivalry often results in raids and skirmishes, but on various occasions these races have found reason and methods for cooperating with each other. The mind flayers sometimes advise the drow, and use their powers to keep otherwise unruly drow slaves docile and under control. In exchange, the drow offer the illithids crafted items and slaves the drow no longer need, on whom the illithid can feed. These arrangements are often shaky, each side viewing the other with intense distrust. Neither race wants all-out war, however. The drow fear their fates at the hands (and tentacles) of the illithids, while the mind flayers recognize that the drow are heavily resistant to many of their mental abilities.

The illithids, it should be noted, do not view the drow as much more valuable than any other nonillithid race. So far as they are concerned, the drow must and will eventually be enslaved and consumed, just like everyone else. They're simply prepared to leave the drow for last.

OTHER SUBTERRANEAN RACES

So far as the drow are concerned, every other underground race is a nuisance: a competitor for space and resources. The only difference is whether or not a race can prove useful. Several drow communities have, at times, worked hand-in-claw with the kuo-toa, so the drow avoid taking too many of that strange race as slaves—at least for the time being. They find nonduergar dwarves intractable, and though they make slaves

of them when they can, they often prefer simply to exterminate them. The same holds true for *svirfneblin* (deep gnomes) and kobolds, who are too physically frail to make good workers, though drow do sometimes take them alive for entertainers or messenger slaves. The dark elves favor the use of orcs and grimlocks as slaves, when this is possible. Accustomed to life underground, quite strong, and not overly intelligent, they make the perfect soldiers and manual laborers.

Again, the drow aren't idiots: They know better than to fight a war on multiple fronts, or to take on an obviously superior opponent. They refrain from bothering plenty of non-drow communities (or at best make only the occasional stealthy raid), and are even willing to engage in trade and commerce with gnomes, kobolds, and the like, if such is the best way for their community to thrive. Inevitably, however, they seek ways to turn these situations to their advantage, and grow strong for the day when conquering their neighbor becomes a viable possibility.

OTHER SURFACE RACES

When the drow think of other surface races at all, they dismiss them as worthless nuisances. They consider gnomes to be flighty dabblers in powers far beyond their control, goblins to be foolish brutes (albeit valuable as slave labor), and halflings to be pests of the highest order who should be slaughtered on sight. Even though the drow are willing to take slaves from anywhere, they do not go out of their way to take prisoners from these surface races, as they do from those who dwell in the depths. If some are foolish enough to wander below, or if they get in the way of a drow surface raid, then yes, they'll find themselves spitted on a drow blade, strapped to an altar of Lolth, or wearing the brand of a drow owner—but for the most part, the drow have more important concerns than what these foolish creatures are doing hundreds and thousands of feet above them.

Roleplaying Application: Whether or not you hold the racial attitudes common to your people is a major aspect of your personality. If you do, these beliefs certainly drive your behavior when dealing with members of other races. If you do not, why? Have you seen or experienced something that convinced you of the error of drow racial opinions? And if so, do you hide your beliefs from other drow, or have you taken the (dangerous) step of trying to convince others of their mistakes?

DROW TACTICS

As mentioned above, drow avoid direct confrontation when they can. They prefer lightning raids, ambushes, sabotage, and assassination to battlefield combat. In their eyes, the best battle is not merely one in which they were victorious, but in which the enemy never had a chance to strike back. Two primary factors drive this philosophy, which is common to almost all drow military minds despite the race's individualistic nature.

First, these techniques allow the drow a far greater chance of victory. Like all elves, drow lack the physical hardiness and Constitution of other races. They tire more swiftly, and they can be slain more easily. Assuming equal skill and equal numbers, the drow are at a disadvantage in a drawn-out, straightforward melee. In addition, their *darkness* ability

allows them to sow chaos and confusion, opening up the perfect opportunity to launch a surprise assault, and their high range of darkvision combined with their heightened Dexterity makes sniping a most attractive option.

The second and more influential factor is the drow instinct for self-preservation. Every enemy that is cut down without the chance to strike back means one less blade, bow, or spell that might take the life of a drow. The drow are not necessarily cowards, but they are absolutely and ruthlessly pragmatic. The notion of honorable combat or a fair fight is alien to most of them, and those who have been introduced to the concept find it both repellent and foolish. Any tactic that offers the drow a chance at victory with minimal danger to themselves is worth considering, no matter how brutal, horrific, or convoluted it might be. And, as always, although a commander would rather sacrifice her non-drow minions than other drow, she happily sacrifices other drow to protect her own life.

Although the specifics vary by community and circumstance, traditional drow tactics frequently involve one or more of the following elements.

Minions: The drow prefer to let others do their fighting for them, and the average “drow army” consists of only a few actual drow in officer and special operative positions. The remainder is composed of minions, hired soldiers, and slaves, from orcs to troglodytes, goblins to humans. The drow make use of these minions primarily as foot soldiers to overwhelm the enemy, and as disposable fodder to absorb spells and attacks that might otherwise threaten the drow themselves. The drow respect a military mind skilled enough to return with the bulk of her army intact, but no particular stigma is attached to losing many or even most of one’s non-drow soldiers. Throwing them away unnecessarily is considered wasteful, but no more so than disposing of ammunition or other supplies.

When possible, the drow prefer to make use of their minions’ racial advantages. Orcs and bugbears, for instance, are used as shock troops in situations when their great strength can come into play. Duergar and other dwarves are used as the vanguard after long marches, or as protection for other forces, taking full advantage of their resilience. Goblins and kobolds make excellent scouts, while hobgoblins are frequently assigned to special operations or even made subcommanders beneath drow officers.

Whatever the case, these creatures can all be certain of one thing: Where a dangerous enemy lurks, it is they, and not their officers, who will feel the brunt of its attacks.

Beasts: Although less popular than humanoid slaves, other beasts of burden and war make frequent appearances in drow battle tactics. The most common of these are, unsurprisingly, monstrous spiders. The drow train them to ambush specific targets, or even to serve as mounts, in the case of some larger specimens. Entire orders of drow knights train in techniques of mounted warfare that take full advantage of the spiders’ ability to walk on any surface at a consistently high speed.

Other techniques gaining popularity include the use of rothé or giant lizard stampedes—with mounted drow on strategically placed beasts throughout the herd—and, in a few instances, the use of elite squads mounted on Large (advanced) basilisks. These specially bred creatures are fitted with leather

head coverings that include red crystal lenses over the eyes. These lenses are not, in and of themselves, sufficient to blot out their petrifying vision. The drow who ride them, however, wear full-head helms with green lenses in the visors. The color combination creates an opaque brown that blocks line of sight, and thus renders the riders safe from the gaze attacks of their mounts. The drow either shatter their petrified opponents, or carry them back home where they can be restored by priestesses or wizards and then put to work as slaves.

Blitz Attacks and Swift Retreats: Whether it’s a lightning raid on a surface community, a group assassination, or an unavoidable direct battle, the drow prefer to strike hard, strike fast, and then vanish. Prolonged confrontation is the worst possible military situation for them. When possible, they have specific goals laid out in advance—often assigning objectives to individual operatives and groups—and they remain on the field only as long as they must to accomplish those goals, or until it becomes clear that they cannot.

At least, this is the theory. In practice, the pride and arrogance of many drow prevents them from declaring an operation a failure and aborting when they should, leading to precisely the sort of prolonged battle they wished to avoid. Wise and experienced drow, however, know that their best bet is to attempt to crush the opposition with a single overwhelming or strategically placed strike, and then withdraw whether or not they succeeded.

It is during these retreats, either when an objective has been achieved or the drow commander has decided an attack has failed, that many of the non-drow soldiers are sacrificed. Drow frequently order units to remain behind and continue fighting, as if they were still working toward a particular goal. This tactic not only covers the escape of the officers, it often prevents the enemy from realizing that the battle, so far as the drow are concerned, has ended.

As the drow see it, military and political assassination is just another form of this “quick strike” philosophy. Remove an enemy’s command structure, and you’ve removed his ability to mount a coordinated war effort. The drow make every attempt to identify enemy leaders, and they deliberately target them both in combat and for assassination off the battlefield.

Poison: The drow are known far and wide for their use of poisons, and it is a skill they have elevated to a cultural art form. The drow rarely, if ever, poison the weapons of their non-drow soldiers, reserving such advantages for themselves.

Among adventurers, the drow are most well known for their sleep poisons, which they use to coat the bolts of their hand crossbows. This is a favored tactic of sentinels; however, the drow rarely employ it in full-scale war, preferring more reliable and deadly techniques. Only if an objective specifically involves taking a target alive do they bother with sleep poisons in military operations.

Spells: Every drow fighting force worth its salt contains at least a few wizards, clerics, or other casters. Although the precise nature of the spells used varies, the drow would no sooner consider going to war without spells than they would without swords or armor. Drow war-casters rarely bother with spells whose function is to take out a single foe, unless they expect to face a lone champion. They prefer spells to hide, protect, or strengthen their

own troops (thus making them more effective), or area spells to obliterate many of the enemy at once. A favored drow tactic is to drop Will-based area effects onto crowds that include both the enemy and other drow, counting on the drow combination of spell resistance and superior Will saves to protect them.

Contingency Plans: All good drow soldiers, particularly officers and spellcasters, head into battle with a contingency plan already in mind. In some cases, this might be an alternate scheme of attack, but at the very least it involves an escape route of some sort. Even if the main strategy involves force, these contingencies usually rely on deception or misdirection. A drow might disguise herself as a member of another race, the better to blend in with her non-drow soldiers. She might order her soldiers to continue fighting to cover her own getaway even when an objective has been obtained or a mission has failed. The most favored drow methods for escape involve magics, from the simple *teleport* or *contingency* to elaborate ruses that involve leaving dead *clones* behind.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The drow are partial to tactics that take advantage of their racial traits and abilities, while minimizing exposure of those areas where they are weakest. As mentioned above, this approach inclines them to make full use of ranged attacks while avoiding melee, but their tactics are certainly more specific and sophisticated than this simple predilection.

The majority of drow warriors specialize in combat styles that accentuate their heightened Dexterity, rather than relying on brute force. Two-weapon fighting and related feats are quite common, as is the use of Weapon Finesse. For extra versatility, drow employ weapons that can be used either in melee or at range. When melee combat is unavoidable, drow prefer to focus their own attacks on spellcasters (particularly arcanists), leaving the heavy fighters for their subordinates and minions. The drow know that sorcerers and wizards die faster and are ineffective with melee weapons (minimizing the physical resistance they can mount), while their spells are at least potentially countered by the drows' own resistances.

Even though none of their racial spell-like abilities are innately offensive in and of themselves, the drow have developed multiple tactics for taking advantage of them.

Dancing Lights: The dark elves' favorite use of *dancing lights* is to confuse enemy sentinels' attempts to calculate the size of a drow force. When cast at random intervals during camping or troop movement, the torchlike effects make it difficult for observers to determine exactly how many campfires or lanterns—and thus how many soldiers—a unit contains.

A less common but far more valuable use of *dancing lights* is to send coded messages over great distances. By causing the balls of light created by the spell to move up and down or blink out in particular patterns, the drow can create signals "written" in the scripted form of their sign language. This is a particularly effective means for officers to pass messages and coordinate efforts in combat.

Of course, should all else fail, the drow can use their *dancing lights* to provide illumination for soldiers and slaves who lack their masters' ability to see far in the darkness.

Darkness: If the drow have sufficient time to prepare for an attack, they often set up pitfalls, caltrops, green slime, and other impediments along the enemy's most likely route. They further cloak these areas through the use of their *darkness* ability. At the very least, the foe must slow down or expend precious spells to safely traverse those areas, and sometimes the extra darkness causes the foe to stumble directly into danger. When these hazard-strewn areas of *darkness* are interspersed with darkened but perfectly safe regions, the enemy cannot afford to ignore any of them.

Drow also make a practice of using *darkness* on crossbow bolts or other ammunition, and then launching the projectiles into the ranks of enemy archers or spellcasters. Although the drow firing the weapon at an opponent within the radius of the effect has her normal miss chance, this is hardly a problem when the objective is simply to place the missile somewhere amid a group of foes. The enemy, on the other hand, then suffers the miss chance when attempting to strike back against the drow.

Faerie Fire: In addition to the obvious uses of this spell—negating invisibility and outlining targets for soldiers with weaker darkvision—the drow have developed several other tactical purposes. Drow scouts and spies are often assigned to identify and locate enemy commanders and spellcasters. Then, as the bulk of the drow-led forces approach, these scouts use *faerie fire* to "paint" the target. This technique not only gives the soldiers an easy and obvious target, it permits them to begin a bombardment of missiles and spells earlier than their own darkvision or the ambient lighting might normally allow.

One additional tactic, which only functions against foes not especially familiar with magic, involves combining the use of *dancing lights* and *faerie fire*. First, the drow use the humanoid-shape option of *dancing lights* to make sentries believe that someone or something is approaching, drawing them away from their posts and possibly allowing drow operatives to slip by. After several instances, the guards likely become aware that the glowing figures are simple illusions and begin ignoring them. At this point, a drow cloaked in a *faerie fire* spell—and thus, from a distance, appearing to be just another of the *dancing lights* effects, if of a different hue—can potentially draw near enough to deliver a sudden attack before the guards realize what's happening.

The drow, for the most part, loathe the fact that their race has innate weaknesses that counterbalance some of their advantages. One of the main reasons they employ non-drow shock troops is because they know that they are usually less hardy than their opponents. They do not worry overmuch about mind-affecting spells—even if the magic penetrates their spell resistance, they are incredibly strong-willed creatures—but they fear the results should damaging or transformative magics break through their resistance. Thus, most drow spellcasters, and those who can afford powerful magic, make at least some attempt at using magic to counter these particular weaknesses. Constitution-boosting and saving throw-boosting items are relatively common among those who engage in battle on a regular basis. So, too, are items that provide for the possibility of a sudden escape when the situation turns bad. (See Contingency Plans, above.)

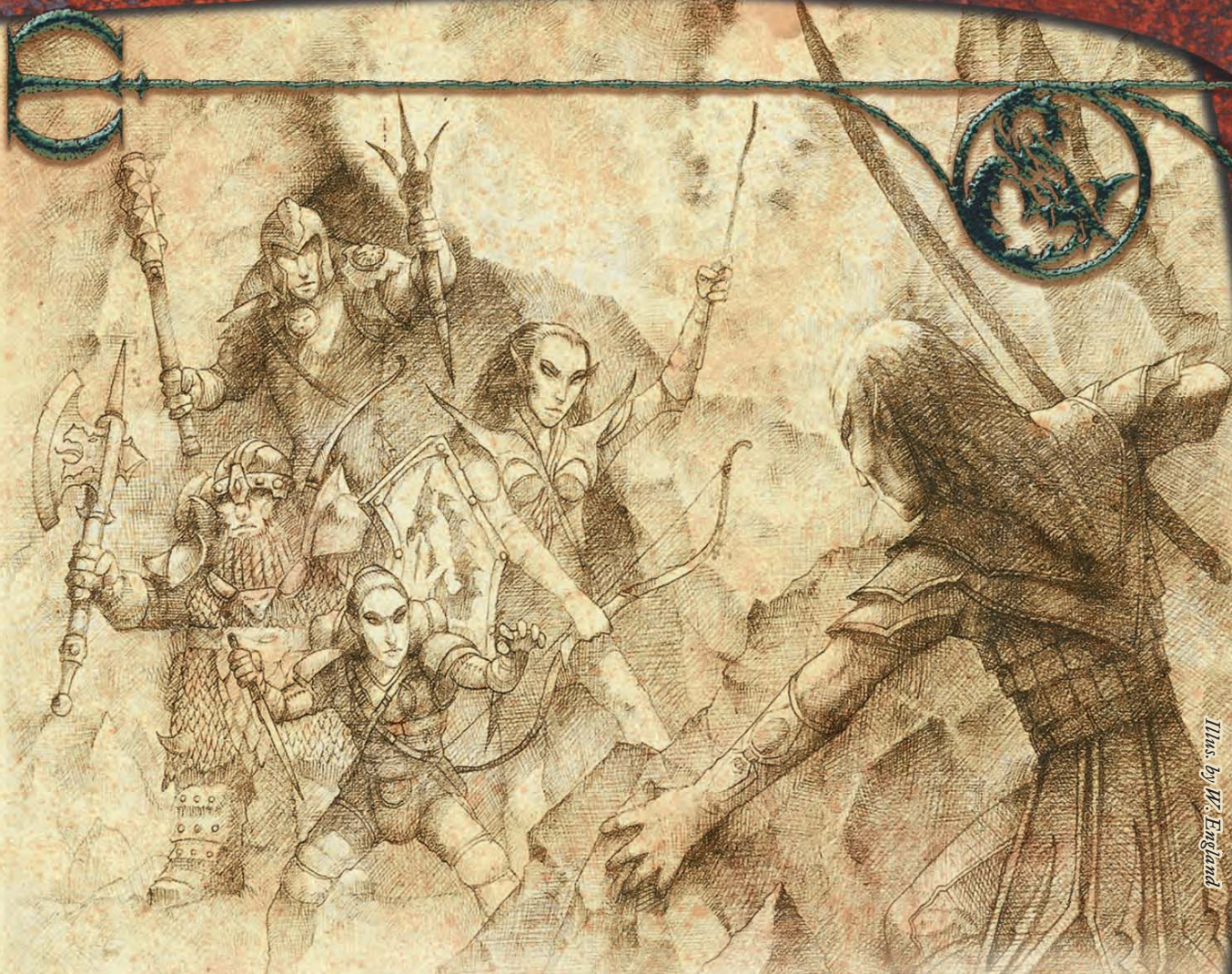


Illustration by W. England

The Underdark is home to ancient creatures, depraved cultures, and hazards that can snuff out the lives of any creatures unfortunate enough to stumble across them. The drow have developed techniques to respond to these many threats. This chapter explores the options available to drow characters, presenting new uses for skills, new feats, alternative class features, and new spells and invocations.

SKILLS

Innovation allows dark elves to make do with the scarce resources of the Underdark, finding new ways to manufacture common goods and to deal with the day-to-day needs in their civilization.

BLUFF (CHA)

Given the unique form of Drow Sign Language, some dark elves learn to incorporate elements of the complex language into normal body movements.

Delivering a Secret Message: You can substitute Dexterity for Charisma when making Bluff checks to deliver a secret message, if you and the recipient are both fluent in Drow Sign Language.

CRAFT (INT)

Drow artisans make do with what they have. Many materials that the surface races take for granted are rare in the Underdark, if they are present at all. Drow raiders do steal much from the surface world, but transporting significant quantities of wood, grains, and other finished materials is simply not practical. The scarcity of resources means that drow must turn to nontraditional materials to provide themselves with life's necessities. Vegetable fibers such as cotton and flax are all but unknown in drow society; fiber extracted from woody fungi or leather is more commonly used. Thus, drow can substitute other materials they have on hand when attempting Craft checks.

The most well-known examples of drow-created items are the poisons and alchemical substances that are found only in their society. Chapter 4 provides extensive information about these special substances. Included here are DCs and costs for creating alchemical items and drow poisons.

Alchemical Item	Craft (alchemy) DC	Cost
Bile droppings	15	50 gp
Darkvision powder	20	10 gp
Dwarfblind stone	25	50 gp
Shedden	20	75 gp
Spelunker's oil	20	15 gp
Stoneburn acid	22	10 gp
Vilegrip	25	50 gp

Poison	Craft (poisonmaking) DC	Cost
Darklight brew	28	1,500 gp
Fish glue	18	100 gp
Illithid mindscorch	27	1,000 gp
Psychotropic rot	17	125 gp
Roach paste	15	50 gp
Underdark blight	20	300 gp

Magic-Infused

Poison	Craft (poisonmaking) DC	Cost
The calling	28	2,000 gp
Creeping nullscourge	25	1,000 gp
Slow taint	18	300 gp
Slowswarming	21	1,200 gp
Swarming spiderbite	26	1,800 gp

Craft (Poisonmaking): The amount of raw materials needed to manufacture poison depends on the general availability of the active ingredient. If a supply is readily available, the raw materials cost one-sixth of the poison's market price. Otherwise, the raw materials cost at least three-quarters of the market price (though only if the substance is for sale). Multiply your check result by the poison's DC to determine the value in gp of poison you create. When the total equals or exceeds the market price of one dose, that dose is finished. (Depending on the check result, you might be able to create more than one dose at a time). If you fail the check by 4 or less, you make no progress, and if you fail by 5 or more, you ruin half the raw materials and have to buy them again.

HANDLE ANIMAL (CHA)

Vermin are vital to the drow. On one hand, they are creatures sacred to Lolth, expressions of her perfect divine form. On the other, they are abundant, and with the proper training, they can serve as guardians, soldiers, and even steeds.

Since vermin are mindless creatures, they don't learn as other animals do. Instead, they must be "programmed" by a trainer, who encodes a desired pattern of behavior that the creature reproduces under a specific set of circumstances. This technique is beyond the capabilities of most animal handlers, and only characters with the Vermin Trainer feat (see page 53) or with access to a similar ability—such as that granted by the vermin keeper^{Und} prestige class can train vermin.

Even with the required feat, handling and training mindless creatures has associated challenges. The larger the vermin, for example, the harder it is to control—thus, when making a Handle Animal check to handle or train a vermin, apply the creature's special size modifier to the check DC.

Vermin Size	Handle Animal DC Modifier
Medium or smaller	+0
Large	+2
Huge	+5
Gargantuan	+10
Colossal	+15

Vermin can learn up to three tricks or one general purpose that encompasses no more than three tricks. Some vermin

have a special quality that enables them to learn more than others of their type ordinarily could. It is impossible to push a vermin. Additionally, vermin are never deemed "wild animals" and thus cannot be reared.

In addition to the tricks described in the *Player's Handbook* and elsewhere, drow commonly teach the following tricks to their vermin servants.

Ambush (DC 20): The vermin makes a Hide check and waits for a creature to come near it. When a target passes beneath it or comes within 10 feet, the vermin attacks.

Bestow Venom (DC 15): By succeeding on a DC 15 Handle Animal check to handle a vermin that has a poison special attack, you can compel the vermin to give up some of its venom. The creature deposits its poison into a container you indicate, providing a single dose. A Handle Animal check to extract venom takes 1 minute. You can then attempt a DC 15 Craft (poisonmaking) check to refine this venom into a poison you can use.

Web (DC 15): On command, a web-spinning vermin shoots a web at the closest hostile creature.

SPEAK LANGUAGE

Drow Sign Language is unlike any other language. A complex harmony of gestures, facial expressions, and body language, it is all but impossible to comprehend by those not fluent in the "tongue." Though it lacks a vocal component, Drow Sign Language is otherwise like any other language, with a robust vocabulary and even a written form. This script, however, is as unusual as the "spoken" form of the language. Consisting of symbols that illustrate the proper hand motions with emphasis marks to indicate other physical gestures, it might be overlooked by those unfamiliar with the tongue, and interpreted as just more of the whorls and patterns that decorate drow settlements.

Spellcasting: Drow Sign Language cannot be used as part of a spell's verbal component.

However, as pointed out in Chapter 1, Drow Sign Language is quite similar to the somatic gestures used to cast arcane spells. An arcane spellcaster who is fluent in Drow Sign Language gains a +2 bonus on Spellcraft checks made to identify a spell being cast (if it has a somatic component), and increases by 2 the Spellcraft DC to identify any of her spells as she casts them (whether or not those spells have somatic components).

Dancing Lights: Drow Sign Language relies on sight to transmit messages—and is usually used when underground—so it is largely ineffectual when directed at those out of darkvision range. To compensate for the challenges imposed by their native environment, the drow have learned to manipulate their innate ability to use *dancing lights* to communicate over longer distances.

To use this ability, a drow must use *dancing lights* and make a successful DC 15 Spellcraft check (or DC 20 for complex messages). As with Bluff, if the Spellcraft check fails by 4 or less, the drow can't get the message across. Failure by 5 or more indicates that false information is communicated.

NEW FEATS

The drow use special tactics in combat, favoring techniques that incapacitate their foes rather than kill them. The reason is simple: They harvest slaves from the ranks of their fallen enemies. The drow do kill, certainly, but indiscriminate slaughter is a waste of a good labor source.

AT HOME IN THE DEEP

Your innate power over the darkness extends to your senses.

Prerequisite: *Darkness* as a spell-like ability, darkvision.

Benefit: You can see through the shadowy illumination created by a *darkness* spell as if the spell weren't there.

This ability doesn't apply to other spells that have the darkness descriptor.

BLEND INTO SHADOWS

You can draw from nearby magical shadow to cloak yourself in darkness.

Prerequisite: *Darkness* as a spell-like ability.

Benefit: As a swift action, you can spend a use of your *darkness* spell-like ability to make a Hide check, even while being observed and without cover or concealment. You must be within 10 feet of an area of magical *darkness*.

You also gain one additional daily use of your *darkness* spell-like ability.

CAUTIOUS ATTACK

When you take your time in combat, you quickly assess the flow of battle to respond rapidly to threats.

Prerequisite: Wis 13, Dodge.

Benefit: Whenever you ready a standard action to attack, you gain a +1 dodge bonus to AC. This bonus lasts until you take the readied action, or until the start of your next turn, whichever comes first.

CHOSEN FOE

At the expense of attention to other distractions, you focus on a single opponent to give you a decided advantage while fighting against him.

Benefit: Once during your turn as a free action, you can designate a single opponent. You gain a +1 insight bonus on attack rolls made against that opponent and a +1 insight bonus to AC against attacks made by that opponent.



Using his Constant Guardian feat, a male drow tries to protect a female from harm

In exchange, you take a –2 penalty on attack rolls against other creatures and a –2 penalty to AC against attacks made by other creatures.

The bonus and penalty last until the start of your next turn.

Special: A fighter can select Chosen Foe as a fighter bonus feat.

CLEVER OPPORTUNIST

When an unwary opponent gives you an opportunity, you use it to change positions with your foe.

Prerequisite: Combat Reflexes.

Benefit: If you hit a creature of your size or smaller with an attack of opportunity, you can spend an immediate action to exchange places with that creature.

Both you and the target must be able to move into and legally occupy the new space in order for this feat to function. For example, an incorporeal character inside a solid object couldn't exchange places with a corporeal character, nor could a nonflying creature exchange places with an airborne flying creature.

Special: A fighter can select Clever Opportunist as a fighter bonus feat.

COERCIVE SPELL [METAMAGIC]

Living foes damaged by your spell become more pliable and vulnerable to your commands.

Benefit: You can alter a spell that deals damage to foes so that any living creature dealt damage by the spell takes a –2 penalty on Will saves for 3 rounds.

Penalties from multiple coercive spells do not stack. A coercive spell uses up a spell slot one level higher than the spell's actual level.

CONSTANT GUARDIAN

By paying careful attention to nearby allies and reducing the accuracy of your attacks, you help protect your companions.

Benefit: Once during your turn as a free action, you can take a –2 penalty on your attack rolls to grant a single ally within 10 feet a +2 dodge bonus to Armor Class. This effect lasts until the start of your next turn or until you are more than 10 feet from the chosen ally, whichever comes first.

Special: A fighter can select Constant Guardian as a fighter bonus feat.

TABLE 2–1: NEW FEATS

General Feats	Prerequisites	Benefit
At Home in the Deep	Darkness spell-like ability, darkvision	You can see through darkness spells
Blend into Shadows	Darkness spell-like ability	Spend darkness use to hide in plain sight
Cautious Attack	Wis 13, Dodge	Gain +1 AC while readying an attack
Chosen Foe	—	Gain +1 attack and AC against single foe
Clever Opportunist	Combat Reflexes	Spend immediate action to exchange places with foe
Constant Guardian	—	Take –2 penalty on attacks to grant +2 to AC for single ally within 10 feet
Dutiful Guardian	Constant Guardian	Exchange places with attacked ally
Dazzling Fire	Faerie fire spell-like ability	Faerie fire dazzles subject
Radiant Flicker	Dazzling Fire, faerie fire spell-like ability	Use faerie fire to grant target concealment
Deceptive Illumination	Dancing lights spell-like ability	Use silent image as a spell-like ability
Fade into Darkness	Darkness spell-like ability	Use darkness to gain +5 bonus on Hide checks
Fascinating Illumination	Dancing lights spell-like ability	Use hypnotic pattern as a spell-like ability
Gift of the Spider Queen	Drow	Invoke various effects by sacrificing two or three of your daily spell-like abilities
Hand Crossbow Focus	Proficiency with hand crossbow, base attack bonus +1	+1 bonus on attack rolls with hand crossbow; reload as free action
Imperious Command	Cha 15, Intimidate 8 ranks	Demoralized opponent cowers for 1 round, then shaken for 1 round
Instinctive Darkness	Darkness spell-like ability	Use darkness as an immediate action; no attack of opportunity
Intensify Darkness	Darkness spell-like ability	Use darkness to cast deeper darkness
Master of Poisons	—	Apply poison as a swift action and with no chance of poisoning yourself
Master of Shadow	Drow	Gain one extra use of <i>dancing lights</i> , <i>darkness</i> , <i>faerie fire</i>
Paralyzing Fists	Wis 15, Improved Unarmed Strike, Stunning Fist	Multiple Stunning Fist attacks paralyze instead of stun
Poison Spell	—	Add poison to a melee touch spell as though it were a weapon
Psychic Refusal	Spell resistance, Iron Will	SR increases by 4 against mind-affecting spells and effects
Reactive Resistance	Spell resistance	Lower SR as immediate action
Sadistic Reward	Evil	Deal damage to living creature to gain +1 on saves for 1 round
Shadowborn Warrior	Blind-Fight, Dodge	+2 initiative, +1 AC when in shadows or darkness
Spiderfriend Magic	—	Your spells don't affect vermin allies
Staggering Critical	Improved Critical, base attack bonus +12	Critical hit slows target for 1 round
Surprising Riposte	Int 13, Combat Expertise, Improved Feint	Feinted target that takes damage becomes flat-footed
Vermin Trainer	Drow, Handle Animal 4 ranks, Knowledge (religion) 4 ranks	Train vermin creatures
Knight of Lolth	Ride 1 rank, Mounted Combat, Vermin Trainer	Gain various advantages when mounted on monstrous vermin
Spider Companion	Vermin Trainer, animal companion	Gain monstrous spider as companion
Verminfriend	Drow	Cha check to prevent vermin from attacking you
Versatile Combatant	Dex 15, proficiency with rapier and hand crossbow	Reduced penalties for fighting with rapier and hand crossbow; hand crossbow attacks don't provoke attacks of opportunity
Metamagic Feats	Prerequisites	Benefit
Coercive Spell	—	Creatures damaged by spell take –2 penalty on Will saves
Deafening Spell	—	Creatures damaged by spell are deafened for 1 round
Umbral Spell	—	Spell gains darkness descriptor

DAZZLING FIRE

The illumination you can bestow on others impedes their ability to fight.

Prerequisite: *Faerie fire* as a spell-like ability.

Benefit: When you use *faerie fire* as a spell-like ability, you can choose also to render the target of the *faerie fire* effect dazzled for its duration.

You also gain one extra daily use of your *faerie fire* spell-like ability.

Ambush Feats	Prerequisites	Benefit
Gloom Strike	Sneak attack +3d6, darkness spell-like ability	Trade 2d6 sneak attack damage to impede target's vision for 3 rounds
Sickening Strike	Sneak attack +2d6	Trade 1d6 sneak attack damage to sicken living target for 1 round
Terrifying Strike	Intimidate 4 ranks, sneak attack +2d6	Trade 1d6 sneak attack damage to render foe shaken for 1 round
Venomous Strike	Poison use, sneak attack +2d6	Trade 1d6 sneak attack damage to increase poison DC by 2
Divine Feats	Prerequisites	Benefit
Divine Intercession	Turn or rebuke undead, Travel or Trickery domain	Spend three rebuke attempts to teleport 30 feet
Lolth's Boon	Rebuke undead, drow or Lolth as patron deity	Spend two rebuke attempts to grant vermin temporary hit points and +2 damage
Lolth's Caress	Rebuke undead, drow or Lolth as patron deity	Spend rebuke attempt to force saves against poison's secondary effect
Profane Agony	Rebuke undead, Death or Destruction domain	Spend rebuke attempt to damage, sicken living foe within 30 feet
Vile Feats	Prerequisites	Benefit
Unspeakable Vow	—	+2 profane bonus on Intimidate checks
Vow of Decadence	Unspeakable Vow	Control effects of drugs, +4 competence bonus on Fort saves against ingested poison
Vow of the Spider Queen	Caster level 6th, rebuke undead, Unspeakable Vow, Verminfriend	See feat description
Vow of Vengeance	Unspeakable Vow	+2 on damage, +4 on critical confirmation rolls against chosen creature.
Weapon Style Feats	Prerequisites	Benefit
Aleval School	Spellcraft 2 ranks, Weapon Finesse, base attack bonus +4, sneak attack +2d6 or sudden strike +2d6	Sacrifice 1d6 sneak attack damage to apply -2 penalty on one save
Despana School	Power Attack, Weapon Focus (light mace, heavy mace, or warmace), base attack bonus +5, ability to cast any summon monster spell	Gain advantages when fighting alongside a monster you summoned
Eilservs School	Spellcraft 2 ranks, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (quarterstaff), base attack bonus +6	Deal extra damage with magic staff, and cast staff spell as swift action against foe you've hit
Inlindl School	Int 13, Combat Expertise, Shield Proficiency, Weapon Finesse	Give up shield bonus to AC for bonus on attacks
Shi'Quos School	Dex 13, Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack, base attack bonus +6	When charging or spring attacking from higher elevation, you can knock foe prone
Steal and Strike	Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (rapier), Weapon Focus (kukri)	Gain free attack when you successfully disarm opponent
Tormtor Style	Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (javelin), base attack bonus +6	Make melee attack and ranged attack with javelin d in the same round
Vae School	Int 13, Combat Expertise, Improved Trip, Weapon Focus (spiked chain or whip), base attack bonus +7	Free trip attempt when you damage a flat-footed or flanked foe with spiked chain or whip
Xaniqos School	Dex 13, Dodge, Mobility, Point Blank Shot, Shot on the Run, base attack bonus +6	"Charge" with crossbow to deal +1d6 points of damage; reloading doesn't provoke attacks of opportunity

DEAFENING SPELL [METAMAGIC]

You can modify a spell so it deafens targets.

Benefit: You can alter a spell that deals damage to foes so that any living creature dealt damage by the spell is also deafened for 1 round.

The effects from multiple deafening spells do not stack. A deafening spell uses up a spell slot one level higher than the spell's actual level.

DECEPTIVE ILLUMINATION

Your innate power to create mobile light is far more precise than others'.

Prerequisite: *Dancing lights* as a spell-like ability.

Benefit: You can spend a daily use of your *dancing lights* spell-like ability to cast *silent image* instead. The illusion lasts for 3 rounds after you cease concentration, but otherwise functions exactly as the spell. Your caster level equals your class level.

You gain one extra daily use of your *dancing lights* spell-like ability.

DUTIFUL GUARDIAN

You put yourself into harm's way to protect your allies.

Prerequisite: Constant Guardian.

Benefit: Whenever the beneficiary of your Constant Guardian feat is attacked, you can take an immediate action to instantly exchange places with that character.

Both you and the ally must be able to move into and legally occupy the new space in order for this feat to function. For example, an incorporeal character inside a solid object couldn't exchange places with a corporeal character, nor could a nonflying creature exchange places with an airborne flying creature.

FADE INTO DARKNESS

By precisely controlling the shadows around you, you render yourself unseen.

Prerequisite: *Darkness* as a spell-like ability.

Benefit: You can spend a daily use of your *darkness* spell-like ability as a standard action to gain a +5 competence bonus on Hide checks for 10 minutes per caster level.

This ability does not function in areas of bright illumination.

You also gain one extra daily use of your *darkness* spell-like ability.

FASCINATING ILLUMINATION

The lights you create have the power to hypnotize others.

Prerequisite: *Dancing lights* as a spell-like ability.

Benefit: You can spend a daily use of your *dancing lights* spell-like ability to cast *hypnotic pattern* instead. Your caster level equals your class level.

You also gain one extra daily use of your *dancing lights* spell-like ability.

GIFT OF THE SPIDER QUEEN

You can combine your racial spell-like abilities in new and potent ways.

Prerequisite: Drow.

Benefit: As an immediate action, you can activate any of the following spell-like abilities (using your class level as your caster level). You spend one daily use of each spell-like ability used in this combination.

Curtain of Darkness: You can expend one daily use of *dancing lights* and *darkness* to extinguish all nonmagical light sources within 100 feet. This is not a magical darkness effect; the fires (or other sources, such as sunrods) simply go out. This ability

does not function on any flame larger than that of a torch or lantern, so it cannot be used to extinguish a burning building or as a defense against fire used as a weapon. This is the equivalent of a 2nd-level spell.

Mirror Image: You can expend one daily use of *dancing lights* and *faerie fire* to use *mirror image* (as the spell, except you gain only 1d4 images).

See Invisibility: You can expend one daily use of *darkness* and *faerie fire* to use *see invisibility* (as the spell, except the duration is only 1 round per caster level).

Blinding Vanish: You can expend one daily use of *dancing lights*, *darkness*, and *faerie fire* to disappear in a blinding flash of light. All creatures within a 20-foot-radius burst are blinded for 1 round; a successful Fortitude save (DC 14 + your Cha modifier) reduces the effect to dazzled for 1 round. In addition, you become invisible (as the *invisibility* spell, except the duration is 1 round per caster level).

HAND CROSSBOW FOCUS

Your hand crossbow attacks gain accuracy and speed.

Prerequisite: Proficiency with hand crossbow, base attack bonus +1.

Benefit: You can reload a hand crossbow as a free action.

You also gain a +1 bonus on attack rolls with a hand crossbow. This bonus does not stack with the bonus from Weapon Focus, but it is the equivalent of Weapon Focus for the purpose of qualifying for feats, prestige classes, and anything else that requires the feat.

Special: A fighter can select Hand Crossbow Focus as a fighter bonus feat.

IMPERIOUS COMMAND

You strike deep and abiding terror in your foes.

Prerequisite: Cha 15, Intimidate 8 ranks.

Benefit: If you successfully demoralize a foe in combat, the foe cowers in fear for 1 round and is shaken in the following round.

INSTINCTIVE DARKNESS

After extensive training, you can negate light instinctively.

Prerequisite: *Darkness* as a spell-like ability.

Benefit: You can use your *darkness* spell-like ability as an immediate action. This does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

You also gain one extra daily use of your *darkness* spell-like ability.

Normal: Using *darkness* requires 1 standard action and provokes attacks of opportunity.

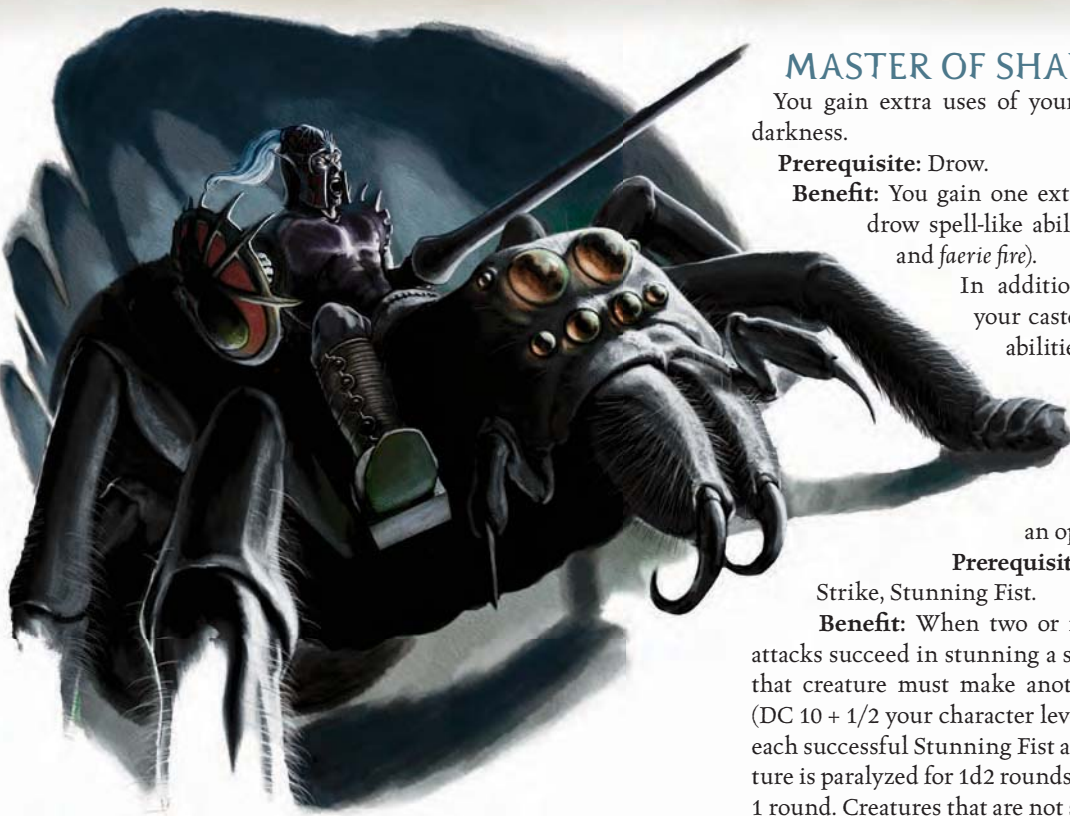
INTENSIFY DARKNESS

By extending your effort, you can expand the area of your *darkness* spell-like ability.

Prerequisite: *Darkness* as a spell-like ability.

Benefit: If you spend a full-round action to use your *darkness* spell-like ability, you create *deeper darkness* instead.

You also gain one extra daily use of your *darkness* spell-like ability.



The Knight of Lolth feat makes a spider-rider more than the equal of any surface-dwelling mounted warrior

KNIGHT OF LOLTH

You have mastered techniques of waging war when mounted on a monstrous spider (or similar vermin).

Prerequisite: Ride 1 rank, Mounted Combat, Vermin Trainer.

Benefit: When riding monstrous vermin, you do not need to make any rolls or checks to remain mounted if your mount travels across walls or ceilings (though if you take damage when on a wall or ceiling, the DC of the check to remain mounted is 10 rather than 5).

When your monstrous vermin mount makes a charge attack, you can spend a standard action to grant it a bonus on the attack roll and damage roll equal to 1/2 your base attack bonus.

Normal: Riding a creature clinging to a wall or ceiling would require various checks depending on circumstances.

MASTER OF POISONS

You are highly trained and adept in the use of toxic substances.

Benefit: You can apply poison or oil to a weapon as a swift action, without provoking attacks of opportunity. In addition, you never risk accidentally poisoning yourself when applying poison to a weapon.

Normal: Applying poison or oil to a weapon is a standard action that provokes attacks of opportunity. When applying poison to a weapon, you have a 5% chance of accidentally poisoning yourself.

MASTER OF SHADOW

You gain extra uses of your drow powers of light and darkness.

Prerequisite: Drow.

Benefit: You gain one extra daily use of each of your drow spell-like abilities (*dancing lights*, *darkness*, and *faerie fire*).

In addition, you gain a +2 bonus to your caster level with these spell-like abilities.

PARALYZING FISTS

You can make multiple unarmed attacks to paralyze an opponent in a single round.

Prerequisite: Wis 15, Improved Unarmed Strike, Stunning Fist.

Benefit: When two or more of your Stunning Fist attacks succeed in stunning a single foe in the same round, that creature must make another Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + 1/2 your character level + your Wis modifier +1 for each successful Stunning Fist attack). On a failure, that creature is paralyzed for 1d2 rounds instead of being stunned for 1 round. Creatures that are not subject to extra damage from critical hits and creatures that are immune to stunning cannot be paralyzed in this manner.

Special: A fighter can select Paralyzing Fists as a fighter bonus feat.

POISON SPELL

You can mystically transfer a poison to the target of your spells.

Benefit: You can add a contact or injury poison as a material component to a melee touch spell you are casting. Doing this entails the same risk of poisoning yourself as applying poison to a weapon (DMG 296).

The target of the spell, in addition to being subject to the normal effects of the spell, is also exposed to the poison. (A melee touch spell must deal damage to deliver the effect of an injury poison.)

The dose of poison used as the component is expended when you cast the spell, whether or not the spell or poison successfully affects the target.

PSYCHIC REFUSAL

Spells that target your mind have difficulty penetrating your defenses.

Prerequisite: Spell resistance, Iron Will.

Benefit: You gain a +4 bonus to spell resistance against mind-affecting spells and abilities.

RADIANT FLICKER

You cloak yourself or another with a nimbus of flickering, bewildering light.

Prerequisite: Dazzling Fire, *faerie fire* as a spell-like ability.

Benefit: You can spend a daily use of your *faerie fire* spell-like ability as a standard action to grant the target concealment from all melee attacks instead. This effect lasts for 1 round per caster level.

You also gain one extra daily use of your *faerie fire* spell-like ability.

REACTIVE RESISTANCE

Through extensive practice and meditation, you can lower your spell resistance quickly.

Prerequisite: Spell resistance.

Benefit: You can lower your spell resistance as an immediate action. It returns to normal at the start of your next turn.

Normal: Lowering spell resistance for 1 round is a standard action.

SADISTIC REWARD

Your mind and body are fortified by harming others.

Prerequisite: Evil.

Benefit: If you deal damage to a living creature, you gain a +1 morale bonus on saves for 1 round.

SHADOWBORN WARRIOR

You are adept at fighting in darkness.

Prerequisite: Blind-Fight, Dodge.

Benefit: Whenever you begin combat within an area of darkness or shadowy illumination, you gain a +2 insight bonus on initiative checks.

When in concealment granted by darkness or shadow, you gain a +1 dodge bonus to AC.

Special: A fighter can select Shadowborn Warrior as a fighter bonus feat.

SPIDER COMPANION

Instead of an animal, you bond with a monstrous spider.

Prerequisite: Vermin Trainer, animal companion.

Benefit: You can select a monstrous spider as your animal companion. This spider gains all the benefits normally granted to animal companions.

At 1st level, you can select a Tiny, Small, or Medium monstrous spider as your spider companion. A druid of sufficiently high level can select a more powerful creature as her spider companion, applying the indicated adjustment to the druid's level (in parentheses) for the purpose of determining the spider companion's characteristics and special abilities.

Spider	Minimum Level (Adjustment)
Large	4th (-3)
Huge	10th (-9)

Normal: Spiders are not available as animal companions.

SPIDERFRIEND MAGIC

Your spells cannot harm your vermin allies.

Benefit: Your spells have no effect against vermin allies (but affect vermin enemies normally).



A drow warrior bestride his Huge spider companion

As a swift action, you can suppress the effect of this feat for 1 round.

STAGGERING CRITICAL

Your critical hits leave your opponents reeling.

Prerequisite: Improved Critical, base attack bonus +12.

Benefit: When you confirm a critical hit with a weapon for which you have the Improved Critical feat, the target is also *slowed* for 1 round.

Special: A fighter can select Staggering Critical as a fighter bonus feat.

SURPRISING RIPOSTE

Through deft maneuvering, you unravel your opponent's defenses.

Prerequisite: Int 13, Combat Expertise, Improved Feint.

Benefit: If you deal damage to an opponent in the same round that you successfully feinted against it, it becomes flat-footed. This effect lasts 1 round or until the opponent's next turn, whichever comes first.

Opponents that can't be caught flat-footed, such as characters who have uncanny dodge, cannot be affected by Surprising Riposte.

Special: A fighter can select Surprising Riposte as a fighter bonus feat.

UMBRAL SPELL [METAMAGIC]

You add the darkness descriptor to a spell you cast.

Benefit: You can alter a burst-, emanation-, or spread-shaped spell so that it gains the darkness descriptor. The altered spell automatically dispels any spells with the light descriptor of the spell's level or lower whose effects overlap or are within the altered spell's area.

For example, an umbral *lightning bolt* would dispel any ongoing light spell of 3rd level or lower in the area of the line. An umbral spell uses up a spell slot one level higher than the spell's actual level.

VERMIN TRAINER

Your service to the Spider Queen gives you insight into training vermin.

Prerequisite: Drow, Handle Animal 4 ranks, Knowledge (religion) 4 ranks.

Benefit: You can use the Handle Animal skill to handle and train vermin as if they were animals with Intelligence scores of 1.

Normal: Without this feat, only animals and magical beasts with Intelligence scores of 1 or 2 can be handled and trained with the Handle Animal skill, and using Handle Animal on a magical beast is done with a -4 penalty on the check.

Special: The size of vermin directly affects the ability of the trainer to instruct them (see page 46).

VERMINFRIEND

Thanks to your racial connection to their kind, vermin regard you as one of their own.

Prerequisite: Drow.

Benefit: Whenever a vermin is about to attack you, you can attempt a Charisma check (DC 15 + 1/4 the vermin's HD) as an immediate action. If you succeed, the vermin cannot attack you for 24 hours.

If you attack a vermin that has been affected by this feat, you lose the feat's benefit for 24 hours.

VERSATILE COMBATANT

You have learned to combine attacks with the favored weapons of the drow.

Prerequisite: Dex 15, proficiency with rapier and hand crossbow.

Benefit: Whenever you are armed with a rapier in your primary hand and a hand crossbow in your off hand, you are treated as having the Two-Weapon Fighting feat for the purpose of calculating attack penalties.

In addition, you do not provoke attacks of opportunity from adjacent opponents when you make ranged attacks with a hand crossbow.

Special: A fighter can select Versatile Combat as a fighter bonus feat.

AMBUSH FEATS

Ambush feats, introduced in *Dragon Magazine* and expanded upon in *Complete Scoundrel*, allow you to use your sneak attack ability to deal an additional harmful or hindering effect upon an opponent, at the cost of one or more of the extra damage dice you normally deal with a successful hit. You must declare your intent to use an ambush feat's ability before making your attack roll and you must always deal at least one extra die of sneak attack damage with the attack (that is, you can't reduce the number of sneak attack bonus damage dice to 0). You can apply multiple ambush feats to the same attack as long as you still deal at least one extra die of damage with the attack.

Creatures immune to sneak attacks are immune to the secondary effects created by ambush feats. Even if a creature is vulnerable to sneak attacks, if your attack deals no damage to the creature (for example, if it is negated by the creature's damage reduction), the secondary effect doesn't occur.

As noted in *Complete Adventurer*, the sudden strike class feature can be used in place of sneak attack in qualifying for feats. Furthermore, whenever an ambush feat mentions sneak attack, you can substitute sudden strike. The skirmish ability of a scout^{CAD} doesn't count as a sneak attack for the purpose of qualifying for feats, nor may a scout sacrifice skirmish extra damage to gain the benefit of an ambush feat.



Using Versatile Combatant, a drow fighter dispatches a goblin while firing at a distant foe

GLOOM STRIKE [AMBUSH]

Your sneak attacks leave a residue of darkness that clouds your enemy's vision.

Prerequisite: Sneak attack +3d6, *darkness* as a spell-like ability.

Benefit: Your sneak attack creates an aura of magical darkness that impedes your target's vision for 3 rounds. The target takes a -4 penalty on Spot checks and treats all other creatures as having concealment. Neither *darkvision* nor *low-light vision* pierces this effect, though the ability to see through magical darkness does. Any spell with the light descriptor suppresses the effect.

Using this feat reduces your sneak attack damage by 2d6.

SICKENING STRIKE [AMBUSH]

Your sneak attacks leave enemies reeling in pain.

Prerequisite: Sneak attack +2d6.

Benefit: The target of your sneak attack, if it is a living creature, is sickened for 1 round.

Using this feat reduces your sneak attack damage by 1d6.

TERRIFYING STRIKE [AMBUSH]

Your sneak attacks inspire fear.

Prerequisite: Intimidate 4 ranks, sneak attack +2d6.

Benefit: The target of your sneak attack is shaken for 1 round. This effect doesn't stack with any other fear effects, including itself. This is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Using this feat reduces your sneak attack damage by 1d6.

VENOMOUS STRIKE [AMBUSH]

You know where to place your sneak attacks to deliver a highly effective poisoned strike.

Prerequisite: Poison use, sneak attack +2d6.

Benefit: If you are wielding a poisoned weapon as part of your sneak attack, the poison's save DC increases by 2.

Using this feat reduces your sneak attack damage by 1d6.

DIVINE FEATS

The feats in this category share a number of characteristics that restrict them to certain classes or class combinations. First, they all have as a prerequisite the ability to turn or rebuke undead. Thus, they are open to clerics, paladins of 4th level or higher, and members of any prestige class or any creatures with that ability.

Second, the force that powers a divine feat is the ability to channel positive or negative energy to turn or rebuke undead. Each use of a divine feat costs a character a minimum of one turning or rebuking attempt from her number of attempts each day. If you don't have any turn or rebuke attempts left, you can't use a divine feat. Turning or rebuking undead is a standard action (unless you have a special ability that says otherwise). These feats normally take a standard action to activate, but might require other actions as specified. Regardless, you can activate only one divine feat per round, though overlapping durations might allow you the benefits of more than one divine feat at a time.

Third, turning or rebuking undead is a supernatural ability and a standard action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity and counts as an attack. Activating a divine feat is also a supernatural ability and does not provoke attacks of opportunity unless otherwise noted in the feat description. However, activating a divine feat is not considered an attack unless the feat's activation could be the direct cause of damage to a target. Lolth's *Caress*, for example, expedites the secondary effect of poison, but does not directly deal damage to an opponent upon its activation. It is not itself an attack.

DIVINE INTERCESSION [DIVINE]

You can channel divine energy to remove yourself from a dangerous situation.

Prerequisite: Turn or rebuke undead, *Travel* or *Trickery* domain.

Benefit: You can spend three turn or rebuke undead attempts to teleport to any point up to 30 feet away within line of sight. This effect functions as *dimension door*, except that you can't bring along other creatures.

LOLTH'S BOON [DIVINE]

You can channel negative energy to empower vermin.

Prerequisite: Rebuke undead, *drow* or *Lolth* as patron deity.

Benefit: You can spend two rebuke undead attempts as a standard action to unleash a 60-foot-radius burst of divine energy. Each vermin in the area gains temporary hit points equal to its HD, as well as a +2 profane bonus on melee damage rolls. These effects last for 5 rounds.

LOLTH'S CARESS [DIVINE]

You can channel negative energy to accelerate poisonous effects.

Prerequisite: Rebuke undead, *drow* or *Lolth* as patron deity.

Benefit: You can spend a rebuke undead attempt to speed up the effects of poison, affecting all creatures within 20 feet of you. Any poisoned creature in the area that has not yet attempted its saving throw against the poison's secondary effect must do so immediately. (This takes the place of the saving throw at the end of the normal poison duration.)

PROFANE AGONY [DIVINE]

You can channel negative energy to deal terrible pain.

Prerequisite: Rebuke undead, *Death* or *Destruction* domain.

Benefit: You can spend a rebuke undead attempt as a full-round action to channel your deity's displeasure at a single living creature within 30 feet. That creature takes 3d6 points of nonlethal damage and is sickened for 1 round. A successful Fortitude save (DC 10 + one-half your level + your Cha modifier) negates the damage, but not the sickening effect.

VILE FEATS

Introduced in *Book of Vile Darkness*, feats with the vile descriptor are available only to intelligent creatures of evil alignment.

UNSPEAKABLE VOW [VILE]

You willingly give yourself to the service of an evil deity or cause, denying yourself an ordinary life to serve your unspeakable ends.

Benefit: You gain a +2 profane bonus on Intimidate checks.

VOW OF DECADENCE [VILE]

You have taken an unspeakable vow to indulge your every desire, even at the expense of others around you.

Prerequisite: Unspeakable Vow.

Benefit: You cannot overdose when using drugs. If the drug deals variable damage, you always take the minimum amount. If the drug has a penalty that lasts for a variable amount of time, it is always for the minimum time described. In addition, you gain a +4 competence bonus on saving throws against ingested poisons.

Special: To fulfill your vow, you must consume an intoxicating, stimulating, depressing, or hallucinogenic substance at least once per day. If you intentionally abstain, you immediately and irrevocably lose the benefit of this feat. You may not take another feat to replace it. If you break your vow as a result of magical compulsion, or otherwise unintentionally, you lose the benefit of this feat until you perform a suitable penance and receive an *atonement* spell.

VOW OF THE SPIDER QUEEN [VILE]

You have taken an unspeakable vow to further the interests of the Spider Queen at all costs.

Prerequisite: Caster level 6th, rebuke undead, Unspeakable Vow, Verminfriend.

Benefit: This unspeakable vow grants a variety of supernatural benefits, but at a terrible price.

You gain immunity to poison.

When using the Verminfriend feat, you gain a +5 insight bonus on the Charisma check, and you can prevent any single vermin within 30 feet from attacking you. If you succeed, the affected vermin cannot attack you for 24 hours.

Also, you can expend a rebuke undead attempt to rebuke or command vermin. This ability functions like rebuke undead, except that it affects vermin.

Finally, you develop horrid glands in your mouth that allow you to spit a wad of toxic fluid. Your glands produce enough poison to spit a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Con

bonus (if any). Treat this as a ranged touch attack with a range increment of 10 feet. A direct hit deals 1d6 points of acid damage and forces the target to succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 your level + your Con modifier) or take 1d4 points of Strength damage. Ten rounds later, the target must succeed on a second save against the same DC or take an additional 1d4 points of Strength damage. Every creature within 5 feet of the target takes 1 point of acid damage from the splash.

Special: To fulfill your vow, you must not cause

harm to any vermin. You may not deal lethal damage or ability damage to such creatures through spells or weapons, though you can deal nonlethal damage. You may not target them with death effects, *disintegrate*, or other spells that have the immediate potential to cause death or great harm. You also may not use nondamaging spells to incapacitate or weaken vermin so your allies can kill them.

In addition, once per week, you must perform a horrid ritual that involves opening yourself to the maddening presence of the Spider Queen. The ritual takes 8 hours, and at the end of this time you take 1d8 points of Wisdom damage. Wisdom damage can be healed normally.

If you intentionally break this vow or fail to perform the profane ritual, Lolth finds you wanting. If you have 11 or fewer HD, you immediately transform into a *chwidench* (see page 108), becoming a scuttling thing with no memory of your former self. If you have 12 or more HD, you immedi-



Lolth gives special protection to her daughters who have the Profane Agony feat

ately become a drider. In both cases, you automatically lose the benefit of this feat and may not select a new one to replace it. If you break your vow because of magical compulsion, or otherwise unintentionally, you lose the benefit of this feat until you perform a suitable penance and receive an *atonement* spell.

VOW OF VENGEANCE [VILE]

Filled with hate, you have made an unspeakable vow to visit vengeance on those whom you believe wronged you and your people. Whether the affront is real or imagined, you settle for nothing less than the extermination of your enemy.

Prerequisite: Unspeakable Vow.

Benefit: Choose one creature type or subtype from those given on Table 3–14: Ranger Favored Enemies, PH 47. You gain a +2 profane bonus on damage rolls against these creatures, as well as a +4 profane bonus on rolls to confirm critical threats against them.

Special: To fulfill your vow, you must kill at least one creature of the selected type each month. When facing these creatures, you cannot retreat and you must fight until you or all the creatures of your chosen foe are killed. You can take prisoners, but they must die within 1 week of capture.

If you intentionally break any portion of this vow, you immediately and irrevocably lose the benefit of this feat. You may not take another feat to replace it. If you break your vow as a result of magical compulsion, or otherwise unintentionally, you lose the benefit of this feat until you perform a suitable penance and receive an *atonement* spell.

WEAPON STYLE FEATS

Complete Warrior introduced a new category of feats called weapon style feats. They provide a particular benefit that draws upon a number of specific feats and often requires the use of specific weapons.

ALEVAL SCHOOL [STYLE]

You have learned House Aeval's fighting techniques, allowing you to deal damage that weakens your enemy's physical or mental state.

Prerequisite: Spellcraft 2 ranks, Weapon Finesse, base attack bonus +4, sneak attack +2d6 or sudden strike +2d6.

Benefit: When you deal sneak attack or sudden strike damage, you can sacrifice 1d6 points of this extra damage to bestow a –2 penalty on one of the target's three saving throws (your choice) for 1 round.

You can use this feat once per round.

DESPANNA SCHOOL [STYLE]

You have learned House Despanna's fighting techniques, which involve teaming up against an enemy with summoned creatures.

Prerequisite: Power Attack, Weapon Focus (light mace, heavy mace, or warmace), base attack bonus +5, ability to cast any *summon monster* spell.

Benefit: As long as you and a monster you summoned threaten the same foe, you are considered to be flanking that foe even if you don't have an ally on the foe's opposite side.

In addition, once per round you can declare that a melee attack you make with a mace, heavy mace, or warmace^{CW} against a flanked enemy is intended to open the enemy's defenses. You must declare this attempt before you roll your attack, and the attempt is wasted for the round if the attack misses. If the attack hits, your summoned creatures gain a +2 morale bonus on attack rolls and damage rolls against that enemy until the start of your next turn.

EILSERVS SCHOOL [STYLE]

You have learned the fighting techniques of House Eilservs, which utilize magic staves in combat.

Prerequisite: Spellcraft 2 ranks, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (quarterstaff), base attack bonus +6.

Benefit: When you strike a creature with a magic staff, you gain a bonus on damage rolls equal to +1 per 10 charges remaining in the staff (rounded up).

If you strike a foe with both ends of a magic staff in the same round, you can immediately activate one of the spells from the staff as a swift action. The spell must target or be centered either on you or the target struck (or on any corner of your or your target's space, in the case of an area spell).

This feat doesn't let you activate a magic staff that you wouldn't otherwise be able to activate. Staves without charges (such as a simple +1 *quarterstaff*) gain no benefit from this feat.

Normal: Activating a spell trigger item is a standard action.

INLINDL SCHOOL [STYLE]

You have learned House Inlindl's fighting techniques, which focus on using light weapons and shields.

Prerequisite: Int 13, Combat Expertise, Shield Proficiency, Weapon Finesse.

Benefit: At the start of your turn, you can choose to sacrifice your shield bonus to AC in exchange for a bonus on melee attack rolls equal to one-half that bonus. This bonus applies only on attacks made with light weapons (or other weapons to which Weapon Finesse applies). This effect lasts until the start of your next turn.

SHI'QUOS SCHOOL [STYLE]

You have learned the mobile fighting style of House Shi'Quos.

Prerequisite: Dex 13, Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack, base attack bonus +6.

Benefits: If you deal damage with a charge attack or Spring Attack against an opponent at a lower elevation than you, the target also falls prone unless it succeeds on a Reflex save (DC 10 + 1/2 your level + your Dex modifier).

STEAL AND STRIKE [STYLE]

You are a master of the style of fighting that involves using a rapier and a kukri at the same time. With it, you can rob an opponent of its weapon and strike swiftly when it is vulnerable.

Prerequisite: Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (kukri), Weapon Focus (rapier).

Benefit: If you successfully disarm an opponent with your rapier, you can make a free attack with your kukri at your highest base attack bonus.

You can use this feat once per round.

TORMTOR SCHOOL [STYLE]

You have learned House Tormtor's fighting technique from its weapon masters.

Prerequisite: Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (javelin), base attack bonus +6.

Benefit: If you deal damage on a melee attack with a javelin, you can then throw that javelin at any other target within 30 feet as a swift action (using your highest base ranged attack bonus).

You take no penalty when making a melee attack with a javelin.

You gain a +1 bonus on damage rolls with javelins.

VAE SCHOOL [STYLE]

You have learned House Vae's fighting style.

Prerequisite: Int 13, Combat Expertise, Improved Trip, Weapon Focus (spiked chain or whip), base attack bonus +7.

Benefit: Once per round, when you deal damage to a flat-footed foe (or a foe you flank) with a whip or a spiked chain, you can also initiate a trip attack (as if you had hit with a touch attack). If you fail to trip when using this special attack, your opponent cannot attempt to trip you in turn.

You must declare this attempt before you roll your attack, and the attempt is wasted for the round if the attack misses.

You must have Weapon Focus with the weapon you are using for this feat. In other words, having Weapon Focus (whip) does not allow you to use the Vae School feat with a spiked chain, or vice versa.

Normal: You must make a trip attack separately from a normal attack. If you fail to trip the foe, he can attempt to trip you in turn.

XANIQOS SCHOOL [STYLE]

You have learned the fighting style of House Xaniqos, which favors aggressive crossbow maneuvers.

Prerequisite: Dex 13, Dodge, Mobility, Point Blank Shot, Shot on the Run, base attack bonus +6.

Benefit: If you have moved at least 10 feet toward your target since the start of your turn, your crossbow attacks deal an extra 1d6 points of damage against that target in this round. This feat's benefit doesn't apply when you are mounted.

In addition, reloading your crossbow does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

ALTERNATIVE CLASS FEATURES

Alternative class features are ways to customize a class by selecting abilities that best reflect a racial choice and character concept. Similar to substitution levels, they offer an option to the class features granted at a particular level. Alternative class features have no prerequisites; you simply select them at the

proper levels in lieu of selecting the standard class features. If you already have reached or passed the level at which you are eligible to take the feature, with your DM's permission, you can swap one ability for an existing one. Alternatively, if you have *Player's Handbook II*, you can use the retraining option.

The format for alternative class features is summarized below.

Alternative Class Feature Name

The ability's description and why you might want to consider it are given in the first paragraph.

Level: You can select the alternative class feature only at this level.

Replaces: This line identifies the ability that you must sacrifice to gain the alternative class feature.

Benefit: This section describes the mechanical effects of the new ability. Unless otherwise mentioned, the class feature is an extraordinary ability.

DROW BARD

When adventurers think of drow arcanists, they picture the horrifically deadly drow wizards or the demonically imbued warlocks. The bard would almost certainly be at the bottom of the list of arcane classes associated with the drow. What surface-dwellers fail to realize, however, is that the drow have an ancient bardic tradition—one that transforms the traveling entertainer, trickster, and storyteller of the surface into one of the most horrific taskmasters and assassins of the Underdark.

Deadly Knowledge

Drow bards do not travel the world, and thus do not gain the broad range of understanding other bards have. Instead, they study a means of death-dealing normally associated with other classes.

Level: 1st.

Replaces: If you select this class feature, you do not gain the standard bard's bardic knowledge ability. In addition, you can use your bardic music one fewer time per day than other bards (minimum 1).

Benefit: You are trained in the use of poison. You never risk poisoning yourself when applying poison to a weapon.

DROW CLERIC

Everything you do, everything you are, is devoted heart and soul to Lolth: to spreading her power across the Underdark, and, of course, to cementing your own base of power among the drow. How better to honor the Weaver of Webs, after all, than to ensure that so potent and loyal a servant as yourself can direct her minions?

Master of Spiders

Spiders—the favored of Lolth and the totems of your race—respond to your call, bowing before you as they do before the divine mistress you both serve.

Level: 1st.

Replaces: If you select this class feature, you do not gain the standard cleric's ability to turn or rebuke undead.

Benefit: You can rebuke or command vermin as an evil cleric rebukes or commands undead. When commanding spiders, you gain a +4 bonus to your effective turning level.

This ability otherwise works exactly as rebuke undead. You can use this ability in place of turn or rebuke undead for the purpose of qualifying for divine feats.

DROW DRUID

Druids are rare among drow communities. Most drow spellcasters pursue either the faith of Lolth or one of a variety of arcane paths. However, a rare few exist who seek a different, more natural connection between themselves and their subterranean environment.

Drow druids forgo the ability to assume animal forms, preferring the shape of their revered totem: the spider.

Spider Shape

After extensive indoctrination by drow priestesses, you use wild shape to assume the form of vermin.

Level: 5th.

Replaces: If you select this class feature, you do not gain the ability to wild shape into an animal at 5th level.

Benefit: Beginning at 5th level, you can turn yourself into any Small or Medium monstrous spider. You are not mindless, and thus do not gain immunity to mind-affecting spells and abilities.

You can take the shape of a Large monstrous spider at 8th level, a Tiny monstrous spider at 11th level, and a Huge monstrous spider at 15th level.

This class feature otherwise functions as the normal wild shape ability.

It doesn't affect your ability to wild shape into plant creatures or elementals (gained at 12th and 16th level, as normal).

Special: Because they have a stronger connection to scorpions than to spiders, drow in the *EBERRON* campaign setting who select this alternative class feature instead gain the ability to wild shape into monstrous scorpions.

FAVORED SOUL

Viewed with a combination of awe and jealous hatred by other drow, the favored souls^{CD} of Lolth hold substantial power in their society, but also occupy a truly precarious position. As Lolth's "elite," favored souls are expected, even more than others, to be able to defend themselves and their positions from other drow who seek to take them. Otherwise, they clearly weren't worthy after all, were they? Favored souls often compete with clerics for positions in the priesthood and other high offices.

Sense Prey

The Weaver of Webs has graced you with the predatory senses of her favored minions. Although you are no longer as resistant to damage as other favored souls, it is almost impossible for the enemy to hide from you.

Level: 5th.

Replaces: If you select this class feature, you do not gain the standard favored soul's energy resistance at 5th, 10th, and 15th level.

Benefit: Three times per day, you can use a standard action to gain tremorsense (*MM* 316) out to of 5 feet for 1 round per class level. This is a supernatural ability.

At 10th level your tremorsense extends to 20 feet, and at 15th level to 30 feet.

DROW FIGHTER

Drow fighters strike fast and melt away before their opponents have a chance to mount a counterattack. Rather than using heavy armor or picking feats that emphasize direct assaults, drow fighters employ techniques that exploit their natural advantages.

In exchange for a fighter's access to heavy armor, a drow fighter gains strong first-strike capability.

Hit-and-Run Tactics

The drow specialize in guerrilla warfare, picking off their foes with poisoned bolts and slipping away into the darkness. Each attack wears their opponents down, until their numbers are so reduced that the drow can sweep in and capture them. If you select the hit-and-run tactics class feature, you sacrifice some AC, but make up for the loss with improved reflexes and accuracy when attacking unsuspecting foes.

Level: 1st.

Replaces: By selecting the hit-and-run alternative class feature, you give up proficiency with heavy armor and tower shields, even if you already have those proficiencies from another class. You can't gain either of these proficiencies by multiclassing later, but you can gain them by selecting the appropriate feats.

Benefit: At 1st level, you gain a +2 bonus on initiative checks.

In addition, when attacking a flat-footed opponent within 30 feet, you can add your Dexterity bonus (if any) as a competence bonus on weapon damage rolls.

DROW ROGUE

Rogues are common in drow society, fewer in number only than clerics and wizards. They are silent killers, spies, and informants. It falls to them to gather intelligence about rival houses and to eliminate challengers within the hierarchy. For these tasks, drow rogues cultivate the ability to safely utilize poison.

Poison Use

Poison is used widely in drow society. For the dark elves, it is a vital tool in the race for survival. From the popular drow sleep poison to the bevy of spider venoms extracted from Lolth's favored creatures, drow have mastered a variety of toxins that wreak havoc with their opponents' bodies.

Level: 1st.

Replaces: If you select this class feature, you do not gain the trapfinding ability gained at 1st level.

Benefit: You are trained in the use of poison. You are never at risk of accidentally poisoning yourself when applying poison to a weapon.

DROW SWASHBUCKLER

The drow swashbuckler^{CW} fills an interesting niche in dark elf society. Their culture of treachery and betrayal offers opportunities for those with wit and skill to rise far. For drow, the swashbuckler class is usually a male pursuit, and well-born sons of the great houses are the most likely to cultivate the abilities this class offers. A rare few drow swashbucklers are renegades: outcasts from drow society, bucking the traditions and loyalties to the matriarchs to seek their own fortunes.

Drow swashbucklers give up some of their mobility across difficult terrain to gain a more tactical understanding of movement.

Swift and Deadly

A drow swashbuckler who wields two weapons gains the ability to better maneuver around his opponents.

Level: 7th.

Replaces: If you select this class feature, you do not gain Acrobatic Charge at 7th level.

Benefit: When wielding two weapons, if you hit at least once with each weapon in the same round, you can take a 5-foot step as a swift action.

This doesn't count against your normal limit of one 5-foot step per round, and you can use this ability even if you've already moved in the round.

WARLOCK

Warlocks^{CAR} among the drow occupy an oddly dichotomous position. They have strong links to the Abyss and to Lolth, but those ties more directly bind them to Lolth's servants—her demons—than to the Spider Queen herself. Thus, although warlocks can occupy positions of power and even become priestesses, drow expect them to be serving the church and the great houses rather than running them.

Venomous Blood

The fluids within your body become like the venom of the spiders themselves. Those who would feast upon your flesh have cause to be sorry, and the poison within renders you resistant to poisons from without.

Level: 8th.

Replaces: If you select this class feature, you do not gain the standard warlock's fiendish resilience at 8th, 13th, and 18th level.

Benefit: At 8th level, you gain a +5 bonus on saves against poison.

At 13th level, your blood becomes poisonous. Any creature that damages you with a bite attack, or that swallows you whole, is exposed to this poison (contact; Fort DC 10 + 1/2 your warlock level + Cha modifier; 1d3 Str/1d3 Str). You are immune to your own poisonous blood.

At 18th level, you can bring the poison of your blood to the surface of your hand and apply it to a held weapon or to your next *eldritch blast*. It requires a move action to manifest and apply the poison, and you can do so three times per day. In this more concentrated form, initial and secondary damage are 1d6 Strength each. The poison lasts until you make an attack with the weapon or *eldritch blast* or until the start of your next turn, whichever comes first. Applying the poison to your *eldritch blast* doesn't prevent you from applying *eldritch essence* or *blast shape* invocations as normal.

DROW WIZARD

Wizards are among the most feared and admired nondivine members of drow society. Despite their innate resistance to magic, the drow have great respect for both the spells and the knowledge available to these masters of the arcane arts. Although they are not directly tied to Lolth in the way divine casters and warlocks are, their devotion to the Spider Queen—

THE POLYMORPH SUBSCHOOL

Introduced in *Player's Handbook II*, the polymorph subschool is a category of spells that change a target's form from one shape to another. Unless stated otherwise in the spell's description, the target of a polymorph spell takes on all the statistics and special abilities of an average member of the new form in place of its own, except as follows:

- The target retains its own alignment (and personality, within the limits of the new form's ability scores).
- The target retains its own hit points.
- The target is treated as having its normal Hit Dice for the purpose of adjudicating effects based on Hit Dice, such as the *sleep* spell, though it uses the new form's base attack bonus, base save bonuses, and all other statistics derived from Hit Dice.
- The target retains the ability to understand the languages it understands in its normal form. If the new form is normally capable of speech, the target retains the ability to speak these languages as well. It can write in the languages it understands, but only if the new form is capable of writing in some manner (even a primitive manner, such as drawing in the dirt with a paw).

In all other ways, the target's normal statistics are effectively replaced by those of the new form. The target loses all the special abilities it has in its normal form, including its class features (even if the new form would normally be able to use these class features).

If the new form's size is different from the target's normal size, its new space must share as much of the original form's space as possible, squeezing into the available space (*PH* 148) if necessary. If insufficient space exists for the new form, the spell fails.

Any gear worn or carried by the target melds into the new form and becomes nonfunctional. When the target reverts to its true form, any objects previous melded into the new form reappear in the same location on its body they previously occupied and are once again functional. Any new items worn in the assumed form fall off and land at the target's feet.

Incorporeal or gaseous creatures are immune to polymorph spells, as are creatures of the plant type. A creature of the shapechanger subtype (such as a lycanthrope or doppelganger) that is the target of a polymorph spell can revert to its natural form as a standard action.

For more information on the polymorph subschool, see *PH2* 95.

and indeed, their very upbringing within society—has led to the development of race-specific wizard traits.

Abyssal Specialist

Most wizards who choose to specialize do so in a specific school. Many drow wizards instead focus on a variety of spells closely linked to the powers and objectives of the Weaver of Webs. The basic mechanic for specialization is the same, but the specifics differ.

Level: 1st.

Replaces: If you select this class feature, you cannot specialize in a school of magic, and you lose the ability to cast spells from a prohibited school.

You must select one school of magic to serve as your prohibited school, and you can never cast spells from it or use spell completion and spell trigger devices connected to it, as per normal specialist rules. You may not select divination as your prohibited school.

Benefit: You are considered specialized, but not in a specific school. Rather, you gain all the benefits of specialization with a group of spells that includes all those of the following subschools and/or descriptors: chaotic, compulsion, darkness, evil, and fear. You gain all the standard benefits of specialization as applied to this group of spells, as though it were a school unto itself.

NEW SPELLS

Magic is a cornerstone of the values and beliefs of all elves, including the drow. Between their spell-like abilities and their magical gear, drow wizards are among the most formidable spellcasters known. Though they make extensive use of spells that are available to other casters, they have forms of magic in their arsenals that are unknown beyond the shadowy realm of the Underdark.

DROW-ONLY SPELLS

Some spells in this chapter have “Drow” on the component line. To learn, prepare, or cast one of these spells, you must either be a drow or have selected Lolth as your patron deity.

ASSASSIN SPELLS

1st Level

Combat Readiness: Target gains +1 per three levels on initiative checks; no bonus from being flanked.

Shadow Double: Shadowy figure attacks enemies.

Snuff the Light: Extinguish one non-magical light source.

BARD SPELLS

1st Level

Combat Readiness: Target gains +1 per three levels on initiative checks; no bonus from being flanked.

Snuff the Light: Extinguish one non-magical light source.

2nd Level

Magical Backlash: Target takes 2 points of damage per spell level affecting it.

CLERIC SPELLS

2nd Level

Shadow Shroud: Negate light blindness/vulnerability; +5 bonus on Hide checks.

3rd Level

Dominate Vermin: Subject vermin obeys psychic commands.

4th Level

Armored Vermin: +2 to natural armor of vermin.

Yochlol Blessing: Target gains eight tentacle attacks, resistance to acid and electricity, AC bonus.

5th Level

Bebilith Blessing: Target gains poisonous bite and sundering claw attacks.

DRUID SPELLS

3rd Level

Dominate Vermin: Subject vermin obeys psychic commands.

Engulfing Terror: Create a single gelatinous cube.

4th Level

Armored Vermin: +2 to natural armor of vermin.

HEXBLADE SPELLS

2nd Level

Magical Backlash: Target takes 2 points of damage per spell level affecting it.

Shadow Double: Shadowy figure attacks enemies.

SORCERER/WIZARD SPELLS

1st Level

Combat Readiness: Target gains +1 per three levels on initiative checks; no bonus from being flanked.

Snuff the Light: Extinguish one non-magical light source.

Spider Form, Lesser: You take on the form and abilities of a Medium fiendish monstrous spider.

2nd Level

Magical Backlash: Target takes 2 points of damage per spell level affecting it.

Shadow Double: Shadowy figure attacks enemies.

Shadow Shroud: Negate light blindness/vulnerability; +5 bonus on Hide checks.

3rd Level

Engulfing Terror: Create a single gelatinous cube.

Spider Form: You take on the form and abilities of a Large fiendish monstrous spider.

5th Level

Dridershape: You take on the form and abilities of a drider.

Spider Form, Greater: You take on the form and abilities of a Huge fiendish monstrous spider.

ARMORED VERMIN

Transmutation

Level: Cleric 4, druid 4

Components: V, S, DF; Drow

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: Up to three vermin, no two of which are more than 30 ft. apart

Duration: 1 round/level (D)

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

The vermin you select pause for a moment as their exoskeletons take on a metallic sheen.

You cause the exoskeletons of up to three vermin to harden to the strength of steel. The spell increases the vermin's natural armor bonus by 2. This bonus increases by 1 for every three caster levels above 7th, to a maximum of +6 at caster level 19th.

The enhancement bonus provided by *armored vermin* stacks with the target's natural armor bonus, but not with other enhancement bonuses to natural armor. A vermin with no natural armor has an effective natural armor bonus of +0.

BEBILITH BLESSING

Transmutation [Chaos, Evil]

Level: Cleric 5

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One living creature

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless); see text

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

A halo of blue fire flares around the target's head, which transforms into the head of an arachnid. As the light fades, two oversized claws explode from the target's torso, snapping and clawing at the air.

You infuse a target with the essence of a bebilith (MM 42), causing it to gain the mandibles and claws of this demon. The target gains two primary claw attacks (in addition to its normal claw attacks, if any) and a secondary bite attack (replacing its normal bite attack). The claws deal 1d6 points of damage, and the bite deals 1d8 points (assuming Medium size). If it is wielding a weapon, the target can attack with either a single claw or a bite as a secondary attack.

The target can sunder objects with its claw attacks as if it had the Improved Sunder feat.

The target's bite attack carries a poison (injury; Fort save equal to the spell's save DC; 1d6 Con/2d6 Con).

The target of this spell is also treated as an outsider of the evil subtype in addition to its normal type and subtypes.

COMBAT READINESS

Divination

Level: Assassin 1, bard 1, sorcerer/wizard 1

Components: V

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: Creature touched

Duration: 1 minute/level

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

The target's eyes widen, and shine briefly with a white light.

The touched creature gains a +1 insight bonus on initiative checks for every three caster levels you have (minimum +1, maximum +6).

In addition, if the target is flanked, its opponents gain no bonus on attack rolls (but still gain any other benefits derived from flanking, such as extra sneak attack damage).

DOMINATE VERMIN

Transmutation

Level: Cleric 3, druid 3

Components: V, S, DF; Drow

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One vermin

Duration: 1 minute/level

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

The creature's eyes change color to match your own. It trembles for a moment as it adjusts to your psychic presence.

You invest your psyche into a single vermin creature, granting it your Intelligence. While it is so affected, you can direct it with simple commands such as "Attack," "Run," and "Fetch." Since you are in absolute control of the creature, it even follows suicidal commands.

You can continue to direct the vermin as long as it remains within range. You need not see it to control it. Changing your instructions or giving a new command is the equivalent of redirecting a spell, so it is a move action.

If the vermin is slain, your mind is forced out of the creature violently. The experience deals 1d4 points of Wisdom damage to you.

DRIDERSHAPE

Transmutation (Polymorph)

Level: Sorcerer/wizard 5

Components: V, S; Drow

Casting Time: 1 swift action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 1 round/level (D)

Your lower extremities transform, sprouting arachnid legs, as a large, pulsing thorax swells from your back.

You take on the form and abilities of a drider (MM 89). You gain 20 temporary hit points, which disappear at the end of the spell's duration. You don't gain the drider's spellcasting ability, but you retain your own. (Spellcasting is subject to the drider's ability scores; for instance, you can't cast wizard spells above 5th level, since your new Intelligence is only 15). Any held objects remain held in the new form (other gear melds into the new form as normal).

See page 59 for details of the polymorph subschool.

ENGULFING TERROR

Conjuration (Creation)

Level: Druid 3, sorcerer/wizard 3

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 full round

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Effect: One gelatinous cube

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

The air wavers and shimmers, finally coalescing into a large cube of glistening ooze.

Engulfing terror creates a gelatinous cube (MM 201) in a space you designate. The space must be large enough to accommodate the creature. If not, the spell automatically fails.

Upon appearing, the cube acts on your turn, attacking the nearest living creature each round. You have no control over it and cannot direct it. The gelatinous cube remains until it is destroyed or has no remaining targets to attack, at which point it moves away in a random direction.

MAGICAL BACKLASH

Abjuration

Level: Bard 2, hexblade 2, sorcerer/wizard 2

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One creature

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Fortitude half

Spell Resistance: Yes

With a word and a gesture, the target flares with crackling, violet-colored energy.

Magical backlash causes any spells affecting the target to resonate painfully. For each spell currently in effect on the target (not counting *magical backlash* itself), *magical backlash* deals 2 points of damage per level of that spell.

For example, a creature targeted by *magical backlash* that is under the effects of *bull's strength*, *blur*, and *mage armor* spells would take 4 points of damage for *bull's strength*, 4 for *blur*, and 2 more for *mage armor* for a total of 10 points of damage.

SHADOW DOUBLE

Illusion (Shadow)

Level: Assassin 1, hexblade 2, sorcerer/wizard 2

Components: V

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Effect: One shadowy duplicate

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: Will disbelief

Spell Resistance: No

You complete the incantation and nearby shadows gather together, assuming your approximate size and shape.

You create a shadowy duplicate of yourself at a place you indicate within range. The *shadow double* attacks any adjacent target (regardless of the weapon it appears to wield), as you desire, starting in the round when you cast the spell. It attacks on your turn once each round, striking with an attack bonus equal to your base attack bonus + the modifier for your spell save DCs. Each hit deals 1 point of Strength damage to the target. The first time a target is hit, it can attempt a Will save to disbelieve the effect; this negates the damage and renders it immune to further attacks by the *shadow double*.

The *shadow double* occupies a space identical to yours. It is not incorporeal, and thus can't share a space with another creature or object. It can provide a flanking bonus against any creature that hasn't yet saved successfully against it. The *shadow double* can strike incorporeal creatures, but not ethereal creatures.

Each round after the first, you can use a standard action to direct the *shadow double* to attack any other target. To attack this new target, the *shadow double* can move to any new legal space within 30 feet (it moves by instantaneous teleportation). If it is not commanded to switch targets, it continues to attack the same target.

A *shadow double* can be attacked. It has an Armor Class equal to 10 + your size modifier + a deflection bonus equal to the modifier for your spell save DCs, and has one-fifth of your full normal hit points. If the *shadow double* is reduced to 0 hit points, or if you create a second *shadow double* when the first still exists, the spell ends.

SHADOW SHROUD

Evocation [Darkness]

Level: Cleric 2, sorcerer/wizard 2

Components: V

Casting Time: 1 immediate action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 1 round/level (D)

A thin membrane of darkness coats your body.

This spell negates any penalties or other harmful effects imposed by your light blindness or light vulnerability.



Magical backlash deals damage to a supposedly protected creature

NEW INVOCATIONS

SPIDER-SHAPE

Lesser; 3rd

You can transform yourself into the form of a Small or Medium fiendish monstrous spider. The available range of sizes you can assume increases as your caster level increases.

Level	Additional Size Available
8th	Large
11th	Tiny
15th	Huge
20th	Gargantuan

This invocation is a polymorph effect (see page 59 for details of the polymorph subschool). It lasts for a number of hours equal to your caster level, or until you choose to end it.

SUDDEN SWARM

Lesser; 4th

When you kill a living creature with one of your invocations (including *eldritch blast*), a swarm of spiders bursts from the corpse. This swarm has the same statistics as a normal spider swarm (MM 239), except that you add your warlock level to its hit points and the save DC for its poison.

The swarm is entirely under your mental control, and fights as you direct it. Commanding the swarm is a free action. The swarm remains for a number of rounds equal to your caster level or until it is destroyed. The swarm can take only a standard action in the round when it emerges.

At any given time, you can control only one of these swarms. If you slay a second creature when a previous swarm is still active, you can choose either to create a second swarm (in which case the first disappears) or to leave the first swarm active and not create a second one.

Sudden swarm lasts for 24 hours or until its effect is triggered.

You also gain a +5 competence bonus on Hide checks made in areas of shadow or darkness.

As with any darkness spell, the effect is suppressed if you enter the area of a light spell of 3rd level or higher.

SNUFF THE LIGHT

Transmutation

Level: Assassin 1, bard 1, sorcerer/wizard 1

Components: S

Casting Time: 1 swift action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One nonmagical light source

Duration: Instantaneous or 1 round/level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

With a gesture, the light goes out.

Snuff the light extinguishes a single nonmagical light source, such as a candle, torch, or lantern. Against alchemical light sources, such as sunrods, you suppress the light for 1 round per caster level.

SPIDER FORM

Transmutation (Polymorph)

Level: Sorcerer/wizard 3

Your body bloats and writhes until eight massive spider legs burst through your flesh. As the transformation finishes, your skin hardens into a dark exoskeleton.

As *lesser spider form*, except you take on the form and abilities of a Large fiendish monstrous spider (MM 289). You are treated as having the spider's Hit Dice (4) for the purpose of adjudicating the special abilities gained from the fiendish template.

SPIDER FORM, GREATER

Transmutation (Polymorph)

Level: Sorcerer/wizard 5

Your body inflates grotesquely as eight enormous spider legs burst through your flesh. As the transformation finishes, your skin hardens into a dark exoskeleton.

As *lesser spider form*, except you take on the form and abilities of a Huge fiendish monstrous spider (MM 289). You are

treated as having the spider's Hit Dice (8) for the purpose of adjudicating the special abilities gained from the fiendish template.

SPIDER FORM, LESSER

Transmutation (Polymorph)

Level: Sorcerer/wizard 1

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 swift action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 1 round/level (D)

Your arms and legs wither away as eight spindly spider legs burst through your flesh. As the transformation finishes, your skin hardens into a dark exoskeleton.

You take on the form and abilities of a Medium fiendish monstrous spider (MM 289). You are treated as having the spider's Hit Dice (2) for the purpose of adjudicating the special abilities gained from the fiendish template. You gain 5 temporary hit points, which disappear at the end of the spell's duration. See page 59 for details of the polymorph subschool.

YOCHLOL BLESSING

Transmutation [Chaotic, Evil]

Level: Cleric 4

Components: V, S, DF; Drow

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One living creature

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

A husky female chuckle accompanies the violet light that limns the target, illuminating the eight writhing tentacles that ooze from its body.

You infuse a target with the vile power of a yochlol^{FC1}, one of the demonic handmaidens of Lolth, causing its body to erupt with eight tendrils. As a full-round action, the target can make eight primary tentacle attacks (using its normal reach), each dealing 1d4 points of damage. These attacks can't be combined with any other weapon or natural weapon attacks.

In addition, the target gains a deflection bonus to AC equal to its Charisma

Illus. by W. England



he prestige classes presented in this chapter represent various pursuits drow might undertake in their quests for power. Though designed for drow characters, these classes might be suitable for other races with some modifications to the requirements. In addition to the new classes included here, the prestige classes mentioned below are also well suited for dark elf characters.

Arachne (*Faiths and Pantheons* 182): Many drow priestesses become arachnes after passing a deadly Test of Lolth.

Archmage (*DMG* 178): Male drow wizards who live through the perils of their training seek the higher arts of magical study.

Assassin (*DMG* 180): Assassins are an important part of drow society and are never short of work in drow cities.

Blackguard (*DMG* 181): Drow blackguards serve as generals and personal guards to the matriarchs.

Darkmask (*Lords of Darkness* 33): In the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, the darkmask prestige class is an interesting choice for drow who worship deities other than Lolth, combining stealth and subterfuge with devotion to Vhaerun.

Drow Judicator (*Underdark* 33): These unholy warriors declare themselves the champions of Lolth and rival the blackguards' wickedness and cruelty.

Eldritch Knight (*DMG* 195): This class is an ideal blend of martial talent and magical power. Many drow consorts become eldritch knights to enhance their value to the high priestesses.

Scorpion Wraith (*Secrets of Xen'drik* 130): The scorpion wraiths of Eberron are the definitive dark elf hunters who haunt the jungles of far-flung Xen'drik.

Shadowdancer (*DMG* 187): At home in the darkness, drow spies and assassins often have levels in the shadowdancer prestige class.

TABLE 3-1: PRESTIGE CLASSES BY TYPE

Class	Type	Description	Best for . . .
Arachnomancer	Transformational	Acquire vermin traits	Wizard, wu jen
Cavestalker	Nature	Underground warrior	Druid, ranger, scout
Demonbinder	Transformational	Acquires fiendish abilities	Warlock
Dread fang of Lolth	Melee, stealth, teamwork	Enforcer	Fighter, ninja, rogue
Eye of Lolth	Stealth, teamwork	Consummate spy	Bard, rogue
Insidious corruptor	Unique capability	Manipulator	Bard, sorcerer
Kinslayer	Melee	Elf-killer	Barbarian, ranger, scout

Sword Dancer (*Faiths and Pantheons* 205): Another excellent choice for drow who worship gods other than Lolth, the sword dancer follows the edicts of Eilistraee the Dark Maiden and works to lead the dark elves back to the surface.

Vermin Keeper (*Underdark* 44): The drow regard vermin keepers as beings favored by Lolth for the ease with which they handle spiders.

PICKING A PRESTIGE CLASS

A quick glance at the prestige classes presented in this chapter reveals that they all have a villainous bent. Since they are designed for the drow, few of these classes are suitable for player characters. Of course, in campaigns in which the players take the roles of drow characters, these classes are all valid choices for PCs.

Players interested in one or more of these prestige classes should pay close attention to their entry requirements. Many of these classes have difficult requirements, and gaining access to them requires careful planning. Dungeon Masters can relax the drow requirement to accommodate the wishes of players, but they should use caution: Many elements of these classes are evil-themed or otherwise destructive to party unity.

Melee: Characters belonging to one of these prestige classes are skilled at fighting in close quarters, whether through direct and brutal combat techniques or subtle fighting skills incorporating ambush and surprise.

Nature: These characters are in their element when out in the wild, whether in the dim forests of the surface world or the inhospitable depths of the Underdark. They have a good selection of wilderness-oriented class skills.

Stealth: These prestige classes emphasize hiding and moving quietly and focus on moving past enemies unseen, infiltrating groups of opponents, and setting ambushes.

Teamwork: This category includes prestige classes that augment the abilities of those around them. Members of these classes work particularly well in groups.

Transformational: These characters are distinguished by the transformation from their current form into something else. This change usually results in an expensive trade-off of power, though the specifics depend on the nature of the transformation itself.

Unique Capability: This is a catchall designation for those prestige classes that don't easily fit into another category. These classes typically offer potent abilities tied to a particular theme, but that aren't available anywhere else.

ARACHNOMANCER

"There are many paths to understanding the Spider Queen. Some worship her, others fear her, but few fully comprehend her glory. The road I walk, however, offers the most thorough knowledge of Lolth's generous blessings."

—Derzen Vrinn, arachnomancer

By discarding the religious traditions dominating drow culture, the arachnomancer finds a different way to serve the Weaver of Webs. Through careful study, the arachnomancer

comes to understand spiders in a unique and disturbing way, developing a rapport with the vermin. It doesn't take long for the arachnomancer to shape his magical studies to awaken the Spider Queen's blessings within himself, allowing him to assume the form of a monstrous spider.

BECOMING AN ARACHNOMANCER

To many, arachnomancers are expressions of the Flesh-Carver's influence on the mortal world, but the fact is that only masters of arcane magic, not divine, can learn the techniques necessary to enter this class. Still, many drow clerics compromise their religious studies to dabble in arcane magic so that they too can know the power of the Spider Queen.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Alignment: Any evil.

Skills: Climb 4 ranks, Knowledge (nature) 4 ranks, Knowledge (religion) 8 ranks.

Feat: Verminfriend (see page 53).

Spells: Ability to cast spider climb, summon swarm, or web as an arcane spell.

CLASS FEATURES

Arachnomancers slowly absorb the characteristics of vermin as they advance until they transcend their ordinary form, in the process discovering the power to assume the form of a monstrous spider. Their studies awaken certain vermin-like qualities within them, leaving these characters forever changed.

Spellcasting: At 1st, 3rd, 4th, 6th, and 7th level, you gain new spells per day and an increase in caster level (and spells known, if applicable) as if you had also gained a level in a spellcasting class to which you belonged before adding the prestige class level. You do not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. If you had more than one arcane spellcasting class before becoming an arachnomancer, you must decide to which class to add each level for the purpose of determining spells per day, caster level, and spells known.

Poison Save Bonus (Ex): You gain a bonus on saving throws against poison equal to your class level.

Handle Spiders (Ex): You gain a +5 bonus on skill checks to use the Handle Animal skill with spiders (see page 46).

Spider Domain: You gain access to the Spider^{SC} domain and the granted power associated with the domain (rebuke spiders as an evil cleric rebukes undead, a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Cha modifier). If you already have access to one or more domains, you can now choose spells from this domain as your daily domain spells. If you do not already have a domain, each day you can prepare one domain spell for each level you can cast, from 1st on up. See the deity, domains, and domain spells cleric class feature, PH 32.

Spider Shape (Su): At 2nd level, you can change into a Small, Medium, or Large monstrous spider (either hunting or web-spinning) and back again three times per day. At 5th level, you can also take the form of a Tiny or Huge monstrous spider, and at 8th level, you can take the form of a Gargantuan monstrous spider. The effect lasts for 1 hour per arachnomancer level. This ability functions as wild shape, so you can

select and use the Natural Spell feat. See the wild shape druid class feature, PH 37.

Tremorsense (Ex): Starting at 3rd level, you can detect and pinpoint any creature or object within 20 feet. At 6th level, your tremorsense extends to 60 feet. You can use this ability five times per day. Activating this ability is a swift action, and it lasts for a number of rounds equal to your arachnomancer class level.

Webwalking (Su): Starting at 4th level, you can ignore webs (magical or nonmagical) as if you were under the effect of a *freedom of movement* spell. You can climb webs at your normal land speed without needing to make Climb checks and walk along webs without needing to make Balance checks.

Climb Speed (Ex): At 7th level, you gain a climb speed equal to your normal land speed. In addition, you gain a +8 bonus on Climb checks and you can always choose to take 10 on these checks, even if rushed or threatened.

PLAYING AN ARACHNOMANCER

You are obsessed with spiders. They fill your dreams and your waking thoughts. The extent of your preoccupation does not stop with ordinary spiders: You are fascinated by all spider-kind, from the monstrous spiders of the Underdark to the

dreaded bebiliths that the priestesses conjure for the most profane rituals.

Even when not studying spiders, you find ways to bring them up in conversation, dropping fascinating (to you) tidbits and trivia about different breeds of spiders, their mating habits, and their hunting habits, and going to great lengths to extol the virtues of vermin. Although the drow might tolerate or even appreciate such insights, your attraction to spiders does little to endear you to members of other races.

Combat

The greatest strength you have as an arachnomancer is the ability to assume the form of a monstrous spider. Although this ability greatly enhances your combat prowess, you are no more durable in your spider shape than you were in your original form. However, you gain the extraordinary abilities of your new form, including a poisonous bite and the ability to spin webs.

Even if you don't fall back on your spider shape ability, you still have a number of assets. The first level you take in this class significantly improves your spellcasting

options by granting you the bonus spells of the Spider domain. You sacrifice some of your spellcasting potential, but you still have a large enough array of spells to augment your other arachnomancer features and to eliminate foes.



Derzen Vrinn, an arachnomancer

TABLE 3–2: THE ARACHNOMANCER HIT DIE: D6

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1st	+0	+0	+2	+0	Poison save bonus, handle spiders, Spider domain	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+0	Spider shape	—
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+1	Tremorsense 20 ft.	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
4th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Webwalking	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
5th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Spider shape (Tiny, Huge)	—
6th	+4	+2	+5	+2	Tremorsense 60 ft.	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
7th	+5	+2	+5	+2	Climb speed	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
8th	+6	+2	+6	+2	Spider shape (Gargantuan)	—

Class Skills (4 + Int modifier per level): Climb, Concentration, Craft, Handle Animal, Hide, Jump, Knowledge (dungeoneering), Knowledge (nature), Knowledge (religion), Move Silently, Spellcraft, Spot, Survival.

Advancement

Images and icons of spiders have always been a part of your life. Your society taught you to venerate these creatures, to exalt them as the children of Lolth. It's no wonder, then, you became obsessed with them.

What began as idle curiosity—a preoccupation with the movements of their graceful forms, the intricate beauty of their magnificent webs, and the trembling of their victims before they sink poison-bearing fangs into flesh—soon filled your dreams. You simply could no longer bear to be away from them.

You threw yourself into the study of spiders, interacting with them and allowing them to pierce your flesh so that you could experience the ambrosia of their venom. You bent your magical knowledge to their study and emulation, until one day you realized that the kinship you felt with these creatures was no longer yours alone: The spiders seemed to regard you as one of their own.

You find you have more in common with the vermin you study than with other creatures, and you even prefer the company of spiders to the mercurial drow. Though you might be distant and somewhat off-putting, the understanding of spiders that you have accumulated grants you unique status and freedom. The drow regard you as a favored servant of Lolth and indulge you in your pursuits.

One of the first feats you should take after entering this class is Natural Spell. This feat allows you to access your spells even when in spider form. As for skills, investing in Handle Animal improves your chances of training vermin, who can then serve you as minions, guardians, or companions.

Resources

Your best resource is the kinship you share with vermin. Spiders are likely abundant in your native environment (since they are drawn to dark elf communities), so you have no shortage of allies. If you are not a drow, you can join a nest of spiders, exerting your influence until the creatures accept you as part of the pack.

Clearly, drow veneration of all things arachnid grants some benefits. Few drow would dare cross such an obviously blessed individual.

ARACHNOMANCERS IN THE WORLD

"As if spiders and drow weren't bad enough, there are spiders who think they are drow, and worse, drow who think they are spiders!"

—Osson Hjortgar, deepwarden

Where there are drow and spiders, there's bound to be an arachnomancer. Given the nature of drow culture, the arachnomancer class is a logical expression of drow values and religious beliefs. As such, there's at least one arachnomancer in any drow community.

Organization

Each arachnomancer arrives at his understanding of spiders in a slightly different way, although many study the nature and capabilities of these creatures for similar reasons. Naturally selfish, would-be arachnomancers conceal their knowledge

from others, perhaps out of some misguided belief that they are somehow special to the Spider Queen and gifted with unique insight into the vermin. Some simply aim to exploit Lolth's creatures by tapping into the power of these monstrous arachnids.

Despite their guarded, selfish nature, arachnomancers enjoy a certain amount of reverence from Lolth's church. Few high priestesses dare harm established arachnomancers directly, regardless of any affront they might present. Instead, arachnomancers become tools in the priestesses' secret power grabs and intrigues. Most arachnomancers find themselves in the employ of influential drow matriarchs and showered with gifts, comforts, and the fulfillment of every desire, with only the occasional mission or appearance to interrupt their foul studies.

NPC Reactions

Arachnomancers are reclusive individuals. To the common drow, the arachnomancer is a pure expression of Lolth, the visible hand of the Spider Queen. Thus, drow of all stations are friendly or even helpful toward these individuals.

Outside the safety and security of the drow city, however, arachnomancers find a less tolerant world. To those who have suffered depredations at the hands of the dark elves, arachnomancers epitomize the abominable nature of drow civilization. This revulsion crosses nearly all racial boundaries, leading to invariably hostile attitudes.

ARACHNOMANCER LORE

Characters who have ranks in Knowledge (dungeoneering) can research arachnomancers to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: There is a breed of Underdark spellcasters that dabble in spider-magic.

DC 15: They call themselves arachnomancers with good reason. They can transform themselves into spiders.

DC 20: Arachnomancers are specialized spellcasters, typically wizards, who invest their magical energy to better understand the characteristics of spiders. Through their studies, they learn to assume the form of spiders, imbuing them with the senses and capabilities of the objects of their obsession.

Characters interested in finding an arachnomancer will have little luck unless they are willing to explore the Underdark, and even then, they must often enter a drow city. There, they might find a few clues about a local arachnomancer with a Gather Information check, but extensive questioning is almost guaranteed to raise the suspicions of the community. This activity will bring the arachnomancer to the PCs—and he is not likely to have conversation on his mind.

ARACHNOMANCERS IN THE GAME

The arachnomancer class offers arcane spellcasters a chance to expand their combat capabilities in new directions. Although entry into this class does diminish spellcasting capabilities, it offers a suite of powers to compensate for the loss: Indeed,

DERZEN VRINN

CR 11

Male drow transmuter 5/arachnomancer 5

CE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., tremorsense 20 ft.; Listen +4, Spot +4

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Kuo-toan, Undercommon

AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 13

(+3 Dex, +2 armor, +1 deflection)

hp 29 (10 HD)

Immune magic *sleep* effects

SR 21

Fort +3 (+8 against poison), **Ref** +9, **Will** +7 (+9 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares); webwalking

Melee rapier +5 (1d6/18–20)

Ranged mwk hand crossbow +9 (1d4/19–20 plus poison)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +5

Atk Options poison (DC 13, 1 Con/1d2 Con)

Special Actions Verminfriend, rebuke vermin 6/day (+3, 2d6+8, 5th), spider shape 3/day (5 hours)

Combat Gear dose of greenblood oil, spider box, thunderstone, *wand of web* (25 charges)

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 9th):

4th—*spiderfriend blast of flame*^{SC} (DC 19), *giant vermin*^D, *greater invisibility*, *spiderfriend ice storm*, *polymorph*

3rd—*dispel magic*, *spiderfriend fireball* (DC 18), *greater mage armor*^{SC}, *spiderskin*^{SC}, *phantom steed*^D, *spiderfriend stinking cloud* (DC 18)

2nd—*blur*, *daze monster* (DC 16), *fox's cunning*, *see invisibility*, *summon swarm*^D, *web* (DC 17)

1st—*spiderfriend burning hands* (DC 15), *expeditious retreat*, *jump*, *spiderfriend magic missile*, *nerveskitter*^{SC}, *obscuring mist*, *spider climb*^D

0—*daze* (DC 14), *detect magic*, *read magic*, *spiderfriend sonic snap*^{SC} (DC 14), *stick*^{SC}

D: Domain spell. Domain: Spider^{SC}.

Note: Spell names preceded by *spiderfriend* indicate those that are affected by the Spiderfriend feat.

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th):

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Abilities Str 10, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 18, Wis 13, Cha 16

SQ familiar (none at present), handle spiders

Feats Craft Wand^B, Natural Spell, Scribe Scroll^B, Spell Focus (conjunction), Spiderfriend Magic*, Verminfriend*
* See Chapter 2

Skills Climb +9, Concentration +9, Decipher Script +8, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +10, Knowledge (nature) +10, Knowledge (religion) +12, Listen +4, Search +6, Spellcraft +19, Spot +4, Survival +6 (+8 underground)

Possessions combat gear plus rapier, masterwork hand crossbow with 10 bolts, *ring of protection* +1, *bracers of armor* +2, *cloak of resistance* +1

Spellbook spells prepared plus 0—all cantrips except abjuration and necromancy; 1st—*animate rope*, *feather fall*, *identify*, *sleep*

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

arachnomancers retain their usefulness even after their daily allotment of spells is exhausted.

Players who enjoy tinkering with their characters and having a broad range of options available to them might be attracted to this class. The arachnomancer class requires commitment, so characters branching into this class do so for the long term, in order to access the greatest transformations at high levels.

Adaptation

To the drow of Eberron, spiders and their kind are sacred but ultimately just reflections of the scorpion, a creature blessed by their strange deity Vulkoor. Arachnomancers hold a place in society similar to that of driders: They are seen as chosen servants of the Mockery, of whom it's believed Vulkoor is a part.

With a little work, you can adapt this class so that it reflects the traits of scorpions rather than spiders. Replace handle spiders with handle scorpions (functioning like the aforementioned ability, but with scorpions). Additionally, the prestige class does not offer access to the Spider domain, nor does it grant the webwalking ability. Instead, it improves spellcasting ability at all eight levels rather than six. Finally, instead of transforming into a spider, the arachnomancer changes into a similarly sized monstrous scorpion.

Sample Encounter

Should the characters find themselves enemies of the drow, they can be assured of a visit by an arachnomancer and his colony of spiders.

EL 11: Derzen Vrinn is an arachnomancer formerly attached to House Everhate in Erelhei-Cinlu, but he now languishes in the deplorable House Xanigos. Desperate to escape his fate, he secretly courts Eclavdra's youngest daughter, who has promised him a place in House Eilservs—provided that he can arrange the death of Sareska, matriarch of House Vae. Rather than implicate himself, Derzen seeks a band of foolhardy adventurers, driven by wealth rather than morals, whom he hopes will do his dirty work for him.

CAVESTALKER

"Welcome to my realm. You'll find naught for you here but privation, fear, and death—oh, and my blade."

—Gaelimor Zyrshaen, drow cavestalker

The Underdark's most dangerous predators are not its horrific monstrosities, crawling and festering in the darkest of grottoes. Rather, they are the deadly cavestalkers, moving effortlessly through a jungle of living rock—and none are as much at home in these caverns as the drow.

Just as a surface ranger feels at peace in the heart of a virgin forest, so too is a cavestalker at home in the wilds of the Underdark. Yet even in his most familiar environment, he is aware of the ever-present danger that surrounds him. It is in the task of surviving this endless peril that he finds peace away from so-called "civilized folk."

BECOMING A CAVESTALKER

Rangers and druids are natural candidates for the cavestalker class. Underdark races that choose the path of the druid or ranger find little use for the abilities of those classes that are attuned to the wilderness of the surface. The cavestalker class augments and hones those abilities, making them more suitable for use in the endless night and providing a true advantage for those that live away from the light.

Rogues occasionally become cavestalkers, since their high skill point allotment allows them to achieve the requirements more easily than other classes. Other classes might enjoy the benefits of becoming a cavestalker, but would likely find meeting the requirements to be prohibitive. Regardless of class, only individuals who have natural darkvision can achieve the affinity with the lightless depths necessary to become a cavestalker.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Skills: Knowledge (dungeoneering) 4 ranks, Survival 8 ranks.

Feats: Track.

Base Attack Bonus: +2.

Special: The candidate must have natural darkvision to allow successful navigation of Underdark tunnels.

TABLE 3–3: THE CAVESTALKER HIT DIE: D8

Level	Base				Special
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	
1st	+1	+2	+2	+0	Advanced spelunker
2nd	+2	+3	+3	+0	Underdark affinity, hide of stone +1
3rd	+3	+3	+3	+1	Lesser cavesense
4th	+4	+4	+4	+1	Exotic combat style
5th	+5	+4	+4	+1	Expert spelunker
6th	+6	+5	+5	+2	<i>Gaseous form</i> , hide of stone +2
7th	+7	+5	+5	+2	Improved exotic combat style
8th	+8	+6	+6	+2	Greater cavesense
9th	+9	+6	+6	+3	Void in space
10th	+10	+7	+7	+3	Master spelunker, hide of stone +3

Class Skills (4 + Int modifier per level): Balance, Climb, Heal, Hide, Jump, Knowledge (dungeoneering), Knowledge (geography), Knowledge (Underdark local), Listen, Move Silently, Profession, Search, Sense Motive, Spot, Swim, Survival, Use Rope.

CLASS FEATURES

As they advance in the class, cavestalkers become more familiar with the Underdark's natural elements. In addition, any abilities they have from the ranger or druid classes become attuned to their subterranean environment.

Advanced Spelunker (Ex): As a cavestalker, your familiarity with the environs of the Underdark allows you to move through it easily, even in the most difficult conditions. As a result, you gain a +2 circumstance bonus on Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, and Jump checks in natural subterranean surroundings.

Underdark Affinity (Ex): At 2nd level, your adaptation to the Underdark allows you to use your nature-themed class abilities in natural subterranean surroundings as well. These include the druid and ranger abilities of camouflage, hide in plain sight, trackless step, and woodland stride. If you already have wild empathy, you can now use it to affect vermin. If you have the wild shape ability, add vermin to the types of creatures you can become (subject to all the size and frequency limitations provided by that ability). If you do not already have these underlying abilities, Underdark affinity does not grant them to you; it only augments those you already have.

Hide of Stone (Ex): As you gain levels in the cavestalker class, your body embraces the rigors of the Underdark and takes on something of its hue and toughness. Your skin hardens and becomes flinty, granting you a natural armor bonus in addition to a circumstance bonus on Hide checks when in natural subterranean surroundings. These bonuses increase as you progress through the cavestalker class, at 6th level and again at 10th level.

Lesser Cavesense (Ex): At 3rd level, you are gifted with a mystical connection to the Underdark, giving you darkvision out to 120 feet. If you already have darkvision out to 120 feet, your darkvision extends an additional 60 feet. Due to your familiarity with the acoustic qualities of the Underdark, you also gain a +4 competence bonus on Listen checks made in subterranean surroundings.

Exotic Combat Style (Ex): At 4th level, you gain mastery of a specific exotic combat style, either the spiked chain style or the hand crossbow style.

If you are not a ranger or have not already selected a ranger combat style, choose one of these two styles. You gain proficiency in that exotic weapon—either the spiked chain or the hand crossbow—if you do not already have it.

If you already have selected two-weapon combat as a ranger combat style, then the exotic combat style provides you with the Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain) feat and permits the use of a spiked chain as a one-handed weapon.

If you already have selected archery as a ranger combat style, then the exotic combat style provides you with the Exotic Weapon Proficiency (hand crossbow) feat and grants you the Rapid Reload feat, even if you do not have the normal prerequisites for the feat.

If you acquire a ranger combat style after gaining an exotic combat style, then the two styles must correspond in a similar fashion: You must select two-weapon combat after choosing the spiked chain style, or archery after choosing the hand crossbow style.

The benefits of your chosen exotic combat style apply only when you wear light or no armor. You lose all benefits of your exotic combat style when wearing medium or heavy armor.

Expert Spelunker (Ex): Upon reaching 5th level, your familiarity with the tight confines of the Underdark allows you to retain your Dexterity bonus even when climbing or when in a cramped space. Furthermore, you're better able to negotiate cramped spaces, lowering Escape Artist DCs, move penalties, and attack penalties by one category. See Table 6–1: Cramped Spaces on page 159.

Gaseous Form (Sp): At 6th level, you gain the ability to traverse the treacherous and confined terrain of the Underdark by assuming *gaseous form* once per day (caster level 12th).

Improved Exotic Combat Style (Ex): Your aptitude for your chosen exotic combat style increases at 7th level. If you do not already have a combat style from the ranger class, then the improved exotic combat style grants you one of those ranger combat styles. If you already have the hand crossbow exotic combat style, you must select archery; if you already have the spiked chain exotic combat style, you must choose two-weapon combat.

If you select archery, then you are treated as having the Rapid Shot feat, even if you do not have the normal prerequisites for that feat.

If you select two-weapon combat, then you are treated as having the Two-Weapon Fighting feat, even if you do not have the normal prerequisites for that feat.

If you already have the ranger two-weapon combat style and the spiked chain exotic combat style, then the improved exotic combat style allows you to treat a spiked chain as one size category smaller for the purpose of use in a cramped space (see Expert Spelunker, above).

If you already have the ranger archery combat style and the hand crossbow exotic combat style, then you are treated as having the Manyshot feat even if you do not have the normal prerequisites for that feat. You are able to use this feat in conjunction with a hand crossbow.

As before, the benefits of your chosen style apply only when you wear light or no armor. You lose the benefit of your exotic combat style when wearing medium or heavy armor.

Greater Cavesense (Ex): When you reach 8th level, your mystical connection to the Underdark increases, granting you tremorsense out to 30 feet.

Void in Space (Su): When you reach 9th level, your attunement to the particular atmosphere of the Underdark allows you to warp the sounds, scents, and vibrations you give off, making you invisible to creatures that rely on senses other than sight to detect others. This effectively makes you undetectable to blindsense, blindsight, and tremorsense. You still make noises and vibrations (though a successful Move Silently check can mask the sounds), but creatures that cannot see are incapable of determining your true location and believe that you are 30 feet in a random direction from where you are actually located.

In addition, this ability nullifies the effect of the Blind-Fight feat against you.

Master Spelunker (Su): By the time you reach 10th level, your affinity for the terrain of the Underdark has become so great that you can negotiate it without difficulty and even merge with it at times. This grants you the ability to use spider climb (as the spell) on any natural stone surface at will. In addition, you can use meld into stone (as the spell) with any surface of unworked stone three times per day.

PLAYING A CAVESTALKER

As a cavestalker, you nurture a close, almost mystical connection to the deadly terrain of the Underdark. To you, the lightless tunnels are not friends, exactly, but perhaps well-respected adversaries. Danger is always present, yet you understand it and even find a certain succor in living alongside it.

Combat

Although you are a formidable warrior, you usually prefer not to stand against the sheer might of the world's fighters and barbarians. Your greatest ally is your own native environment. None dare face your blades when they are trapped in a cramped tunnel, and your exhaustive knowledge of the Underdark allows you to draw enemies into untenable positions where you have the advantage—and where you might even be able to dispatch them without having to fight at all.

With your excellent mobility, you might consider taking a few levels of rogue, adding a deadly sneak attack to your repertoire. And if things get too hot, it's easy for you to disappear into a realm of extreme peril where few dare to follow.

Advancement

The call of the wild is a very different thing in the Underdark from what it is on the surface, but its allure is no less enticing. Whereas on the surface a character might enter the remote reaches of nature to find solitude or peace, in the Underdark he typically does it for survival. Perhaps the most dangerous location in the Underdark is on the "civilized" streets of a drow city: an environment rife with political intrigue, betrayal, and assassination. To escape these noxious environs, you sought refuge in the surrounding tunnels where even the foulest elements of drow society fear to tread. By gaining an intimate knowledge of this hazardous realm, you buy some breathing room and security from the knives of your kin without abandoning all the advantages that drow society has to offer.

As your cavestalker abilities increase, you find the Underdark a more and more inviting place (if a place of such constant peril can be called inviting). You use your skills to establish safe havens for yourself or to gain employment opportunities—perhaps guiding the rich and the powerful to distant,



Gaelimor Zyrshaen, a cavestalker

dangerous locations. You also find that continuing to advance as a ranger or druid augments your already impressive abilities in the Underdark's deepest caverns.

CAVESTALKERS IN THE WORLD

"Lolth's priestesses rule the cities with unquestioned dominance, but the tunnels—the tunnels belong to the cavestalkers."

—Pharug Lurimil, drow merchant of the Crescent Clan

For the drow who pursues the life of a ranger or druid—normally impractical classes for members of a subterranean race—the existence of the cavestalkers is validation for his unconventional choice. With the abilities of a cavestalker, that drow can exert his mastery of nature in a more accessible environment, one that lies just beyond the far outposts of a drow city.

Organization

There is no special organization for cavestalkers. You are more likely to be a loner—or at best the leader of a group of fringe brigands or renegades—than you are to gather with other cavestalkers.

Sometimes priestesses or noble houses hire cavestalkers as spies, and merchant clans are eager to employ you as a guide along the most perilous trade routes. Cavestalkers can find membership in one of the drow fighting societies or house garrisons, serving as scouts or leaders for the far patrols that guard the fringes of a drow city's sphere of influence. Additionally, you might be called on to lead an expeditionary force to attack some distant target or settlement.

NPC Reactions

Within a drow city proper, you find that you are either ignored or regarded with some small amount of curiosity. A certain mystique surrounds the reputation of the cavestalkers, but it seems distant and irrelevant to the drow cutthroat or noble who makes his living preying upon the denizens of the streets. It is only when a drow finds himself outside the secure boundaries of his city that he truly appreciates you. Indeed, he holds you almost in awe, knowing that you are all that stands between him and a horrible death in a hostile environment.

CAVESTALKER LORE

Characters who have ranks in Knowledge (Underdark local) or Knowledge (dungeoneering), or who have the bardic knowledge ability, can research cavestalkers to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful skill check or bardic knowledge check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: Only those assisted by a cavestalker can hope to survive in the wilds of the Underdark for long.

DC 15: Cavestalkers move with ease through tunnels and terrain that others find dangerous or impassable. They make use of this aptitude to set traps and ambushes for those who dare chase them.

DC 20: As a cavestalker advances in knowledge and skill, he grows more and more connected to tunnels in which he

GAELIMOR ZYRSHAEN

CR 12

Male drow ranger 4/cavestalker 7

NE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 180 ft.; Listen +3 (+7 underground), Spot +9

Languages Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon

AC 23, touch 16, flat-footed 19

hp 62 (11 HD)

Immune magic *sleep* effects

SR 22

Fort +12, **Ref** +15, **Will** +4 (+6 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +1 *drowcraft** *spiked chain* +14/+9/+4 (2d4+5) and +1 *short sword* +14/+9 (1d6+2/19–20)

* See Underdark Radiations, page 154

Ranged mwk hand crossbow +16 (1d4/19–20 plus poison)

Base Atk +11; **Grp** +13

Atk Options favored enemy elves +2, improved spiked chain exotic combat style, spiked chain exotic combat style, two-weapon combat style

Combat Gear 2 *oils of magic weapon*, 3 vials of purple worm poison, 9 vials of drow sleep poison

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th):

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*, *gaseous form* (CL 12th)

Abilities Str 14, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 13

SQ advanced spelunker, animal companion (Medium monstrous spider), expert spelunker, hide of stone +2, lesser cavesense, Underdark affinity, wild empathy +5 (+1 magical beasts)

Feats Endurance^B, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain)^B, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (hand crossbow)^B, Improved Initiative, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Spider Companion*, Vermin Trainer*^B, Two-Weapon Fighting^B, Weapon Finesse

* See Chapter 2

Skills Balance +11 (+13 underground), Bluff +8, Climb +9 (+11 underground), Escape Artist +8 (+10 underground), Heal +6, Hide +11 (+13 underground), Jump +9 (+11 underground), Listen +3 (+7 underground), Knowledge (dungeoneering) +7, Knowledge (nature) +3, Knowledge (Underdark (local)) +5, Move Silently +12, Search +3, Spot +9, Survival +7 (+9 underground)

Possessions combat gear plus +1 *drowcraft** *mithral shirt of silent moves*, +1 *drowcraft** *spiked chain*, +1 *short sword*, masterwork hand crossbow with 25 bolts, *cloak of resistance* +2

* See Underdark Radiations, page 154

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

lives. It is said that at death, a cavestalker becomes one with the caverns.

In a drow city, a cavestalker can be found by inquiring with the various garrisons, fighting societies, or at locations frequented by merchant clans (Gather Information DC 10). Having a ranger or druid in the party reduces the check DC by 5.

CAVESTALKERS IN THE GAME

As a player character, you can put your levels in ranger or druid to good use for adventuring in the Underdark, when you would otherwise find the abilities provided by those classes somewhat unproductive. You can serve as a guide for a party, helping it to avoid the Underdark's hidden dangers and using your talents to outmaneuver or outwit those foes that can't be avoided.

An NPC cavestalker might be the leader of a drow patrol or the head of a band of outlaws living outside drow society and preying on those foolish enough to venture beyond its boundaries. He could also be a spy sent to observe some other community and report its weaknesses to his masters.

Adaptation

Although cavestalkers are most frequently found among the drow, they are certainly not limited to the race of the dark elves. A svirfneblin hermit might live as a cavestalker, quietly protecting the fringes of his community from the incursion of subterranean beasts. Alternately, a duergar or dwarf cavestalker could be a prospector seeking new veins of ore for his clan. The barbaric quaggoths and grimlocks rarely become cavestalkers, but a truly exceptional individual from one of these races might choose this class—perhaps one born into slavery and later raised to leadership of his tribe.

A character from a surface-dwelling race can also become a cavestalker, though he would need to have extensive exposure to an underground environment. He could dwell near an extensive natural cave system, for example, or in a community with close ties to a gnome or dwarf clanhold. In this case, the character might start out as a ranger or druid and become more and more acclimated to a subterranean environment as his adventures take him deeper into the nearby caverns. Finally, a member of a surface race adopted by some underground-dwelling people might find his way to the cavestalker class, pushed toward solitude by the awkward sense of never quite fitting in.

Sample Encounter

Gaelimor Zyrshaen (see page 71) exists on the outskirts of drow society as something of a dark Robin Hood character. He fears neither the priestesses of the city nor the dangers of the surrounding Underdark, choosing instead to prey upon the former and seek refuge in the latter. Anyone seeking to reach Erelhei-Cinlu might find himself subject to extortion or ambush by Gaelimor and his merry gang of ruthless thugs.

DEMONBINDER

"By the eight names of Lolith, I invoke thee. By the eight curses of the Flesh-Carver, I command thee. By the eight dooms of the Spider Queen, I summon thee. Fill my empty vessel with your profane might, your limitless power, and your inexhaustible wisdom. Let us become one and show the world your true power!"

—Olarae Quavein, demonbinder

The demonbinder draws the essence of demons into herself to acquire their power. Such acts are forbidden, and doing so

condemns the mortal to eternity in the deepest pits of the Abyss. However, the demonbinder cares little for her fate, being wholly concerned with power in the here and now. It is from this doom that she is able to invest herself with the power of fiends, and the farther she travels down the road of corruption, the more potent are the demons she binds.

BECOMING A DEMONBINDER

Demonbinders all have at least four levels of warlock, but not all are pure warlocks. Many dabble in other classes, especially those who seek to augment their combat capabilities. Class levels in ranger, fighter, and especially barbarian are all common choices for demonbinder candidates.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Race: Drow.

Alignment: Chaotic evil.

Skills: Bluff 4 ranks, Knowledge (the planes) 8 ranks, Sense Motive 4 ranks.

Language: Abyssal.

Invocations: *Baleful utterance* plus any two others.

CLASS FEATURES

The demonbinder prestige class increases the number of invocations at your disposal, and it also provides access to a number of supernatural abilities and resistances. From the start, you gain a pool of points that you use to bind demons that bestow their powers onto you. In many cases, you can use these demons to modify your *eldritch blast*. You also gradually acquire the immunities enjoyed by demons, as well as their damage reduction.

Invocations Known: At each level above 1st, you gain new invocations as if you had also gained a level in the warlock class. You do not gain any other benefits a warlock would have otherwise gained.

Damnation Points (Ex): You gain a number of damnation points equal to your Charisma modifier plus your class level. You use damnation points to activate your demonbind abilities. You cannot spend damnation points when in the area of a *consecrate*, *hallow*, or *magic circle against evil* spell. You regain all spent damnation points after 5 minutes of rest.

Demonbind (Sp): Once per day per class level, you can spend damnation points to invoke the essence of a demon and bind it to your soul. This changes your general appearance (which has no significant game effect unless stated otherwise) and also grants you certain benefits. Binding a demon in this way is a full-round action and lasts for 10 rounds.

If you invoke a second demonbind when another is still active, the new one replaces the old one. Temporary hit points granted by a demonbind vanish when the demonbind ends (or is replaced by a new demonbind).

Some demonbinds allow you to spend additional damnation points to gain an extra benefit. You can use this option only when affected by the demonbind, and the benefit lasts until the start of your next turn or until the demonbind ends, whichever comes first. Any saving throw allowed has a DC of 10 + class level + Cha modifier.

When under the effect of a demonbind, you gain telepathy out to 100 feet (MM 316) and the evil subtype if you don't

have it already. If you are targeted by a *banishment* or *dismissal* spell, you instantly lose your demonbind. If you enter an area protected by a *hallow* or *consecrate* spell, the demonbind is suppressed for as long as you remain in the area.

Each demonbind is the equivalent of a spell whose level equals the damnation point cost for invoking the demonbind.

Dretch (1 point): Your body becomes flabby and grotesque, and your limbs become thin and spindly.

You gain 5 temporary hit points and resistance to acid 5, cold 5, and fire 5.

Babau (2 points): A sheen of red ectoplasm covers your hands.

You gain 10 temporary hit points and sneak attack +1d6 (as the rogue class feature).

In addition, you can spend 1 damnation point as a swift action to lace your *eldritch blast* with caustic slime, dealing an extra 5 points of acid damage.

Succubus (3 points): Small, useless black wings erupt from your back.

You gain 15 temporary hit points and the benefits of the *tongues* spell.

You can spend 1 damnation point as a swift action to gain a +5 competence bonus on Bluff and Diplomacy checks.

Yochlol (4 points): Your flesh takes on a slightly amorphous appearance, occasionally forming tiny vestigial tendrils that wave about as if searching for something.

You gain 20 temporary hit points, and you have a 25% chance to ignore the extra damage from a critical hit or sneak attack.

Also, you can spend one damnation point as a swift action to use *gaseous form* on yourself.

Bebilith (4 points): Your skin turns a dark shade of blue and your eyes redden. Six vestigial limbs that flap uselessly for the duration emerge from your ribs.

You gain 20 temporary hit points and the scent ability.

You can spend 1 damnation point as a swift action to gain a climb speed equal to your land speed.

Vrock (5 points): A down of gray and white feathers covers your body. Your face twists and contorts, forming a hard beak in place of your mouth. As you move, puffs of harmless dust rise from your body.

You gain 25 temporary hit points.

In addition, you can spend 1 damnation point as a swift action to augment your *eldritch blast* with screeching sonic energy. A target struck by this *eldritch blast* takes an additional 10 points of sonic damage and becomes deafened for 5 rounds (Fort negates deafness).

Glabrezu (6 points): Your hands twist into crab-claws.

You gain 30 temporary hit points and a +5 competence bonus on Bluff checks.

In addition, you can spend 1 damnation point as a swift action to gain the benefit of a *true seeing* spell.

Nalfeshnee (7 points): Your body swells with corruption, the skin stretching taut from the profound pressure created by the possessing fiend.

You gain 35 temporary hit points and resistance to acid 5, cold 5, and fire 5.

Additionally, you can spend 1 damnation point as a swift action to lace your *eldritch blast* with a nalfeshnee's smite. Non-evil targets with fewer HD than your character level who are struck by the *eldritch blast* are dazed for 1 round, overwhelmed by horrid visions (Will negates).

Marilith (8 points): An extra two sets of arms grow from the sides of your body, your legs fuse into a green serpent's tail, and your eyes burn with an unholy light.

You gain 40 temporary hit points.

Your original arms (if any) are your primary arms, and the new limbs are secondary limbs. You can wield extra weapons with these new limbs, but all such attacks are treated as off-hand attacks.

Also, you can spend 1 damnation point as a swift action to use one of your new limbs to fire an *eldritch blast* at a –5 penalty on the attack roll; you can't apply any *eldritch essence* or *blast shape* invocations (or any other modifications) to this *eldritch blast*.

TABLE 3–4: THE DEMONBINDER HIT DIE: D4

Level	Base				Special	Invocations Known
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save		
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Damnation points, <i>demonbind</i>	—
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Damage reduction 2/good	+1 level of existing class
3rd	+1	+3	+1	+3	Resistance to electricity 5	+1 level of existing class
4th	+2	+4	+1	+4	—	+1 level of existing class
5th	+2	+4	+1	+4	Resistance to electricity 10	+1 level of existing class
6th	+3	+5	+2	+5	Damage reduction 4/good	+1 level of existing class
7th	+3	+5	+2	+5	Immunity to poison	+1 level of existing class
8th	+4	+6	+2	+6	—	+1 level of existing class
9th	+4	+6	+3	+6	Immunity to electricity	+1 level of existing class
10th	+5	+7	+3	+7	Damage reduction 6/good	+1 level of existing class

Class Skills (2 + Int modifier per level): Bluff, Concentration, Disguise, Intimidate, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (the planes), Knowledge (religion), Sense Motive, Spellcraft, Use Magic Device.

Balor (9 points): Massive wings tear out of your back, and angry red flames wreath your body.

You gain 45 temporary hit points and a fly speed equal to your land speed (good maneuverability).

Also, you can spend 1 damnation point as a swift action to make a melee touch attack that deals fire damage equal to the damage normally dealt by your *eldritch blast*.

Damage Reduction (Su): Starting at second level, you gain damage reduction 2/good. At 6th and 10th level, your damage reduction improves to 4/good and 6/good, respectively.

Resistance to Electricity (Su): Beginning at 3rd level, you gain resistance to electricity 5. At 5th level, this resistance increases to 10. This resistance stacks with the energy resistance class feature gained by the warlock^{CAr}.

Immunity to Poison (Su): At 7th level, you gain immunity to all types of poison, even magical poison.

Immunity to Electricity (Su): At 9th level, your resistance to electricity is replaced by immunity to electricity.

PLAYING A DEMONBINDER

By becoming a demonbinder, you sacrifice your immortal soul for the instant power granted by the Abyss. You draw demonic agencies inside yourself, triggering a vile transformation that bestows not only a sampling of a fiend's power, but also a resemblance to that fiend. Constant exposure to these creatures leaves a stain on your soul so foul that no act of restitution will ever cleanse it.

For obvious reasons, most demonbinders find little acceptance in most civilized lands and are forced to make do in remote places: dark lands filled with goblinoids, giants, and other creatures that care little for the interests of one depraved mortal. This, however, is not the case with the drow. Thanks to Lolth's association with the Abyss, particularly with regard to her personal domain (the Demonweb Pits), female demonbinders are valued members of the Spider Queen's clergy. Called the Daughters of the Demon, they treat regularly with fiends. Lending special insights into the nature of demons, they aid priestesses in a particularly terrifying ritual—one in which these otherworldly beings are called up to take part in depraved couplings, hoping to gain the favor of the Queen of Spiders.

Combat

The demonbinder prestige class offers an incredible selection of abilities, granting you uncommon versatility. With the infu-

sion of temporary hit points acquired from your demonbind, you have a greater ability to withstand attacks before you have to withdraw from combat.

Demonbinds also give you ways to improve your *eldritch blast*. However, they require additional expenditures of damnation points, which limits your options at lower levels but provides even greater flexibility with the use of your *eldritch blast* as you grow more powerful.

*Olarae Quavein,
a demonbinder*



Advancement

The Abyss and the creatures that dwell within its endless depths contain enormous power that you have stolen and molded to serve your purposes. You turned to the forbidden knowledge of the demonologists, scouring tomes of the most profane knowledge to unlock the secrets of demonbinding. You learned how to open yourself to these spirits and invite them to reside within you. The depth of their wickedness shocked you at first, but each time you bound one, you found your reluctance slipping away until the process felt almost natural.

Unless you are ensconced in a church of Lolth, odds are that you are an exile, cast out of society for your terrible arts. You might surround yourself with minions for the protection they afford. If you are not an exile, and you are female, then you are a part of the esteemed Daughters of the Demon, a coven of female drow warlocks who advise and support the priestesses, helping them to exert their absolute control over the community. Though most of your time is spent in these endeavors, you occasionally use your magical talents to thwart your most ambitious competitors.

As you advance, you should invest in feats that improve your *eldritch blast* ability. Since the demonbinder class does not improve the amount of damage you deal, feats such as Ability Focus (*eldritch blast*) and Weapon Focus (*eldritch blast*), as well as Maximize Spell-Like Ability and Heighten Spell-Like Ability, make it harder for foes to resist this vital component of your arsenal.

Resources

The Daughters of the Demon receive assistance from the clerics of Lolth, who regard them as valuable tools for maintaining their status and control. In exchange for your support, the priestesses provide you with lodging, food, clothing, and all of life's necessities. In addition, they also offer free healing, if it lies within their power, as well as discounted spellcasting services. Though the rewards are considerable, make no mistake: You are their servant.

DEMONBINDERS IN THE WORLD

"How can you doubt the reasons behind the curse that banished the drow from the sun's light? The demonbinders prove their wickedness. They earned their fate—and the day this world sees the end of the dark elves cannot come soon enough."

—Estrella Montenegro, Knight of the Chalice

Demonbinders are a menace. They have no restraint. They eschew the good sense that keeps sane mortals from treating with demons. Demonbinders are too arrogant to recognize that they are the tools of the creatures they supposedly control, and the fact that they have not yet been bodily snatched into the Abyss to suffer incomprehensible tortures is only proof that these twisted individuals are immensely valuable to the demon princes.

Organization

From the very moment young drow exhibit a warlock's unique powers, they are taken from their houses, stripped of their familial loyalties, and steeped in the dark arts of warlock magic. Few survive the arduous training and profoundly evil rites meant to usher them into their next stage of development. For most, their "education" stops when they achieve adulthood, whereupon they take their place in the priesthood as members of the church. A few go farther than this position, however.

Warlocks who display a special knack for dealing with fiends and who exhibit a deeper understanding of those creatures study under the tutelage of established demonbinders, learning a different, darker path to power. Again, the casualty rate from such instruction is high, and many would-be demonbind-

OLARAE QUAVEIN

CR 10

Female drow warlock^{CAr} 5/demonbinder 4
CE Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +1, Spot +1
Languages Abyssal, Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Kuo-toan, Undercommon

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+2 Dex, +4 armor, +1 deflection)
hp 36 (9 HD); **DR** 1/cold iron and 2/good
Immune magic *sleep* effects
Resist electricity 5; **SR** 20
Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +8 (+10 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments)
Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk heavy mace +6 (1d8)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +5
Atk Options Combat Expertise, Improved Feint, *eldritch blast* (+8 ranged touch, 4d6)
Special Actions demonbind
Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of eagle's splendor*, *wand of fireball* (CL 5th, 12 charges)
Invocations Known (CL 8th):
At will—*baleful utterance* (DC 17), *frightful blast* (DC 17), *sickening blast* (DC 17), *spiderwalk*, *walk unseen*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th):
At will—*detect magic*
1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Abilities Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 8, Cha 20
SQ damnation 9, deceive item
Feats Ability Focus (eldritch blast), Combat Expertise, Improved Feint, Weapon Focus (eldritch blast)
Skills Bluff +17, Diplomacy +9, Disguise +5 (+7 acting), Intimidate +15, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (the planes) +15, Listen +1, Search +5, Sense Motive +7, Spellcasting +11 (+13 decipher scrolls), Spot +1, Survival -1 (+1 on other planes), Use Magic Device +13 (+15 scrolls)
Possessions combat gear plus +1 *mithral shirt*, *ring of protection* +1, *chasuble of fell power*^{CAr}, *cloak of Charisma* +2, *vest of resistance* +1^{CAr}

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they take a -1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

DARK SNIPER

CR 7

Male drow scout^{CAD} 6
CE Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +12, Spot +12
Languages Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon

AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 19; Dodge, Mobility, uncanny dodge (+5 Dex, +4 armor)
hp 36 (6 HD)
Immune magic *sleep* effects
Resist evasion; **SR** 17
Fort +4, **Ref** +10, **Will** +3 (+5 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments)
Weakness light blindness

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares); Shot on the Run, flawless stride
Melee mwk rapier +6 (1d6+1/18-20 plus poison)
Ranged +1 *composite longbow* +10 (1d8+2/×3)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +5
Atk Options Point Blank Shot, poison (drow poison, Fort DC 13, unconscious 1 minute/unconscious 2d4 hours), skirmish (+2d6, +1 AC)
Combat Gear 5 doses of drow poison
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th):
1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Abilities Str 13, Dex 20, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 10
SQ able to notice secret or concealed doors, battle fortitude +1, fast movement, poison use, trackless step, trapfinding
Feats Dodge, Mobility, Point Blank Shot, Shot on the Run^B
Skills Balance +16, Climb +10, Diplomacy +2, Hide +19, Jump +12, Listen +12, Move Silently +14, Search +12, Sense Motive +6, Spot +12, Tumble +15
Possessions combat gear plus *mithral shirt*, +1 *composite longbow* (+1 Str bonus) with 50 arrows, *masterwork rapier*, *gloves of Dexterity* +2, *cloak of elvenkind*

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they take a -1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

Flawless Stride (Ex) A dark sniper ignores movement penalties in any terrain that slows movement.

Skirmish (Ex) +1 bonus on damage rolls and to AC in any round in which a dark sniper moves at least 10 feet.

Battle Fortitude (Ex) Bonus on initiative checks and Fortitude saves while wearing light or no armor and carrying a light load. Included above.

ers simply disappear, with only an echoing scream to suggest where they went and what took them.

Once past the initial stages of training, the newly ordained demonbinder oversees and sometimes participates in summoning rituals, cackling as the acolytes shriek with pain and terror from the caress of a conjured fiend.

Although demonbinders have great power, the path is not without its drawbacks. No priestess fully trusts a demonbinder, and with good reason: These individuals are every bit as fickle and dangerous as Lolth herself. When infused with a demon's essence, their capricious and violent tendencies become far worse.

NPC Reactions

Demonbinders are lumped together with demon worshippers, detestable in almost every circle and certainly by any civilized community. Those who learn of a demonbinder's nature, abilities, and allegiance are hostile and attack on sight if at all possible.

Demonbinders find welcome only among evil outsiders and creatures that venerate demonic gods. To such individuals, demonbinders are kindred spirits, serving the same powers for the same ends. They are indifferent, or friendly if they happen to serve identical masters.

DEMONBINDER LORE

Characters who have ranks in Knowledge (the planes) can research demonbinders to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: There is little difference between demonbinders and the demons that possess them.

DC 15: Demonbinders, though they have much in common with other spirit sharers, are wholly in a class of their own. They transcend the limits of common sense, willingly giving their bodies to demons.

DC 20: A demonbinder uses his or her own corruption to open a gate inside himself or herself, allowing a malignant spirit to occupy his or her body for a brief time. From such unions, the demonbinder gains a variety of powers and resistances that vary with the demon or demons bound.

Outside drow cities, demonbinders are reclusive. Characters interested in tracking down a demonbinder have the best chances of doing so by using Gather Information in frontier villages at the edges of civilization.

DEMONBINDERS IN THE GAME

Demonbinders lurk at the fringes of society, so you should be able to incorporate them into an ongoing campaign with little to no work. Furthermore, demonbinders are blessedly rare, and unless the characters have been in a drow city for a long time, there's no reason to assume the PCs have had previous encounters with these characters.

Best as adversaries, low-level demonbinders make excellent lieutenants: They are versatile, and the techniques they use are hard to predict. A higher-level demonbinder might lead a group of cultists, perhaps acting as a prophet.

Adaptation

Demonbinders are vile warlocks, utterly in thrall to the demons they bind. To make this class more useful to players, you could downplay some of darker elements to bring it more in line with other transformative prestige classes such as the dragon disciple (DMG 183) and the fiend-blooded (*Heroes of Horror*). Replace the chaotic evil alignment requirement with any non-good. In addition, apply the following changes to the damnation ability described above.

Damnation (Su): You gain a number of damnation points equal to your Charisma modifier plus your class level. You use damnation points to power your demonbind ability. Spent damnation points return at a rate of 1 point per 5 rounds. You cannot spend damnation points when in the area of a *consecrate*, *hallow*, or *magic circle against evil* spell.

Damnation comes with a price. Whenever you use damnation points, you must succeed on a DC 20 Will save or gain one negative level. Negative levels gained in this way last for 1 minute. Evil characters are immune to this side effect.

Sample Encounter

Drow demonbinders keep company with Lolth's clerics. Outside drow circles, demonbinders reside in reclusive and forlorn places, in the depths of dungeons, or in forgotten towers. They surround their lairs with guardians to ensure they are not disturbed.

EL 13: Fearing the growing instability within her, Olrae Quavein (see page 75) volunteered to lead a strike team of six dark snipers against a svirfneblin outpost. She hopes that the slaughter will slake the thirst for violence that grips her soul.

DREAD FANG OF LOLTH

"All things are possible with the grace of the Spider Queen. It is a shame you did not realize this before your treasonous transgression."

—Shalzad Raelnan, dread fang of Lolth

The dread fangs of Lolth are elite soldiers who fight for the drow matriarchs. They are a visible manifestation of the theocratic power that governs the dark elves, and their appearance elicits fear in almost all who behold them. Dread fangs of Lolth answer only to the clergy, but they work alongside the mysterious eyes of Lolth (see page 80) from time to time.

BECOMING A DREAD FANG

Most dread fangs of Lolth are multiclass fighter/rogues, because the combination of these classes offers the quickest path to meeting the requirements. Some fangs have levels in ranger or barbarian instead of fighter, or ninja instead of rogue. A rare few dabble in arcane magic as sorcerers or wizards, and then alternate levels in dread fang of Lolth and eldritch knight (DMG 186).

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Alignment: Lawful evil.

Race: Drow.

Base Attack Bonus: +5.

Skills: Hide 4 ranks, Listen 2 ranks, Move Silently 4 ranks, Spot 2 ranks.

Special: Evasion.

Special: Sneak attack +2d6.

TABLE 3–5: THE DREAD FANG HIT DIE: D8

Level	Base				Special
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Lolth's will, Lolth's whispers, sudden strike +1d6
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	Poison use, team maneuverability
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	Sudden strike +2d6, uncanny dodge
4th	+4	+4	+1	+1	Improved evasion, team defense +1
5th	+5	+4	+1	+1	Sudden strike +3d6
6th	+6	+5	+2	+2	Spider bite
7th	+7	+5	+2	+2	Opportunist, sudden strike +4d6
8th	+8	+6	+2	+2	Team defense +2
9th	+9	+6	+3	+3	Improved uncanny dodge, sudden strike +5d6
10th	+10	+7	+3	+3	Ambush

Class Skills (4 + Int modifier per level): Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Intimidate, Jump, Listen, Move Silently, Spot, Tumble.

CLASS FEATURES

Dread fangs of Lolth are shrewd warriors who specialize in the element of surprise. From the outset, they are granted blessings from their goddess that set them apart from other warriors. As they gain levels, they develop a number of techniques that help them make swift and deadly attacks.

Lolth's Will (Su): Your racial bonus on Will saves against spells and spell-like abilities increases to +4.

Lolth's Whispers (Su): The dread voice of the Spider Queen fills your thoughts. You gain a +2 insight bonus on damage rolls. As a swift action, you can give up this bonus and bestow it on an ally within 30 feet that you can clearly see. The ally's bonus lasts for 1 round.

Sudden Strike (Ex): You deal extra damage at any time when the target would be denied its Dexterity bonus. This extra damage applies to ranged attacks only if the target is within 30 feet. You can't use sudden strike to deliver nonlethal damage. Weapons capable of dealing only nonlethal damage don't deal extra damage when used as part of a sudden strike. Otherwise, this ability functions as the sneak attack rogue class feature (PH 50), and it stacks with sneak attack whenever both would apply to the same target. (This ability is the same as the ninja's sudden strike class feature, described in *Complete Adventurer*.)

This extra damage increases by 1d6 at each odd-numbered level beyond 1st.

Poison Use (Ex): Starting at 2nd level, you never risk accidentally poisoning yourself when applying poison to a weapon.

Team Maneuverability (Ex): Also at 2nd level, you add one-half your class level as an insight bonus on Climb and Jump checks. All allies within 30 feet gain a +2 competence bonus on these checks if they can see you.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): At 3rd level, you cannot be caught flat-footed and react to danger before your senses would normally allow you to do so. See the uncanny dodge barbarian class feature, PH 26. If you already have this ability, you gain improved uncanny dodge instead (see below).

Improved Evasion (Ex): Beginning at 4th level, you can avoid damage from certain attacks with a successful Reflex save and take only half damage on a failed save. See the improved evasion monk class feature, PH 42.

Team Defense (Ex): At 4th level, you gain a +1 dodge bonus to Armor Class. As a swift action, you can give up and bestow this bonus onto an ally within 30 feet that you can clearly see. The ally's bonus lasts for 1 round.

The dodge bonus increases to +2 at 8th level.

Spider Bite (Ex): By 6th level, you have learned where to strike your foes to best deliver your poison. When you attack with a poisoned weapon, the save DC to resist the initial effect increases by 2.

Opportunist (Ex): At 7th level, once per round, you can make an attack of opportunity against an opponent who has just been injured in melee by another character. See the opportunist rogue class feature, PH 51.

Improved Uncanny Dodge (Ex): From 9th level on, you can no longer be flanked. See the improved uncanny dodge barbarian class feature, PH 26.

Ambush (Ex): At 10th level, during a surprise round, you can act normally if aware of your opponents; you are not restricted to just a standard action and can perform a full-round action, standard and move action, and so on. If you are surprised, you can still take a standard action.

PLAYING A DREAD FANG OF LOLTH

As a dread fang of Lolth, you enforce the will of the priestesses. The goddess favors you, filling your mind with her whispers and mutterings. Most times, it is a constant, almost maddening noise, but you have learned to pick out some wisdom from her litany—insights that make you a better warrior.

You are more than just a soldier, though. You are part of an elite fighting force that protects and furthers the Spider Queen's interests. As a group, you and your fellow fangs protect temples, priestesses, and the city, and occasionally undertake important missions for the clerics of Lolth. You take your responsibilities seriously and are loyal to a fault.

Combat

Many of your class features require you to gain surprise. Rather than improving your sneak attack, you gain sudden strike, which grants extra damage only against opponents deprived of their Dexterity bonus. You can certainly hold your own in a fight, but you're most dangerous when ambushing your enemies.

At 2nd level, you gain your first team ability. Like the eyes of Lolth, you are most effective when fighting alongside allies.

When grouped with other fangs or eyes, you and your allies can respond to changes in the battlefield and best allocate your resources to win the fight.

Advancement

Becoming a dread fang of Lolth was no easy task. It involved endless hours of training, including the extensive study of numerous fighting techniques as well as in-depth religious indoctrination. For years, you honed your abilities, improving upon your already formidable talents. But the priestesses waited for a sign of greater ability, and then it came: The mark of Lolth's favor began as a faint voice, the slightest whisper, something you might have imagined. But it soon became far more insistent.

It distracted you and pushed you to the brink of madness, but somehow you resisted—and eventually embraced the whispering, knowing that it was the voice of the goddess herself. And thus, you were welcomed into the ranks of the fangs.

Since nearly all your abilities rely on surprise, invest in feats and skills that help you take advantage of these circumstances. Feats such as Improved Initiative, Spring Attack, and Great Cleave are good choices, but don't overlook feats that enhance your sneak attack and sudden strike abilities, particularly Razing Strike^{CAD} and Staggering Strike^{CAD}. When you gain treasure, spend it on items that improve your stealth. *Cloaks* and *boots of elvenkind* are vital, as are *elixirs of hiding* and *sneaking*.

SHALZAD RAE LNAN

CR 11

Male drow rogue 3/fighter 3/dread fang of Lolth 4
LE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +15, Spot +15

Languages Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon

AC 22, touch 16, flat-footed 17; Dodge, team defense (+5 Dex, +6 armor, +1 dodge)

hp 64 (10 HD)

Immune magic *sleep* effects

Resist improved evasion; **SR** 21

Fort +11, **Ref** +11, **Will** +5 (+9 against spells and spell-like abilities; +7 against other enchantments)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +1 *toxic* longsword* +14/+9 (1d8+3/19–20 plus poison)
* See page 96

Ranged +1 *spiderkissed* composite longbow* +17/+12 (1d8+3/×3 plus entangle)
* See page 96

Base Atk +10; **Grp** +12

Atk Options Blind-Fight, Clever Opportunist, Combat Reflexes, Shadowborn Warrior, Lolth's whispers, poison (drow sleep poison, Fort DC 13, unconscious 1 minute/unconscious 2d4 hours), sneak attack +2d6, sudden strike +2d6

Special Actions team defense, team maneuverability

Combat Gear 3 doses of drow sleep poison, *elixir of hiding*, *elixir of sneaking*, *potion of cure serious wounds*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th):

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Abilities Str 14, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 10

SQ poison use, trap sense +1, trapfinding

Feats Alertness, Blind-Fight, Clever Opportunist^{*B}, Combat Reflexes^B, Dodge^B, Shadowborn Warrior^{*}, Stealthy
* See Chapter 2

Skills Balance +7, Climb +12, Escape Artist +11, Hide +13, Intimidate +9, Jump +20, Listen +15, Move Silently +15, Search +9, Spot +15, Survival +1 (+3 following tracks), Tumble +17, Use Rope +5 (+7 bindings)

Possessions combat gear plus +2 *mithral shirt*, +1 *toxic longsword*, +1 *spiderkissed composite longbow* (+2 Str bonus) with 20 arrows, *amulet of health* +2, *cloak of resistance* +1, *gloves of Dexterity* +2

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

LOLTH'S STING

CR 5

Female drow ninja^{CAD} 4

NE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +11, Spot +11

Languages Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon

AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 15 (+3 Dex, +3 armor, +2 Wis)

hp 25 (4 HD)

Immune magic *sleep* effects

SR 15

Fort +3, **Ref** +7, **Will** +3 (+5 with *ki* pool) (+5/+7 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 35 ft. (7 squares)

Melee mwk rapier +7 (1d6+1/18–20 plus poison)

Ranged dagger +6 (1d4+1/19–20 plus poison)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +4

Atk Options poison (drow poison, Fort DC 13, unconscious 1 minute/unconscious 2d4 hours), sudden strike +2d6

Special Actions

Combat Gear 3 doses of drow poison, 2 bags of caltrops, 2 smokesticks, *elixir of hiding*, *elixir of sneaking*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th):

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Abilities Str 12, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 10

SQ ghost step, great leap, *ki* power 4/day, poison use, trapfinding

Feats Dash^{CW}, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +7, Diplomacy +4, Disguise +0 (+2 acting), Hide +10, Intimidate +2, Jump +7, Listen +11, Move Silently +10, Search +3, Sense Motive +9, Spot +11, Tumble +10

Possessions combat gear plus +1 *leather armor*, masterwork rapier, dagger, *amulet of health* +2

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks while operating in bright light.

Sudden Strike (Ex) As sneak attack (PH 50), but no extra damage when flanking.

Great Leap (Su) Always makes Jump checks as if running with the Run feat.

Ki Power (Su) Expend one daily use to activate *ki*-based abilities (ghost step or *ki* dodge); +2 bonus on Will saves as long as at least one daily use remains.

Ghost Step (Su) Swift action, one daily *ki* power use, invisibility for 1 round. *Complete Adventurer* 8.

Resources

You are a chosen servant of Lolth and, by virtue of your status, few drow dare cross your path. The priestesses supply you with your basic equipment, as well as housing, clothing, and the necessary supplies to survive. In addition, you have an easy time finding trainers and mentors who can help you refine your craft.

DREAD FANGS IN THE WORLD

“The dread fangs of Lolth are lackeys at best, but as elite guards, shock troops, and enforcers, they are useful allies. If they have one flaw, it’s their obedience. They never question orders. Ever.”

—Xune Argith, eye of Lolth

The dread fangs of Lolth are important additions to any campaign in which the drow are featured as principal antagonists. They use drow tactics and perfect them, and so are extremely evasive, unpredictable, and mobile. Even when used alongside lesser soldiers, the dread fangs drive home the cunning tactics the drow favor, and instill in the PCs a healthy respect for their foes.

Organization

The dread fangs of Lolth have a presence in nearly every drow city. Wherever there are priestesses of the Spider Queen, fangs are not far. As the enforcement arm of the church, the fangs ensure that the wishes of the priestesses are fulfilled and their enemies destroyed.

The clerics assign fangs to the eyes of Lolth. Under the command of these operatives, the fangs provide the muscle to ensure a successful mission. Eyes and fangs work exceptionally well together, their abilities complementing each other. When so paired, they can be a nearly unstoppable force.

Candidates are always carefully screened before being invited to join the fangs, since the priestesses cannot afford to compromise the integrity of the organization with dissent or treasonous thoughts. They pick talented males (and rarely females) who are unwaveringly loyal to the Spider Queen. Candidates endure a difficult period of training to alter their personalities and correct their conflicting loyalties until a single-minded warrior remains. Of these, only the ones who hear the voice of Lolth are allowed to become full-fledged members.

NPC Reactions

The dread fangs of Lolth are an intimidating presence among the drow, serving as constant reminders of the priestesses’ pervasive presence in their lives. Drow clerics are always friendly toward fangs, valuing their support of the theocracy, but the same attitude doesn’t always extend to all levels of drow society. Ordinary soldiers resent them out of jealousy, since (unlike the rank and file) the fangs succeeded in rising above their station. Likewise, nobles fear the fangs, perpetually worrying that the priestesses will employ those elite warriors against the houses. Of course, none would be so foolish as to exhibit anything other than a friendly face when speaking to a fang, but most nobles harbor disdain for the class and are secretly unfriendly.



Sbalzad Raelman, a dread fang of Lolth

DREAD FANG OF LOLTH LORE

Characters who have ranks in Knowledge (religion) can research dread fangs of Lolth to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: Dread fangs of Lolth are elite soldiers.

DC 15: Dread fangs, with their sudden strike ability, are most powerful when they have the advantage of surprise and numbers.

DC 20: When working with allies, dread fangs can lend their skills to those allies to improve their capabilities in combat, making the allies an extremely effective fighting force.

Dread fangs of Lolth are scarce outside drow cities, though within them, a character can locate a dread fang with a Gather Information check. Such checks should have low DCs, since nearly all drow know the location of the dread fangs' barracks.

DREAD FANGS IN THE GAME

Incorporating the dread fangs of Lolth into an ongoing campaign is simple, since they are practically exclusive to drow cities. If you have been running a long campaign featuring the drow, you could treat the existence of the dread fangs (and the eyes of Lolth) as a relatively new development, perhaps as a response to the actions of the adventurers.

Adaptation

If you run a campaign in a setting where Lolth is not clearly present, such as in Eberron or in Faerûn during the period of Lolth's silence, you can adapt this class easily by replacing Lolth with a campaign-appropriate deity. You can even retool the concept to make it suitable for surface elves. For example, instead of spider bite, change the class feature to scorpion sting and the name of the class to the stinger of Vulkoor.

Sample Encounter

Dread fangs of Lolth respond to threats made against their church. Individual fangs lead teams of lesser drow, and an eye of Lolth accompanies groups of fangs.

EL 12: Shalzad Raelnan (see page 78) and a squad of four Lolth's Stings patrol the edge of a contested cavern that the drow hope to wrest from an entrenched quaggoth tribe. The fighting has been fierce, with terrible casualties on both sides. Rather than sacrifice more valuable slaves in the confrontation, the drow hope to starve their enemies out. Shalzad, however, believes the quaggoths have a secret route leading to supplies, which could draw this engagement out indefinitely. He's torn. Part of him feels compelled to eliminate any quaggoths that come too close, but he must be certain about his suspicions.

EYE OF LOLTH

"We are the watchers. We monitor those who enjoy the enlightened wisdom and benevolence of the matriarchs."

—Xune Argith, eye of Lolth

The eyes of Lolth are stealthy servants and watchers faithful to the Church of Lolth. They observe activity in the lands controlled by the matriarchs and report their findings back to the houses. It falls to the eyes of Lolth to lead forces of dread fangs of Lolth (see page 76) and other drow to capture enemies and bring them back to the temples for interrogation. They are the secret police—and they are everywhere.

BECOMING AN EYE OF LOLTH

Multiclass cleric/rogues easily meet the requirements of this class, since they have the mix of skills and abilities necessary to take eye of Lolth levels early on. A cleric/scout^{CAD} can also advance into this class at a higher level.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Race: Drow.

Skills: Hide 8 ranks, Knowledge (religion) 4 ranks, Listen 8 ranks, Spot 8 ranks.

Feats: Cautious Attack (see page 47).

Domain: Trickery.

Special: Evasion.

Special: Sneak attack +2d6 or skirmish +2d6.

CLASS FEATURES

As an eye of Lolth, you improve your powers of observation. At higher levels, you can bestow this uncanny awareness on your allies, giving you the edge needed to lead your strike force and to attack quickly and efficiently.

Spellcasting: At each even-numbered level, you gain new spells per day and an increase in caster level (and spells known, if applicable) as if you had also gained a level in a divine spellcasting class to which you belonged before adding the prestige class level. You do not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. If you had more than one divine spellcasting class before becoming an eye of Lolth, you must decide to which class to add each level for the purpose of determining spells per day, caster level, and spells known.

Aura of Truth (Su): You emit a 20-foot-radius aura that prevents other creatures from speaking falsehoods, as if they were in the area of a *zone of truth* spell. Creatures are entitled to a Will save (DC 10 + your class level + your Cha modifier) to resist this effect. As with the spell, characters that move beyond the range of your aura are free to speak as they choose.

Blindsense (Su): You gain blindsense (MM 306) out to 10 feet. At 4th, 7th, and 9th level, the extent of your blindsense increases by an additional 10 feet.

Lolth's Vision (Ex): You add your class level to Spot checks. You can grant this bonus to an ally within 30 feet as a swift action. This bonus lasts for 1 round.

Sneak Attack (Ex): Beginning at 2nd level, you deal an extra 1d6 points of damage when you are flanking an opponent or at any time when the target would be denied its Dexterity bonus. This extra damage applies to ranged attacks only if the target is within 30 feet. See the sneak attack rogue class feature, PH 50. This damage increases by 1d6 at 5th level and again at 8th level.

Teamwork Observation (Ex): From 3rd level onward, if you spend 1 minute taking no other action than observing a single target, you gain a +2 bonus on attack rolls and weapon damage rolls against that target for 5 rounds. All allies within 30 feet gain the same bonus. (The allies need not be present while you study the target.)

At 7th level, this bonus increases to +4.

Hide in Plain Sight (Ex): Beginning at 6th level, as long as you are within 10 feet of some sort of a shadow, you can use

the Hide skill even when being observed. See the assassin class feature, *DMG* 181.

Team Sense (Ex): At 6th level, you gain a +2 insight bonus on initiative checks and Listen, Search, and Spot checks. All allies within 30 feet of you also gain this bonus.

Team Stealth (Ex): Beginning at 9th level, you take no penalty on Hide and Move Silently checks when moving faster than one-half your normal speed but less than your full speed, and you take only a –10 penalty on Hide and Move Silently checks when moving your full speed. As a swift action, you can grant this benefit to another character within 30 feet for 1 round.

Vanish (Su): At 10th level, as a swift action you can become *invisible* for 5 rounds. You can use this ability at will, but you must wait 1 minute between uses.

PLAYING AN EYE OF LOLTH

You pride yourself on your vigilance and pay attention to every smallest detail, no matter how inconsequential. It is because of your observations that you have worth in the eyes of the matriarchs, and as long as you have worth, you have some degree of protection from the awful torments they inflict on those who have angered them.

The eyes of Lolth are an insidious organization, infesting every level of drow society. As a member, you live a double life, posing as a priestess or as a common citizen in one of the city's ghettos. It's vital that you retain your cover, since it allows you to keep track of the various undercurrents that define the tumultuous atmosphere of drow culture.

Combat

You never allow yourself to be caught unaware, and your class features make this event unlikely at best. Scout out the battlefield before taking any action, using team stealth to best position yourself and your allies so you can surprise your adversaries.

Like a rogue or a scout, you're at your best when you support other characters in combat. You can pepper your enemies with ranged attacks, but unless you have the advantage of surprise, you should focus on flanking your enemies to complement your warrior allies.

Should a battle ever turn against you, though, you have the means to escape. Hide in plain sight allows you to effectively vanish, and when you attain the highest level in this class, you can become invisible. Aside from providing an almost infallible means of escape, you can also use these abilities to strike from unseen positions, crippling unsuspecting opponents with your devastating attacks.

Advancement

The church of Lolth aggressively recruits new eyes of Lolth. In fact, eyes are always under orders to watch for suitable candidates to bring into the organization. In all likelihood, this was your first introduction to the eyes. Of course, it wasn't as if you had a choice about joining. Refusing an invitation is tantamount to accepting a death sentence.

As an eye of Lolth, it is your responsibility to gather information about your fellow drow, to notice trends and developments within your culture, and to anticipate upheavals. One might expect the priestesses to take a more active role in monitoring their cities, but their important enemies protect their privacy with a variety of wards. It falls to you to undertake these dangerous missions, to get close to the movers and shakers of the underworld and learn what you can.

Your most important role is that of a spy, so you would do well to invest skill points in Gather Information, Listen, and Spot. Of equal importance is the ability to observe unseen, so Hide and Move Silently are excellent skills to improve. As for feats, select those that complement your class features, such as Quick Reconnoiter^{CAD}. Also consider feats that improve your combat capabilities and maneuverability, such as Spring Attack, Terrifying Strike (page 54), and Shadowborn Warrior (page 52).

Resources

As members of the secret police, eyes of Lolth have access to extensive stores of information, compiled by various agents working in the field. Most entries are dossiers on agitators, important slaves, and the members of the mighty households. Eyes of Lolth who use this information gain a +4 competence bonus on Knowledge (history) and Knowledge (local) checks.

TABLE 3–6: THE EYE OF LOLTH HIT DIE: D6

Level	Base				Special	Spellcasting
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save		
1st	+0	+0	+2	+2	Aura of truth, blindsense 10 ft., Lolth's vision	—
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+3	Sneak attack +1d6	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+3	Teamwork observation +2	—
4th	+3	+1	+4	+4	Blindsense 20 ft.	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class
5th	+3	+1	+4	+4	Sneak attack +2d6	—
6th	+4	+2	+5	+5	Hide in plain sight, team sense	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class
7th	+5	+2	+5	+5	Blindsense 30 ft., teamwork observation +4	—
8th	+6	+2	+6	+6	Sneak attack +3d6	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class
9th	+6	+3	+6	+6	Blindsense 40 ft., team stealth	—
10th	+7	+3	+7	+7	Vanish	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class

Class Skills (4 + Int modifier per level): Bluff, Concentration, Disguise, Gather Information, Hide, Intimidate, Knowledge (local), Knowledge (religion), Listen, Move Silently, Search, Sense Motive, Spot.

Eyes are more than just spies. They enforce the matriarchs' will, acting as warriors and assassins. On dangerous missions, eyes team up with dread fangs of Lolth (see page 76), especially when they must capture particularly troublesome opponents.

EYES OF LOLTH IN THE WORLD

"Never trust a drow, especially a smiling one."

—Gorben Stonefist, duergar merchant

The eyes of Lolth wait, watch, and listen. They could be anyone, anywhere. They usually operate in drow cities, but they can be found anywhere—as long as their priestesses have an interest in the place. Eyes of Lolth provide an in-game reason for why the drow are able to anticipate the player characters' movements, serving as foils for the PCs and, ultimately, as obstacles for the characters to overcome.

Organization

To the common drow, the existence of the eyes is only the subject of conjecture.

Few drow have ever knowingly met an eye of Lolth, even though most suspect that they've encountered at least one during the course of their lives. The extent of the eyes' power varies from city to city. In some places, they are a force rivaling even the Spider Queen's church and are no longer subject to the whims of her clerics.

In others, they are small, disorganized, and subjugated by the subversive elements in the cities. Regardless, those who know about the eyes invariably fear them.

In most cases, the eyes work directly for the priestesses, filing regular reports and receiving assignments from the church. Eyes are loners, since too many operatives in one place can compromise a mission. Certain targets require a greater investment of resources, however, and in these cases groups of four or more eyes might monitor the same mark.

The eyes are closely affiliated with the dread fangs of Lolth. Although some rivalry exists between the two groups, they work together to handle dangerous jobs. Fangs, as the enforcers and elite soldiers, do the majority of the fighting. The eyes direct the combat, lending support where needed.

NPC Reactions

As drow, eyes of Lolth receive the same kind of reactions that other drow face, which is usually fear and hostility from nearly all non-drow and indifference from their own kind. On the off chance that an eye's affiliation is revealed, drow attitudes improve to helpful, to avoid the wrath of the matriarchs.

EYE OF LOLTH LORE

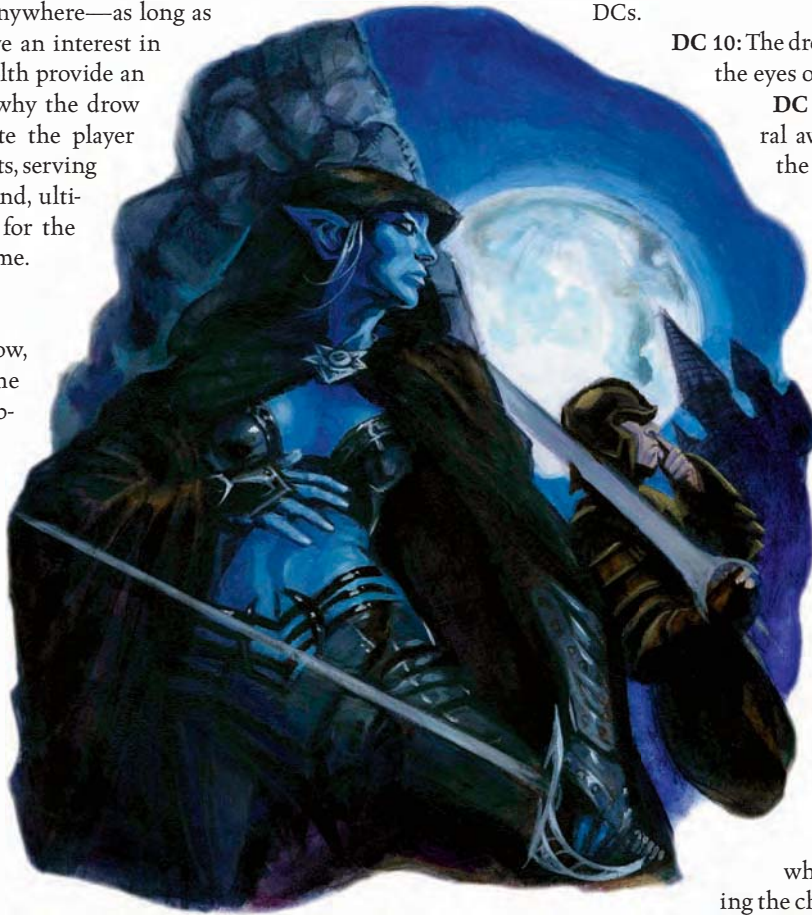
Characters who have ranks in Knowledge (religion) can research eyes of Lolth to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: The drow secret police are called the eyes of Lolth.

DC 15: They have preternatural awareness: They can hear the slightest sound and spot the smallest detail.

DC 20: Eyes never fight fairly, preferring the element of surprise. When on an important mission, they work alongside the dread fangs of Lolth.

You don't find the eyes of Lolth; they find you. Any concerted effort made to track one down soon comes to an eye's attention, and one or more might be assigned to watch the player characters. If any of the PCs seem a good candidate for the organization, an eye might approach when they are alone, inviting the characters to join. Should a character refuse, the eye accepts that decision and returns the next day with a group of dread fangs to snatch the unwilling candidate.



Xune Argith, an eye of Lolth

EYES OF LOLTH IN THE GAME

The eyes favor secrecy, so you can incorporate them easily into an ongoing campaign. They can be a constant source of frustration to adventuring parties. They might approach the characters under the pretense of friendship, only to funnel information back to the matriarchs. Such villains might even help the PCs if it allows them to get closer to their target. More likely, though, the eyes shadow their steps, watching from a distance until the proper moment to attack.

Adaptation

The eye of Lolth class can be customized by changing its focus. Instead of serving the drow matriarchs, the eyes could be recast as surface elves who make forays into the Underdark to monitor their estranged kin. Change the drow requirement

XUNE ARGITH

CR 13

Female drow rogue 3/cleric 3/eye of Lolth 6
NE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +7; **Senses** blindsense 40 ft., darkvision 120 ft.;
Listen +27, Spot +33

Aura truth (DC 19, 20-ft.-radius)

Languages Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven,
Undercommon

AC 23, touch 16, flat-footed 18; **Dodge**
(+5 Dex, +2 armor, +3 shield, +1 deflection, +2 natural)

hp 48 (12 HD)

Immune magic *sleep* effects

Resist evasion; **SR** 23

Fort +6, **Ref** +16, **Will** +11 (+13 against spells, spell-like
abilities, and other enchantments)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee +1 *keen rapier* +14/+9 (1d6/15–20)

Ranged +1 *hand crossbow* +14 (1d4+1/19–20 plus poison)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +7

Atk Options Cautious Attack, Terrifying Strike, poison
(shadow essence, Fort DC 17, 1 Str drain/2d6 Str) rebuke
undead 6/day (+3, 2d6+6, 3rd), sneak attack +4d6

Combat Gear 2 flasks of acid, 2 *potions of cure moderate
wounds*

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 6th):

3rd—*chain of eyes*^{SC} (DC 15), *darkfire*^{SC} (+7 melee touch
or +13 ranged touch), *nondetection*^D

2nd—*clairaudience/clairvoyance*^D, *death knell* (DC 14),
owl's wisdom, *status*, *veil of shadow*^{SC}

1st—*bane* (DC 13), *command* (DC 13), *disguise self*^D,
entropic shield, *sanctuary* (DC 13)

0—*detect magic*, *cure minor wounds*, *guidance*, *read
magic*, *resistance*

D: Domain spell. Deity: Lolth. *Domains*: Drow^{SC}, Trickery

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th):

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Abilities Str 8, Dex 20, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 16

SQ hide in plain sight (within 10 ft. of shadow), Lolth's
vision, team sense, teamwork observation, trap sense +1,
trapfinding

Feats Alertness, Cautious Attack*, Dodge, Lightning
Reflexes^B, Terrifying Strike*, Weapon Finesse
* See Chapter 2

Skills Bluff +9, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +3 (+5 acting), Gather
Information +11, Hide +29, Intimidate +12, Jump +8,
Knowledge (local) +7, Knowledge (religion) +5, Listen +27,
Move Silently +18, Search +11, Sense Motive +8, Spot +33

Possessions combat gear plus +2 *light steel shield*, +1 *keen
rapier*, +1 *hand crossbow* with 10 bolts, *ring of
anticipation**, *ring of protection* +1, *amulet of natural
armor* +2, *assassin's cloak**, *boots of striding and springing*,
bracers of armor +2, *gloves of Dexterity* +2
* See Chapter 4

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as
sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In
addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack
rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

to elf or half-elf and the Knowledge (religion) requirement to
Knowledge (dungeoneering). In lieu of gaining Lolth's vision,
the class grants characters darkvision out to 60 feet. Finally,
the character loses all team-oriented benefits, but gains the
ability to use *disguise self* at 3rd level, *alter self* at 6th level, and
finally *polymorph* at 9th level, each a number of times per day
equal to the character's Charisma bonus (minimum 1/day) and
at a caster level equal to the character's Hit Dice.

Sample Encounter

Eyes of Lolth wait to show themselves until they are ready.
They are patient spies, waiting for the opportune moment to
strike. When they do attack, the results are devastating.

EL 13: Xune Argith is a particularly well-regarded member
of the eyes of Lolth. Through her work, she revealed the plot
and treachery in House Kilsek that culminated in its expulsion
from the city. When the player characters first arrive in
Erelhei-Cinlu, she is curious and follows them. She haunts
their movements to ascertain why they have come to the city.
She slips away only to report her findings, but otherwise she's
a constant, if unknown, companion.

INSIDIOUS CORRUPTOR

"Friends, listen not to the dire warnings of the dwarves! The Underdark, while dangerous, is no worse than any other wilderness . . . and the treasures! Indeed, the Underdark is a new frontier, ripe with adventure and replete with plunder that's yours for the taking. The drow, you ask? What have you heroes to fear of a few elves?"

—Belgos Xarann, insidious corruptor

The insidious corruptor is a manipulator, a devious and sinister villain who lures individuals to their dooms. Armed with his silver tongue and his keen wit, few can resist his suggestions, and his victims meet dreadful fates either as sacrifices on the high priestesses' bloody altars or as slaves in the endless tunnels of the Underdark.

BECOMING AN INSIDIOUS CORRUPTOR

Nearly all corruptors are arcane spellcasters, since candidates must master the *dominate person* spell before taking levels in the class. Insidious corruptors are unique to the drow, and most of them are bards or sorcerers who establish a strong foundation of spellcasting abilities prior to advancing in this prestige class.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Race: Drow.

Alignment: Any evil.

Skills: Bluff 9 ranks, Diplomacy 4 ranks, Sense Motive 4 ranks.

Feats: Persuasive.

Spells: Ability to cast *dominate person*.

CLASS FEATURES

Although his talents lie in his deceptions, the insidious corruptor has a powerful will that he can exert upon any creature he meets. He sinks the claws of his influence into the hearts

and minds of his victims, using them like puppets to further his own ambitions.

Spellcasting: At each even-numbered level, you gain new spells per day and an increase in caster level (and spells known, if applicable) as if you had also gained a level in a spellcasting class to which you belonged before adding the prestige class level. You do not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. If you had more than one spellcasting class before becoming an insidious corruptor, you must decide to which class to add each level for the purpose of determining spells per day, caster level, and spells known.

Claws of Influence (Su): At will, as a standard action, you can select a single living creature within 30 feet that you can see and that has an Intelligence score of at least 3. The target must succeed on a Will save (DC 10 + your class level + your Cha modifier) or become vulnerable to your coercions. You gain your class level as an insight bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, and Sense Motive checks made against targets that fail their save against this ability.

At 1st level you can affect one target at a time. At 3rd level and every three levels thereafter, you gain an additional target.

The claws of influence remain until you release the subject (a swift action) or until it is more than 30 feet away from you, at which point it is instantly freed from your influence.

Manipulate Senses (Su): As a swift action, you can alter the senses of a creature affected by claws of influence. You can grant an insight bonus or penalty, of any amount up to your class level, to its Listen, Search, and Spot checks for 1 minute.

Probe Thoughts (Sp): Starting at 2nd level, as a standard action you can violate the thoughts of any creature currently under the effect of claws of influence. This ability functions like the *detect thoughts* spell, except the target does not get a saving throw. You gain information as if you had spent 3 rounds in concentration. After you use this ability, the target becomes *confused* (as the *confusion* spell) for 1 round.

Manipulation (Su): At 3rd level, as an immediate action you can telepathically urge a single creature under the effect

of claws of influence to take any of the following specific actions on its next turn.

Attack: The target creature uses a standard action to make a single attack.

Cast: The target creature casts a spell with a casting time of 1 standard action or less.

Move: The target creature spends a move action to move at a rate equal to his speed.

The target is free to make choices as to the target of its attack or spell, or where and how it moves. The target is under no compulsion to abide by your instructions. However, if the target chooses not to obey, it takes a -4 insight penalty on all attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, saving throws, and checks for 1 round.

Minion (Su): Beginning at 4th level, as a standard action you can select a single creature under the effect of claws of influence and affect it with a *dominate monster* spell for 1 round. As with the spell, if you force the target to do something against its nature, it can immediately make another saving throw against claws of influence with a $+2$ bonus to break free from this effect.

Swift Enchantment (Ex): Starting at 5th level, as an immediate action you can release a subject under the effect of claws of influence to cast an enchantment spell as a swift action.

Irresistible Charm (Ex): At 6th level, as a swift action you can release a subject under the effect of claws of influence to increase the save DC of the next enchantment (charm) spell you cast by an amount equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum $+1$).

Greater Manipulation (Su): Beginning at 7th level, you can issue commands to creatures under the sway of claws of influence with greater effect.

Attack: The target attacks another creature that you indicate. If it does, it gains a $+4$ bonus on attack rolls and damage rolls.

Cast: The target casts a spell at a target you indicate. If it does, the save DC increases by 2.

Move: The target moves where you indicate. If it does, it gains a $+10$ enhancement bonus to its speed for 1 round.

TABLE 3–7: THE INSIDIOUS CORRUPTOR HIT DIE: D6

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Claws of influence (1 target), manipulate senses	—
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	<i>Probe thoughts</i>	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	Manipulation, claws of influence (2 targets)	—
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Minion	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Swift enchantment	—
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Irresistible charm, claws of influence (3 targets)	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Greater manipulation	—
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6	Greater minion	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6	Irresistible compulsion, claws of influence (4 targets)	—
10th	+5	+3	+3	+7	Master manipulator	+1 level of existing spellcasting class

Class Skills (4 + Int modifier per level): Bluff, Concentration, Diplomacy, Disguise, Forgery, Gather Information, Intimidate, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (local), Listen, Search, Sense Motive, Spellcraft, Spot.

As with manipulation, subjects are not forced to abide by your directives. However, if they choose some other action, they do so under penalties prescribed by manipulation.

Greater Minions (Su): Starting at 8th level, as a standard action you can force any and all creatures under the effect of claws of influence to act as if under the influence of a *dominate monster* spell for 1 round. This ability otherwise functions as the minion ability.

Irresistible Compulsion (Ex): At 9th level, as a swift action you can release a subject under the effect of claws of influence to increase the save DC of the next enchantment (compulsion) spell you cast by an amount equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum +1).

Master Manipulator (Su): At 10th level you can use claws of influence as a swift action. If you use it as a standard action, the save DC to resist it increases by 4.

PLAYING AN INSIDIOUS CORRUPTOR

Domination is your trade. You derive pleasure from manipulating others, from bending them to your will and making them your creatures. To this end, you have magnified your already impressive powers to specialize in controlling other beings. The more you influence them, and the more you instruct them to behave as you desire, the more they become your slaves.

Combat

Under no circumstances should you ever fight on your own behalf. It's vital to surround yourself with minions—willing or otherwise. You lack the combat capabilities of other characters, and advancing in this class diminishes your spellcasting abilities. Luckily, you have a number of talents that convince others to protect you, and as you grow more powerful, this influence can extend even over your enemies.

Some might see you as a supporting character, a specialized individual with some skill at enchantment magic. In truth, you control everything, convincing your allies to perform as you direct and weakening your opponents so that your comrades can do their jobs.

Advancement

You didn't choose to become an insidious corruptor; you were born to it. Your entire life has been spent manipulating,

deceiving, and creating situations that best benefit you. This ability only grew more pronounced when you studied magic, for therein lay the secrets of true mastery. You discovered that you could achieve far more with well-placed spells than you ever could with cunning wit and careful words. Even better, you learned to marry those two techniques into one extremely effective method—the claws of influence ability, which changed your life forever.

Although when directly confronted you are nearly impossible to refuse, your powerful personality loses its force when you are separated from your subjects. Those who grow

wise to your nature and abilities resent you—and might even hate you.

Thus, you rarely remain overlong in your drow city, leaving to seek your fortunes on the surface. There you work carefully to serve the matriarchs, sending expeditions into traps that allow the dark elves to harvest the would-be adventurers as slaves.

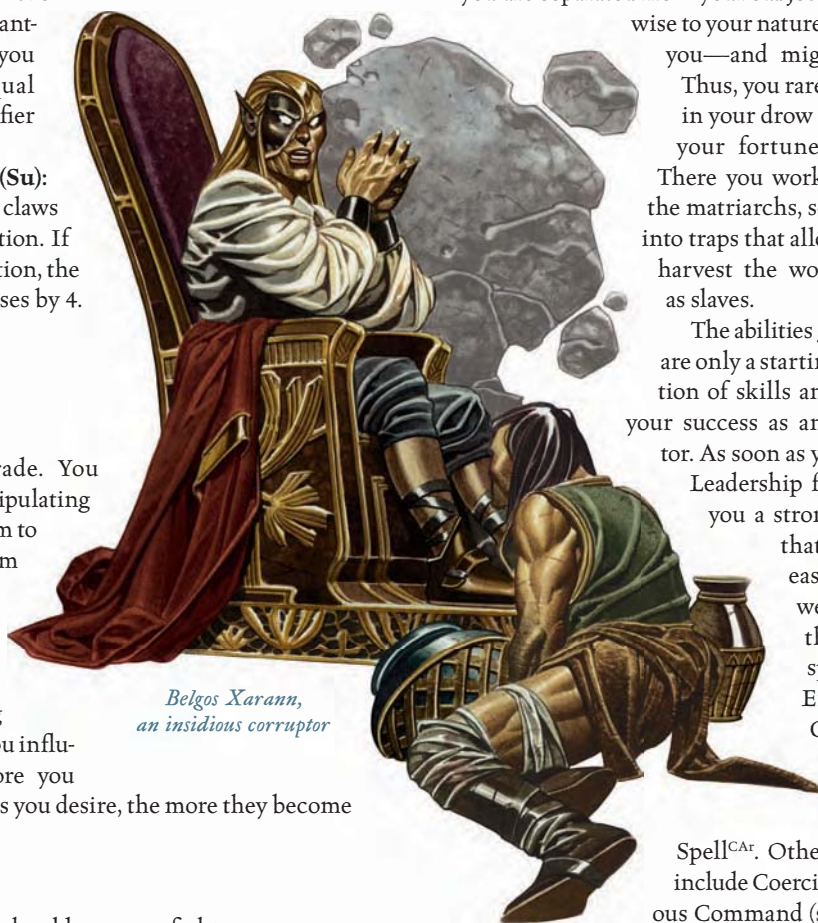
The abilities granted by this class are only a starting point; your selection of skills and feats determines your success as an insidious corruptor. As soon as you can, pick up the Leadership feat. This feat gives you a strong base of minions

that you can control easily in combat. As well, invest in feats that improve your spellcasting abilities. Examples include Greater Spell Focus (enchantment), Spell Penetration, and Extra

Spell^{CAT}. Other excellent choices include Coercive Spell and Imperious Command (see pages 47 and 50 respectively), as well as Ability Focus (claws of influence). For skills, never neglect Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise, Intimidate, and Sense Motive. These are vital skills for interaction, and interaction is key to your survival.

Resources

One tangible benefit gained from this class is the network of minions you establish. Over time, extensive use of the Diplomacy skill engenders goodwill and allegiance, allowing you to swell the numbers of individuals who will help you. These willing tools work to further your mission, doing everything from setting up appointments with adventurers to monitoring independent expeditions and forays into the Underdark. Aside from the intelligence they gather, they also supply you with wealth, gifts, and even companionship.



*Belgos Xarann,
an insidious corruptor*

BELGOS XARANN

CR 16

Male drow sorcerer 10/insidious corruptor 5

NE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2

Languages Common, Draconic, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon

AC 24, touch 18, flat-footed 19

(+5 Dex, +4 armor, +2 deflection, +1 insight, +2 natural)

hp 42 (15 HD)

Immune magic sleep effects

SR 26

Fort +4, **Ref** +9, **Will** +11 (+13 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +1 short sword +6/+1 (1d6/19–20)

Ranged mwk hand crossbow +13 (1d4/19–20)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +6

Special Actions Imperious Command, claws of influence (DC 22, 2 targets), diminish senses (DC 22), *probe thoughts*, manipulation, metamagic specialist, minion, swift enchantment

Combat Gear *excruciating ring**, flask of acid, 2 *potions of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of sanctuary*, 2 scrolls of *hypnotism*, 2 scrolls of *shield*, *staff of charming*, thunderstone

* See page 99

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 12th; 1d20+14 to overcome SR):

6th (4/day)—*acid storm* (DC 23)

5th (6/day)—*cone of cold* (DC 22), *dominate person* (DC 24)

4th (7/day)—*charm monster* (DC 23), *confusion* (DC 23), *crushing despair* (DC 23)

3rd (7/day)—*dispel magic*, *displacement*, *hold person* (DC 22), *suggestion* (DC 22)

2nd (7/day)—*alter self*, *bear's endurance*, *blindness/deafness* (DC 19), *daze monster* (DC 21), *sting ray*^{SC} (ranged touch +13, DC 21)

1st (7/day)—*charm person* (DC 20), *disguise self*, *expeditious retreat*, *magic missile*, *shock and awe*^{SC}, *snuff the light**

0 (6/day)—*acid splash* (+13 ranged touch), *daze* (DC 19), *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 17), *message*, *open/close*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*, *resistance*

* See page 63

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th):

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Abilities Str 8, Dex 20, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 24

Feats Coercive Spell*, Greater Spell Focus (enchantment), Imperious Command*, Persuasive, Spell Penetration, Spell Focus (enchantment)

* See Chapter 2

Skills Bluff +27, Concentration +6, Diplomacy +21, Disguise +7 (+9 acting), Gather Information +9, Intimidate +21, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (local) +7, Listen +2, Search +4, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +16, Spot +2

Possessions combat gear plus +1 short sword, masterwork hand crossbow with 10 bolts, *ring of protection* +2, *amulet of natural armor* +2, *bracers of armor* +4, *cloak of Charisma* +4, *gloves of Dexterity* +4, *dusty rose ioun stone*

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

Metamagic Specialist (Ex) Five times per day, Belgos can apply the effect of a metamagic feat he knows without increasing the spell's casting time.

INSIDIOUS CORRUPTORS IN THE WORLD

"I don't understand it. The map Belgos gave us says there's a secret door right here! I've looked for over ten minutes, and nothing. Wait. Did you hear that? It sounded like movement . . . over there. . ."

—Morzul Darkhunter, dungeon delver

An insidious corruptor is the proverbial spider at the center of the web. Since he rarely confronts his foes directly, he serves as a hidden enemy, orchestrating elaborate schemes to harass and impede the PCs on their adventures—likely without them ever knowing it. Insidious corruptors are evil, conniving villains who move their minions like pawns.

Organization

At home in a large organization, an insidious corruptor wastes little time climbing the ranks, forcing his way to the top to best control the institution. He manages this with a surgical precision, carefully murdering those who prove too difficult to control and bending the rest to his will. It doesn't matter which organization he joins, as long as he benefits by doing so.

The most likely target for infestation by an insidious corruptor is a group whose primary function is exploration and acquisition, such as the Blacklock Loreseekers^{CAd} or the Order of Illumination^{CAd}. Posing as a candidate, the insidious corruptor meets whatever criteria are required by the organization—or he fakes the relevant abilities by the use of the Disguise skill or other means—until he is accepted by the group and made a full-fledged member. Once there, he is careful to keep the organization's purpose and function in mind, secretly replacing key members with those loyal to himself. It's just a matter of time before he takes control, at which point it's far too late to stop him.

NPC Reactions

Insidious corruptors cultivate alter egos and disguises to secure their positions with countless supporters and allies. They develop praiseworthy reputations, influenced in no small part by their unusual talents. Thanks to their public facade, they can move freely through communities, spreading their corruption as they go. Few people can see through an insidious corruptor's disguise, and most are friendly or even helpful to these charismatic individuals. Should a corruptor's identity and purpose become known, however, hostility—and perhaps even violence—can be the only result.

Among the drow, the same animosity holds true. Dark elves with an understanding of the insidious corruptor's capabilities are unfriendly at best, since the mere presence of this shady character breeds doubt in the minds of those who have previously crossed his path.

INSIDIOUS CORRUPTOR LORE

Characters who have ranks in Knowledge (local) can research insidious corruptors to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: Some say that at the center of every conspiracy, every plot, and every betrayal, there's an insidious corruptor,

a foul agent of the drow who wants nothing other than to steer us wrong.

DC 15: The insidious corruptor is a cunning spy who sows discord and tragedy. He uses trickery and deception to get his way, exerting his influence on you and making you his slave.

DC 20: Insidious corruptors infiltrate the surface world on occasion, usually to lure individuals into the Underdark. An insidious corruptor might fund an expedition, supply a group with a map, and even offer a few tantalizing treasures to whet his prey's appetites.

Insidious corruptors don't advertise their presence. If they have any dealings at all with player characters, it is through intermediaries, or—if they must—behind the safety of a cunningly wrought disguise. In a drow city, however, characters are likely to be found by an insidious corruptor anxious to use them for his own purposes—purposes that likely involve slavery, exploitation, or murder.

INSIDIOUS CORRUPTORS IN THE GAME

The insidious corruptor is an excellent adversary, a hidden enemy who complicates the lives and the efforts of the PCs. When the PCs confront an insidious corruptor, they might have to face friends who have fallen under his sway. The corruptor's most loyal minions gladly give their lives to protect their master, whether out of fear or adoration. The corruptor is a powerful, intelligent foe, and as such is best used as the final encounter in a long adventure—his capabilities can stretch the characters' resources to the breaking point.

Adaptation

The insidious corruptor class reflects a very specific aspect of drow culture—the ubiquity of manipulation. Such individuals are born from the self-serving, corrupt environment of their societies. Many of the class features might be attractive to players, and with the right adaptation, you can alter the class in ways that make it considerably less disruptive to the typical adventuring party.

The first and most important change is to alter the alignment prerequisite from any evil to any non-good. From there, you should alter the corruptor's class features so that they affect only opponents, thus preventing player character corruptors from manipulating other PCs. With these minor changes in place, the class should be playable as written.

Sample Encounter

Corruptors act as false allies or benefactors who claim to have the PCs' interests in mind. They might set the characters up with a few lucrative deals, but their ultimate goal is to steer them toward a terrible end in the slave pits of the Underdark.

EL 16: Belgos Xarann (see page 86), a corruptor posing as an elf antiquities dealer, hears of the characters' exploits and seeks to hire them for a mission or two. After a few easy forays—tests, as he calls them—he offers them a serious job: a mission that will take them into the Underdark. He dickers over the price, but he's ultimately willing to pay them what-

ever they ask, since he doesn't anticipate having to pay them anyway. When the characters agree, he sends word to his drow allies to prepare the ambush.

KINSLAYER

"I will slay them all, each and every one. While I suffer in the depths of the earth, forced to grub like worms for food and live shoulder to shoulder with the filthy fish-folk, mind flayers, and countless other threats, they cavort in the warm sun, free of worries, free of fear. I say, no more! The fire of my hate will never be quenched as long as at least one elf breathes the clean air of the world above."

—Dak Falshae, kinslayer

Though the ancient conflict that rent the elves and the drow asunder has long passed into antiquity, neither race has forgotten. Each side nurses old grudges and hatreds, refusing to set aside their differences. The two races exist in a state of war, with each side launching forays against the other. There are avengers aplenty on the side of the surface elves, but few compare to the ferocity of the kinslayer, a hunter whose entire existence is defined by his vows.

BECOMING A KINSLAYER

Drow despise surface elves; thus, any drow who make the solemn vow to destroy their kin can enter this class. But the life of the kinslayer is hard, and only those with incredible stamina and dedication can hope to awaken the ancient hate that drives the class. Drow rangers often take levels in kinslayer, and among the more savage groups, drow barbarians might similarly commit their lives to vengeance. Few others have the burning desire to make such an unholy pact with the Queen of Spiders.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Race: Drow.

Feats: Endurance, Diehard, Unspeakable Vow*, Vow of Vengeance*.

* See page 56.

TABLE 3–8: THE KINSLAYER

HIT DIE: d8

Level	Base				Special
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	
1st	+1	+0	+2	+2	Mettle, rage 1/day, surge of hate
2nd	+2	+0	+3	+3	Inured to sunlight, smite elves 1/day
3rd	+3	+1	+3	+3	Elf bane
4th	+4	+1	+4	+4	Shameful strike
5th	+5	+1	+4	+4	Rage 2/day, smite elves 2/day
6th	+6	+2	+5	+5	Deny elf magic
7th	+7	+2	+5	+5	Disguise heritage
8th	+8	+2	+6	+6	Fey bane, smite elves 3/day
9th	+9	+3	+6	+6	Rage 3/day
10th	+10	+3	+7	+7	Loth's curse, vengeful strike

Class Skills (4 + Int modifier per level): Bluff, Disguise, Hide, Intimidate, Jump, Knowledge (geography), Knowledge (history), Listen, Move Silently, Search, Sense Motive, Spot, Survival.

CLASS FEATURES

Your hatred for elves manifests as a violent, bloodthirsty rage. As you advance, you learn to overcome the obstacles that make it difficult to kill your sworn enemies. You adapt to the sunlight and even shrug off enemy spells. Eventually you can alter your appearance so that you look just like your hated foes.

Mettle (Ex): Whenever you make a successful Fortitude or Will saving throw that would normally lessen (rather than negate) the effect of a spell or other magical ability, it has no effect on you at all. Any spell that is normally negated by a successful saving throw is unaffected by this ability.

Rage (Ex): You can fly into a screaming blood frenzy. See the barbarian rage class feature (PH 25). You gain additional uses of this ability at 5th and 9th levels. If you already have a rage or frenzy ability from another source, the uses per day stack with the rage granted by this class feature.

Surge of Hate (Ex): Whenever you begin a combat in which you see elves among your enemies, add your class level as a morale bonus on your initiative check.

Inured to Sunlight (Ex): Starting at 2nd level, you no longer suffer from the detrimental effects of bright light, such as sunlight or the *daylight* spell.

Smite Elves (Su): Beginning at 2nd level, you can smite elves once per day. This ability functions like the smite evil paladin class feature (PH 44), but the smite affects only elves or half-elves. You gain additional uses of this ability at 5th and 8th levels.

Elf Bane (Su): Beginning at 3rd level, when using a weapon to attack an elf, you gain a +1 insight bonus on your attack rolls and deal an extra 1d6 points of damage.

Shameful Strike (Su): At 4th level, you can make a shameful strike as a full-round action. You make a normal melee attack, but at a -4 penalty. If you hit, the target becomes sickened for 1 round per class level.

Deny Elf Magic (Su): From 6th level on, whenever you are targeted by a spell or spell-like ability cast by another elf, you can make a level check (using your total character level) as an immediate action. If the result is higher than your spell resistance, it replaces your spell resistance for the purpose of negating that spell.

Disguise Heritage (Su): Beginning at 7th level, you can alter your appearance to that of a surface elf, as if using the *disguise self* spell. This affects your body but not your possessions. It is not an illusory effect, but a minor physical alteration of your appearance within the limits described for the spell.

Fey Bane (Su): Starting at 8th level, when using a weapon to attack a creature of the fey type, you gain a +1 insight bonus on your attack rolls and deal an extra 1d6 points of damage.

Vengeful Strike (Su): At 10th level, whenever an elf deals damage to you, you gain a +4 morale bonus on attack and weapon damage rolls on your first melee attack against that individual in the following round.

Lolth's Curse (Su): At 10th level, you can bestow a powerful curse on a single elf as a full-round action. You must sacrifice two of your daily uses of smite or rage (or a combination of both) to use this ability. When you use Lolth's curse, any single elf within 30 feet that you can see clearly must succeed on a Will save (DC 20 + your Cha modifier) or gain the light blindness special quality as well as assuming the appearance of a drow. The target gains no other drow abilities. The effects are permanent and can only be lifted by a *remove curse* spell or more powerful magic.

PLAYING A KINSLAYER

You hate them—all of them. You place the blame for your people's fate squarely on the elves' shoulders. They are weak, decadent, and effete, and their existence is an affront to you. They are a scourge, an obstacle that prevents your people's return to the surface. When you spoke the unspeakable vow to commit genocide, you set the course for your life. Your mission is clear: The elves must be destroyed.

Combat

When confronted with your enemies, don't hold back. You feed off the fires of vengeance that burn within you, and abandon yourself to the beast within. Using your rage to boost your fighting attributes, you fling yourself at your foes with little regard for your own safety, interspersing your attacks with smites and shameful strikes. Should an elf manage to injure you, you merely become more inflamed with hate.

With experience, you learn that not every elf you meet should die immediately. You come to appreciate caution. You can alter your features to match theirs, and so can slip in among them to more easily destroy them. Armed with this knowledge, you can return and paint their forests with their blood, savoring their expressions when they feel firsthand the heavy weight of Lolth's curse.

Advancement

The only thing you need to become a kinslayer is a deep and abiding hatred of elves. This contempt could be directed at those elves on the surface, or possibly toward elves of your own kind. Your loathing for your kin drives you to speak the forbidden words, making the unforgivable promise to the Spider Queen that you will not rest until every elf is dead.

As you gain levels, you develop terrifying abilities that augment your brutal tactics, but that also tantalize you with the ability to blend in with your enemies. You do not see this power as an opportunity to understand them, but as a means to ruin them.

You should invest in feats that build upon the class features granted by your chosen path. Feats such as *Extend Rage*^{CW} and *Extra Rage*^{CW} boost your rage abilities and maximize the carnage you create, while *Chosen Foe* (see page 47) and *Intimidating Strike*^{PH2} thematically reflect your dedication to your mission. When purchasing equipment, spend your gold on weapons first, since they increase your damage potential. Everything else is secondary.

Resources

Although you prefer your own company, you're no fool. The elves are smart, after all, and they protect themselves with a variety of defenses. Although you're not part of an organization, you sometimes lead raids onto the surface to gather much-needed gear and resources to take back the drow cities. As you advance, you might find yourself working with a cadre of skilled murderers and warriors who share your goals, and you come to rely on these companions rather than compromising your mission with substandard allies.

KIN-SLAYERS IN THE WORLD

"Soulless butchers, every one. These drow . . . they have no hearts, no compassion. They are merciless killers who make no distinction between warriors and innocents. Do we descend into their communities, killing all we find? No. Though, I admit, perhaps this has been our error."

—Elwyn, lone survivor of a kinslayer raid

The kinslayer gives life to the simmering hatred the drow have for their cousins. They have but one purpose: extermination. Most kinslayers live short, violent lives, remembered for their savagery and the bodies they left behind. The bloody evidence of their crimes emphasizes their role as brutal villains.

Organization

Kinslayers can appear anywhere in drow society, from lowly commoners and servants to zealous priestesses. Those who are part of an organization work from within, shifting its purpose to serve their needs. For instance, an entire drow house under the control of a particularly charismatic kinslayer matriarch might abandon the political intrigues of the city to funnel its resources, slaves, and soldiers into endless raids on the world above. Not content with the work of their minions, the kinslayers lead these expeditions themselves—spending their lives in an impossible pursuit, but spreading fear and death wherever they go.

NPC Reactions

Kinslayers disturb even other dark elves. Their single-mindedness, their impassioned hatred that borders on obsession, is a sign of weakness to those not caught up in the kinslayer's fervor. All drow want their surface kin to pay for the dark elves' misfortune, but death is too final, too complete a fate. In a sense, it's almost merciful. Drow would rather enslave surface elves—genocide produces no opportunity to gloat. As such, drow are indifferent at best toward kinslayers, and some, especially those with a vested mission or plan for a particular surface elf community, are unfriendly.

Kinslayers sully the dark elves' already sullied reputations. Drow are reviled already, but those who reveal themselves as kinslayers are utterly despised. Good surface-dwellers react with immediate hostility when faced with a kinslayer, and most cannot permit these characters to live.

KINSLAYER LORE

Characters who have ranks in Knowledge (history) can research kinslayers to learn more about them.

When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: All drow are evil, but there are different degrees of wickedness. Kinslayers are among the worst.

DC 15: Kinslayers kill elves. That's what they do. Why? Revenge is probably the best guess, though for what, who knows? History says that the drow earned their fate.

DC 20: What makes these villains so terrifying is their commitment to their purpose. They can't be reasoned with. They can shrug off spells, slice through defenses, and even bestow their own curse onto their victims.

Kinslayers are easy to locate and require little effort to track down. These characters are drawn to elf settlements, and word of their exploits travels fast, usually spurred by the tendrils of smoke rising from the communities that fall prey to their attacks.

KINSLAYERS IN THE GAME

As long as there is strife between the drow and other elves, there will always be kinslayers. The kinslayer is a vicious



Dak Falsbae, a kinslayer

opponent, a premier villain who wages a violent campaign of epic proportions. The sheer evil of his purpose makes him an outlaw that the player characters will readily hate. If there's any reluctance to stand against him, a few decimated elf villages should make PCs realize the danger the kinslayer poses.

Adaptation

The easiest way to adapt this prestige class is to modify its thematic elements. Instead of hunting elves, the kinslayer could hunt drow instead. This would certainly be a viable choice for drow who recognize the corruption of their culture—but, since they are evil themselves, see no way other than utter annihilation to end their people's transgressions. Kinslayer characters could also be surface elves who have succumbed to blind hatred, risking a precipitous plunge into corruption themselves. You should modify the class features to reflect these changes, swapping fey bane for vermin bane and perhaps granting kinslayers spell resistance rather than the Lolth's curse ability.

Sample Encounter

Kinslayers don't concern themselves with non-elves, but if anyone stands in their way, they happily carve their way through opponents to reach their favored enemies. Low-level kinslayers lead groups of drow on their forays. Higher-level kinslayers are often members of evil adventuring groups.

EL 14: Born in Erelhei-Cinlu to a minor house long ago eradicated by the then-powerful House Eilservs, Dak Falshae fled his homeland and wandered the Underdark, struggling to survive in the inhospitable tunnels and warrens. In his isolation, he came to resent his people for what they had become and blamed both them and the surface elves for what he saw as the ruination of his race. Dak made a terrible vow to the dark god Tharizdun, swearing to the lord of madness that he would purge the world of all elves. Since that fateful moment, Dak has waged a personal war against his fellows, ambushing caravans, murdering guards, and inciting slave revolts. When the danger of retaliation from the drow houses grows too great, he slips out of the depths to continue the fight against the high elves and their ilk.

DAK FALSHAE (RAGING)

CR 14

Male drow ranger 3/scout 3/kinslayer 7
NE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +8, Spot +8

Languages Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon

AC 21, touch 15, flat-footed 16; Two-Weapon Defense, skirmish +1, uncanny dodge (+5 Dex, +6 armor, +2 deflection, -2 rage)

hp 110 (13 HD)

Immune magic *sleep* effects

Resist mettle; **SR** 24

Fort +11, **Ref** +16, **Will** +10 (+12 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments)

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee +1 *flaming short sword* +19/+14/+9 (1d6+7 plus 1d6 fire/19-20) or

Melee +1 *flaming short sword* +17/+12/+7 (1d6+7 plus 1d6 fire/19-20) and

+1 *keen short sword* +17/+12 (1d6+4/17-20) with Improved Two-Weapon Fighting

Ranged +1 *composite longbow* +18/+13/+8 (1d8+4/x3)

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +18

Atk Options Vow of Vengeance (elves), elf bane, favored enemy elves +2, skirmish (+1d6, +1 AC), rage 2/day, shameful strike, smite elves 2/day

Special Actions burning faerie fire, deny elf magic, disguise heritage

Combat Gear 2 *potions of cure light wounds*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 13th):

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Abilities Str 22, Dex 20, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 10

SA burning faerie fire, elf bane, favored enemy elves +2, skirmish (+1d6, +1 AC), rage 2/day, shameful strike, smite elves 2/day

SQ battle fortitude, inured to sunlight, surge of hate, trackless step, trapfinding, wild empathy +3 (-1 magical beasts)

Feats Diehard, Endurance^B, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Track^B, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting^B, Unspeakable Vow*, Vow of Vengeance* (elves)

* See pages 55 and 56

Skills Balance +7, Bluff +8, Climb +10, Diplomacy +2, Disguise +5 (+7 acting), Escape Artist +9, Hide +19, Intimidate +10, Jump +19, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +6, Knowledge (geography) +5, Knowledge (nature) +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +24, Search +7, Sense Motive +3, Spot +8, Survival +8 (+10 following tracks, +10 underground, +10 in aboveground natural environments), Tumble +12

Possessions combat gear plus +2 *mithral shirt*, +1 *flaming short sword*, +1 *keen short sword*, +1 *composite longbow* (+3 Str bonus) with 20 arrows, *ring of protection* +2, *amulet of health* +2, *belt of giant strength* +4, *boots of elvenkind*, *gloves of Dexterity* +2

When not raging, Dak has the following changed statistics:

AC 23, touch 15, flat-footed 16

hp decrease by 26

Fort +9, **Will** +8 (+10 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments)

Melee +1 *flaming short sword* +17/+12/+7 (1d6+5 plus 1d6 fire/19-20) or

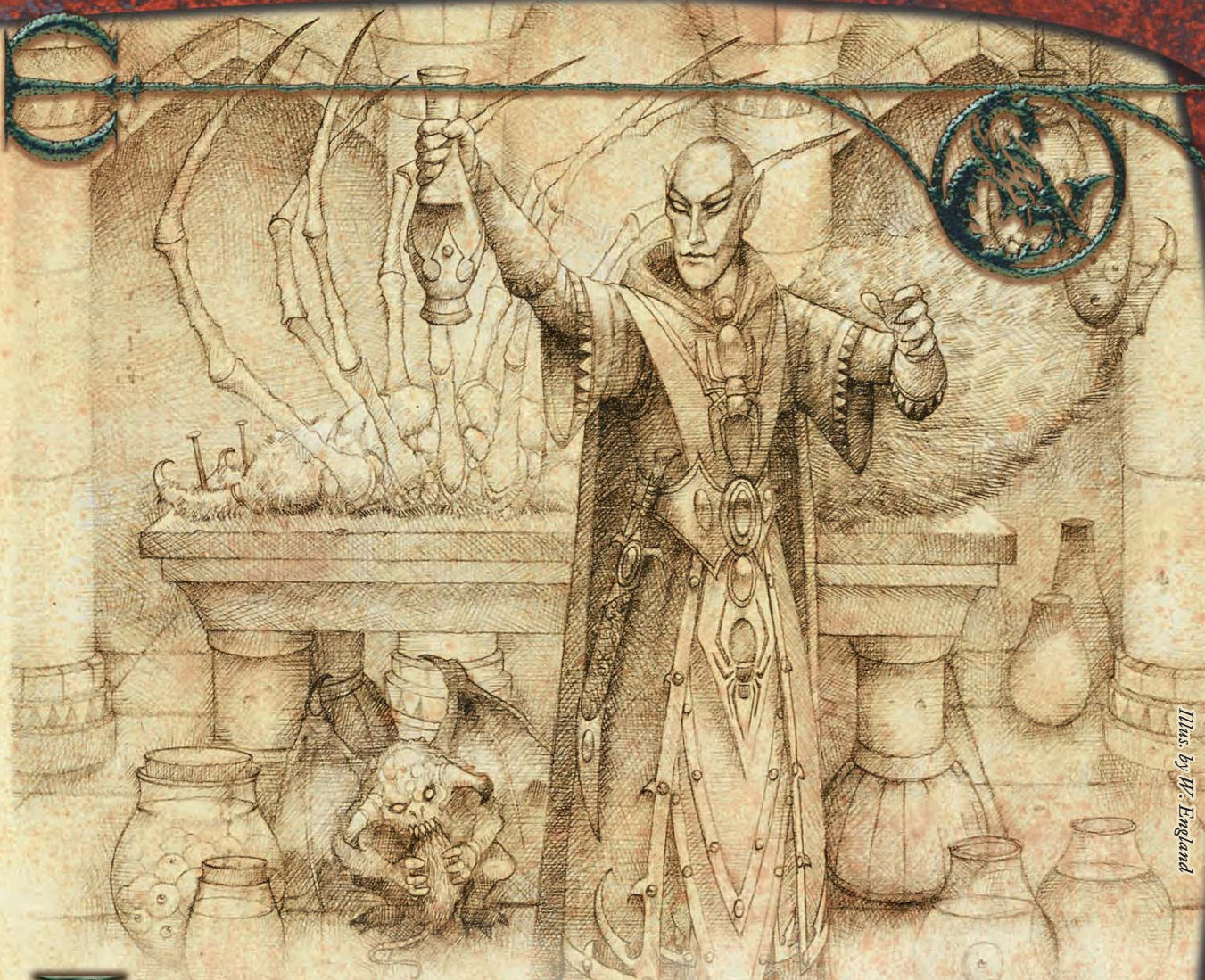
Melee +1 *flaming short sword* +15/+10/+5 (1d6+5 plus 1d6 fire/19-20) and

+1 *keen short sword* +15/+10 (1d6+3/17-20) with Improved Two-Weapon Fighting

Grp +16

Abilities Str 18, Con 14

Skills Climb +8, Jump +17



Illus. by W. England

Drow employ a wide range of sinister items. From the insidious poisons with which they coat their weapons to the strange and unusual magic items they create, the dark elves demonstrate their ingenuity through their crafting skills.

Adventuring Gear

Prompted by the hazardous nature of the Underdark, the drow have learned to fashion tools and special equipment to help them survive its perils. Resources are scarce, and crafters commonly face shortages of materials that surface dwellers take for granted. To compensate, the drow have access to rare materials. Many wield adamantine and mithral weapons, and the dark elves have found ways to extract workable materials from other strange ores. Additionally, drow have created a variety of innovative weapons, armor, and tools, all aimed at helping them to overcome their inhospitable environment.

EQUIPMENT

Although not everyone can afford magical solutions to the hazards and obstacles of the Underdark, several practical and inexpensive items help less affluent drow survive in the subterranean world.

Breathing Hood: This hood composed of flexible lizard hide completely covers the head of the wearer and extends

down to the chest and upper back, creating a seal. Two glass lenses set into the front of the hood allow for vision; oftentimes, these lenses are replaced with sundark goggles (see *Races of the Dragon*) or cinnabar eye cusps (see below). Two long, flexible breathing tubes of the same leathery material extend down from the neck of the mask, wrap under the wearer's arms, and drag on the ground just behind the wearer. The last foot of the tubes is filled with a fibrous filter.

Though somewhat ungainly, breathing hoods come in handy when one must enter caverns or tunnels with questionable air quality. The tubes fit along the wearer's body, draw air up from ground level, and filter it several times before it reaches the user. See page 159 of Chapter 6 for the effects of air quality and the use of a breathing hood. Furthermore, a breathing hood provides a +8 circumstance bonus on saves against all inhaled poisons, whether they originate from attacks, spells, or traps.

Cinnabar Eye Cusps: These are pink lenses of polarized crystal that fit comfortably over your eyes. When worn in an area with an intense concentration of *faerzress* (in a FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign; see page 154) or other magical radiations of the Underdark (such as in the Vault of the Drow; see page 154), the eye cusps enhance your vision. If you don't already have

darkvision or low-light vision, you gain darkvision out to 120 feet. If you have only low-light vision, you gain darkvision out to 240 feet. If you already have darkvision, you gain vision over the entire radiation-infused area equal to that of normal vision on the surface at twilight. The eye cusps grant no special vision in an area that has only the normal concentrations of these radiations typically found throughout the Underdark. The DM will determine which areas qualify for the special vision granted by these lenses.

Guest Cloak: These mundane-seeming cloaks of an olive or pale green color are handed out to visitors to Erelhei-Cinlu by the drow guards at the entrance to the Vault. The fabric of these cloaks is suffused with darkvision powder (see Alchemical Items, below) so that they glow brightly when viewed with darkvision. The drow use these to easily identify foreign guests within their city. Any non-drow caught in the city and not wearing one of these cloaks is usually executed.

TABLE 4-1: EQUIPMENT

Item	Cost	Weight
Breathing hood	70 gp	5 lb.
Cinnabar eye cusps	50 gp	—
Guest cloak	15 gp	1 lb.
Mister	150 gp	—
Potion bladder	25 gp	1/2 lb.
Spider kit	110 gp	5 lb.
Stoneburners	5 gp	1 lb.

Mister: This small steel hand-held device can contain a single dose of poison or a potion. As a standard action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity, you can use it to deliver that dose in droplet form to any single target within 5 feet as a ranged touch attack. The mister is an effective vehicle for

both contact and inhaled poisons. Ingested poisons allow the victim to attempt a DC 15 Reflex save to avoid contact with the mist and escape the poison's effect. Mister-borne injury poisons are effective only if the victim is wounded and hasn't been treated with a Heal check.

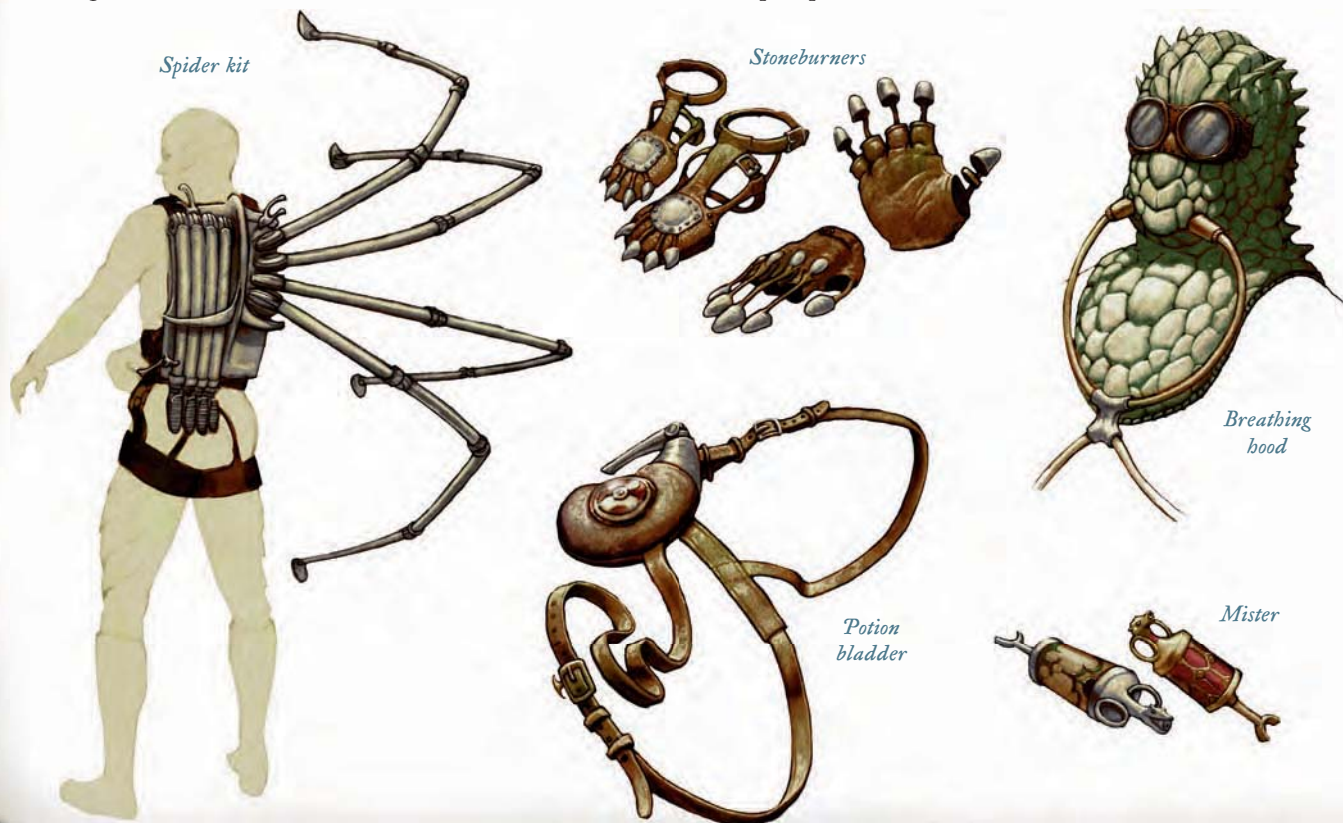
If the mister delivers a potion, that potion can be used against an adjacent creature that breathes. You can automatically do this to yourself or to a willing or disabled subject. Oils, salves, and elixirs cannot be delivered through a mister.

Refilling a mister requires a full-round action and provokes attacks of opportunity.

Potion Bladder: Crafted from the thin, rubbery organs of cloaklers and lurkers^{Und}, these items are slung over the shoulder and worn on the upper back. They are small enough that they do not interfere with backpacks, can be worn under armor, and are easily concealable (+5 circumstance bonus on Sleight of Hand checks to hide). A flexible tube made from the same material runs from this rubbery bladder under the collar and ends below the chin of the wearer. A potion bladder can hold a single dose of one potion. A valve in the bladder prevents the potion from leaking unless suction is placed at the end of the strawlike tube. A potion bladder allows you to drink the potion within as a standard action without provoking attacks of opportunity. Refilling a potion bladder requires a full-round action and is done by siphoning the potion through the straw; this action provokes attacks of opportunity.

Insidious drow have been known to place poisons in the potion bladders of rivals.

Spider Kit: This kit includes hand, feet, elbow, and knee pads set with hundreds of tiny hooks and smeared with a sticky alchemical substance similar to that in a tanglefoot bag. These pads provide a +2 circumstance bonus on Climb checks;



this stacks with the bonuses provided by climber's kits and spelunker's kits^{Und}. The substance on the pads actually becomes stickier when exposed to moisture, so no penalties apply for slippery surfaces if the slipperiness is caused by wetness. In addition to the pads, the kit also includes a harness, to which are attached four retractable telescoping legs (two on each side of the back so there is room for a backpack between them). These legs also end in the same sticky pads. If you have made a successful Climb check, you can extend these legs and attach them to the surface you are climbing as a full-round action. You can use your hands freely once the legs are extended, because the legs (along with your own feet and knees) adhere you to the wall. The legs can be detached from the wall with a move action and refolded with another move action. If you climb with the legs still extended, you do not gain the +2 bonus on Climb checks normally provided by the spider kit.

Stoneburners: These are special boot tips and gloves with reinforced fingertips that hold small receptacles for stoneburn acid (see Alchemical Items, below). When pressure is applied to these compartments, the acid is released onto whatever surface is being pressed. If the surface is stone, the finger or boot tips immediately burn a small divot that can be used as a hand or foothold. Using stoneburners along with stoneburn acid provides you a +2 circumstance bonus on Climb checks on stone surfaces. This does not stack with the bonuses provided by climber's kits, spelunker's kits, or spider kits. Stoneburners are typically used by drow who are in a hurry and are not picky about leaving behind a permanent trail.

A single flask of stoneburn acid provides enough substance for a wearer of stoneburners to climb up to 200 feet.

ALCHEMICAL ITEMS

The drow have created several innovative alchemical substances to help them negotiate the tunnels and caverns of the Underdark.

TABLE 4–2: ALCHEMICAL ITEMS

Item	Cost	Weight
Bile droppings (flask)	50 gp	1 lb.
Darkvision powder (vial)	10 gp	—
Dwarfblind stone	50 gp	1 lb.
Shedden (jar)	75 gp ¹	1/2 lb.
Spelunker's oil (flask)	15 gp	1 lb.
Stoneburn acid (flask)	10 gp	1 lb.
Vilegrip (vial)	50 gp	—

¹ See item description for additional costs.

Bile Droppings: Distilled from the venomous excreta of certain breeds of monstrous spiders, this substance is a thick, viscous fluid. You can throw a flask of bile droppings as a ranged touch attack with a range increment of 10 feet. Upon hitting a target, this sticky fluid deals 1d6 points of acid damage in the first round and 1d6 points of acid damage in the second round. If the target takes a full-round action to scrape it off, he takes no damage in the second round.

In addition to causing acid damage, a flask of bile droppings releases a powerful stench when broken open, forcing anyone

within 5 feet to make a successful DC 13 Fortitude save or be sickened for 1 round. Anyone actually struck by the vile stuff takes a –4 penalty on the save.

Bile droppings can be created with a DC 15 Craft (alchemy) check and the proper raw materials (the spiders that create the droppings are bred by the dark elves, so these materials are readily available in a typical drow city).

Darkvision Powder: This plain gray powder clings to surfaces and cannot be seen with normal vision from more than 10 feet away. It glows brightly when viewed with darkvision, and thus is useful for creatures that have darkvision and wish to write messages that other creatures can't read. Each vial contains enough powder for a message of up to 25 words. By adding a mixture of spider silk oil, an ink can be created with the same properties as the powder.

Darkvision powder can be created with a DC 20 Craft (alchemy) check.

Dwarfblind Stone: These small stones are treated with a substance that gives them a faint purple sheen. When you throw a dwarfblind stone as a ranged touch attack with a range increment of 20 feet, it releases a burst of violet light upon striking a hard surface. This burst illuminates a 10-foot radius for an instant and interferes with darkvision. Creatures within the area of the burst must make a DC 15 Reflex save or lose their darkvision ability for 10 minutes. A dwarfblind stone has no effect on normal or low-light vision.

Since it doesn't need to hit a specific target to be effective, you can simply aim a dwarfblind stone at a particular 5-foot square. Treat the target as AC 5; if you miss, see Throw Splash Weapon, PH 158, to determine where the stone lands.

A dwarfblind stone can be created with a DC 25 Craft (alchemy) check.

Shedden: This gray paste is brewed from the exoskeletons of monstrous spiders ground with silk-based oils and mixed with various chemicals and reagents. When spread on your exposed flesh, it temporarily hardens your skin, granting you a +1 bonus to natural armor for 2 minutes. This bonus stacks with any other natural armor you already have. It takes 1 minute to apply shedden to your entire body and obtain its benefits.

Shedden can be created with a DC 20 Craft (alchemy) check. Certain master alchemists can create shedden that provides natural armor bonuses of +2 to +5, but doing so raises the Craft DC by 4 for each additional point of natural armor and increases the price as follows: 200 gp for +2, 500 gp for +3, 1,000 gp for +4, and 2,000 gp for +5.

Spelunker's Oil: This clear, slick substance is derived from several types of slimes and certain mineral oils. As a full-round action, you can apply a flask of it to your body and gain a +2 alchemical bonus on Escape Artist checks. This oil is especially useful to cave explorers who have to squeeze through tight quarters. However, when the oil is effective it bestows a –5 penalty on Climb checks.

Spelunker's oil can be created with a DC 20 Craft (alchemy) check.

Stoneburn Acid: This substance is a weaker form of alchemist's mineral acid^{Und}. It harms only stone and other minerals. It is not effective as a splash weapon, because it requires both

contact and pressure to fully dissolve the exposed material. Otherwise, it just makes small pocks in a surface. When you apply it with pressure against rock or other minerals, it ignores hardness and deals 2d6 points of damage. This dissolution happens almost instantly, after which the acid becomes inert. Therefore, it is only useful for digging small divots into a stone surface or small openings in very thin walls. It works best when used with stoneburners (described above).

Stoneburn acid can be created with a DC 22 Craft (alchemy) check.

Vilegrip: This misty substance enhances the adhesive qualities of a web. A single vial contains enough mist to fill a 10-foot cube in a single round. All webs in this area become stickier and stronger, increasing the DC to avoid or break free by 2 for 1 hour. Vilegrip can also be used on the webs created by a web spell.

Vilegrip can be created with a DC 25 Craft (alchemy) check.

POISONS

The drow excel at making poisons culled from various creatures and substances at hand. Below are a few poisons that can be found smeared on drow weapons or lacing a beverage.

TABLE 4–3: POISONS

Poison	Type	Initial Damage	Secondary Damage	Price
Darklight brew	Injury DC 23	2d6 Con + 1d6 Str	Blinded	1,500 gp
Fish glue	Injury DC 14	1d4 Dex	Sickened	100 gp
Illithid mindscorch	Inhaled DC 22	1d6 Int	1d6 Int	1,000 gp
Psychotropic rot	Ingested DC 15	1d4 Wis	3d18 hp	125 gp
Roach paste	Injury DC 12	Nausea	Disease	50 gp
Underdark blight	Contact DC 20	1 SR	1 SR	300 gp

Darklight Brew: Darklight ore (see page 154) is powdered and cut with a mild acid to create this poison. The radiation of the ore is diminished greatly in this process, but its effect becomes acute when it is introduced into the bloodstream. This poison can be made with a DC 28 Craft (poisonmaking) check.

The blindness from the poison lasts for 1 hour.

Fish Glue: The body oil of captured kuo-toas is used to create this poison, which is named for the rigidity it causes in the joints of the victim and its characteristic fishy smell. It can be crafted with a DC 18 Craft (poisonmaking) check.

The sickness from the poison lasts for 1 hour.

Illithid Mindscorch: The brain matter of recently slain illithids can be distilled, capturing some of its psionic potential and creating this extremely rare poison. Though it is a liquid in its basic form, it is ineffective unless reduced to an aerosol and absorbed through the nasal passages of the victim. It can be created with a DC 27 (poisonmaking) check, though the

DC is reduced by 5 if the creator has ranks in Knowledge (psionics) or Psicraft or has levels in a psionic character class (see *Expanded Psionics Handbook*).

Illithids immediately try to devour the brains of anyone they catch with this substance.

Psychotropic Rot: Distilled violet fungus and other chemicals can be mixed together to create this insidious toxin. It can be created with a DC 17 Craft (poisonmaking) check.

Roach Paste: This brown paste is made from the crushed bodies of the carrion-eating giant roaches found in the Underdark. It is known for its horrendous smell. It can be created with a DC 15 Craft (poisonmaking) check.

The nausea from the poison lasts for 1 round.

The disease it transmits is filth fever (*DMG* 293).

Underdark Blight: Running a chemical solution over certain rare ores and minerals found in the Underdark creates this poison; it is effective at removing spell resistance. Lost spell resistance returns at the same rate and by the same means as ability score damage. Underdark blight can be created with a DC 20 Craft (poisonmaking) check.

MAGIC-INFUSED POISONS

As masters of their craft and natural manipulators of magical energies, cruel drow alchemists have discovered ways to infuse spell effects into the venoms they concoct. Immunity to mundane poisons provides no resistance to these new substances, nor does spell resistance; however, *neutralize poison* and *slow poison* are still effective. A successful *dispel magic* against a caster level equal to 1/2 the poison's Fortitude save DC likewise removes its effects.

These poisons are created not only with the Craft (poisonmaking) skill, but also with an appropriate spell (which must be cast by the creator).

TABLE 4–4: MAGIC-INFUSED POISONS

Poison	Type	Initial Damage	Secondary Damage	Price
The calling	Ingested DC 20	2d6 Con	2d6 Con	2,000 gp
Creeping nullscourge	Injury DC 20	5 SR	5 SR	1,000 gp
Slowswarming	Ingested DC 25	1d2 Con + 1d6 Cha	1d2 Con	1,200 gp
Slow taint	Contact DC 15	10 ft.	10 ft.	300 gp
Swarming spiderbite	Ingested DC 22	1d6 Con	2d6 Con	1,800 gp

The Calling: This lumpy black paste is magically infused with spider eggs and can be hidden in a dish of food, in which it is detectable only with a successful DC 20 Profession (cook) check. If it is consumed, and if the victim fails the initial save, a swarm of spiders hatches within the victim's stomach, dealing the initial damage. The swarm is then digested and destroyed without further harm, unless the second save is failed. In that case, it bursts forth from the victim's nose and mouth, dealing the secondary damage and coalescing as a spider swarm (*MM* 239), attacking everyone in the area. This poison can



A drow traitor suffers the effect of the calling

be created with a DC 28 Craft (poisonmaking) check and a *summon swarm* spell.

Creeping Nullscourge: Used during bouts of drow infighting, on failed save this poison drains 5 points of the target's spell resistance. The secondary damage also drains 5 points of spell resistance. Lost spell resistance returns at the same rate and by the same means as ability score damage. This poison can be created with a DC 25 Craft (poisonmaking) check and an *assay spell resistance*^{SC} spell.

Slowswarming: Unlike swarming spiderbite below, this poison is for those drow caught in acts of treachery or blasphemy. It is usually administered to a prisoner over several days; each dose creates a slower and more agonizing biting sensation similar to that caused by swarming spiderbite, but also disfigures the body with horrific red boils. It can be created with a DC 21 Craft (poisonmaking) check and a *poison* spell.

Slow Taint: This poison reduces the target's speed by 10 feet on a failed save. The secondary damage reduces speed by another 10 feet. The target's speed cannot be reduced below 5 feet. The poison can be created with a DC 18 Craft (poisonmaking) check and a *slow* spell. Its effect has a duration of 1 hour.

Swarming Spiderbite: Usually taken to ensure an honorable death (or to avoid torture) by drow defeated in battle, the effect of this poison is like the biting mouths of venomous spiders starting from the extremities and advancing throughout the body. It can be created with a DC 26 Craft (poisonmaking) check and a *poison* spell.

Magic Items ACCURATE

Magic is a large part of drow life. All dark elves have some ability to cast spells, even if it's just the three abilities all drow possess at birth. As a reflection of the magic infusing their culture and their being, the drow invest time and energy into magic item creation. Samples of these items are described on the following pages.

WEAPON PROPERTIES

Like the sleep poison they favor, drow create magic weapons that reflect their preference for incapacitating their opponents rather than killing them outright.

Price: +1 bonus

Property: Weapon

Caster Level: 5th

Aura: Faint; (DC 17) divination

Activation: —

This weapon is finely balanced and made of exceptional materials.

An accurate weapon helps its wielder correct his mistakes. When you miss, the weapon provides a +2 circumstance bonus on your next attack roll.

Prerequisite: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *true strike*.

Cost to Create: Varies.

LIGHT BURST

Price: +1 bonus

Property: Weapon

Caster Level: 5th

Aura: Faint; (DC 17) evocation

Activation: —

Images of the sun are etched onto the surface of this weapon, and it feels warm to the touch.

A light burst weapon explodes with dazzling light upon striking a successful critical hit. The light does not affect you (in case you have light sensitivity, light blindness, or some other vulnerability to light). The target of your critical hit is dazzled for 5 rounds. If it has a weakness to light, it suffers the effects of its weakness for 1 round as if it was in the presence of a *daylight* spell, and is dazzled for 5 rounds afterward. For example, if you wield a light burst weapon and score a critical hit against a drow, the drow is blinded for 1 round, and then dazzled for 5 rounds as normal. Projectile weapons bestow the light burst property upon their ammunition.

Prerequisite: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *daylight*.

Cost to Create: Varies.

SPARKLING

Price: +2 bonus

Property: Weapon

Caster Level: 9th

Aura: Moderate; (DC 19) evocation

Activation: —

Gleaming specks of blue, purple, and red lie just below the weapon's surface, reflecting oddly in the light.

A sparkling weapon causes a target it strikes to erupt in pale multicolored flame, as if affected by the *faerie fire* spell. The flames last for 5 rounds. Multiple hits by sparkling weapons have no additional effect. Projectile weapons bestow the sparkling property upon their ammunition.

Prerequisite: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *faerie fire*, creator must be drow.

Cost to Create: Varies.

SPIDERKISSED

Price: +1 bonus

Property: Weapon

Caster Level: 5th

Aura: Faint; (DC 17) transmutation

Activation: —

Tracery suggestive of a spider's web covers the entire surface of this weapon.

When you confirm a critical hit with a spiderkissed weapon, the target must succeed on a DC 13 Reflex save or become entangled for 5 rounds as a mass of webbing covers its body. The webbing cannot be removed and lasts

for the duration of the effect. Bows, crossbows, and slings with this property bestow the spiderkissed property upon their ammunition.

Prerequisite: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *web*, drow.

Cost to Create: Varies.



A light burst mace

TOXIC

Price: +1 bonus

Property: Melee weapon

Caster Level: 5th

Aura: Faint; (DC 17) transmutation

Activation: —

When exposed to any light, this weapon gleams with an unhealthy ochre glow.

When you apply contact or injury poison to a toxic weapon, the weapon retains its potency after two successful hits instead of just one.

Prerequisite: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *gentle repose*.

Cost to Create: Varies.

VIRULENT

Price: +1 bonus

Property: Melee weapon or ammunition

Caster Level: 7th

Aura: Moderate; (DC 18) necromancy

Activation: —

Oozing pits mar the surface of this weapon.

When you apply contact or injury poison to a virulent weapon, the poison becomes fast acting. Targets struck by a virulent weapon must make the saving throw to resist secondary damage 5 rounds after the initial damage instead of the customary 1 minute.

Prerequisite: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *poison*.

Cost to Create: Varies.

A NOTE ON FORMAT

The magic items described here use the format introduced in *Magic Item Compendium*. Aspects of that format that might not be self-explanatory are described below.

Price (Item Level): This entry gives the price of the item in gold pieces and the item level. Item level is a guideline for the DM to estimate the level at which a character can reasonably attain the item. It is unrelated to caster level.

Body Slot: This entry identifies the place on the body where the item is worn. For items not worn in a body slot, — (held) designates an item held in the hands and — designates items that need only be carried on your person.

Aura: This entry gives information that can be obtained with a *detect magic* spell. It lists the strength of the item's aura, the DC of the Spellcraft check required to determine the school of magic, and the school of magic associated with the aura.

Activation: The kind of action required to activate the item is

given here, followed by a description of what a character does during the activation. For example, a "swift (command)" item requires a swift action to activate and requires the activator to speak a command word. An entry of "—" means the effect is continuous and requires no activation.

Magic weapon and armor properties use a similar format, but the Body Slot entry is replaced by "Property." This entry identifies the type of item this property can be applied to.

New Categories: In *Magic Item Compendium*, items were categorized differently from those in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, based on their function or the way they are employed. Items that are worn on the body, including rings, are now classified as clothing. Items that are held or carried, except for those designed for use as weapons, are considered tools.

In this book, two artifacts occupy their own section at the end of this chapter, regardless of whether each would otherwise be classified as clothing or a tool.

ARMOR AND SHIELD PROPERTIES

Since mithral is more widely available to the drow than it is to other cultures, most dark elves find mithral shirts sufficient for their needs. When they do purchase magic armor, it is almost always light armor—that way, they can retain the benefits of their high Dexterity scores.

DARK

Price: +8,000 gp
Property: Armor
Caster Level: 8th
Aura: Moderate; (DC 19) illusion
Activation: —

This armor has a dull appearance. It does not reflect light, and it maintains its color regardless of lighting conditions.

Dark armor is specially crafted to blend in with its surroundings when viewed with darkvision. You gain a +5 circumstance bonus on Hide checks made to conceal yourself from creatures with darkvision. In addition (when fighting such creatures), you gain concealment. You lose these benefits whenever you are in an area of bright light.

Prerequisite: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, invisibility.

Cost to Create: 4,000 gp, 320 XP, 8 days..

MORE DROW MAGIC ITEMS

There are many other fantastic magic items suitable for drow beyond those included in this chapter. If you have *City of the Spider Queen*, be sure to check out the *lesser and greater death spears* and *eyes of the spider*. Additionally, the *Underdark* supplement also includes a number of drow-oriented items, such as the *driftdisk*, *jasper spider*, and *glove of venom*.

Also, *Magic Item Compendium* includes four items that are closely associated with drow: the *greater piwafwi*, the *pearl of speech*, the *rod of the recluse*, and *vestments of ebonsilk*.

FEARSOME

Price: +5,000 gp
Property: Armor
Caster Level: 3rd
Aura: Faint; (DC 16) necromancy
Activation: —

This foul armor has a sinister appearance. It is dark, almost black, and covered with sharp barbs and spikes.

Fearsome armor functions as if it has armor spikes (PH 124) if the armor doesn't have this feature already. In addition, when wearing this armor, you gain a +5 enhancement bonus on Intimidate checks, and you can demoralize opponents (PH 76) as a move action instead of a standard action.

Prerequisite: Craft Magic Arms and Armor.

Cost to Create: 2,500 gp, 200 XP, 5 days.

SPIDER BOON

Price: +9,000 gp
Property: Armor
Caster Level: 8th
Aura: Moderate; (DC 20) transmutation
Activation: Swift (command)

This armor is etched with spiderweb patterns. It is slightly slippery to the touch.

Spider boon armor allows you to navigate through the sticky strands of webbing. You gain a +4 enhancement bonus on Climb and Escape Artist checks. Also, the webs of monstrous spiders or spiderkin (such as ettercaps) cannot affect you.

Three times per day, you can increase the enhancement bonus on Climb checks to +8 and gain a climb speed equal to your base land speed. When under this effect, you can take 10 on Climb checks even if rushed or threatened. This function lasts for 8 rounds.

Prerequisite: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, freedom of movement, spider climb, drow.

Cost to Create: 4,500 gp, 360 XP, 9 days.

SPIDER BOUND

Price: +2,500 gp (buckler), +5,000 gp (light shield), +10,000 gp (heavy shield), +15,000 gp (tower shield)
Property: Shield
Caster Level: 12th
Aura: Strong; (DC 21) conjuration
Activation: Standard (command)

This shield resembles a large spider. The small rubies used for its eyes burn with a hellish light.

Once per day, you can speak a command word to cause your shield to transform into a fiendish spider. The spider's size depends on the type of shield, as shown on the following table.

Shield	Fiendish Monstrous Spider Size
Buckler	Small
Light shield	Medium
Heavy shield	Large
Tower shield	Huge



Illus. by B. Trot

A spider bound shield transforms into an effective companion

The spider follows your mental commands. It remains for 10 rounds or until reduced to 0 hit points, at which point it instantly reverts back to a shield. While the spider is activated, you lose your shield bonus to AC.

Prerequisite: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *summon monster I* (buckler), *summon monster II* (light shield), *summon monster IV* (heavy shield), *summon monster VI* (tower shield), drow.

Cost to Create: 1,250 gp, 100 XP, 3 days (buckler); 2,500 gp, 200 XP, 5 days (light shield); 5,000 gp, 400 XP, 10 days (heavy shield); 7,500 gp, 600 XP, 15 days (tower shield).

CLOTHING

The drow are famous for their magical creations. From the *house insignia* worn by drow of consequence to the curious *assassin's cloak*, the dark elves have a variety of clothing at their disposal.

Drow rings reinforce or augment their wearer's already impressive abilities. A few, however, are designed to be defensive, aiding the wearer by confounding her enemies.

ASSASSIN'S CLOAK

Price (Item Level): 10,000 gp (12th)

Body Slot: Shoulders

Caster Level: 9th

Aura: Moderate; (DC 19) abjuration

Activation: Swift (command)

Weight: 1 lb.

This long gray cloak has a black lining.

Three times per day, whenever you speak the command word, the *assassin's cloak* diminishes your presence, making you seem insignificant and unimportant. You gain a +10 competence bonus on Hide checks, and creatures must succeed on a DC 17 Will save to attack you. Those who succeed can attack you normally. This effect lasts 10 rounds or until you make an attack (as *invisibility*, PH 245), whichever comes first.

Prerequisite: Craft Wondrous Item, heightened (5th) *sanctuary*.

Cost to Create: 5,000 gp, 400 XP, 10 days.

BELT OF THE REINFORCED FORM

Price (Item Level): 5,400 gp (10th)

Body Slot: Waist

Caster Level: 7th

Aura: Moderate; (DC 18) transmutation

Activation: —

Weight: 1 lb.

This wide belt is made of orange scaly leather. Despite its appearance, it is soft and pliable. The adamantine buckle is set with a strange teardrop gemstone that changes color in the light.

While you wear a belt of the reinforced form, whenever you are the target of a transmutation spell or spell-like effect, or some other transformative effect such as an aboleth's slime or a basilisk's petrifying gaze, you gain a +4 bonus on your saving throw.

In addition, once per day, when casting a transmutation spell with a casting time of 1 standard action on yourself, you can cast that spell as a swift action instead.

Prerequisite: Craft Wondrous Item, *alter self*, *haste*.

Cost to Create: 2,700 gp, 216 XP, 6 days.

BRACERS OF MURDER

Price (Item Level): 8,000 gp (11th)

Body Slot: Arms

Caster Level: 5th

Aura: Faint; (DC 17) evocation

Activation: —

Weight: 3 lb.

Each of these burnished metal bracers is adorned with grinning skull set with onyx stones in its eye sockets.

Bracers of murder grant you a +2 profane bonus on attack rolls and damage rolls against flat-footed targets.

If you have the death attack ability, the save DC to resist your death attack increases by 2.

If you have sneak attack or sudden strike, reroll any result of 1 on the dice.

Prerequisite: Craft Wondrous Item, *divine favor*, *evil*.

Cost to Create: 4,000 gp, 200 XP, 8 days.



An assassin's cloak enables its wearer to effectively disappear

CIRCLET OF SPIDERKIND COMMAND

Price (Item Level): 8,400 gp (12th)

Body Slot: Head

Caster Level: 9th

Aura: Moderate; (DC 19) transmutation

Activation: Standard (command)

Weight: 1 lb.

Eight tiny silver spiders with ruby chips for eyes adorn this delicate circlet.

Three times per day, a *circlet of spiderkind command* allows you to issue psychic commands to spiderkind creatures (see page 112). As a standard action, you can target a single spiderkind creature within 30 feet. The target is entitled to a DC 14 Will save to resist the command. If it fails, you can direct it to perform simple commands such as “attack,” “run,” and “fetch.” If the spiderkind creature has the mindless special quality, you can order it to make suicidal or self-destructive commands.

Once you establish control, you can direct it with silent mental commands as long as you can see the affected creature. Changing a command is a move action.

As a daily use of this item, you can also cast *giant vermin* on any single spider within range.

Prerequisite: Craft Wondrous Item, *dominate vermin* (see page 61), *giant vermin*.

Cost to Create: 4,200 gp, 336 XP, 9 days.

DROW HOUSE INSIGNIA (SPELL)

Price (Item Level): See table

Body Slot: Throat

Caster Level: 5th

Aura: Faint; (DC 17) see text

Activation: Standard (command)

Weight: —

This small unusually shaped amulet bears a strange symbol.

Each *drow house insignia (spell)* is keyed to a specific noble house of a particular drow city, and is wrought to reflect the house that created it. Some might be

stylized versions of crossbows, javelins, maces, or even just spiders.

A *drow house insignia (spell)* contains a single minor magical effect that can be used once per day, usually a 1st-, 2nd-, or 3rd-level spell, with the more powerful spells reserved for drow of significant station or influence.

These insignia typically contain one of the following spells: *blur*, *cat's grace*, *comprehend languages*, *feather fall*, *jump*, *levitate*, *shield*, *spider climb*, *unseen servant*, and *water breathing*. The aura of this item is of the same school as the spell it contains.

Since each insignia is slightly different—even those from the same noble house—a person aware of the unique shape of an individual *insignia* can magically locate that amulet with a *scrying* or similar spell.

Lore: A DC 15 Knowledge (local), or a DC 20 Knowledge (dungeoneering) or bardic knowledge check reveals the house to which an insignia is keyed. Drow gain a +4 circumstance bonus on these checks.

Prerequisite: Craft Wondrous Item, appropriate spell, drow.

Cost to Create: See table.

DROW HOUSE INSIGNIA (SPELL)

Spell Level	Price (Item Level)	Cost to Create
1st	620 gp (3rd)	310 gp, 25 XP, 1 day
2nd	3,300 gp (8th)	1,650 gp, 132 XP, 4 days
3rd	8,200 gp (12th)	4,100 gp, 382 XP, 9 days

DROW HOUSE INSIGNIA (TRANSMITTING)

Price (Item Level): 500 gp (3rd)

Body Slot: Throat

Caster Level: 3rd

Aura: Faint; (DC 16) transmutation

Activation: Standard (command)

Weight: —

This small, unusually shaped adamantine amulet bears a strange symbol.

Each *drow house insignia (transmitting)* is keyed to a specific noble house of a particular drow city, and is wrought to reflect the house that created it.

Three times per day, by speaking the command word, you can utter a short message into the item, which transmits it up to 1 mile away to another character wearing an insignia of the same house. The recipient hears the message in its mind.

To transmit the message, you must name the intended target as part of the command word. Should the target not be wearing its *drow house insignia*, the message is lost, but you have no way of knowing whether it successfully transmits or not.

Since each *insignia* is slightly different, even those from the same noble house, a person aware of the unique shape of an individual *insignia* can magically locate that amulet with a *scrying* or similar spell.

Lore: A DC 15 Knowledge (local), or a DC 20 Knowledge (dungeoneering) or bardic knowledge check reveals the house to which this insignia is keyed. Drow gain a +4 circumstance bonus on these checks.

Prerequisite: Craft Wondrous Item, *whispering wind*, drow.

Cost to Create: 250 gp, 20 XP, 1 day.

EXCRUCIATING RING

Price (Item Level): 8,000 gp (11th)

Body Slot: Ring

Caster Level: 5th

Aura: Faint; (DC 17) necromancy

Activation: Immediate (command)

Weight: —

This bone ring is set with a marble-sized stone of white onyx.

An *excruciating ring* punishes those who would touch you. Five times per day as an immediate action, when struck by a melee attack, you can send a lance of pain through your opponent, dealing 2d6 points of nonlethal damage.

Prerequisite: Forge Ring, *death armor*^{SC}.

Cost to Create: 4,000 gp, 160 XP, 8 days.

GLOOM MASK

Price (Item Level): 3,000 gp (7th)

Body Slot: Face

Caster Level: 11th

Aura: Moderate; (DC 20) evocation

Activation: Standard (command)

Weight: —

This black mask seems to absorb the light around it. It is cool to the touch.

Three times per day, you gain the ability to see in darkness out to 30 feet. This sight penetrates all forms of darkness, even that created by a *deeper darkness* spell; the effect lasts for 5 rounds.

In addition, three times per day, any spell or spell-like ability up to 3rd level with the darkness descriptor that you cast functions as if you had cast it with the *Widen Spell* metamagic feat.

Prerequisite: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, darkvision, deeper darkness.

Cost to Create: 1,500 gp, 120 XP, 3 days.

MASK OF THE MATRIARCH

Price (Item Level): 9,000 gp (12th)

Body Slot: Face

Caster Level: 11th

Aura: Moderate; (DC 20) necromancy

Activation: Standard (command)

Weight: 5 lb.

This obsidian mask has been fashioned into the likeness of a drow female. Framing the face are eight straps that hold the mask in place on the wearer's head.

Three times per day, you can make a gaze attack (DMG 294) against all creatures that can clearly see you and are within 30 feet. Those who fail a DC 20 Will save cower in fear for 1 round and are shaken on the following round. Your gaze remains effective for 1 round.

Prerequisite: Craft Wondrous Item, imperious glare^{SC}.

Cost to Create: 4,500 gp, 360 XP, 9 days.

MOTHER'S CORSET

Price (Item Level): 7,200 gp (11th)

Body Slot: Waist

Caster Level: 9th

Aura: Moderate; (DC 19) transmutation

Activation: Swift (command)

Weight: 1 lb.

Woven into this black corset is purple thread suggestive of webbing.

Up to 20 minutes each day (which you can split up as you choose), you can cause the *mother's corset* to sprout eight spider legs from your body. You gain a climb speed of 30 feet and a +8 bonus on Climb checks. While under this effect, you can take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

Prerequisite: Craft Wondrous Item, spider form (see page 63), drow.

Cost to Create: 3,600 gp, 288 XP, 8 days.

RING OF ANTICIPATION

Price (Item Level): 6,000 gp (10th)

Body Slot: Ring

Caster Level: 7th

Aura: Moderate; (DC 18) divination

Activation: —

Weight: —

This unusual ring is wrought from smooth, transparent lavender glass.

While wearing a ring of anticipation, you gain a +2 competence bonus on Listen and Spot checks. When making initiative checks, you can roll twice and take the better result.

Prerequisite: Forge Ring, cat's grace, owl's wisdom.

Cost to Create: 3,000 gp, 240 XP, 6 days.

RING OF DROW BLOOD

Price (Item Level): 4,800 gp (9th)

Body Slot: Ring

Caster Level: 7th

Aura: Moderate; (DC 18) evocation

Activation: Standard (command)

Weight: —



A ring of drow blood

This strange silver ring appears tarnished in the light, but when viewed in the shadows, it gleams as if highly polished.

A ring of drow blood grants you the ability to use *dancing lights*, *darkness*, and *faerie fire* as spell-like abilities, each once per day. If you already have the ability to use these spells as spell-like abilities, you gain an additional daily use for each at your normal caster level.

Prerequisite: Forge Ring, *dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*, drow.

Cost to Create: 2,400 gp, 192 XP, 5 days.

RING OF ESCAPING

Price (Item Level): 3,100 gp (8th)

Body Slot: Ring

Caster Level: 7th

Aura: Moderate; (DC 18) transmutation

Activation: — and swift (mental)

Weight: —

This black metal ring is extremely smooth. When worn, it fits snugly, though you cannot feel it.

A ring of escaping allows you to slip away from a dangerous situation. For as long as you wear the ring, you gain a +5 competence bonus on Escape Artist checks.

In addition, once per day as a swift action, you gain a fly speed of 60 feet with good maneuverability for 1 round.

Prerequisite: Forge Ring, fly, freedom of movement.

Cost to Create: 1,550 gp, 124 XP, 4 days.

RING OF RESOLVE

Price (Item Level): 5,500 gp (10th)

Body Slot: Ring

Caster Level: 13th

Aura: Strong; (DC 21) abjuration

Activation: — and immediate (command)

Weight: —

Eight small diamonds encrust this adamantite ring.

A *ring of resolve* grants you a +4 morale bonus on Will saves made against spells and spell-like effects with the fear descriptor. This is a continuous effect and requires no activation.

Once per day, as an immediate action you can turn back a fear spell or spell-like effect against the original caster as long as that effect had you as the target. For all aspects of the spell, the effect functions as if the original caster had selected itself as the target.

Prerequisite: Forge Ring, *spell turning*.

Cost to Create: 2,750 gp, 220 XP, 6 days.

SHADOW CLOAK

Price (Item Level): 5,500 gp (10th)

Body Slot: Shoulders

Caster Level: 12th

Aura: Strong; (DC 21) conjuration, illusion

Activation: — and immediate (command)

Weight: 1 lb.

This black cloak writhes as if it were alive.

A *shadow cloak* grants a +1 deflection bonus to AC.

If you are attacked, you can use the cloak three times per day to produce one or the other of the following effects. You can gain concealment for 1 round, or you can teleport to a space you can see clearly up to 10 feet in any direction.

Prerequisite: Craft Wondrous Item, *blur*, *dimension hop*^{PH2}, *mage armor*.

Cost to Create: 2,750 gp, 220 XP, 6 days.

SKULLCAP OF EYES

Price (Item Level): 5,500 gp (10th)

Body Slot: Head

Caster Level: 3rd

Aura: Faint; (DC 16) divination

Activation: —

Weight: —

This iron skullcap is wrought to appear as if it were covered in eyes.

As long as you wear a *skullcap of eyes*, you gain a +5 competence bonus on Spot checks. In addition, opponents gain no bonus on attacks when they flank you. If you have Improved Uncanny Dodge,

the level your opponent needs to flank you increases by 2.

Prerequisite: Craft Wondrous Item, *combat readiness* (see page 61).

Cost to Create: 2,750 gp, 220 XP, 6 days.

TRACKLESS BOOTS

Price (Item Level): 1,000 gp (4th)

Body Slot: Feet

Caster Level: 3rd

Aura: Faint; (DC 16) transmutation

Activation: —

Weight: —

These boots look rather ordinary, though of fine make.

While you wear *trackless boots*, Survival checks made to follow your trail have a –5 circumstance penalty. In addition, creatures with scent cannot use this ability to detect you.

Prerequisite: Craft Wondrous Item, *camouflage*^{SC}.

Cost to Create: 500 gp, 40 XP, 1 day.

TOOLS

Many drow tools, particularly rods, are symbols of authority, items of great and terrible power wielded only by the most powerful dark elves.

ARACHNID ROD

Price (Item Level): 12,000 gp (13th)

Body Slot: — (held)

Caster Level: 8th

Aura: Moderate; (DC 19) conjuration

Activation: Standard (manipulation)

Weight: 5 lb.

This 3-foot-long rod is made of pale wood bound with bone bands. Images of black dancing spiders cover each band.

Three times per day, you can shoot forth sticky webbing as a ranged touch attack out to a range of 60 feet. Targets struck are entangled and must succeed on a DC 20 Escape Artist check to wriggle free or a DC 24 Strength check to break through the sticky bindings. As with webs created by the *web* spell, this webbing is extremely flammable: It is burned away after taking 10 points of fire damage.

As one or more of your uses per day, you can shoot a sticky strand of webbing out to a range of 120 feet. The strand remains attached to the end of the rod until you release it (a move action). You can cause the rod to reel in the strand (a standard action) at a rate of 10 feet per round. The strand is strong enough to bear up to 500 pounds of weight, so if you fire the strand at a ledge overhead, you can reel in the strand, lifting you toward the ledge at a rate of 10 feet per round.

If this function is used against a creature, you must succeed on a ranged touch attack. The creature can break free of the strand by attacking it (hardness 5, hp 10), burning it (as above), or succeeding on a DC 24 Strength check to break free. If you reel in the creature, it must succeed on a DC 24 Strength check or be pulled forward. If the Strength check fails by 5 or more, the target falls prone.

Prerequisite: Craft Rod, *web*, *drow*.

Cost to Create: 6,000 gp, 480 XP, 12 days.

BOTTLED NIGHT

Price (Item Level): 200 gp (2nd)

Body Slot: — (held)

Caster Level: 3rd

Aura: Faint; (DC 16) evocation

Activation: Standard (thrown)

Weight: —

Inky black liquid swirls inside this fragile glass vial.

You can throw *bottled night* by making a ranged touch attack with a range increment of 10 feet. Upon impact, it instantly fills the area with magical darkness, granting concealment to all creatures in a 20-foot radius. The darkness lasts for 10 rounds.

Bottled night dispels any light spell of 2nd level or lower.

Prerequisite: Craft Wondrous Item, *darkness*.

Cost to Create: 100 gp, 8 XP, 1 day.

DAYLIGHT PELLET

Price (Item Level): 150 gp (1st)

Body Slot: — (held)

Caster Level: 5th

Aura: Faint; (DC 17) evocation

Activation: Standard (thrown)

Weight: —

Within a thick black pouch, you see a handful of tiny ceramic beads. Thin veins of light shine through cracks in each bead.

This implement was devised by drow for use against other drow, but it is equally useful against any light-sensitive creature. A *daylight pellet* can be thrown up to 50 feet; when it lands, it shatters and creates illumination equivalent to a *daylight* spell, but with a duration of 10 rounds. These small stones are usually found in pouches containing 3d4 pellets. Using a pellet destroys it.

Prerequisite: Craft Wondrous Item, *daylight*.

Cost to Create: 75 gp, 6 XP, 1 day.

DEMON ROD

Price (Item Level): 20,308 gp (15th)

Body Slot: — (held)

Caster Level: 18th

Aura: Strong; (DC 24) conjuration

Activation: — and full-round (manipulation)

Weight: 6 lb.

This red and black rod is three feet long. Black, barbed thorns sprout from its surface. It is warm to the touch.

The *demon rod* functions as a +1 *morningstar*. Good creatures struck with it must succeed on a DC 20 Will save or be shaken for 1 round.

Three times per day, you can spend a full-round action to make a melee touch attack with the *demon rod*. If you hit, the target takes no damage, but must make a DC 20 Will save or become panicked for 3 rounds.

While you wield a *demon rod*, chaotic evil outsiders you summon gain a +2 profane bonus on melee attack rolls and damage rolls and gain +2 hit points per Hit Die for 6 additional rounds.

Finally, once per day, you can use the *demon rod* to conjure a vroock demon. The vroock appears anywhere within 45 feet and remains for 6 rounds. When it appears, you must make an opposed Charisma check as a free action to exert your control over it. If you succeed, the demon follows your commands as is normal for a *summon monster VIII*

spell. If you fail, the demon attacks you instead.

If you do not have an evil alignment, the *demon rod* bestows one negative level for as long as you carry it; this negative level disappears when you drop the rod. The negative level never results in actual level loss, but it cannot be overcome in any way (including *restoration* spells) while you carry the rod.

Prerequisite: Augment Summoning, Craft Rod, *fear*, *summon monster VIII*, chaotic evil.

Cost to Create: 10,000 gp (plus 308 gp for masterwork morningstar), 800 XP, 20 days.



Demon rod

ELIXIR OF THE UNFAILING SERVANT

Price (Item Level): 750 gp (3rd)

Body Slot: — (held)

Caster Level: 8th

Aura: Moderate; (DC 19) necromancy

Activation: Standard (manipulation)

Weight: —

Inside this bone flask is a noxious black fluid that stinks of rot. The flask itself resembles a screaming face, with a fat stopper in its mouth.

An *elixir of the unfailing servant* ensures that minions keep fighting, even in death. If you consume this vile concoction, any time within the next 8 hours that your hit points are reduced to 0 or lower, you are instantly slain. On the following round, you rise as a zombie (MM 265) with the instructions to attack any non-drow you encounter.

Prerequisite: Craft Wondrous Item, *animate dead*, *death knell*, evil.

Cost to Create: 375 gp, 30 XP, 1 day.

FLAYING ROD

Price (Item Level): 35,000 gp (16th)

Body Slot: — (held)

Caster Level: 7th

Aura: Moderate; (DC 17) necromancy, transmutation

Activation: Standard (manipulation)

Weight: 5 lb.

This slender metal baton is painted crimson. Sharp metal barbs cover one end, while the other is wrapped in black leather.

Upon grasping a *flaying rod*, you cause the barbs to slip free of the head on thin adamantine chains. The *flaying rod* functions as a +1 *scourge of speed*. (A *scourge* deals 1d8 points of damage, threatens a critical hit on a 20, and does ×2 damage on a confirmed critical hit.) If you confirm a critical hit with a *flaying rod*, the creature struck is wracked with pain and cowers for 1 round. Creatures immune to critical hits are immune to this effect.

When you cast spells with the *fear* descriptor when holding a *flaying rod*, your caster level increases by 1.

Prerequisite: Craft Rod, *daze monster*, *fear*, *haste*, drow.

Cost to Create: 17,500 gp, 1,400 XP, 35 days.

ROD OF IMPENETRABLE DARKNESS

Price (Item Level): 36,000 gp (17th)
Body Slot: — (held)
Caster Level: 9th
Aura: Moderate; (DC 19) evocation
Activation: — and swift
(manipulation)
Weight: 3 lb.

This metal rod is black and featureless, as if wrought from shadow itself.

A rod of impenetrable darkness grants you darkvision to a range of 30 feet. If you already have darkvision, the range extends by an additional 30 feet. Three times per day, you can cast *deeper darkness*.

The rod increases your caster level by 2 when casting spells or spell-like effects with the darkness descriptor.

If you touch the rod to a creature or object under the effect of a spell or spell-like effect with the light descriptor, it is automatically dispelled.

Prerequisite: Craft Rod, *darkvision*, *deeper darkness*.

Cost to Create: 18,000 gp, 1,440 XP, 36 days.

ROD OF THE MATRIARCH

Price (Item Level): 18,000 gp (14th)
Body Slot: — (held)
Caster Level: 18th
Aura: Strong; (DC 24) abjuration, divination
Activation: — and standard
(command)
Weight: 4 lb.

This long scepter appears to be made from silver spiders and in dim lighting, they seem to writhe. Capping one end is a fist-sized image of Lolth, a bloated spider with the head of an elf female.

A rod of the matriarch functions as a +1 light mace. While grasped, it grants a +2 enhancement bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, and Intimidate checks. Against drow, this bonus increases to +5.

You also gain access to a number of spell-like abilities. Once per day, you can use one of the following: *clairaudience/*

clairvoyance, discern lies, dispel magic, or suggestion.

If you are a cleric of Lolth, you can also use your rebuke undead ability to rebuke vermin. This functions like the rebuke undead ability, except that it affects vermin.

If you are not a female drow, the rod bestows one negative level for as long as you carry it; this negative level disappears when you drop the rod. The negative level never results in actual level loss, but it cannot be overcome in any way (including *restoration* spells) while you have the rod in your possession.

Prerequisite: Craft Rod, *clairaudience/clairvoyance, discern lies, dispel magic, suggestion, drow female*.

Cost to Create: 9,000 gp (plus 312 gp for masterwork light mace), 720 XP, 18 days.

SPIDER BOX

Price (Item Level): 3,200 gp (8th)
Body Slot: —
Caster Level: 7th
Aura: Moderate; (DC 18) conjuration
Activation: — and standard
(command)
Weight: 2 lb.

This pale white stone box is carved with bas-reliefs depicting spiders of all shapes and sizes. Some wriggling thing within the container causes it to shake violently.

When a spider box is in your possession, you gain a +4 resistance bonus on saving throws against spiderkind poison.

Also, when you place a spider box on any level surface and speak the command word, the box unfolds and releases a swarm of spiders (MM 239). The creatures respond to your silent commands, attacking where you direct them for a maximum of 7 rounds. Commanding the creatures to change targets is a move action.

A spider box can be used twice per day. Only one swarm can be in existence at a time. If the swarm is destroyed or the duration ends, the box reassembles, awaiting your next command to open it.

Prerequisite: Craft Wondrous Item, *summon swarm*.

Cost to Create: 1,600 gp, 128 XP, 4 days.

ARTIFACTS

Drow artifacts are rare and powerful. They almost always have some dangerous drawback built into their design, reflecting their maker's ill intent.

CLOAK OF THE CONSORT

Price: n/a
Body Slot: Shoulders
Caster Level: 21st
Aura: Overwhelming; (DC 25) abjuration
Activation: Swift (command)
Weight: 1 lb.

This light, very fine gray cape shimmers in the light.

A cloak of the consort grants a +6 deflection bonus to Armor Class and a +4 resistance bonus on all saving throws. In addition, the cloak negates any weakness to light that you might have. Finally, you can gain concealment for 10 rounds, at will.

In exchange for these benefits, you take a -4 penalty to all saving throws against spells and spell-like effects cast by female drow.

Lore: As they fled the surface, the dark elves looked to the matriarchs for guidance—for although it was their corruption and obeisance to the Spider Queen that led to the drow's exile from their homeland, any chance they had of surviving in the Underdark lay with the priestesses. (Knowledge [history] DC 20)

But before the drow would entrust their fates to the matriarchs once more, they demanded a concession: some way to restore the balance between the males and the females of the species. The priestesses agreed, and each elevated one male to serve as a companion and advisor. (Knowledge [history] DC 25)

To secure the pact, the matriarchs spun cloaks of fine spider silk and imbued them with their blood and Lolth's dark will. (Knowledge [history] DC 30)

They crafted each cloak to protect their consorts, guarding each privileged male against ambitious upstarts who would usurp their position. (Knowledge [history] DC 32)

But the matriarchs were clever, and they infused a small curse into each cloak. Those who wore the cloaks would be vulnerable to the magic of the priestesses. And so, from the start, the drow consorts were nothing more than the puppets and figureheads they remain to this day. (Knowledge [history] DC 35)

Adventure Hook: Since the exile, the process for constructing these cloaks has been lost, enhancing both the prestige value and the monetary value of those that remain. When one is discovered, the various houses immediately lay claim to it, causing no shortage of conflict. A *cloak of the consort* might change hands many times: One might be stolen from one house, only to be stolen back again within hours. The infighting ends only when one house manages to secure a cloak and bestow it onto a consort powerful enough to keep it.

A matriarch might dispatch drow raiding parties to recover a cloak from another house, requiring them to slip in, murder the consort, and bring the cloak back. And, until a suitable consort can be found, that party might also be required to protect the cloak from countless enemies.

Characters from the surface might happen upon one of these cloaks after encountering a particularly powerful group of drow led by a consort. Soon after the PCs take possession of the cloak, word of its loss spreads throughout the city, and the various houses work to recover it. Some might use a direct approach, harrying the PCs throughout the Underdark, and others might deal peacefully, offering to exchange it for some other potent (and likely cursed) item.

EGG OF LOLTH

Price: n/a

Body Slot: —

Caster Level: 23rd

Aura: Overwhelming; (DC 26)
conjunction

Activation: See text

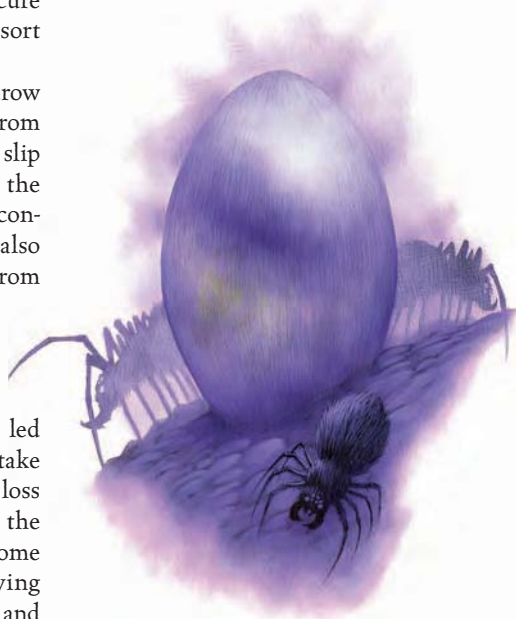
Weight: 10 lb.

This fist-sized egg is made of platinum. It has no markings and is completely smooth. When touched, it vibrates slightly, and you hear the faint sounds of scratching coming from within.

The *egg of Lolth* is a potent artifact with a long history. Originally nothing more than a cursed item that compelled its wielder to fling himself through a gate to the Abyss, its long exposure to the chaotic energies of the Demonweb Pits has transformed it into the deadly device it is today.

Aside from its relatively minor value (60 gp), the egg appears to have no function. It cannot be opened, and has no hinges or seams. It can be dented, but any blemishes vanish after 1d4 hours.

The only way to activate the item is to cast a *remove curse* spell on it, at which point the egg vanishes; in its place appears a shuddering, tumescent bag of spider silk. On the following round, the bag tears itself open, spilling out



An egg of Lolth

1d10 fiendish spider swarms and one fiendish Colossal monstrous spider. For the next 10 rounds, 1d4 fiendish Large monstrous spiders follow, after which the bag of spidersilk seals shut and vanishes, leaving the platinum egg spinning in its place.

Creatures called by the egg appear in the closest available space to the artifact and can act immediately, attacking the closest non-drow creature as soon as they appear. They fight until destroyed, pursuing fleeing characters relentlessly.

While the egg is activated, any creature that touches the bag is automatically transported to the Demonweb Pits. In addition, the artifact can serve as the focus component for *plane shift* spells cast to travel to the Abyss.

Love: Ages ago, a group of bold heroes—having fought through hordes of giants—uncovered a terrifying plot to sow war and discord throughout the world. Eclavdra, a high priestess and an influential leader in the drow city of Erelhei-Cinlu, was behind these machinations. (Knowledge [history] DC 20)

The adventurers swept through the Underdark, battled the kuo-toa in their profane warren, and took the fight to the vault of the drow itself. After all this effort, their job was not yet finished. They discovered a strange item that enabled them to leave the Material Plane and take the fight to the Spider Queen herself in the Abyss. (Knowledge [history] DC 25)

It's not clear what happened to these adventurers, but the egg eventually found its way back to the drow, and has changed hands many times since. (Knowledge [history] DC 30)

Adventure Hook: The *egg of Lolth* is an unholy relic, and one that is closely guarded by the Spider Queen's most powerful priestesses. Given the forces that protect it, only a few know of its existence and fewer still have laid eyes upon it.

When members of a rival city learn of the egg's existence and the significance of the object, they are unwilling to let Erelhei-Cinlu retain the vile thing, and so the matriarchs send a team of infiltrators to recover it. The theft plunges both cities into war, with each side expending their slave-warriors by the hundreds to recover the profane object. As the conflict escalates, the characters find themselves drawn into the struggle: perhaps to defend a svirfneblin enclave, or as mercenaries in service to a drow noble house. The more the characters invest themselves in the struggle, the more it becomes clear that the force pulling the strings is Lolth herself, and that the only way to restore stability between the two cities is to either destroy the artifact or send it back to the Abyss where it belongs.



Illustration by W. O'Connor

The drow are not sole masters of the Underdark. Many horrors claim this realm as their home, and some compete to rule the subterranean expanses. In fact, the Underdark teems with strange and wonderful creatures, ancient cultures, and alien civilizations.

The various *Monster Manuals* and other game supplements present a variety of creatures that might be found in the Underdark, from horrific aberrations such as aboleth slavers and the dreaded mind flayers, to tunneling beasts, foul slimes, warped humanoid tribes, and worse. All of the monsters

described in this chapter are somehow connected to the drow, representing minions and servants, slaves, adversaries, or simply expressions of Lolth's depthless cruelty. Some of these creatures have appeared in previous supplements but are presented in greater detail here, including sample characters or advanced individuals, ready to be dropped into a campaign. Others are legendary creatures from earlier D&D publications, their statistics updated to the current edition, and many appear here for the first time.

NEW MONSTERS RANKED BY CHALLENGE RATING

	CR				
Deep dragon, wyrmling	2	Draegloth	6	Troll, filth-eater	11
Lizard, quicksilver	2	Deep dragon, young	6	Husk vermin, widowmaker	11
Goblinoid, vril	2	Quaggoth, greater	6	Venom ooze	12
Husk vermin, Medium spider	2	Kuo-toa monitor	7	Drow, szarkai provocateur	13
Adamantine spider	3	Shunned	7	Draegloth favored one	14
Quaggoth	3	Deep dragon, juvenile	8	Deep dragon, adult	14
Deep dragon, very young	4	Goblinoid, bugbear overseer	8	Deep dragon, Phazeuroth (sample)	14
Lizard, footpad	4	Spider, tangle terror	8	Troll, tunnel thug	14
Lizard, subterranean	4	Chwidencha	9	Deep dragon, mature adult	16
Draegloth	5	Kuo-toa whip	9	Deep dragon, old	18
Goblinoid, bugbear stonejack	5	Husk vermin, Huge scorpion	9	Deep dragon, ancient	21
Goblinoid, goblin flesh-herder	5	Quaggoth, war leader	10	Deep dragon, wyrm	22
Spider, spitting	5	Spider, widowmaker	10	Deep Dragon, great wyrm	24
		Deep dragon, young adult	11		

OTHER RESOURCES

In addition to the creatures described in this chapter (and elsewhere in this book, several supplements feature monsters relevant to drow and their environs. These include:

Monster Manual II: Desmodu.

Fiend Folio: Abyssal ghoul and guth-maren.

Monster Manual III: Vermin lord.

Monster Manual IV: Balhannoth; bloodsilk spider; elf, drow; golem, fang; lodestone marauder; Lolth-touched temple; minotaur, greathorn; sailsnake; tomb spider; and zern.

ADAMANTINE SPIDER

This mechanical spider is exquisitely wrought in dark, gleaming metal. As it moves forward, the delicate legs make a faint clicking noise. Eight lavender eyes fix on your position, and a thin stream of smoking fluid spills from razor-sharp fangs.

Adamantine spiders are crafted by the drow to serve as companions, guardians, and assassins. An adamantine spider is controlled by a magic amulet. Whoever wears the amulet can issue simple commands to its associated construct.

STRATEGY AND TACTICS

Being mindless constructs, adamantine spiders have limited tactical sense. When left to their own devices, they attack only to defend themselves. However, when fighting at the behest of its master (the amulet's wearer), an adamantine spider follows that person's commands to the best of its ability, pressing the attack without regard for itself.

An adamantine spider has two typical uses. Its master can send it to attack, usually to deliver poison with its bite. Depending on the nature of the command, the construct might continue its attack or retreat once it has fulfilled its orders.

The more common use is as a bodyguard. The amulet's wearer can order the construct to stay nearby and interpose itself between its master and attackers. Should an attack slip past and actually injure its master, an adamantine spider can trap the opponent with a glob of sticky webbing, making the offender easier prey for retaliation.

SAMPLE ENCOUNTERS

Adamantine spiders, as products of drow ingenuity, are encountered only among the drow. They might protect unholy sites, temples, magical locations, or strongholds, or be in the company of a powerful house leader and her minions. These constructs are difficult and expensive to produce, and are only rarely encountered in numbers.

Companion (EL 3): Most drow spellcasters keep adamantine spider minions close by for additional protection, being justifiably paranoid in their cutthroat society. Such masters might employ especially deadly toxins to ensure that any who dares attack them pays dearly for the insult.

Assassin (EL 3): Their size, speed, and mobility, as well as their ability to deliver poison, make adamantine spiders excel-

ADAMANTINE SPIDER

CR 3

Always N Small construct

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +4

Languages understands commands by amulet wearer

AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 14
(+1 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 32 (4 HD); fast healing 1; **DR** 5/adamantine or magic

Immune construct immunities (MM 307)

Fort +1, **Ref** +4, **Will** +1

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +7 (1d4 plus poison)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +3; **Grp** -1

Atk Options poison (drow sleep poison, Fort DC 13, unconscious 1 minute/unconscious 2d4 hours)

Special Actions reactive web

Abilities Str 11, Dex 16, Con —, Int —, Wis 1, Cha 1

SQ construct traits (MM 307), find master, guard

Feats Improved Initiative^B, Weapon Finesse^B

Skills Climb +11, Hide +7, Listen +0, Spot +4

Advancement 5 HD (Small); 6–8 HD (Medium)

Poison (Ex) A character can fill an adamantine spider with one dose of injury poison, which it can then deliver as part of its bite attack. This particular spider is loaded with drow sleep poison.

Reactive Web (Ex) If an adamantine spider is in a square adjacent to its master, and that master takes at least 1 point of damage from an attacker in an adjacent square, the adamantine spider can squirt webbing at the attacker as an immediate action. The target of this ability must succeed on a DC 15 Reflex save or become entangled for 3 rounds. After using this ability, an adamantine spider must wait 3 rounds before using it again.

Find Master (Su) When crafted, an adamantine spider is keyed to a particular controlling amulet. Henceforth, it considers the wearer of that amulet to be its master. As long as an adamantine spider and its controlling amulet are on the same plane, the adamantine spider can find the amulet as if with the *discern location* spell (CL 12th).

Guard (Ex) If ordered to do so, an adamantine spider moves swiftly to defend its master, blocking blows and disrupting foes. All attacks against the amulet's wearer take a -2 penalty when an adamantine spider is adjacent to the wearer.

Skills Adamantine spiders have a +4 racial bonus on Spot checks.

An adamantine spider has a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened. It uses its Dexterity modifier instead of its Strength modifier for Climb checks.

lent assassins. A master might send an adamantine spider to eliminate a rival or to incite a coup in an enemy house.

Nest (EL 5–6): Powerful and wealthy drow manufacture multiple adamantine spiders to protect themselves from foes, or to negotiate useful arrangements with clients.

EL 6: In exchange for a dozen bugbear slaves, a drow priestess convinced the reclusive wizard Xar'penth to construct three adamantine spiders to safeguard her family's temple against rivals. The group, loaded with drow sleep poison, now patrols

within the complex. Unbeknownst to the priestess, Xar'penth has keyed one of them to a separate amulet that he wears as "insurance" should the priestess renege on their arrangement, providing her with an inert replica. For now, the construct is ordered to follow the behavior of the other two.

ECOLOGY

As constructs, adamantine spiders have no physical needs. They do not need sleep or nourishment. From the moment they acquire a semblance of life, they exist only to serve their creators, and follow all orders even if doing so would mean their annihilation.

Each adamantine spider is keyed to a special amulet that, while worn, allows the wearer to command it. The amulet is indistinguishable from a *drow house insignia* (see page 99). The wearer of the amulet can speak simple instructions to the adamantine spider. Typical instructions include the following.

- **Attack:** The adamantine spider engages and attempts to bite the indicated target. Without further instructions, it continues to attack that same target, even after killing the creature.
- **Fetch:** The construct retrieves a single designated object. If it is not strong enough to move the object, it struggles to complete the order regardless, until it receives another command.
- **Go:** The spider makes every effort to move to a designated spot. Once there, it waits for new orders.
- **Guard:** The adamantine spider stays in a space adjacent to the amulet's wearer and provides defense, as described under the guard ability.
- **Return:** The construct makes every effort to return to a space adjacent to the amulet's wearer.

ADAMANTINE SPIDER LORE

Characters who have ranks in Knowledge (arcana) can research adamantine spiders to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

Knowledge (Arcana)

DC	Result
13	This creature is an adamantine spider, an automaton crafted by the drow to serve as a companion and guardian. This result reveals all construct traits.
18	An adamantine spider ordered to protect its master interferes with attacks. If its master is injured, the construct can neutralize opponents by entangling them with its webbing. Once it uses this ability, it must wait a short time before using it again.
23	Adamantine spiders can be filled with poison (often drow sleep poison) that they deliver with their bites.
28	An adamantine spider takes no action independently but obeys commands issued by its controller. Its controller wears a special amulet keyed to that construct.

Environment: Although adamantine spiders can tolerate any environment, their creators are drow. Thus, these creatures are found almost exclusively in underground environments, particularly drow settlements. Occasionally an adventurer or a rival creature manages to defeat the holder of an amulet, thus gaining control of the construct. This circumstance can lead to adamantine spiders appearing in unusual locations.

Typical Physical Characteristics: An adamantine spider is about 4 feet in diameter, including its legs. It is made entirely of adamantine. Its abdomen is relatively large, with a diameter of 2 feet; on it is set a small head with two rows of purple gemstones that serve as eyes. Despite its size, an adamantine spider is quite heavy, weighing as much as 150 pounds.

Alignment: Adamantine spiders have no concept of ethics or morality. They are always neutral—although their controllers might set them to wicked ends.

TYPICAL TREASURE

Adamantine spiders do not understand the notion of treasure or wealth, and thus they do not collect treasure (although they might be set to guard a treasury). However, because they are crafted from adamantine, their bodies are valuable. The parts harvested from an adamantine spider are worth as much as 900 gp, depending on their condition.

FOR PLAYER CHARACTERS

An adamantine spider is assembled from exquisitely wrought adamantine components. During the construction process, each component is bathed in a mixture of venom, roper blood, and the tears of a dozen slaves. The components and materials cost 450 gp, and constructing the body requires a DC 18 Craft (metalworking) check. In addition to the cost of materials, the creator must purchase or craft the poison the construct uses separately.

An adamantine spider can be constructed with more than 4 Hit Dice. Each additional Hit Die adds 3,000 gp to the cost.

The creation cost also includes the materials for the command amulet attuned to that adamantine spider. For the purpose of creation, the amulet is considered part of the con-

THE WAR OF THE SPIDER QUEEN

In the *War of the Spider Queen* novel series, the drow are beset by an awful crisis: Lolth, the Demon Queen of Spiders, has fallen silent. Clerics of Lolth across all of Faerûn stop receiving spells. For a time, the priestesses conceal their weakness, but eventually the secret becomes plain for all to see, and the repercussions of Lolth's silence shake the very foundations of drow society.

Drow of the Underdark presumes that, in Faerûn, the events of the War of the Spider Queen have transpired and that Lolth is still silent. If you wish to feature this crisis, refer to the *City of the Spider Queen* adventure, published in September 2002. If you would prefer not to incorporate those events into your campaign, you can rule that Lolth's silence has ended and that drow clerics have regained their spellcasting ability.

struct. It is not possible to recreate a destroyed amulet, nor to bypass the amulet's function to control the adamantine spider without it.

CL 12th; Craft Construct, *animate objects*, *discern location*; Price 10,900 gp; Cost 5,450 gp + 436 XP.

ADAMANTINE SPIDERS IN EBERRON

The drow of Xen'drik revere all arachnids and express their beliefs and values in their art, magic, and religious practices. Above all others, though, the drow uphold scorpions as the purest expression of their patron deity, Vulkoor. Thus, drow artificers construct adamantine scorpions instead of spiders. These creatures have the same statistics as those presented here, but they look like Small monstrous scorpions. They deliver their poison with a sting rather than a bite, using the same attack bonus and damage as adamantine spiders.

ADAMANTINE SPIDERS IN FAERÛN

Up until recently, the priestesses of Menzoberranzan had a special arrangement with a cabal of drow wizards: The wizards assembled these constructs, and the priestesses supplied the spells needed for their creation. This arrangement led to the construction of over thirty adamantine spiders, situated throughout the city. However, the advent of Lolth's silence (see the sidebar) caused widespread panic and upheaval in the city, as Kiaransalee's devoted swept through and toppled the ruling regime of their enemies. Many of the constructs were destroyed, along with other icons of the dread Spider Queen, but a few survived in the possession of priestesses who escaped. Those priestesses work with surviving arcane spellcasters in a guerrilla war against the usurpers, filling their adamantine spiders with deathblade poison (DC 20, 1d6 Con/2d6 Con) to destroy the living servants of the Revenancer.

CHWIDENCHACHA

What seems to be a writhing mass of flexible, hairy spider legs surges forward, revealing long barbed spikes at the ends of its many appendages.

A chwidenchacha is an abomination spawned from a drow who failed one of Lolth's many tests.

STRATEGY AND TACTICS

A chwidenchacha is a bold combatant, scuttling forward on its many legs to drive its claws into the soft flesh of its foes. It relies on the element of surprise, attacking fast and preferably first. It often lies in wait just beneath the earth's surface, waiting for prey to come within range, then pouncing to grab and impale the creature on its barbed claws. Once it slays its prey, it retreats into its burrow or another hidden location to devour its meal at leisure. If a chwidenchacha is damaged before it has subdued its prey, it retreats, dragging the victim with it to finish off in a safe place.

When encountered in groups, chwidenchachas attack en masse. Emboldened by their numbers, they do not content themselves with single victims but slay every living thing

they can. Only when the group is reduced to half its original number or fewer do the chwidenchachas retreat, dragging away what prey they can.

SAMPLE ENCOUNTERS

The circumstances of chwidenchachas' creation means they are fairly rare, usually encountered singly. Areas of large drow populations might have several small clusters of the creatures, and clusters often band together into colonies.

Individual (EL 9): A solitary chwidenchacha lurks near an Underdark road, awaiting unwary prey.

Cluster (EL 11–14): Chwidenchachas sometimes collect into groups of two to five for mutual defense and more efficient hunting.

EL 11: Two chwidenchachas haunt a forgotten grotto, subsisting on bats, spiders, and the occasional lost traveler.

Colony (EL 16–18): Drow priestesses sometimes cultivate larger colonies, numbering from eleven to twenty chwidenchachas.

ECOLOGY

Born from those who fail one of Lolth's tests, chwidenchachas are unnatural creatures, their forms reflecting the Spider Queen's cruel humor. Many drow shun them as a reminder of the fate that awaits those who displease the Flesh-Carver. But a few priestesses keep stables of these monsters as guardians, which they keep in pits. The foul creatures also dispose of waste (such as prisoners that have no other value).

Chwidenchachas have no apparent gender. They come into existence only through the Spider Queen's curse or through growth and division (see below), and their wretched lives might drag on for centuries.

Environment: Chwidenchachas are found only underground. Though they have no aversion to light, some dim recollection of their time as drow binds them to the communities of their birth. They are extremely sensitive to sonic effects and flee from loud noises.

CHWIDENCHACHA LORE

Characters who have ranks in Knowledge (dungeoneering) can research chwidenchachas to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

Knowledge (dungeoneering)

- | DC | Result |
|----|---|
| 19 | This horrid, multilegged abomination is a chwidenchacha, an aberration created from a drow who has displeased the Spider Queen. This result reveals all aberration traits. |
| 24 | Chwidenchachas are highly resistant to nonmagical weapons, but they are affected by sonic energy more than most other creatures. |
| 29 | When a chwidenchacha charges, it attacks with a flurry of barbed claws. The mere sight of an attacking chwidenchacha terrifies its opponents. If it can, it drives its thorny appendages into its victim's body and drags it off before devouring it. |



Chwidenchra

Most chwidenchras hide in piles of debris and rubble in caverns and tunnels near a drow city, waiting for prey. They prefer tunnels and caverns with sporadic traffic, understanding that the Underdark is filled with greater menaces that could destroy them with ease. A chwidenchra's lair is easy to spot; a profusion of split and shattered bones litters the broken terrain around it.

Typical Physical Characteristics: A chwidenchra has a radial body that measures about 11 feet in diameter and weighs as much as half a ton. All of its many legs seem to emerge from a single point, but if the creature has a mouth or central body, it's impossible to discern beneath the jumble of limbs. Chwidenchras can live as long as 500 years, but often succumb sooner to Underdark threats or hunting parties dispatched to clear an important passage.

Alignment: The transformation into a chwidenchra destroys a cursed drow's mind, erasing memories and higher-order thinking. Fragments of recollection might remain for a while, making newly created chwidenchras even more vicious than normal. But as the creature becomes more comfortable in its new form, it forgets its former existence, devolving into a near-mindless hunter. As a result, chwidenchras are always neutral.

CHWIDENCHRA

CR 9

Always N Large aberration

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.;

Listen +6, Spot +6

Aura frightful presence (30 ft., DC 16)**Languages** understands Undercommon**AC** 24, touch 12, flat-footed 21

(-1 size, +3 Dex, +12 natural)

hp 114 (12 HD); **DR** 10/magic**Fort** +11, **Ref** +9, **Will** +11**Weakness** vulnerability to sonic**Speed** 30 ft. (6 squares), burrow 30 ft., climb 30 ft.; scuttling charge**Melee** 4 claws +15 each (1d6+6/19–20)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.**Base Atk** +9; **Grp** +19**Atk Options** impale 1d6+9, improved grab, pounce, magic strike**Abilities** Str 22, Dex 17, Con 20, Int 3, Wis 16, Cha 3**Feats** Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (claws), Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Focus (claw)**Skills** Climb +16, Hide +3, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Spot +6**Advancement** 13–18 HD (Large); 19–36 HD (Huge); see text

Frightful Presence (Su) A chwidenchra can inspire terror by charging or attacking. Affected creatures must succeed on a DC 16 Will save or become shaken, remaining in that condition as long as they remain within 30 feet of the chwidenchra. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected by the same chwidenchra's frightful presence for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based and includes a +4 racial bonus.

Scuttling Charge (Ex) When making a charge, a chwidenchra need not move in a straight line.

Impale (Ex) A chwidenchra deals 1d6+9 points of piercing damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a chwidenchra must hit an opponent of any size with a claw attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking attacks of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can impale the opponent on its claws.

Pounce (Ex) If a chwidenchra charges a foe, it can make a full attack.

Magic Strike A chwidenchra's natural weapons are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

TYPICAL TREASURE

Chwidenchras do not keep treasure. Anything found in their lairs is incidental, scattered, and often broken. There is a 10% chance that a chwidenchra's lair contains some coins, goods, or items left over from its victims. Roll separately for each type of treasure.

ADVANCED CHWIDENCHRAS

Since they are unnatural creatures, chwidenchras do not reproduce normally. As they age, they grow larger and larger, until finally their scabbling legs cannot bear the weight of their corrupted forms.

Soon after a chwidenchas reaches Huge size (at least 24 Hit Dice), it can divide. When it does so, it splits into two Large chwidenchas with 12 Hit Dice each. Any excess Hit Dice are lost.

CHWIDENCHAS IN EBERRON

In Eberron, chwidenchas are native to Xoriat. They are nightmarish products of the daelkyr, bred for battle, and have the extraplanar subtype. Though common in the Realm of Madness, these creatures share few traits with one another. Most have been warped or bred for some other purpose. Chwidenchas commonly have the pseudonatural^{CAr} template, but a few are trained as warbeasts^{MM2}, serving as terrifying steeds for the dread kaortis^{FF}.

CHWIDENCHAS IN FAERÛN

Since Lolth fell into silence, the chwidenchas have become more active, and now they hunt drow almost to the exclusion of other creatures. Drow matriarchs who keep stables of these creatures hear constant reports from handlers of attacks on them and their assistants. To deal with this problem, the priestesses have ordered many chwidenchas destroyed, but affectionate handlers have loosed some into the Underdark, giving the creatures a chance to survive by preying on other settlements.

DRAEGLOTH

Draegloths are fiends born from profane unions between drow high priestesses and powerful demons. Such couplings rarely produce a child, but when one is born, it is an auspicious sign of Lolth's favor.

DRAEGLOTH

This massive, vaguely humanoid creature has the black skin of a drow and a mane of yellow-white hair. Its powerfully muscled body sprouts two pairs of arms: One set ends in powerful claws, while the other has slender hands equipped with delicate fingers. It has a bestial face with an elongated, toothy muzzle.

Draegloths are elite soldiers that serve the houses' matriarchs. They might be advisors, leaders, or just symbols of Lolth's favor. A house usually provides its draegloths with offensive and defensive equipment to strengthen their already fearsome combat prowess.

Strategy and Tactics

Draegloths are vicious combatants that delight in wading into battle. They have little use for weapons, preferring instead to tear enemies apart with their teeth and claws. A draegloth is no fool, though, and seizes whatever advantage it can. It typically opens a fight with *darkness* before charging into the thick of its foes, and it uses Power Attack as much as possible. Should the battle turn against it, it falls back to use *unholy blight* and then retreats to a place of safety to recover, plotting revenge all the while.

DRAEGLOTH

CR 5

Always CE Large outsider (native)
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +9, Spot +9
Languages Abyssal, Undercommon

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15
(-1 size, +2 Dex, +1 deflection, +5 natural)

hp 39 (6 HD)

Immune poison, sleep

Resist acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10

Fort +8, **Ref** +8, **Will** +6 (+8 against enchantments)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee 2 claws +11 each (1d6+6) and
bite +6 (1d8+3)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +16

Atk Options Blind-Fight, Cleave, Power Attack

Combat Gear *necklace of fireballs type II*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th):

4/day—*darkness*

1/day—*dancing lights, desecrate, faerie fire, unholy blight*
(DC 14)

Abilities Str 22, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 11

Feats Blind-Fight, Cleave, Power Attack

Skills Concentration +11, Hide +7, Jump +15, Knowledge
(religion) +10, Listen +9, Move Silently +11, Search +10,
Spellcraft +10, Spot +9, Survival +0 (+2 following tracks)

Advancement by character class; **Favored Class** cleric; see
text

Possessions combat gear plus *cloak of resistance +1, ring of
protection +1*

FAVORED ONE

This powerful creature, something like a bestial drow, wears a gleaming breastplate and carries a blood-red scourge in its huge claws. A second pair of arms ends in slender hands that weave magical gestures. Crimson eyes glitter with the promise of pain as it advances, its muzzle spreading in an awful, toothy smile.

Favored ones personify drow values. These draegloths are especially cruel and cunning, and they enjoy the blessings of the Spider Queen. Favored ones occupy key places in Lolth's religious hierarchy.

The draegloth favored one presented here had the following ability scores before racial adjustments, Hit Die ability score increases, and equipment bonuses: Str 14, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 13.

Strategy and Tactics

Draegloth favored ones are rarely encountered alone. They lead groups of drow, or act as companions to house matriarchs. Since they have at their disposal an arsenal of magical capabilities, they let others fight in melee, and the favored ones provide spell support—at least for a while.

If time permits, a favored one first casts *owl's wisdom* and *divine power* on herself, and *nightshield* if possible. So long as she faces no immediate threats, she then turns her attention to her allies, boosting them with *hand of divinity, recitation, and shield of faith*.

FAVORED ONE

CR 14

Female Lolth-touched^{MM4} draegloth cleric 7
CE Large outsider (native)
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +14, Spot +14
Languages Abyssal, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon

AC 25, touch 14, flat-footed 24
(-1 size, +1 Dex, +7 armor, +3 deflection, +5 natural)

hp 127 (13 HD)

Immune fear, poison, sleep

Resist acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 13

Fort +15 (+19 against spiderkind poison), **Ref** +8, **Will** +15 (+17 against enchantments)

Speed 20 ft. in breastplate (4 squares), base speed 30 ft.

Melee *flaying rod** +19/+12/+7/+2 (1d8+12) and bite +16 (1d8+4) or

Melee 2 claws +18 (1d6+8) and bite +16 (1d8+4)

* See page 102

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +11; **Grp** +23

Atk Options Blind-Fight, Power Attack, smite 1/day (+4 attack, +7 damage)

Special Actions Profane Agony, rebuke undead 9/day (+4, 2d6+9, 7th)

Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds*, *potion of fly*, scroll of *flame strike* (DC 17), *spider box**, *wand of poison* (20 charges, DC 16)

* See page 103

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 7th):

4th—*divine power*, *recitation*^{SC}, *unholy blight*^D (DC 19, CL 8th)

3rd—*bestow curse* (+18 melee touch, DC 18), *blindness/deafness* (DC 18), *contagion*^D (+18 melee touch, DC 18, CL 8th), *cure serious wounds*

2nd—*deific vengeance*^{SC} (DC 17), *desecrate*^D (CL 8th), *hand of divinity*^{SC} (CL 8th), *owl's wisdom*, *summon monster II* (CL 8th)

1st—*cause fear* (DC 17, CL 8th), *divine favor*, *doom* (DC 17, CL 8th), *entropic shield*, *nightshield*^{SC}, *protection from good*^D, *shield of faith*

0—*detect magic* (2), *guidance*, *resistance* (2)

D: Domain spell. Deity: Lolth. Domains: Destruction, Evil.

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th):

4/day—*darkness*

1/day—*dancing lights*, *desecrate*, *faerie fire*, *unholy blight* (DC 16)

Abilities Str 26, Dex 12, Con 20, Int 14, Wis 20, Cha 14

Feats Blind-Fight, Extra Turning, Multiattack, Power Attack, Profane Agony*

* See page 54

Skills Concentration +20, Hide +3, Jump +8, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (religion) +18, Listen +14, Move Silently +7, Search +11, Spellcraft +20, Spot +14, Survival +5 (+7 following tracks)

Possessions combat gear plus +2 *breastplate of spell resistance 13*, *circlet of spiderkind command**, *periapt of Wisdom* +4, *ring of protection* +3

* See page 99

When in combat, a draegloth favored one wastes no time. She uses her most powerful spells first as her enemies close, blasting them with *unholy blight*, followed by *deific vengeance* against hostile spellcasters. Once she has sufficiently weakened her opponents, she gives into her bestial nature and charges, using her *flaying rod* and the Profane Agony feat to cripple those still standing.

OVERSEER

This brute towers above you, muscles rippling beneath its ebony skin. Its body shudders with hatred, and it looses a tremendous howl before it springs into action.

Draegloth barbarians sometimes serve as overseers, controlling and harvesting the drow's large stables of slaves. Particularly

OVERSEER (RAGING)

CR 6

Male draegloth barbarian 3
CE Large outsider (native)
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +15, Spot +12
Languages Abyssal, Undercommon

AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 20; uncanny dodge
(-1 size, +3 Dex, +5 armor, +2 deflection, +5 natural, -2 rage)

hp 105 (9 HD); **DR** 1/—

Immune poison, sleep

Resist acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10

Fort +15, **Ref** +9, **Will** +9 (+11 against enchantments)

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee 2 claws +19 each (1d6+11) and bite +17 (2d6+5)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +24

Atk Options Blind-Fight, Power Attack, rage 1/day (11 rounds)

Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds*, *potion of displacement*, *potion of haste*, *potion of magic fang*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th):

4/day—*darkness*

1/day—*dancing lights*, *desecrate*, *faerie fire*, *unholy blight* (DC 15)

Abilities Str 32, Dex 17, Con 24, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 12

SQ trap sense +1

Feats Blind-Fight, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Multiattack, Power Attack

Skills Intimidate +7, Jump +20, Listen +15, Spot +12

Possessions combat gear plus +1 *adamantine chain shirt*, *ring of protection* +2, *amulet of health* +2

When not raging, the draegloth overseer has the following changed statistics:

AC 25, touch 13, flat-footed 22

hp 87 (9 HD)

Fort +13, **Will** +7

Melee 2 claws +17 each (1d6+9) and bite +15 (2d6+4)

Grp +22

Abilities Str 28, Con 20

Skills Concentration +16, Hide +7, Intimidate +7, Jump +18, Knowledge (religion) +9, Listen +15, Move Silently +11, Search +9, Spellcraft +9, Spot +12, Survival +0 (+2 following tracks)

pitiless masters, they butcher their chattel indiscriminately for the most minor of infractions.

The draegloth overseer presented here had the following ability scores before racial adjustments, Hit Die ability score increases, and equipment bonuses: Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Strategy and Tactics

Overseers are brutes and little more. When a battle begins, an overseer immediately enters a rage and charges the closest opponent. He maximizes his Power Attack each round until he realizes the foe's Armor Class is high, at which point he fights with slightly more caution. Only when his rage ends does he fall back on his spell-like abilities.

SAMPLE ENCOUNTERS

Draegloths are not numerous enough to form groups. As well, these fiends are jealous creatures and bristle in the presence of their own kind. They are typically encountered singly or leading groups of drow.

Strike Force (EL 6–7): A strike force consists of one draegloth soldier and three to six drow warriors (see page 169). They patrol the grounds of their house, hunting for spies and intruders.

EL 7: A unit of six drow warriors led by a draegloth patrols the tunnels just outside a svirfneblin enclave in the hope of ambushing a small group of miners. The draegloth intends to take the gnomes alive if it can to bring them back to Erelhei-Cinlu as slaves.

Slave Train (EL 8+): Draegloth overseers command scores of slaves to harvest fungus, to excavate new tunnels, or simply to use for gruesome entertainment. Most overseers employ six or more guards to help keep the prisoners in line.

EL 8: A draegloth overseer and six guards (drow warrior 2) are chivvying along a group of maltreated slaves to toil in the mithral mines. Among the slaves are eight bugbears, a dozen goblins, four svirfneblin, and an ancient troll with a penchant

for devouring goblins. So demoralized are these prisoners that they do nothing to help would-be rescuers.

Coven (EL 14–15): For all the draegloths' influence and power, the drow forbid them from becoming matriarchs. Instead, those draegloths who serve Lolth form covens, each usually leading a secret society of four to six disaffected drow priestesses of lower standing.

EL 14: A favored one leads this coven of four drow priestesses (female drow cleric 8; *MM4* 57). The clerics conceal their allegiance to the coven beneath a façade of subservience to their houses. They have, for now, set aside their political differences and plot to overthrow the matriarch of a powerful house, a feat they hope to accomplish with the favored one's aid.

ECOLOGY

Draegloths would not exist at all if it were not for drow rituals. In special ceremonies, drow matriarchs call a demon from the Abyss for the purpose of mating. Such encounters are spectacularly bloody and cruel, and many times the priestess selected for this "honor" dies messily. On occasion, a priestess who survives the terrifying experience finds herself with child, and eventually gives birth to a draegloth.

Draegloths have no need of nourishment. They can get along just fine without food or water, but they enjoy consuming raw meat and regularly demand victims to devour. They aren't fussy about the nature of the meal, so long as it is screaming.

Environment: Draegloths are most at home deep underground. Few venture far from the comforts of the drow cities. Unlike their drow parents, draegloths have no special vulnerability to light. This enables them to sometimes creep from the depths to work their wickedness on the surface.

Typical Physical Characteristics: A draegloth stands between 7-1/2 and 8 feet tall and weighs between 300 and 375 pounds. No significant differences exist between the genders.

Alignment: Draegloths are always chaotic evil. They are cruel, capricious, and full of treachery. They also epitomize the raw violence that pervades the Abyss. Like rabid

SPIDERKIND

Introduced in *City of the Spider Queen*, the spiderkind classification encompasses a variety of creatures that share certain features and capabilities. Items, class abilities, and spells that are intended to affect spiderlike creatures affect all of spiderkind. Abilities that grant immunity or resistance to the abilities of spiderlike creatures extend to all spiderkind creatures. The ability to speak or communicate with spiders and the ability to navigate their webs also apply to spiderkind creatures and their webbing.

The following creatures in the D&D game are considered spiderkind.

Monster Manual: All spiders, aranea, bebilith (demon), drider, ettercap, monstrous spider, phase spider, retriever (demon), spider swarm.

City of the Spider Queen: Drider vampire.

Drow of the Underdark: Chwidench, shunned, spitting spider,

tangle terror, widowmaker.

Epic Level Handbook: Devastation spider.

Fiend Folio: Dark weaver.

Fiendish Codex I: Yochlol.

Frostburn: Snow spider.

Lost Empires of Faerûn: Giant sun spider, giant whip spider.

Monster Manual II: Neogi, shadow spider, spellgaunt.

Monster Manual III: Chelicera, dread harpoon spider, harpoon spider, lhok.

Monster Manual IV: Bloodsilk spider, inferno spider, tomb spider.

Monsters of Faerûn: Chitine, choldrith, hairy spider, myrloch, sword spider.

Secrets of Xen'drik: Tentacle spider.

Stormwrack: Monstrous diving spider.

Underdark: Arachnoid creatures (template).

animals, draegloths can change their demeanor in an instant with no warning: one moment, sedate and content; the next, raging, ravenous beasts.

SOCIETY

The appearance of a draegloth is a sign of great favor to a drow house, a boon from the Spider Queen. The house priestesses pamper the whelp, feeding it a mixture of milk and slaves' blood to encourage its feral nature. The draegloth wants for nothing during its lifetime and enjoys every decadent diversion offered by the drow's perverse culture.

Draegloths see little point to venturing outside their home cities. Each one stays close to the house of its birth, lending its might to furthering the cause of the matriarch. Only when its house is destroyed or weakened does a draegloth abandon its patrons. However, draegloths are well known for anticipating the winds of fortune, changing allegiances before the ultimate fall and joining houses more advantageous to them. A draegloth's loyalty to its house exists only to indulge its cruel interests.

If draegloths share any belief, it is their certainty they are the favored of the Queen of Spiders. They see their existence as an example of the perfect union of Lolth's mortals and immortal followers.

TYPICAL TREASURE

Most draegloths have standard treasure for NPCs of their Challenge Rating. They do not accumulate wealth but instead invest in defensive items such as *cloaks of resistance* and *rings of protection*. Most also direct a portion of their wealth to acquiring potent weapons and offensive magic, such as their preferred *necklaces of fireballs*.

DRAEGLOTHS WITH CLASS LEVELS

NPC draegloths advance by character class, most as clerics (their favored class) or wizards. Spellcasting draegloths earn particular favor among their houses. A few of the more brutish types become barbarians; these are relegated to less important roles, typically as bodyguards or overseers. Draegloth clerics always serve Lolth.

Level Adjustment: +4.



Left to right: draegloth, favored one, overseer

DRAEGLOTHS IN EBERRON

Draegloths are found almost exclusively in Xen'drik, where the drow view them as a divine race, dark angels of the Fury and symbols of strength and power. Because the appearance of a draegloth is so rare, a drow community that is so favored lords the creature's existence over its rivals. Many draegloths serve as overseers, leading expeditions to harvest the coveted Siberys dragonshards.

DRAEGLOTH LORE

Characters who have ranks in Knowledge (the planes) can research draegloths to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

Knowledge (the planes)

DC	Result
15	This fearsome creature is a draegloth, a fiend born from a drow priestess and a demon conjured from the Abyss. This result reveals all native outsider traits.
20	Draegloths inherit many of their mothers' abilities, including the drow's innate spellcasting and resistance to enchantment magic and sleep. They also have innate fiendish powers.
25	Draegloths are highly resistant to most forms of energy, including acid, cold, electricity, and fire.

DRAEGLOTHS IN FAERÛN

With Lolth's silence, the draegloths have become rebellious and unwieldy. In times past, they would serve the matriarchs without question, but now they demand equal status—if they do not outright abandon or betray their mothers. Some draegloths are leaving their cities, striking out on their own to restore the Spider Queen or to found new cults to bring more mortals under the sway of their demonic fathers.

DRAGON, DEEP

This dragon is sinuous and serpentine with a slender neck and limbs and narrow wings. Its scales gleam with the deep purple luster of amethysts. Its sleek, narrow head has a streamlined, shielded crest that reaches to its neck.

The self-proclaimed masters of the material world, dragons are creatures of awe-inspiring strength, intellect, and power. The various breeds of dragonkind can be found in almost any environment. Many varieties of chromatic and other evil dragons have allied with the drow in the past: from Greyhawk's infamous red, Brazzermal, to the insidious master of the Wailing Cliff, the shadow dragon Glouroth (*City of the Spider Queen*). However, none is more at home among the machinations of the drow and their lightless environment than the deep dragon.

Like other true dragons, deep dragons become more powerful as they grow older. The accompanying tables summarize their game statistics by age category. For more about true dragon abilities, such as damage from melee attacks, see MM 68–70.

Details of the abilities that deep dragons gain as they age, as well as other characteristics, are provided below.

True Seeing (Su): All deep dragons benefit from a continuous true seeing effect (as the spell) at caster level 20th.

Frightful Presence (Su): A young adult or older deep dragon can inspire terror by charging, attacking, or flying overhead. Creatures within a radius of 30 feet × the dragon's age category are subject to the effect if they have fewer Hit Dice than the dragon.

Affected creatures must succeed on a Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 dragon's HD + dragon's Cha modifier) or become shaken, remaining in that condition as long as they remain within range of the dragon. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected by the same deep dragon's frightful presence for 24 hours. On a failure, creatures with 4 or fewer HD become panicked for 4d6 rounds, and those with 5 or more HD become shaken for 4d6 rounds. Deep dragons ignore the frightful presence of other dragons.

Breath Weapon (Su): All deep dragons are able to breathe a cone of acid once every 1d4 rounds. The damage and save DC vary by age, as indicated on the table. The length of the cone depends on the size of the dragon; see the Dragon Breath Weapons table, MM 69. This flesh-corrosive gas does not affect inorganic material, including most constructs.

Change Shape (Su): As a standard action, a deep dragon (except for a wyrmling) can assume one or more forms other than its normal draconic form. The dragon can remain in an alternate form until it chooses to assume a new one or return to its natural form.

It can assume a serpentine (legless) form three times per day at very young age and four times per day at juvenile age or older. This form is the same size as the dragon, but it is able to move through narrow tunnels because it has no legs (treat the creature as one size category smaller for squeezing purposes). The dragon's natural armor bonus worsens by –6 in this form. It moves at 30 feet, flies at 10 feet (poor), and swims at 30 feet. It loses all claw attacks in this form but gains a constrict attack against grappled opponents, dealing damage depending on its size: 1d8 points of damage if Small, 2d6 if Medium, 2d8 if Large, 3d6 if Huge, 3d8 if Gargantuan, or 5d6 if Colossal.

A deep dragon can assume a humanoid form of Medium size or smaller three times per day at young age and four times per day at juvenile age or older.

Spell-Like Abilities: The caster level for a deep dragon's spell-like abilities is equal to the dragon's age category (1–12) or its sorcerer caster level (as given on the table), whichever is higher.

Challenge Rating: Wyrmling 3; very young 5, young 7; juvenile 9; young adult 12; adult 15; mature adult 17; old 19; very old 20; ancient 22; wyrm 23; great wyrm 25.

Advancement: Wyrmling 7–8 HD; very young 10–11 HD; young 13–14 HD; juvenile 16–17 HD; young adult 19–20 HD; adult 22–23 HD; mature adult 25–26 HD; old 28–29 HD; very old 31–32 HD; ancient 34–35 HD; wyrm 37–38 HD; great wyrm 40+ HD.

Skills: A deep dragon has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action when swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

PHAZEUROTH

This slender dragon, its body a rich purple color tending to black, has a particularly narrow profile. A tawny crystal orbits its head, and its claws glimmer with arcane power.

Phazeuroth is an adult deep dragon who has recently relocated his lair near the drow city of Erelhei-Cinlu. His new lair is in a hidden cavern that once housed his grandfather, who was allied with the drow centuries ago before a tunnel collapse injured him badly enough that he was unable to burrow free. Phazeuroth hopes to renew those ancient ties with the drow to his own profit.

Strategy and Tactics

Phazeuroth is a clever strategist. He prefers to observe approaching creatures from a distance and keep them under observation as long as possible to learn about them, traveling through hidden tunnels in his serpentine or humanoid form.

If he thinks they might be useful allies or easily led into a trap (or both), the dragon approaches them in the form of whatever humanoid race they would be most likely to accept, claiming to be a fellow traveler, explorer, or the like. He does not reveal his true form unless forced to do so in combat or if necessary to intimidate others into doing as he wishes.

If forced into combat, Phazeuroth prefers to retreat down a narrow tunnel, forcing his opponents to bunch up tightly. He blasts the group with his breath weapon repeatedly, preferring not to engage in melee as long as he can continue doing so. If he must join battle, he tries to prepare by casting *spell flower* on each of his claws, followed by *shocking grasp*, so he can hold the charge until he strikes opponents. He prefers to open with a swift breath weapon (using Quicken Breath)

followed by a devastating barrage of enspelled claws, wings, bite, and tail slap.

Phazeuroth prefers not to fight on the wing, since he is not a particularly good flyer and rarely has the room to do so in cramped Underdark tunnels and caverns. However, if facing effective ranged weapons or spellcasters, he typically casts *resistance* and *entropic shield* on himself while taking cover and then casts *darkness* on a rock, which he then hurls up to 100 feet as a ranged touch attack (range increment 20 feet) to provide some concealment as he flies in to make melee attacks.

If facing drow, illithids, or aboleths, Phazeuroth always begins combat with *protection from evil* to prevent any chance of magical or psionic mind control.

DEEP DRAGONS BY AGE

Age	Size	Hit Dice (hp)	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha	Base Atk/ Grapple	Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Breath Weapon (DC)	Frightful Presence DC
Wyrmling	T	6d12+6 (45)	11	10	13	14	13	12	+6/-2	+8	+6	+5	+6	2d8 (14)	—
Very young	S	9d12+9 (67)	13	10	13	14	13	12	+9/+6	+11	+7	+6	+7	4d8 (15)	—
Young	M	12d12+24 (102)	15	10	15	16	15	14	+12/+14	+14	+10	+8	+10	6d8 (18)	—
Juvenile	M	15d12+30 (127)	17	10	15	16	15	14	+15/+18	+18	+11	+9	+11	8d8 (19)	—
Young adult	L	18d12+54 (171)	19	10	17	18	17	16	+18/+26	+21	+14	+11	+14	10d8 (22)	22
Adult	L	21d12+84 (120)	23	10	19	18	17	16	+21/+31	+26	+16	+12	+15	12d8 (24)	23
Mature adult	H	24d12+120 (276)	25	10	21	20	19	18	+24/+39	+29	+19	+14	+18	14d8 (27)	26
Old	H	27d12+162 (337)	27	10	23	20	19	18	+27/+43	+33	+21	+15	+19	16d8 (29)	27
Very old	H	30d12+180 (375)	29	10	23	22	21	20	+30/+47	+37	+23	+17	+22	18d8 (31)	30
Ancient	H	33d12+231 (445)	31	10	25	22	21	20	+33/+51	+41	+25	+18	+23	20d8 (33)	31
Wyrm	G	36d12+288 (522)	33	10	27	23	23	22	+36/+59	+43	+28	+20	+26	22d8 (36)	34
Great wyrm	G	39d12+312 (565)	35	10	27	24	23	22	+39/+63	+47	+30	+22	+28	24d8 (37)	35

DEEP DRAGON ABILITIES BY AGE

Age	Speed	Init	AC	Special Abilities	Caster Level*	SR
Wyrmling	40 ft., fly 100 ft. (average), burrow 20 ft., swim 30 ft.	+0	17 (+2 size, +5 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 17	True seeing, <i>detect magic</i> at will, immunity to charms, resistance to cold 10 and fire 10	—	—
Very young	40 ft., fly 150 ft. (average), burrow 20 ft., swim 30 ft.	+0	19 (+1 size, +8 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 19	Change shape (serpentine) 3/day	—	—
Young	40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), burrow 20 ft., swim 30 ft.	+0	21 (+11 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 21	Change shape (humanoid) 3/day	—	—
Juvenile	40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), burrow 20 ft., swim 30 ft.	+0	24 (+14 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 24	Change shape (both) 4/day	1st	—
Young adult	40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), burrow 20 ft., swim 30 ft.	+0	26 (-1 size, +17 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 26	DR 5/magic	3rd	21
Adult	40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), burrow 20 ft., swim 30 ft.	+0	29 (-1 size, +20 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 29	<i>Freedom of movement</i> at will	5th	24
Mature adult	40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), burrow 20 ft., swim 30 ft.	+0	31 (-2 size, +23 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 31	DR 10/magic	7th	26
Old	40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), burrow 20 ft., swim 30 ft.	+0	34 (-2 size, +26 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 34	<i>Transmute rock to mud</i> 3/day	9th	28
Very old	40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), burrow 20 ft., swim 30 ft.	+0	37 (-2 size, +29 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 37	DR 15/magic	11th	29
Ancient	40 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor), burrow 20 ft., swim 30 ft.	+0	40 (-2 size, +32 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 40	<i>Passwall</i> 2/day	13th	31
Wyrm	40 ft., fly 200 ft. (clumsy), burrow 20 ft., swim 30 ft.	+0	41 (-4 size, +35 natural), touch 6, flat-footed 41	DR 20/magic	15th	32
Great wyrm	40 ft., fly 200 ft. (clumsy), burrow 20 ft., swim 30 ft.	+0	44 (-4 size, +38 natural), touch 6, flat-footed 44	<i>Stone shape</i> 2/day	17th	34

*Can also cast cleric spells and those from the Earth, Evil, and Trickery domains as arcane spells (casting as a sorcerer).



Phazeuroth, a deep dragon

SAMPLE ENCOUNTERS

Deep dragons love to stalk their prey through the lightless caverns of the Underdark. They are wary in battle, but find combat nearly irresistible. They avoid obvious traps and ambushes, but delight in the hunt, pouncing on creatures without warning, and using their spells to bury opponents under rockfalls.

Solitary Hunter (EL 9–25): When a deep dragon has reached sufficient size to survive on its own, it stakes out a part of the Underdark as its personal hunting ground.

EL 15: Phazeuroth (see above) has not yet opened a dialogue with the drow, waiting for the right time and method to approach them with his proposal. He keeps the location of his lair a secret and slays any sentient creature that stumbles upon it—tracking the interloper down if necessary. Of late, however, he has been entertaining overtures of alliance with a new group in the area.

Drow Expedition (EL 12+): Although they do not wholly trust the drow, deep dragons sometimes form alliances of varying duration with the dark elves if their current interests are mutual.

EL 13: A young adult deep dragon accompanies a raiding party consisting of four Lolth's Stings (see page 78) and two

dark snipers (see page 75). The group seeks to weaken groups of allies supporting an enemy city by picking them off from ambush in nearby tunnels.

ECOLOGY

Deep dragons are little known on the surface world. They are consummate hunters of the Underdark, stalking their prey with cunning and patience. Relentless explorers, they always seek to penetrate to the deepest places of the earth, never before trod by a sentient creature, to reveal what wonders such undiscovered caverns might hold. They are extremely avaricious and covet all wealth—especially magic items.

Legends speak of a mystical realm called Azarakka that was hidden deep beneath the surface when Io, creator of all dragons, first laid the foundation of the world. The dragon who first discovers this fabled cavern, so the legend goes, will be privy to the ancient knowledge of the Ninefold Dragon and ascend to the ranks of the dragon deities. Whether the deep dragons believe this tale is unknown, but scholars speculate that the allure of this prize first drew their progenitors from the skies of their heritage to the dark places of the earth.

Deep dragons can eat almost anything but seem to have a preference for “seafood”: giant clams and crabs, fish, kuo-toas, and even aboleths. (They are not fond of skum, though, finding them tough and bitter.) Because of

DEEP DRAGON LORE

Characters who have ranks in Knowledge (arcana) can research deep dragons to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

Knowledge (Arcana)

DC	Result
15 + CR	This serpentine creature is a deep dragon, a native of the deep Underdark. This result reveals all dragon traits.
20 + CR	Deep dragons are immune to charm effects and resistant to cold and fire. A deep dragon's breath weapon is a cone of flesh-destroying acid.
25 + CR	Deep dragons often work with drow, but they pursue their own hidden agenda and might just as easily be on the opposite side. They covet ancient lore and treasure from the deeps of the earth.

PHAZEUROTH

CR 15

Male adult deep dragon

CE Large dragon (earth)

Init +4; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., keen senses, low-light vision, true seeing; **Listen** +27, **Spot** +27

Aura frightful presence (180 ft. radius, DC 23)

Languages Draconic, Elven, Giant, Goblin, Undercommon

AC 29, touch 9, flat-footed 29

(-1 size, +20 natural)

hp 120 (21 HD); **DR** 5/magic

Immune charm, paralysis, sleep

Resist cold 10, fire 10; **SR** 24

Fort +16, **Ref** +12, **Will** +15

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), fly 150 ft. (poor), burrow 20 ft., swim 30 ft.

Melee bite +16 (3d6+6) and
2 claws +15 each (1d8+3) and
2 wings +14 each (1d6+3) and
tail slap +14 (1d8+9)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with bite)

Base Atk +21; **Grp** +31

Atk Options Power Attack, Quicken Breath, Recover Breath, magic strike

Combat Gear *ring of spell storing (cure moderate wounds [2])*

Special Actions change shape 4/day (serpentine or humanoid), breath weapon

Spells Known (CL 6th):

2nd (5/day)—*cure moderate wounds, darkness*

1st (7/day)—*entropic shield, protection from evil, shocking grasp* (+26 melee touch), *spell flower*^{SC}

0 (6/day)—*detect poison, ghost sound* (DC 13), *guidance, mage hand, read magic, resistance*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th):

At will—*detect magic, freedom of movement*

Abilities Str 23, Dex 10, Con 19, Int 18, Wis 17, Cha 16

Feats Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Multiattack, Power Attack, Quicken Breath*, Recover Breath*, Track, Weapon Focus (claw)

*Feat described in *Draconomicon*

Skills Diplomacy +29, Disguise +27, Escape Artist +24, Knowledge (arcana) +28, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +28, Knowledge (nature) +6, Listen +27, Search +28, Sense Motive +27, Spellcraft +6, Spot +27, Survival +27 (+29 underground, +29 following tracks), Swim +14, Use Rope +0 (+2 involving bindings)

Possessions *orange prism ioun stone*

Magic Strike Phazeuroth's natural weapons are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Breath Weapon (Su) 40-ft. cone, once every 1d4 rounds, damage 12d8 acid, Reflex DC 24 half.

Change Shape (Su) Phazeuroth can assume a Large serpentine form or a Medium or smaller humanoid form. The serpentine form counts as Medium size for the purpose of squeezing. In this form, Phazeuroth's natural armor bonus decreases to 14. He loses all claw attacks but gains a constrict attack against grappled opponents that deals 2d8 points of damage.

their hunting habits, they are often at odds with sentient ichthyoid creatures, and they conceal and heavily trap their lairs to prevent incursions by vengeance-seeking kuo-toas and others. However, their greatest enemies, other than the drow (with whom they have a complex relationship), are cloaklers and illithids.

The relationship of deep dragons to the drow varies with the dragons' whims—they might ally closely with the dark elves at one time, and at another maintain a haughty and malevolent distance. They see the drow as useful tools and excellent sources of "trinkets" (as the deep dragons refer to magic items). But they also recognize the power that the dark elves possess, and they do not like the idea of a drow hegemony throughout the lightless realm.

Environment: Deep dragons rarely venture from the Underdark, whose depths they are ideally suited to navigating, but they have been known to venture to the surface. Such sojourns are usually undertaken in pursuit of stolen treasure, to take revenge against a foe, or to seek rare magic.

Typical Physical Characteristics: A hatchling deep dragon has iridescent maroon scales, darkening to deep rich purple in adulthood and almost black in the dragon's older age. Its lithe body is designed for maneuvering in the narrow, twisting corridors of the Underdark. Deep dragons are also accomplished shapechangers, with the ability to adopt a legless serpentine form that lets them squeeze into tight spaces or a humanoid shape to blend in with the other races of the Underdark.

Younger deep dragons might gather in clutches of two to five individuals, but by a relatively young age, their greed and relentless curiosity drive them to strike out on their own. As is typical of evil dragons, parents do not care for the eggs once laid.

Alignment: Deep dragons are selfish, cruel, and capricious. They are always chaotic evil.

TYPICAL TREASURE

Like all their kind, deep dragons are avaricious creatures and hoard their wealth greedily. A deep dragon has triple standard treasure for its Challenge Rating.

DEEP DRAGONS AS CHARACTERS

See MM 69 for information on dragons' favored skills and feats. Disguise, Survival, and Swim are considered class skills for deep dragons.

Level Adjustment: Wyrmling +3; very young +3; young +3; juvenile +4; others —.

DEEP DRAGONS IN FAERÛN

Deep dragons are most often encountered near drow cities. The confusion of the cities during Lolth's silence has interrupted the steady supplies of food and magic, causing many deep dragons to take independent action. However, the dragons are generally pleased that the drow are fighting one another: By weakening themselves in this way, they pose no immediate threat of dominating the lower realms.

ELF, ALBINO DROW (SZARKAI)

The dark elves are bad enough, but some legends speak of an even more sinister and deadly foe—drow who resemble surface elves and can walk among them undetected. Called szarkai (pronounced *zahrk-eye*), these enigmatic drow are natural spies.

SZARKAI PROVOCATEUR

The cloaked, pale humanoid before you looks something like a drow, but her skin is alabaster rather than black, and her red eyes size you up in a quick calculation.

Szarkai (whose name means “ghost spiders”) are rare mutants in the deep confines of drow cities who appear perfectly natural in other surroundings—especially those on the surface. Thus, albino drow receive intense training in espionage almost from birth.

The szarkai provocateur presented here had the following ability scores before racial adjustments and Hit Die ability score increases: Str 13, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 15.

Strategy and Tactics

A szarkai provocateur never plans to become involved in a stand-up fight. Better to manipulate somebody more suited to the task or to put it off somehow until the potential combatants lose interest in it or forget it altogether.

ALBINO DROW LORE

Characters who have ranks in Knowledge (dungeoneering) or Knowledge (history) can research albino drow to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

Knowledge (dungeoneering)

DC Result

- 15 This creature is an albino drow, a rare variant of the drow race, also called a szarkai. This result reveals all elf traits.
- 20 Like other drow, szarkai are highly resistant to magic but are vulnerable to light. This result reveals all drow traits (see page 36).

Knowledge (history)

DC Result

- 20 This creature is an albino drow, a rare variant of the drow race, also called a szarkai. Drow are generally evil and subterranean dwellers.
- 25 The drow trace their lineage back to an elf splinter group that rejected the surface life.
- 30 Most drow live underground, but the szarkai can pass as surface elves. They are trained as spies and saboteurs, spending centuries among ordinary folk as they pursue inscrutable and long-term plots.

If a szarkai provocateur is forced to enter battle, her first priority is escape. She rarely engages in a prolonged conflict but seeks to withdraw after a round or two, and she always has two or three retreat plans ready. She seeks to eliminate her foe quickly and quietly and then disappear, leaving no evidence of her own identity. Unless caught completely by surprise, she first uses her *wand of eagle's splendor* to enhance her spellcasting ability. Divination spells such as *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *detect thoughts*, and *detect magic* allow her to prepare for the strengths and exploit the weaknesses of opponents. If time permits, she might *charm* a few minions for added muscle.

The provocateur makes use of her disguise abilities and spells or hides in plain sight to get close enough for an attack. An envenomed dart, or a quick jab from a poisoned rapier, is usually enough to remove a combat threat. Spring Attack allows her to leap in to make melee attacks and then retreat beyond the range of counterattacks. *Suggestion* and *charm person* against foes or their bodyguards can also provide a tactical advantage. A provocateur commonly uses *shadow illusion* and her shadow companion to cover her retreat, and a *potion of sanctuary* allows further protection. Often she falls back into a crowded area and uses *alter self* or *lesser disguise* to slip away unnoticed.

Sample Encounters

Szarkai provocateurs usually pass themselves off as surface elves while pursuing hidden goals that might reach fruition only after centuries.

Deep Cover Agent (EL 10–20): A szarkai provocateur is expert in the arts of disguise. She blends into society while furthering the cause of her noble house.

EL 15: The provocateur described above has thoroughly studied the intrigues of the high elf court, and she has infiltrated a minor noble house by the simple expedient of replacing a lesser scion. Having disposed of the body among the chwidenchas of her native house, the szarkai now bides her time in her adopted role. She quietly manipulates court politics in ways advantageous to the drow, sowing discord and distraction with innocent-seeming comments.

Ecology

These albinos appear only rarely, representing one-hundredth of one percent of the drow population. Other drow hold them in some awe, and the birth of one is considered a blessing to the family. They are called “ghost spiders” to signify the boon of Lolth.

Whether through inbreeding or the intentional dabbling of the Spider Queen, szarkai tend to appear more frequently among the noble houses than among the lower castes. Their existence is hidden from all but the highest-ranking drow who have a need to know. Szarkai are largely sequestered from drow life, being are too valuable to risk losing to a casual murder when out among the riffraff. Although they are physically safer than other drow, their lot in life is no less harsh and corrupting. Szarkai receive the personal attentions of the cruelest priestesses and most Machiavellian of nobles.

Environment: Although szarkai are born and nurtured in the underground cities of the drow, they can be found in any setting as befits the nature of their missions. Often an albino drow lives among surface elves or in cities where elves are common.

Typical Physical Characteristics: Other drow often consider szarkai to be a separate race, but the two kinds of elves are genetically identical except for the szarkai's pale skin and red eyes. This popular opinion has some basis in fact, though: Some szarkai have subtle deformities, such as hairlessness, gnarled, clawlike hands, or small fangs.

Alignment: Like many of their kin, albino drow are often neutral evil. Szarkai cultivate cold patience, and few drow are as skilled at subtle and cruel intrigues.

Society

When szarkai have completed their training and have demonstrated the necessary skills to carry out their missions, they are deployed to the surface in deep cover assignments. There, they ingratiate themselves with the surface folk when furthering the agenda of their drow masters and of Lolth.

These agents provocateur are always long-term visionaries, since their missions can last for lifetimes among the lesser

aces. Their assignments might be simple information-gathering and relay, reconnaissance of the physical and political landscape, forming a sleeper cell for some future act of sabotage or violence, or quietly manipulating those around them to turn potential allies against one another or to keep surface communities small and weak. Rarely is one of these agents dispatched to perform anything so pedestrian as an assassination; the chance of discovery is too high, and the removal of any specific individual among the surface races too insignificant, to be of any real value to the drow. Rather, these master spies weave webs of intrigue that are so thinly stretched across such a span of time as to be virtually invisible. Szarkai studiously avoid liches, since the undying spellcasters are adept at piercing their disguises and guessing their plots.

Typical Treasure

Unlike typical drow, whose wealth is stored mainly in their homes, albino drow must carry everything they need with them on their missions. Such equipment forms standard treasure for NPCs of their Challenge Rating. When undercover, they do not wear the spider-themed and disturbing jewelry of their dark-skinned cousins.

SZARKAI PROVOCATEUR

CR 13

Female albino drow bard 7/shadowdancer 5

NE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +11, Spot +8

Languages Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon

AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 18; Dodge, Mobility, improved uncanny dodge

(+3 Dex, +3 armor, +2 deflection)

hp 50 (12 HD); defensive roll

Immune magic *sleep* effects

Resist evasion; **SR** 23

Fort +3, **Ref** +12, **Will** +5 (+7 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), shadow jump 20 ft.; Spring Attack

Melee +1 *adamantine rapier* +10/+5 (1d6+2/18–20 plus poison)

Ranged dart +11 (1d4+1 plus poison)

Base Atk +8; **Gp** +9

Atk Options Combat Reflexes, poison (blue whinnis, DC 14, 1 Con/unconscious)

Special Actions bardic music 7/day (*suggestion* [DC 17], inspire competence, inspire courage +1, *fascinate* 3 creatures, countersong), summon shadow

Combat Gear 5 doses of blue whinnis poison, *potion of sanctuary*

Bard Spells Known (CL 7th):

3rd (1/day)—*clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *glibness*

2nd (3/day)—*alter self*, *calm emotions* (DC 16), *detect thoughts* (DC 15), *suggestion* (DC 15)

1st (4/day)—*charm person* (DC 15), *cure light wounds*, *obscure object*, *undetactable alignment*

0 (3/day)—*detect magic*, *flare* (DC 14), *ghost sound* (DC 14), *lullaby* (DC 14), *message*, *minor disguise*^{SC}

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th):

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*, *shadow illusion* (CL 5th)

Abilities Str 13, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 18

SQ bardic knowledge +8, hide in plain sight (within 10 ft. of shadow)

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Mobility, Persuasive, Spring Attack

Skills Balance +11, Bluff +24, Diplomacy +18, Disguise +7 (+9 acting), Gather Information +9, Hide +12, Intimidate +11, Jump +3, Listen +11, Move Silently +10, Perform (dance) +12, Perform (sing) +17, Search +11, Sense Motive +9, Sleight of Hand +12, Spot +8, Survival –1 (+1 following tracks), Tumble +12

Possessions combat gear plus +1 *glamered leather armor*, +1 *adamantine rapier* (concealed in a parasol), 5 darts (disguised as hair pins), *ring of protection* +2, *circlet of persuasion*, *wand of eagle's splendor* (27 charges), courtier's outfit, jewelry worth 20 gp

Shadow Jump (Su) Travel up to 20 feet per day between shadows as though with *dimension door* spell; CL 5th. *DMG* 195.

Defensive Roll (Ex) Reflex save (DC = damage from attack) to avoid attack that would reduce the szarkai provocateur to 0 or fewer hit points. *PH* 51.

Light Blindness (Ex) Sudden exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds szarkai for 1 round. In addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

Summon Shadow (Su) A szarkai can call a 3 HD shadow companion (*MM* 221). This shadow has NE alignment and cannot be turned, rebuked, or commanded. *DMG* 195.

Shadow Illusion (Sp) As the *silent image* spell.

Albino Drow as Characters

Szarkai have identical game statistics to ordinary drow. See MM 103 for information on drow as characters. The albinos typically choose classes that specialize in misdirection and intrigue, such as bard, cloaked dancer^{CS}, and spymaster^{CAD}.

Albino Drow in Faerûn

The most infamous of szarkai was the Kiaransaleen high priestess Irae T'sarran, who overthrew the Lolth worshipers of the city of Maerimydra after their goddess fell silent. She then transported the Undying Temple of Kiaransalee to Castle Maerimydra and began a great ritual to animate the thousands fallen in that battle to claim the Underdark for her dread deity. These events are further described in the *City of the Spider Queen* adventure.

GOBLINOID

Many goblinoid races call the Underdark home, and all have felt the lash of drow tyranny at one time or other. Some are more frequently seen in servitude to drow masters. Goblins and bugbears live within easy access of drow communities, and the strange vril have been bred by the dark elves for specific purposes.

BUGBEAR

Of all the goblinoid races, bugbears are most common among the drow. Their deep lairs make them easily accessible to drow raiding parties. Although not as numerous as goblins, bugbears

are hardier and make better soldiers and enforcers. Often they are bought off as cheap mercenaries and do not even realize their near slavery to the dark elves.

Bugbear Overseer

This snarling brute is a hulking, furry goblinoid with a flattened snout. It expertly aims a polearm at your feet, and, as you attempt to dodge the swing, raises a clawed hand in an arcane gesture.

Each drow community controls hundreds or thousands of slaves, requiring trustees of a sort among the inferior races they hold sway over. They have bred bugbear overseers to this end, cultivating sorcerously imbued family groups from which new recruits are drawn.

The bugbear overseer presented here had the following ability scores before racial adjustments and Hit Die ability score increases: Str 14, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 15.

Strategy and Tactics

Bugbear overseers are true bullies, easily intimidating unarmed and helpless slaves. Their disabling spells and gisarme trip attacks are well suited to overpowering recalcitrant individuals quickly and with a minimum of damage. However, they take delight in getting tough with troublemakers who resist their disabling magic.

When faced with a worthy adversary, however, this bluster quickly falters. If initial attacks fail to cow such an opponent, a bugbear overseer begins looking for opportunities to withdraw, using *spider climb*, *invisibility*, or *mirror image*, while blowing his signal whistle to summon help. Only when under the scrutiny of his drow masters does an overseer stand and fight an equal foe. In this case, he still relies on his weapon's reach and trip attacks to remain at a distance, disabling opponents with spells. The crossbow is a weapon of last resort unless he is in a secure position. Bugbear overseers are loath to use the poison provided by their drow masters for fear of accidentally poisoning themselves, but if retreat is necessary, they coat their crossbow bolts with venom.

Bugbear Stonejack

This muscular goblinoid is clad in leather and laden with assorted stoneworking tools. He swings a heavy mining pick.

The fantastic grandeur of drow cities requires massive excavation that displaces tons of rubble and stone. The drow are not about to soil their delicate hands with such demeaning labor, so they usually assign it to bugbear stonejacks. These pliant goblinoid servants are equipped to handle the rigors and the dangers of construction.

The bugbear stonejack presented here had the following ability scores before racial adjustments and Hit Die ability score increases: Str 13, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 9, Cha 8.

Bugbear stonejack



BUGBEAR OVERSEER

CR 8

Male bugbear fighter 3/sorcerer 3
CE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)
Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Listen +6, Spot +6
Languages Drow, Goblin, Undercommon

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15
(+1 Dex, +2 armor, +3 natural)

hp 60 (9 HD)

Fort +7, **Ref** +6, **Will** +4

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +7 *guisarme* +12/+7 (2d4+7/×3)

Ranged mwk heavy crossbow +8 (1d10/19–20)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +10

Atk Options Combat Expertise, Improved Trip, Rapid Reload, poison (drow sleep poison, DC 13, unconscious 1 minute/unconscious 2d4 hours)

Combat Gear 2 doses of drow sleep poison, 3 *potions of cure light wounds*, *potion of sanctuary*, scroll of *invisibility*, scroll of *resist energy*, scroll of *mirror image*, scroll of *spider climb*, *wand of hold person*

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 3rd):

1st (6/day)—*alarm*, *ray of enfeeblement* (+7 ranged touch), *sleep* (DC 13)

0 (6/day)—*acid splash* (+7 ranged touch), *detect magic*, *flare* (DC 12), *message*, *touch of fatigue* (+8 melee touch, DC 12)

Abilities Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 15

Feats Alertness, Combat Expertise^B, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Rapid Reload^B, Weapon Focus (*guisarme*)

Skills Climb +6, Concentration +8, Hide +5, Intimidate +8, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Ride +2, Search +2, Spellcraft +4, Spot +6

Possessions combat gear plus *bracers of armor* +2, +1 *guisarme*, masterwork heavy crossbow with 10 bolts, masterwork manacles, signal whistle



Bugbear overseer

Strategy and Tactics

Bugbear stonejacks are not sophisticated warriors. They have only the most rudimentary of training, relying on their natural strength and aggressiveness to see them through in a fight, and their inexperience can often be used against them. They are terrified of their masters and fight to the death when so ordered, but if the drow leaders should fall, the stonejacks are likely to drop their weapons and flee into the surrounding tunnels.

In battle, lines of stonejacks charge opponents to overpower them with numbers and sheer fury. The bugbears try to swing the ends of their battle line around that of their opponents to surround them and gain flanking positions. The drow who lead them stay to the rear, using the cover and distraction provided by the stonejacks to launch spells or implement clever tactics.

A bugbear stonejack typically keeps a *potion of gaseous form* in his potion bladder in case of a cave-in while he works in the mines. However, if he is on guard duty or has been assigned to a military force, he replaces this with a *potion of bull's strength*, which he imbibes if possible before entering combat.

BUGBEAR STONEJACK

CR 5

Male bugbear expert 2/warrior 2
CE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Listen +3, Spot +4
Languages Goblin, Undercommon

AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16
(+1 Dex, +3 armor, +3 natural)

hp 46 (7 HD)

Resist critical hits 25%

Fort +6 (+14 against inhaled poisons), **Ref** +4, **Will** +4

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee mwk morningstar +9 (1d8+4) or

Melee heavy pick +8 (1d6+4/×4)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +8

Combat Gear 2 *potions of bull's strength*, *potion of cure light wounds*, *potion of gaseous form*, *potion of levitate*, *potion of water breathing*

Abilities Str 17, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 6

Feats Alertness, Toughness, Weapon Focus (morningstar)

Skills Climb +5, Hide +5, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +5, Listen +3, Move Silently +7, Profession (miner) +7, Search +1 (+3 secret doors), Spot +4, Survival +2

Possessions combat gear plus +1 *studded leather armor of light fortification*, masterwork morningstar, heavy pick, breathing hood*, 2 flasks of stoneburn acid*, masterwork mining tools, potion bladder*

* See Chapter 4

GOBLIN FLESH-HERDER

This somber goblin wears crudely stitched hide armor under rank, coarse wool robes with tiny bones woven into the fringes, creating a constant hollow clatter. His head is completely shaven, and his face is stark white with ash. Kohl around the eyes and nose creates a skull-like mask.

In evil-aligned communities, hordes of mindless undead often are used as cheap labor, and a society as depraved as that of the drow is no exception. Goblin flesh-herders manage these dangerous and distasteful resources.

The goblin flesh-herder presented here had the following ability scores before racial adjustments, Hit Die ability score increases, and equipment bonuses: Str 12, Dex 8, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 14.

Strategy and Tactics

Goblin flesh-herders are not primarily combatants, but when the drow community is threatened, they command their undead charges as a front-line defense. In battle they direct a mass of skeletons and zombies from the rear. One flesh-herder can directly command only a few undead, but drow

A goblin flesh-herder



GOBLIN FLESH-HERDER

CR 5

Male goblin cleric 5
NE Small humanoid (goblinoid)
Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +3
Languages Goblin, Undercommon

AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 14
(+1 size, +3 armor)

hp 31 (5 HD)
Fort +5, **Ref** +1, **Will** +6

Speed 15 ft. (3 squares)
Melee mwk scythe +5 (1d6/×4)
Ranged sling +4 (1d4)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** -1

Special Actions command undead 9/day (+4, 2d4+7, 5th), death touch 1/day (+4 melee touch, 5d6), spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 5th):

3rd—*animate dead*^D (CL 6th), *flesh ripper*^{BovD} (+4 ranged touch, CL 6th)

2nd—*boneblast*^{BovD} (+4 ranged touch, DC 14, CL 6th), *death knell* (DC 14, CL 6th), *desecrate*^D (CL 6th), *spiritual weapon*

1st—*cause fear*^D (DC 13), *detect undead*, *divine favor*, *summon undead* 1^{SC} (2) (CL 6th)

0—*create water*, *cure minor wounds* (2), *detect magic*, *resistance*

D: Domain spell. Deity: Nerull. *Domains*: Death, Evil.

Abilities Str 10, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 15

Feats Extra Turning, Martial Weapon Proficiency (scythe)

Skills Concentration +7, Hide +1, Knowledge (religion) +8, Listen +2, Move Silently +1, Ride +4, Spot +3

Possessions hide armor, masterwork scythe, sling with 10 bullets, *cloak of Charisma* +2, bone holy symbol, black onyx gem worth 25 gp

necromancers usually command their creations to obey the goblins' orders. In this way, the flesh-herders can reserve their rebuke and command abilities to combat enemy-commanded or free-willed undead. However, since the mindless hordes recognize the flesh-herders by their distinct garb, appropriately disguised intruders can bypass or even commandeer some of these troops.

When facing combat, a flesh-herder always tries to send any undead under his charge into battle first. He then casts *summon undead I* to create more Medium skeletons or Small zombies, followed by *desecrate* to strengthen his undead servants. If any opponents or living allies fall in battle, he might try to maneuver nearby and cast *animate dead* to create even more troops. If forced to engage enemies directly, a flesh-herder first tries to soften them up with *flesh ripper* and *spiritual weapon*, then fortifies himself with *divine favor* before wading into battle with his scythe. He look for opportunities to use death touch, *boneblast*, or *death knell* against likely opponents.

Goblin flesh-herders have no fear of death and never retreat unless ordered to by a superior. They know that if they should fall in battle, their compatriots will animate them, allowing them to continue their service to the Reaper.

VRIL

This small humanoid has dark violet skin with black tiger stripes on its back and limbs. Dull yellow eyes peer out of a scrunched, batlike face with pointed ears and a wide mouth filled with sharp fangs. It is somewhat stooped, and its long arms hang down past its knees

Vril are the product of dark elf wizards' experiments over many generations. These goblinoids are imbued with innate sonic ability and can alter the consistency of their own flesh.

Most vril are brutally trained as warriors by the drow to weed out the weakest specimens. The information in the statistics block is for one of 3rd level. The vril warrior presented here had the following ability scores before racial adjustments: Str 13, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8.

Strategy and Tactics

Vril were created as shock troops and defenders of drow cities. From their masters they have acquired an inherent sense of devious tactics and dirty fighting.

If given the opportunity before battle, a vril spends some time observing its enemies to determine what sort of weaponry most of them wield. It then uses its skinshift ability to offset the applicable type of damage before closing to melee. It readies a shriek attack, waiting for enemies to bunch together.

A group of vril tries to space those with Dazing Shriek as evenly as possible through its forward line to create overlapping areas of effect. Once a significant portion of the foes have been dazed, a second rank of vril charges into battle to slaughter as many as possible. Particularly favored vril wield keen or wounding weapons just for this purpose. If their own position is disrupted or overrun, they attempt to spread out



Vril warrior

VRIL FEATS

The vril have access to several racial feats that improve on their inherent abilities.

DAZING SHRIEK

Your shriek dazes enemies in addition to dealing damage.

Prerequisite: Vril, base attack bonus +3.

Benefit: Creatures that take damage from your shriek must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 your character level + your Con modifier) or be dazed for 1 round.

GREAT SHRIEK

You can daze and deafen opponents with your piercing shriek.

Prerequisite: Vril, Dazing Shriek, base attack bonus +9.

Benefit: Creatures that take damage from your shriek must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 your character level + your Con modifier) or be dazed for 1d4 rounds and deafened for 1 minute.

IMPROVED SKINSHIFT

You can better protect yourself against certain types of weapons.

Prerequisite: Vril, character level 5th.

Benefit: The damage reduction you gain from your skinshift ability increases to 10.

SUDDEN SHRIEK

You can use your shriek ability quickly when performing other actions.

Prerequisite: Vril, base attack bonus +2.

Benefit: You can use your shriek ability as a swift action.

Normal: Using your shriek ability usually requires a standard action.

VRIL DROW SLAYER

You despise drow and have learned how to fight them and their ilk more effectively.

Prerequisite: Vril, base attack bonus +4.

Benefit: You are no longer take a -4 penalty on Fortitude saves against drow and spiderkind poison.

In addition, you gain a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls against drow and creatures related to drow (including driders, szarkai, and scorrow [Secrets of Xen'drik]) and spiderkind, and a +4 dodge bonus to Armor Class against these creatures.

and use their shrieks to deal as much damage as they can to the enemy.

SAMPLE ENCOUNTERS

Drow exploit goblinoids to do dirty jobs considered beneath such cultured individuals as themselves. However, these brutish and cowardly creatures require frequent supervision, and in battle, they are never without drow commanders.

Slave Drivers (EL 8–12): Bugbear overseers drive along a mass of demoralized prisoners with fairly low-ranking drow officers bringing up the rear.

EL 10: A bugbear overseer is herding a gang of prisoners to the arena of Erelhei-Cinlu. Along with the group is a drow sergeant (male drow fighter 7), who doesn't bother to conceal his disgust and contempt for his assignment and his charges.

Bugbear Irregulars (EL 7–15): Bugbear stonejacks provide rough-and-ready troopers that do not require extensive training and are unlikely to revolt. Many drow nobles or priestesses augment their own personal guards with a platoon or two of bugbear stonejacks. Often a bugbear subchief or champion provides additional tactical support and coordination.

EL 14: A drow matron (female drow cleric 12) is venturing from the safety of her house compound. As she travels through the city, she is escorted by two arcane guards (see page 184) and six bugbear stonejacks. The arcane guards flank the priestess, while four bugbears take point and a pair cover the group's rear.

Undead Bastion (EL 6–10): Groups of undead laborers can serve as emergency defenses for an embattled city, and goblin flesh-herders command them as directed by drow superiors.

EL 8: A squad of eight kobold zombies and six elf skeletons, under the command of two flesh-herders, have formed a wall of rotting corpses to block a dwarf raid.

Vril Platoon (EL 5–14): A platoon can contain as many as forty individuals, coordinated by several sergeants and an officer (often a drow). Groups of vril warriors patrol the outskirts of drow settlements and are the first line of defense against attack.

EL 8: The Screaming Pack is a small group of particularly fierce vril who have the honor of protecting a matron mother's personal grounds. This group of twelve 1st-level warriors also includes a vril sergeant (male vril warrior 5) and a drow lieutenant (female drow cleric 6).

ECOLOGY

Goblinoids, especially goblins and bugbears, are often captured or bred by the drow. Less common goblinoid races do not usually inhabit the Underdark regions frequented by the dark elves, and the militant hobgoblins are not easily tamed.

Environment: Bugbears and goblins often seek out caves or burrows, bugbears in mountainous regions, and goblins wherever they can scrounge a relatively safe hideaway. Those under the command of drow are rarely far from the dark elves' cities. Vril, being specially bred to serve the drow, never stray from their masters' lands.

Typical Physical Characteristics: See *MM* 29 and 133 for basic information about bugbears and goblins, respectively.

Like a goblin, a typical vril stands 3 to 3-1/2 feet tall and weighs 40 to 45 pounds, but it is more gangly, with longer arms and a stooped posture. Vril have violet skin with black stripes on their back and limbs. They typically wear finely crafted hide armor (provided by their masters) over drab, soiled, and tattered clothing, and they have little sense of personal hygiene. Vril have short life spans, achieving maturity at age 10 and rarely reaching 50 years of age.

Alignment: Bugbears are selfish, bullying brutes and thus usually chaotic evil. They are easily cowed by the ruthless drow, however. Goblins tend toward neutral evil and are completely at their masters' mercy. The vril have been bred for ferocity, making them typically chaotic evil, but they are completely loyal to the drow.

SOCIETY

The ghettos of the drow cities teem with all manner of races rubbing shoulders in the various markets, dives, and flophouses. The free people plot evil acts, seek greater power, or just wash away the dust and grit from a day in the mines. In their wretched compounds, the enslaved suffocate in misery, and none are more numerous than goblinoids of various kinds.

Bugbears

Each drow community—and sometimes even an individual house—controls hundreds if not thousands of slaves who perform all the menial labor. The drow consider not only physical chores but actually dealing with slaves to be beneath themselves, so they created a class of slave overseers among the inferior races. Goblinoids are the most easily manageable of the subject races, and bugbears in particular have the right mix of brute strength and cunning to manage the often dangerous masses of the slave population. The drow provide bugbear overseers with magic items to assist them against potential slave uprisings.

Bred for loyalty, strength, and cleverness, bugbear overseers hold the highest station among the slaves and have adopted some of the drow's derision for those beneath them. Despite their positions of responsibility and the imagined respect of their masters, these bugbears mean nothing more to the drow than other slaves. In fact, only out-of-favor drow or those of particularly low station are assigned the task of directly dealing with the overseers.

In contrast to the bullying overseers, bugbear stonejacks are miners and construction workers. They not only build the fabulous drow structures, but they also discover and tap the rich veins of ore and precious stones so in demand by their masters. Stonejacks typically work long shifts in dank, stuffy tunnels, driving steel and moving stone. They are servants rather than slaves, and after a grueling day's work, they return to their shabby tenements. Their life is hard but not unbearable, and they take a grim pride in their simple lot. These bugbears share a touch of pragmatic optimism that is atypical among the servants of the drow, and they cherish the meager belongings they are able to acquire.

Bugbear stonejacks serve a secondary role as irregular troops. The drow typically do not allow their servants to

train in the martial skills unless specifically for the gladiatorial arenas—and these only under careful guard—to avoid an uprising. Yet they are averse to exposing themselves to danger in battle. The hardy and loyal stonejacks are an excellent solution to this conundrum: They do not require extensive training and are unlikely to organize any serious revolt. Stonejacks suffer a high casualty rate in battle against capable foes, but the bugbear warrens teem with laborers that can easily replace those losses.

Goblins

Most numerous of the goblinoid slaves are the lowly goblins, who are the most expendable in the drow's eyes. They are mere chattel, forced to perform the most onerous or dangerous tasks. Their lives are particularly brutal and short, since they usually don't even have the opportunity to improve their station by serving as soldiers. Exceptional individuals

are occasionally hand-picked from the miserable throngs to become personal servants or guards. Otherwise, goblins are useful only as breeding stock to produce vril and the psionic blues^{EPH}, which the drow hope to exploit to gain dominance over the illithids. Rumors speak of secret programs to breed a legendary type of goblinoid known as a nilbog for some nefarious purpose.

Most of these creatures live in utter squalor and must scavenge for even the basic necessities of life. Goblins are usually bullied by stronger races and grow apathetic in the face of brutality, and they are not known for cleverness or ingenuity. Thus, they are assigned menial labor, such as tending rothé herds, mucking out cesspools, harvesting fungi, and dredging subterranean channels. And if some particularly poisonous or sentient fungus or hitherto unknown sewer-dwelling monster kills off a few dozen goblins, the drow hardly even pay attention. The bugbear overseers get the rest back to work as quickly as possible and replenish the stock at the slave markets on the morrow.

However, exceptional goblins who show promise early in life are destined for a special role. These youngsters are removed from their warrens and housed in special cloisters dedicated to Nerull, one of the few deities other than Lolth whose worship is openly accepted among the drow. These religious communities train the prospective goblin candidates (those that survive the rigors of indoctrination) to serve as flesh-herders. The drow create nearly endless ranks of skeletons and zombies to perform tasks that are beneath even the lowly goblin slaves. Undead can arise under other circumstances as well: Slain enemies are animated as guardians of their killers, and victims of strife and predators rise as slaving ghouls that wander the streets. The flesh-herders not only marshal the undead laborers, but they also control and contain the more free-willed undead that could otherwise become a hazard to the city dwellers.

GOBLINOID LORE

Characters who have ranks in Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (history), or Knowledge (local) can research goblinoids that serve the drow to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

Knowledge (arcana)

- | DC | Result |
|----|--|
| 10 | This strange-looking goblinoid is a vril, a magically altered goblin. This result reveals all goblinoid traits. |
| 15 | Vril have innate sonic attacks and are resistant to sonic damage. |
| 20 | Although they are calculating and ferocious, vril are bred to obey drow. They serve as defenders of drow cities. |
| 25 | A few vril have escaped drow servitude and have established hidden colonies in the Underdark. |

Knowledge (history)

- | DC | Result |
|----|--|
| 10 | Drow enslave many races they consider to be inferior, especially goblinoids that inhabit the same regions of the Underdark. |
| 15 | Although members of some enslaved races have limited autonomy within drow society, the drow despise them and think nothing of throwing away their lives to save their own. |
| 20 | Drow forbid all their slaves from worshiping Lolth, and they strongly discourage worship of other deities. |

Knowledge (local)

- | DC | Result |
|----|--|
| 10 | This is a goblinoid, either a bugbear or a goblin. This result reveals all goblinoid traits. |
| 15 | Goblins serve drow mainly as slaves and breeding stock. Bugbears often fill enforcement positions, and some are trained for construction and mining. |
| 20 | A few goblins are indoctrinated into the worship of Nerull and become clerical handlers of undead laborers and soldiers. |

Vril

The drow treat vril little better than animals, yet generations of specialized breeding have produced unquestioned loyalty. Vril fear and obey the drow instinctively. They serve as shock troops and city defenders, and they are the only slave race allowed to formally train for combat. Vril are usually quartered in warrens and barracks separate from the other drow thralls, though their living conditions are no better. Although they might grumble about their lot in life, rarely do they think to do something about it.

Vril share few traits with their goblin kin. The drow wizards who created them sought to expunge many of the race's characteristic weaknesses. Like their cousins, they are malicious little creatures, but while goblins are cowardly and undisciplined, vril are bold, daring, and organized. Generations of mistreatment at the hands of the drow have also built up a fiercely stubborn resolve. The race now breeds true, but attempts to cross vril with other goblinoid races produce only stillborn offspring, perhaps as a result of deliberate design. Vril view ordinary goblins as inferior but have a cautious respect

for larger humanoids such as humans, orcs, half-orcs, and hobgoblins. They avoid bugbears, which dislike the strange little creatures.

Vril typically form squads of five to eight individuals and platoons of ten to forty (plus one 5th-level sergeant per ten vril and one lieutenant of 6th–8th level). A company of vril might have as many as 200 members plus the same number of noncombatant young; it includes one 5th-level sergeant per ten adults, three to six lieutenants of 6th–8th level, and a captain of 9th–10th level.

TYPICAL TREASURE

As servant races, goblinoids living among the drow acquire virtually no possessions. Those in positions of minor authority, such as bugbear overseers or goblin flesh-herders, receive mundane and magical equipment from their masters but do not carry other kinds of treasure. Such equipment has a standard value for characters of their Challenge Rating.

GOBLINOIDS AS CHARACTERS

See MM 29 and 134 for information about bugbears and goblins as characters.

Vril as Characters

Most vril are warriors or barbarians that serve in the armies of the drow. Vril are usually agnostic, since the drow crush any religious inclination and do not permit them to venerate Lolth. Thus, clerics are rare. Vril clerics sometimes worship Maglubiyet in secret, but adepts are more common. Clerics of Maglubiyet have access to two of the following domains: Chaos, Evil, and Trickery.

Some exceptional individuals have managed to throw off the yoke of servitude and escape their drow masters. Small, hidden communities of free vril exist throughout the Underdark, and they include members of various character classes. Clerics are more common in these settlements, and Maglubiyet is worshiped openly.

Vril characters possess the following racial traits.

- Humanoid (goblinoid) type.
- +2 Constitution, –2 Intelligence, –2 Charisma.
- Small size: +1 bonus to Armor Class, +1 bonus on attack rolls, +4 bonus on Hide checks, –4 penalty on grapple checks, lifting and carrying limits those of Medium characters.
- A vril's base land speed is 30 feet.
- Darkvision out to 60 feet.
- Resistance to sonic 5.
- Weaknesses (see above): light blindness, vulnerability to poison.
- Special Abilities (see above): skinshift, shriek.
- +4 racial bonus on Climb checks.
- +2 racial bonus on Balance and Jump checks.
- Automatic Languages: Goblin, Undercommon. Bonus Languages: Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Gnome, Orc.
- Favored Class: Barbarian.

HUSK VERMIN

Husk vermin are undead creatures formed from the carapaces of monstrous vermin, animated by evil spirits.

HUGE HUSK SCORPION

Scuttling forward is a massive scorpion. Its dead-black exoskeleton is pocked with noticeable holes. It raises its stinger, which glows with an unholy light.

A husk scorpion is a relentless hunter, seeming to delight in the suffering it causes.

Strategy and Tactics

A husk scorpion is solitary, prowling over rocks and debris, searching for prey much as its living kin do. When a husk scorpion attacks, it swiftly closes, then makes full attacks until either it or its opponent is destroyed.

MEDIUM HUSK SPIDER

As this big spider creeps forward to attack, you notice that a few of its eyes leak a pale fluid, and the stench of decay fills your nostrils.

Drow priestesses sometimes create husk spiders from particularly beloved pets to ensure they are never without their favored companion. Also, the drow are quick to turn slain spiders into undead to prove their devotion to the Spider Queen.

The above example is based on a hunting spider (MM 289).

Strategy and Tactics

Medium husk spiders congregate in groups of two to three, using pack tactics to bring down their prey. They circle the opponent, each taking turns biting it until it becomes so weak that the group can tear it to pieces.

HUSK WIDOWMAKER

This massive spider has a swollen abdomen, from which drips a noxious fluid that stinks of death. It fixes you with its ghostly eyes as it prepares to charge.

Drow necromancers raise widowmakers specifically to transform into husk vermin. Since they retain their ability to be easily trained, even as undead creatures, they are ideal mounts for Lolth's high priestesses.

Strategy and Tactics

A husk widowmaker is a violent and destructive monster. It leaps into battle, charging the closest foe to bite and weaken its opponent. It has no regard for danger and flings itself at its enemies with reckless abandon. Only when under the firm guidance of a rider does a husk widowmaker fight with caution.

HUGE HUSK SCORPION

CR 9

Always CE Huge undead (augmented vermin)
Init -1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.;
Listen +1, Spot +5

Languages —

AC 19, touch 7, flat-footed 19
(-2 size, -1 Dex, +12 natural)

hp 68 (10 HD); **DR** 5/magic

Immune undead immunities (MM 317)

Fort +7, **Ref** +2, **Will** +4

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares)

Melee 2 claws +13 each (1d8+8) and
sting +8 (2d4+4 plus energy drain)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +23

Atk Options create spawn, energy drain, magic strike

Abilities Str 27, Dex 8, Con —, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10

SQ undead traits (MM 317)

Feats Toughness^B

Skills Climb +12, Hide -1, Jump +16, Listen +1, Spot +5

Advancement —

Create Spawn (Su) A living vermin of any size slain by a Huge husk scorpion gains the husk vermin template in 1d4 hours.

Energy Drain (Su) Living creatures hit by a Huge husk scorpion's sting attack gain two negative levels. The DC is 15 for the Fortitude save to remove a negative level. The save DC is Charisma-based. For each negative level bestowed, a Huge husk scorpion gains 5 temporary hit points. Temporary hit points last for 24 hours, and a Huge husk scorpion can gain a maximum number of temporary hit points equal to its full normal hit point total.

Magic Strike A Huge husk scorpion's natural weapons are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Skills A Huge husk scorpion has a +4 racial bonus on Climb, Hide, and Spot checks.

CREATING A HUSK VERMIN

"Husk vermin" is an acquired template that can be added to any vermin (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

Size and Type: The creature's type changes to undead (augmented vermin). Do not recalculate base attack bonus, saves, or skill points. Size is unchanged.

Challenge Rating: Large or smaller, same as the base creature +1; Huge or larger, same as the base creature +2.

Alignment: The creature's alignment changes to chaotic evil.

Hit Dice: Increase all current and future Hit Dice to d12s.

Damage Reduction: A husk vermin gains damage reduction based on its Hit Dice. Its natural attacks are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

MEDIUM HUSK SPIDER

CR 2

Always CE Medium undead (augmented vermin)
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.;
Listen +1, Spot +9

Languages —

AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11
(+2 Dex, +1 natural)

hp 16 (2 HD)

Immune undead immunities (MM 317)

Fort +3, **Ref** +2, **Will** +1

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +3 (1d6+2 plus 1d4 Str)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +3

Atk Options create spawn, magic strike

Abilities Str 15, Dex 15, Con —, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10

SQ undead traits (MM 317)

Feats Toughness^B, Weapon Finesse^B

Skills Climb +10, Hide +6, Jump +12, Listen +1, Spot +9

Advancement —

Create Spawn (Su) A living vermin of any size slain by a Medium husk spider gains the husk vermin template in 1d4 hours.

Magic Strike A Medium husk spider's natural weapons are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Strength Damage (Su) Whenever a Medium husk spider hits with its bite attack, it also deals 1d4 points of Strength damage. For each attack that deals Strength damage, the Medium husk spider gains 5 temporary hit points. Temporary hit points last for 24 hours, and a Medium husk spider can gain a maximum number of temporary hit points equal to its normal hit point total.

Skills Medium husk spiders have a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks, a +8 racial bonus on Climb and Spot checks, and a +10 racial bonus on Jump checks. A Medium husk spider can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened. It can use its Strength or its Dexterity modifier for Climb checks, whichever is higher.

Hit Dice	Damage Reduction
1-3	—
4-11	5/magic
12 or more	10/magic

Atk Options: A husk vermin loses all attack options of the base creature and gains new attack options as described below, depending on its size.

Create Spawn (Su): A living vermin of any size slain by a husk vermin gains the husk vermin template in 1d4 hours.

Strength Damage (Su): A Large or smaller husk vermin can weaken foes in addition to damage dealt by one attack (typically its bite or sting). Damage depends on the base creature's size, as shown on the following table.

Size	Str Damage
Small or smaller	1
Medium	1d4
Large	2d4

For each attack that deals Strength damage, the husk vermin gains 5 temporary hit points. Temporary hit points last for 24 hours, and the husk vermin can gain a maximum number of temporary hit points equal to its normal hit point total.

Energy Drain (Su): Husk vermin of Huge or larger size drain energy instead of dealing Strength damage. A living creature hit by one of a husk vermin's attacks (typically bite or sting) gains two negative levels. The DC for the Fortitude save to remove a negative level is equal $10 + 1/2$ the husk vermin's HD + the husk vermin's Cha modifier. For each negative level bestowed, the husk vermin gains 5 temporary hit points. Temporary hit points last for 24 hours, and the husk vermin can gain a maximum number of temporary hit points equal to its normal hit point total.

HUSK WIDOWMAKER

CR 11

Always CE Large undead (augmented vermin)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.;

Listen +3, Spot +11

Languages —

AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 21
(−1 size, +2 Dex, +12 natural)

hp 87 (13 HD); **DR** 10/magic

Immune undead immunities (MM 317)

Fort +8, **Ref** +6, **Will** +7

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +15 (1d8+10 plus 2d4 Str)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +20

Atk Options Powerful Charge*, create spawn, magic strike

* See page 144

Abilities Str 24, Dex 15, Con —, Int 2, Wis 16, Cha 15

SQ steed, undead traits (MM 317)

Feats Improved Initiative^B, Powerful Charge^B, Toughness^B

Skills Climb +15, Hide −2, Jump +17, Listen +3, Move Silently +10, Spot +11

Advancement —

Create Spawn (Su) A living vermin of any size slain by a husk widowmaker gains the husk vermin template in 1d4 hours.

Magic Strike A husk widowmaker's natural weapons are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Strength Damage (Su) Whenever a husk widowmaker hits with its bite attack, it also deals 2d4 points of Strength damage. For each attack that deals Strength damage, the husk widowmaker gains 5 temporary hit points. Temporary hit points last for 24 hours, and a husk widowmaker can gain a maximum number of temporary hit points equal to its normal hit point total.

Steed (Ex) Husk widowmakers take instruction well and are easy to train. Treat a husk widowmaker as a magical beast with Intelligence 3 for the purpose of Handle Animal checks.

Skills Husk widowmakers have a +8 racial bonus on Climb, Move Silently, and Spot checks, and a +10 bonus on Jump checks. A husk widowmaker can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

Abilities: Change from the base creature as follows: Str +4, Dex −2, Wis +2, Cha +8. In addition, the husk vermin gains an Intelligence score of 2. As an undead creature, a husk vermin has no Constitution score.

Special Qualities: A husk vermin retains all the special qualities of the base creature and gains undead traits.

Feats: A husk vermin retains any feats of the base creature and gains Toughness as a bonus feat.

Advancement: —.

SAMPLE ENCOUNTERS

Husk vermin, like any other undead, prey on the living. In many ways, they behave like their living counterparts, although they are far more malevolent.

Individual (EL 1–14): Solitary husk vermin either have yet to establish a colony or are soldiers in the service of their creators.

EL 9: A solitary Huge husk scorpion lurks in the heart of the desert, haunting an ancient tomb of a forgotten civilization. It unknowingly protects a far worse evil below.

Colony (EL 2–20): Many husk vermin haunt their former territory, transforming their living fellows into husk vermin, until they establish an entire colony of undead.

EL 7: Hidden in a grotto just outside Erelhei-Cinlu is a nest of six Medium husk spiders. Having subverted all the living spiders, they now range out from their lair to trouble travelers—though they've learned to avoid the dark elves.

Cavalry (EL 2–20): Some particularly loathsome drow intentionally create husk vermin to better control them.

EL 11: A Lolth-touched drow ranger (MM4 92) rides a husk widowmaker on the outskirts of an illithid stronghold. For weeks, the pair has butchered mind flayers and their slaves, causing tremendous trouble for that foul community.

HUSK VERMIN LORE

Characters who have ranks in Knowledge (religion) can research husk vermin to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

The base creature and its characteristics must be identified using the appropriate Knowledge skill according to the base creature's type.

Knowledge (religion)

DC	Result
15	This creature is a husk vermin, a foul undead horror. This result reveals all undead traits.
15 + CR	Husk vermin are exclusively made from vermin creatures. Though they lose most of their special abilities and cannot produce poison, their attacks can sap strength or even life itself.
20 + CR	Priestesses of Lolth often create husk vermin as favored companions or mounts.

ECOLOGY

As undead creatures, husk vermin have no more need of food, sleep, or many of the other things their living kin require. They continue to hunt and feast, as if driven by some unholy urge, even though they have a spark of intelligence. When given the opportunity, a husk vermin preys on its own kind to create more undead, and some regions of the Underdark are infested by entire colonies of these abominations.

Many drow see the practice of creating husk vermin as a growing trend. Some priestesses actually prefer the undead creatures, which are smarter and easier to control (through channeling negative energy). Husk spiders and other undead vermin can be guardians, mounts, or even companions.

Environment: Husk vermin are found mostly underground, in the company of drow, even though they have no vulnerability to sunlight. A few lurk in the same territories they did in life, haunting forests in the tatters of their old webs, or stalking the tunnels of their burrows.

Typical Physical Characteristics: That a husk vermin is not a normal specimen of its kind is quickly apparent just by looking at it. These creatures exhibit varying states of decay, with missing legs or eyes, or gaping holes in their exoskeletons. They also have a rancid stink about them, smelling of the grave.

Alignment: The creation of a husk vermin infuses it with an evil spirit of dark energy and vicious purpose. Husk vermin are always chaotic evil.

Typical Treasure

If the base creature ordinarily possesses treasure, the husk vermin creature does too, according to its Challenge Rating.

For Player Characters

A character can create a husk vermin by casting a *create greater undead* spell.

Husk Vermin in Eberron

Husk vermin are almost exclusively found in the jungles of Xen'drik, where the drow transform monstrous scorpions in profane rituals celebrating Vulkoor. The dark elves sometimes use the largest husk scorpions as massive war platforms, launching barrages of poisoned arrows and spears from the backs of these deadly creatures.

Husk Vermin in Faerûn

Husk vermin, specifically husk spiders, are animated by evil spirits conjured from the realm of Kiaransalee. They appeared in appalling numbers during the deity's rise to power. During the War of the Spider Queen, her priestesses turned the sacred spiders into undead mockeries and sent them against the holdouts who remained loyal to the Spider Queen.

KUO-TOA

These fishlike beings of the Underdark and the deeps inspire terror with their alien appearance and psyche. The cold, unblinking stare of their bulbous eyes and the horrific reek of decayed sea life that always hovers around them bring a chill to the spine of the most stalwart warrior. What goes on inside the inhuman minds of these cold-blooded creatures defies contemplation, and what ancient horrors they consort with in the deepest chasms of the world are better left unknown.

WHIP

The scaly armor of this threatening creature only emphasizes its fishlike features. It wields a long staff equipped with a set of toothy pincers, and electricity crackles around the weapon's haft.

Whips are priests of Blibdoolpoolp, the Sea Mother, and devote their whole being to her worship. They lead kuo-toas in daily worship, ritual sacrifices, and military actions.

The whip presented here had the following ability scores before racial adjustments and Hit Die ability score increases: Str 12, Dex 13, Con 8, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 14.

Strategy and Tactics

In battle, whips typically lead from the rear, rallying the kuo-toa soldiers and coordinating their movements. They use their spells to defend themselves, to augment their troops, and especially to watch for enemy spellcasters. Once they have identified spellcasting opponents, the whips immediately dispatch troops—usually led by the fiercest monitors—to attack them directly, thus providing a distraction that allows the whips to gain an advantageous position. Whips expect their followers to fight to the death if necessary to accomplish this end.

Once within range, whips coordinate to cast *silence* on the entire area containing enemy spellcasters. The sudden quiet signals the soldiers to disengage. The whips next start pummeling the enemy position with lightning bolts. After the initial barrage, they send their underlings back in to mop up the remaining combatants and close themselves to ensnare any still-living casters with their pincer staffs. They prefer to take captives alive if possible for their sacrifices to the Sea Mother.

MONITOR

A scaled, fishlike being leaps at you, its webbed hands and feet thrashing in a blur of deadly motion.

Monitors are special kuo-toas trained as monks from the time they leave the fingerling pool. A rigid system of discipline and privation hardens their bodies and psyches to create emotionless guardians of the race.

The monitor presented here had the following ability scores before racial adjustments, Hit Die ability score increases, and equipment bonuses: Str 12, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 13.



A kuo-toa whip

Strategy and Tactics

Monitors are whirlwinds of fury in melee combat. An individual monitor attempts to quickly overcome his foes under an onslaught of attacks, using Paralyzing Fists when feasible. In battle, monitors serve as the field captains who command the troops, coordinating their movements with the tactics of the whips. Groups of monitors lead kuo-toa warriors in charges and attempt to stun, paralyze, or otherwise distract enemy commanders and spellcasters in order to soften them up for the whips' spells and lightning bolts.

SAMPLE ENCOUNTERS

Patrols of kuo-toas, led by whips and monitors, protect their hidden cities. Larger groups mount attacks against other Underdark dwellers.

EL 8–12: A typical patrol contains two to four kuo-toa warriors led by a whip. A squad might have up to a dozen warriors under the command of several monitors and whips.

EL 10: The whip described above leads a patrol of four kuo-toas to defend the precinct of the Sea Mother's temple.

EL 13+: Bands of twenty to fifty kuo-toas and their commanders raid other subterranean communities for slaves, sacrifices, and treasure.

EL 16: Two whips, four monitors, and forty kuo-toa soldiers (including five 3rd-level fighters acting as sergeants) form a raiding party.

ECOLOGY

Once a dominant race in a time before the coming of the soft, warm-blooded peoples, kuo-toas have been in a millennia-long decline. As their numbers dwindle, they retreat ever farther into the world's roots. There they cultivate temples to Blibdoolpool in sunless, hidden lakes, plotting a glorious return to power.

Behind their bulging, emotionless eyes lurks an ice-cold fury. Dreams of vengeance against the soft ones fill kuo-toas' thoughts, and a thread of insanity runs deep through the psyche of the race. Its source could be the kuo-toas' long history of setback and decline, dark dealings in primordial times with beings of power and madness, or simply a recessive trait that occasionally surfaces. Whatever the cause, psychopathic episodes break out from time to time among kuo-toas, usually in the form of homicidal rages.

For some unknown reason, despite their animosity toward most humanoid races, the kuo-toas treat the drow as friends—or at least useful allies. Only drow are allowed free access to kuo-toa temples and settlements, and they are virtually the only people the kuo-toas don't attack on sight. Likewise,

KUO-TOA LORE

Characters who have ranks in Knowledge (nature) or Knowledge (religion) can research kuo-toas to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

Knowledge (nature)

- | DC | Result |
|----|---|
| 12 | This is a kuo-toa, a fishlike being of deep waters and Underdark caves. This result reveals all monstrous humanoid traits. |
| 17 | Kuo-toas have excellent vision and can even notice the movement of invisible things. They are unaffected by paralysis and poison, and they are resistant to electricity. |
| 22 | Kuo-toas once controlled a vast empire, but their power waned as other races outnumbered them. They retreated into the oceans and the Underdark, where they now plot revenge. |

Knowledge (religion)

- | DC | Result |
|----|---|
| 15 | Kuo-toas worship Blibdoolpool, a terrible deity they call the Sea Mother. |
| 20 | The high priests of the Sea Mother completely dominate kuo-toa society. Clerics called whips enforce the Sea Mother's will and can produce lightning bolts by working together. |
| 25 | The Sea Mother's rites are unspeakably vile and cruel. The goddess especially delights in sacrifices of spellcasters by slow drowning. |

WHIP

CR 9

Female kuo-toa cleric 5/Sea Mother whip^{Und} 2

NE Medium monstrous humanoid (aquatic)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., keen sight; Listen +10, Spot +16

Languages Aquan, Drow, Kuo-Toan, Undercommon

AC 23, touch 13, flat-footed 21

(+2 Dex, +4 armor, +1 deflection, +6 natural)

hp 44 (9 HD)

Immune paralysis, poison; slippery

Resist electricity 10

Fort +10, **Ref** +7, **Will** +16

Weakness light blindness

Speed 15 ft. (3 squares) in scale mail, base speed 20 ft.; swim 30 ft. in scale mail, base speed 40 ft.

Melee +1 *frost pincer staff* +9/+4 (1d10+4 plus 1d6 cold) and bite +3 (1d4+1)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +8

Atk Options Combat Casting, *punish the infidels*, smite 1/day (+4 attack, +5 damage), smite nonaquatic creatures 1/day (+4 attack, +7 damage)

Special Actions lightning bolt, rebuke undead 5/day (+4, 2d6+7, 5th), rebuke water creatures 5/day (+4, 2d6+7, 5th), spontaneous casting (*inflict spells*)

Combat Gear 3 *potions of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of magic fang*

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 7th; 1d20+9 to overcome SR):

4th—*control water*^D, *divine power*, *poison* (+8 melee touch, DC 19)

3rd—*contagion*^D (+8 melee touch, DC 18), *cure serious wounds*, *deeper darkness*, *prayer*

2nd—*bear's endurance*, *hold person* (DC 17), *fog cloud*^D, *silence* (DC 17), *sound burst* (DC 17)

1st—*cause fear* (DC 16), *deathwatch*, *divine favor*, *entangle*^D (DC 16), *entropic shield*, *shield of faith*

0—*create water*, *cure minor wounds* (2), *detect poison*, *guidance*, *light*

D: Domain spell. Deity: Blibdoolpoolp. **Domains:** Destruction, Water, Watery Death^{Und}

Abilities Str 14, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 20, Cha 14
SQ amphibious

Feats Alertness^B, Combat Casting, Eschew Materials, Great Fortitude, Spell Penetration

Skills Concentration +11, Escape Artist +6, Knowledge (religion) +11, Listen +10, Move Silently +1, Search +5, Spot +16, Swim +6

Possessions combat gear plus scale mail, +1 *frost pincer staff*, *cloak of resistance* +1, *ring of protection* +1, mother-of-pearl holy symbol

Keen Sight (Ex) A kuo-toa whip can spot a moving object or creature even if it is invisible or ethereal.

Slippery (Ex) Unaffected by natural and magical webs.

Light Blindness (Ex) Sudden exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds this kuo-toa whip for 1 round. In addition, she takes a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

Pincer Staff (Ex) If this kuo-toa whip hits a Small to Large opponent with her pincer staff attack, she can attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking attacks of opportunity. If she wins the grapple check, she establishes a hold and deals 1d10+4 points of damage each round the hold is maintained.

Punish the Infidels (Sp) All foes within 30 feet who can see and hear this kuo-toa whip are affected as if by a *doom*^{Und} spell (Will DC 16 negates); CL 2nd.

Lightning Bolt (Su) Two or more kuo-toa whips can generate a stroke of lightning every 1d4 rounds. The whips must join hands to launch the bolt but need merely be within 30 feet of one another while it builds. The lightning bolt deals 1d6 points of electricity damage per whip; a successful Reflex save (DC 13 + number of whips) halves the damage.

Skills Kuo-toas have a +8 racial bonus on Escape Artist checks and a +4 racial bonus on Spot and Search checks.

A kuo-toa has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action when swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

kuo-toas are among the few races that the drow do not openly try to enslave. Despite this cautious peace, animosity does lurk below the surface between the two races, fueling a low-grade cold war that has gone on for centuries. Each side quietly attempts to undermine the other's power, and both lay claim to ancient Underdark sites. Lone drow or kuo-toas had best beware when among those of the other race, especially if their disappearance is unlikely to be noticed.

Environment: Kuo-toas prefer watery environments, although they can breathe air and water with equal ease. They hate bright light, so their settlements are at the bottoms of oceans or deep within the Underdark. They are cold-blooded, like the fish they resemble, so they prefer temperate climates.

Rumors persist of tribes of kuo-toas that have infiltrated humanoid communities by cross-breeding. These offspring resemble their humanoid forebears and blend into surface societies until they reach maturity, when they join the kuo-toas in the depths.

Typical Physical Characteristics: Kuo-toas look like bizarre hybrids of humanoids and fish. They have pallid, luminous eyes that bulge out at the sides of their heads, giving them exceptional peripheral vision. A mucous slime keeps them moist and also makes them extremely slippery, and they stink of rotting fish.

Kuo-toas spawn like fish, rearing their young in communal pools for the first year of life, until the fingerlings can breathe air.

A typical kuo-toa stands about 5 feet tall and weighs about 160 pounds. Its normal color is a silvery green, but it flushes deep red when angry and becomes very pale when surprised or frightened.

Alignment: Cold and cruel, kuo-toas would tend toward lawful evil alignment were it not for the taint of madness that infects the race. Like drow, the tension between their regimented society and individual ferocity leads them to be usually neutral evil.

SOCIETY

The worship of the Sea Mother permeates kuo-toa society, and every community has at least one great temple to Blib-doolpoolp. The high priests of the Sea Mother wield absolute authority. Just below them are the dreaded whips, who enforce the will of the priest-nobility. They administer the temples and shrines and watch over pilgrims. The whips are also the planners of the race, managing long-term relationships with the drow, concocting plots against surface dwellers, and questing after long-lost, forbidden secrets of the lightless depths. Their influence prevents all-out war with the dark elves, fostering the strained alliance for the whips' own sinister purposes.

War is only one strategy of the calculating kuo-toas. After many centuries of decline, they have learned the lessons of attrition and the dangers posed by the more fecund races. Thus, whips prefer to defend their communities through stealth, misdirection, isolation, and secrecy. Many kuo-toa settlements try to exist beyond the knowledge of the races living around them. However, when battle is forced upon them—whether to further the agenda of the Sea Mother or defend the holy places from interlopers—kuo-toas fight with a cold-blooded savagery.



Illus. by F. Tsai

A kuo-toa monitor

MONITOR

CR 7

Male kuo-toa monk 5

LE Medium monstrous humanoid (aquatic)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., keen sight; Listen +8, Spot +12

Languages Aquan, Kuo-Toan, Undercommon

AC 25, touch 19, flat-footed 22; Deflect Arrows (+3 Dex, +4 Wis, +1 deflection, +6 natural, +1 class)

hp 42 (7 HD)

Immune normal disease, paralysis, and poison; slippery

Resist electricity 10; evasion

Fort +7, **Ref** +10, **Will** +11 (+13 against enchantments)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), swim 60 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +8 (1d8+3) or

+7/+7 (1d8+3) with flurry of blows and

bite +3 (1d4+2)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +7

Atk Options Combat Reflexes, Paralyzing Fists, Stunning Fist 5/day (DC 17), ki strike (magic)

Combat Gear 2 *potions of cure light wounds*, *potion of jump*, *potion of shield of faith* +2

Abilities Str 14, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 11

SQ amphibious, slow fall 20 ft.

Feats Alertness^B, Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows^B, Great Fortitude, Improved Unarmed Strike^B, Paralyzing Fists*, Stunning Fist^B

* See page 51

Skills Balance +7, Climb +7, Diplomacy +2, Escape Artist +11, Jump +4, Knowledge (religion) +2, Listen +8, Move Silently +7, Search +6, Sense Motive +10, Spot +12, Swim +10, Tumble +8

Possessions combat gear plus *amulet of mighty fists* +1, *ring of protection* +1

Keen Sight (Ex) A kuo-toa monitor can spot a moving object or creature even if it is invisible or ethereal.

Slippery (Ex) Unaffected by natural and magical webs.

Light Blindness (Ex) Sudden exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds this kuo-toa monitor for 1 round. In addition, he takes a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

The monitors are the police of kuo-toa society. They combat the destabilizing influence of the race's streak of insanity and enforce the social mores and practices of their ancient culture. These disciplined kuo-toas are generally not susceptible to the embrace of madness. Their training techniques are not always successful, though, and some of the most dangerous kuo-toas are monitors who have succumbed to insanity or teeter at its brink.

A primary duty of monitors is to locate and neutralize kuo-toas who have gone mad and to do so as quickly as possible. When they spot a kuo-toa who appears to have gone insane, they do not pause to ask questions to be sure. A monitor quickly overtakes a fleeing quarry and then attempts to paralyze the target by raining blows down on it.

He then performs a coup de grace against the helpless individual. Insane kuo-toas are never allowed to live, for fear that they might further taint the tribe.

TYPICAL TREASURE

Kuo-toas have standard treasure for NPCs of their Challenge Rating. Whips are armed with their signature pincer staffs, usually magic, and carry potions and other magic items to enhance their command ability. Monitors favor magic items to protect them in combat, since they usually lead the assault. A temple to the Sea Mother is lavishly decorated with pearls and other gems, as well as with spoils taken from defeated enemies.

KUO-TOA AS CHARACTERS

See MM 164–165 for more information on kuo-toa society and characters, and *Underdark* 16 for a list of racial traits.

LIZARD, GIANT

Even with the use of the Vermin Trainer feat (see page 53), spiders are challenging to train. In addition, some clerics of Lolth forbid using spiders for any purpose other than participating in their rituals. For these reasons, drow cultivate new breeds of hardy, Underdark-dwelling lizards to act as mounts and dray animals. Other giant lizards are formidable hazards of the depths.

FOOTPAD LIZARD

This massive lizard has a scaly blue hide. Its wedge-shaped head is filled with teeth as long as daggers. Instead of claws, the lizard's feet end in suckerlike disks.

A footpad lizard is a breed of subterranean reptile sometimes used as a pack animal by the drow.

Strategy and Tactics

A footpad lizard has the intelligence of an animal and fights as such. It initiates combat only if hungry or threatened. When it does attack, it stretches out its snakelike neck to bite its foes. Once it catches a creature between its teeth, it clamps down hard and doesn't let go until the meal stops wiggling.

QUICKSILVER LIZARD

This big, silvery lizard stands on two hind powerful hind legs, balanced by a short tail. It has a pair of small forearms that end in sharp claws. A diamond-shaped head filled with sharp teeth perches atop a long, slender neck.

Quicksilver lizards are valued for their tremendous bursts of speed and their willingness to bear riders. Drow scouts use these mounts to make lightning-quick raids.

Strategy and Tactics

In the wild, quicksilver lizards hunt in packs. They employ hit-and-run tactics, weakening prey until they can safely bring it down. But they are also skittish and flee if faced with any serious threat.

As a mount, a quicksilver lizard serves primarily to get its rider safely into and out of combat. Drow scouts use Ride-By Attack or Mounted Archery to exploit the beasts' speed, and the lizards sometimes add their own bites in melee.

Illus. by J. Zhang



Giant lizards: footpad, quicksilver, subterranean

SUBTERRANEAN LIZARD

The hide of this massive lizard is covered in white scales. Its head is thick and filled with powerful teeth. It scrabbles forward with a speed that belies its bulky appearance, its long tail swishing back and forth in agitation.

The dreaded subterranean lizard is a dangerous predator that lurks in the deep places of the Underdark. With its surprising speed and its long, sticky tongue, it is a formidable opponent.

Strategy and Tactics

Though no more intelligent than an animal, a subterranean lizard is vicious. It prefers to lurk in areas of rubble, waiting for likely prey. The lizard begins by launching its tongue at a single opponent up to 20 feet away, then reels in the captured creature to deliver a powerful bite. Since it heals so quickly, a subterranean lizard does not recognize pain and typically fights to the death.

GIANT LIZARD LORE

Characters who have ranks in Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (nature) can research giant lizards to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

Knowledge (arcana)

DC Result

Subterranean Lizard

- 14 This creature is a subterranean lizard, a terrible amalgam of a giant lizard and a chameleon. This result reveals all magical beast traits.
- 19 A subterranean lizard can launch its long, sticky tongue to snatch prey up to twice its length distant. The tongue adheres to its target, allowing the lizard to reel it in.
- 24 Subterranean lizards heal damage rapidly. Only acid and fire have any lasting effect on them.

Knowledge (nature)

DC Result

Footpad Lizard

- 14 This creature is a footpad lizard, a dangerous breed of subterranean reptile. This result reveals all animal traits.
- 19 Don't be deceived by a footpad lizard's squat appearance. It can extend its neck to a great length to deliver a nasty bite.
- 24 Footpad lizards are uncommonly sensitive to light. When exposed to bright light sources, they become disoriented.

Quicksilver Lizard

- 12 This creature is a quicksilver lizard. Bred for speed and endurance, these lizards are ideal mounts. This result reveals all animal traits.
- 15 A quicksilver lizard moves quickly, but when frightened or angry, it can sprint at even greater speed.

FOOTPAD LIZARD

CR 4

Always N Large animal

Init +5; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., low-light vision; **Listen** +2, **Spot** +2

Languages —

AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 14
(–1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural)

hp 47 (5 HD)

Fort +9, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2

Weakness light sensitivity

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), climb 30 ft.

Melee bite +9 (2d6+10)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +14

Atk Options improved grab

Abilities Str 25, Dex 13, Con 21, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2

Feats Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite)

Skills Balance +9, Climb +16, Hide –1*, Listen +2, Move Silently +4, Spot +2

Advancement 6–10 HD (Large); 11–15 HD (Huge)

Light Sensitivity (Ex) A footpad lizard is dazzled in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a footpad lizard must hit an opponent of up to its size with a bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking attacks of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and automatically deals bite damage.

Skills Footpad lizards have a +8 racial bonus on Balance checks. In addition, they have a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

*In rocky areas, a footpad lizard gains a +8 bonus on Hide checks.

QUICKSILVER LIZARD

CR 2

Always N Large animal

Init +2; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; **Listen** +3, **Spot** +3

Languages —

AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 12
(–1 size, +2 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 30 (4 HD)

Fort +7, **Ref** +6, **Will** +2

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), climb 40 ft.; **Run**, **sprint**

Melee bite +6 (1d8+4) and
2 claws +1 each (1d6+2)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +11

Abilities Str 19, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10

Feats Alertness, **Run**

Skills Climb +17, Hide +0, Jump +12, Listen +3, Spot +3

Advancement 5–8 HD (Large); 9–12 HD (Huge)

Sprint (Ex) Once per hour, a quicksilver lizard can move five times its normal speed (200 feet) when it makes a charge.

Skills Quicksilver lizards have a +4 racial bonus on Jump checks. They also have a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

SUBTERRANEAN LIZARD

CR 4

Always N Large magical beast
Init +7; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +7, Spot +7

Languages —

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 13
(–1 size, +3 Dex, +4 natural)

hp 49 (6 HD); regeneration 2

Fort +8, Ref +8, Will +4

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), climb 40 ft.

Melee bite +9 (1d8+6 plus poison) or

Melee tongue +10 touch (1d6+4 nonlethal plus poison)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft. (20 ft. with tongue)

Base Atk +6; Grp +14

Atk Options improved grab, poison (DC 16, 1d4 Str/1 Str)

Special Actions tongue

Abilities Str 18, Dex 16, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 2

Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (tongue)

Skills Balance +9, Hide +4*, Jump +8, Listen +7, Move Silently +7, Spot +7

Advancement 7–12 HD (Large); 13–18 HD (Huge)

Regeneration (Ex) Acid and fire deal normal damage to a subterranean lizard. If a subterranean lizard loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 10 minutes. If a severed limb is held to the stump, the limb reattaches instantly.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a subterranean lizard must hit an opponent of up to one size larger with its tongue attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking attacks of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold, drags the target to an adjacent space, and automatically deals bite damage.

Tongue (Ex) As a full-round action, a subterranean lizard can extend its long, sticky tongue to make a melee touch attack.

Skills Subterranean lizards have a +4 racial bonus on Balance, Hide, and Move Silently checks. They also have a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

*In rocky areas, a subterranean lizard's Hide bonus improves to +8.

SAMPLE ENCOUNTERS

The giant lizards described here are but a few of the many similar creatures that lurk in the dim caverns of the Underdark. What sets these apart is the fact that the drow and some other civilized races domesticate them. In particular, the footpad lizard serves as a heavy cavalry mount, and rangers ride quicksilver lizards to scout enemy territory. The subterranean lizard is the most rarely domesticated, owing to its ferocious nature, but is a useful guardian or mount when properly trained.

Battle Beast (EL 9–10): Subterranean lizards are solitary creatures and resist training. When broken, they sometimes serve drow priestesses (see page 167) or house captains (see page 170) as steeds.

Scout Patrol (EL 6–8): A scout patrol consists of three to six drow warriors (see page 169) each mounted on quicksilver lizards. The scouts monitor the outermost caverns under drow control and, when they encounter intruders, speed back to raise the alarm and bring reinforcements.

Heavy Cavalry (EL 11–13): Heavy cavalry consists of some of the drow's best-trained male warriors. A typical team of heavy cavalry consists of three to five drow arcane guards (see page 184) mounted on footpad lizards.

ECOLOGY

When not domesticated by drow, footpad and quicksilver lizards rarely remain in one place for long, settling only to lay eggs in well-concealed hollows. After depositing her eggs, the mother leaves her young to fend for themselves and resumes wandering the endless tunnels. Quicksilver lizards are social creatures that gather in packs in the wild, whereas footpads are more solitary.

A subterranean lizard, however, is a loner that establishes its territory and doesn't venture far from it. These lizards prefer the shores of underground lakes, since water is rare and such locations are bound to attract prey.

All giant lizards are carnivores and eat just about anything that moves, from goblins to quaggoths to even drow. Most make do with cave-dwelling spiders and other vermin, a fact drow priestesses dislike but tolerate because of the creatures' usefulness. So long as a giant lizard has a steady food supply and no significant competition, it can live as long as 300 years.

Environment: The giant lizards described here live exclusively underground. They hunt near water sources and other places where game is abundant. As cold-blooded creatures, they prefer warmer climes, so they are more active in areas with geothermal vents.

Typical Physical Characteristics: A footpad lizard measures about 14 feet long. A subterranean lizard is slightly longer, at 16 feet. Both can weigh as much as half a ton.

A quicksilver lizard stands about 10 feet tall and weighs around 500 pounds.

Typical Treasure

Giant lizards do not keep treasure, although a drow accompanying a mount or beast of burden might do so.

The lair of a subterranean lizard might contain items dropped by the creatures it devours, but such wealth is meager and buried under the mounds of its leavings. A subterranean lizard has 1/10 standard treasure for its Challenge Rating.

For Player Characters

Footpad and quicksilver lizards are both relatively easy to train as mounts. The ferocity and solitary nature of subterranean lizards make them trickier to domesticate: Handle Animal and Ride checks both increase by 5.

Both footpad and quicksilver lizards make suitable animal companions. Druids of 4th level or higher can select a quicksilver lizard. Druids of 7th level or higher can select a footpad lizard.

Carrying Capacity: A light load for a footpad lizard is up to 800 pounds, a medium load, 801–1,600 pounds, and a

heavy load, 1,601–2,400 pounds. A footpad lizard can drag 12,000 pounds.

A light load for a quicksilver lizard is up to 230 pounds, a medium load, 231–465 pounds, and a heavy load, 466–700 pounds. A quicksilver lizard can drag 3,500 pounds.

A light load for a subterranean lizard is up to 300 pounds, a medium load, 301–600 pounds, and a heavy load, 601–900 pounds. A subterranean lizard can drag 4,500 pounds.

Giant Lizards in Eberron

Eberron's lizard trainers are dwarves, rather than drow. They use giant lizards extensively in their underground cities. Of those described here, dwarves most often employ footpad lizards as mounts while they search new lodes of iron, mithral, and adamantine. These skilled climbers are best able to negotiate treacherous terrain.

QUAGGOTH

Quaggoths are a race of subterranean monstrous humanoids that combine the features of humans and albino cave bears. (Indeed, they are often referred to as “deep bears.”) Primitive and simple, they are forced into slavery by other Underdark races—especially the drow.

Covered in shaggy white fur, this muscular humanoid has the head something like that of a bear. It looses a snarl and leaps forward, lashing out with its claws.

Quaggoths might lack refinement and culture, but they are cunning and dangerous foes, both brutal and fearless.

Strategy and Tactics

Quaggoths often use simple ambush tactics. A lone quaggoth goads and lures enemies toward where others lie in wait. Once they engage their enemy, they fight in a fury, with no consideration for risk or injury to themselves. Their battle rage drives them to audacious acts that sane warriors would consider suicidal.

GREATER QUAGGOTH

This humanoid-shaped creature is covered in matted black fur, though the white roots tell you it's dyed. Gripping its knobby warclub, it charges with a roar.

A greater quaggoth is an elite combatant with even greater strength and combat prowess than his lesser fellows have.

The greater quaggoth presented here had the following ability scores before racial adjustments and equipment bonuses: Str 12, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Strategy and Tactics

Unlike their common counterparts, greater quaggoths place a much higher importance on survival. They are smarter than their kin, too, and therefore more dangerous. Still, they fly into a rage easily. Greater quaggoths wield weapons, albeit crude, primitive ones. When engaged, they maximize Power

QUAGGOTH (RAGING)

CR 3

Usually NE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., scent; Listen +3, Spot +2
Languages Undercommon

AC 13, touch 8, flat-footed 13

(+5 natural, –2 rage)

hp 34 (4 HD); Diehard

Immune fear, poison

Fort +5, **Ref** +4, **Will** +7

Weakness light sensitivity

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), climb 30 ft.

Melee 2 claws +10 each (1d4+6) and
bite +5 (1d6+3)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +10

Atk Options Power Attack, rage 1/day (7 rounds)

Abilities Str 22, Dex 11, Con 19, Int 7, Wis 12, Cha 10

Feats Diehard^B, Improved Initiative, Power Attack

Skills Climb +14, Listen +3, Spot +2

Advancement by character class; **Favored Class** barbarian; see text

Light Sensitivity (Ex) A quaggoth is dazzled in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

Rage (Ex) Once per day, a quaggoth can fly into a screaming blood frenzy. This ability functions like a barbarian's rage (PH 25), except that the quaggoth suffers no ill effects after the rage ends.

Skills Quaggoths have a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks. A quaggoth can always choose to take 10 on a Climb check, even if rushed or threatened.

*In areas of shadow, a quaggoth has a +4 circumstance bonus on Hide checks.

When not raging, a quaggoth has the following changed statistics:

AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 15

hp 26 (4 HD)

Fort +3, **Will** +5

Melee 2 claws +8 each (1d4+4) and
bite +3 (1d6+2)

Grp +8

Abilities Str 18, Con 15

Skills Climb +12, Hide +1*, Search +0, Survival +2

Attack to paste their opponents. But if the battle looks grim, a greater quaggoth has no reservations about withdrawing to fight again another day.

QUAGGOTH WAR LEADER

This heavyset humanoid has shaggy fur dyed in black and red stripes. It hefts a greataxe from which hang a number of white-haired scalps.

A quaggoth war leader is a clan chief, if not the supreme leader of a quaggoth gathering. He commands groups of common and greater quaggoths in raids against drow, mind flayers, and duergar.

The quaggoth war leader presented here had the following ability scores before racial adjustments, Hit Die ability score increases, and equipment bonuses: Str 12, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Strategy and Tactics

A quaggoth war leader is never encountered without a cadre of warriors. Having emerged from the ranks of the greater quaggoths, he uses weapons to great effect in combat. He leads from the front, raging and charging into the thickest knot of opponents to chop them up with his greataxe. He uses Power Attack as much as possible, though he's smart enough to adjust his tactics against tougher adversaries. Like other greater quaggoths, though, a war leader is quick to flee if the battle sours.

SAMPLE ENCOUNTERS

Quaggoths have a healthy respect for the dangers of the Underdark and so rarely venture forth alone, instead forming hunting bands. In times of war, they assemble into warbands, launching campaigns of carnage and destruction.

Hunting Band (EL 8–10): A hunting band includes three to five quaggoths along with one or two greater quaggoths.

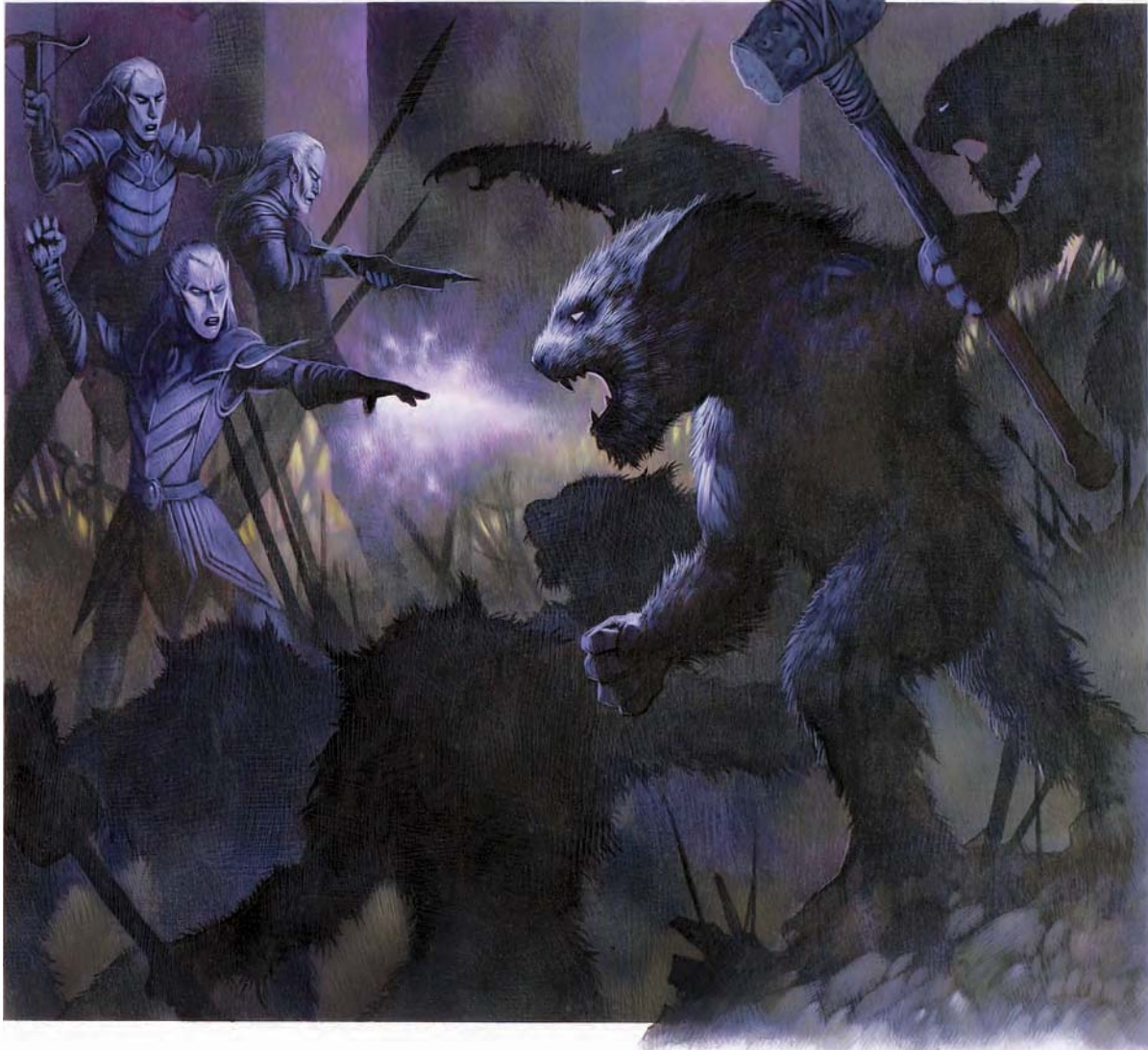
EL 9: This band of five quaggoths and one greater quaggoth have laid a trap for drow or other travelers. One takes position in the middle of a tunnel and, when it spots enemies, makes a commotion to attract their attention. It then retreats to where the rest of the band have hidden themselves.

Warband (EL 12–13): A warband consists of one war leader, six to twelve quaggoths, and two to four greater quaggoths.

EL 12: After a devastating attack by a team of drow slavers, the remaining quaggoths and greater quaggoths gather under a war leader to destroy their hated foes or die trying.

ECOLOGY

Quaggoths are unknown outside the Underdark. Born and raised in these lightless tunnels, most quaggoths cannot comprehend a world without a ceiling overhead. They are well adapted to this harsh environment, being equipped with keen senses and a natural resilience to toxins.



Quaggoths charge toward a band of drow warriors

Illus. by W. England

GREATER QUAGGOTH (RAGING)**CR 6**

Male quaggoth barbarian 3
 NE Medium monstrous humanoid
Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., scent; Listen +7, Spot +6
Languages Undercommon

AC 15, touch 8, flat-footed 15; uncanny dodge
 (+2 armor, +5 natural, -2 rage)

hp 86 (7 HD); Diehard

Immune fear, poison

Fort +10, **Ref** +5, **Will** +9

Weakness light sensitivity

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), climb 30 ft.

Melee +1 *greatclub* +17/+12 (1d10+14) and
 bite +11 (1d6+4)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +16

Atk Options Cleave, Power Attack, rage 2/day (9 rounds)

Combat Gear *elixir of hiding*, *elixir of sneaking*, *potion of bull's strength*, *potion of cure serious wounds*

Abilities Str 28, Dex 10, Con 23, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 8

SQ trap sense +1

Feats Cleave, Diehard^B, Improved Initiative, Power Attack

Skills Climb +19, Jump +17, Listen +7, Spot +6

Possessions combat gear plus +1 *greatclub*, *bracers of armor* +2, *gauntlets of ogre power*

Light Sensitivity (Ex) A greater quaggoth is dazzled in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

Rage (Ex) Once per day, a greater quaggoth can fly into a screaming blood frenzy. This ability functions like a barbarian's rage (PH 25), except that the quaggoth suffers no ill effects after the rage ends.

When not raging, a greater quaggoth has the following changed statistics:

AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17

hp 72 (7 HD)

Fort +8, **Will** +7

Melee +1 *greatclub* +15/+10 (1d10+11) and
 bite +9 (1d6+3)

Grp +14

Abilities Str 24, Con 19

Skills Climb +17, Hide +3 (+7 in shadow), Jump +17,
 Search +2, Survival +10

Though omnivores, quaggoths prefer meat, especially that of sentient beings. They readily devour humans, gnomes, goblinoids, and just about anything else that walks, creeps, or crawls into their domain. The only exception is dwarves, which quaggoths eat only if they're starving, so foul do they find the meat. They have acquired a special taste for the flesh of drow, perhaps because of the brutal treatment they receive at the hands of dark elf slavers.

Environment: Quaggoths can be found anywhere underground, but they prefer the deeper places over those near the surface. A quaggoth community is filthy, fouled by droppings, piles of bones, rotting meat, and rubbish heaped against the walls. Quaggoth lairs are rife with disease, and many clans are weakened by outbreaks of filth fever.

Typical Physical Characteristics: A typical male quaggoth stands just over 6 feet tall and weighs 250 pounds or more.

QUAGGOTH WAR LEADER (RAGING)**CR 10**

Male quaggoth barbarian 7
 NE Medium monstrous humanoid
Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., scent; Listen +9, Spot +5
Languages Undercommon

AC 20, touch 8, flat-footed 20; improved uncanny dodge
 (+6 armor, +6 natural, -2 rage)

hp 138 (10 HD); Diehard; **DR** 1/—

Immune fear, poison

Fort +13, **Ref** +6, **Will** +10

Weakness light sensitivity

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), climb 30 ft.

Melee +1 *keen elf bane greataxe* +21/+16/+11 (1d12+14/19–
 20/×3) or

Melee +1 *keen elf bane greataxe* +23/+18/+13 (1d12+16/19–
 20/×3 plus 2d6) against elves and
 bite +15 (1d6+4)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +11; **Grp** +20

Atk Options Cleave, Great Cleave, Power Attack, rage 3/day
 (10 rounds)

Combat Gear 2 *potions of cure serious wounds*

Abilities Str 28, Dex 10, Con 24, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 8

SQ trap sense +2

Feats Cleave, Diehard^B, Great Cleave, Improved Initiative,
 Power Attack

Skills Climb +17, Intimidate +9, Jump +19, Listen +9, Spot +5

Possessions combat gear plus +3 *hide armor*, +1 *keen elf bane greataxe*, *amulet of natural armor* +1, *gauntlets of ogre power*

Light Sensitivity (Ex) A quaggoth war leader is dazzled in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

Rage (Ex) Once per day, a quaggoth war leader can fly into a screaming blood frenzy. This ability functions like a barbarian's rage (PH 25), except that the quaggoth suffers no ill effects after the rage ends.

When not raging, a quaggoth war leader has the following changed statistics:

AC 22, touch 10, flat-footed 22

hp 118 (10 HD)

Fort +11, **Will** +8

Melee +1 *keen elf bane greataxe* +19/+14/+9 (1d12+11/
 19–20/×3) or

Melee +1 *keen elf bane greataxe* +21/+16/+11 (1d12+13/
 19–20/×3 plus 2d6) against elves and
 bite +13 (1d6+3)

Grp +18

Abilities Str 24, Con 20

Skills Climb +15, Hide +0 (+4 in shadows), Intimidate +9,
 Jump +17, Search +2, Survival +9

Female quaggoths are slightly smaller, but no lighter. They stand about 5-1/2 feet tall and have the same build as males, though they tend to obesity. Regardless of gender, every quaggoth has thick white fur over a densely muscular body.

Alignment: Quaggoths are always neutral evil. They are self-interested beings, with little understanding of or concern for the consequences of their actions, motivated purely to fulfill their every desire.

SOCIETY

Though numerous quaggoths inhabit the Underdark, many serve the drow as slaves. These poor souls suffer terribly under pitiless overseers who work them to death or expend them in large numbers for the interminable contests between houses. Others languish in captivity to mind flayers, who treat them no more kindly. Such abuse breaks quaggoths' minds, turning them into shuddering hulks or ravenous, unthinking beasts.

Those that manage to avoid the slavers form clans that can include up to fifty members. On rare occasions, several clans might meet in a massive cavern to hold a gathering. Such convocations occur after a series of damaging attacks on quaggoth holdings or if some other danger threatens them as a whole.

Among these savages are two general outlooks. Most quaggoths abide by the old customs and "follow the beast." They are extremely violent and reckless, seeing no point in using weaponry or making any advances to their society. They live up to the "deep bear" moniker, being virtually indistinguishable in nature and outlook from wild animals.

The other quaggoths "follow magic." This expression is something of a misnomer, since spellcasting among the quaggoths is extremely rare. Instead, these individuals improve upon their innate strengths, which they see as a gift from their gods (though still primitive and elemental). They revel in the power of the weapons they wield, treating them as mystical relics, and seek out magic items of all kinds. They mark their choice by dyeing their white fur with dung, blood, and black ichor harvested from mind flayers' gall. Those who follow magic are the prominent members of their clans. They are generally more intelligent, usually becoming war leaders, and don't throw their lives away recklessly. Thus, they might one day outnumber the primitives, much as humanity left behind the Neanderthals. Such a development would mean great upheaval in the Underdark.

QUAGGOTH LORE

Characters who have ranks in Knowledge (nature) can research quaggoths to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

Knowledge (nature)

DC Result

- 13 This creature is a quaggoth, a savage, warlike monstrous humanoid. This result reveals all monstrous humanoid traits.
 - 18 Quaggoths are wild and dangerous warriors that fly into a rage at the slightest provocation.
 - 23 Quaggoths are fearless and immune to poison. If they have one weakness, it's light.
 - 28 Many quaggoths are enslaved by drow, and those who escape this fate nurture a special hatred for the dark elves.
-

TYPICAL TREASURE

Quaggoths do not collect treasure, seeing little use for such things as gold and gems. Those who follow the beast destroy weapons and armor stripped from their victims, or at least bury such things in dungheaps to prevent their bringing bad luck or raising the ire of the gods.

Those who follow magic are not so cavalier about destroying or discarding equipment. Such a quaggoth has standard treasure for its Challenge Rating, always in the form of combat gear such as weapons, minor magic items, and, rarely, armor. Even such advanced quaggoths see no value in gems or coins.

QUAGGOTHS WITH CLASS LEVELS

Quaggoths' favored class is barbarian, reflecting their short tempers and violent nature. Only the most wise become spirit shamans^{CD}, and those that do are solitary, left alone to commune with the spirits and the gods that created their race.

Quaggoth clerics are extremely rare and worship a primitive aspect of Nerull. The god of death's trickery aspect fits in well with the quaggoths' battle tactics.

Level Adjustment: +2.

QUAGGOTHS IN EBERRON

The quaggoths are a subject race of the daelkyr, who use them principally for collecting Khyber dragonshards. Quaggoths brave some of the most dangerous places in Khyber, contending with aberrations, undead, and worse as they struggle to please their masters. Rumors of free quaggoths in distant subterranean reaches sometimes find their way to slave encampments, but the daelkyr swiftly stamp out such pernicious talk to ensure their domination.

QUAGGOTHS IN FAERÛN

The drow long ago enslaved the quaggoths to serve as guards, spider handlers, and thrall-soldiers. Mind flayers also employ quaggoth minions, valuing them mainly for their strength and service as warriors. Nevertheless, the Underdark holds many enclaves of free quaggoths. Those who live in the north beneath the Trollmoors have become organized, forming alliances with the orcs to destroy the drow slavers. Whispers circulate that the quaggoths have even begun to breed with the prolific orcs, producing a new brutish hybrid race of extreme strength and viciousness.

SHUNNED

What looks like a swollen tumor bristling with a score of spider legs pulls itself forward with alarming speed. The front of the thing has the face of a pale elf twisted in terrible pain.

The hideous shunned are the accursed of Lolth. Created from servants who have failed the Spider Queen, they are condemned to a fate of eternal agony.

STRATEGY AND TACTICS

A shunned hates all creatures and seeks to make them suffer as much as or more than it does. It lures creatures to battlefields of its choosing with *dancing lights*, and uses *darkness* to best take advantage of its environment. As its prey draws near, a shunned vomits forth swarms of spiders; once the battle begins, it lurks in the shadows while its minions contend with the enemy. The shunned readies an action to cast *dispel magic* to counter any significant magic attacks its foes might cast. Once the opponents have focused their efforts against the spider swarms, the shunned creeps forward, using *suggestion* to drive off tougher prey before it closes to deliver its venomous bite.

SAMPLE ENCOUNTERS

So foul are these creatures that others cannot abide their presence, not even other shunned. These aberrations are always encountered alone.

Individual (EL 7): A shunned lives a solitary existence on the fringes of its former society. It has come to terms with its new form but blames the drow for its wretched state. This shunned has managed to infiltrate a fungus forest where it murders slaves, overseers, and anyone else who comes too close.

ECOLOGY

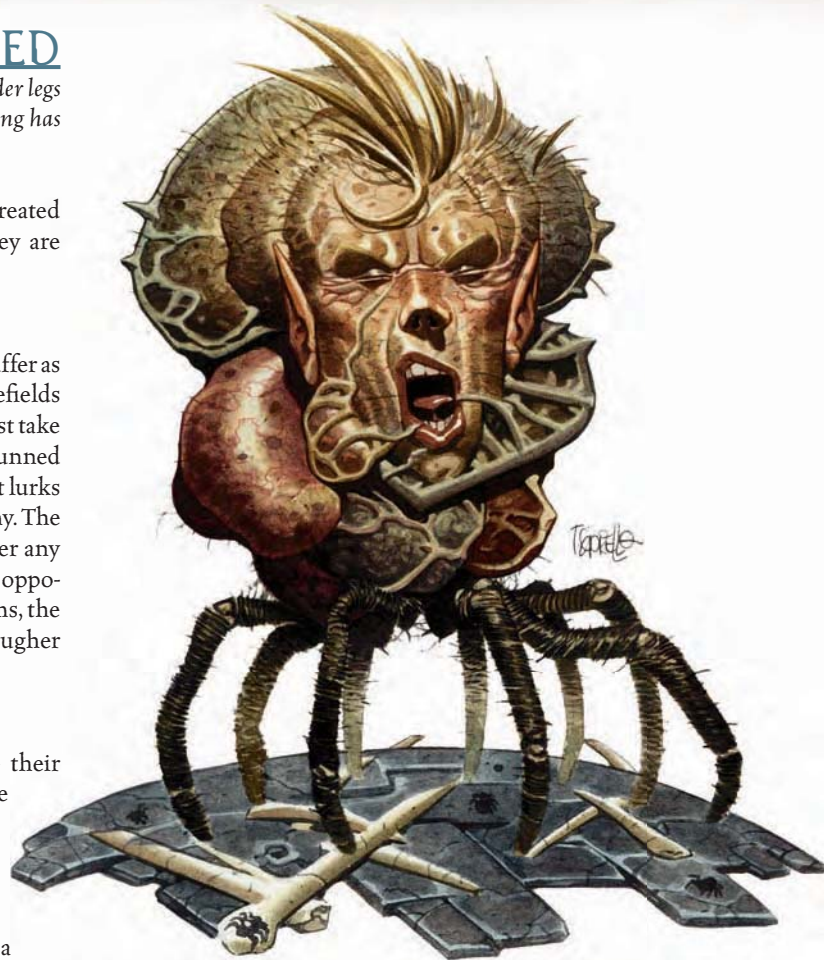
The shunned are aptly named: Having so displeased the Spider Queen, they are rejected by their former people. They are not permitted within drow cities and are cast out to find their own way in the Underdark. Consigned to a lonely life, the shunned

SHUNNED LORE

Characters who have ranks in Knowledge (dungeoneering) can research the shunned to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

Knowledge (dungeoneering)

DC	Result
17	This creature is one of the shunned—drow who have been terribly cursed by Lolth. This result reveals all aberration traits.
22	Although rejected by the drow, shunned retain many of the traits of their former form, including the elf's keen senses and the ability to work magic innately.
27	All shunned are infested with spiders. They can spew swarms of the tiny arachnids and bend them to their will.



A shunned

pine for what they have lost, trapped in a hideous form and ever aware of their goddess's wrath. No creature will ever accept them—most flee before their horrific visages.

All shunned cling to the faint hope of being restored and would do anything, kill anyone, to regain Lolth's favor. Few, if any, ever succeed at this goal. For most, it is but a matter of time before some other creature destroys them, ending their pitiful existence.

Though despised by the drow, shunned rarely venture too far from their former homes. A shunned establishes itself in a small, out-of-the-way cavern or tunnel, surviving on goblins, quaggoths, and the occasional drow.

These wretched creatures are relatively free of antagonists. Animals and vermin do not prey on them, for their meat has a sense of wrongness about it. The drow defend themselves against attacks by the shunned but do not actively hunt them, believing that they should not interfere with Lolth's punishments. Shunned must be wary of *svirfneblin* and *duergar*, who destroy them on sight.

Environment: The shunned are found only underground, and never more than a few miles of a drow settlement. Once a shunned settles on a home, it decorates the lair in a mockery of a typical drow dwelling, with rubbish and other cast-off materials found when hunting.

SHUNNED

CR 7

Always CE Medium aberration

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +7, Spot +7

Languages Undercommon

AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 16

(+2 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 82 (11 HD); **DR** 10/magic

SR 17

Fort +6 (+10 against poison), **Ref** +5, **Will** +9

Weakness light sensitivity

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +12 (1d8+6 plus poison)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +12

Atk Options magic strike, poison (Fort DC 20, 1d6 Con/unconscious 1d10 rounds)

Special Actions disgorge spiders, wail

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th):

1/day—*dancing lights, darkness, dispel magic, faerie fire, suggestion* (DC 14)

Abilities Str 19, Dex 14, Con 17, Int 6, Wis 15, Cha 12

Feats Ability Focus (poison), Alertness, Combat Casting, Improved Natural Attack (bite)

Skills Climb +12, Concentration +5, Hide +6, Jump +8, Listen +7, Move Silently +6, Search +2, Spot +7

Advancement 12–18 HD (Medium); 19–25 HD (Large)

Light Sensitivity (Ex) A shunned is dazzled in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

Magic Strike A shunned's natural weapons are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Disgorge Spiders (Su) As a full-round action that provokes attacks of opportunity, a shunned can spew a spider swarm (*MM* 239) into an adjacent square. Once it has disgorged spiders, the shunned must wait 1d4 rounds before using this ability. The shunned controls all such swarms completely and can instruct each swarm to attack a particular target. It can redirect a swarm as a move action.

Wail (Su) Once per round as a standard action, a shunned can loose a horrid wail. All creatures within 30 feet must succeed on DC 16 Will saves or become sickened for 1 round. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Skills A shunned has a +2 racial bonus on Listen, Search, and Spot checks.

It also has a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take 10 on a Climb check, even if rushed or threatened.

Typical Physical Characteristics: A shunned measures about 6 feet long and weighs just over 200 pounds. Most of its body is a bulbous sac of pale flesh covered in throbbing black veins. Foul excretions collect in its folds, emitting a sour stink. The head of a female drow with translucent skin perches on the end of its bulky form, and close inspection reveals numerous tiny spiders wriggling just below the surface of the pallid flesh. Randomly piercing its disgusting body are numerous glossy spider legs covered in thorns.

Shunned are exclusively female and lack the ability to reproduce.

Alignment: Shunned are always chaotic evil. Many do not begin with this alignment, but after a few weeks in their new form, their minds give way to madness and desperation, pushing them to random acts of terrifying violence.

TYPICAL TREASURE

Shunned do not typically hoard treasure and do not use magic items. They are, however, keenly interested in drow goods, such as furniture, carvings, and even clothing. They decorate their homes with debris collected from drow cities. Examining the contents of a shunned lair reveals various items of worth, amounting to standard treasure for the creature's Challenge Rating, but no coins.

SHUNNED IN EBERRON

The shunned are native to Dal Quor, the Region of Dreams. Born from old nightmares experienced by those who suffered the quori invasion, they exist in a state of eternal torment. They regard mortals as the cause of their plight and take any chance to slip onto the Material Plane to get revenge.

SHUNNED IN FAERÛN

The clerics of Kiaransalee hold up the shunned as examples of Lolth's corruption, seducing these vile creatures with promises of restoration. Seeing hope in the Revenancer's clerics, many shunned aided them in the War of the Spider Queen. But no succor was to be had from those who served the White Banshee; most of the shunned were wiped out in Kiaransalee's mad campaign to purge the Underdark of Lolth's influence.

SPIDER, MONSTROUS

Aside from the more common varieties of hunting and web-spinning monstrous spiders, the drow breed and train several new strains of spider found exclusively in the Underdark.

SPITTING SPIDER

This enormous spider stands on eight spindly legs and has a surprisingly small body for its size. Its fangs drip a pale yellow fluid as it lunges forward to attack.

A spitting spider is noted for its speed and its ability to project venom into the faces of its foes.

Strategy and Tactics

A spitting spider is aggressive when hunting. It spits a stream of poison at its closest target and then pounces on the following round, biting its prey. It pounds a poisoned creature with its front legs to further weaken it before the toxin takes effect.

Drow sometimes use spitting spiders as mounts. Since these spiders are easier to train than other vermin, as well as being ferocious in combat, they are in high demand. In combat, a spitting spider coordinates its attacks with its rider.

SPITTING SPIDER

CR 5

Always N Large vermin

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.; Listen +1, Spot +9

Languages —

AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 15
(-1 size, +3 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 59 (7 HD)

Immune vermin immunities (MM 317)

Fort +9 (+13 against poison), **Ref** +5, **Will** +3

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +10 (1d8+6 plus poison) and 2 slams +5 each (1d6+3)

Ranged spit +7 touch (poison)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +15

Atk Options poison (DC 17, 1d6 Dex/2d6 Dex), pounce, spit poison

Abilities Str 22, Dex 17, Con 18, Int —, Wis 12, Cha 5

SQ steed, vermin traits (MM 317)

Skills Climb +14, Hide -1, Jump +20, Listen +1, Move Silently +11, Spot +9

Advancement 8–14 HD (Large); 15–21 HD (Huge)

Pounce (Ex) If a spitting spider charges, it can make a full attack.

Spit Poison (Ex) A spitting spider can spit its venom up to 30 feet as a standard action. This is a ranged touch attack with no range increment.

Steed (Ex) Spitting spiders take instruction well and are easy to train. Treat a spitting spider as a magical beast with Intelligence 3 for the purpose of Handle Animal checks.

Skills Spitting spiders have a +8 racial bonus on Climb, Move Silently, and Spot checks, and a +10 racial bonus on Jump checks. A spitting spider can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

TANGLE TERROR

In the center of a strangely glistening web is a big spider, about the size of a dog. Its body is dark green slashed with black stripes. As you watch, it draws a strand of wet webbing from its spinnerets.

Tangle terrors use poisonous webs to ensnare and confound their prey.

Strategy and Tactics

A tangle terror is usually content to wait for creatures to become entangled in its webbing, since the webs' poison make a victim more pliant and easier to overcome and drain. Once prey has been trapped, the tangle terror creeps forward to either finish off its victim or poison it and wrap it in a cocoon of webbing for later consumption.

WIDOWMAKER

Though massive, this spider's black body is sleek and built for battle, standing on eight delicate legs. It has a bulbous abdomen sporting a large red discoloration that resembles an hourglass.

A widowmaker is a deadly hunter in its own right, and it is the favored steed of drow priestesses.

TANGLE TERROR

CR 8

Always N Medium vermin

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 120 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2

Languages —

AC 22, touch 14, flat-footed 18
(+4 Dex, +8 natural)

hp 102 (12 HD)

Immune webs; vermin immunities (MM 317)

Fort +12, **Ref** +8, **Will** +6

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), climb 30 ft.

Melee bite +13 (1d6+2 plus poison)

Ranged web +13 touch (entangle)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +11

Atk Options maddening webs, poison (Fort DC 20, 2d6 Wis/1d6 Str)

Abilities Str 14, Dex 19, Con 18, Int —, Wis 14, Cha 5

SQ vermin traits (MM 317)

Feats Weapon Finesse^B

Skills Climb +10, Hide +12, Listen +2, Move Silently +12, Spot +2

Advancement 13–24 HD (Medium); 25–36 HD (Large)

Immunity to Webs (Ex) A tangle terror is unaffected by natural and magical webs.

Maddening Webs (Ex) Webbing created by a tangle terror drips with a powerful psychotropic toxin. Creatures struck by a tangle terror's web attack or entangled in its sheet webs must succeed on a DC 20 Will save or become confused for 12 rounds as they experience strange hallucinations that leave them befuddled. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Web (Ex) A tangle terror can throw a web up to eight times per day. This is similar to an attack with a net but has a maximum range of 100 feet, with a range increment of 20 feet, and is effective against targets up to two size categories larger than the spider. The web anchors the target in place, allowing no movement.

An entangled creature can escape with a successful DC 22 Escape Artist check or burst the web with a successful DC 22 Strength check. The check DCs are Strength-based and include a +4 racial bonus. The web has 12 hit points and hardness 0, and takes double damage from fire.

A tangle terror can create sheets of sticky webbing up to 20 feet square. It usually positions these sheets to trap flying creatures but can also try to trap prey on the ground. Approaching creatures must succeed on a DC 20 Spot check to notice a web; otherwise they stumble into it and become trapped as though by a successful web attack (including the maddening webs effect). Each 5-foot section of webbing has 12 hit points and damage reduction 5/—.

A tangle terror can move across its own sheet web at its climb speed and can determine the exact location of any creature touching the web.

Skills Tangle terrors have a +8 racial bonus on Climb, Hide, and Move Silently checks. A tangle terror can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

Illustration by S. Ellis



Spitting spider (top), widowmaker (left), tangle terror (right)

Strategy and Tactics

A widowmaker is a voracious predator that feeds on all living creatures, even its own kind. When on the hunt, it creeps about, moving slowly and under cover of darkness. When it

spots prey, it charges. A creature that survives this powerful initial attack still has to deal with the devastating effects of the spider's poison.

WIDOWMAKER

CR 10

Always N Large vermin
Init +7; Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.;
Listen +2, Spot +10

Languages —

AC 24, touch 12, flat-footed 21
(−1 size, +3 Dex, +12 natural)

hp 136 (13 HD)

Immune vermin immunities (MM 317)

Fort +14, Ref +7, Will +6

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +13 (1d8+7 plus poison)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Base Atk +9; Grp +18

Atk Options Powerful Charge*, blood drain, improved grab,
poison (Fort DC 22, 1d6 Str + 1d6 Dex/2d6 Dex)

* See page 144

Abilities Str 20, Dex 17, Con 22, Int —, Wis 14, Cha 7
SQ steed, vermin traits (MM 317)

Feats Improved Initiative^B, Powerful Charge^B

Skills Climb +13, Hide −1, Jump +15, Listen +2, Move
Silently +11, Spot +10

Advancement 14–26 HD (Large); 27–39 HD (Huge)

Blood Drain (Ex) A widowmaker can suck blood from a living victim by making a successful grapple check. If it pins the foe, it drains blood, dealing 1d4 points of Constitution damage each round the pin is maintained. This ability does not affect elementals, plants, or creatures that lack a Constitution score.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a widowmaker must hit an opponent of any size with a bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking attacks of opportunity. If it wins the grapple, it establishes a hold and can pin the opponent. It can use its blood drain ability against a pinned creature.

Steed (Ex) Widowmakers take instruction well and are easy to train. Treat a widowmaker as a magical beast with Intelligence 3 for the purpose of Handle Animal checks.

Skills Widowmakers have a +8 racial bonus on Climb, Move Silently, and Spot checks, and a +10 bonus on Jump checks. A widowmaker can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

Despite their ferocity, widowmakers are easily trained, even though they are vermin. Clerics of Lolth regard these creatures as the truest expressions of the Spider Queen and prefer them as mounts.

SAMPLE ENCOUNTERS

Monstrous spiders are usually solitary hunters, although they occasionally serve the drow as steeds or guardians.

Individual (EL 5–10): All the monstrous spiders described in this chapter are usually encountered when they are hunting or lurking in their webs.

EL 5: A spitting spider searches through the rubble of an abandoned gnome enclave. Bodies wrapped in spider silk lie nestled in the ruins.

EL 8: A tangle terror sits in the center of a massive web bisecting a huge crevasse that once served as a swift route through the mountains. Traffic is much thinner now, and the spider is quite hungry. It is unlikely to wait for prey to stumble into its web.

EL 10: A widowmaker has made its lair in a temple in a small drow settlement. It has been trained not to attack anyone wearing the vestments of Lolth's clergy, but it kills anyone else who comes near—noticeably depleting the local population.

Spider Sentinel (EL 10–12): Drow spider sentinels (see page 172) patrol singly or in pairs. Occasionally they are mounted on spitting spiders, particularly if they wish to take prisoners.

ECOLOGY

Monstrous spiders come in two varieties: hunters and web-spinners. Both the spitting spider and the widowmaker are hunting spiders, and so they do not rely on webs to catch prey. Instead, they prowl their territory in search of fresh meat. A tangle terror lurks in its web, lying in wait until some hapless creature stumbles into its trap, at which point, it gingerly descends to paralyze the prey with its bite. Its big advantage over other web-spinners is its poisonous web, which causes strange and confusing hallucinations that make prey easier

POWERFUL CHARGE

The Powerful Charge feat appears in *Monster Manual IV* and is reprinted here for convenience.

POWERFUL CHARGE

A creature with this feat can charge with extra force.

Prerequisite: Medium or larger, base attack bonus +1.

Benefit: When the creature charges, if its melee attack hits, it deals an extra 1d8 points of damage (if it is Medium size). For Large creatures, the extra damage is 2d6 points; for Huge, 3d6; for Gargantuan, 4d6; and for Colossal, 6d6.

This feat works only when the creature makes a charge. It does not work when the creature is mounted. If the creature has the ability to make multiple attacks after a charge, it can apply this extra damage to only one of those attacks.

Special: A fighter can select Powerful Charge as one of his fighter bonus feats.

to deal with. Tangle terrors don't consume the heads of their prey and leave them scattered throughout their lairs, leading to a popular belief that they take trophies.

Generally, these spiders are loners, since food is scarce in the Underdark. They congregate only for mating. Tangle terrors and spitting spiders make no lasting nests but simply leave egg clusters in protected areas; a male tangle terror often returns to eat its young. A female widowmaker takes no chances, devouring the male after mating.

Monstrous spiders are often found in the service of the drow, who see the creatures much as surface dwellers see horses: servants, beasts of burden, and occasional companions. Others believe them to be divinely favored, symbols of Lolth's majesty.

Environment: All three of these monstrous spiders live exclusively underground. They prefer damp places with plenty of prey to hunt or ensnare. Domesticated individuals are stabled in drow settlements or inhabit special areas in or near temples to Lolth.

MONSTROUS SPIDER LORE

Characters who have ranks in Knowledge (nature) can research monstrous spiders to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

Knowledge (nature)

DC Result

Spitting Spider

- 15 This creature is a spitting spider, a particularly deadly breed of hunting spider that occasionally serves the drow as a mount. This result reveals all vermin traits.
- 20 A spitting spider can deliver its paralytic poison by bite or by spitting it up to 30 feet.
- 25 Though it favors softening its foes up first, a spitting spider can pounce on its enemies, delivering a rapid barrage of attacks.

Tangle Terror

- 18 This creature is a tangle terror, a breed of web-spinning spider. This result reveals all vermin traits.
- 23 Beware the tangle spider's webs; they're just as poisonous as its bite. Though its bite weakens prey, the venom of its webs leaves them disoriented and helpless.
- 28 A tangle spider cannot be hampered by webs of any kind, not even magical ones.

Widowmaker

- 20 This creature is a widowmaker, a vicious hunting spider sometimes used as a steed by the drow. This result reveals all vermin traits.
- 25 A widowmaker can make an overpowering charge attack to drive its venomous fangs deep into its prey's body.
- 30 Once it bites, a widowmaker hangs on and drinks its victim's blood.

TROLL

Typical Physical Characteristics: A spitting spider is about 16 feet across but has a relatively small body, no more than 5 feet in diameter. Spitting spiders weigh about 500 pounds.

A tangle terror is much more compact, being about 6 feet in diameter and weighing 300 pounds. Neither of these spiders has discernible physical differences between genders.

Measuring 15 feet across and weighing more than 2,000 pounds, a female widowmaker carries much of its bulk in its abdomen. Males, though still Large, are about half the females' size and weight, being 8 feet across and weighing just over half a ton.

TYPICAL TREASURE

Though monstrous spiders do not keep treasure, their lairs sometimes contain coins, gems, and other items from previous victims. Typically, the value of these items is 1/5 standard treasure for the spider's Challenge Rating.

FOR PLAYER CHARACTERS

Characters with the Spider Companion feat (see page 52) can use some monstrous spiders as animal companions. Druids of 7th level or higher can select a spitting spider instead of a brown bear. Druids of 13th level or higher can select a tangle terror instead of a dire bear.

Because they can be trained fairly easily, even by characters without the Vermin Trainer feat, spitting spiders and widowmakers make good mounts.

Carrying Capacity: A light load for a spitting spider is up to 520 pounds, a medium load, 521–1,040 pounds, and a heavy load, 1,041–1,560 pounds. A spitting spider can drag 7,800 pounds.

A light load for a widowmaker is up to 400 pounds, a medium load, 401–800 pounds, and a heavy load, 801–1,200 pounds. A widowmaker can drag 6,000 pounds.

MONSTROUS SPIDERS IN EBERRON

All three varieties of monstrous spiders are found in the caverns of Khyber that lie beneath Xen'drik, though specimens of these strains can be found throughout the subterranean realm. Eberron's drow have no special relationship with spiders, so they do not use these creatures as steeds or guardians (monstrous scorpions fill a similar role).

Most of these vermin cause few problems and are easily contained. However, of late, tangle terrors have begun slipping from their caves and are finding new homes in the cliffs and canyons so common on Xen'drik. This migration has become a problem for the continent's small population of raptorans (*Races of the Wild*), who are losing several hatchlings to these predators.

MONSTROUS SPIDERS IN FAERÛN

Up until recently, monstrous spiders were an important component of Lolth's worship. But with the Spider Queen's silence (see page 107), clerics of her enemies have mounted raids of reprisal. During the War of the Spider Queen, many drow cities were purged of their spider populations, with followers of Kiaransalee even placing bounties on spider legs.

Trolls are the great brutes of the Underdark. Natural predators, difficult to kill, and typically of low intelligence, they are an excellent source of slave labor and shock troops for the drow.

FILTH-EATER

A thin, green-skinned creature, at least 9 feet tall, flails at you with elongated arms tipped with filth-encrusted claws. It bares yellow fangs in a snarl, and a blast of foul air buffets you.

Living in the most squalid of conditions outside drow enclaves, troll filth-eaters are vicious carriers of foul disease.

The filth-eater presented here had the following ability scores before racial adjustments and Hit Die ability score increases: Str 15, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 13.

Strategy and Tactics

Harsh living conditions and breeding for aggressiveness and toughness make filth-eaters into frenzied combatants. When they detect a potential living meal, they typically attack in a raging horde, seeking to tear their prey limb from limb. They seldom retreat unless faced with acid or with fire attacks that can manage to penetrate their formidable energy resistance. In battle, they always use Power Attack and attempt to rend as often as possible.

Though it is not done consciously, this mad-rush style of attack also spreads filth fever with maximum effectiveness. The few beings that survive the claws and teeth of a filth-eater gang often end up weakened and sick not long afterward, at the mercy of the hazards of the Underdark.

TROLL LORE

Characters who have ranks in Knowledge (nature) can research trolls to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

Knowledge (nature)

DC Result

- 15 This creature is a troll, a bestial giant of immense toughness and ferocity. This result reveals all giant traits.
- 20 Trolls can heal damage with amazing speed, although they are susceptible to acid and fire.
- 25 Trolls can be found almost anywhere, but those in the Underdark are often servants of drow. Some live in filth and are carriers of disease, and others are stealthy hunters.
- 30 Drow gift their troll servants with magic to overcome their innate weaknesses.

FILTH-EATER (RAGING)

CR 11

Male troll barbarian 6
CE Large giant
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 90 ft., low-light vision, scent;
Listen +8, Spot +9

Languages Giant

AC 14, touch 9, flat-footed 14; improved uncanny dodge
(–1 size, +2 Dex, +5 natural, –2 rage)

hp 182 (12 HD); regeneration 5

Immune normal disease

Resist fire 20

Fort +26, **Ref** +6, **Will** +8

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee 2 claws +20 each (1d6+11 plus disease) and
bite +15 (1d6+5 plus disease)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +10; **Grp** +25

Atk Options Power Attack, disease (filth fever, Fort DC 23,
incubation 1d3 days, 1d3 Dex + 1d3 Con), rage 2/day (13
rounds), rend 2d6+16

Abilities Str 32, Dex 14, Con 30, Int 5, Wis 10, Cha 9

SQ trap sense +2

Feats Alertness, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Power Attack,
Track

Skills Climb +13, Jump +15, Listen +8, Spot +9

Possessions *major ring of fire resistance*

Regeneration (Ex) Acid and fire deal normal damage to a
troll filth-eater. If a troll filth-eater loses a limb or body
part, the lost portion regrows in 3d6 minutes. The
creature can reattach the severed member instantly by
holding it to the stump.

Rend (Ex) If a troll filth-eater hits with both claw attacks, it
latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh,
dealing an additional 2d6+16 points of damage.

When not raging, a troll filth-eater has the following changed
statistics:

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 16

hp 158 (12 HD)

Fort +24, **Will** +6

Melee 2 claws +18 each (1d6+9 plus disease) and
bite +13 (1d6+4 plus disease)

Grp +21

Atk Options disease (Fort DC 21), rend 2d6+13

Abilities Str 28, Con 26

Skills Climb +11, Jump +13

TUNNEL THUG

*Cunning intelligence gleams in the deep-set eyes of this greenish giant
as it leaps from cover. Its ungainly, rubbery arms wield a huge sword
with practiced ease.*

Some trolls are bred by the drow for intelligence and agility.
Tunnel thugs are not the run-of-the-mill guards and laborers
common to the outskirts of drow communities, but rather,
cunning trackers and assassins.

The tunnel thug presented here had the following abil-
ity scores before racial adjustments, Hit Die ability score
increases, and equipment bonuses: Str 8, Dex 15, Con 12, Int
14, Wis 13, Cha 10.

TUNNEL THUG

CR 14

Male troll rogue 5/assassin 3

CE Large giant

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 90 ft., low-light vision, scent;
Listen +12, Spot +12

Languages Giant, Undercommon

AC 26, touch 16, flat-footed 26; improved uncanny dodge
(–1 size, +7 Dex, +5 armor, +5 natural)

hp 158 (14 HD); regeneration 5

Resist evasion

Fort +14 (+15 against poison), **Ref** +16, **Will** +6

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +1 *falchion* +14/+9 (2d6+8/18–20 plus poison) and
bite +8 (1d6+2) or

Melee 2 claws +13 each (1d6+5) and
bite +8 (1d6+2)

Ranged mwk light crossbow +16 (2d6/19–20 plus poison)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +18

Atk Options death attack (DC 13), poison (deathblade, Fort
DC 20, 1d6 Con/2d6 Con), poison (roach paste, Fort
DC 12, nausea 1 round/disease [filth fever]), rend 2d6+7,
sneak attack +5d6

Combat Gear 2 doses of deathblade, 10 doses of roach
paste*, 2 *oils of magic weapon*, *potions of blur*

* See page 94

Abilities Str 20, Dex 24, Con 24, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 6

SQ poison use, trap sense +1, trapfinding

Feats Alertness, Iron Will, Martial Weapon Proficiency
(falchion), Skill Focus (Survival), Track

Skills Balance +10, Climb +15, Disguise +2, Hide +17,
Jump +7, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +5, Knowledge
(nature) +2, Listen +12, Move Silently +17, Spot +12,
Survival +9 (+11 underground), Tumble +12

Possessions combat gear plus +2 *improved shadow studded
leather armor*, +1 *falchion*, masterwork light crossbow
with 20 bolts, *boots of elvenkind*, *gloves of Dexterity* +4,
spider kit*

* See page 92

Regeneration (Ex) Acid and fire deal normal damage to a troll
tunnel thug. If a troll tunnel thug loses a limb or body
part, the lost portion regrows in 3d6 minutes. The
creature can reattach the severed member instantly by
holding it to the stump.

Rend (Ex) If a troll tunnel thug hits with both claw attacks, it
latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh,
dealing an additional 2d6+7 points of damage.

Strategy and Tactics

Tunnel thugs differ from normal trolls in that direct melee
is not their preferred mode of combat. When they have
located their quarry, they observe for a while until they have
the opportunity to move in and make death attacks. They
like to quickly and quietly pick off stragglers or rear guards
with sneak attacks and poison, seeking high positions on
cavern walls using their spider kits. Often the only warning
of attack is a poisoned crossbow bolt streaking out the dark.
Tunnel thugs disable their foes one at a time, favoring the
relatively inexpensive roach paste and saving deathblade for
formidable-looking opponents.

Tunnel thugs usually begin pursuit by tracking by scent, getting a good idea of the numbers and types of creatures they are hunting. Once they have determined the quarry's probable destination, they establish cutoff points to trap their fleeing prey. They are not particularly adept at locating traps or ambushes but often avoid them simply by not traveling the route that their quarry expects. Even when they run into an ambush, tunnel thugs disconcert their would-be attackers, who usually have prepared for fighting drow. The trolls' evasion and regeneration abilities help them penetrate any such defenses with minimal harm.

If they are serving as trackers for a drow warband, tunnel thugs soften their targets up with crossbow fire from one direction, while the drow attack with surprise from an unexpected quarter. The trolls then move into flanking positions in order to make full use of their sneak attacks. Before entering melee, tunnel thugs smear their falchions with poison and try to target a spellcaster or war leader among their opponents.

SAMPLE ENCOUNTERS

Troll filth-eaters lurk in squalid burrows on the outskirts of drow communities. They typically hunt in packs, killing and eating any non-drow that happen by their lairs. Tunnel thugs operate alone or form organized groups.

Filth-Eater Gang (EL 13–15): Packs of two to four filth-eaters scavenge for food around their lairs. Any living creature other than drow is a target for their frenzied attacks. A pack of filth-eaters in a battle rage usually provides ample alarm to nearby drow listening posts.

Retributive Strike (EL 14–18): Tunnel thugs usually pursue intruders singly or in small squads, though sometimes they guide drow hunting parties.

EL 14: This solitary tunnel thug is in pursuit of a thief who managed to infiltrate the compound of a ranking drow house and steal an item of value.

EL 17: Two tunnel thugs lead a strike squad of four Lolth's Stings (see page 78) and two dark snipers (see page 75) under the command of a house captain (see page 170).

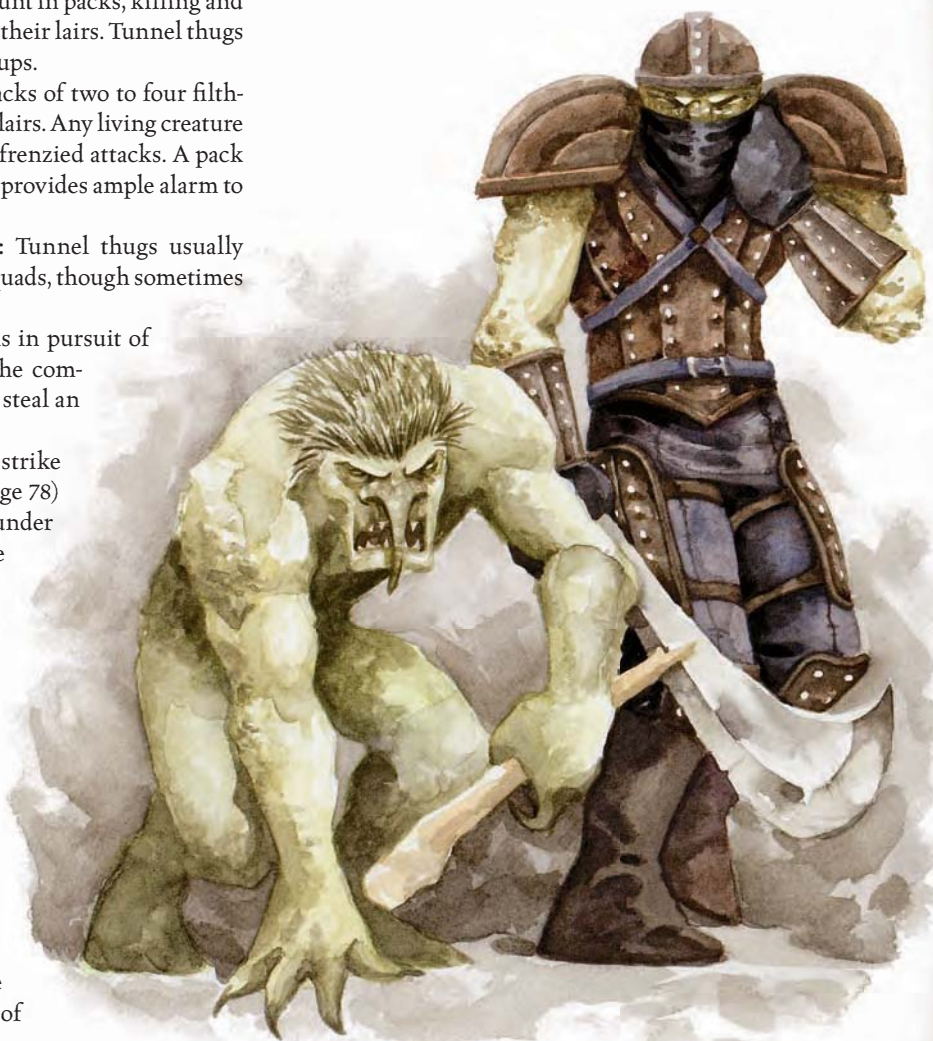
ECOLOGY

Though trolls can inhabit almost any environment, terrorizing the nearby denizens, those that dwell in the Underdark have been the thralls of the dark elves for countless generations. Using magic and fire, the drow have been able to tame these brutes to some extent, but only the foolish or extraordinarily powerful lower their guard or walk with impunity among them. Drow dislike the giants' savagery and general lack of

hygiene, so usually troll packs are relegated to caverns or pits that are adjacent to the entrances to their domains.

The presence of troll filth-eaters is easy to deduce from the foul stench of their burrows. They squat in pits and caverns littered with the remnants of past meals, their own refuse, and the myriad organisms that thrive in such conditions. As a result, filth-eaters have an almost unnatural hardiness to go along with their regenerative properties. The drow prefer not to enter the disgusting dens of the filth-eaters, rather sending in slaves whenever necessary to feed them. Sometimes the slaves carry foodstuffs for the trolls, but more often than not they themselves are the meal.

Some trolls are bred by the drow for intelligence and agility. When some adversary of the drow escapes their clutches or retreats from battle, and the dark elves do not wish to pursue themselves, they call out their tunnel thugs. These trolls are consummate trackers and hit-and-run assassins. Interlopers fleeing from the drow often listen for sounds of pursuit or set traps for pursuers. Against tunnel thugs, such measures are rarely successful. With their impressive skills, magical gear, and knowledge of the local Underdark terrain, tunnel thugs



Illus. by B. Trot

Trolls: filth-eater, tunnel thug

avoid detection and traps, easily surmount difficult terrain, and use tertiary tunnels to head off their quarry. These trolls can run quickly through tunnels, leaping over debris and obstacles that might hinder the movement of smaller creatures.

Environment: The trolls that serve the drow inhabit the middle depths of the Underdark where the dark elves build their cities. Filth-eaters inhabit burrows and caverns, while the pens of tunnel thugs are associated with houses or temples.

Typical Physical Characteristics: Filth-eaters are especially lanky and horrid-looking for their kind, with crooked fangs and long, jagged claws, encrusted with disgusting matter. They are immune to normal diseases and carry infections from their lairs on their teeth and claws, which transmit the illness by successful attacks.

Tunnel thugs wear light armor and carry weapons, provided by their drow masters. Though as hideous as any troll, they have an intelligent air and are relatively civilized-looking.

Alignment: Like all trolls, those exploited by the drow are chaotic evil. Filth-eaters are particularly bestial, but tunnel thugs exhibit a cruel cunning.

SOCIETY

Filth-eaters are bred for obedience (with stupidity a desirable side-effect), and they fear the wrath of the dark elves that command them. Any such troll showing signs of marked intelligence or leadership capability is culled and destroyed. In return for their loyal service—consisting largely of killing and eating intruders—the filth-eaters enjoy a measure of protection. The drow provide them with magic rings that compensate for the trolls' natural vulnerability to fire, further ensuring their continued loyalty.

Nevertheless, the drow do spare some trolls that demonstrate intelligence and agility. When such a promising specimen is born, it is removed from its parents' lair and raised in the pens of the tunnel thugs. To further augment their skills and training, the drow give these trolls magic weaponry and equipment, making the creatures expensive to raise, train, and house. As a result, tunnel thugs are usually not numerous in a drow community, belonging only to the noble houses or perhaps the church. However, their low numbers are more than made up for by their deadly effectiveness.

TYPICAL TREASURE

Trolls in the service of the drow do not collect treasure, being little more than pets. However, filth-eaters possess the *major rings of fire resistance* given them by their masters. A typical troll tunnel thug has mundane and magical equipment amounting to standard treasure for its Challenge Rating.

TROLLS AS CHARACTERS

See MM 248 for information on trolls as characters.

VENOM OOZE

A glistening patch of luminescent yellow slime slides forward, gathering itself to form a sticky pseudopod.

A venom ooze is a protoplasmic creature that excretes deadly toxins.

STRATEGY AND TACTICS

A venom ooze is mindless but is drawn to disturbances: Any movement within range of its blindsight triggers its instincts, causing it to slide toward its prey. When it is within range, the ooze lashes out with a pseudopod dripping with poisonous excreta. Once it has struck a foe, it wraps its amorphous body around that creature and squeezes until it or its prey is dead.

VENOM OOZE

CR 12

Always N Large ooze

Init -3; **Senses** blind, blindsight 60 ft.; **Listen** -2, **Spot** -2

Languages —

AC 6, touch 6, flat-footed 6

(-1 size, -3 Dex)

hp 184 (16 HD); fast healing 3

Immune acid, cold, electricity; ooze immunities (MM 313)

Fort +11, **Ref** +2, **Will** +3

Speed 15 ft. (3 squares), climb 15 ft., swim 15 ft.

Melee slam +19 (2d8+12 plus poison)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +28

Atk Options constrict 2d8+12, improved grab, poison (Fort DC 26, 1d8 Dex/2d6 Con)

Abilities Str 26, Dex 5, Con 22, Int —, Wis 7, Cha 1

SQ corrupt water, ooze traits (MM 313)

Skills Climb +16, Listen -2, Spot -2, Swim +16

Advancement 17–32 HD (Large); 33–48 HD (Huge)

Constrict (Ex) A venom ooze deals 2d8+12 points of damage with a successful grapple check, in addition to damage from its slam attack.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a venom ooze must hit an opponent of any size with a slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking attacks of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

A venom ooze has a +4 racial bonus on grapple checks, which is already included in the statistics block.

Poison (Ex) The save DC is Constitution-based and includes a +2 racial bonus.

Corrupt Water (Ex) Each hour a venom ooze remains submerged in a body of water, it contaminates 10 cubic feet, making the liquid still, foul, and unable to sustain animal life. The corrupted water becomes poisonous (ingested, Fort DC 26, 1d6 Con/1d6 Con).

Skills A venom ooze has a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take 10 on a Climb check, even if rushed or threatened.

It has a +8 racial bonus on Swim checks to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action when swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

SAMPLE ENCOUNTER

Venom oozes are most likely to be encountered alone, but they can sometimes be found in the employ of intelligent creatures. In such cases, the oozes are kept in moats or pits to act as barricades, or allowed to roam freely in isolated areas.

Hunter (EL 12): A venom ooze has cornered a svirfneblin (MM 131) and is closing in for the kill. The endangered gnome's allies do their best to distract the ooze, but the ooze mindlessly pursues its meal.

ECOLOGY

Believed to be offshoots of ochre jellies, venom oozes are particularly dangerous organisms. They are ravenous hunters that scour the tunnels of their habitat for food. Unlike other oozes, they are not content to stay in one place, but rather slide across the ground, relying on nonvisual senses to detect even the slightest movement. When a venom ooze detects prey, it pursues relentlessly.

A venom ooze feeds by absorbing fluids through its skin. When it attacks, it wraps itself around a creature and tightens, crushing the prey to release the nourishing juices. Its poisonous secretions quickly weaken and suffocate prey.

Venom oozes reproduce by dividing. The more fluids one ingests, the larger it grows, until it can no longer sustain itself. The process of division takes several days to conclude. A cleft appears in the center of the ooze's body, gradually widening as the thrashing halves struggle for independence.

Environment: Venom oozes are most often found in the Underdark. They lurk near poisonous lakes, toxic gas vents, and other noxious areas inhospitable to other life. Equally at home in the water as out, they can adapt to just about any environment, tough enough to withstand deep cold or the deepest places in the earth.

Typical Physical Characteristics: A typical venom ooze is approximately 12 feet in diameter and weighs about half a ton. It is a sickly yellow, about the color of bile, which it smells like as well. Whenever the ooze moves, it leaves a glistening trail of slime. The poison in its excreta loses potency rapidly, but it leaves a silvery stain.

Alignment: A mindless hunter, a venom ooze is always neutral.

TYPICAL TREASURE

Though a venom ooze does not collect treasure, it might leave behind a few possessions from its previous victims. Since the ooze feeds by crushing its victim, fragile goods (such as potions) rarely survive. An area inhabited by a venom ooze has



Venom ooze

1/2 standard treasure for its Challenge Rating, consisting of coins, gems, and nonfragile goods.

VENOM OOZES IN EBERRON

Venom oozes can be found in the fetid waterways and pools of Xen'drik's jungles. Such places are said to be holy to the dark elves, blessed by their foul scorpion god. Among some tribes, it is a rite of passage to consume waters tainted by the ooze; those who live through the experience are considered favored by Vulkoor.

VENOM OOZES IN FAERÛN

Venom oozes are the product of a deliberate breeding program led by the now-destroyed House Freth in the infamous drow city of Menzoberranzan. Subjecting ochre jellies to countless *poison* spells, foul transmutation magic, and chemical agents, these dark elves produced the first specimen. Though the house was destroyed soon after these experiments, the venom ooze survived and multiplied, and its progeny have spread throughout the Underdark.

VENOM OOZE LORE

Characters who have ranks in Knowledge (dungeoneering) can research venom oozes to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

Knowledge (dungeoneering)

DC	Result
17	This creature is an ooze, a protoplasmic and primitive creature. This result reveals all ooze traits.
22	This creature is a venom ooze, an active hunter that drips with toxic slime.
27	A venom ooze envelops its prey with its body, crushing the life out of it while smothering it with its toxins.

Illus. by J. Zhang



Drow are not just elves with dark skin, and a drow-based campaign is not just an elf-based campaign in which all the trees have been replaced by stalagmites. Creating a campaign that effectively uses the drow—whether as direct adversaries or as subtle foils for the player characters—requires some work on your part as the Dungeon Master.

A drow-based campaign has a certain flavor that must be captured, or the dark elves will be little more than monsters to be defeated. The PCs should tremble when they encounter spider swarms in the Underdark or a strange, fungus-shaped brooch in a giant's hoard. This chapter is meant to help you provide the appropriate feel to your campaign and give you ideas for integrating drow NPCs as the focus of stand-alone adventures or as part of a longer campaign.

First, the chapter discusses the use of dark elves in the campaign, from part-time villains to full-time nemeses. Next, it looks at drow cities, their environs, the reasons they exist, and the impact they have on their surroundings. After that, the discussion expands to include the areas of the Underdark around drow communities—the Borderlands and the Wilds. Next, you will find numerous drow archetypes with full statistics that are ready to be used in your campaign. The remainder of the chapter details sample drow encounters, fifty drow adventure ideas, and magical locations in the Underdark that pertain to the drow.

DROW CAMPAIGNS

Drow have appeared in many adventures and undoubtedly many campaigns throughout the years. From a few slavers lurking in the cellar of a fortress, to a lone assassin pursuing a dark agenda, to a noble ranger leaving behind the cruelty of his heritage, drow can appear just about anywhere at any time. Presented below are ideas for running campaigns that include drow characters or that take place in the realms of the dark elves.

INCORPORATING DROW INTO A CAMPAIGN

Perhaps you have begun a campaign of dungeon crawls and wilderness adventures and now would like to incorporate a drow element so that you can work toward a climax involving the dark elves. You will need to do more than simply insert drow NPCs here and there. Capturing the menace and awe of the drow requires effort on your part, and it begins with generating a sense of fear before the first drow ever shows its face.

For example, in the Library of Khilbarus, where the PCs are researching the means to destroy an evil artifact, they stumble across an adventurer's journal that details abandoned ruins he found in the Underdark. The journal describes glyphs and symbols he discovered there, and it shows images of a javelin embossed in electrum. The explorer writes that he took several items that were adorned with that symbol. The

final entry, written in another hand, states that the original owner disappeared in the Underdark, but that his journal was found in a crevice in the rocks near strange ruins. The drow are never mentioned, and there are no further clues.

Some time later, the adventurers are in the region's capital city to meet with its ruler about their current mission, and they notice that one of his advisors wears an electrum ring with a stylized javelin on it. Unable to learn anything more from the encounter, they consult a sage who has assisted them in the past. He says that he will look into the matter and asks them to return in a day or two. But when the PCs call again, they find that the sage has been murdered and his home ransacked. His head is missing, preventing communication with his corpse, but scrawled in his own blood under a desk is the word "Tormtor." Once again, there is no direct contact with drow, but the PCs have now realized that something sinister and deadly appears to reach to the highest levels of the kingdom.

At this point, divinations might lead a high-level party to the drow, but preferably the PCs have not advanced so far in their careers and must rely on more mundane measures. The Gather Information skill and a few minor divinations lead them to a gang of street thugs that killed the sage. In the process of defeating the thugs, the PCs realize that they have weapons and equipment far beyond that of a typical street gang—clearly, the thugs have affluent patrons. Stranger still, guarding the gang's small treasure hoard is a trained monstrous spider that obeys the commands of the leader. If survivors are questioned, the PCs learn only that the creature was an anonymous gift.

The PCs decide to conduct research on the gang. Perhaps they break an inmate out of prison to question him, since the government has become strangely reticent toward the characters, or maybe they take down a rival gang or a few members of the local thieves' guild. Regardless, the PCs learn that the thugs in question work as bodyguards in the city's soup kitchens and flophouses, supposedly to maintain security and protect the volunteers. The operations are overseen by the Minister of Alms, who is one of the city leader's chief advisors—and the male that the PCs saw wearing the odd ring. The PCs now have evidence to connect the minister to the thugs who murdered the sage, and they can confront him. They draw close to the nature of the drow plot but have not yet uncovered its true masters.

Having learned that adventurers are investigating him, the Minister of Alms takes a short vacation to his country villa, hoping that the busybodies will follow so that he can have them permanently silenced. After heading to the villa, the PCs find more than they bargained for—its grounds are guarded by trained bugbear warriors, and trolls dwell in the basement. The minister himself has several highly skilled goblinoid bodyguards, including one that handles trained monstrous spiders. If the characters capture or kill the minister, they learn (whether from his confession or by reading his personal papers) that he receives large sums of money to supply a local weaver with derelicts, whom he kidnaps from the flophouses during the night.

Back in the city, the PCs break into the affluent weaver's manse and discover that it is guarded by more trained goblinoids and trolls. In addition, for the first time, they encounter

drow warriors that make sniping attacks from key locations in the house. Defeating these dark elf assailants, the PCs catch the weaver in the cellar, only to learn that he is an albino drow provocateur from House Tormtor. He has been wielding his influence over city officials to cover up his slave-taking ring and to subtly direct the course of the government. Perhaps his Tormtor masters intend for him to eventually rule the city in their name. Along with this information, the party discovers maps that show how the slave caravans take the kidnapped derelicts through nearby caverns that descend into the drow realms. The operation has gone on for years, and literally hundreds of victims have been taken away.

At this point, possibly after months of buildup, the PCs are finally sure that they are facing the drow. However, they have confronted only a few dark elves so far and have yet to journey any deeper than the cellar of a house. They now face the prospect of descending into the Underdark to confront the drow on their home ground. Worse, further clues indicate that other disguised drow live in the city, so even if the slaver ring has been stopped, a greater threat still looms. Only in the subterranean realm of the dark elves can the PCs learn the true identities of the drow agents.

This extended example shows that the key to working the drow into your campaign is to portray them as cruel masqueraders and assassins, with hidden fingers that reach into many facets of the PCs' lives. The drow should seem like an invisible threat, always potentially lurking around the next corner. Build the suspense until it is almost a relief when the party finally hears the click of hand crossbows firing. Of course, once the PCs learn what the drow are capable of in combat, their relief will be short lived.

DROW-BASED CAMPAIGNS

You can build a whole campaign around the drow, whether with PCs of surface-dwelling races or with a party of dark elf adventurers. It is also possible to start with an all-surface party and, through attrition and replenishment, gain members that are drow. Either way, the PCs can be noble and good, evil like typical drow, or neutral as they try to make their fortune in a drow world.

The section above provides a sample springboard for building a surface campaign around the drow. However, you can also run an Underdark campaign in which the PCs are members of other subterranean races. In a campaign of this kind, the drow are an omnipresent threat, but they are part of a necessary trade alliance of mutual benefit to all the Underdark races. The player characters focus on defending against drow raids, making their own incursions against the dark elves, conducting trade missions to deal with the drow, spying on the drow, and perhaps eventually commanding a small citadel or outpost intended to serve as a first defense against attack.

Another possibility is for players to run drow characters who are disaffected outcasts. This kind of campaign is similar to the Underdark campaign described above, except that the outcasts have no society or establishment of their own to ask for help or refuge. Instead, the PCs probably survive as Underdark bandits, preying on their former people and other subterranean dwellers. The adventurers must deal with all the

threats of the Underdark while fending off attacks by drow and by members of other races who might be hunting them. The characters might find acceptance among other races or at least among small groups such as adventuring parties, but that would depend on why they are outcasts from drow society. Have they forsaken evil, as did the noble Drizzt Do'Urden? Are they lower-caste drow seeking a better existence? Are they vile drow criminals fleeing from the vendettas of powerful enemies? Regardless, a campaign of outcasts involves a constant struggle for acceptance and existence.

The final type of drow campaign involves dark elf player characters who are still a part of drow society. Though probably of low birth, the PCs will need the support of at least a moderately powerful drow house or individual to survive all the foes and vendettas that their actions will surely draw. The PCs might be enforcers for a particular house or spies gathering information on its enemies and rivals. In the least restrictive option, the PCs are hired by a drow house as explorers or to represent their interests abroad by guarding caravans or procuring valuable materials from distant regions. These sorts of activities shield the characters from most of the everyday backbiting and plotting of drow society, allowing them to participate in more traditional adventures. Player characters who operate within a drow city instead have just as much opportunity and danger, but their adventures usually involve more intrigue and less exploration.

Parties should avoid including PCs who are noble or elite dark elves, mainly because such drow prefer to let subordinates do their menial work while they focus on their schemes and decadent lifestyles. Also, noble drow face the near-constant threat of extermination by rivals, perhaps even a sibling or other close relative within their house. However, it is possible for a party to include one disaffected or daring noble, perhaps a sixth- or seventh-born son who is deemed expendable by his house and is sent away to see if he can procure any useful talents or good fortune. Such parties will still be targeted by drow schemes, but at a more manageable level that does not interfere too much with normal play.

Despite what has been said above, if you and your players prefer a campaign of intrigue, maneuvering, and potential death at the end of an assassin's blade, then ranking members of drow houses are ideal character choices. The PCs will not explore many dungeons or fight hordes of monsters—in fact, entire sessions might pass without anyone drawing a blade. However, the rich possibilities for roleplaying in a world of cruel, ruthless nobles can provide hours of entertainment.

THE DROW HOOK

Drawing a party of surface adventurers into the deep realms of the drow requires some preparation on your part. Although PCs are often willing to brave a dungeon to face great danger and escape with great rewards, it is more difficult to convince them to descend into the labyrinth of the Underdark, since they will not climb out to a bright sun and a refreshing breeze at the end of the day. Instead, you will need a good hook to lure them into such a hostile and alien environment for prolonged periods of time.

First, when the PCs discover that they will soon face an Underdark expedition and a probable confrontation with the drow, allow them to prepare accordingly. Nothing reassures a group of player characters more than learning about the perils that might lie ahead and preparing countermeasures. Allow them to consult sages and make Knowledge checks and Gather Information checks to find out more about the hazards involved. Let them buy specialized equipment (see Chapter 4, or other books such as *Underdark* and *Arms and Equipment Guide*), either in a shop before they leave town or in a convenient Underdark bazaar run by sympathetic traders shortly after they set out. As they travel farther into the realms of the drow, allow them to keep gathering intelligence on their foes from additional sources along the way, or provide them with access to divination magic that they can put to good use. If you are running a FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign, remember that in portions of the Underdark affected by *faerzress* (see page 154), divinations are limited.

In addition to letting the PCs prepare for an extended Underdark campaign, provide them with good motivation to do so. No doubt they could find a closer dungeon with hoards of gold that are defended by lesser guardians, so give the adventurers a good reason to take on a bigger risk.

One such example was provided earlier in this chapter, in which the PCs uncover a drow slave trade that kidnaps victims from the surface. Another motivation stems from the sheer mystery of the dark elves. They are an ancient, magical race that has lived away from the light of the sun and has developed independently from surface cultures. The wondrous lore and secrets that they might hold is a strong temptation for anyone who values knowledge. As another example, consider a scenario in which the PCs must obtain crucial information about an enemy government, and infiltration seems impossible. If they learn that the subtle drow have already penetrated the ranks of those officials, the PCs might be eager to pay a call on the dark elf spies. Of course, the drow had their own reasons for worming their way into that particular government, and they remain hostile to the player characters. But by offering gold or some other item of value, the PCs might be able to barter for the information they seek.

On the subject of money, it is important to remember that although the drow are an inherently evil race, they are also open traders. They participate in peaceful trade all over the Underdark, and their caravans ply the routes between all points except the strongholds of their most implacable foes. Nearly anyone who comes to a drow city to trade will be allowed to do so, unless he has been declared an enemy of the state. Drow are considered by all to be a wicked race, but though a dark elf would likely be killed on sight if he approached a surface elf community, those same surface elves could visit a drow city to trade with relative impunity. Such visitors are still in danger from individual drow who prey on anyone who looks weak, but as long as the PCs follow the local customs, they should be safe from official harassment or arrest by the houses or the church.

Thus, an open-trade society that is known for its innovative magic items and spells is a strong draw for adventuring parties. In addition, drow produce poisons and many kinds of

illicit materials that cannot ordinarily be found in civilized circles but that might be sought by adventurers. The bazaars and shops of the dark elves are potential pots of gold for those who need esoteric or illegal items.

Finally, drow often establish their cities near special magical locations that grant benefits to those who know the secret. If the PCs learn of such a location, they might decide that the benefits gained are worth a trip into the Underdark and a visit to the nearest drow city.

Whatever reasons the party might have for visiting the drow in your campaign, the PCs are sure to face intrigue on many levels and deadly foes at every turn who strike at the first sign of weakness.

DROW CITIES AND ENVIRONS

The Long Walk, the Night Below, the Forest of Stone, the Sunless Desert—all these describe the unforgiving terrain that is the Underdark. Endless tunnels and caverns of lifeless stone broken here and there by fetid pools of water or clumps of toxic fungus fill much of this dark, desolate waste. Survival is always an issue; residents must compete for water, food, and even air to breathe just to exist. However, despite these austere conditions, life not only exists but often thrives in the cold

stone tunnels. Perhaps the greatest examples of these oases of life are the drow cities.

Cosmopolitan and decadent, drow cities would not look out of place in the greatest human

empire, were it not for two features. The first is the weird urban architecture, which blends native stone formations with magical innovations. The second feature is, of course, the many depraved Underdark races that roam the city streets, not the least of which are the dark elves themselves. But stripping away appearances, drow cities are not unlike those that might be found in any theocratic, matriarchal society of magically talented killers and thieves.

Architectural and social oddities are not the only subjects of curiosity, however. Surface dwellers usually wonder how drow cities come to be established in the first place, and how they manage to survive over centuries. Chapter 1 of this book describes the social structure and culture of the drow, and Chapter 7 provides an overview of Erelhei-Cinlu, one of the greatest drow cities. This chapter details the hows and whys of drow cities in general.

In a hostile subterranean environment such as the Underdark, the placement of a major population center is not to be undertaken lightly. A community cannot simply sit in a cave that has easy access to the surface and the abundant resources available there. First, such a location would not, by definition, be in the Underdark, but rather in a shallow surface cavern that has little in common with the caves of lower reaches. Second, such a place is doubly exposed to danger, not just from the

denizens of the surrounding tunnels but also from intruders from the surface who might come in search of valuable minerals and ores,

hoards of loot and magic, or handy lairs with access to realms above and



Drow use the terrain advantages available to build their intricate cities

below. Thus, a city in a shallow cavern must either be extremely well hidden—a difficult prospect for a population center, and one that still does not prevent random incursions—or be part of a support network of nearby realms that provides mutual defense and warning. Neither option appeals to the drow, or indeed to most other denizens of the deep caverns.

When you are planning a settlement in the Underdark, many considerations must be taken into account. One of the advantages is that of limited access. Surface settlements in all but the most hazardous or remote terrain can be approached from nearly any direction. But in the Underdark, access is restricted to the surrounding tunnels, which can be carefully guarded to provide security for the settlement. Furthermore, surface communities usually face the threat of approach by air, which is eliminated entirely in the Underdark except in the largest caverns, and even those are protected by stalactites, slimes, and strange creatures.

The advantages of being surrounded by stone are negated somewhat when dealing with burrowing creatures such as thoquas or umber hulks, but the same dangers exist for any landlocked site on the surface. In fact, the threat is worse above ground due to the number of beasts that can burrow through soil and loose earth, whereas fewer creatures can penetrate the solid rock of the Underdark.

UNDERDARK RADIATIONS

The drow often choose locations for their cities based on magical or natural emanations. In the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting, a magical radiation called *faerzress* permeates much if not all of the Underdark, interfering with divination and teleportation spells. Anyone in an area of *faerzress* receives a +4 bonus on Will saves against divination spells, and casters of teleportation magic that covers any distance over 1 mile must make a successful DC 35 Spellcraft check or suffer a mishap. Casters of infallible forms of this magic, such as *word of recall* or *greater teleport* spells, must make a successful DC 25 Spellcraft check.

In addition, the emanations of *faerzress* allow magic items to be created cheaply and easily with a special property known as drowcraft. Within an area of *faerzress*, drowcraft weapons provide a +2 luck bonus on attack rolls and damage rolls in addition to their normal enhancements, and drowcraft armor provides a +2 deflection bonus. These additional bonuses do not apply outside an area of *faerzress*, and if exposed to sunlight, drowcraft items lose their additional enhancements.

In the Vault of the Drow, natural radiation is given off by rock formations in the ceiling—small pockets of unique minerals and a huge mass of tumkeoite, a heavy and unstable magnetic metal that slowly decays with exposure to air. The formations transform into lacofcite, a dense, crumbling ore that absorbs certain wavelengths of light energy and gives off a lurid glow. The result is an effect almost like a moon and starry sky in the rocky upper reaches of the Vault, and, like *faerzress*, it interferes with teleportation. Drow who live in the Vault prize the fact that surface raiders cannot teleport directly into their cities and out again. The game effect is the same difficulty in casting these spells as within an area of *faerzress*. Furthermore, all sources of illumination exposed to the emanations are reduced to one-quarter of their normal area and give off only a muted pale glow

Another major consideration is the availability of basic necessities. First and foremost among them is breathable air. Hazardous gases and depleted air supplies in caverns with no way to replenish their atmosphere have long posed a risk for those who delve too deep. These dangers are discussed in more detail later in this chapter, but suffice it to say that the drow always choose sites that have a replenishable air supply.

The presence of potable water is another major factor in the location of a drow city. Despite its reputation as a series of moist caverns that constantly drip into plentiful pools, much of the Underdark consists of dead caverns. Some of these dry spaces were formed without the use of water; in others, the water that carved the caverns has long since dispersed and evaporated. Although small groups can subsist on magically created or purified water, such an existence is precarious. The best solution is to find a living cave in which the formative liquid processes are still changing the cavern's structure and shape. In such locations, pools of water are common and often potable due to the filtering effects of the surrounding layers of rock. Many living caverns have turbulent Underdark rivers or genuine lakes deep in the bowels of the earth.

After water, the most important necessity is sustenance. Once again, barring magical intervention, settlers must have a source of food that can sustain them. Some races of the

that is much preferred by the sensitive eyes of the drow.

Drow are mysterious and otherworldly, so feel free to create different emanations and effects from radiations, strange growths of spores or fungi, magnetic forces, or perhaps powerful curses or artifacts. One example is given below.

DARKLIGHT ORE

Darklight ore is a rare and dangerous substance found in the Underdark. It occurs only in formations of heavy metal ore. A darklight lode's inherent properties cause it to give off a milky, purple glow that is equal to a torch for the purpose of illumination. However, this radiation is poisonous. Of all the Underdark races, only the drow have been known to mine the ore and harness its power, using lead-shielded equipment.

Anyone who comes within 60 feet of a darklight lode without appropriate armor or shielding (such as that provided by a stone wall) is immediately exposed to darklight poisoning. For all purposes, darklight poisoning functions as regular poison. The Fortitude save to resist darklight poisoning is DC 18. The initial effect is 1d6 points of Constitution damage. The secondary effect is a disease that is similar to mummy rot. However, this disease is not magical, so a paladin's divine health and a monk's purity of body allow those characters to resist its effect. Furthermore, a victim who dies of darklight poisoning does not shrivel into dust. A caster level check is required for a healing spell to work on a victim of darklight poisoning, but this limitation is overcome by a *neutralize poison* spell rather than *break enchantment* or *remove curse*.

Some sages have theorized a connection between darklight ore radiation and the existence of the mutated fungus commonly known as violet fungus. No link has been proven yet, but violet fungus appears to be impervious to the effect of the radiation.

Underdark—including many breeds of vermin and some beast-follower quaggoth tribes—have been known to survive through cannibalism, but that hardly reaches the level of society desired by most communities, and certainly not the urbane sophistication of a drow city. Although the dark elves feed on their own metaphorically, they would shudder in disgust at the thought of doing so literally (in public, at least).

The need for food is often met by the presence of another requirement—water. Where there is water, many types of edible fungi and slime molds grow or can be cultivated. Likewise, wet oases in the Underdark desert attract creatures from all around that also rely on water for survival. This situation provides excellent hunting opportunities but can lead to problems if dangerous predators choose to do some hunting of their own near a fledgling community. A wise city planner seeks a protected water supply with a constant runoff that descends to a more deserted area. In addition, placing extra water sources at specific locations might attract beasts that stray close enough to serve as a food supply but not close enough to constitute a hazard.

In addition to matters of survival, the drow might have other reasons to establish a city on a given site. The dark elves are a vicious and aggressive race of slavers and manipulators, but they are rarely martial conquerors. So although they might subjugate nearby communities of lesser races and make raids on enemy enclaves, they are seldom organized or disciplined enough to create a true drow empire. Instead, they are prone to pursue individual achievement and advancement. Therefore, drow are extremely social, capable of diplomacy with all but their most hated enemies or anyone who happens to be disfavored by Lolth.

Likewise, although the drow command a work force of slaves and are capable of impressive feats of artifice, anything that cannot be created through raw labor or their own talents must be imported. The drow do not accept the idea of “doing without,” so to satisfy their desire for specialized goods and luxury items, they rely on trade. It drives their economy, and the dark elves try to build their cities in sites where they can command or at least strongly influence major Underdark trade routes. The city of Erelhei-Cinlu (see Chapter 7) is one such hub. Its residents wield power over a route that extends through miles of tunnels before reaching the surface, and they also command a major port on a vast Underdark sea that has access to diverse markets abroad.

Despite their sinister reputation and deadly nature, drow cities are open to visitors from nearly any race, as long as outlanders come for legitimate trade purposes and abide by the laws (or, more accurately, the cruel whims of the ruling elite). In the more cosmopolitan drow cities, even surface elves can walk about safely, provided that they are backed by a prominent merchant consortium whose amicable relations are desired by the drow.

Other, more esoteric reasons can account for the positioning of drow cities as well. The true story behind the founding of a particular settlement might be based on any factor described above, or several factors in combination. Once again, Erelhei-Cinlu is a good example—it has abundant air, water, and food; it is defensible; it is an important trade nexus; and it possesses some of the special characteristics described below.

Sometimes the drow choose the location of a settlement based on religious or superstitious beliefs that brand it as a place of power. A city can result from something as mysterious as drow refugees being led by visions to a promised haven to something as direct as Lolth ordering a priestess to found a new community at a specific location. In any case, outcast drow or those otherwise excluded from the ruling elite are drawn to places of power, seeing them as opportunities to escape their circumstances, build better lives, or simply form a new ruling elite and wield the power that eluded them elsewhere. Disaffected drow adventurers and second and third children of noble houses are more likely to colonize such a place and create a community in an image they prefer. Likewise, drow of lower castes who can make the trip usually tag along to reinvent themselves and improve their station. Almost invariably, however, the new settlement falls into the same ingrained patterns that have dictated drow behavior for millennia, and it ends up looking much like the community from which it spawned.

Some places of power have a magical nature. For example, a blood of the Spider Queen site (see page 187) is a location infused with the divine essence of Lolth, spilled eons ago when she was wounded in battle by Corellon Larethian. A drow who discovers one of these rare sites (and who is qualified to activate its inherent magical power) receives a divine mandate from Lolth that almost always results in the establishment of a new drow city and the creation of a new aristocracy. Despite their scarcity, blood of the Spider Queen sites have served as the foundations of several great drow cities. Indeed, some of the most powerful drow houses ever known were beneficiaries of the divine mandate provided by such locations.

Another peculiar factor in establishing a drow settlement is a site's emanations. As natural practitioners of the magical arts, the drow have an affinity to the magical and mundane radiations of the Underdark. Sometimes, these strange ethers result from natural geological processes in which heavy ore breaks down into a new form, releasing different kinds of energy. Sometimes the emanations are the result of magical conjunctions that occur in the earth itself. In either case, drow wizards and artificers can harness the energy to enhance their creations or augment their spellcasting. As a result, when such locations are found, they are guarded jealously. Examples of locations with magical intensity include earth nodes (*Underdark*, page 49), areas that are affected by *faerzress* (in a FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign; see the sidebar Underdark Radiations), and the Vault of the Drow (see the same sidebar).

Once a drow city has been established, the area around it is rapidly transformed from a wild and dangerous place into a more civilized wild and dangerous place. Subterranean creatures move their lairs farther from the hustle and bustle of the city, and drow patrols begin sweeping the tunnels, slowly bringing them under drow sway and teaching the native inhabitants that the dark-skinned elves are best avoided.

The surrounding areas that are heavily influenced by the drow but not claimed by them are referred to as the Borderlands, and the untamed regions that lie beyond the farthest patrols are called the Wilds. Both environments are described in detail below.

DROW SETTLEMENTS

Dwarves and duergar chisel out subterranean chambers and halls. Trolls and troglodytes prefer to lair in endless burrows and warrens. But drow like to dwell in more open areas—as much as such areas can be found in the Underdark. Rather than existing as a system of mines or interconnected defensive chambers, drow settlements are usually found in caverns or cysts in the earth with relatively wide-open spaces. Perhaps as a result of their elf heritage, drow prefer to live with a “sky” overhead, even if that sky is only tens of feet above and consists of a dome of solid rock.

The drow are masters of modifying the existing features of a cavern or tunnel system through magic and delving, thereby creating a habitation that is defensible and aesthetically pleasing. Drow make frequent use of *stone shape* and carefully molded *walls of stone*.

In addition to magically created stone structures, drow love to turn natural features such as massive stalagmites and stalactites into homes and defenses. Through magic or, if necessary, brute labor, they create chambers and defensive positions within these formations.

Drow love towers of all types, perhaps due to the ancient elf blood that still flows through their veins. Whether crafted from an existing rock formation or fashioned entirely by magic, such structures are slender and graceful, with an elegance that seems to defy gravity and an ephemeral beauty that calls to mind the wonders of faerie. Towers figure prominently into the defense of drow cities, anchoring the walls that surround a settlement and serving as defensive points in their own right. Most noble houses consist of compounds that are veritable fortresses and make frequent use of towers. The walls and towers of typical drow cities are further augmented by devious tricks and traps, such as cultivated patches of slimes and molds, hidden pits or shifting walls, and magical applications of *spike stones*, *glyphs*, and *symbols*.

The city of Erelhei-Cinlu blends all the features mentioned above into a single community. It sits in a massive cavern called the Vault of the Drow that is over six miles long, nearly as broad, and several thousand feet high at the apex of its dome. The only entrance to the Vault, other than by river, is shielded by a massive tower atop a mesa that controls all ingress. Erelhei-Cinlu is surrounded by a stone wall that has many guard towers and a single huge gate, and it lies at the edge of a river that runs along the base of a high plateau accessible only by a lone bridge. Atop this enormous foundation sit the estates of the noble drow houses, each fortified and protected by its own artifice.

Erelhei-Cinlu and the Vault are iconic examples of drow architecture, but almost any dark elf settlement of significant size shares some or all of the same features, whether the city is built atop a plateau, along a chasm cliff, or into the side of a massive stalagmite. Often the settlement can be entered only by crossing a particular bridge or by magically flying over an obstacle, and woe be to foolish invaders who get within range of the crossbows and spells of the community's guardians and wizards.

Thanks to its unfriendly architecture, life within a drow city is fairly safe. Visitors need not fear the usual predators and dangers of the Underdark, but they still must contend with the dark elves—not to mention thralls and slaves that are half again as big and sometimes twice as numerous as their drow masters. Hordes of goblinoids, trolls, undead, kuo-toas, duergar, troglodytes, fiends, illithids, and adventurers live and work side by side more or less peacefully. Of course, violence still erupts, and the drow have no real codified laws that must be followed. However, an underlying agreement to avoid disturbing the local drow masters and bringing down their wrath keeps everyone in line, limiting altercations to small-scale engagements and momentary bouts of melee that enliven the day. The general rule is that you can keep whatever you are strong enough to hold, but since the local drow are undoubtedly the strongest in the area, such nonsense is limited to the shadows and back alleys.

Crime is especially rampant in drow cities, but most victims are either members of the lower castes, from whom the criminals do not fear reprisal, or visitors from afar, who are just as unlikely to pursue a vendetta. If guests follow the customs of the city, such as wearing identifying markers and steering clear of forbidden areas, they are likely to avoid undue peril—at least from the sentient inhabitants. But drow make pets of dangerous creatures, including giant lizards and displacer beasts. As long as these creatures are well tended by their drow masters, they are fairly harmless, but if someone carelessly ventures within easy clawing or biting distance, he invites injury or death. In addition, these beasts occasionally escape their pens or slip their handlers and run loose through the streets. At such times, it is best to take cover and avoid their attacks. Killing the favored pet of a drow matriarch, even in self-defense, can lead to worse trouble than being mauled by the creature.

To feed the multitudes of their cities, the drow grow edible fungus, which is often magically enhanced to become larger and more nutritious. Enormous fungus farms tended by slaves not only feed the citizens but also provide grazing fields for creatures cultivated as food stock. These farms are well defended by slaves and their overseers, as well as patrols of drow warriors mounted on riding lizards and using trained displacer beasts as trackers. Only the most desperate would dare to invade these fungal orchards, for though the drow are somewhat picky about their table fare, the half-starved goblin and bugbear slaves are unlikely to turn down a meal of freshly caught humanoid.

Many creatures live in and around drow settlements, serving as guardians, food stock, nuisances, or predators. Some of these beasts are described in Chapter 5, and others are briefly described in the *Denizens of the Underdark* sidebar. Flesh out any of those creatures that catch your interest and use them in your drow campaign.

One final warning to those who plan to visit a drow city—the dark elves cohabit with large numbers of spiders of mundane and monstrous varieties. Most drow settlements are infested with arachnids of all shapes and sizes. Many are

DENIZENS OF THE UNDERDARK

In addition to the creatures detailed elsewhere in this book (and in other game supplements), several other creatures call the subterranean realms their home. Brief descriptions of each of these creatures appear in this sidebar.

ROTHÉ

Rothé are herd animals that strongly resemble musk oxen with curving horns, cloven hooves, and long, shaggy coats of thick hair. They are docile, but when penned, untrained rothé tend to react violently, biting and goring anyone nearby. Three breeds exist: deep rothé, ghost rothé, and surface rothé. The latter two are Large creatures that live on the surface. Deep rothé are of Medium size and live in the Underdark. Many races that also live belowground domesticate herds of the beasts as their major food source.

Deep rothé are magical beasts that have adapted to herd survival in subterranean settings. They have immunity to ill effects from contact with mold, fungus, and other spores, allowing them to feed on almost any substance that grows in the tunnels of the Underdark. Further, rothé have the innate ability to create a *dancing lights* effect that serves as an instinctual signal to the herd, conveying messages of food and danger.

For statistics for the various breeds of rothé, see the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting*, page 313. If you do not have access to that book, you can substitute a boar (*MM* 270), as long as you give it immunity to mold and fungus, cold resistance 10, and the ability to create *dancing lights*.

CRICKETS AND LIZARDS

Second only to the rothé in frequency, giant lizards and giant cave crickets are used as food stock for drow cities. The giant herd lizards should not be confused with the trained pack lizards and riding lizards described in Chapter 5. Instead, they represent a more lethargic and docile species of giant lizard bred for a milder temperament and the ability to attain greater girth and hold more muscle and fat tissue. They are carnivorous but not aggressive, preferring to feed on carrion or recently killed cave crickets or rothé rather than trying to hunt for themselves.

Giant cave crickets are a common pest in the Underdark near settlements and areas of prolific organic growth. They can be up to 3 feet long and have a carapace of mottled gray and white. They feed on plant life and the many harmless slimes and molds of the Underdark, but unlike the deep rothé, they are not immune to harmful varieties. Cave crickets are flighty and capable of leaping great distances, usually when they spot movement or light. Specimens bred in captivity are much less prone to being spooked, but to keep them from scattering if they startle, their handlers cover their enclosures with large nets, tens of yards across, woven of rothé hair or fibrous fungus.

BLIND CAVE FISH

As ubiquitous to the deep caverns as gloom is the humble blind cave fish. These creatures have been staples since the earliest days of fantasy literature, and they have been part of the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* game at least as far back as the Shallow Pool (Room 33) in the Caves of Chaos, in the classic adventure *The Keep on the Borderlands*.

These Diminutive animals are a species of fish related to trout. In pools that are especially still and deep, they can grow to 4 or more feet in length, but most blind cave fish rarely measure more than 1 foot from end to end. They lost the ability to see eons ago, when their ancestors first swam down through tiny cavern streams into the Underdark. Instead, the fish survive by using blindsight (effective out to 30 feet), though wide, vestigial eyes still bulge from either side of their head. They are not aggressive, feeding on the tiny algae and insects that thrive in their pools of cold, fresh water.

Blind cave fish are pale white, almost transparent, having lost their pigmentation along with their sight. However, they are easily visible in clear cavern pools, appearing almost luminous. Drow and other races use the fish as food stock, breeding them in hatchery pools to protect them from aquatic predators.

Blind cave fish are harmless and have no effective forms of attack against anything larger than a fly.

THE STALACTOIDS

No Underdark adventure is complete without a journey through cave mouths and tunnels filled with stalagmites and stalactites, which suggest massive, fanged maws to even the most obtuse explorer. However, these ominous locations hold dangers that are all too real—the stalactoids. That term refers to creatures that have the ability to camouflage themselves as stalactite formations. The most common examples are darkmantles and piercers, which are distantly related species on a genetic level. The drow capture these creatures and train them to pose a hazard to anyone passing through a certain portion of a cavern or tunnel.

Piercers are simple organisms that consist of a stony shell tapering to a point that surrounds its internal organs. The exposed flat base holds its maw and a ring of tiny muscular tendrils that allow slow movement and wall climbing. Piercers hang inverted from cavern ceilings, looking for all the world like stalactites. When they sense vibrations caused by a creature passing below, they release their grip on the ceiling and attempt to impale the intruder. If they succeed in killing the victim, they slowly feed on its corpse (though they are virtually helpless while doing so). Otherwise, they begin their slow ascent back up the wall to the ceiling.

The darkmantle (*MM* 38) is a recent evolutionary improvement on the simple piercer. Darkmantles also hang inverted from the ceiling, appearing to be stalactites, but they can change their color to better match the native stone. Further developments include a membranous hide stretched between small tentacles that allows gliding, and the inherent magical ability to create *darkness*.

ANGLERS OF THE DEPTHS

One of the strangest types of Underdark vermin is the cave fisher. This arachnoid creature has six legs and two lobster-like claws. A long proboscis extending from its head can fire a sticky, weblike filament up to 60 feet. A cave fisher uses the filament to reel in prey, which it then dispatches with its claws. Typically, a cave fisher perches on a ledge near the cavern ceiling or clings to a stalactite, trailing its long, adhesive filament below to capture bats or more substantial prey. Drow occasionally charm these creatures and place them at strategic cavern mouths, ledges, or parapets around their cities and fortresses.

pets or guardians of noble houses and priestesses of Lolth, but it is difficult to keep track of such vermin, and they quickly overbreed. Their spawn runs wild through the cities, scrabbling through back alleys and leaping across rooftops. These spiders are natural predators and will feast on any creature they can capture and disable. Only the hardest arachnids lair in the sewers, however, because those fetid tunnels harbor even worse horrors that are best left to the imagination.

THE BORDERLANDS

Just beyond the edges of the drow cities and their controlled areas of farms, strongholds, and slave warrens is an area known as the Borderlands. It varies in width from only a few hundred feet where there are no easily accessible tunnels to many miles where traversable paths exist, and the area can be far larger where tunnels hug a major trade route.

The Borderlands are unclaimed by the drow but still feel the effect of their dominion. Drow patrols pass through the area frequently, mounted on riding lizards or spiders for speed and maneuverability. These patrols originate at small fortresses and outposts garrisoned by contingents of drow soldiers and commanded by a mid-level spellcaster or two. Such outposts might be nothing more than a gate warding passage through a tunnel with crude billet chambers chipped out of the stone of the surrounding walls, or they could be as elaborate as a self-sufficient fortress with a permanent garrison and sporadic contact with its mother city. The latter kind of outpost is likely to have higher-level leaders and a moderate-sized chapel staffed by priestesses of Lolth.

The Borderlands are fairly free of unintelligent monsters and predators, which are tracked and hunted by the drow for sport or as a security precaution. However, the drow might allow a small enclave of beasts to exist in a limited area, where they can provide additional security for vulnerable points or important tunnels.

Intelligent monsters still live in the Borderlands, avoiding drow patrols and plundering travelers and caravans for food and treasure. These opportunistic predators play a dangerous game and must never draw too much attention to themselves. They include drow outcasts, bandits of various races, and slavers on the hunt for victims who would not be missed. In addition, illithids establish base camps in the Borderlands, often unknown to the drow, where they observe their sometime allies and gather information through mundane or more gruesome means.

THE WILDS

Beyond the range of regular drow patrols is the region that comprises most of the Underdark, an area known to the subterranean races as the Wilds. Some of this territory is isolated and accessible only through magic or digging, and other parts of the realm are so remote that it seems no creature has ever set foot there. Despite the lack of drow, the wet, overgrown Wilds offer unfettered perils in all forms. Only the most experienced cavestalkers traverse these areas safely, and then only because they know better than to tread lightly. A typical surface adventurer, or even a shrewd drow explorer, will not last long without a healthy dose of assistance, luck, or magic.

As mentioned previously, most of the Underdark can be likened to a lifeless desert, with seemingly endless stretches of caverns and tunnels that have no light or water. The sheer monotony can drive a traveler “tunnelcrazed” (as some of the dwellers below call it). In addition, the relatively cool temperatures and the lack of sunlight can mask signs of thirst. Like an insidious predator, dehydration sneaks up on a traveler before he realizes it—and perhaps before he can take steps to alleviate it.

Escaping to the living tunnels of the Wilds, where water still flows and food sources are more abundant, is only marginally better, because here, predators thrive. Spiders, bats, and other vermin and animals are common, as they are throughout the Underdark. But explorers might also encounter myconids^{MM2}, xorns, violet fungi, umber hulks, elementals, cloaklers, lurkers^{Und}, ropers, oozes, and even soft beds of moss that release deadly spores at the merest touch. Some of the more dangerous monsters include deep dragons (as well as other kinds, on occasion), beholders, aboleths, purple worms, stone giants, and nightshades. In addition, many kinds of undead roam the Wilds, bemoaning the fate that drew them to their doom and looking for others to share their eternal misery. To top it all off, the near-constant echo of dripping water can mask the sounds of approaching danger to travelers who are not attuned to the area’s natural rhythms.

Finally, the Wilds hold strange sites and topographic oddities that can be hazardous by their very nature. Intelligent creatures sometimes settle in or near such places, taking advantage of the natural defenses they offer, but most such sites remain undiscovered or at least uninhabited. Sample locations include:

- Vast lava caverns, washed in extreme heat, where a few flat-topped stalagmites serve as islands, connected by natural arches. Creatures from the Elemental Plane of Fire cavort in this burning cauldron and attack trespassers.
- Strange crystalline tunnels that are actually flaws in a gigantic diamond or other gemstone. Creatures from the Elemental Plane of Earth make their home in this geode.
- A massive, unplumbed abyss filled with the rumbling thunder of a tidal sea far below, or perhaps seismic activity from an unstable fault. Cloaklers, lurkers^{Und}, and mutated bats flap around the upper reaches and roost on the many stalactites, some of which occasionally break off, pulling any hangers-on to their doom.
- A system of fungal caverns coated in a dull green carpet that comprises a single organic entity of impossible size. Spores and fungal parasites make this place particularly deadly. Perhaps the entity’s massive size and epochal age has allowed it to gain a dim sentience. For an example of such a creature on a smaller scale, see Gduar’s Garden (*Underdark* 188).
- A complex tangle of lava tubes or worm tunnels that were burrowed out eons ago and that now serve as a labyrinth where predators patiently stalk one another.

NATURAL HAZARDS

Whether in the arid dead tunnels or the moisture-laden living caverns of the Underdark, incautious travelers can easily fall

prey to many natural hazards. These dangers include weak floors, collapsing tunnels, treacherous chasms, and getting lost in the twisting passages. For PCs native to the surface world, making a successful DC 20 Survival check means they manage to identify and avoid a natural hazard. For PCs who are members of races native to the Underdark, this DC is reduced by 5. As an option, you can allow a surface PC to take ranks in the specialized skill Survival (Underdark) to reduce the check's DC to 15, just as if he were a native of the Underdark.

Lack of Air

One of the biggest natural hazards of the Underdark is the lack of good air. Many caverns and tunnels can be sealed by rock falls or pools or have poor air circulation, which depletes their air supply and makes them dangerous to creatures that must breathe. Likewise, organisms can give off fumes or spores, and tunnels can be saturated with colorless, odorless natural gases that ruin the air supply. The FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign accessory *Underdark* covers this subject in detail; abbreviated rules appear below.

Air quality can be good, stale, or depleted. Good air quality means the area has ventilation, oxygen-producing plant life, a conduit to the Elemental Plane of Air, or some other source. No game effects apply in areas of good air quality.

Stale air quality is found in isolated areas where the air has been somewhat depleted but is not immediately deadly. Characters who enter an area of stale air must make a successful DC 25 Survival check (reduced by 5 for Underdark natives as noted above) to notice the drop in air quality, unless there are other clues such as fumes or odors. In stale air, a PC must succeed on a Fortitude save each hour (DC 15 + 1 per previous check) or become fatigued. A fatigued character must succeed on a Fortitude save each hour (DC 15 + 1 per previous check) or become exhausted. An exhausted character takes 1d6 points of nonlethal damage every 15 minutes until exposed to good air.

Areas of depleted air no longer have any breathable oxygen and can be identified by a PC who makes a successful DC 15 Survival check (reduced by 5 for Underdark natives as noted above), unless there are other visual or olfactory clues. For the effects of lack of air, see Slow Suffocation (DMG 304).

Gases in the air can be visible or invisible, noxious or odorless. Some of them can also be explosive. Characters can easily detect gases that they can see or smell. To detect gases that are invisible or odorless, PCs must make a successful DC 25

Survival check (reduced by 5 for Underdark natives as noted above). A gas introduced to an area reduces its air quality by one category—good air becomes stale, and stale air becomes depleted.

To battle the effects of poor air quality, miners and Underdark denizens rely on advance warning or protection. Small caged animals such as birds, bats, or mice are often brought along and observed on the assumption that they would exhibit the effects of stale or depleted air sooner as a warning to others. Various spells and magic items also address this problem, though many—especially the common ranks of the Underdark races—cannot afford such luxuries.

Chapter 4 introduces a relatively inexpensive mundane device called a breathing hood (see page 91). In areas where the air quality is poor due to the presence of fumes or gases, the hood improves the air quality for the wearer by one category (unless the gases are heavier than air). Stale air is considered good air for the wearer. Even if the air in an area has been depleted, the area is considered to have stale air for the first hour of the wearer's exposure.

Cramped Spaces

Many areas of the Underdark are a tight fit and hinder both speed and combat. The FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign accessory *Underdark* covers this topic in detail; abbreviated rules appear below.

Five main kinds of cramped spaces exist:

- Spaces that are narrow or low (smaller than a creature's space or height but by no more than half of that dimension).
- Spaces that are narrow and low (smaller than both the creature's space and height but by no more than half of those dimensions).
- Spaces that are crawl-navigable (less than one-half but at least one-quarter of a creature's height; it can move by removing backpacks and bulky equipment, falling prone, and crawling at a speed of 5 feet).
- Spaces that are awkward (narrower than narrow, lower than low, and smaller than crawl-navigable, but not quite a tight squeeze).
- Spaces that are a tight squeeze (big enough for a creature's head but too small for its shoulders; see the Escape Artist skill, PH 73).

The effects of these various kinds of cramped spaces are summarized on Table 6–1.

TABLE 6–1: CRAMPED SPACES

Space	Move Penalty ¹	Attack Penalty (Light) ²	Attack Penalty (One-Handed) ²	Attack Penalty (Two-Handed) ²	Ranged Weapons
Narrow or low	1/2 speed	–2	–4	Unusable	Any
Narrow and low	1/4 speed	–4	–8	Unusable	Any
Crawl-navigable	5 ft. only	–4	–8	Unusable	Crossbow only
Awkward	DC 15 Escape Artist check to move 5 ft.	–8	Unusable	Unusable	Crossbow only
Tight squeeze	DC 30 Escape Artist check to move 5 ft.	Unusable	Unusable	Unusable	Unusable

¹ A creature moving through a cramped space loses its Dexterity bonus (if any) to Armor Class.

² Treat piercing weapons that are jabbed at the target as one size category smaller.

SAMPLE DROW

The drow NPCs below provide examples of the different personalities and agendas that dark elves might bring to a campaign. Any of them can be found in or around a drow city, or they might be encountered elsewhere while carrying out a mission for Lolth, for their house, or for their own selfish purposes.

ANYBYS VELIFANE

CR 20

Female drow evoker 10/argent savant^{CAr} 5/archmage 4
NE Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +12, Spot +13
Languages Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon

AC 25, touch 15, flat-footed 22
(+3 Dex, +4 deflection, +6 armor, +2 shield)

hp 67 (19 HD)
Immune magic sleep effects

SR 30
Fort +10, **Ref** +12, **Will** +20 (+22 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +3 *elf bane shock dagger* +12/+7 (1d4+3/19–20)

Ranged +2 *light crossbow* +14 (1d8+2/19–20)

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +9

Atk Options Empower Spell, enduring force, force specialization, mastery of shaping, unbind force

Special Actions mastery of counterspelling

Combat Gear *wand of darkbolt*^{BoVD} (CL 8th, 38 charges), *bead of force*

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 20th, 1d20+22 to overcome SR):

9th—*abyssal army*^{SC}, *Bibgy's crushing hand*^F, *meteor swarm* (DC 25), *transmute rock to lava*^{SC} (DC 24)

8th—*Bigby's clenched fist*^F, *ghost form*^{SC}, *polar ray* (+12 ranged touch), *summon monster VIII*

7th—*antimagic ray*^{SC} (DC 22), *banishment* (DC 22), *Bigby's grasping hand*^F, *greater teleport*

6th—*analyze dweomer* (DC 21), *disintegrate* (DC 21), *empowered force missiles*^{SC,F}, *greater dispel magic*, *howling chain*^{SC,F} (DC 22)

5th—*stilled orb of force*^{SC,F}, *prying eyes*, *shard storm*^{SC,F} (DC 21), *wall of force*^F

4th—*crushing despair* (DC 19), *dragon breath*^{SC} (DC 20), *explosive cascade*^{SC} (DC 20), *stoneskin*, *sword of deception*^{SC,F}, *wall of fire*

3rd—*chain missile*^{SC,F}, *fireball* (DC 19), *fly*, *greater mage armor*^{†SC,F}, *lightning bolt* (DC 19), *manyjaws*^{SC,F} (DC 19)

2nd—*baleful transposition*^{SC} (DC 17), *battering ram*^{SC,F}, *blast of force*^{SC,F} (+12 ranged touch, DC 18), *stilled magic missile*^F, *scorching ray* (+12 ranged touch), *slapping hand*^F

1st—*feather fall*, *mage armor*^F, *magic missile*^F (2), *shield*^F, *swift expeditious retreat*^{SC}, *ray of flame*^{SC} (+12 ranged touch, DC 17)

0—*caltrops*^{SC}, *mage hand*, *ray of frost* (+12 ranged touch), *resistance*, *sonic snap*^{SC,F} (DC 16)

Prohibited Schools: necromancy, illusion
† already cast

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th):

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

2/day—*force missiles*^{SC,F}

F: Force spell

Anybys Velifane is one of the master wizards of Erelhei-Cinlu



Abilities Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 20, Wis 12, Cha 12
SQ ablate force, force armor, high arcana, summon familiar

Feats Empower Spell, Eschew Materials^B, Magical Aptitude, Negotiator, Scribe Scroll^B, Skill Focus (spellcraft), Spell Focus (evocation), Spell Penetration^B, Still Spell

Skills Bluff +5, Concentration +23, Decipher Script +15, Diplomacy +9, Knowledge (arcana) +27, Listen +12, Search +13, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +34, Spot +13, Use Magic Device +3 (+7 involving scrolls)

Possessions combat gear plus +3 *elf bane shock dagger*, +2 *light crossbow* with 20 bolts, *abyssal iron staff*^{PlA}, *ring of force shield*, *vest of resistance* +4^{CAr}, *belt of many pockets*^{CAr}, *ring of protection* +2, 2 diamonds (500 gp each), sapphire (250 gp), platinum chain necklace (750 gp)

Spellbook spells prepared plus 0—*arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *disrupt undead*, *mending*; 1st—*burning hands*, *detect undead*, *identify*, *protection from evil*, *Tenser's floating disc*, *unseen servant*; 2nd—*continual flame*, *fox's cunning*, *glitterdust*, *Melf's acid arrow*, *protection from arrows*, *resist energy*, *shatter*, *summon swarm*; 3rd—*daylight*, *gaseous form*, *haste*, *nondetection*, *secret page*, *sepia snake sigil*, *summon monster III*; 4th—*dimensional anchor*, *fire shield*, *ice storm*, *lesser geas*, *Rary's mnemonic enhancer*, *shout*, *stone shape*; 5th—*cone of cold*, *feeblemind*, *lesser planar binding*, *Mordenkainen's private sanctum*, *passwall*, *sending*, *teleport*; 6th—*contingency*, *globe of invulnerability*, *summon monster VI*, *symbol of persuasion*; 7th—*delayed blast fireball*, *ethereal jaunt*, *limited wish*, *sequester*, *vision*; 8th—*incendiary cloud*, *mass charm monster*, *protection from spells*; 9th—*gate*, *power word kill*, *prismatic sphere*

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

ANYBYS VELIFANE

Growing up in a society where females are all but expected to join the clergy is tough for someone with a talent for arcane magic. Anybys knew from an early age that her path did not go through Lolth's temple. Because of the ostracism and animosity she faced, she decided the best way to keep her skin was to ensure that her enemies never got close enough to be a threat.

Studying magical force effects was the outlet Anybys needed to achieve her goals. Over the past century, she has developed quite an arsenal to keep her foes at bay. Her method is to engage potential enemies at a distance and destroy them before they get within a bowshot of her lithe form.

Currently, Anybys is one of the premier master wizards in the city of Erelhei-Cinlu. She is not affiliated with any single house, but many court her favor secretly in the hope of using her power against their enemies. She occasionally takes on house wizards as apprentices, but she tires of these students quickly and either expels them from her tower or destroys them for some imagined slight. The houses have not yet avenged the deaths, perhaps because they fear her power, or perhaps because none of the victims has been of any importance. In any case, students who survive her tutoring harness more powerful and devastating magic than they did before, and the houses are always pleased with the results.

The priestesses of the Fane of Lolth despise Anybys for being a female who did not embrace the clergy, but they have yet to move against her directly.



KEVERAS LORAKYTHE

Keveras Lorakythe is the quintessential drow rake, working the streets of Erelhei-Cinlu for easy marks and avoiding anyone who smacks of authority. He is affiliated with no one (other than occasional part-time alliances for mutual profit) and counts on no one but himself. He prefers to take his victims by surprise and incapacitate them with trip or disarming attacks, and he taunts those he accosts, using his Intimidate skill to end the battle as quickly as possible. If Keveras is working with others, he tries to set up flanking attacks. If preparing for a particularly formidable opponent, he takes the time to scout out the terrain and augment his weapons with poison and *oil of magic weapon*.

KEVERAS LORAKYTHE

CR 10

Male drow swashbuckler^{CW} 5/rogue 4
NE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +11, Spot +11

Languages Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Goblin, Undercommon

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 19; **dodge bonus** +1, uncanny dodge
(+4 Dex, +5 armor)

hp 41 (9 HD)

Immune magic *sleep* effects

Resist evasion; **SR** 20

Fort +5, **Ref** +10, **Will** +1 (+3 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee mwk spiked chain +13/+8 (2d4+4 plus poison)

Ranged hand crossbow +12 (1d4/19–20 plus poison)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +10

Atk Options Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, insightful strike, poison (drow sleep poison, Fort DC 13, unconscious 1 minute/unconscious 2d4 hours), sneak attack +2d6

Combat Gear 2 *oils of magic weapon*, 2 *potions of cure light wounds*, 2 vials of drow sleep poison

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th):

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Abilities Str 14, Dex 19, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 8, Cha 12

SQ trap sense +1, trapfinding, uncanny dodge

Feats Combat Expertise, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain), Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, Weapon Finesse^B

Skills Balance +11, Bluff +9, Climb +12 (+14 with ropes), Diplomacy +3, Disguise +6 (+8 acting), Escape Artist +9 (+11 with ropes), Gather Information +8, Intimidate +10, Jump +10, Listen +11, Move Silently +6, Search +6, Sleight of Hand +6, Spot +11, Swim +7, Tumble +17, Use Rope +9 (+11 with bindings)

Possessions combat gear plus +1 *mithral shirt*, *ring of anticipation**, masterwork spiked chain, hand crossbow with 10 bolts, gold teardrop earring (25 gp)

* See page 100

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

Keveras Lorakythe, drow rake

LADY THANDYSHA

Female drow cleric 18

NE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +10, Spot +11

Languages Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 16

(+2 Dex, +4 armor, +2 deflection)

hp 85 (18 HD)

Immune magic sleep effects

SR 29

Fort +12, **Ref** +10, **Will** +16 (+18 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +2 *drowcraft** *scourge* +17/+12/+7 (1d8+2) or

Melee +1 *light mace* +14/+9/+4 (1d6+1)

* See Underdark Radiations, page 154

Base Atk +13; **Grp** +13

Special Actions rebuke undead 9/day (+4, 2d6+20, 18th), spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells)

Combat Gear *oil of magic vestment* +3, *potion of cure serious wounds*

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 18th, 1d20+22 to overcome SR):

9th—*abyssal army*^{SC} (CL 19th), *miracle*, *time stop*^D

8th—*discern location*, *fire storm* (DC 23), *mass inflict critical wounds* (DC 23), *unholy aura*^D (CL 19th, DC 23)

7th—*blasphemy*^D (CL 19th, DC 22), *destruction* (DC 22), *evil glare*^{SC} (CL 19th, DC 22), *repulsion* (DC 22)

6th—*blade barrier* (DC 21), *forbiddance* (DC 21), *harm* (+13 melee touch, DC 21), *mislead*^D (DC 21), *rejection*^{SC} (DC 21)

5th—*false vision*^D, *flame strike* (DC 20), *greater command* (DC 20), *slay living* (+13 melee touch, DC 20), *summon bearded devil*^{SC} (CL 19th), *symbol of pain* (CL 19th, DC 20)

4th—*castigate*^{SC} (DC 19), *discern lies* (DC 19), *divination*, *divine power*, *unholy blight*^D (CL 19th, DC 19), *wall of evil**^{SC} (DC 19), *wrack**^{SC} (DC 19)

3rd—*bestow curse* (+13 melee touch, DC 18), *dispel magic*, *lesser visage of the deity*^{SC} (CL 19th), *nondetection*^D (DC 18), *protection from energy*, *speak with dead* (DC 18), *wind wall* (DC 18)

CR 19

2nd—*augury*, *death knell* (+13 melee touch, CL 19th, DC 17), *desecrate*^D (CL 19th), *enthral* (DC 17), *lesser restoration*, *sound burst* (DC 17), *wave of grief*^{SC} (CL 19th, DC 17)

1st—*bane* (DC 16), *cause fear* (DC 16), *deathwatch* (CL 19th), *disguise self*^D, *doom* (DC 16), *obscuring mist*, *protection from good* (CL 19th), *sanctuary*

0—*detect magic*, *guidance*, *inflict minor wounds* (+13 melee touch, DC 15), *mending*, *read magic*, *virtue*

D: Domain spell. **Deity:** Lolth. **Domains:** Evil, Trickery

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 18th):

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *detect good*, *detect magic*, *faerie fire*, *levitate*

1/day (with *queen's scourge*)—*inflict critical wounds* (4d8+12, DC 17)

Abilities Str 11, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 20, Cha 14

SQ aura of evil

Feats Alertness, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (*scourge*), Extra Turning, Greater Spell Penetration, Highborn Drow^{Und}, Spell Penetration, True Believer^{CD}

Skills Bluff +10, Concentration +8, Diplomacy +9, Disguise +10 (+12 acting), Hide +7, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (religion) +14, Listen +10, Search +3, Sleight of Hand +4, Spellcraft +8, Spot +11, Use Magic Device +2 (+4 involving scrolls)

Possessions combat gear plus *queen's scourge*^{Und} (+2 *drowcraft scourge*^{FR}), +1 *light mace*, *bracers of armor* +4, *ring of protection* +2, *greater piwafwi*^{LD}, *figurine of wondrous power (jasper spider)*^{Und}, *web choker*^{Und}, *drow house insignia*^{LD} (*comprehend languages*), *crystalline spider bead*^{CP}, platinum necklace with spider charm (800 gp), gold ring set with a ruby (500 gp), 4 diamonds (100 gp each)

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

LADY THANDYSHA

Lady Thandysha is the matriarch of the up-and-coming House Xaniquos, whose fortunes have exploded in Erelhei-Cinlu with a meteoric rise. Ambitious and impetuous, Lady Thandysha is riding the ascendance of her house to what she believes will be eventual domination of the Vault of the Drow. She personally oversaw the execution of the last of the members of House Everhate, and her lust for power and taste for blood threaten to consume her. She believes that House Xaniquos rises by the divine mandate of Lolth. It remains to be seen whether her belief is correct or the rise is due to a chaotic whim of the Spider Queen, but Thandysha's personal power cannot be questioned. Even the savvy Eclavdra of Eilservs (see page 193) has been forced to take serious notice of this new player in the game.



Lady Thandysha,
Matron of House Xaniquos

MINDSHARD

CR 14

Male drow warlock^{CAr} 13

CE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon

AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 14; **Dodge** (+2 Dex, +3 deflection, +1 insight)

hp 71 (13 HD); **fast healing** 2 (1/day, 2 minutes); **DR** 3/cold iron

Immune magic *sleep* effects

Resist acid 5, sonic 5; **SR** 24

Fort +6, **Ref** +6, **Will** +8 (+10 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee *rending claw*^{FF} +9/+4 (1d6/×3) or

Melee dagger +9/+4 (1d4/19–20)

Ranged *eldritch blast* +11 (6d6)

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +9

Atk Options Combat Casting

Combat Gear *potion of barkskin* +5

Invocations Known (CL 13th):

Greater—*repelling blast* (DC 21), *vitriolic blast*

Lesser—*brimstone blast* (DC 18), *eldritch chain*, *hellrime blast* (DC 18), *hungry darkness*

Least—*eldritch spear*, *sickening blast* (DC 17), *spiderwalk*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 13th):

At will—*detect magic*

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Abilities Str 10, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 9, Wis 9, Cha 20

SQ deceive item, fiendish resilience, imbue item

Feats Combat Casting, Dodge, Extra Invocation^{CAr}, Persuasive, Quick Recovery^{LOM}

Skills Bluff +10, Concentration +6, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (the planes) +3, Listen +1, Search +1, Spot +1, Use Magic Device +6

Possessions combat gear plus *bracers of armor* +3, *dusty rose ioun stone*, *hook of dissolution*^{BoVD}, *rending claw*^{FF}, dagger, traveler's outfit, ruby (400 gp)

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.



Mindshard the warlock

MINDSHARD

Hatred is the driving force of the drow known as Mindshard—specifically, hatred of illithids. Raised as a slave, Mindshard suffered much at the tentacles of the mind flayers. When he was old enough, they grafted a *rending claw*^{FF} to his body and tried to use him for their nefarious ends. When it became clear that Mindshard would not cooperate, his master tried the one thing that could stop the slave from causing trouble—extracting his brain. But as the illithid started to bore into Mindshard's skull, the drow snapped and killed his master.

He was not quick enough to prevent himself from suffering severe physical and mental damage. He still bears horrendous

scars and ridges across his partially bald pate, and he lost the memory of his real name. “Mindshard” is a name that he adopted to reflect his new state of being. The half-crazed drow now harbors only one thought—kill mind flayers—and anyone who gets in his way might be surprised to learn that he is quite formidable. He prefers to use his eldritch powers to dispose of foes, but he happily uses his illithid graft on opponents who get close enough.

Currently, Mindshard is being used as a tool of destruction by his adopted “family,” House Tormtor. It needs only insinuate that a particular person consorts with illithids, and Mindshard does the rest.

*Xil'etha the soulknife*

XIL'ETHA DHUVARYL

Xil'etha became an outcast on the streets of Erelhei-Cinlu after displaying powers at an early age that were neither understood nor accepted by the ruling elite. As a result, she grew embittered (even more than is usual for drow) and fell into the life of an enforcer for hire. Her rates are low, and she works mainly for middle- and lower-class employers, not wanting to draw too much attention from the powers that be.

Xil, as she is usually called, excels in her work because she likes to inflict pain. She wears dark clothing and keeps her silver hair (which has a slight blue tint) in a loose ponytail. The *mind blades* she manifests are always of a dark burgundy color. She tries to deal maximum damage when possible with her psychic strike and psionic weapon abilities in addition to the +2 *psychokinetic burst* power of her *mind blade*. She carries no weapons, but she is only a free action away from having something in hand.

DROW ASSASSIN

Assassins are some of the highest-paid individuals in drow cities. Always in great demand, they enjoy lives of plenty and comfort, selling their services to anyone who is willing to meet their price. Using poison, bolts, or blades, they get the job done—whatever it entails—with ruthless efficiency. Most well-to-do drow keep an assassin or two on the payroll, even if they have no current targets, primarily to ensure that the killers do not betray them.

DROW INQUISITOR

In the tempestuous cities of the dark elves, traitors abound. It takes the keen eye of a skilled torturer to ferret out the plotters and conspirators, thus keeping a matriarch's reign as secure as possible. Most drow inquisitors are females who have some training in the priesthood of Lolth. Blessed by the Spider Queen, they use their profane abilities to extract what they want to hear from their prisoners.

XIL'ETHA DHUVARYL

CR 11

Female drow soulknife^{EPH} 10
NE Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +14, Spot +14
Languages Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Kuo-Toan, Undercommon

AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 17
(+3 Dex, +6 armor, +1 deflection)

hp 72 (10 HD)
Immune magic sleep effects

SR 21
Fort +4, **Ref** +10, **Will** +6 (+8 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares); 40 ft. with Speed of Thought
Melee +2 *psychokinetic burst*^{EPH} *mind blade*^{EPH} (short sword) +13/+8 (1d6+4/19–20 plus 1d4 psychokinetic) or
Melee +2 *psychokinetic burst mind blade* (longsword) +13/+8 (1d8+4/19–20 plus 1d4 psychokinetic) or
Melee +2 *psychokinetic burst mind blade* (bastard sword) +13/+8 (1d10+5/19–20 plus 1d4 psychokinetic)
Ranged +2 *psychokinetic burst mind blade* (short sword) +14 (1d6+4/19–20 plus 1d4 psychokinetic)
Base Atk +7; **Grp** +9

Atk Options Elfhunter (drow)^{Und}, Psionic Charge^{EPH}, Psionic Weapon^{EPH}, bladewind, free draw, psychic strike +2d8, throw mind blade

Special Actions shape mind blade

Combat Gear boots of landing^{EPH}, 2 pearls of breath crisis^{EPH}, 2 potions of cure serious wounds

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th):
1/day—*dancing lights, darkness, faerie fire*

Abilities Str 14, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 15, Wis 8, Cha 14

SQ mind blade enhancement +2

Feats Elfhunter (drow)^{Und}, Greater Weapon Focus (mind blade)^B, Improved Initiative, Psionic Charge^{EPH}, Psionic Weapon^{EPH}, Speed of Thought^{B,EPH}, Weapon Focus (mind blade)^B, Wild Talent^{B,EPH}

Skills Autohypnosis^{EPH} +3, Balance +5, Climb +8, Concentration +5, Hide +7, Jump +12, Listen +14, Move Silently +16, Search +4, Spot +14, Tumble +18

Possessions combat gear plus +2 mithral shirt, ring of protection +1, gray bag of tricks, amulet of health +2, explorer's outfit

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

DROW ASSASSIN

CR 13

Male or female drow ninja^{CA} 5/assassin 7

LE, NE, or CE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +8, Spot +8

Languages Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon

AC 20, touch 18, flat-footed 20; Dodge, Mobility, improved uncanny dodge

(+6 Dex, +2 class, +2 armor)

hp 53 (12 HD)

Immune magic sleep effects

SR 23

Fort +4 (+7 against poison), **Ref** +15, **Will** +6* (+8* against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments)

* Assumes at least 1 point of *ki* power remaining

Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares); Spring Attack, great leap

Melee +1 *toxic* virulent* rapier* +15/+10 (1d6+3/18–20)

* See page 96

Ranged +1 *human bane hand crossbow* +15 (1d4 plus poison/19–20)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +10

Atk Options Venomous Strike, death attack (DC 18), *ki* power 3/day (ghost step [invisible]), poison (deathblade, Fort DC 20, 1d6 Con/2d6 Con), poison (drow sleep poison, Fort DC 13, unconscious 1 minute/unconscious 2d4 hours), poison (purple worm poison, Fort DC 24, 1d6 Str/2d6 Str), sneak attack +4d6, sudden strike +3d6

Combat Gear dose of deathblade poison, 5 doses of drow sleep poison, dose of purple worm poison, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of invisibility*, *potion of shield of faith* +2

Assassin Spells Known (CL 7th):

3rd (2/day)—*deep slumber* (DC 14), *spider poison*^{SC} (+13 melee touch, DC 14), *wraithstrike*^{SC}

2nd (3/day)—*fox's cunning*, *invisibility*, *phantom foe*^{SC} (DC 12), *spider climb*

1st (4/day)—*combat readiness**, *critical strike*^{SC}, *shock and awe*^{SC}, *snuff the light**

* See Chapter 2

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th):

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Abilities Str 14, Dex 22, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 10

SQ trapfinding

Feats Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack, Venomous Strike, Weapon Finesse

Skills Balance +11, Bluff +6, Climb +7, Craft (poison) +3, Diplomacy +4, Disguise +4 (+6 acting), Hide +26, Intimidate +2, Jump +14, Knowledge (local) +2, Listen +8, Move Silently +21, Search +6, Sense Motive +6, Sleight of Hand +10, Spot +8, Tumble +21

Possessions combat gear plus +1 *toxic virulent rapier*, +1 *human bane hand crossbow* with 10 bolts, *bracers of armor* +2, *cloak of elvenkind*, *gloves of Dexterity* +2

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

Ki Power (Su) Gain +2 on Will saves as long as at least one use of *ki* power remains.

Ghost Step (Su) Use *ki* power to become invisible for 1 round as a swift action.

Great Leap (Su) Make Jump checks as if running and possessing the Run feat.

DROW PRIESTESS

No group or organization wields more power in drow society than the clerics of Lolth. Drow priestesses are respected, or at least feared, by nearly all other drow. They act on the will of the Spider Queen, and occasionally on their own whim, always vying for more power and the favor of their goddess. They serve as battlefield commanders, constables, detectives, and judges, as the situation requires.

DROW SLAVER

The drow enslave other races as laborers. Raids supply the majority of prisoners, but more powerful captives have to be hunted down by skilled slavers. These tenacious trackers scour the subterranean tunnels and sometimes the surface world for marks that seem likely to fetch a high price. They rarely kill their quarry—that would just add the expense of a *raise dead* spell.



Drow assassin

DROW INQUISITOR

CR 16

Female Lolth-touched^{MM4} drow fighter 2/cleric 4/rogue 2/
blackguard 6

CE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +7, Spot +7

Aura despair 10 ft., evil

Languages Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven,
Undercommon, empathic link

AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 16
(+4 Dex, +5 armor, +1 deflection)

Miss Chance 20% blur, 1/day

hp 124 (14 HD); **DR** 1/—

Immune fear, sleep

Resist evasion; **SR** 25

Fort +21, **Ref** +15, **Will** +16 (+18 against spells, spell-like
abilities, and other enchantments)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee *demon rod** +16/+11/+6 (1d8+4 plus 2d6 against good
outsiders) or

Melee *demon rod** +17/+12/+7 (1d8+4 plus 2d6) against
good outsiders

* See page 102 (functions as +1 *good outsider bane*
morningstar)

Ranged +1 *anarchic hand crossbow* +17/+12/+7 (1d4+1/19–20
plus 2d6 against lawful)

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +14

Atk Options Sadistic Reward*, Sickening Strike*, Terrifying
Strike*, poison (drow sleep poison, Fort DC 13,
unconscious 1 minute/unconscious 2d4 hours), poison
(Medium spider venom, Fort DC 14, 1d4 Str/1d4 Str),
smite 1/day (+4 attack, +4 damage), smite good 2/day (+5
attack, +6 damage), sneak attack +2d6
* See Chapter 2

Special Actions Profane Agony, rebuke undead 8/day (+7,
2d6+13, 8th)

Combat Gear 2 doses of drow sleep poison, dose of Medium
spider venom, 3 *elixirs of hiding*, 2 *potions of cure moderate*
wounds, *wand of cure light wounds*

Blackguard Spells Prepared (CL 6th):

3rd—*cure serious wounds*, *summon monster III*

2nd—*demonhide*^{SC} (CL 7th), *eagle's splendor*

1st—*doom* (DC 16), *inflict light wounds* (+16 melee touch,
DC 16), *summon monster I*

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 4th):

2nd—*desecrate*^D (CL 5th), *hold person* (DC 17), *shatter*
(DC 17), *zone of truth* (DC 17)

1st—*bane* (DC 16), *cause fear* (DC 16), *doom* (DC 16),
entropic shield, *obscuring mist*, *protection from good*
(CL 5th)^D

0—*detect magic* (2), *read magic*, *resistance* (2)

D: Domain spell. Deity: Lolth. Domains: Destruction, Evil

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 14th):

At will—*detect good*

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Abilities Str 14, Dex 18, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 20, Cha 20

SQ fiendish servant (fiendish dire rat), light fortification,
share spells, trapfinding

Feats Improved Initiative, Profane Agony*, Rapid Reload
(hand crossbow)^B, Sadistic Reward*, Sickening Strike*,
Terrifying Strike*, Weapon Focus (morningstar)^B

* See Chapter 2

Skills Bluff +13, Climb +5, Concentration +7, Diplomacy +15,
Disguise +5 (+7 acting), Hide +12, Intimidate +17,
Jump +5, Knowledge (religion) +10, Listen +7, Move
Silently +7, Ride +7, Search +3, Sense Motive +10,
Spellcraft +4, Spot +7

Possessions combat gear plus +1 *adamantine chain shirt of*
light fortification, *demon rod**, +1 *anarchic hand crossbow*
with 10 bolts, *ring of protection* +1, *amulet of health* +4,
cloak of Charisma +4, *gloves of Dexterity* +2, *incandescent*
blue ioun stone

* See page 102

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as
sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In
addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack
rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

FIENDISH SERVANT

CR —

Fiendish dire rat

CE Small magical beast

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent;
Listen +5, Spot +5

Languages empathic link, speak with master

AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 14
(+1 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 28 (5 HD)

Resist cold 5, fire 5; improved evasion

Fort +13, **Ref** +9, **Will** +7

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +7 (1d4+1 plus disease)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +0

Atk Options disease (Fort DC 13, 1d3 days, 1d3 Dex and 1d3
Con), smite good (+5 damage)

Abilities Str 12, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 7, Wis 12, Cha 4

SQ share spells

Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse^B

Skills Hide +9, Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Spot +5,
Swim +11

Illus. by F. Tsai



Drow inquisitor

DROW WARRIOR

The rank and file of drow civilization are the warriors—males who are outfitted with basic weapons and armor to supplement their racial abilities and employed whenever large numbers of troops are needed for guard duty or protection. On rare occasions, a warrior rises in the hierarchy to occupy a position of prestige. For the vast majority of these individuals, life is short—usually sacrificed in battle for the greater glory of the race.

FAVORED CONSORT

Drow priestesses select consorts as lovers and mates. These males are breeders, serving to perpetuate the line and little more. Some priestesses indulge them, listening to their advice or opinions, but in most cases, a cleric uses a consort until she tires of him, at which point he is discarded.

Although a consort has the favor of his priestess, it is his duty to protect her, even at the cost of his own life. He must be vigilant against assassins and traitors within the household, going so far as to taste her drinks and meals first in case they have been poisoned.

The sample favored consort presented here possesses a *cloak of the consort* (see page 103), which means he is likely a member of an important drow house and attached to a significant matriarch.

Favored consort



Illus. by J. Zhang

DROW PRIESTESS

Female drow cleric 8

NE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +6, Spot +6

Languages Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon

AC 22, touch 14, flat-footed 19

(+3 Dex, +6 armor, +2 shield, +1 deflection)

hp 48 (8 HD)

Immune magic *sleep* effects

SR 19

Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +10 (+12 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares) in breastplate; base speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk dagger +8/+3 (1d4+1/19–20 plus poison) or

Melee light mace +7/+2 (1d6+1)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +7

Atk Options poison (drow poison, Fort DC 13, unconscious 1 minute/unconscious 2d4 hours), smite 1/day (+4 attack, +8 damage)

Special Actions rebuke undead 3/day (+0, 2d6+8, 8th), spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells)

Combat Gear 2 doses of drow poison, *wand of cure moderate wounds* (34 charges)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 8th, 1d20+10 to overcome SR):

4th—*air walk*, *freedom of movement*, *summon monster IV*, *unholy blight*^D (DC 18, CL 9th)

CR 9

3rd—*bestow curse* (+8 melee touch, DC 17), *dispel magic*, *invisibility purge*, *magic circle against good*^D (CL 9th), *summon monster III*

2nd—*cure moderate wounds*, *death knell* (DC 16, CL 9th), *shatter*^D (DC 16), *sound burst* (DC 16), *summon monster II*

1st—*bane*, *cure light wounds*, *doom* (DC 15), *entropic shield*, *inflict light wounds*^D (+8 melee touch), *summon monster I*

0—*cure minor wounds* (2), *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *guidance*, *resistance*

D: Domain spell. Deity: Lolth. Domains: Destruction, Evil.

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th):

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Abilities Str 13, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 19, Cha 10

Feats Augment Summoning, Combat Casting, Spell Penetration

Skills Concentration +12, Diplomacy +5, Knowledge (religion) +4, Knowledge (the planes) +4, Listen +6, Search +3, Spellcraft +12, Spot +6

Possessions combat gear plus +1 *breastplate*, +1 *light steel shield*, masterwork dagger, light mace, *gloves of Dexterity* +2, *periapt of Wisdom* +2, *ring of protection* +1

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

DROW SLAYER

CR 13

Male drow ranger 3/scout^{CAD} 3/bloodhound^{CAD} 6
LE, NE, or CE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +13, Spot +13

Languages Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon

AC 22, touch 17, flat-footed 17; skirmish +1 AC, uncanny dodge (+5 Dex, +5 armor, +2 deflection)

hp 83 (12 HD)

Immune magic sleep effects

SR 23

Fort +12, **Ref** +16, **Will** +6 (+8 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments); hunter's dedication

Weakness light blindness

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares); tenacious pursuit +10 ft.

Melee +1 *toxic* longsword* +14/+9/+4 (1d8+3/19–20 plus poison) or

Melee +1 *toxic longsword* +12/+7/+2 (1d8+3/19–20 plus poison) and mwk cold iron short sword +12 (1d6+1/19–20)
* See page 96

Ranged +2 *spear* +19 (1d8+4)

Base Atk +11; **Grp** +13

Atk Options Chosen Foe, Combat Reflexes, Point Blank Shot, bring 'em back alive, crippling strike (2 points Str damage with sneak attack), favored enemy elves +2, mark 2, nonlethal force, poison (drow sleep poison, Fort DC 13, unconscious 1 minute/unconscious 2d4 hours), poison (giant wasp poison, Fort DC 18, 1d6 Str/1d6 Str), skirmish +1d6

Special Actions ready and waiting

Combat Gear dose of giant wasp poison, 2 *potions of cure light wounds*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of invisibility*, thunderstone

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th):

Always active—*see invisibility* (marks only)
1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Abilities Str 14, Dex 20, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 10

SQ move like the wind, swift tracker, track the trackless, trackless step, trapfinding, wild empathy +3 (–1 magical beasts)

Feats Chosen Foe, Combat Reflexes, Endurance^B, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Track^B, Two-Weapon Fighting^B, Weapon Focus (spear)

Skills Climb +2 (+4 ropes), Diplomacy +8, Escape Artist +5 (+7 ropes), Gather Information +4, Hide +14, Intimidate +6, Jump +10, Listen +13, Move Silently +14, Open Lock +11, Search +18, Spot +13, Survival +17 (+19 following tracks), Use Rope +14

Possessions combat gear plus +2 *studded leather*, +1 *toxic longsword*, masterwork cold iron short sword, +2 *spear*, *ring of protection* +2, *amulet of health* +4, *gloves of Dexterity* +2, masterwork manacles

Skirmish (Ex) Whenever a drow slayer moves at least 10 feet, he deals extra damage. This damage only applies to living creatures with discernible anatomies, and he must be able to see the target well enough to pick out a vital spot and be able to reach the spot. A drow slayer can apply this extra damage to ranged attacks made against targets within 30 feet.

In addition, a drow slayer also gains a +1 competence bonus to AC whenever he moves at least 10 feet.

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In

addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

Hunter's Dedication (Ex) A drow slayer adds a +2 bonus on Will saves made to resist the special attacks or spells of his mark.

Tenacious Pursuit (Ex) A drow slayer gains a +4 bonus on Constitution checks to resist nonlethal damage from a forced march. When tracking a mark, his speed increases by 10 feet up to a maximum of the mark's speed.

Bring 'em Back Alive (Ex) Any attack that would reduce a foe to –2 or fewer hit points reduces the foe to –1 hit point instead. A drow slayer must choose to use this ability upon reducing his foe to –2 hit points or fewer, and before taking any other action.

Mark (Ex) A drow slayer can mark any humanoid or monstrous humanoid by focusing on the target or a depiction of the target for 10 minutes. He then gains a +3 bonus on Gather Information, Listen, Search, Spot, and Survival checks made to determine the mark's whereabouts. A drow slayer can have up to two marks at a time.

Nonlethal Force (Ex) A drow slayer can use a melee weapon that ordinarily deals lethal damage to deal nonlethal damage without the customary –4 penalty on his attack roll.

Ready and Waiting (Ex) At any time in a round, a drow slayer can ready an action against his mark. If at any time within 10 minutes after readying the action, the mark triggers the action, the drow slayer can carry out the action as if the two were already engaged in combat. If the drow slayer is unable to carry out the action, the readied action is lost.

Move Like the Wind (Ex) A drow slayer does not take a –5 penalty on Hide and Move Silently checks when moving at any speed up to his normal speed, and takes only a –10 penalty on Hide and Move Silently checks when running.



Drow slayer

DROW WARRIOR

Male drow warrior 1
NE Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +3
Languages Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15
(+1 Dex, +4 armor, +1 shield)

hp 4 (1 HD)

Immune magic *sleep* effects

SR 12

Fort +2, **Ref** +1, **Will** -1 (+1 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee rapier +3 (1d6+1/18-20 plus poison)

CR 1

Ranged hand crossbow +2 (1d4/19-20 plus poison)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +2

Atk Options poison (drow poison, Fort DC 13, unconscious 1 minute/unconscious 2d4 hours)

Combat Gear 2 doses of drow poison

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1st):

1/day—*dancing lights, darkness, faerie fire*

Abilities Str 13, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 10

Feats Weapon Focus (rapier)

Skills Listen +2, Search +4, Spot +3

Possessions combat gear plus chain shirt, light steel shield, rapier, hand crossbow with 10 bolts

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they take a -1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

FAVORED CONSORT

* CR is higher due to *cloak of the consort*
Male drow evoker 5/fighter 6/eldritch knight 6
NE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +5 (+7 in darkness or shadow); *ring of anticipation**;

Senses darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +8, Spot +8

* See page 100

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon

AC 32, touch 22, flat-footed 27; Dodge, Shadowborn Warrior
(+5 Dex, +1 dodge, +8 armor, +6 deflection, +2 natural)

Miss Chance 20% *cloak of the consort* (10 rounds)

hp 66 (17 HD)

Immune magic *sleep* effects

SR 28; Reactive Resistance*

* See page 52

Fort +15, **Ref** +14, **Will** +11 (+9 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments of female drow; +13 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments of all others)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +2 *shock rapier* +21/+16/+11 (1d6+7/18-20 plus 1d6 electricity)

Ranged +2 *spider boon** *hand crossbow* +21 (1d4+2/19-20 plus poison)

* See page 97

Base Atk +14; **Grp** +19

Atk Options Blind-Fight, Clever Opportunist*, Constant Guardian*, Combat Reflexes, Dutiful Guardian*, poison (drow sleep poison, Fort DC 13, unconscious 1 minute/unconscious 2d4 hours), Shadowborn Warrior*

* See Chapter 2

Combat Gear 2 *potions of cure serious wounds*, 2 *potions of haste*, *wand of fireball* (CL 5th, 25 charges), *wand of ice storm* (20 charges)

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 10th):

5th—*cloudkill* (DC 19), *cone of cold* (DC 19), *transmute rock to mud* (DC 19)

4th—*dimension door*, *enervation*, *phantasmal killer* (DC 18), *shout* (DC 18), *wall of ice*

CR 19*

3rd—*blink, dispel magic, fly, lightning bolt* (DC 17), *wind wall*

2nd—*bull's strength, bear's endurance, cat's grace, resist energy, scorching ray* (+19 ranged touch), *web* (DC 16)

1st—*burning hands* (DC 15), *expeditious retreat, feather fall, magic missile, shield, shocking grasp* (+19 melee touch)

0—*detect magic, flare* (DC 14), *mage hand, message, read magic*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 17th):

1/day—*dancing lights, darkness* (immediate action), *faerie fire*

Abilities Str 20, Dex 20, Con 11, Int 18, Wis 8, Cha 13

SQ familiar (none at present)

Feats Alertness, Blind-Fight^B, Clever Opportunist*^B, Combat Reflexes^B, Constant Guardian*, Dodge^B, Dutiful Guardian*, Empower Spell^B, Instinctive Darkness*, Reactive Resistance*, Scribe Scroll^B, Shadowborn Warrior*

* See Chapter 2

Skills Bluff +5, Climb +11, Concentration +14, Decipher Script +9, Diplomacy +7, Intimidate +8, Jump +6, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Knowledge (nobility) +16, Knowledge (religion) +5, Listen +8, Ride +6, Search +6, Sense Motive +8, Spellcraft +20 (+22 learn evocation spells), Spot +8, Swim +10

Possessions combat gear plus +4 *mithral shirt*, +2 *shock rapier*, +2 *spider boon** *hand crossbow* with 10 bolts, *ring of anticipation**, *amulet of natural armor* +2, *belt of giant strength* +4, *gloves of Dexterity* +4, *headband of intellect* +2, *cloak of the consort**, 5 gp

* See Chapter 4

Spellbook spells prepared plus 0—all except enchantment and necromancy; 1st—*alarm, endure elements, grease, jump, true strike*; 2nd—*knock*; 3rd—*haste, keen edge, slow*; 4th—*fire shield, scrying, shadow conjuration, wall of fire*; 5th—*cloudkill, dismissal, teleport*

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they take a -1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

HOUSE CAPTAIN

CR 10

Male drow marshal 9^{MH}

NE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +11, Spot +11

Languages Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Goblin, Undercommon

AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 23
(+9 armor, +3 shield, +1 deflection)

hp 49 (9 HD)

Immune magic sleep effects

SR 20

Fort +8, **Ref** +4, **Will** +7 (+9 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 20 ft. in full plate (4 squares), base speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 longsword +10/+5 (1d8+3/19–20)

Ranged +1 hand crossbow +7 (1d4+1/19–20)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +8

Atk Options Goad^{CAD, MH}, Sadistic Reward*, poison (drow sleep poison, Fort DC 13, unconscious 1 minute/unconscious 2d4 hours)

* See Chapter 2

Special Actions grant move action 2/day, major aura +2, minor aura +4

Combat Gear 1 dose of drow sleep poison, *potion of cure light wounds*, *potion of eagle's splendor*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th):

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Abilities Str 14, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 18

Feats Goad^{CAD, MH}, Improved Initiative, Sadistic Reward*, Skill Focus (Diplomacy)^B, Weapon Focus (longsword)

* See page 52

Skills Bluff +12, Diplomacy +18, Disguise +4 (+6 acting), Gather Information +6, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +8, Knowledge (geography) +7, Knowledge (history) +6, Knowledge (local) +7, Knowledge (nobility) +6, Knowledge (the planes) +4, Listen +11, Search +4, Sense Motive +8, Spot +11, Survival +0 (+2 underground, +2 avoiding getting lost and hazards)

Possessions combat gear plus +1 mithral full plate, +1 heavy steel shield, +1 longsword, +1 hand crossbow with 10 bolts, *ring of protection* +1, *cloak of resistance* +1

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

Grant Move Action (Ex) As a standard action, a house captain can grant an extra move action to any and all allies within 30 feet. This extra movement does not affect the allies' initiative count.

Major Aura As a swift action, a house captain can grant any of the following auras to all allies within 60 feet that have an Intelligence score of 3 or higher.

Motivate Ardor: +2 bonus on damage rolls.

Motivate Attack: +2 bonus on attack rolls.

Motivate Care: +2 bonus to AC.

Minor Aura As a swift action, a house captain can grant any of the following auras to all allies within 60 feet that have an Intelligence score of 3 or higher.

Accurate Strike: +4 bonus to confirm critical hits.

Force of Will: +4 bonus on Will saves.

Master of Opportunity: +4 bonus to AC against attacks of opportunity.

Over the Top: +4 bonus on damage when charging.

Watchful Eye: +4 bonus on Reflex saves.



House captain

HOUSE CAPTAIN

House captains command the slaves and dark elves that make up the personal army of the house matriarch. Trained in strategy and tactics, captains put the combatants to good use on the battlefield. When not warring with a rival house or an external threat, they are nominally in charge of their house's security. Typically, a house captain is the first son (or the favored son) of the matriarch.

HOUSE WIZARD

Though they rank lower than clerics, drow wizards and their ilk are important to the survival of dark elf society. Their ingenuity and magical talent make possible many of the luxuries found in the cities. It is tradition for a matriarch to send her second or third son to study magic. The apprentice returns home only after he has learned enough to lend his power to the defense of the house and to fulfill his mother's wishes.

Many house wizards, such as the sample NPC below, study to become warmages. However, the eldest among them are more likely to be wizards or specialist wizards, preferring versatility to the raw destruction wielded by the younger upstarts.

HOUSE WIZARD

Male drow warmage^{CAr} 8

LE, NE, CE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +3, Spot +3

Languages Common, Draconic, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 16

(+3 Dex, +5 armor, +1 deflection)

hp 19 (8 HD)

Immune magic *sleep* effects

SR 19

Fort +1, **Ref** +5, **Will** +7 (+9 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee rapier +3 (1d6–1/18–20)

Ranged mwk hand crossbow +8 (1d4/19–20 plus poison)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +3

Atk Options poison (drow sleep poison, Fort DC 13, unconscious 1 minute/unconscious 2d4 hours), warmage edge +3

Combat Gear dose of drow sleep poison, *potion of bear's endurance*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of sanctuary*, *wand of magic missile* (CL 7th, 20 charges)

Warmage Spells Known (CL 8th):

4th (3/day)—*blast of flame* (DC 19)^{SC,CAr}, *contagion* (DC 18), *Evard's black tentacles* (grapple +16), *orb of acid*^{SC,CAr} (+7 ranged touch, DC 19), *orb of cold*^{SC,CAr} (+7 ranged touch, DC 19), *orb of electricity*^{SC,CAr} (+7 ranged touch, DC 19), *orb of fire*^{SC,CAr} (+7 ranged touch, DC 19), *orb of force*^{SC,CAr} (+7 ranged touch), *orb of sound*^{SC,CAr} (+7 ranged touch, DC 19), *phantasmal killer* (DC 22), *shout* (DC 22), *wall of fire*

3rd (5/day)—*explosive cascade* (DC 17)^{SC}, *fire shield*, *fireball* (DC 17), *flame arrow* (+7 ranged touch), *gust of wind* (DC 17), *ice storm*, *lightning bolt* (DC 17), *poison* (DC 17), *ring of blades*^{SC,CAr}, *sleet storm*, *stinking cloud* (DC 18)

2nd (6/day)—*battering ram*^{SC}, *blades of fire*^{SC,CAr}, *continual flame*, *fire trap* (DC 16), *fireburst*^{SC,CAr} (DC 16), *flaming sphere* (DC 16), *ice knife*^{SC,CAr} (+11 ranged touch, DC 17), *Melf's acid arrow* (+7 ranged touch), *pyrotechnics* (DC 16), *scorching ray* (+7 ranged touch), *shatter* (DC 16), *whirling blade*^{SC,CAr}

1st (6/day)—*accuracy*^{CAr}, *burning hands* (DC 15), *chill touch* (+2 melee touch, DC 15), *fist of stone*^{SC,CAr}, *hail of stone*^{SC,CAr}, *magic missile*, *lesser orb of acid*^{SC,CAr} (+7 ranged touch), *lesser orb of cold*^{SC,CAr} (+7 ranged touch), *lesser orb of electricity*^{SC,CAr} (+7 ranged touch), *lesser orb of fire*^{SC,CAr} (+7 ranged touch), *lesser orb of sound*^{SC,CAr} (+7 ranged touch), *persistent blade*^{SC} (+6 melee), *shocking grasp* (+3 melee touch), *true strike*

0 (6/day)—*acid splash* (+7 ranged touch), *disrupt undead* (+7 ranged touch), *light*, *ray of frost* (+7 ranged touch)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th):

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Abilities Str 8, Dex 16, Con 8, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 18

SQ armored mage (medium), fiendish servant (fiendish dire rat)

Feats Coercive Spell*, Improved Initiative, Spell Focus (conjuration), Sudden Empower^{CAr}

* See page 47

Skills Concentration +10, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (history) +14, Listen +3, Search +5, Spellcraft +16, Spot +3

CR 9

Possessions combat gear plus elven chain, rapier, masterwork hand crossbow with 10 bolts, *ring of protection* +1, piece of jade (5 gp)

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

Warmage Edge (Ex) This house wizard deals an additional 3 points of damage whenever he casts a warmage spell that deals hit point damage.

FIENDISH SERVANT

CR —

Fiendish dire rat

CE Small magical beast

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +5, Spot +5

Languages empathic link, speak with master

AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 14

(+1 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 28 (5 HD)

Resist improved evasion, cold 5, fire 5

Fort +13, **Ref** +9, **Will** +7

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +7 (1d4+1 plus disease)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +0

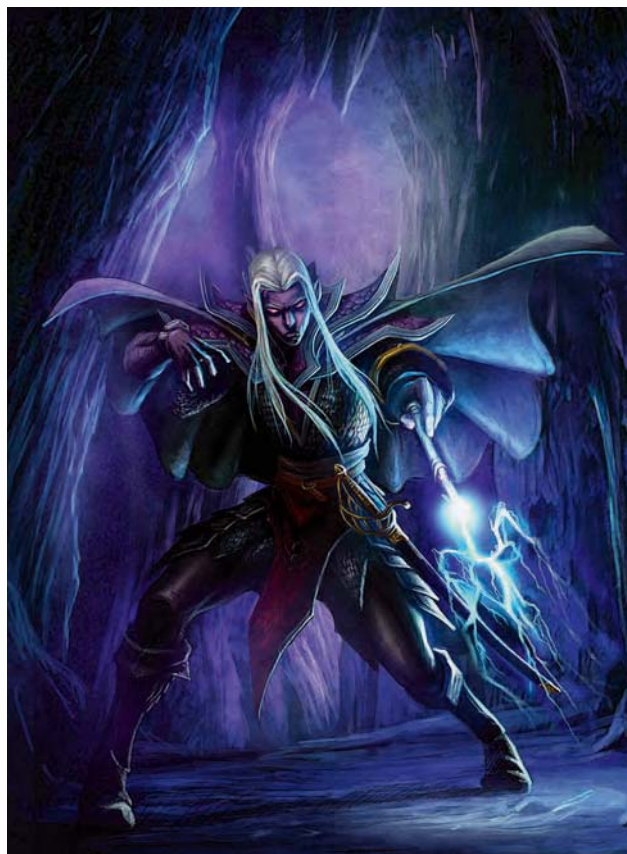
Atk Options disease (Fort DC 13, 1d3 days, 1d3 Dex and 1d3 Con), smite good (+5 damage)

Abilities Str 12, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 7, Wis 12, Cha 4

SQ share spells

Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse^B

Skills Hide +9, Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Spot +5, Swim +11



House wizard

SPIDER SENTINEL

In times of peace, drow mounted on monstrous spider steeds protect the tunnels around their cities. These dark elves, known as spider sentinels, swiftly eliminate spies and outlanders. When their cities muster for war, spider sentinels reinforce other units of drow, lending their strength (and that of their mounts) to defend their people.

SPIDER SENTINEL

CR 10

Male drow ranger 9
NE Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +12, Spot +12
Languages Common, Elven, Undercommon; empathic link

AC 21, touch 16, flat-footed 16
(+5 Dex, +5 armor, +1 deflection)

hp 49 (9 HD)

Immune magic *sleep* effects

Resist evasion; **SR** 20

Fort +9, **Ref** +13, **Will** +5 (+7 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +1 rapier +11/+6 (1d6+2/18–20)

Ranged +1 composite shortbow +15/+10 (1d6+2/×3 plus poison) or

Ranged +1 composite shortbow +9/+9/+9 (1d6+2/×3 plus poison) with Manyshot or

Ranged +1 composite shortbow +13/+10/+13 (1d6+2/×3 plus poison) with Rapid Shot

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +10

Atk Options favored enemy monstrous humanoids +4, favored enemy aberrations +2, poison (drow sleep poison, Fort DC 13, unconscious 1 minute/unconscious 2d4 hours)

Combat Gear brooch of shielding, 3 doses of drow sleep poison, *potions of cure moderate wounds*, 2 *potions of sanctuary*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th):
1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Abilities Str 12, Dex 20, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 15

SQ animal companion (Large monstrous spider), swift tracker, wild empathy +11 (+7 magical beasts), woodland stride

Feats Endurance^B, Manyshot^B, Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Rapid Shot^B, Spider Companion*, Track^B, Vermin Trainer*

* See Chapter 2

Skills Handle Animal +11, Hide +11, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +7, Knowledge (geography) +4, Knowledge (religion) +4, Listen +12, Move Silently +10, Ride +11, Search +6, Spot +12, Survival +5 (+7 underground)

Possessions combat gear plus +1 mithral shirt, +1 rapier, +1 composite shortbow (+1 Str bonus) with 20 arrows, *ring of protection* +1, *cloak of resistance* +2, *gloves of Dexterity* +2

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.



Spider sentinel

SENTINEL'S COMPANION

CR —

Large monstrous spider
N Large vermin
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.;
Listen +0, Spot +8

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 13
(–1 size, +4 Dex, +4 natural)

hp 33 (6 HD)

Resist evasion

Immune mind-affecting spells and abilities

Fort +7, **Ref** +4, **Will** +1

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +7 (1d8+7 plus poison)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +12

Atk Options poison (Fort DC 14, 1d6 Str/1d6 Str)

Special Actions web (Escape Artist DC 17, break DC 21, hp 12; MM 289)

Abilities Str 16, Dex 18, Con 12, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 2

SQ link, share spells

Skills Climb +13, Hide +3, Jump +15, Spot +8

Drow Adventures

This section details several drow encounters and adventure sites. You can use them as individual events in your game or link them to form the core building blocks of a larger drow campaign.

DROW AMBUSH (EL 14)

SETUP

This ambush can take place in any of the tunnels that riddle the Borderlands around the Vault of the Drow. Here in these half-wild areas, renegade drow—outcasts and rebels—work as bandits, avoiding the infrequent drow patrols and looking for easy marks to waylay.

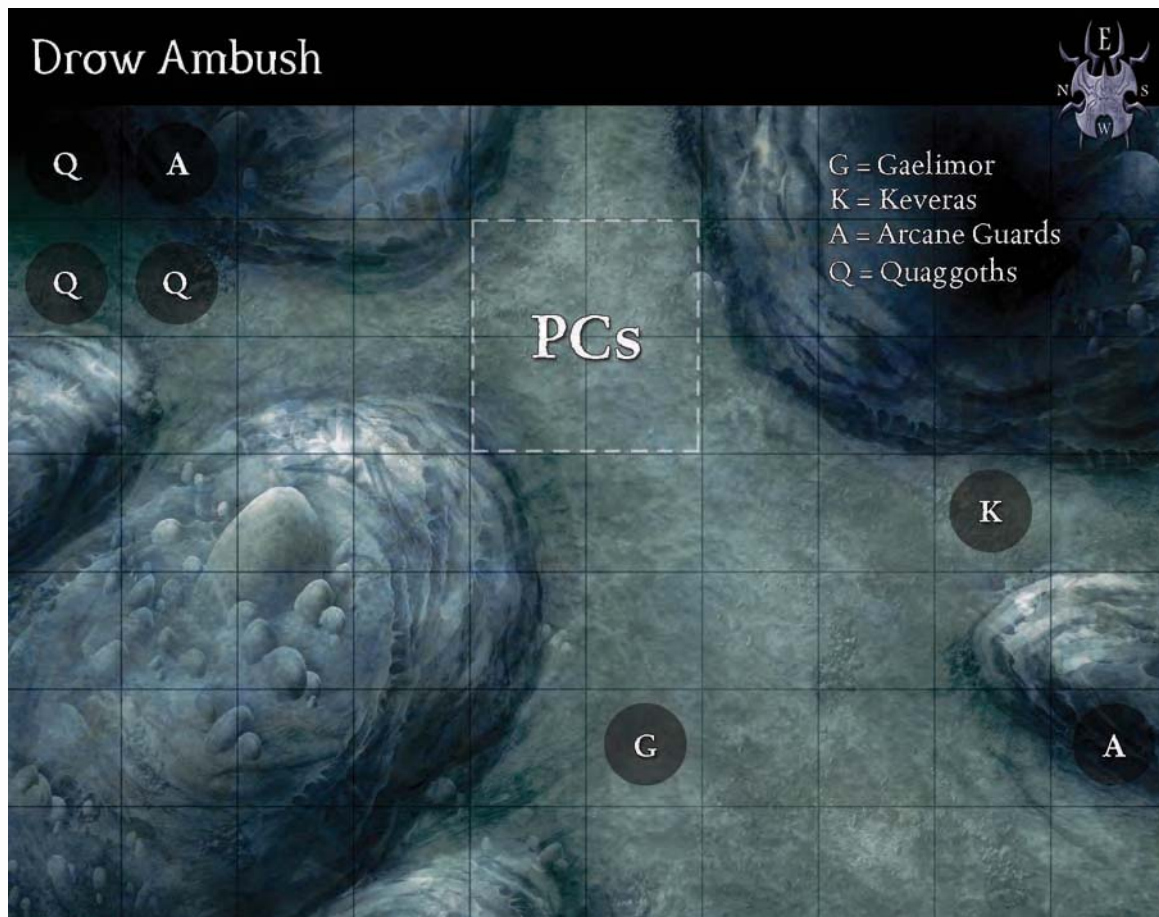
One of the most infamous bandits is a cavestalker named Gaelimor Zyrshaen. This drow male has long chafed under the matriarchal leash of Erelhei-Cinlu and has made it his mission to obtain that power and freedom for himself, preferably at his matron's expense. To this end, he uses his cavestalker skills to locate and rob likely victims and then disappear far into the Wilds, where even the drow fear to follow him. Rumors of a secret hideout where an army of drow rebels prepares to

invade the Vault have yet to be proven but are rampant in the back alleys of Erelhei-Cinlu.

In this encounter, you can have Gaelimor try to rob the PCs of their valuables; he is often merciful, sparing the lives of non-drow and of drow who are not closely connected with the houses or the Fane of Lolth. Alternatively, you can have him approach the PCs from a position of strength to offer an alliance, an exchange of favors, or perhaps a job for which they seem especially suited. Whatever the outcome, if Gaelimor survives the encounter, he can become a long-running foil or ally for your drow campaign.

Set up the encounter as the PCs move through the tunnels. Gaelimor notices them and starts tracking them surreptitiously. Allow the members of the party to make Spot and Listen checks opposed by Gaelimor's Hide and Move Silently checks. He does not follow them too closely, so include the penalties for distance.

Meanwhile, some of his fellow bandits set up the ambush, for whatever reason you decide—Gaelimor might want to retain the PCs' services, form a temporary alliance, or just rob them blind. His gang includes his erratic lieutenant Keveras Lorakythe, two arcane guards who stole from their house and fled to escape punishment, and three greater quaggoths who serve Gaelimor's ally, the quaggoth warleader Grommtt.



To trigger this encounter, read:

The tunnel ahead widens momentarily. Standing nonchalantly in the center of this wide spot is a drow male with his arms folded across his chest, conspicuously away from the spiked chain and short sword hanging from his belt. His face betrays a ghost of a smile, as if he knows something you don't, or perhaps simply because he is supremely confident. You don't find either option particularly comforting. However, his stance suggests that he'd rather talk than fight.

The natural stone in this area is rough and dry, and the walls and stalagmites can be ascended or descended with a successful DC 20 Climb check. The major stalagmites shown on the map reach a height of 30 feet. The walls rise upward for 40 feet before curving in toward the stone ceiling, which features only a few small stalactites.

The northwestern section of the map is a maze of stalagmite formations. It is considered a narrow space (see *Cramped Spaces*, page 159), so those who move through that section move at half speed, lose their Dexterity bonus to Armor Class (if any), take a –2 penalty on attack rolls made with light weapons, and take a –4 penalty on attack rolls made with one-handed weapons. Two-handed weapons cannot be used in the stalagmite-filled area.

Gaelimor Zyrshaen

hp 62; see page 71

CR 12

Gaelimor's reaction depends on his purpose in tracking the PCs and on the party's response. When the adventurers reach the point on the map marked "PCs," Gaelimor calls out in Undercommon for them to stop, knowing that they are in the line of sight of his arcane guards. If the PCs notice the guards, Gaelimor shrugs it off, saying that precautions are necessary in these parts. He then attempts to parlay.

If the PCs attack the drow or refuse to stop, or if Gaelimor intended to attack them all along, he quickly retreats into the tangle of stalagmites to the northwest, drawing his spiked chain as he moves. He fights when within that narrow space, relying on his expert spelunker ability to offset the penalties imposed. If the battle looks hopeless, Gaelimor retreats.

Keveras Lorakythe

hp 41; see page 161

CR 10

Keveras is Gaelimor's principal aide. He sits on a ledge 5 feet above the floor, using a large stalagmite for cover and concealment from the party. At Gaelimor's signal, or if he sees Gaelimor retreat, Keveras uses the Tumble skill to leap from his hiding place and then engages the toughest-looking PCs with his spiked chain. He uses Tumble and his feats to remain out of the adventurers' reach and to harass them. If Keveras thinks his life is endangered, he retreats from the battle, abandoning his comrades.

2 Drow Arcane Guards**CR 5**

hp 19 each; see page 184; each guard also wears a spider kit (page 92)

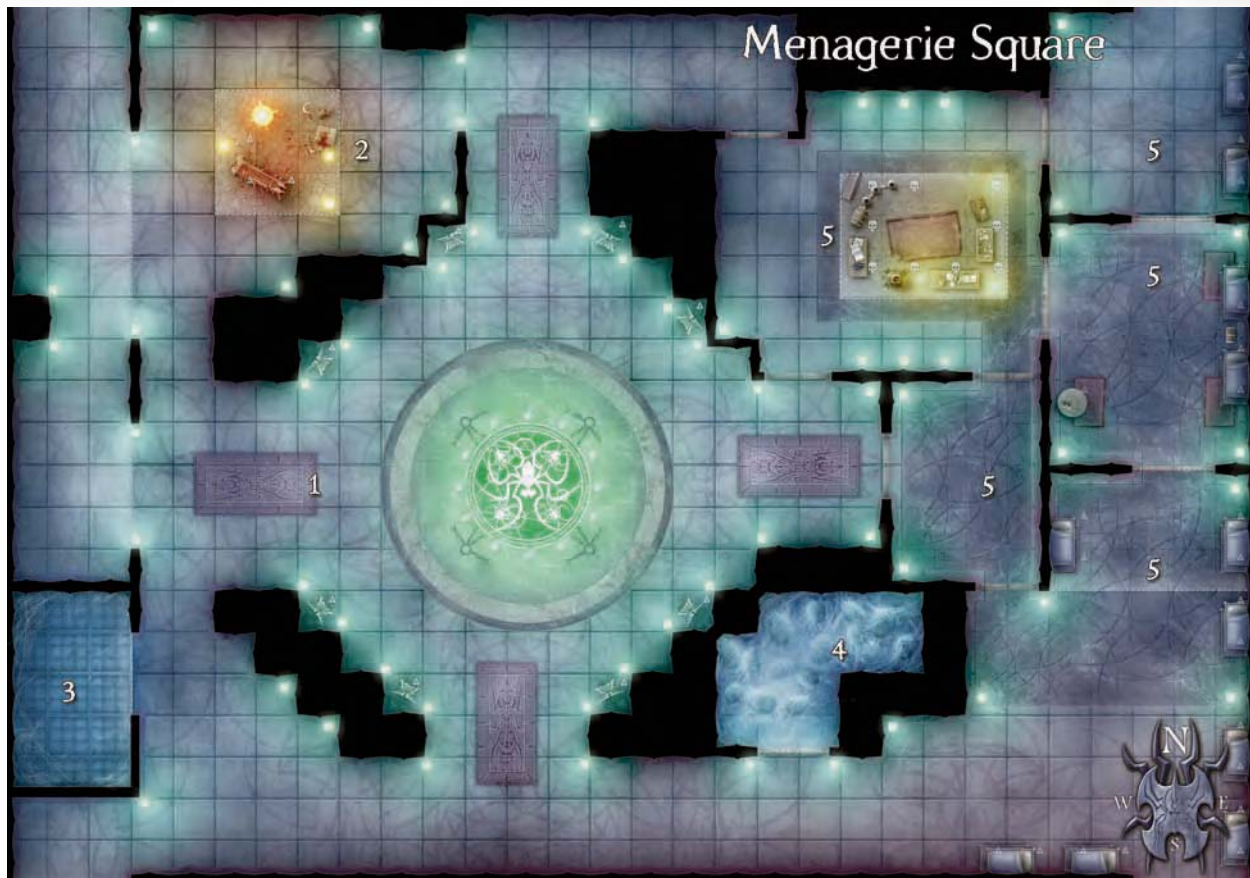
These guards cling to perches 20 feet high on the sides of stalagmites, using spider kits to keep their hands free. They have poisoned crossbow bolts readied to fire at Gaelimor's signal or at aggressive acts by the PCs. Cloaked in total darkness, the guards use the Hide skill to remain unseen. Unless the party makes successful Spot checks for areas at that height, the guards probably remain unnoticed until they attack. Before descending to engage in melee, each guard drinks a *potion of haste* and a *potion of cat's grace*, and uses his wizard spells and his *faerie fire* spell-like ability. The guards prefer to target spellcasters and rogues with their spells and poisoned crossbow bolts.

3 Greater Quaggoths**CR 6**

hp 79 each; see page 138

These barbarians are meant to bear the brunt of any fighting that becomes necessary. They try to hide in the shadows at the base of a large stalagmite, but they can be spotted with a successful Spot check opposed by their Hide checks. The greater quaggoths stand with their +1 *greatclubs* drawn, but they do not attack unless they are attacked by the PCs or unless the drow attack the party. In either event, the barbarians immediately rage and charge into battle, targeting the PCs who most look like formidable fighters. Sent by their warleader to serve Gaelimor, they fight to the death to defend the drow.

The outcome of this ambush is up to you and the PCs. It might simply serve as an introduction to the dangers of dealing with drow, or it could establish Gaelimor as a tenuous ally or a bitter rival who can return in a future adventure.



MENAGERIE SQUARE

Anyone visiting Erelhei-Cinlu eventually finds his way (often against his will) to Menagerie Square, located in the heart of the Ghetto of Chattel. Not so much a single building as numerous interconnected galleries, tents, huts, and domes, the square takes up an entire city block. It is the site of perhaps the largest ongoing slave auction above or below ground, run by an ancient drow known as the Venerable Fleshpeddler. The auction is also notorious for its exotic variety of merchandise.

This encounter occurs in a covered portico in Menagerie Square, where the PCs happen to be conducting business of some kind. At the same time, a delegation of kuo-toas led by an important whip priestess is being shown a private selection of slaves for purchase. When the whip spies the party, she tries to buy one of them instead. The servants of the Fleshpeddler, eager to please their client and turn a profit, try to apprehend the chosen character. When they fail, the servants of the kuo-toa whip also try to subdue the recalcitrant slave-to-be.

1. AUCTION FLOOR (EL 11 OR 12)

The encounter begins when the party enters area 1 on the map. A private slave auction is currently underway here for Slroolishdop, the visiting noble kuo-toa whip. She comes from the same fingerling brood as the kuo-toa priest-prince Va-Guugh, and therefore she is treated as a favored cousin of the prince. The Venerable Fleshpeddler set up the special

meeting through some of his bugbear overseers, who are running the auction.

While the PCs complete their personal business in area 2, the clerk they are dealing with motions them into area 1, where he has left an item he needs. Slroolishdop is seated in the northernmost chair on the southeastern section of the wall, her four kuo-toa monitors arrayed around her protectively. She watches as two bugbears tout the merits of six slaves who are chained to a central dais. When Slroolishdop happens to spy the PCs, she decides that one of them would make a perfect slave. When this occurs, the clerk that the PCs are dealing with quickly sidles out of the way and disappears. The bugbear overseers move in to capture the marked character.

To trigger this encounter, read:

As you step through the arch into the high-domed chamber, you see that a slave auction is in progress. It appears to be a private auction for very important guests—a group of kuo-toas gathered on the far side of the room. Chained to a marble auction block by wrist and ankle fetters are six nearly nude slaves: a male drow, two female drow, a male deep gnome, and two female hobgoblins. Two bugbears wearing off-white robes and wielding guisarmes display the slaves for their guests.

As you watch, one of the kuo-toas, seated among the others and resplendent in a colorful headdress, points your way and croaks something to those around her.

Anyone who knows Undercommon and who makes a successful DC 10 Listen check realizes that the kuo-toa said, "I'll take that one." Any PCs who understand her words have a surprise round in which to act before the bugbear overseers move in.

The marble dais is 1 foot high and does not cause much of an impediment, but anyone moving across it must make a successful DC 8 Balance check to avoid getting tangled in the chains. Anyone who gets tangled can free himself only with a move action. Anyone who fails the Balance check by 5 or more is tripped.

The six slaves are unexceptional specimens of their races; each has one level in the NPC class of your choice. They do not involve themselves in the melee, but if freed from their chains, they immediately attempt to flee Menagerie Square. Each bugbear overseer has a key to the fetters, which are masterwork manacles secured by bolts to the dais.

Masterwork Manacles: hardness 10; hp 10; break DC 28; Open Lock DC 25.

2 BUGBEAR OVERSEERS

CR 8

hp 37 each; see page 121

Once Slroolishdop chooses a PC as her slave, the overseers split up and approach the party from opposite sides of the dais. One blows a signal whistle to summon the stone giant Gristle from area 3. The other casts *ray of enfeeblement* at the PC in question. Then both use their +1 *guisarmes* to make trip attacks to subdue that character, though they do not hesitate to use deadly force on other party members. These overseers do not retreat, counting on Gristle to back them up.

4 KUO-TOA MONITORS

CR 7

hp 38 each; see page 132

When melee begins, the kuo-toa monitors (all unarmed monks) stand by silently, giving cover to Slroolishdop and protecting her from any threats. If she is attacked, or if the PCs are on the verge of defeating the bugbears and Gristle, the monitors launch into action. They try to keep the chosen character alive while incapacitating or killing the rest of the party.

SLROOLISHDOP

CR 9

Female kuo-toa whip
hp 40; see page 131

At first, Slroolishdop sits passively and watches the capture of her selected slave. However, if her monitors engage in melee, she calls in her native language for aid from another whip that is currently in area 3, and then uses her *punish the infidels* ability to subject the PCs to the effect of a *doom* spell. The other kuo-toa whip arrives 1 round after being called, at which time both whips begin assisting the monitors with spells and lightning bolts. If the opportunity presents itself, Slroolishdop sends the other whip to capture the selected PC with her pincer staff.

Slroolishdop carries a large sack made of stitched goblinoid hide that holds 1,500 pp, which she brought to pay for her slave purchases.

The overseers and Gristle fight to the death out of fear of reprisal from the Venerable Fleshpeddler. The kuo-toas also fight to the death except for Slroolishdop, who quietly surrenders if all her underlings are defeated.

Shortly after the combat ends, a number of drow arcane guards (see page 184) arrive to take charge of the situation. Rather than attack the party, they try to escort Slroolishdop back to the kuo-toan embassy. Of course, if the PCs choose to fight, the arcane guards are happy to oblige them.

2. PURSER'S OFFICE

The PCs begin the encounter in this area, where a clerk is helping them conduct whatever business has brought them to Menagerie Square. The office holds the records of all recent slave transactions. A secret panel in the floor (which can be found with a successful DC 40 Search check) hides a small compartment that contains 5,600 gp in coins and gems. Nothing else about the office is relevant to the overall encounter.

3. HOLDING CELLS (EL 10)

Use this encounter if the PCs enter area 3 on the map. Here, a number of cells contain slaves who are waiting to be shown at the auction in area 1. Currently, the cells hold a dozen slaves of assorted races and genders. When the encounter begins, the slave tender, Gristle, is preparing the next group of slaves for display while the second kuo-toa whip observes him. Both are drawn into the encounter as explained in area 1, above.

GRISTLE

CR 8

Male stone giant
hp 119; see MM 124

KUO-TOA WHIP

CR 9

hp 40; see page 131

4. COCOON STORAGE

Use this encounter if the PCs enter area 4 on the map. This locked room (accessible with a successful DC 25 Open Lock check) holds special slaves who have been paralyzed with poisons and wrapped in protective spider silk cocoons for storage. You can put any slaves you wish in here. Otherwise, the storage room holds nothing relevant to the overall encounter.

5. PRIVATE CHAMBERS

Use this encounter if the PCs enter area 5 on the map. These rooms serve as meeting, storage, and private chambers for the staff of Menagerie Square. They contain nothing relevant to the overall encounter.

PHAZEUROTH'S LAIR

Located in an out-of-the-way cavern several miles west of the Vault of the Drow is the former lair of Vatirian, a reclusive deep dragon who had long been allied with the drow of Erelhei-Cinlu. A century ago, the creature met his end in a cave-in. The lair stood abandoned and undiscovered until a few months ago, when it was found and claimed by Vatirian's grandson, the adult deep dragon Phazeuroth. Ever since, he has spied on the Vault, plotting how best to profit from an alliance with the dark elves of Erelhei-Cinlu. However, he was recently approached by a delegation of strange drow who did not come from the city, and they told Phazeuroth of the true treasure contained within his grandsire's lair.

To reach the lair, a visitor must climb a perilous rock slide by making a successful DC 15 Balance check. Those who fail the check fall 1d6×10 feet, taking 1d6 points of damage per 10 feet fallen. Those who succeed soon come upon the lair's small entrance. Creatures of Large size must squeeze to fit through the entrance, and bigger creatures cannot pass through it at all.

The lair is unlit, and all descriptions below assume that the PCs have a light source or at least darkvision. If they do not, modify the descriptions as needed.

1. ENTRANCE (EL 11)

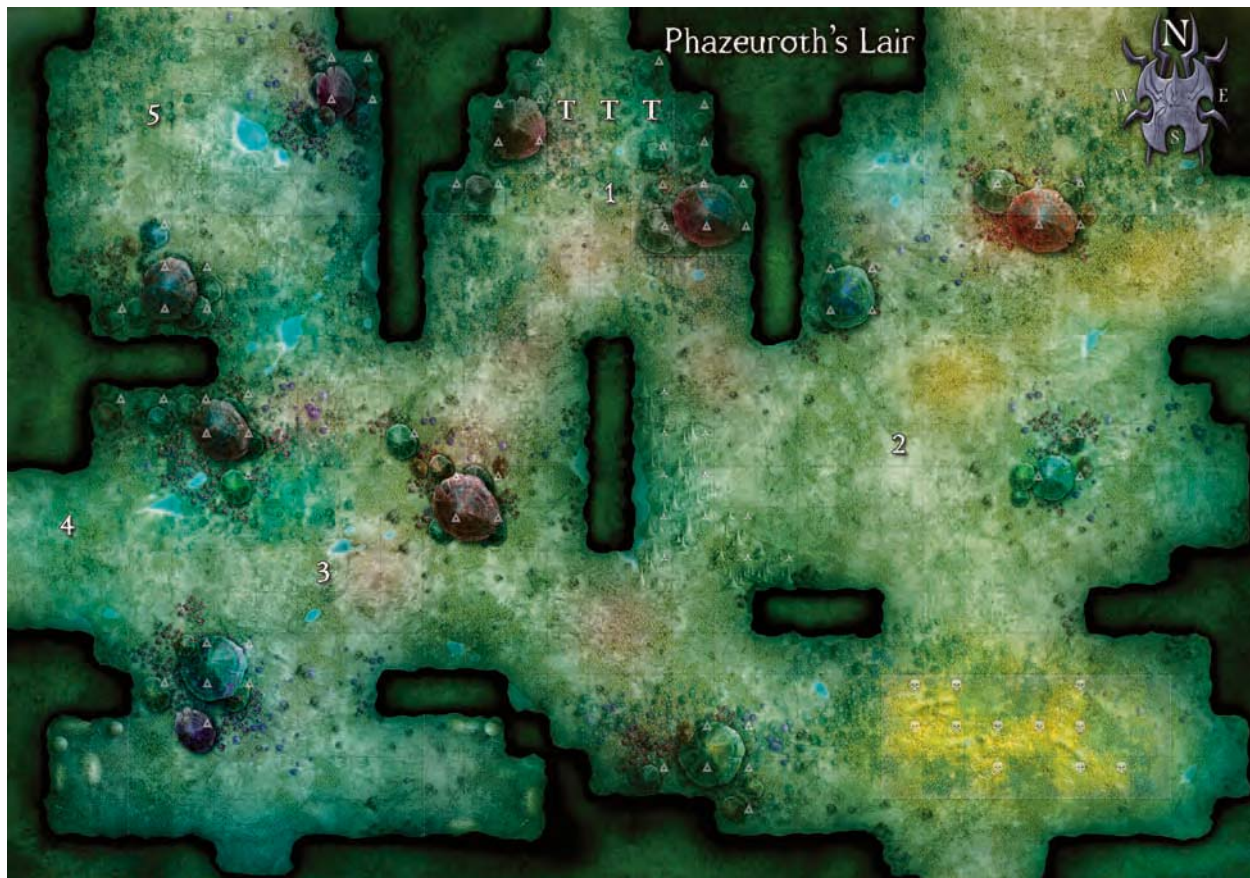
This encounter occurs when the party reaches area 1 on the map. A low crawl tunnel opens into a wider, unlit cavern. Here, Phazeuroth has repaired a trap left behind by his grandsire to guard against incursions by kuo-toas and other foes.

Phazeuroth always enters his lair in humanoid form. A successful DC 10 Search check in the dust and muck of the floor reveals several sets of humanoid footprints coming and going. They exit to the southeast and the southwest, but where the ground firms and dries up, they taper off after only a few feet.

For a long time, this room has been exposed to a small lode of darklight ore (see page 154). Too weak to harm anyone, the mild ore is strong enough to have caused the growth of five violet fungi, as depicted by the five largest mushrooms on the map. The smaller mushrooms represent harmless immature fungi.

To trigger this encounter, read:

Scrambling through the dust and muck at the entrance to this cave, you are finally able to stand up in a dark cavern. Tall mushrooms surmounting densely packed bases of rootlike tendrils occupy the perimeter of the chamber. Tunnels exit to the southeast and the southwest.



On the map, the three squares marked T show the location of a carefully concealed pit trap. The trap drops 50 feet to a pile of jagged, broken stalagmites that have been coated with violet fungus poison. The fungi in the entrance area are instinctively aware of the trap and avoid it.

If the trap is triggered, the noise alerts Phazeuroth, who is resting in area 2 and taking 10 on his Listen check.

POISONED SPIKED PIT TRAP

CR 10

Mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; hidden lock bypass (Search DC 25, Open Lock DC 30); Reflex DC 20 avoids; 50 ft. deep (5d6, fall); multiple targets (first target in each of three adjacent 5-ft. squares); pit spikes (Atk +10 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d4+5 plus poison each); poison (violet fungus poison, Fort DC 14, 1d4 Str and 1d4 Con/1d4 Str and 1d4 Con); Search DC 16; Disable Device DC 25.

5 VIOLET FUNGI

CR 3

N Medium plant

Init -1; **Senses** low-light vision

Languages —

AC 13, touch 9, flat-footed 13

(-1 Dex, +4 natural)

hp 15 (2 HD)

Immune plant traits (MM 313)

Fort +6, **Ref** -1, **Will** +0

Speed 10 ft. (2 squares)

Melee 4 tentacles each +3 (1d16+2 plus poison)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +3

Atk Options poison (Fort DC 14, 1d4 Str + 1d4 Con/1d4 Str + 1d4 Con)

Abilities Str 14, Dex 8, Con 16, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 9

SQ plant traits (MM 313)

Feats —

Skills —

The violet fungi in the lair have grown used to Phazeuroth, who has proven largely immune to their attacks, and they ignore the deep dragon's presence. If chasing intruders, the fungi do not pursue beyond this area.

2. DRAGON'S DEN (EL 14)

Use this encounter when the PCs reach area 2 on the map. This den is where Phazeuroth spends most of his time, and he prefers to rest in dragon form in the large central area. However, if he hears intruders in area 1 or area 3, he moves into the northern portion of the den and readies his breath weapon.

Spaced around his den are five violet fungi, as depicted on the map by the five largest mushrooms. The smaller mushrooms represent harmless immature fungi.

The openings at the edges of the map to the north, east, and south end in natural walls of rough stone after only a few feet. The southern portion of the cave holds Phazeuroth's treasure hoard, which consists of 2,300 pp; 10,800 gp; 22,650 sp; 48,000 cp; assorted gems worth 12,500 gp; three pairs of cinnabar eye cusps; two dwarfblind stones; two matching +1 virulent daggers; a major cloak of displacement; a chaos diamond; a manual of bodily health +3; and a demon rod.

To trigger this encounter, read:

The tunnel opens into an echoing cavern that has a stalactite-encrusted ceiling at least 60 feet above, supported in places by natural stone columns. Several clumps of giant fungus grow here and there, and the entire area has a musty, reptilian odor mixed with an acrid tang. To the south, gold glints beyond a natural arch.

PHAZEUROTH

CR 15

Male adult deep dragon
hp 120; see page 117

Phazeuroth defends his lair as described in the Strategy and Tactics section of the deep dragon monster entry (see page 114). When attacking intruders, he does not care if violet fungi are destroyed in the process.

5 VIOLET FUNGI

CR 3

hp 15 each; see above

The violet fungi will not leave the den. The southernmost fungus remains in the shadows by the treasure hoard, feasting on cave lichen, and does not attack unless an intruder approaches.

3. EXCAVATED CAVERN (EL 8 OR 11)

Use this encounter when the PCs reach area 3 on the map. This cavern was the site of the collapse that killed Vativian, the grandsire of Phazeuroth. It has been painstakingly excavated over the last few weeks by the deep dragon and some of his guests. The crumbling, 10-foot-high ceiling is held up by a forest of steel poles situated along the walls of the room. Though the ceiling appears unstable, occasionally raining down dust and grit, it has been stabilized and is in no danger of further collapse.

The opening to the south once led to a long, low-ceilinged cave, but now only the portion visible on the map is open. The rest is filled with rubble excavated from the collapse of this room. Bones among the debris are the crushed remnants of Vativian, which Phazeuroth—who is not overly sentimental—did not bother to clean up. Moving through the debris is equal to moving through light rubble, increasing the DC for Balance and Tumble checks by 2.

Three violet fungi inhabit this cavern, as depicted on the map by the three largest mushrooms. The smaller mushrooms represent harmless immature fungi.

One round after the PCs enter this room, three szarkai fighters enter from area 4. As soon as they see the PCs, they attack, assuming that the adventurers work for the drow of Erelhei-Cinlu. The szarkai try to flank PCs against the cavern's violet fungi and risk straying within reach of the fungi themselves, trusting in their heavy armor to keep them safe.

If the sounds of battle are magically silenced, the szarkai druid in area 5 hears the noise and arrives in 3 rounds to investigate.

To trigger this encounter, read:

The low-fractured ceiling looks ominously unstable, and it clearly collapsed at some point in the past. The floor is covered with bits of rubble and a layer of dust disturbed by the passage of many feet. Steel poles anchored into the floor and walls seem to hold the ceiling in place. Scattered among the rubble on the floor are a number of large white bones that seem to have been fractured or crushed. Part of a large draconic skull rests in one corner.

The szarkai in Phazeuroth's lair have recently allied with the deep dragon. They belong to a tribe of albino drow that lives several weeks' journey from Erelhei-Cinlu. The members of this tribe call themselves Ul-Ilendeth, which means "drow of destiny" in Elven, and they believe that they are destined to rule all drow one day. For centuries, they have kept their existence a secret from other Underdark races by living in the most hostile environments possible, often near darklight ore lodes. They take precautions to shield themselves from darklight ore poisoning, but generations of mild exposure have caused the Ul-Ilendeth to mutate. As a result, all Ul-Ilendeth appear emaciated and frail, despite their fierce strength, and are sometimes mistaken for undead upon first glance. They also have low Constitution scores, making them prone to the many diseases and toxins of the Underdark. Due to this infirmity, the Ul-Ilendeth are fanatical fatalists and fear nothing.

3 SZARKAI FIGHTERS

CR 5

Male albino drow fighter 4
NE Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +4, Spot +4
Languages Common, Elven, Undercommon

AC 22, touch 11, flat-footed 21
(+1 Dex, +9 armor, +2 shield)

hp 18 (4 HD)

Immune magic sleep effects

SR 15

Fort +3, **Ref** +4, **Will** +3 (+5 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee mwk bastard sword +10 (1d10+6/19–20)

Ranged mwk heavy crossbow +8 (1d10/19–20 plus poison)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +8

Atk Options poison (darklight brew, Fort DC 23, 2d6 Con + 1d6 Str/blindness)

Combat Gear 1 dose of darklight brew

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th, 40% arcane spell failure):
1/day—*dancing lights, darkness, faerie fire*

Abilities Str 18, Dex 17, Con 8, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 10

Feats Blind-Fight, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword)^B, Rapid Reload, Weapon Focus (bastard sword)^B, Weapon Specialization (bastard sword)^B

Skills Climb –5, Intimidate +6, Jump –5, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +2, Listen +4, Search +2, Spot +4, Survival +4

Possessions combat gear plus +1 full plate armor, heavy steel shield, masterwork bastard sword, masterwork heavy crossbow with 20 bolts

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

3 VIOLET FUNGI

CR 3

hp 15 each; see above

The violet fungi will not leave the cavern. They usually ignore the szarkai, having become used to the presence of the albino drow. However, if combat starts, the fungi grow agitated and flail at anything that comes within reach.

4. MINE FACE

Use this encounter when the PCs reach area 4 on the map. This area extends as a 20-foot-wide tunnel for 80 feet off the map to the west before hitting a dead end. When Vatirian originally claimed the lair, it included a mine that had been excavated by drow in search of darklight ore lodes, many generations ago. The location of the mine was lost to the current residents of Erelhei-Cinlu, its presence forgotten. Vatirian remembered, though, and the deep dragon was trying to reopen the mine and extend the excavations when he triggered the cave-in that killed him.

The dark elves of Erelhei-Cinlu still know nothing about the ancient mine, but the Ul-Ilendeth somehow learned of its existence, and that is the reason they now seek an alliance with Phazeuroth. The szarkai have depleted the stores of darklight ore in their homeland and followed divinations to the lair, hoping to reopen the old mine and dig out its ore. They have bribed Phazeuroth heavily, and because the deep dragon cares nothing for the metal that lies beyond the collapsed tunnel, he agreed to let them take as much as they want. The Ul-Ilendeth have only recently finished clearing away enough debris to gain access to the mine.

To trigger this encounter, read:

At the far end of this recently cleared tunnel is a wall of stone, the mine face where digging ceased. The stone of this wall is different from other stone in the caves. It has a rough, lumpy texture as if it contained tumors, and the bulges flicker with a dim purple glow. Three mining picks lie on the floor in front of the wall, and a wheeled metal hand cart holds a chest loaded with chunks of the strange stone.

The darklight lode causes darklight poisoning (Fort DC 18, 1d6 Con/mummy rot) in anyone who comes within 60 feet of the lode without proper shielding. For more details on darklight poisoning, see the sidebar Underdark Radiations, page 154.

The chest can hold up to 8 cubic feet of stone and is made of 2-inch-thick lead. It seals when closed and can be used to move the darklight ore safely. The chest is extremely heavy, weighing 300 pounds when empty and 700 pounds when full, but the wheeled metal hand cart is strong enough to move it. The cart is just small enough to squeeze through the entrance to Phazeuroth's lair.

5. TEMPORARY QUARTERS (EL 10)

Use this encounter when the PCs reach area 5 on the map. This side cavern serves as the campsite for the Ul-Ilendeth while they visit the lair. It is currently inhabited only by the Ul-Ilendeth leader, a szarkai druid, and two violet fungi that he controls through the use of a *command plants* spell (already in effect).

SZARKAI DRUID

Male szarkai druid 9

NE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +8, Spot +7

Languages Common, Druidic, Terran, Elven, Undercommon

AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 16; **Dodge** (+4 Dex, +4 armor, +2 shield)

hp 27 (9 HD)

Immune poison, sleep

SR 20

Fort +5, **Ref** +7, **Will** +11 (+13 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments); +4 against spell-like abilities of fey

Weakness light blindness

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); woodland stride

Melee +1 *wounding shortspear* +9/+4 (1d6+3 plus 2 Con)

Ranged +1 *wounding shortspear* +11 (1d6+3 plus 2 Con)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +8

Special Actions wild shape 3/day (Large, 9 hours)

Combat Gear 2 *potions of blur*

Druid Spells Prepared (CL 9th):

5th—*commune with nature*, *stoneskin*

4th—*arc of lightning*^{SC} (DC 19), *command plants* (DC 19), *sudden stalagmite*^{SC} (DC 19)

3rd—*cure moderate wounds*, *meld into stone*, *quillfire*^{SC} (+8 melee, +10 ranged), *remove disease*

2nd—*barkskin*, *blinding spittle*^{SC} (+6 ranged touch), *heat metal* (DC 17), *resist energy*, *warp wood* (DC 17)

1st—*babau slime*^{SC}, *cure light wounds* (2), *lesser vigor*^{SC}, *longstrider*, *magic stone* (+11 ranged)

0—*create water*, *flare* (DC 15), *guidance*, *know direction*, *mending*, *virtue*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th):

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *detect good*, *detect magic*, *faerie fire*, *levitate*

Abilities Str 14, Dex 19, Con 8, Int 12, Wis 20, Cha 7

SQ animal companion, nature sense, trackless step, wild empathy +7 (+3 magical beasts)

Feats Combat Casting, Dodge, Highborn Drow^{Und}, Improved Levitation^{Und}

Skills Concentration +11, Craft (alchemy) +13, Heal +11, Hide +1, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +7, Knowledge (nature) +11, Listen +8, Search +3, Spot +7, Survival +19

Possessions combat gear plus +1 *wounding shortspear*, +1 *hide armor*, heavy wooden shield

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds szarkai for 1 round. In addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

The north wall that appears to be open on the map actually ends at a wall of natural stone after only 1 foot.

To trigger this encounter, read:

This side cavern seems to serve as a campsite. Four bedrolls made of scaly black hide are spread out on the floor, with backpacks and various odds and ends strewn among them. Two large fungi stand over the bedrolls like guardians. A few small pools of water collect from the drips of stalactites above.

The bedrolls are made of dyed lizard hide. The backpacks hold barely edible foodstuffs and a few personal effects of crude

CR 10

drow construction, but one backpack also contains 75 pp and two vials of darklight brew poison (see page 94).

If the PCs have not already encountered the three szarkai fighters, they remain in area 4, excavating stone from the mine. If combat breaks out in the campsite, the fighters hear the noise and arrive in 5 rounds to investigate.

When the druid detects intruders, he orders the fungi to attack and uses *levitate* to hover near the 20-foot-high ceiling. From that vantage point, he drinks a *potion of blur* and casts *stoneskin*, *barkskin*, *lesser vigor*, and *magic stone*, in that order. He then engages the PCs with *quillfire*, *sudden stalagmite*, *arc of lightning*, and *blinding spittle*. He uses *resist energy* and *warp wood* to protect himself from spellcasters and archers, and if defeat appears imminent, he tries to escape by using *meld into stone* or his wild shape ability.

3 VIOLET FUNGI

CR 3

hp 15 each; see above

The violet fungi follow the commands of the druid.

HOUSE XANIQOS VILLA

The new noble House Xaniqos maintains a villa in the center of the Ghetto of Outcasts. From here, Lady Thandysha spins her plans for the ghetto.

1. CHAPEL OF LOLTH (EL 14)

This encounter occurs when the PCs are visiting the villa of House Xaniqos, meeting with Lady Thandysha and her personal guards for whatever reason has brought them to Erelhei-Cinlu—perhaps the completion of a mission or the sale of valuable information. During the meeting, opportunistic rivals move to eliminate the upstart house and its matron, and the villa comes under attack by the surrounding forces. (You can establish the identity and motivation of the rivals according to what best fits your campaign.) The PCs must find a way to escape from the embattled villa as they get their first genuine taste of drow politics.

The meeting room is situated at the center of the villa and serves as a chapel to Lolth. A large black marble altar bearing old bloodstains stands on a dais. At the north end of the room is an idol depicting the Spider Queen. Across the room to the south is a font of unholy water (enough to fill twenty flasks). The font gives off a moderate aura of conjuration if *detect magic* is used. If at least 1 hit point worth of blood is placed in the font, it and the entire southern wall become insubstantial, forming a *dimension door* that remains open for 1 minute. Anyone stepping through is transported to an alley a block away, outside the circle of the attacking forces. The font is the characters' most likely escape route if they can uncover the secret of its use.

If the party successfully escapes from the villa, this encounter is finished (unless the PCs willingly engage the attacking forces, a futile gesture at best). You can decide whether House Xaniqos survives the attack or falls and is replaced by another upstart house.

To trigger this encounter, read:

Your audience with the Lady Thandysha, Matron of House Xaniqos, has come to an end. Her expression remains inscrutable, as if she is deep in thought. Suddenly, the moment is interrupted by a dull thud that seems to shake the foundations of the villa. Before anyone can react, a bugbear with smoldering fur runs into the room, shouting, "We're under attack!"

In a flurry, the room begins to empty of the congregated drow and warriors of other races. Lady Thandysha starts barking orders for the defense of the villa. As she departs to the south, she issues a final command to two heavily armed drow who remain in the chapel. "These people are obviously spies. Kill them and then join me at the front gate."

The warriors Thandysha has left behind are two dread fangs of Lolth who serve her fanatically. They block the way between the party and the matron. Even if the PCs get past the dread fangs, they are unlikely to catch up with Lady Thandysha because immediately after leaving the room, she thinks better of checking on the front gate and instead uses *word of recall* to return to her estate. If the party manages to confront her somehow, her statistics appear on page 162.

2 DREAD FANGS OF LOLT

CR 13

hp 64 each; use the statistics for Shalzad Raelnan, page 78

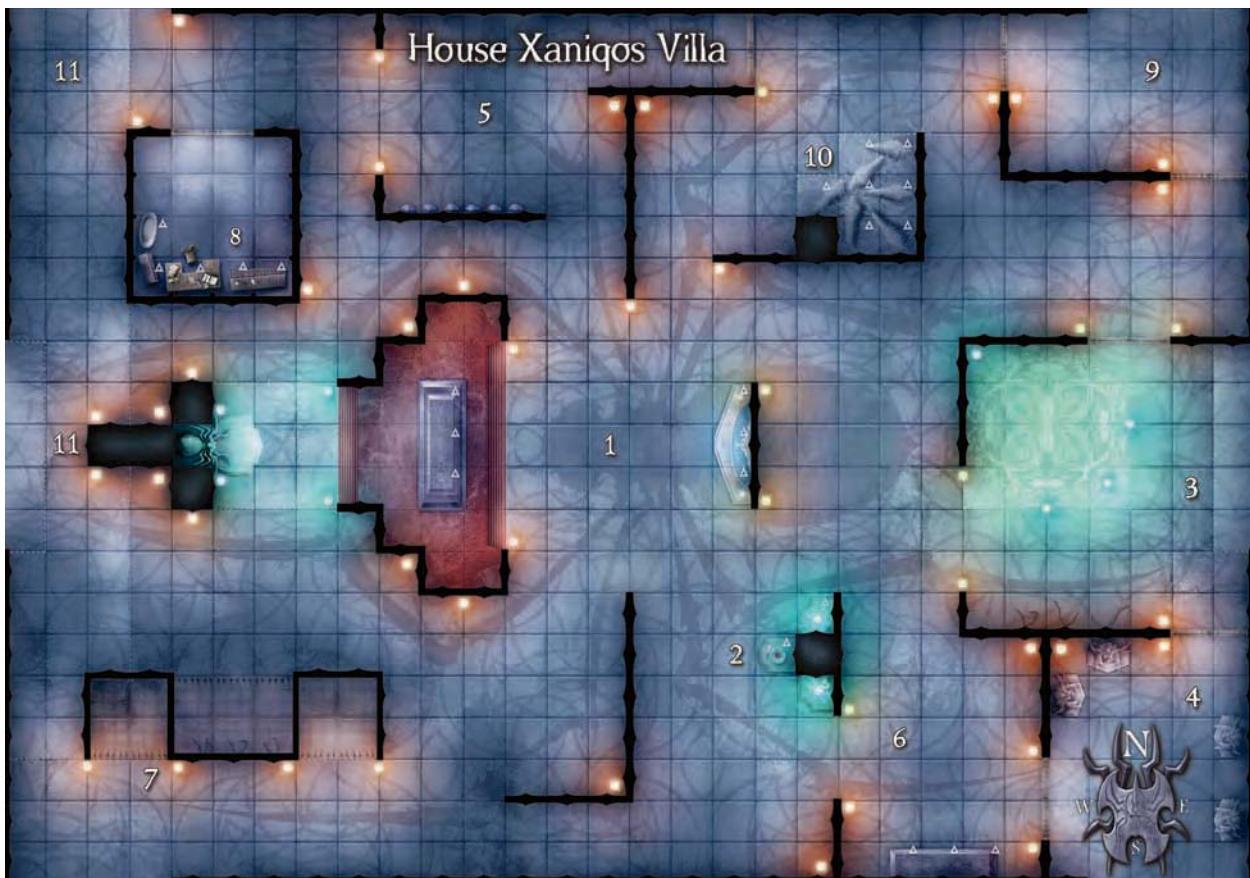
The dread fangs fight to the death in an attempt to destroy the PCs.

2. ART GALLERY

Use this encounter when the PCs reach the area labeled 2 on the map. This room displays a small collection of artwork. The west and east alcoves each hold an illusory sculpture, created by Xaniqos artisans, combining *permanent image* and *persistent image*. The two sculptures can be dispelled by a successful check against caster level 15th. Between them on a stand is an antique kuo-toan vase over 1,000 years old. The vase is extremely fragile but is worth 2,500 gp if it can be successfully transported out of the villa.

The illusory sculpture in the west alcove depicts a beautiful female drow performing a graceful and exotic dance. Her silvery hair, bound in hundreds of braids, flails about her wildly. A moment later, the image shifts, and the female transforms into a drider, mouthing a silent scream of rage and pain as she disembowels herself with a spider-shaped ritual dagger. After another minute, the image shifts back to its original form. The sculpture changes back and forth in an endless loop.

The illusory sculpture in the east alcove depicts a tall drow female wearing a white toga. Her head has been shaved bald, and she seems to be giving a speech, gesturing with her arms and hands while her lips move. She makes no sound, but if a viewer speaks Elven, he can attempt a DC 15 Spot check to read the image's lips and determine that she is extolling the blessed vices of Lolth. Anyone who makes a successful DC 25 Spot check notices that the speaker's seemingly innocuous hand gestures are subtly forming symbols. A viewer who notices this and who can understand Drow Sign Language



can translate her gestures, which say, "Feed life blood to pool, open portal." This statement is a clue to the use of the *dimension door* in area 1.

3. MAIN ENTRANCE (EL 11)

Use this encounter when the PCs reach area 3 on the map. The main entrance to the villa is blocked by large mithral gates held shut with a mithral crossbar. The forces outside the villa are massed just beyond, hammering away at the gates with all the spells and brute force at their disposal. As a result, the gates are starting to dent and buckle. Anyone who removes the crossbar is immediately overwhelmed by hundreds of attackers, including a high priestess of Lolth (see page 167), a master wizard of Erelhei-Cinlu (use the statistics for Anybys Velifane, page 160), dozens of arcane guards (see page 184) and troll filth-eaters, three score regular drow warriors (see page 169), and over a hundred bugbears.

Defending the gates are ten drow warriors who are part of Lady Thandysha's detachment and a troll filth-eater recently recruited from the surrounding ghetto. They have wedged heavy stone beams against the gates to reinforce them, but the beams are beginning to crack. It is only a matter of time until the gates burst open and the villa is lost. However, that will not happen unless the PCs are foolish enough to open the gates, or until you decide that enough time has passed. Just be sure to give the PCs ample time to make their escape before you allow the gates to fall.

Before the party enters this chamber, any PC who makes a successful DC 5 Listen check can hear the sounds of hammering on the mithral gates.

To trigger this encounter, read:

The hammering of powerful spells and mighty blows ring against the silvery metal of the double gates in the room's south wall. The gates are warped and bent, riddled with protrusions caused by the phenomenal concussions. The noise in this chamber is almost overpowering. Heavy stone beams have been propped against the gates, but even these reinforcements are beginning to crack.

Damaged Mithral Gates, Barred and Braced: hardness 15; hp 240 (currently 110); break DC 38.

10 DROW WARRIORS

hp 4 each; see page 169

CR 1

These warriors were tasked to defend the main gates to the death, and they fear reprisal from Lady Thandysha more than they fear the invaders. The drow do not realize that their matriarch has already fled the villa.

TROLL FILTH-EATER

hp 174; see page 146

CR 11

This troll is not overly bright, but it realizes that it receives a larger food allotment when it follows the orders of the drow. It immediately rages when the PCs enter the room and will pursue them with a mindless fury wherever they go in the villa (and beyond, if possible).

4. ARMORY (EL 8)

Use this encounter when the PCs reach area 4 on the map. The armory still holds a few weapons and suits of armor that the villa's defenders did not have time to don before rushing to respond to the attack.

The opening in the west wall shown on the map is merely a shallow alcove holding half-empty weapon racks.

The house wizard in the tower above left his shield guardian to defend the armory.

To trigger this encounter, read:

Armor stands are spaced around the periphery of this chamber. Most are empty, but four still hold suits of ornate armor of drow make. An alcove in the west wall contains half-empty weapon racks that offer a handful of viciously serrated and barbed blades and spears. The door of iron bars that normally blocks access to these weapons hangs open, its chains smashed.

Three of the four suits of armor are black masterwork studded leather. The fourth suit is +2 *drowcraft chainmail* (see Underdark Radiations, page 154).

The weapon racks hold four longswords, two spears, and a hand crossbow, all mundane. However, the PCs also find a +1 *light burst spear* (see the light burst weapon property, page 95).

SHIELD GUARDIAN

hp 112; see MM 223

CR 8

The house wizard left the shield guardian with orders to attack anyone who enters the armory but does not bear the jet crossbow bolt insignia of House Xaniqos. However, the guardian was also ordered to defend the villa's gates. Thus, if the main gates at area 3 are breached, the shield guardian goes to that location and attacks anyone it finds there who does not bear the insignia.

5. TORTURE CHAMBER (EL 14)

Use this encounter when the PCs reach area 5 on the map. This room was used to torture prisoners to extract information, as well as to provide entertainment for the drow. Currently, the manacles hold no captives, but the room is not empty. A troll tunnel thug is here, preparing to sneak out of the villa through the postern gate in area 7 so that it can get behind the attacking forces and slay their leaders.

The troll is taking 10 on its Listen check. If it hears the PCs approaching, the creature hides in a dark corner so that it can make a sneak attack when they enter.

To trigger this encounter, read:

Three pairs of bloody manacles hang from the west wall. They are currently empty. A small chest sits on a shelf on the south wall, and a brazier in the southeast corner holds glowing coals and two iron poker.

Masterwork Manacles: hardness 10; 10 hp; break DC 28; Escape Artist DC 35; Open Lock DC 20 (the keys are missing).

The chest is unlocked and contains an assortment of knives, barbed hooks, and razors. None of the items would make a good weapon, but they all serve well as torture instruments.

The glowing coals in the iron brazier give off illumination equal to that of a candle. Anyone touching the coals takes 1d6 points of fire damage per round of contact. The coals can be thrown as improvised weapons.

The iron pokers can be wielded as clubs. For 3 rounds after the pokers are removed from the coals, they deal an extra 1d6 points of fire damage per hit. After that time, they cool off and deal only normal damage. If placed in the coals again, the pokers reheat in 3 rounds.

TROLL TUNNEL THUG

CR 14

hp 111; see page 146

The troll tries to use the Tumble skill and its reach to avoid being cornered and to prevent multiple opponents from getting too close. It maneuvers through the surrounding corridors and rooms as necessary, trying to hide and make sneak attacks on the PCs. If allowed time, the troll poisons its weapons and stalks the party, hoping to make death attacks.

6. BARRACKS (EL 7)

Use this encounter when the PCs reach area 6 on the map. This chamber serves as a barracks for the guards that normally staff the villa. Currently, the room is inhabited by six bugbear warriors that were brought from the Xanigos Estate with Lady Thandysha. They have guessed correctly that she has abandoned them, and their morale is broken.

To trigger this encounter, read:

Hammocks woven from strong spider silk are affixed to the walls of this chamber at various levels, reaching all the way to the ceiling 15 feet above. Numerous footlockers of black stone line the walls.

The footlockers are made of chiseled stone and hold mundane clothing and equipment belonging to the bugbear guards. They are not locked. Hidden inside one footlocker is a large opal worth 250 gp, but it has been tucked inside a dirty, flea-infested sock. A PC can find the opal by making a successful DC 22 Search check.

6 BUGBEARS

CR 2

hp 16 each; see MM 29

The bugbears are demoralized and want only one thing—to leave the villa alive. If the PCs attack, the guards defend themselves ferociously until they can break through their opponents and flee. If this occurs, the PCs might face the bugbears again later, since the creatures continue to explore the besieged villa, looking for a way out.

If the PCs do not attack and instead use Diplomacy or Intimidate to change the bugbears' attitude from unfriendly to friendly, the guards agree to depart without a fight and to keep silent about the party's presence. The bugbears also offer their collective treasure (totaling 87 gp in small gems and various coins) as an incentive for the PCs to turn a blind eye.

7. CELLBLOCK AND POSTERN (EL 13)

Use this encounter when the PCs reach area 7 on the map. This corridor has two holding cells flanking a larger cell in the opposite side of the wall to hold prisoners of House Xanigos awaiting torture or sacrifice. On the map, the portion of the west wall at the northernmost end of the corridor that is drawn as an opening is actually a stone wall with a secret door in its center. The door is extremely difficult to detect from the outside (Search DC 40) and served as an escape route for the inhabitants of the villa.

The sponsors of the attack on the villa learned of the secret door. A drow assassin who had just entered through the door hid in the shadows of the northernmost cell when he heard the PCs coming. Allow the PCs to make Spot checks opposed by the assassin's Hide check.

To trigger this encounter, read:

This dimly lit corridor travels beside two prison cells. Each cell is blocked off by a wall of bars with a gate of bars in the center. The gates to both cells stand open, and the cells appear to be empty.

Iron Bars: hardness 10; 50 hp; break DC 28; Open Lock DC 20 (currently unlocked; the cells can be locked by pulling the doors shut).

DROW ASSASSIN

CR 13

hp 53; see page 165

The assassin has infiltrated the villa to assassinate Lady Thandysha and any other leaders he can find. He assumes that the PCs are special mercenaries hired by Xanigos and tries to observe them long enough to identify the party leader and make a death attack at the first opportunity. If the assassin succeeds, he does not stick around to engage the rest of the party, preferring to sneak away and search the villa for more important targets.

8. KITCHEN

Use this encounter when the PCs reach area 8 on the map. The villa's kitchen is currently unoccupied.

To trigger this encounter, read:

Tables and benches cluttered with earthenware and utensils crowd this room. A stone oven stands against the north wall. A kettle hangs nearby, coated with fuzzy green paste.

The bugbear stonejacks use this room to prepare their meals. All the items and utensils are ordinary. The green substance in the kettle is nothing more than a fungal stew that was left out for too long.

9. GUARD TOWER (EL 10)

Use this encounter when the PCs reach area 9 on the map. This area is the lower level of a two-story guard tower at the southeastern corner of the villa. The room is occupied by two drow arcane guards who came with Lady Thandysha and three bugbear stonejacks that are part of the villa's regular garrison.

The open area along the southern portion of the east wall leads to an enclosed staircase that rises 20 feet to the level above. The upper level is a single room with arrow slits that face all directions. A dozen embattled drow arcane guards and a house wizard are flinging spells and crossbow bolts at the attacking forces massing outside the villa. (The PCs have no reason to climb the stairs and engage the drow in the upper level. If they try, feel free to discourage them by describing the sounds of intense battle issuing from the room above.)

At the base of the staircase lies the charred corpse of a bugbear stonejack, a sentry that was on duty when the attack began and was blown down the stair by a *fireball* that traveled in though an arrow slit.

To trigger this encounter, read:

This dark chamber smells strongly of smoke and burned fur. Screams of battle echo down a stairway rising in the east wall. The corpse of a lightly armored goblinoid lies at the base of the stair, charred to a crisp.

The arcane guards know that the PCs came to the villa to meet with Lady Thandysha, but they also heard her order the dread fangs to slay them. Thus, the guards assume that the PCs are spies and try to kill them as quickly as possible. They use the first round of combat to drink their *potions of haste* and follow up with their *potions of cat's grace* once the bugbears have engaged the PCs.

3 BUGBEAR STONEJACKS

hp 39 each; see page 121

The stonejacks have not seen the party before and assume that the PCs are part of the force assaulting the villa. They follow the lead of the drow arcane guards and attack the adventurers.

If the PCs defeat the guards and the bugbears, they find themselves alone in the lower level of the tower. None of the villa's defenders in the upper level or in nearby rooms respond to the sounds of battle coming from this chamber—mainly because they have their own troubles to worry about.

10. MORGUE (EL 8)

Use this encounter when the PCs reach area 10 on the map. This small storage chamber is used by the masters of the villa as a morgue for their dead. The funerary tradition of House Xaniqos is to summon a fiendish monstrous spider to enshroud the dead in webbing, which preserves the bodies until they can be transported back to the caverns beneath the Xaniqos estate. There, spiders drain the corpses of fluids at their leisure, and the husks are animated to serve the house as zombie slaves.

Currently, the morgue contains the wrapped corpses of five bugbear thralls and a drow assassin from House Vae who failed in a recent mission to slay Lady Thandysha. The drow corpse has recently animated as a mohrg. It has been struggling to free

2 ARCANES GUARDS

CR 8

Male drow fighter 2/wizard 5

NE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +6, Spot +7

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 15; **Dodge** (+3 Dex, +4 armor, +1 deflection)

hp 35 (7 HD)

Immune magic *sleep* effects

SR 18

Fort +5, **Ref** +4, **Will** +4 (+6 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +1 *spiked chain* +9 (2d4+2)

Ranged mwk hand crossbow +8 (1d4/19–20 plus poison)

Reach 5 ft. (10 ft. with spiked chain)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +5

Atk Options poison (drow poison, Fort DC 13, unconscious 1 minute/unconscious 2d4 hours)

Combat Gear 3 doses of drow poison, *wand of magic missile* (CL 5th, 25 charges), *potion of cat's grace*, *potion of cure serious wounds*, *potion of haste*

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 5th; 10% arcane spell failure chance):

3rd—*fly*, *empowered burning hands* (DC 14)

2nd—*scorching ray* (+7 ranged touch), *invisibility*, *see invisibility*

1st—*magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement* (+7 ranged touch), *shield*, *true strike*

0—*detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 13), *touch of fatigue* (+5 melee touch, DC 13), *resistance*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th):

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Abilities Str 13, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 17, Wis 10, Cha 10

Feats Dodge, Empower Spell^B, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain), Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll^B, Weapon Finesse^B, Weapon Focus^B (spiked chain)

Skills Climb +6, Concentration +10, Hide +5, Intimidate +4, Jump +6, Listen +6, Search +5, Spellcraft +6, Spot +7

Possessions combat gear plus mithral shirt, +1 *spiked chain*, masterwork hand crossbow with 20 bolts, *ring of protection* +1, 12 gp

Spellbook spells prepared plus 0—all; 1st—*alarm*, *animate rope*, *identify*, *silent image*; 2nd—*spider climb*, *web*; 3rd—*vampiric touch*

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

itself from its web shroud, and the undead creature manages to burst free the round after the PCs enter the morgue.

Allow the PCs to attempt DC 17 Listen checks to hear the web bonds tearing the moment before they finally break. If the PCs fail to make the checks, the mohrg makes a surprise attack with its tongue, trying to paralyze the nearest character.

To trigger this encounter, read:

The smell of death fills this storeroom. Six web-shrouded humanoid corpses lie in a heap in the corner.

MOHRG

hp 91; see *MM* 189

The vicious mohrg seeks only to destroy all living things. If the PCs flee, the mohrg wanders the villa, attacking anyone it meets until it is destroyed.

11. ALCOVES

Use this encounter when the PCs reach either of the areas labeled 11 on the map. The exits shown in the walls in the center of the map's north edge and in the northern end of the map's east edge are merely shallow alcoves, containing only dust. There is nothing of interest here.

50 ADVENTURE IDEAS

Creating a drow campaign can be a challenge. Half of your job is coming up with a good reason for the player characters to interact with the drow at all. Presented below are fifty sample adventure seeds to help get you started. The list offers ideas for drow PCs, non-drow PCs, and characters who are enemies or allies of the dark elves.

- 1 A svirfneblin warren notices increasing drow patrols and seeks protection against these incursions.
- 2 A surface slave trader is discovered to be a drow in disguise and flees down an old mine shaft.
- 3 A drow noble seeks to eliminate his older siblings so that he will rise in power within his house.
- 4 Drow wine becomes a hit in local taverns, and the PCs must journey into the Underdark to establish a secure trade route with the supplier.
- 5 City leaders fear that drow saboteurs have infiltrated their ranks and ask the PCs to ferret out the dark elves.
- 6 An aged dwarf recounts creating a wondrous sword that was stolen by drow long ago, and he makes a dying request to be buried with the weapon.
- 7 Monstrous spiders start breeding in huge numbers beneath a halfling community and begin to terrorize their burrow homes.
- 8 Drow twins have been seen on the surface. One is a noble warrior, the other a cruel murderer. The PCs must hunt them down to bring the killer to justice and save the warrior from a merciless mob.
- 9 Someone is murdering drow merchants at a peaceful Underdark trade conclave. The killer must be stopped before war breaks out between the races.
- 10 A drow alchemist has found the secret to making drowcraft weapons and armor that can remain viable in sunlight. This discovery could enable the dark elves to conquer the surface world, so the alchemist must be protected (or eliminated, depending on the PCs' agenda).
- 11 A patriarch of Pelor seeks to bring the might of the sun to bear on a drow city to eradicate its evil.
- 12 Duergar assassins hatch a plot to kill all the scions of the noble houses in a small drow city.
- 13 Followers of Eilistraee seek protection from drow marauders during an important dance ritual.
- 14 A substance has been discovered that weakens drowcraft weapons and armor, and the PCs must sneak it into drow forges.
- 15 A cult of enlightened drow seeks to reclaim its surface heritage but is opposed by other dark elves.
- 16 Dwarf miners break through into an ancient drow temple and are beset by ghostly spiders.
- 17 A deep dragon annoyed by grimlock raiders calls in a debt and asks the drow to clear out the pests.
- 18 Avatars of Lolth and Corellon Larethian battle in the streets, and adherents to both faiths join in the fray.
- 19 The chitine declare one of the PCs to be a prophet for their race and seek to follow her to freedom.
- 20 Followers of Vhaeraun seek to infiltrate the Fane of Lolth and activate a powerful magic item to destroy it.
- 21 Many albino drow children are being born. Divinations blame an ancient curse that is coming to fruition.
- 22 Drow insurgents try to taint a surface city's water supply with a virulent form of the disease known as slimy doom.
- 23 A forest community of elves is discovered to have been burned to the ground, but no bodies are found. Tracks lead to a cave in a nearby cliff.
- 24 Drow merchants want to obtain kuo-toa eggs to sell as a rare delicacy.
- 25 A lost drow shrine to an elder god is discovered beneath a temple of Pelor.
- 26 Aboleths want to add drow prisoners to their slave ranks so they can spy on a nearby drow settlement.
- 27 Tremors beneath a drow city threaten to destroy it completely. The PCs must explore forgotten tunnels and find the source.
- 28 A PC wakes to find spider legs growing from her back, and she learns that Lolth has chosen her for a special mission.
- 29 Drow necromancers have opened a gate to the Negative Energy Plane somewhere in the Underdark. It must be found and sealed.
- 30 Injured veterans treated at the local temple of St. Cuthbert have been emerging with prosthetic limbs of drow craftsmanship.
- 31 Two rival lords court a drow embassy in the hope of gaining a powerful ally.
- 32 Three drow who were turned to stone long ago and stored in the local guildhall have disappeared.
- 33 A drow blackguard seeks to become a death knight and must sacrifice two heroes to complete the process.
- 34 The PCs are asked to investigate a gigantic spiderlike machine that has been seen plodding through the lower caverns.
- 35 Followers of Orcus try to assassinate the high priestess of Kiaransalee.
- 36 A gang of pirates strikes a deal with the drow for magical support during their midnight attacks on shipping lanes.
- 37 Clerics of Lolth lose control of many summoned demons, which roam the Underdark on a rampage.
- 38 A drow matron has been replaced by a greater doppelganger that must be stopped before it plunges the city into all-out war.
- 39 A drow galley that sank in an Underdark sea is rumored to contain vast treasures.

- 40 On a whim, Lolth turns all her clerics in a city to stone. The PCs must discover how to end her curse.
- 41 A mad drow prophet seeks to repair the schism between drow and elves, but both sides try to silence him.
- 42 Svirkneblin suspect a drow curse when all the gems in their mine turn to coal.
- 43 A holy icon of Lolth has been stolen. It must be recovered, but the mere sight of the icon can kill the viewer.
- 44 The drow launch a quest to find the sacred web of the Great Spider of the Underdark.
- 45 Large numbers of piercers move into a drow cavern, and skilled exterminators are needed.
- 46 A murdered drow matron is resurrected and needs help to regain control of her house.
- 47 A surface elf decides to investigate his lost drow heritage and needs safe escort to a drow city.
- 48 Duergar ghosts take up residence in a drow temple and must be removed.
- 49 The king declares drow to be imaginary and wants all references to the dark elves expunged from the kingdom. The PCs must investigate this strange decree.
- 50 Street urchins say that dark elves are kidnapping their fellows in the night.

MAGICAL LOCATIONS

Magical locations have a rich history in the fantasy genre. The power imbued in such special places allows heroes to accomplish any number of fantastic deeds, and this tradition is no less true in the dismal tunnels and deep vaults claimed by the drow.

Locations of power can be used for various purposes in a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS campaign. Some, such as the earth nodes described in the FORGOTTEN REALMS book *Underdark*, might serve as sites for working especially powerful magic. Others, such as the planar touchstones described in *Planar Handbook*, might unlock potential advancement opportunities or special abilities in characters. Still others, such as the rune circles described in *Races of Stone*, could allow PCs to create permanent magical effects bound to tightly confined areas. And finally, locations such as those found in *Dungeon Master's Guide II* are imbued with magical power that is available for the taking.

PLACING MAGICAL LOCATIONS

As the Dungeon Master, you have the final say about where, when and how magical locations occur in your campaign, just as you control access to magic items by determining which ones are for sale in any given city or shop. Because the various types of magical locations serve different purposes and operate under different rules, it is perfectly acceptable to feature more than one kind in the same adventure site. For example, a drow city could house an earth node^{Und}, a *spellward of arcane might*^{DMG2}, and a *blood of the Spider Queen* site (described below). To justify the presence of all three sites, you can decide that the drow city formed where the earth node and the spilled blood already existed in close proximity, while the spellward occurred as a result of the many centuries of arcane

activity that have taken place since. You could also separate the earth node from the *blood of the Spider Queen* site if you wish—perhaps the earth node hides a colony of svirkneblin that live near the city.

THE NATURE OF MAGICAL LOCATIONS

In general, a magical location can be suppressed (by *dispel magic*) or disjoined (by *Mordenkainen's disjunction*) as if it were a magic item containing a spell of caster level 10th with an object Will save of +15. A magical location is metaphysically tied to its area, so destroying buildings, walls, or other physical structures in and around the location does not eliminate its ability to confer its power.

Unless otherwise noted, no creature can gain the benefit of a magical location's conferred power more than once. Even if the power has limited uses or has a fixed duration, a character cannot regain it by returning to the magical location after the power expires. Furthermore, once a location has conferred its ability on a character, it must recharge its power for a specified period of time (generally from one day to one year, depending on the location) before it can do so again.

However, if the creature on which a magical location has conferred its ability dies, the location is instantly recharged and can confer its ability again immediately, no matter how much recharge time remains. A location that can confer its ability on more than one creature simultaneously can be renewed early only if all those who currently enjoy the ability die. If the conferred ability has a duration shorter than the required recharge period, the creature's death still recharges the location immediately, even if the creature can no longer use the ability.

MAGICAL LOCATION DESCRIPTIONS

The magical locations described below are presented in the following format.

NAME OF MAGICAL LOCATION

The entry begins with a description of the location in plain language.

Lore: This entry provides any information that is available to the PCs about the location, along with the relevant Knowledge checks necessary to acquire it. Bardic knowledge checks can be substituted for any of these checks at the same DCs.

Description: This entry first describes the physical location and then presents any other necessary details, such as sounds, smells, tactile sensations, and the appearance of the magical effect or special ability.

Prerequisite: This entry describes the prerequisites needed to gain the magical location's special ability. In addition to meeting these prerequisites, a PC must visit the location physically to acquire its ability.

Location Activation: This entry explains how to acquire and activate the special ability conferred by the location.

Recharge: This entry gives the time needed for the location to recharge.

Special Ability: This entry describes the special ability conferred and explains the rules for using it.

Duration: This entry gives the ability's duration or number of uses.

Aura: This entry describes the type of magical aura that surrounds the location.

Ability Value: This entry is the gp value of the conferred ability. Although these abilities can never be bought or sold, their gp values are provided so that the DM can track the overall value of treasure possessed by a player character.

BLOOD OF THE SPIDER QUEEN

Eons ago when Lolth faced Corellon Larethian in open battle, she was bested and forced to flee for her life. Wounded and beaten, she dragged herself through the caverns of the Underdark, beyond her enemy's sight, until she could reach a portal to her beloved Demonweb Pits. Trailing her in this exodus from the world of light were her followers, the drow, who then established themselves in Underdark caverns to create a new society below the ground.

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE NEUTRAL

In a campaign setting in which the predominant race is not just evil but actively, purposely, and intrinsically evil, PCs might feel as if they have only two choices: join the enemy or go down fighting. But a drow campaign provides many motivations for different kinds of parties, whether the characters are surface adventurers, drow, or members of other subterranean races. The constant infighting among dark elves allows PCs of diverse backgrounds to infiltrate drow society, and, if they so choose, to participate regardless of alignment or race.

Of course, a paladin of Heironeous would still be sickened by the depraved and cruel acts that he witnesses in a drow city, but he must pick his battles. Single-handedly taking on the whole city makes for a short and ultimately unfulfilling campaign. For a PC with a high moral code, you must provide an incentive for holding his tongue and staying his blade. Simple self-preservation might not be enough for a noble knight prepared to sacrifice himself for the greater good.

In general, good-aligned PCs, especially those who have a particularly keen moral compass, need a broader picture. An easy solution is to present the PCs with a bigger danger so fearsome that cooperation with the drow seems reasonable. This tactic is a bit heavy-handed, however, and should be used sparingly.

Instead, try offering the perspective of a greater good that views dealing with the drow as a means to an end. Good-aligned PCs do not have to take part in drow society, but just as they do not (or should not) kill every NPC in their town who has an evil alignment, they will find that trying to clean out a drow city is a bad idea. Certainly, they can step in when necessary to prevent a particularly evil act or to defend an innocent victim, but that is not the main goal of their dealings with the dark elves. Perhaps they must gain information to complete another quest, rescue kidnapped loved ones, or simply keep the power of the drow in check. Savvy PCs can turn one dark elf against another to preventing them from preying on anyone else. In any case, good-aligned PCs should feel the tension of battling

During Lolth's flight, she bled her divine essence onto the stones over which she passed. Locations where this occurred became known as the *blood of the Spider Queen*. The dark elves prize these locations highly, and most ancient drow cities were founded on or near such sites.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about a *blood of the Spider Queen* site by making Knowledge (dungeoneering), Knowledge (history), or Knowledge (religion) checks at the stated DCs.

DC 10 (religion): The *blood of the Spider Queen* marks sites where Lolth dragged her wounded body through the Underdark to escape the wrath of Corellon after their epic battle.

DC 15 (dungeoneering, history, or religion): Many of the oldest drow cities were established around sites where *blood of the Spider Queen* was found.

DC 20 (history or religion): A drow priestess who discovers a *blood of the Spider Queen* site is considered to be blessed by Lolth and a leader among drow.

their instinct to put an end to the miserable drow, mixed with the anxiety that the villains might at any moment attack them in overwhelming numbers. A visit to a drow community should be fraught with danger and moral dilemmas but ultimately survivable.

Neutral-aligned parties have a much easier time dealing with drow. The PCs do not necessarily condone the activities of the dark elves, but as long as those activities do not affect the party or its interests, they pay little attention. A city full of evil beings that plot to slaughter one another does not seem like such a bad thing. Races and characters that conduct trade with the drow are often neutral. They might not have diplomatic ties with the dark elves, but they view the drow as a valuable resource for procuring hard-to-find items, not to mention as a market for their own wares. A neutral PC sees dealing with the drow as "just business."

On the other hand, neutral PCs are always on their guard for tricks and ambushes. They know that the drow might try to cheat them or simply murder them. Neutral PCs are cautious and observant around the drow and avoid sticking their noses where they do not belong for fear that any situation could be a ruse designed to trap them.

Evil-aligned PCs have the largest number of possible motivations in a drow campaign. They might be driven by any motivation stated above, or they might just want to get ahead in a cutthroat society. Whether enemies or allies of the drow, evil PCs are not above using the dark elves for their own ends. A high-level campaign might revolve around a PC's attempt to gain control of a drow city or just raise his own drow house to prominence. When scruples are not an issue, the possibilities for interaction with the equally unscrupulous dark elves are endless.

Evil PCs are typically in a state of constant paranoia. They suspect that a thousand possible plots could be afoot mainly because they have put their own plots in motion. Drow live for the moment because they know that it might all end in the next instant on an assassin's blade. Evil PCs who deal with the drow feel much the same way, knowing all too well the perils that hound their every step.

DC 25 (*religion*): A drow priestess who discovers a *blood of the Spider Queen* site is granted a boon by Lolth and can start her own noble house as a matriarch.

DC 35 (*dungeoneering, history, or religion*): A successful check at this level allows the character to learn or recall a clue to the location of a specific *blood of the Spider Queen* site.

DC 40 (*religion*): The abilities granted by a *blood of the Spider Queen* site work for male and female drow alike, but the priestesses carefully guard this secret.

Description: *Blood of the Spider Queen* is always either a shallow pool of ichor or a long, sticky smear on a tunnel wall or floor. It can be found in any type of Underdark terrain but is never located on the surface. The ichor is a thick, black, tarlike substance that gives off a foul odor detectable from 20 feet away. If found in a pool, the ichor is never more than a few inches deep; if found in a smear, it is never more than 20 feet long. Regardless of the size of the deposit, the ichor always remains fresh and never dries out.

Unintelligent Underdark creatures instinctively avoid such sites. Intelligent creatures immediately notice a sinister air that seems to hang about this foul effluvia. A drow who has claimed the power granted by a *blood of the Spider Queen* site looks no different, but other dark elves notice that a palpable aura of Lolth's favor surrounds the beneficiary.

Prerequisite: Only a drow follower of Lolth who has at least five cleric levels can gain the power granted by a *blood of the Spider Queen* site. The priestesses want everyone to believe that the recipient must also be female, but it works for males as well—a secret that is extremely well guarded among drow clergy.

Location Activation: To claim the gift of a *blood of the Spider Queen* site, the drow must sacrifice a living, sentient creature to Lolth at the blessed site and let the blood of the offering mingle with the divine substance of the deity.

Recharge: Once it has granted its gift to a drow cleric of Lolth, a *blood of the Spider Queen* site cannot do so again as long as that drow lives and remains a faithful follower of the deity.

Special Ability (Su): A *blood of the Spider Queen* site grants the recipient a +5 bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Intimidate checks when dealing with other drow. She also gains a recognizable aura of having been chosen by Lolth to lead the dark elves. This latter benefit has no game effect other than to let other drow know that they risk Lolth's wrath by openly defying the recipient. Finally, a *blood of the Spider Queen* site grants the recipient the effect of a permanent *sanctuary* spell against other drow, whether or not they are followers of Lolth. Any dark elf who wants to attack the recipient must make a successful DC 22 Will save to follow through with the attack.

Lolth bestows these particular benefits to create some semblance of hierarchy for her otherwise chaotic children. The powers of a *blood of the Spider Queen* site bring just enough stability to the drow to support the noble houses and the cities. Of course, the gift is a double-edged sword, because the social structure guarantees constant infighting among the dark elves, but Lolth finds the internecine warfare a source of great amusement.

Duration: Any drow who receives this blessing from Lolth retains it as long as she lives and remains loyal to the Spider Queen. In rare instances, the gift has endured beyond death when contingencies were in place to facilitate a quick transition to an undead state (such as when a drow dies and becomes a lich).

Aura: Strong transmutation.

Ability Value: 5,000 gp.

CAVESTALKER FORMATION

Many fanciful rock formations add to the mysterious allure of the caverns of the Underdark. The whimsical shapes seem to have been carved by a deliberate hand, and these sculptures of living stone these never fail to inspire awe. In many cases, they are not natural formations at all, but rather manifestations of the spirits of intrepid explorers who met their ends in the environment to which they were so attuned. When an experienced cavestalker falls prey to one of the many perils of the Underdark, the site of his death is sometimes imbued with his knowledge of the stone tunnels, spawning a *cavestalker formation*.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about a *cavestalker formation* by making a Knowledge (*dungeoneering*) check against the stated DCs.

DC 10: When a worthy cavestalker dies in the Underdark, sometimes the earth absorbs his spirit into the stone.

DC 15: Fanciful rock formations exist throughout the Underdark, but some of them hold the souls of cavestalkers and can bestow powers when touched.

DC 20: Someone who gains the power of a *cavestalker formation* can use it to hide from the senses of Underdark creatures.

Description: A *cavestalker formation* appears to be a natural sculpture of stone in an underground setting. Exotic in appearance, the formation is usually a fancifully shaped column, stalagmite, drapery, or flowstone. Often, a discernible image of a face is seen in the smooth folds and wrinkles of the stone, or a humanoid outline is vaguely apparent. In other cases, the image takes the form of a symbol associated with the late cavestalker—perhaps a broken sword for someone who carried a shield decorated with that emblem, or a swooping bat for one who was a werebat.

Prerequisite: The power of a *cavestalker formation* can be tapped only by a character who has levels in the barbarian, ranger, or druid classes; or by someone who has levels in the cavalord, cavestalker, deep diviner, or prime Underdark guide prestige classes.

Location Activation: A qualified character can sense the lingering essence of a *cavestalker formation* and claim a portion of its power by spending a full-round action in direct contact with the stone. This requirement could prove problematic if the formation grows on the roof of a cavern, behind a thundering waterfall, or above a river of molten rock.

Recharge: Up to five creatures can tap the power of a given *cavestalker formation* before it is spent. The formation must then recharge for one year before it can confer its benefits again.

Special Ability (Ex): When activated, a *cavestalker formation* grants the recipient a +5 competence bonus on Hide checks made in an underground setting.

Duration: The Hide check bonus lasts for one year.

Aura: Strong illusion (glamer).

Ability Value: 1,500 gp.

FONT OF DELIGHTS AND SORROWS

Legends tell of ancient altars dedicated to perverse deities that are tucked away in remote reaches of the Underdark. Explorers who are willing to give their souls to whatever mad god watches over such an altar can gain great power. Far too many fools succumb to these seductive evils, selling their lives cheaply to sample the delights promised by these profane places.

These altars, known as *fonts of delights and sorrows*, occur spontaneously. They can appear anywhere, at any time, but they rarely remain intact for long before a paladin or some other do-gooder destroys them. Thus, *fonts of delights and sorrows* are more common in the direst corners of the Underdark, where only the most courageous or the most reckless would dare venture.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about a *font of delights and sorrows* by making Knowledge (religion) checks against the stated DCs.

DC 15: A *font of delights and sorrows* comes into being at the behest of dark deities.

DC 20: Those who drink from its waters invite unspeakable evil into their hearts and minds.

DC 25: These locations are often protected by clerics of evil gods, who usher willing victims onto the path of corruption, and who murder heroes seeking to destroy the font.

Description: Although *fonts of delights and sorrows* appear in a variety of locations, they are identical in form. They are wide stone basins decorated with horrid images of mortals capering with lewd demons or performing unspeakable acts of depravity and cruelty. Within each font is a pool of black liquid that seems to drink in the light. No noise or tremor can disturb its obsidian surface. Only when physically touched does the fluid assume the normal qualities of water—albeit unclean water.

Prerequisite: Only a creature that has attained at least five levels is worthy of gaining the evil blessing of a *font of delights and sorrows*.

Location Activation: Anyone who tastes the brackish waters immediately takes 1d6 points of Constitution damage. If the drinker meets the prerequisite, he also gains the benefits of the font. Each font has enough black water for three people. Drinking from the same *font of delights and sorrows* more than once does not confer additional benefits, but each sip still deals 1d6 points of Constitution damage.

Recharge: Once three people have sampled the waters of a *font of delights and sorrows*, regardless of whether they were qualified to receive its power, the font is dry. It cannot be used again until it refills itself one year later.

Special Ability (Ex): A *font of delights and sorrows* corrupts the recipient, twisting his nature so that his alignment changes to evil. In addition, whenever he deals at least 1 point of damage in a round, he gains a +2 profane bonus on his attack rolls in the following round. If he takes at least 1 point of

damage in a round, he gains a +1 profane bonus on his saving throws for 1 round.

If the recipient regains his original alignment through the use of an *atonement* spell, he loses all benefits gained from the *font of delights and sorrows*.

Duration: The alignment change is permanent (unless reversed by magical means, as noted above), and the other effects last for 66 days.

Aura: Strong enchantment.

Ability Value: 3,000 gp (1,000 gp per affected creature).

GARDEN OF RESPLENDENT HUES

Long have explorers told of giant subterranean forests of fungi and caverns filled with multicolored mushrooms, puffballs, and molds. Certainly, the drow and other denizens of the Underdark harvest fungi to supplement their meager diets, slake their thirst with fermented juice, clothe themselves in the fibers, concoct unguents and infusions, and more. But not all such forests are mere gardens. Some simmer with a deep and abiding hunger for vengeance. Such sites seek out champions to avenge past misdeeds, and those who accept this solemn responsibility undergo a profound transformation.

A *garden of resplendent hues* sometimes grows where a myconid sovereign^{MM2} and its tribe are butchered. The spores released from their dying bodies hang in the air, touched and changed by the suffering of the slain. When the spores finally settle onto the rocks, they find purchase and grow, becoming a breathtaking *garden of resplendent hues*.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about a *garden of resplendent hues* by making Knowledge (nature) checks at the stated DCs.

DC 10: *Gardens of resplendent hues* are strange places of unusual growth found only in the Underdark.

DC 15: Though harmless, a *garden of resplendent hues* hums with the promise of violence and old anger, the power of which seems to resonate with the magic used by druids and rangers.

DC 20: A druid or ranger who spends time in a *garden of resplendent hues* can undergo a transformation.

DC 25: A druid or ranger found worthy by a *garden of resplendent hues* transforms into a plant, crossing his form with that of a myconid.

Description: A *garden of resplendent hues* is a strange and unsettling place. Typically forming in a hidden grotto, its size varies depending on the cavern. All *gardens of resplendent hues* burst with fungi, including large and small mushrooms, molds, and puffballs; assorted creepers and climbers; and sweeps of yeasts, smuts, and rusts glistening on the walls. The air is humid, warmed by geothermal vents that made the sites ideal lairs for the myconid tribes that once lived there.

Prerequisite: To be found worthy of a *garden of resplendent hues* and benefit from its power, a character must be nonevil, and she must be a druid of at least 5th level or a ranger of at least 8th level.

Location Activation: To be chosen by a *garden of resplendent hues*, a character must spend at least 1 hour exploring the area without damaging any of the fungi. She can move through the area alone or with companions, but if an evil character is

present, the candidate will not be chosen. At the end of the hour, she must attempt a DC 15 Will save. If she fails the save, she becomes dazed (as the *daze monster* spell) for 1 minute, and nothing else happens. If she succeeds on the save, the *garden of resplendent hues* selects her as its champion.

Recharge: Once it has granted its ability to a single druid or ranger, a *garden of resplendent hues* cannot do so again for one year.

Special Ability (Ex): The recipient's type changes to plant. She gains immunity to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and polymorph. She also gains damage reduction 5/bludgeoning or slashing. However, unlike other plants, she is still affected by critical hits, and she gains only a +4 circumstance bonus on Will saves against mind-affecting spells and spell-like abilities. In addition, her skin acquires a dazzling pattern of colors reflecting the hues found in the garden. In all other respects, she is unchanged.

Duration: Any druid or ranger who receives the special ability retains it for 30 days.

Aura: Strong transmutation.

Ability Value: 10,000 gp.

UTTER DARK

There are whispers of places so deep in the Underdark that no light has ever shone there, areas where darkness reigns supreme. Buried beneath miles of stone, these realms are known only to a few. Those who receive the gift of an area of *utter dark* are said to be changed forever.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about an area of *utter dark* by making Knowledge (dungeoneering) checks at the stated DCs.

DC 15: An area of *utter dark* is a place of magical darkness that is impervious to light.

DC 20: To those willing to feed it, an area of *utter dark* reveals the secrets of shadow.

DC 25: A character who gives a portion of his soul gains the ability to peer through darkness as if it were an area of bright light. The recipient can also use *darkness* effects with greater proficiency.

Description: Found only in the deepest regions of the Underdark, areas of *utter dark* are supremely resistant to light. Not even magical light can penetrate their murky borders. When light shines upon an area of *utter dark*, it reveals an impenetrable black wall, similar to the surface of a *sphere of annihilation*. Creatures that have dark-vision can still see within an area of *utter dark*, though at half the normal distance. Those who peer inside find that everything within the zone is covered in pale dust, with no signs of life.

Prerequisite: Only a character who has attained at least ten levels can benefit from the effects of an area of *utter dark*.

Location Activation: An area of *utter dark* devours life as greedily as it eats light. A character who enters the *utter dark* must immediately succeed on a DC 18 Fortitude save or gain one negative level. Each round he remains in the *utter dark*, he must succeed on another save or gain an additional negative level. Only a qualified candidate who remains in the *utter dark* for 5 consecutive rounds can benefit from its power. The negative levels are not permanent, fading 1 hour after the character exits the area of *utter dark*. However, anyone who is slain by exposure to the life-draining blackness rises as a shadow 1d4 rounds later.

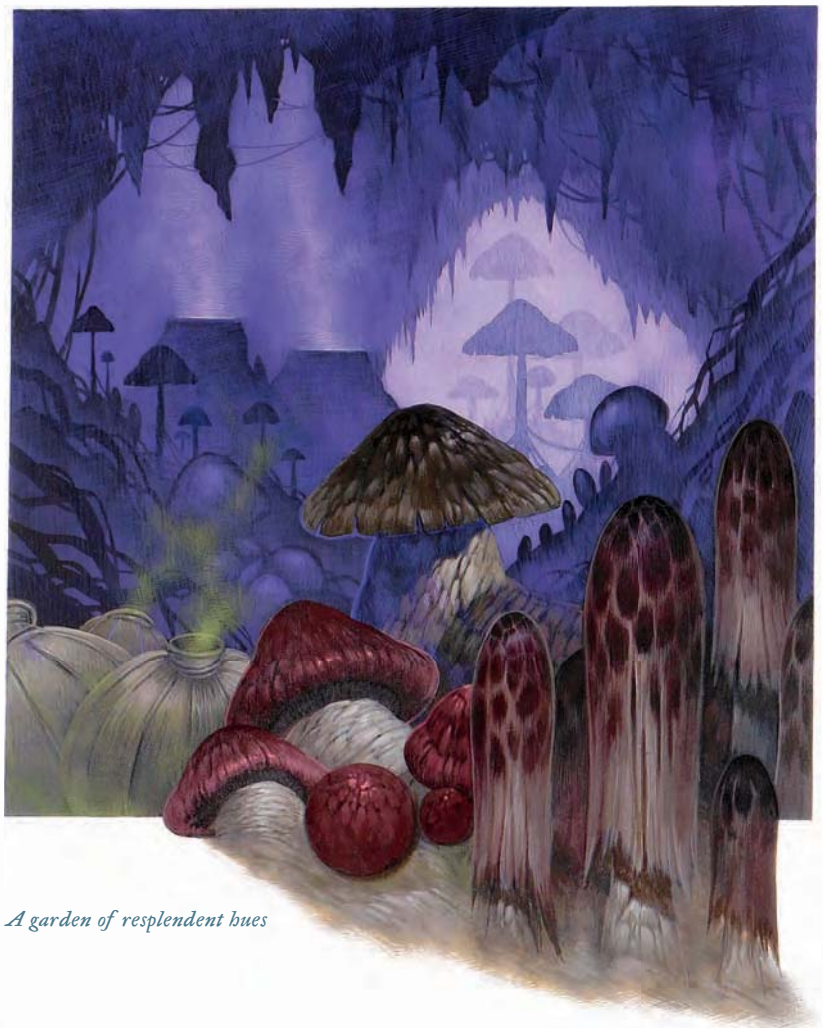
Recharge: Once an area of *utter dark* confers its ability on a single character, it cannot do so again for one year.

Special Ability (Su): Any qualified character who taps into the power of the *utter dark* gains the ability to see perfectly in darkness, including magical darkness. If the recipient is a spellcaster, he also gains the ability to cast spells that have the darkness descriptor at his caster level +2.

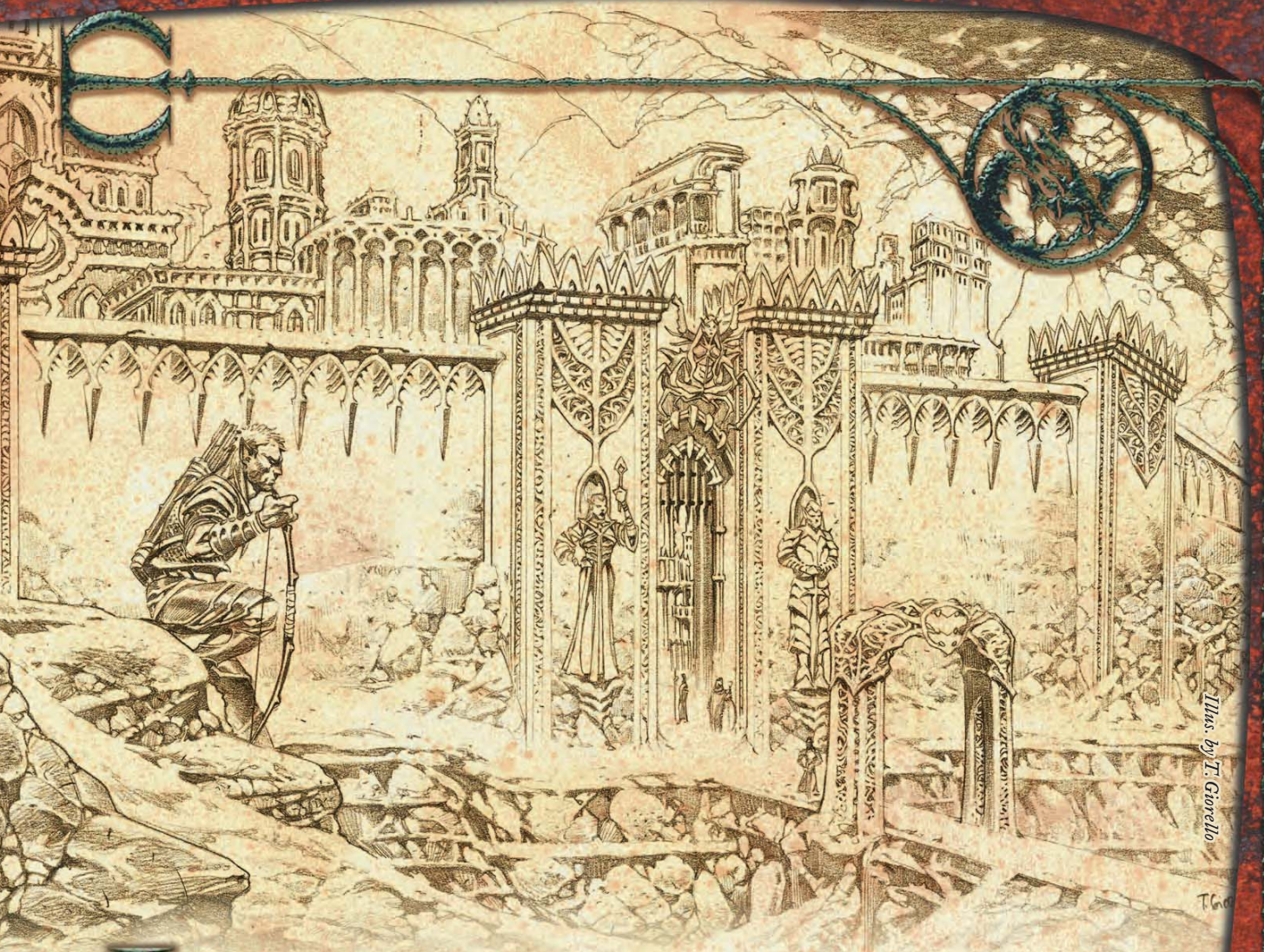
Duration: The conferred ability lasts for one year.

Aura: Strong evocation and transmutation.

Ability Value: 5,000 gp.



A garden of resplendent hues



Illus. by T. Giorello

In the drow imagination, Erelhei-Cinlu is both the darkly shining star of their subterranean empire and a foul pit of the rankest offal, teeming with filthy lesser creatures and bubbling with a raw sewage of dirty commoners and vulgar merchants. Erelhei-Cinlu is at once loved and hated, like an obese and disease-ridden lover who nonetheless provides golden trinkets to her consorts. It is a treasure to be protected and a festering boil to be lanced. In typical fashion, the dark elves simply accept their city as both and go about their foul business.

Erelhei-Cinlu is one of the few places in the drow empire where outlanders can come and go in relative freedom. As evil, sadistic, and xenophobic as the drow can be, they tolerate the presence of foreigners here—as long as their own interests are not threatened. An outlander can even live in Erelhei-Cinlu without interference from drow authorities, as long as she does not draw undue attention to herself. Of course, many other dangers lurking in the shadows make life here a constant challenge. The spiders, the thieves and bandits, the slave-takers, the gangs, the diseases, the undead—these are only a few of the hazards facing non-drow in the city.

— Human scholar Monus Abramus, in his treatise *The Empire Below*, a rare and largely unknown work on drow history and society

Welcome to Erelhei-Cinlu, the most prominent and important city in the Vault of the Drow. This chapter presents basic information about the city, its inhabitants, its history, and its politics; descriptions of major locations; encounters suitable for adventurers from the surface; and tips for player characters and Dungeon Masters alike.

This city has been described in previous *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* products and remains one of the game's classic locations. This chapter portrays a city farther along in its history, emerging from a series of destructive civil conflicts that almost shattered drow power in the region. As the DM, feel free to change, adapt, or ignore any aspects of Erelhei-Cinlu described below. The city is yours now, and you can do whatever is necessary to make it a living and growing part of your campaign.

THE DARK GEM

The city of Erelhei-Cinlu stands like a polished gemstone in the heart of the dark elf realm. At the center of an elaborate web of alliances, rivalries, and traditions, it embodies the essence of drow existence—a darkly enchanted capital from which Lolth's faithful praise her name as they plot against one another and the world beyond.

Erelhei-Cinlu is also one of the most cosmopolitan drow cities, which is to say that outlanders are tolerated. Those who interfere with the drow are ruthlessly and painfully exterminated, but those who abide by the city's traditions, as distasteful as those traditions might be, can survive here, at least for a time.

AN ANCIENT EVIL

Erelhei-Cinlu lies at the core of a subterranean realm known as the Vault of the Drow. As dangerous as it is immense, the Vault is the center of drow power in its part of the world, and Erelhei-Cinlu is its unquestioned seat of authority.

For many years, House Eilservs was the city's leading noble family. But when a raid by surface adventurers threw the Vault into chaos, Eilservs and its Matron Mother, Eclavdra, fell from grace, replaced by the ambitious House Tormtor. This realignment of power sent shock waves through Erelhei-Cinlu society, and in the aftermath, House Kilsek challenged Tormtor's authority, going so far as to reject the worship of the Queen of Spiders. The Priestess Wars began, and they raged for almost two decades until some semblance of peace was restored to the city. In the process, several major houses, most notably the rebellious Kilsek, were destroyed or significantly weakened, while others, such as the nomadic Vae and the upstart Xaniquos, rose to power and displaced or destroyed their predecessors.

The massive changes wrought by the Priestess Wars are still being sorted out by the Spider Queen and the surviving drow. Though their wickedness and perversity remain undiminished, the drow of Erelhei-Cinlu have gained a certain amount of perspective from these events, realizing how close they came to self-destruction. Accordingly, their activities below and above ground have changed, with intrigue and hidden plots replacing overt militaristic schemes. House Tormtor and others now place spies in the surface world, pay agents and unwitting dupes to advance drow causes, and pull the strings in clandestine operations ranging from simple merchant affairs to the corruption and overthrow of entire kingdoms. These activities occur in secret because most drow do not wish to draw more attention to themselves than absolutely necessary. Not all dark elves are as cautious, however. House Vae's slave-raids on the surface world have raised alarms among other houses that advocate subtlety.

Similar motivations spur drow activities in the Underdark. Although open conflict, slave raids, and the mindless destruction of foes always have their place, the drow of Erelhei-Cinlu have grown more cunning, making peace and sometimes even allying with traditional rivals, such as the illithids and the derro. These partnerships are for convenience only, and both sides know it. For the time being, however, House Tormtor and its allies seek to weave a web of diplomacy, espionage, and

conquest that will eventually bring all subterranean races under drow rule. Tormtor believes that it is doing the work of Lolth in a manner that the Spider Queen herself would find most pleasing.

MISTRESSES OF SHADOW

As is the case in other drow cities, the real power in Erelhei-Cinlu resides in the noble houses and their matriarchs. Due to the city's importance to drow society at large, the nobles of Erelhei-Cinlu are especially powerful and exceptionally ruthless, even for dark elves.

Currently, the city is recovering from a series of convulsive internal conflicts that saw many of the old families displaced or destroyed. The so-called Priestess Wars were unusual for a society that favors subtle intrigue over open conflict, but when such raw clashes occur, Lolth watches with pleasure as the weak are smashed and the strong rise to take their place. The Spider Queen sees overt civil war as a means by which her people remain pure and avoid stagnation. Besides, she and her consorts find it amusing to watch and occasionally meddle.

By tradition, eight noble houses oversee Erelhei-Cinlu, each responsible for one of the city's neighborhoods, or ghettos. At times during the various conflicts that have racked the city, the number of houses fell to as few as four, but new and upcoming houses always step in to fill the gap.

Each household is organized along familial lines, with the high priestess as the unquestioned ruler. Lesser houses cultivate relationships with greater houses in the hope of gaining influence and eventually displacing them. Of course, members of allied houses rarely trust each other, upholding their arrangements only as long as they have something to gain.

The eight leading houses are described below in order of their relative status in the city. None of the families actually live within Erelhei-Cinlu—the place is far too vulgar and filthy for noble drow. Instead, their vast estates are located to the north, across the river known as the Pitchy Flow, while high-ranking administrators oversee house affairs within the city.

Tormtor

Sigil: Electrum javelin

City District: Ghetto of Foreigners

Matron: Verdaeth (CE female drow cleric 15/fighter 7,

Diplomacy +29)

The current dominant noble household of Erelhei-Cinlu, Tormtor prospers under the leadership of Mistress Verdaeth. Though the house emerged supreme from the chaos of the Priestess Wars, Verdaeth's consort was cursed by Lolth, and only recently has the matron mother found a replacement. With her position secured, Verdaeth has begun to expand her house's activities in the surface world, taking control of several mercantile operations and buying influence with powerful politicians.

The vast majority of Tormtor's warriors are devoted to the vital and prestigious duty of patrolling the city wall and defending its gates. So demanding is this duty, in fact, that Verdaeth has allowed a number of warriors from House Despana to serve as well, albeit under Tormtor control. She is painfully aware that this leaves her vulnerable and indebted to Despana,

and she hopes to one day replace its troops with mercenaries or loyal members of House Tormtor.

Aeval

Sigil: Gold wand

City District: Ghetto of Performers

Matron: Mevremas (CE female drow cleric 16, Gather Information +22)

Tormtor's chief ally in the deadly games of Erelhei-Cinlu, House Aeval remains near the top of the pyramid of city politics. The house is known for its scouts, spies, and agents, and it is sometimes called the "House of Poison" due to its members' skill with toxins. Unlike other houses, Aeval actively cultivates partnerships with surface adventurers, particularly those of evil alignment, and uses them against the mind flayers, the derro, and other subterranean rivals.

Despana

Sigil: Adamantine mace

City District: Ghetto of Savages

Matron: Shehirae (CE female drow cleric 14, Intimidate +15)

The finest warriors and gladiators in the drow realm are said to come from this martial house, whose holdings are built like fortresses, with extensive armories and training facilities. Despana is also known for its diabolists and summoners, who make liberal use of bound demons and other outsiders. Lady Shehirae is a remarkable success story, having risen from the rank of slave to that of matron after participating in the assassination of the house's previous ruler. Despana's tradition of military excellence has continued ever since, and today a disproportionate number of drow warriors owe allegiance to this household. Despana maintains relatively good relations with House Tormtor and periodically lends its warriors to assist with wall patrol and guard duties.

Shi'quos

Sigil: Amethyst bat

City District: Ghetto of Scholars

Matron: Ythesh'na (CE female drow rogue 6/assassin 6, Hide +19, Move Silently +18)

During the Priestess Wars, House Noquar remained neutral, but the strategy availed it little because it emerged with few resources and no allies. The up-and-coming Shi'quos family was able to displace Noquar with a skillful and ruthless campaign of assassination, extortion, and false accusations of treason. Today, Matron Mother Ythesh'na presides over a successful clan that specializes in necromancy and other dark arcane arts.

Godeep

Sigil: Platinum crossbow

City District: Ghetto of Artisans

Matron: Siadef (CE female drow cleric 10/fighter 10, Diplomacy +15)

Like the disgraced Noquar, Godeep chose to maintain neutrality during the Priestess Wars. However, Godeep emerged from the conflict stronger, without having squandered its resources

on pointless destruction. Siadef is the longest-ruling matron in Erelhei-Cinlu, but as she grows older, her tenure seems to be nearing its end. Godeep produces especially potent magic items and is also well known for its members' skill at breeding spiders.

Vae

Sigil: Iron chain

City District: Ghetto of Chattel

Matron: Sereska (CE female drow cleric 9/wizard 9, Spellcraft +24)

Once a nomadic merchant clan, the Vae family took advantage of conflicts among the nobles to rise to prominence. Granted the holdings of the destroyed House Kilsek, Vae is a leading mercantile house and controls the city's slave trade. Recently, Sereska began sponsoring expeditions to the surface to capture slaves. Other houses, particularly Tormtor and Aeval, protest these blatant acts of aggression, arguing that the way to power on the surface is through stealth and secrecy, not outright warfare.

Eilservs

Sigil: Bronze staff

City District: Ghetto of the Dead

Matron: Eclavdra (CE female drow cleric 24, Diplomacy +26, Knowledge [religion] +30; see *Epic Level Handbook* page 306)

Once a leading family in Erelhei-Cinlu politics, House Eilservs lost much of its influence when a band of surface adventurers dealt a serious blow to the Vault of the Drow—the intruders even sacked the holy Fane of Lolth. Mistress Eclavdra disappeared for many years, and some thought her dead. Eventually, she returned and took command of House Eilservs once again, guiding it through the Priestess Wars and emerging intact, albeit with reduced status. But Eclavdra appears to have regained the favor of the Spider Queen, having recently assumed control of the Fane of Lolth. Thus, she continues to advance the fortunes of a family that many once thought to be on the verge of extinction.

Xaniqos

Sigil: Jet crossbow bolt

City District: Ghetto of Outcasts

Matron: Thandysha (NE female drow cleric 18, Bluff +10, Diplomacy +9)

The drow endlessly struggle and plot against one another, and the spectacle of betrayal and cruelty gives Lolth no end of pleasure. The evil deity watches as the strongest of her children prosper by strangling the weak. The upstart House Xaniqos, the youngest and most impetuous of the ruling families, rose to its position by exterminating the remnants of the old House Everhate, a family whose ineptitude during the wars cost them everything. Lady Thandysha is a brash and energetic ruler whose excesses in the worship of Lolth and the pursuit of personal power are already legendary. Her primary weakness is her own ambition, because although House Xaniqos engages in many different activities and schemes, it excels at none of them.

OUTLANDERS IN ERELHEI-CINLU

As the hub of dark elf activity in the region, Erelhei-Cinlu is surprisingly cosmopolitan, with all major races present as residents, visitors, or slaves. Even the despised surface elves can walk the city's labyrinthine streets and manage to survive in the face of their cousins' venomous hatred.

Being chaotic in general, the drow care little for the alignment or character of visitors, as long as they obey the city's ways and stay out of trouble. Travelers who enter the Vault of the Drow through normal trade routes are inspected by dark elf patrols, who demand that each visitor swear on pain of death to obey all dictates and traditions of the drow houses. Visitors then receive dark green guest cloaks (see page 92), which they must wear at all times to signify their status as outlanders.

Non-drow who live in the city are restricted to the Ghetto of Foreigners, which falls under the administration of House Tormtor. To be granted resident status, an individual must live in Erelhei-Cinlu for at least six months and then make a successful application to Tormtor. Outlanders who become residents no longer have to wear guest cloaks, but they must pay a fee of 1 gp per month and carry a resident's medallion—a black metal item inscribed with a stylized spider. Trade in counterfeit medallions is brisk. Fakes cost up to 1,000 gp, even though the penalty for carrying or selling them ranges from permanent enslavement to death.

RELATIONS WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD

The drow are increasingly aware that they do not live in a vacuum and that a teeming surface world exists above, far from the isolated security of their realm. Early attempts to gain influence in that world ended catastrophically, causing the downfall of major drow houses. But since the conclusion of the Priestess Wars, the drow of Erelhei-Cinlu have grown more realistic and cunning in their dealings with outlanders, whether they hail from the surface or from below.

Most drow believe it is their destiny to conquer the Underdark. However, the other subterranean races—including derro, illithids, aboleths, kuo-toas, duergar, desmodus^{MM2}, and myconids^{MM2}—stubbornly refuse to cooperate with drow schemes for world domination. Some races, in fact, have the temerity to actively resist.

The dark elves know that they are among the most powerful of the Underdark races, and they have no intention of abandoning the destiny of conquest promised by Lolth. However, the drow are willing to employ subtlety and forge alliances to get what they want. Some drow houses, for example, have established close ties with illithids, using the mind flayers to help promote dark elf causes in the Underdark and on the surface. Such alliances are hazardous, however. House Noquar suffered for its association with illithids and was eventually brought down in the Priestess Wars.

20 SIGHTS OF THE CITY

The gloom of Erelhei-Cinlu hides many secrets. The casual traveler might glimpse sights ranging from the curious to the horrifying, such as those described below.

- 1 A female drow noble strolls by, walking her "pets"—a number of human, drow, and goblin slaves in collars and chains.
- 2 An imperious drow priestess sweeps past, escorted by several armored bugbears and a small coterie of hangers-on and toadies.
- 3 A derro merchant walks by pushing his cart, which is laden with fresh-picked mushrooms, smoked lizards and frogs, and other foodstuffs.
- 4 A pair of male drow brawl in the street over an imagined slight, draw rapiers, and fight to the death.
- 5 A goblin slave scurries by, loaded down with bottles, jars, and other items for his mistress.
- 6 Two humans in dark clothing slip discreetly out of a shadowy alleyway, one bearing a small coin purse and the other clutching a small bottle of purple liquid.
- 7 In the distance, an enormous winged creature flaps toward a towering structure and disappears through a large open window.
- 8 Minimally clad males and females of various races, including drow, lounge enticingly on a balcony, beckoning passersby to approach.
- 9 Two female drow soldiers drag a reluctant elf behind them in chains. The filthy prisoner has an expression that is at once terrified and resigned.
- 10 A spider-tender guides several of her charges down the street with gentle pressure from her crook. The spiders seem agitated, clicking their mandibles irritably.
- 11 A pair of red eyes gleams from a gutter or a dark corner of the street, then vanishes.
- 12 A small group of kuo-toas, their scales glistening, stand in a plaza and point upward excitedly while hissing and grunting in their native tongue.
- 13 A priestess in ceremonial robes calls out an invocation at a shrine to Lolth, and a dozen worshipers abase themselves before her in response.
- 14 A solemn religious procession of several lower-ranking priestesses, preceded by males bearing censers and black candles, passes by in complete silence.
- 15 A squad of drow cavalry mounted on riding lizards speeds down the street, scattering pedestrians and upending carts and tables.
- 16 A gnome crafter works silently on an elaborate piece of furniture in an open-air workshop. Closer inspection reveals that he is chained to his workbench.
- 17 A dwarf gladiator, scarred and grim-faced, sits outside a tavern, describing his latest bout in the arena to a small crowd of admirers.
- 18 In the courtyard outside a school, a drow instructor points to a diagram of the human body while lecturing to students on the finer points of torture.
19. A drow demonbinder shifts into her fiendish form and takes to the sky on dark, leathery wings.
- 20 A drow chained to a whipping post is being flogged by bugbear slaves while his trainer, a female drow noble, looks on. The chained drow orders the bugbears to strike him harder.

Relations with the surface world are complex and often involve contradictory goals. The disastrous assault on the Fane of Lolth, now decades in the past, still lingers in the drow psyche, and most dark elves wish to maintain a degree of isolation from surface dwellers. At the same time, the lure of power and the lust for bloodshed and mayhem (inherited from their patron deity) compels the drow to expand their realm beyond the confines of the Underdark. The dark elves of today hope to accomplish this goal with intrigue and subtlety.

THE CITY

Erelhei-Cinlu is a wondrous sight, brooding in the dim light of the Vault, surrounded by a massive wall made of polished black basalt and studded with guard towers. The city is every bit as chaotic as its natives, with structures ranging from the ramshackle tenements of artisans to the extraordinary buildings in the Ghetto of Scholars. Day and night are a purely surface

concept, so the city is busy at all hours, teeming with drow, their slaves and servants, and outlanders of all races.

The dark elves are notorious for their kinship with spiders, which developed as a result of their self-image and the dictates of their unforgiving deity. Nowhere is this relationship more obvious than in the streets of Erelhei-Cinlu. Spiders of all sizes and varieties lurk in alleys, on rooftops, in basements—just about anywhere, stringing webs between buildings to catch vermin or unwary passersby.

Outlanders are increasingly common in Erelhei-Cinlu, and despite the wishes of some secretive drow, the city's existence is known to more and more surface dwellers with each passing year. Visitors can find rewards and opportunities in Erelhei-Cinlu, but they must remember that they take their lives in their hands just by sharing the streets with the mercurial and often sociopathic dark elves.

The city is divided into eight ghettos or districts, each under the control of a different drow house. The nobles do not live within the city's enclosing wall, dwelling instead in palatial

WHERE TO GO

Adventurers in Erelhei-Cinlu need all the usual supplies, such as food, lodging, clothing, weapons, and armor. Discreet contacts with locals (in the form of Gather Information checks) yields information about suitable locations. The higher the check result, the more accurate the information—a low result when searching for an inn could land the PCs in a grim dive where they might be knifed in their sleep.

Presented here are some common needs and establishments that meet those needs. A successful Gather Information check earns the tip that follows the indicated DC. If the check fails, the informant either has nothing to say or provides false counsel instead.

Food and Drink: The drow are masters of poison, so finding safe food and drink can be a problem. No establishments are guaranteed, but some are more reliable than others.

P4, The Upturned Jar (DC 10): Take care what you drink, or you'll end up washing dishes.

Sc7, The Old Battleaxe (DC 10): Bugbears only—others steer clear of this place.

O2, The Snake and Weasel (DC 15): A den of thieves, but pleasant enough if you're a rogue.

O3, The Demon's Den (DC 10): A favored haunt of rakes, and a nice spot for a fight.

D4, The Black Chalice (DC 20): Deep in the Necropolis, owned by a vampire. Not for the faint of heart.

Lodging: Establishments that operate purely as lodging houses are rare. Most serve multiple functions, offering food and drink, gambling, or discreet companionship in addition to room and board. However, the following locations are best known for their lodging facilities.

F6, The Black Widow (DC 15): Be wary of the owner, especially if you're lucky at the gaming tables.

F7, Knucklebone's Inn (DC 10): The building's even less safe than it looks—if that's possible.

F8, Teeson's Rooming House (DC 10): Keep a close watch on your valuables.

C6, The Crop and Manacle (DC 15): Pleasant enough—if you like pain.

O4, The Hideaway (DC 25): The place to go if you're on the

run from the authorities.

D5, The Grim Ghost (DC 20): A safe haven in the Necropolis, owned by a friendly elf who must be insane.

Clothing: The drow love clothing, and numerous shops cater to commoners. The following garment shops are two of the most well known.

A3, Tasaela's Raiment (DC 10): The finest in town, but Tasaela doesn't like foreigners much.

P6, Costumers' Guild (DC 15): Almost anything you need, including disguises and counterfeit noble clothing—if you know who to ask.

Weapons and Armor: Most drow houses have their own armors. Foreigners and common drow are allowed to have weapons and armor, but only if their equipment does not outshine that of the city's elite. Otherwise, they will be challenged to frequent fights as a result of their audacity.

A4, Nyttoris's Arms and Armor (DC 10): Expensive but worth it.

C3, Beast Trainer (DC 10): Crude but serviceable armor, and you might find work hunting down escaped slaves.

Magic, Spells, and Spell Components: Arcane forces swirl around the magic-obsessed drow. Several establishments are known to offer reliable goods to commoners.

Sc3, Palace of Scribes (DC 10): Dusty and vast, but useful.

Sc4, The Ebon Libram (DC 10): Many rare spells, but you must become a member.

A5, Poisons and Potions (DC 15): This spider-lover might be a lunatic, but his brews are the best.

Healing: In Erelhei-Cinlu, being healed by a cleric is risky. Only the clerics of Lolth are allowed to cast divine magic, though a few exceptions exist. For example, outlander clerics can cast divine magic within the confines of their temples, but most of the deities represented in the Ghetto of Foreigners are evil and care little for cures. Two temples that do provide healing are mentioned below.

F4, Temple of Boccob (DC 10): The temple accepts labor from arcane casters in exchange for mending their wounds.

F5, Temple of Olidammara (DC 15): Leave a generous donation, or the healing spell you receive might not be as helpful as you thought.

estates on a plateau to the north that is accessible only by way of the Flying Bridge.

THE WALL

An enormous wall of black stone surrounds the city, at once protecting and imprisoning its inhabitants. Crafted of polished basalt, it is apparently seamless, a continuous piece of stone describing the perimeter of Erelhei-Cinlu. Like just about every other crime in the city, scaling the wall is an offense punishable by death or enslavement. Whichever drow family is the most powerful—currently, House Tormtor—maintains security and provides guards to patrol the wall. There is great competition for this role, since the house that keeps the wall also controls access to and from the city, and with it the majority of tariffs, taxes, bribes, and other income. Such an important responsibility requires plenty of guards, so the patrols often include warriors from House Despana, which (for the moment) maintains good relations with House Tormtor. This arrangement makes Despana indispensable to Tormtor, for the withdrawal of Despana support would leave Tormtor all but helpless.

W1. South Wall

This section of the wall surrounds the major portion of the city and rises to a height of 30 feet. The top is crenellated, with supplies of crossbow bolts every 50 feet or so. Guards walk along its length and are encountered every 15 minutes as they patrol the wall. Although the Great Gate is the major entry point into Erelhei-Cinlu, the South Wall is studded

with numerous small doors and sally ports, which are normally magically locked and barred. Tampering with them is, naturally, a capital crime.

W2. The Great Gate

For non-drow and for drow commoners, this massive fortress is the only way in and out of Erelhei-Cinlu. When survivors and retainers of the fallen House Noquar tried to flee the city several years ago, the Great Gate was the scene of a ferocious battle. Yugoloths and bugbear troops killed almost all the Noquars, but in the process, the structure was badly damaged.

Since then, the Great Gate has been rebuilt, stronger than before. Atop the entryway is a massive jet statue of Lolth, crouching in spider-drow form. Two giant statues of drow, one male and one female, flank the entrance at ground level. Heavy black iron gates and a massive portcullis can be closed and secured, allowing troops in the gatehouse to rain bolts, alchemical substances, and offensive spells down upon attackers.

The gates are normally open, but squads of drow guards interrogate anyone wishing to enter the city, issuing guest cloaks to visitors as needed. Taxes, tariffs, and “discretionary fees” are imposed as the current watch commander sees fit; the city has no formal tax code. However, the drow realize that taking too much from visitors will discourage trade and reduce House Tormtor’s prosperity.

20 SOUNDS OF THE CITY

Many visitors to Erelhei-Cinlu comment on its heavy and almost oppressive silence. Few raise their voices in the streets or make loud noises, because no one wants to draw undue attention. Still, careful listeners might hear disquieting or inexplicable sounds that emanate from shadowy corners, shuttered windows, or hidden chambers.

- 1 A drawn-out scream of agony echoes from somewhere beneath your feet, muffled by earth and stone.
- 2 You hear distant and indistinct chanting in an unfamiliar language. A successful DC 15 Listen check reveals the name “Lolth” repeated reverently.
- 3 The guttural snarl of a demon or other fell beast is followed by a cry of ecstasy or horror—you cannot tell which.
- 4 Mad, incoherent laughter echoes from somewhere above.
- 5 A voice calls out the somatic component of a spell (DM’s choice; a successful Spellcraft check reveals the specific spell).
- 6 A weak and terrified voice begs for mercy and is swiftly silenced.
- 7 From the darkness overhead, you hear the high-pitched chittering of many small flying creatures, but when you look, you see nothing.
- 8 You hear a faint hint of a whispered conversation. One voice is soft and sweet, like that of a female drow. The other is deep and brutal, like that of a troll or a demon. Just as you start listening, the conversation abruptly ceases.
- 9 You hear the soft scuttling of hundreds of tiny feet nearby.
- 10 The voice of a house herald echoes up and down the street, calling the faithful to the hour of worship and crying out the praises of Lolth.
- 11 An angry argument breaks out, punctuated by the sound of breaking glass, the clash of steel, and a short, sharp cry of pain.
- 12 A harsh voice cries out in accented Common (a successful DC 10 Knowledge check reveals that the speaker is probably a bugbear), followed by the crack of a whip.
- 13 You hear the shouts of drow authorities, the clatter of large animals, and the hissing of riding lizards from several streets away.
- 14 A number of voices join together in a drunken song, accompanied by the pounding of drums and a cacophony of improvised instruments. None of the voices sounds like a drow.
- 15 From down the street come the chattering voices of a dozen or more goblins.
- 16 A drow voice barks orders, and a guttural, bovine bellow sounds in response.
- 17 You briefly hear the sound of a gale-force wind—and perhaps demonic howling—from somewhere close by (a successful DC 20 Spellcraft check reveals it to be the sound of a planar gateway opening and closing).
- 18 An angry drow voice shouts over the sound of blows and the pleas for mercy from a goblin or halfling.
- 19 A squad of bugbears or trolls chants in unison as they engage in heavy labor.
- 20 The voice of a lunatic echoes up from below, babbling random words or mad poetry.

Erelhei-Cinlu

City of the Drow



W3. Guard Towers

These square, three-story towers stud the South Wall every 100 to 500 feet. Each tower is 50 feet tall and contains living quarters for up to thirty drow warriors, though usually only one squad occupies a tower at any given time. The towers also hold stores of food, weapons, armor, and clothing.

W4. North Wall

The grim wall rises to 50 feet in height along the northern perimeter of the city, where it borders the dark waters of the Pitchy Flow. The wall has no towers here, but its top remains crenellated, and it can be defended if necessary. However, this area sees little activity, and guards patrol the distance between the Noble Gate and the South Wall infrequently.

W5. Noble Gate

At the western end of High Street stands the Noble Gate, a six-story structure that blocks the road to the estates of the drow nobles, which lie beyond the Flying Bridge. Extensive battlements, two heavily reinforced gates, and various guard forces protect the elite houses. A black stone image of Lolth in spider form looks down from atop the southernmost gate, while her image in drow form adorns the northernmost gate, which opens onto the bridge.

Only noble drow and their attendants can pass through the two gates, and the dark elves maintain many safeguards to keep undesirables away. First and foremost are one hundred elite drow guards, who have no compunctions about killing passersby who merely stray too near the gate. The guards are supported by a small squad of yugoloths (three nycaloths and three mezzoloths) and a cohort of drow wizards and sorcerers who are prepared to apply any level of arcane force necessary to defend the Noble Gate.

W6. Flying Bridge

This elegant structure spans the black waters of the Pitchy Flow north of Erelhei-Cinlu. Deceptively slender and seemingly frail, the bridge is a marvel of engineering, shaped from what appears to be a single piece of polished stone, just like the city wall. Its slim supports are carved with drow incantations and prayers to Lolth, and statues of drow rulers and heroes line both sides of the bridge. Two squads of drow warriors stand guard at all times.

W7. Noble Estates

Lost in the gloom that surrounds Erelhei-Cinlu, the estates of the drow nobles are vast and wondrous compounds, with elaborate buildings and carefully manicured grounds. Each of the eight ruling families maintains an estate here, amid forests of phosphorescent fungi, stands of pale grass, and albino ferns and trees.

Beyond the noble estates lies the fearsome Fane of Lolth, the center of the Spider Queen's power in the area. Here, horrific rituals and sacrifices are made in the deity's name. Often, the Fane is the last destination of unfortunate captives or slaves of the drow.

GHETTO OF FOREIGNERS

This district is the only region of Erelhei-Cinlu where outlanders are allowed to live. It is a warren of narrow streets and tottering buildings in varying degrees of disrepair. Humans, dwarves, illithids, svirfneblin, and others inhabit this deadly urban maze under the watchful eye of House Tormtor, whose officials try to prevent the ghetto's mayhem from spilling over into the rest of Erelhei-Cinlu. Other drow avoid the district, deigning to visit the ghetto only when they must hire outlanders for their schemes.

The Ghetto of Foreigners is also the only place in the city (and in the dark elf realm beyond) that allows temples dedicated to non-drow deities. Needless to say, evil gods predominate, and all temples exist at the pleasure of Lolth and her clerics. The temples are heavily taxed, and their priests and priestesses must be approved by representatives of House Tormtor. Nonetheless, ghetto residents can practice foreign religions in relative freedom. The drow look the other way as long as the worship does not disrupt the city or interfere with the work of Lolth.

F1. Shrine of Lolth

A black obsidian obelisk rises here, inscribed with images of Lolth in both of her favored forms. Anyone wishing to visit the temples beyond the shrine must leave a tribute to the Queen of Spiders as a symbolic acknowledgement of Lolth's supremacy. Two clerics maintain the shrine, and a squad of bugbears enforces the tribute (though few if any visitors dare refuse to pay Lolth her due). One silver piece per person is usually sufficient, but visitors who look especially wealthy are expected to leave at least one gold piece.

F2. Temple of Nerull

Worship of the Lord of Death is quite common in the gloom of the Underdark. Necromancers, assassins, criminals, berserkers, and others who revere death visit this temple to pay homage and to receive guidance from high priestess Thavaesa Narr (NE female half-fiend drow cleric 11, Knowledge [religion] +16). Narr is said to be the daughter of a human cleric of Nerull and a female demon. The temple is an elegant structure of black stone, constantly polished by slaves and laborers.

F3. Temple of Vecna

In the surface world, the lich-god Vecna is rarely worshiped overtly, but in Erelhei-Cinlu, the faithful are open and public about their veneration for the deity. The temple is actually a collection of smaller buildings, connected by subterranean passages, that house shrines, vaults, libraries, and chambers where dark rites are performed. The Temple of Vecna includes among its visitors a number of drow who revere Lolth but who are not above getting help wherever they can.

F4. Temple of Boccob

The neutral deity of magic has a number of non-drow followers in the city, especially among those who came to Erelhei-Cinlu in search of forbidden arcane knowledge. Temple clerics perform services for mages, scholars, and others with an interest in magic. The priests offer healing and other services to outland-

ers, but they often ask for assistance from arcane spellcasters in exchange. Boccob's priests maintain good relations with House Tormtor and assist the drow of that house with magical research. As a result, this temple is less heavily taxed than others in the ghetto.

F5. Temple of Olidammara

The clerics of Olidammara, deity of thieves and pranksters, make their home in this blocky, nondescript temple—the closest thing the Ghetto of Foreigners has to a thieves' guild. The Temple of the Laughing Rogue acts as a mutual aid society where criminals can meet, discuss common issues, and dispose of their ill-gotten gains. Temple priests also help faithful rogues by granting them healing, blessings, and prayers for good fortune in their future criminal endeavors. Other visitors to the temple are offered curative services in exchange for donations. Stingy contributions sometimes result in healing spells that suddenly lose their effectiveness at inopportune moments.

F6. The Black Widow

A typical establishment in the Ghetto of Foreigners, the Black Widow combines inn, brothel, and gaming house into a single business. It is run by Keluvos Nysin (NE male human [?], expert 9/rogue 4, Hide +13), a human-looking proprietor who is said to have demon blood in his veins and who supposedly killed (and possibly devoured) the previous owner. Despite its dire reputation, the Black Widow is popular with visiting adventurers, particularly those of a chaotic bent, and a handful of customers have won fortunes at the gaming tables. More often than not, however, big winners end up losing their last copper piece when their luck runs out, and those who do walk away rich often meet with a messy end soon afterward.

The Widow's rooms are nothing short of luxurious, and the brothel's employees are among the most attractive and talented in the district.

F7. Knucklebone's Inn

Another combination gambling den and rooming house, this ramshackle structure is owned by a one-eyed dwarf known only as Knucklebone (N male dwarf fighter 10, Intimidate +13). The place is a true wonder of the city—that is, it's a wonder the building has not yet fallen down. Over the years, parts of the roof have caved in, gables have fallen into the street, walls have collapsed, floorboards have splintered and spilled guests into the rooms below, and so on. Knucklebone and his employees, a small horde of chattering goblins, have made so many improvised and haphazard repairs that the building bears almost no resemblance to its original design. Guests are sometimes puzzled to find that hallways have shifted or that their rooms have moved, occasionally up or down a full level. The inn is normally five stories tall, but even that measurement is subject to change.

Still, Knucklebone is quite welcoming to outlanders, and despite its strangeness, his inn is popular with adventurers.

F8. Teeson's Rooming House

Architecturally, Teeson's Rooming House is far more stable than Knucklebone's shifting wonder. However, it is also far more dangerous, since its proprietor (CN male half-elf expert 6) welcomes all guests, many of whom seem insane, violent, and unpredictable. All the same, the price is right. A mere five coppers per night, or one gold piece per month, gets you a cramped room and one meal a day from whatever Teeson and his staff can scrounge up. The mushroom-rat stew is especially popular with the kobold tenants.

GHETTO OF SCHOLARS

House Shi'qos recently took control of this district, where the darkest and most forbidden knowledge is available to anyone who pays the price. The ghetto is frequented by drow and thus more cosmopolitan and more crowded than the nearby Ghetto of Foreigners. The neighborhood was the scene of fierce internecine battles during the Priestess Wars when House Noquar

TOP FIVE WAYS TO START A FIGHT WITH A DROW

It is said that the best and easiest way to pick a fight with a drow is simply to be a non-drow. Xenophobia aside, Erelhei-Cinlu teems with opportunities for misunderstanding and casual violence. Here is a small sample of such potential incidents.

Insulting a Drow: Almost anything you do can be interpreted as an insult by the drow, but anything less than total politeness and obsequiousness is likely to trigger a violent response. Offenses can include failing to let a drow order first at a tavern, walking in front of a drow while crossing the street, or failing to avert your eyes when a drow looks your way.

Inappropriate Dress: All outlanders in Erelhei-Cinlu must wear guest cloaks at all times. Non-drow who have gained resident status can wear black spider medallions instead, but other non-drow caught without their cloaks are targeted for arrest and interrogation. Any sign of resistance provokes an instant and forceful response from the dark elves.

Failure to Show Proper Respect for Lolth: As with insults, this offense covers a wide range of actions. Simply acknowledging the divinity of another god might send a faithful drow into a murderous rage. However, displaying the holy symbol of another faith or (worse still) casting divine magic almost guarantees a hostile reaction.

Speaking a Foreign Tongue: The drow are a suspicious race, and foreigners who seem to whisper and conspire in their "barbaric babble" will attract unwanted attention. If outlanders wish the privilege of spending time in Erelhei-Cinlu, the drow expect them to speak the language of the dark elves. Besides, using a foreign tongue only means that they have something to hide.

Not Being a Drow: The simple offense of having been born to a race other than the drow is sufficient provocation for many dark elves. Young thugs, bored and ignored by their families, wander the Ghetto of Foreigners looking for fights, and they invariably find outlanders who are willing to oblige.

was forcibly expelled. In fact, many of the landmarks were destroyed, most notably the Spire of the Encyclic, a storehouse of dark elf knowledge.

The Ghetto of Scholars lacks the usual gamut of inns, taverns, brothels, and similar establishments. Residents here tend to focus on their various quests for knowledge. In the few taverns present, such as the Poison Pen and the Empty Tome, the ambience is sedate and intellectual. Quiet study, polite conversation, and the occasional game of skill is the rule, though the violence and perversity of drow society is never far beneath the surface. For example, the famous Third Level Inn was destroyed in a dispute between two drow sorcerers over whether one of them had removed his hand from a piece during a friendly game of dragon chess.

Sc1. The Tower of Words

One of the greatest tragedies of the Priestess Wars occurred when House Noquar defenders set fire to the Spire of the Encyclic rather than lose it to the upstart House Shi'qos. Though some of the spire's contents were saved—including the *Libram Encyclic*, a volume said to contain all drow knowledge—many priceless works were lost forever.

Today, a council of scholars from all eight houses oversees the restoration of knowledge in the new Tower of Words. Though the drow are a fractious and chaotic race, they realize that the loss of more knowledge might spell their doom, so they have agreed to cooperate in the maintenance and control of this structure.

The Tower of Words recreates many of the features of the former Spire of the Encyclic, but it also encourages the pursuit of new avenues of learning. Outlanders can visit the tower as long as they are sponsored by a member of the ruling council, a privilege that usually requires hefty bribes. Nevertheless, non-drow are frequent visitors to the tower, where they can find knowledge that is forbidden, banned, or shunned on the surface world.

Sc2. The Antisolar Institute

An elaborate jumble of gray-green stone that sprouts fanciful towers, bridges, walkways, porticos, and balconies, the Antisolar Institute was built by illithids many years ago to help maintain good relations with the drow and other subterranean races. Later, derro scholars came to conduct magical research at the institute, and ever since, the two races—normally quite antagonistic—have worked together here.

The illithids' stated purpose in starting the institute was to research the illumination and radiations of the Underdark, in the hope of deriving a means of protection from the painful daylight of the surface world. Research has expanded well beyond that original purpose. Currently, the mind flayers and the derro together study psionic phenomena, alchemy,



In the Antisolar Institute, illithids contemplate the dark energies of the subterranean world

linguistics, sociology, subterranean astronomancy, and other exotic pursuits. The illithids and derro at the institute have lived in Erelhei-Cinlu for generations, and they have more ties to the drow than to their own races.

Outlanders and surface adventurers rarely have any dealings with the Antisolar Institute, though they are sometimes hired as guards. From time to time, however, foreigners are brought here for experimentation and other scholarly research.

Sc3. Palace of Scribes

Scribes and others who are skilled in the crafting of books, scrolls, and documents are valued in the Ghetto of Scholars, where learning and knowledge are paramount. In this ornate three-story structure, a small army of scribes labors at all hours, copying books, taking dictation, transcribing notes, and engaging in other arcane pursuits at the behest of their clients. Most of the palace scribes are slaves of various races—dwarves and gnomes are especially prized for their steady hands and painstaking nature—overseen by dark elf masters. Scribes who continue to provide useful and profitable services are well treated and live in conditions of relative comfort.

The palace also provides magical services, such as creating scrolls and copying spells into spellbooks. These endeavors are normally carried out by the palace's drow employees, who have arcane skills that the slaves do not.

Sc4. The Ebon Libram

A private library administered by the sorceress Elizarea (LE female drow sorcerer 9, Knowledge [history] +14) and her slaves and drow assistants, the Ebon Libram houses one of the most extensive collections of magic tomes, scrolls, and tablets in the world. Unsurprisingly, Elizarea focuses on dark and forbidden lore—spells of demonism, torment, interrogation, and painful death are among her most popular items.

The cost to join the Libram is quite steep. An ordinary membership is 100 gp, which allows access only to spells found in the *Player's Handbook* of up to 5th level. A contributing membership is 1,000 gp, which allows access to all the standard *Player's Handbook* spells. Transcribing a spell requires 100 gp per spell level in addition to the normal costs associated with scribing a spell.

A senior membership, costing 2,000 gp, grants access to all spells in the Ebon Libram. As the DM, you are free to specify the precise contents of the collection, which might include unique drow spells and spells from other game products. Copying spells that Elizarea considers particularly rare, sensitive, or desirable might entail a surcharge of up to 1,000 gp.

GHETTO OF ARTISANS

The drow pride themselves on their lavish good taste in fashion, architecture, fine art, and sculpture. Everything that a drow uses each day must conform to dark elf aesthetics, even such mundane items as tools and utensils. Amid the twisted streets and walled mansions and workshops of the Ghetto of Artisans, drow crafters labor to outdo one another in every aspect. The darker side of creation is represented as well, for the drow consider poisons and implements of torture to be among the most valued works of art.

Outlanders are forbidden in the ghetto unless given specific permission by House Godeep. Slaves are an exception to this rule, since they carry or are marked with their house's sigil, signifying that they are mere possessions and unworthy of undue attention.

Numerous businesses in the ghetto cater to drow, including the usual assortment of drinking establishments, brothels, and drug dens. Many drow crafters practice decadence and perversion as a form of art, offering such disturbing services as torture, flesh sculpting, slave abuse, and murder. It is all one to Lolth, who looks upon this sordid district and is pleased.

A1. Studio of Chael Qe'nos

The paintings of this mad drow are all the rage in Erelhei-Cinlu, combining surrealistic images of suffering with such exotic media as demon blood, powdered dragon scales, and the skin of sacrificial victims. Chael Qe'nos (CE male drow expert 10/rogue 4, Craft [painting] +20) lives in this studio with a small staff of assistants and slaves, growing more demented as his popularity soars. When asked what he paints, Chael usually answers "Fear," "Anger," or "Darkness."

In reality, many of Chael's paintings come from life—he uses the services of drow diabolists to travel to the Outer Planes and observe fiends in their natural habitat. These expeditions have grown more hazardous of late as Chael probes deeper into the secrets of his artistic subjects. He is currently search-

ing for discreet sellswords who can protect him during his expeditions, and Chael is willing to hire surface-dwellers and other undesirables. The artist is as evil as he is mad. Anyone who hires on might find herself marooned in the Abyss when Chael takes a portal home, or she might become the subject of one of his sadistic paintings.

A2. The House of Abandonment

Familial love is an alien concept to the drow, who believe that a child's duty is to obey or overthrow her parents, while parents are obligated to test their children and allow only the strong to survive. Drow children who survive the testing but remain unwanted—the half-breeds, the lowborn, or the simply rejected—usually end up in the House of Abandonment or a similar institution. Sometimes, parents, relatives, owners, and anyone else seeking to profit from the disposal of drow children sell them to house administrators, though the price paid is minimal.

The House of Abandonment is a large, rambling structure that contains many hundreds of occupants and their cruel overseers. Orphaned and unwanted children are given minimal food, shelter, and clothing and put through a merciless training regimen, forced to obey the most trivial of commands and to compete with each other for survival. Those who endure the abusive conditions and emerge from the house are among the coldest and most ruthless drow imaginable. True children of Lolth, they are greatly prized as minions, servants, and warriors.

A3. Tasaela's Raiment

One of the best known-seamstresses in Erelhei-Cinlu, Tasaela (NE female drow expert 13, Craft [sewing] +18) has grown wealthy selling her elaborate garments to powerful and influential drow. She commands a staff of two dozen slaves, whom she works harshly with the help of her twin bugbear overseers. Tasaela spends much of her time designing ever more complex outfits and collecting the exotic and expensive materials needed to produce them. She has been known to hire outlanders to obtain spider silk, gemstones, demon hide, and similar items.

Many of Tasaela's garments are enchanted, providing Charisma bonuses and skill enhancements to their wearers. Normally, she sells magic clothing only to drow, but she might consider commissions for foreigners if they do her a large favor or offer sufficient payment.

A4. Nyttoris's Arms and Armor

A slender, deceptively frail individual, Nyttoris (NE male drow expert 10/wizard 6, Craft [armorsmithing] +20, Craft [weaponsmithing] +18) designs and creates many types of weapons and armor in this shop. He maintains a stable of drow artisans and troglodyte slaves to assist in the production of his items, which are works of art in addition to being functional.

Like most drow, Nyttoris shuns the brutal, excessive designs of surface races (he finds dwarf craftsmanship especially gauche), preferring slender, elaborate weapons and armor that provide effects far greater than their appearance would suggest. His black metal longswords, for example, are more

like rapiers, with delicate silver runes, complex basket hilts, and inlaid gemstones, but they deal damage as if they were far heavier weapons. Nyttoris is a skilled spellcaster, and his items are almost always magical.

A5. Poisons and Potions

Lha'zis Ulvira (CE male drow wizard 7/arachnomancer 6, Craft [poisonmaking] +20) dwells in this shuttered structure with many natural and magical spiders. His monstrous spider companion, Xu'klyr, is one of his most frightening minions, but the place also swarms with adamantine spiders (see page 106) and other vermin. Lha'zis also has several *potions of spider form* (see page 63) and usually drinks one before facing intruders.

Even other drow find the shop disturbing, and customers never know if they will emerge from the building alive and free of spiders. However, Lha'zis is unquestionably one of the finest poisoners and potion-makers in the city. He also sells spell components and, if he takes a special liking to a visitor, he might be willing to bring her into the fold as a fellow arachnomancer. But Lha'zis is chaotic, cruel, and entirely mad, and no one can say for sure what he might do when approached.

GHETTO OF PERFORMERS

Decadence extends into every aspect of drow life, including popular entertainment. This district, under the oversight of House Aeval, is home to most drow actors, singers, dancers, and other performers. Dark elf tastes are notoriously fickle, and a dancer or poet who is the toast of the town one day might find himself the butt of jokes and cruel satire the next.

Unsuccessful performers usually drown their sorrows in corrupt and debased activities. Indeed, the ghetto is a haven for every imaginable vice, since drow performers are even more decadent than typical members of their race. The district has the highest consumption of narcotics and alcohol in Erelhei-Cinlu, and House Aeval allows any substance to be bought and sold here, as long as it receives a percentage. Drug dens, brothels, taverns, torture parlors, and gladiatorial fighting pits exist alongside theaters, dance studios, and public squares.

P1. Performers' Amphitheater

Some scholars claim that drow society is the fairest in the world because each drow must rely on his or her talents to succeed or fail, and individual achievement is valued above all else. Most sane observers dispute this claim, but just such a system is in place at the Performers' Amphitheater.

The amphitheater is a public plaza, with a large round platform surrounded by sloping rows of seats. Any drow can perform in any way he or she pleases, earning the approval or the disdain of the gathered crowd. At almost any hour, drow take to the stage, and performances range from lone poets and singers to elaborate plays with large casts and extensive sets.

As might be expected, performing is a hazardous undertaking—disappointed audiences are not shy about taking out their frustrations on those who fail to provide suitable entertainment. The fatality rate among performers is high. Recently, a drow wizard spectator summoned a demon to devour an inept mime, to the delight of the rest of the audience.

Non-drow are sometimes allowed to perform at the amphitheater, though they run the same risks. Bards, acrobats, dancers, and the like from surface-dwelling races can seek fame or infamy here.

P2. The Hall of Shadows

The notorious showman Chelos Val'dren (NE male drow bard 12, Perform [acting] +18, Perform [comedy] +15, Perform [oratory] +16) manages this lush, ornate theater, which became popular after other major establishments were destroyed in the Priestess Wars. Rumor has it that Chelos himself torched the Silver Stage, his chief rival, during the riots.

The Hall of Shadows features a cast of noted drow performers, and Chelos eagerly signs new talent to long-term contracts. Shows range from concerts, plays, and operas to bloody celebrations of pain and erotic deviance, some of which draw the audience into the vile activities. Bugbear custodians clean the theater between performances.

Chelos also keeps the illusionist Daelana Shi'quos (CE female drow illusionist 6, Perform [acting] +5) as a highly paid retainer (and, many claim, as a lover). One of the younger members of House Shi'quos, Daelana has scandalized her family by joining a theatrical troupe and "squandering" her valuable magical talent by providing special effects and mood enhancement during performances.

P3. The Silk Curtain

In Erelhei-Cinlu, bordellos are considered to be prime locations for artistic performances, and the Silk Curtain, under the proprietorship of Thandaela Ethyss (CE female drow expert 15, Diplomacy +11, Perform [acting] +14), is highly regarded in the ghetto. Employees are trained in a wide range of performing arts—including singing, dancing, acting, and acrobatics—that feature strongly decadent and amorous qualities. The Curtain's acrobats are especially famous, and their performances fetch high prices. In traditional drow style, the bordello is lush and luxuriant, and virtually any intoxicant or illicit substance is available to enhance and prolong a client's visit. Foreigners can partake of the Curtain's services, too, though sometimes they are treated poorly. Capable outlanders might find employment as guards or, occasionally, as entertainers.

P4. The Upturned Jar

Baenal Laziz (NE male drow expert 9) oversees a staff of indentured drow and dispirited halfling slaves in this dark, intimate tavern, where customers can sample wines and intoxicants extracted from a wide range of subterranean fungi and other strange growths. Some expensive and rare potables are highly addictive or poisonous (often both), but they provide drinkers with enhanced senses or other temporary benefits. It is not a good night at the Jar if at least one patron does not succumb to the establishment's wares, ending up unconscious, paralyzed, mindless, or dead. In fact, customers are required to hold Baenal and his staff harmless for any misfortune that might befall them, and patrons whose minds are destroyed end up washing dishes or cleaning out slops for the proprietor.

Baenal has few qualms about dealing with outlanders. He frequently hires surface adventurers to collect exotic materials or stand guard during especially busy periods.

P5. The Riskallus Agency

In the vicious world of drow performing arts, a theatrical agent fills many roles. First and foremost, he advocates for his clients, seeking out employers and negotiating lucrative contracts. However, a drow agent must also protect his clients against the predations of rival performers, which requires him to be a skilled spy and assassin. Such talents prove handy whenever he needs to eliminate a competitor or sabotage a performance.

Riskallus (LE male drow bard 5/expert 8/rogue 3, Bluff +16, Diplomacy +18, Perform [acting] +11), one of the best-known agents in the ghetto, maintains a large stable of popular performers and ruthlessly negotiates contracts and performances on their behalf. He is also a veteran scout and assassin, with many operatives who keep tabs on nonclients. Riskallus stops at nothing to recruit a fashionable new performer or sabotage anyone who stands in his clients' way. He uses threats, extortion, and magic to secure good deals for his performers and to destroy the careers of rivals. Other agents, of course, have little fondness for Riskallus, and his daily existence is an elaborate dance with death. Only the strong survive in his world, and so far he has proven himself one of the strongest.

The Riskallus Agency is a small, tidy black building with a simple sign and no outward indication of its importance. Drow and mercenary guards watch the place at all hours, however, and Riskallus is aware of anyone who so much as approaches the building. His enemies occasionally mount assaults to bring down the agency, but so far their efforts have failed. Fortunately for ghetto residents who live nearby, most attempts to kill Riskallus are subtle and secretive.

As an agent, Riskallus does not discriminate. He hires drow and outlanders as performers or guards, and he frequently employs adventurers from the surface, since newcomers would not be known to his foes.

P6. Costumers' Guild

What are performers without costumes? To the vain and decadent drow, costumes are an indispensable part of life, and the Costumers' Guild provides wild and outrageous raiment for members of society and for the performers who work in the ghetto. (The establishment's name is something of a misnomer, because it implies the existence of a single such guild, whereas others like it exist.)

Chief costumer Themos Eath'en (LE male drow expert 18, Profession (tailor) +18) has designed and created costumes for nearly two centuries, and what he does not know about the trade would fit comfortably in a thimble. His services, and those of his costumers, tailors, and slaves, do not come cheap, but they are worth every copper, so competition for his work is intense.

Of course, decorative costumes are only part of the business. Erelhei-Cinlu's thriving criminal class takes advantage of his expertise as well, and Themos is often hired to provide disguises or duplicates of costumes, armor, or uniforms to aid

in various acts of devilry. Because he works with each of the eight ruling houses and with all major criminal organizations, Themos is rarely called to answer for his activities, instead growing richer and more arrogant each year. The only pursuit likely to land him in trouble one day is his willingness to work with foreigners and surface adventurers, though he tries to keep those dealings secret.

GHETTO OF SAVAGES

An especially rough and dangerous section of the city, the Ghetto of Savages falls under House Despana's authority. The bulk of Erelhei-Cinlu's non-drow warriors live here amid violence and cruelty. Bugbears make up the majority of the inhabitants, followed by troglodytes and trolls. The effective rulers, however, are the yugoloths, whose relatively small numbers belie their power and influence.

Most of the ghetto's residents are slaves or indentured servants that are sworn to the drow noble houses. Some have won their freedom but continue to live here, building new lives as mercenaries or freelance adventurers.

Sa1. Ceremonial Arena

One of the most popular destinations in the city, this six-story stone coliseum features bloody combat around the clock. The arena's entertainment includes traditional fights between individuals or teams, battles between gladiators and monsters or wild animals, the torture and execution of prisoners and escaped slaves, and training brawls between units of bugbears, troglodytes, or other warrior races.

Once a year, the troglodytes that live in the ghetto use the arena for their sacrificial rituals, in which captured foes or slaves donated by the drow are dismembered and consumed. This ceremony is followed by solemn mating rituals, the stench and noise of which pollute the entire district.

Sa2. Hiring Hall

A substantial number of the district's savages work as freelance contractors or mercenaries, and this large, fortified structure gives them a place to sell their services. The Hiring Hall has no real central authority, though House Despana maintains administrative offices in the building and takes a cut of every deal that is made.

Mercenaries of all kinds use the hall to negotiate with potential employers—usually drow, but anyone with cash on hand is welcome to seek hired muscle here. The hall bustles with constant activity, and outlanders and surface-dwellers are commonly encountered as both buyers and sellers. It is said that if an employer waits long enough, almost any intelligent creature will become available for hire.

Sa3. Bugbear Warrens

The servant races that dwell in the Ghetto of Savages live in neighborhoods that resemble their traditional environments. Most bugbears live here, among ramshackle houses and twisting tunnels. Armed gangs keep order, and the place is a filthy labyrinth that reeks of mud and dung. Even young bugbears are dangerous, and outlanders are advised to avoid the warrens unless they are well armed or suicidal.

Sa4. Troglodyte Burrows

The troglodytes in the ghetto live entirely underground. Technically, that is true of all residents of Erelhei-Cinlu, but the trogs dwell below the city, in caves that are slightly less claustrophobic than the bugbear warrens. All trogs gather for the annual mating rituals that take place in the Ceremonial Arena. The rest of the time, males dwell in one portion of the burrows, and females and young keep strictly to the other. Woe unto a young trog that happens to wander into the males' section, for these creatures have no qualms about infanticide or cannibalism.

Sa5. Troll Caverns

Erelhei-Cinlu's small troll community lives in roomy caves and stone huts designed to accommodate the creatures' impressive stature. Despite their low numbers, the trolls are second in influence only to the yugoloths, and most creatures avoid this neighborhood altogether. Oddly, outlanders who come here usually emerge with their lives, which is not the case in the bugbear and troglodyte neighborhoods. The trolls are willing to talk with visitors and even negotiate for services, well away from the chaos of the Hiring Hall.

Sa6. Goblin Slums

By far the most numerous of the drow chattel are the pitiful goblins, which are so ubiquitous that most of Erelhei-Cinlu's inhabitants learn to ignore them completely. Although many goblins live in slave quarters provided by their owners, large numbers dwell in these slums and make the daily trek to and from their owner's home or business. The streets of the slums are lined with shacks, ruins, and tenements that are teeming

with goblins, packed with refuse, and plagued by vermin and predators. No sensible being would live here voluntarily, but the slums are the only home that these downtrodden goblins know. Some of the few free goblins in Erelhei-Cinlu have relocated to the Ghetto of Outcasts, but that neighborhood is not much of an improvement.

A few goblins are brave and resourceful enough to escape from their owners, but they carry brands, scars, or other identifying marks, and runaway slaves have but one fate. Some fugitive goblins are said to have made their way out of the Vault of the Drow, while others simply wallow like animals in the gutters and sewers of Erelhei-Cinlu.

Sa7. The Old Battleaxe

Bugbear warriors favor this run-down establishment as a place to relax, knock back their favorite intoxicants, and gamble on games of dice and spider fights. Tesha Rassilkra (CN female bugbear fighter 9, Intimidate +12) has proven herself the equal of males of her race in every endeavor from fighting to drinking, and she runs the Battleaxe as something of a benign dictatorship. Tesha leaves the enforcement of the rules to her dim-witted twin sons, Hurggaz and Vosh.

The most popular drinks at the Old Battleaxe include "elf blood," "chieftain's brew," and the dreaded "battleaxe black," which can render nonbugbear drinkers unconscious. Still, members of other races who visit the tavern find that the regulars offer them a warm welcome.

Sa8. Yugoloth Barracks

Yugoloths occupy an unusual niche in drow society. Though many yugoloths are summoned and bound into service, others



In the Arena of Erelhei-Cinlu, only the strong survive . . .



... while the privileged watch from high above

serve the drow willingly, finding the harshness of Erelhei-Cinlu preferable to that of their home plane, the Bleak Eternity of Gehenna. Nycaloths and mezzoloths are the most common types of yugoloth servants, but more powerful fiends such as ultraloths can be found as advisors or boon companions to elite drow, and lesser varieties such as skerothos and canoloths sometimes accompany their fellows into battle.

This wide, three-story structure houses most of the city's nycaloths and mezzoloths, along with a handful of other yugoloths. More or less free agents, these fiends serve whomever they choose, though their primary employers are the drow noble houses. There are rules to their service, however. Yugoloths can take no action against clerics of Lolth, they cannot fight each other, and they can battle drow only when in the employ of other drow. Beyond these restrictions, yugoloths have free run of the city and are the ghetto's most powerful and respected faction.

Sa9. Fortress Despana

This grim, sprawling structure is the center of House Despana's power in Erelhei-Cinlu, and the site where most of its warriors receive their initial training. At any time, several hundred Despana warriors, mages, rangers, and clerics dwell here, studying famous battles, training in tactics and single combat, and working on arms and armor. Although the surroundings are distasteful to average drow, who shun the company of chattel, all aspiring Despana warriors and military folk are expected to serve here under the most influential male in the household, Lord Tymeth Despana (LE male drow fighter 8/blackguard 8, Diplomacy +12, Intimidate +20).

A harsh disciplinarian, Tymeth does not blink when recruits perish during training. Like his deity, Tymeth believes in culling the weak and leaving only the strong. But he differs from other drow leaders in that he tries to instill a sense of loyalty and obedience in his warriors. Most dark elves are out for themselves, an attitude that renders them ineffective in large-scale combat because they ignore orders and betray one another. Tymeth knows that selfish chaos is no way to win battles, and as long as Despana warriors serve under him, they are expected to work together, as distasteful as that might seem.

This philosophy, along with a harsh training regimen that kills one out of every four recruits, has given Despana the most powerful and respected military arm of any noble house in Erelhei-Cinlu. Tymeth and his matron, Shehirae, chafe at House Tormtor's dominance and hope to replace the house one day by sheer force of arms. For now, however, they cooperate with their rivals, and lend Tormtor troops to aid in defending the city.

GHETTO OF CHATTEL

The majority of Erelhei-Cinlu's slave trading takes place in the Ghetto of Chattel, where vast pens and holding facilities house thousands of wretched souls. Business never closes for the drow, and the ghetto sees constant activity as dark elf nobles seek new household slaves, military commanders and arena managers search for capable warriors, vampire lords purchase breeding stock or fresh meat, wizards buy experimental subjects, and priests find new sacrificial victims. The life of a slave in Erelhei-Cinlu is short and miserable, and often the

best that a captive who is sold here can hope for is a quick and relatively painless death.

C1. Verdict Hall

This grim stone structure is the seat of drow justice, such as it is. Of course, this justice is not for the drow themselves—household matriarchs and their subordinates render judgment on the dark elves. The Verdict Hall is where foreigners who are accused of crimes in Erelhei-Cinlu are kept and tried before drow judges. (Actually, many outlanders who break drow edicts never see the inside of the building, because they are slain or enslaved on the spot.)

The city has no real written code of law, only a rule that it is illegal for a foreigner to interfere with a drow in any way. Whether an outlander's course of action constitutes interference is up to the guards who choose to make the arrest, and whether the crime merits prosecution is up to the ruling house of the ghetto where the arrest took place. There are only two possible punishments for foreigners, death or enslavement, and judges allow no appeals. Outlanders who are sentenced to one of these fates should consider themselves lucky, because among their own kind, the drow impose far more complex and cruel punishments.

C2. Menagerie Square

This public plaza's name reflects the drow attitude toward slaves. To most dark elves, slaves are mere animals—possessions just as homes, swords, pets, or cattle are. Menagerie Square abounds with buyers, sellers, guards, and hordes of slaves. Transactions take place by auction, direct negotiation, or bargaining, or as part of prearranged sales. Once a slave is sold, trained branders use hot irons to sear the mark of the new owner into the creature's flesh. Slaves who have multiple brands are mistreated even more than usual, because the marks are proof that previous owners were disappointed in their performance and cast them out.

C3. Beast Trainer

Thog Norghast (N male ogre expert 8, Intimidate +13) is an exceptionally intelligent ogre. Some claim that he has human ancestry, a rumor that he denies violently. Once a slave, Thog won his freedom by strangling his drow master with his chains, an act of rebellion that would normally earn a lingering death. Fortunately for Thog, his slain master had powerful enemies who chose to reward the ogre with freedom—a highly unusual step for the merciless drow.

Since that time, Thog has lived in the Ghetto of Chattel as a slave (or “beast”) trainer, mimicking and further honing the cruel techniques that were used on him. There is no trace of irony or pity in the ogre, who has made a name for himself as the best trainer in the city, and noble houses eagerly bring him their chattel. Thog commands a staff of slaves who have been through his training regimen and who now pass it along to new captives.

In addition, Thog sells inexpensive arms and armor, and he works as a slave catcher, hired to track down runaways and either bring them back or slay them. His two fiendish spiders, Morax and Grez, are particularly skilled at finding

escaped slaves, and they usually leave enough of their victims for Thog to claim his reward. On occasion, the ogre is also called upon to find outside intruders, such as troublesome surface-dwellers.

C4. Slave Buyer

“Buyer” is an adequate term for Kholar Nyborix (NE male half-drow ranger 8/rogue 4, Hide +16, Move Silently +18, Survival +15). He has risen to the top of a highly competitive business, using his despised ethnic status to build a reputation for hard bargaining and quality product. Not only does he buy and sell slaves in his massive barred and walled compound, but Kholar also leads slave raids into surrounding caverns. From time to time, his slave-taking parties venture into the surface world under the sponsorship of House Vae, expeditions that have alarmed several of the other drow houses.

Kholar is perfect for surface raids, however, because his mixed heritage helps him blend in with the natives, and his cunning nature allows him to find victims and spirit them away with almost no trace. His three assistants, the twin assassins/rogues Rhela and Hylura Fahm and the sorcerer Yhorimin, are considered to be the finest team of slave-takers in Erelhei-Cinlu, an honor that Kholar will kill to maintain.

C5. The Silver Collar

The most exclusive brothel in Erelhei-Cinlu, the Silver Collar counts members of the mightiest drow houses among its clientele. A queen's ransom in gems and precious metals changes hands each night as customers try to outbid one another for time with famous or exotic courtesans. Owner Jae'lana Tryss'qa (CE female drow expert 8/sorcerer 6, Perform [acting] +15) has managed the place for nearly a century, and she offers the services of males and females of almost every imaginable race and temperament. Though she puts slaves to work in many different capacities, Jae'lana's brothel is unusual in that her “star” performers are professionals under contract, able to negotiate their prices and leave if they so choose. The brothel's clients, who are used to the attentions of downtrodden or excessively obedient slaves, find this attitude stimulating.

C6. The Crop and Manacle

Another business that combines several functions, the Crop and Manacle is an inn, a tavern, and a torture parlor, where patrons can practice the painful arts on willing or unwilling victims. Here, the worst dark elf vices are indulged, so much so that normal surface-dwellers find it hard to stay for long. Drinks are plentiful and cheap, the rooms are pleasantly appointed, and the torment of victims can take place in secluded private chambers or in more public locations, usually observed by an enthusiastic audience.

GHETTO OF OUTCASTS

This filthy district is the last destination for drow undesirables, including criminals, beggars, half-breeds, and the survivors of fallen noble houses. House Xaniqos has dominion over the ghetto, and in typical fashion, Lady Thandysha has ambitious plans for its use. Her agents have purchased several local tav-

erns and brothels, and she recruits the neighborhood's more skilled residents as killers, spies, and guards.

The rest of the drow in Erelhei-Cinlu shun the district, leaving its inhabitants to their own devices. In return, the residents have created a nightmarish society ruled by criminal gangs and brutal thugs. From time to time, a talented resident rises up from the grinding poverty and regains influence in the city, but for the most part, the downtrodden drow of the ghetto remain oppressed, poor, and utterly without hope.

Foreigners sometimes visit the ghetto, and a handful even live here. Ironically, compared to other districts in the city, the Ghetto of Outcasts is relatively safe for outlanders because common drow ignore the district, and residents are too far gone to care who they rub shoulders with.

01. Guild of the Poxbearers

The filth and vermin so prevalent in the Ghetto of Outcasts sometimes cause outbreaks of terrible diseases, and few sicknesses are as dreaded as the suppurating pox (see the sidebar). Victims of the pox waste away for months or years, prone to weakness, fevers, and convulsions. Meanwhile, their flesh, cratered by boils and weeping sores, almost literally melts away in long, stringy tendrils.

Magical cures by clerics of deities other than Lolth are forbidden in Erelhei-Cinlu, so most victims of the pox must deal with its debilitating effects on their own. These victims, known as poxbearers, have formed a beggars' guild and use their illness to improve their quality of life—however little of it remains. The guild runs a fairly straightforward protection racket. Bands of poxbearers wander the streets, demanding payment from passersby. Since the pox is highly contagious, the implied (or overt) threat is that those who fail to contribute will be forcibly infected and consigned to a hideous death. Almost anyone who has spare coins gladly gives them up in the hope of avoiding such a fate.

There is a benefit to aiding poxbearers as well, since the disease is said to grant divine (or possibly profane) prescience to its victims, allowing them to see the future. Generous donors are given a brief and usually obscure prophecy, and those who part with fewer coins receive a bleaker vision of their future—often, the revelation that they will become victims of the suppurating pox and die in agony.

THE SUPPURATING POX

This terrifying illness, the scourge of the Ghetto of Outcasts, is widely thought to be incurable. That belief is not true, but it keeps the district's residents in a constant state of fear, which House Xaniquos manipulates to its advantage.

Suppurating Pox: Contact, DC 22, incubation 1 day, 1d4 Con/1d6 Cha. If the victim makes two successful Fortitude saves in succession, the disease is arrested but not cured, and any Constitution and Charisma losses persist until cured. When the disease is arrested, the victim remains contagious.

A successful *remove disease* spell eliminates the pox and cures the victim. However, it is a capital offense for anyone other

The guildhouse is a surprisingly pleasant-looking villa, kept in good repair by skilled poxbearers. Residents of the neighborhood give the place a wide berth, out of fear of contagious guild members and their leader, said to be a victim of the disease who perished and was raised as an undead creature. Supposedly, the foul being now uses the pox as a weapon to gain power for itself and its followers. The rumor has never been confirmed, but it is plausible enough to keep outlanders away.

02. The Snake and Weasel

Plenius Greysoul (NE male half-drow rogue 9) has lived in the Ghetto of Outcasts all his life. A talented thief and fence, he pulls the strings of many thugs and alley-bashers who call the district home, and he specializes in returning stolen goods to their owners. Of course, he is usually responsible for the thefts in the first place, and he charges exorbitant prices for the items' return. Even if Plenius does not have a given stolen item for sale, odds are that he knows where it is, and he will part with this information for a price.

Sharing his good fortune with the residents of the ghetto, Plenius has turned the Snake and Weasel into one of the more tolerable eating and drinking establishments around. It attracts a relatively nonviolent clientele by discouraging brawls, crime, and mayhem within its walls. Plenius enforces the rules through his bugbear and half-ogre bouncers, all of which are accomplished warriors.

03. The Demon's Den

Brutal thugs lurk in the ghetto's alleys, but slightly more principled rogues and swashbucklers hold sway in certain parts of the neighborhood. Known as rakes, they are usually half-drow or (rarely) full-blooded outcasts from their families, united by a desire to change their society—though exactly how to accomplish that change remains a bone of contention.

The rakes have several favored watering holes, foremost among them the Demon's Den, which attracts clients who are relatively pleasant (and, on rare occasions, non-evil). They gather to talk, drink, gamble, brawl in good-natured fashion, and discuss the inequities of drow society. Their informal leader is Zaetha (CE female drow rogue 6/assassin 2, Move Silently +14), an outcast said to worship fallen drow deities that were powerful before the rise of Lolth. The Den is also a favored haunt for the chaotic advocates of Zinzerena (see

than a cleric of Lolth to cast divine magic, and House Xaniquos strictly forbids clerics from curing non-drow without express permission.

Rumor has it that Xaniquos possesses the formula for a mundane cure that can be created from relatively simple materials. The release of such a cure could trigger open rebellion in the ghetto and perhaps lead to the fall of House Xaniquos. Naturally, other drow houses would pay a steep price to learn if the rumor is true, and the nobles would be grateful (or at least as grateful as dark elves can be) toward anyone who digs up information on the supposed cure.

page 34), and casual visitors should be on guard when both groups are here at the same time.

Although many rakes are less hostile than full-blooded dark elves, it would be a mistake to think of them as any less violent, mercurial, or evil. Exceptions do exist, but most rakes are just as cruel as drow in other parts of the city.

O4. The Hideaway

Erelhei-Cinlu is full of creatures on the run, whether from their own kind or from the drow. On the outside, the Hideaway is an ordinary inn located in an especially tawdry, run-down section of a tawdry, run-down district, but it also serves as a refuge for those on the lam.

Proprietor Melash D'valla (N male half-drow expert 9/rogue 4, Diplomacy +13) is not running a charity. He charges steep fees for his services, in part because much of his income goes to drow officials and soldiers, whom he pays to look the other way. The true purpose of the Hideaway is an open secret throughout the ghetto, but most residents know not to discuss it overtly.

The establishment is as pleasant as possible, considering the neighborhood. The food and drink is bad but not too bad, the dining room is filthy but not too filthy, and the games are crooked but not too crooked. Melash provides ordinary rooms for 5 sp per night, but his real business involves a number of well-hidden chambers that the authorities either cannot find or are paid to ignore. The secret chambers are relatively comfortable, given that occupants must spend many hours or days there, and they cost up to 100 gp per day, depending on the nature of the customer's offense and the size of the bribes Melash must pay to keep him safe.

GHETTO OF THE DEAD

Once widely believed to be dead itself, House Eilservs, whose schemes on the surface world led to disaster, now controls this dark and horrifying district of Erelhei-Cinlu. The Ghetto of the Dead, also called the Necropolis, is a fitting locale for the fallen house and its still-ambitious leader.

Long ago, the ghetto was a traditional place of the dead, known for its mausoleums, cemeteries, and tombs. But drow necromancers started coming here to experiment, raising corpses of the recently deceased to do their bidding. In the end, the ghetto became a place of the walking dead, and conventional interment of corpses was finally abandoned.

Most drow avoid the district, venturing into the ghetto only when they must dispose of mortal remains. Bodies are deposited according to varying degrees of ceremony, depending on the importance of the deceased. Once the mourners depart, the district's permanent residents—the hungry undead—descend to feast upon the corpses.

Ghouls are the most common inhabitants of the ghetto, but vampires and necromancers are the unofficial rulers. Once a year, the ghouls are allowed out of the district to terrorize Erelhei-Cinlu in a ritual known as the Time of the Hunters. Most drow barricade themselves in their estates or homes during this time, but the ravenous horde overcomes many security measures, and the event results in many deaths.

D1. Necropolis Square

This grim plaza is surrounded by eight unadorned obelisks, one for each of the city's noble families. The obelisks do not bear family crests because of the frequency with which the drow houses fall and are replaced. Recarving the crests would be a pointless waste of time and effort.

Beyond the plaza sprawl the warrens of the dead, full of ghouls and other rotting creatures. Here, the dearly departed receive the closest thing to a funeral that a dark elf ever gets, as mourners arrive, lay the corpse on a marble slab, intone prayers and invocations, and leave as quickly as possible.

The end of a drow's mortal existence is no more pleasant than the rest of her life. Once the mourners have departed the plaza and closed the gates behind them, the ghouls emerge from their hiding places and swarm each fresh corpse, viciously fighting for position. The body is ripped asunder, the flesh quickly consumed, and the bones cracked open for marrow and scattered throughout the district. The ghouls understand their part in the ritual and restrain themselves from feasting until the mourners are safely away. The creatures also keep Necropolis Square clear of bones and stray body parts.

D2. Osseus Tower

Several ghetto residents are necromancers who shun their fellow drow and prefer to keep company with the dead. The most notorious is Morresus (CE male lich wizard 16, Concentration +20, Spellcraft +20), a drow lich whose tower rises from the ghetto like an enormous bony finger. In fact, his undead minions built the structure out of half-chewed bones that were strewn about the district, and the tower is a disturbing sight.

Most of the undead that dwell near the tower are under the lich's control and keep themselves busy on his various inscrutable errands. They ignore passersby unless Morresus requires living subjects for his latest experiments or as new members of his undead horde. Ghetto residents think that Morresus is biding his time while he gathers power, preparing for the day when he will try to seize control of the district—and possibly all of Erelhei-Cinlu.

D3. Sarcoma Keep

This keep was once a massive mausoleum for a wealthy drow family whose name is now forgotten. Since the undead took over the ghetto, the mausoleum has housed a succession of necromancers and autonomous undead, eventually gaining its current moniker. The keep remains an imposing and forbidding structure, its black crenellated walls rising up four full stories.

The current occupant is Khovad (CE male half-drow vampire fighter 13, Intimidate +20), a former minion of the vampire warlord Telagos. Khovad turned against his master and led other servants in revolt, destroying the older creature and taking over the keep. Khovad has become every bit as ruthless and violent as his old master, maintaining a network of mortal outcasts of various races and a complement of undead troll bodyguards.

Encounters in Erelhei-Cinlu

Khovad hopes to establish the first undead noble house in Erelhei-Cinlu. His undead status and his half-breed heritage are strong handicaps, but so far they have not prevented him from becoming one of the most powerful warlords in the ghetto.

D4. The Black Chalice

Mourners are not the only living visitors to the Ghetto of the Dead. Some bored drow seek exotic relief for their jaded senses in the district's handful of taverns, inns, and brothels. Most establishments are run by vampires, liches, or other self-willed undead, who see the possibility of profit and the chance to recruit a few customers to their hordes of followers.

The best-known tavern is the Black Chalice, located near Necropolis Square. It is owned by a former drow priestess named Nyvaela (NE female drow vampire cleric 10, Bluff +15), who enjoys her status as a leading member of the ghetto's undead community. Her clientele are among the most decadent drow in Erelhei-Cinlu, willing to sample horrific potions, share the company of undead lovers, and put their lives and souls on the line in games of chance. Nyvaela has grown rich catering to such tastes, and the interior décor of the Black Chalice rivals that of the finest public houses in the Ghetto of Artisans. Guests are advised to be wary, however, for some patrons never return from a night at the Chalice.

D5. The Grim Ghost

Ordinarily, only the mad or the powerful try to live in the Ghetto of the Dead. But a hardy few see it as a place where the drow have little influence, and therefore a place where they can live relatively free from the tyranny of the dark elves. One such resident is Aenyrra (NG female elf ranger 10, Survival +16), a surface elf who has chosen to make her home among the walking dead. While on the run from drow authorities, she tried to lose herself in the ghetto, only to learn that a small but determined group of mortals—adventurers, explorers, outcast drow, mages, and the like—were trying to survive there. Gathering a number of odd allies, Aenyrra turned the former home of an undertaker into the Grim Ghost, an establishment that caters to the living.

Comfortable and well maintained, the Grim Ghost provides food, drink, entertainment, and shelter for warm bodies, along with a measure of protection from the undead. Aenyrra and her partners—a half-drow rogue named Leixaes, the halfling brothers Thad and Emond, and (most unusual of all) the ghost of the ancient drow warrior Maeletarus—welcome any and all living customers.

At considerable expense, Aenyrra had the building's doors and windows treated with cleric spells and blessings to ward off the undead. The effects were supposed to last for a decade or longer, but she periodically pays drow clerics to renew the protections. Aenyrra also employs a small team of professional ghoulish hunters who have managed to keep her guests safe from the shambling creatures—so far.

The rest of this chapter presents encounters that visiting adventurers might have in the grand city of the dark elves. These encounters are not tied to any specific adventure or sequence of events, though you can develop them further and add subplots as desired. For instance, perhaps the slaver Valma Phar'aen (see Slaver Attack, below) catches sight of the PCs and wrongly assumes that they will be easy victims, or maybe a scheming drow noble lures the adventurers into conflict with the slaver to weaken them or take them out entirely.

The encounters are intended to take place in Erelhei-Cinlu, but you can adapt the descriptions to suit other drow settlements in your campaign.

SLAVER ATTACK (EL 8)

The drow slaver Valma Phar'aen, his sister Jhael'min, and a squad of bugbears roam the neighborhood, following up on a rumor that outlanders are in the vicinity.

The young son of a minor house, Valma hopes to make a name for himself in the female-dominated city by capturing and enslaving surface adventurers. His younger sister is annoyed that a mere male presumes to hold so much authority in their small household, but she goes along with his plans, waiting for him to make a mistake so that she can take his place.

So far, the siblings and their bugbear slaves have captured a number of unwary surface merchants and their bodyguards. These successes have increased Valma's confidence, making him more likely to underestimate the strength of the player characters. However, both Valma and Jhael'min flee if the bugbears are defeated or slain. Neither has any particular familial affection for the other. If one of them is captured, he or she offers the PCs a reward to chase down and defeat the other treacherous sibling.

This encounter takes place when the PCs travel through Erelhei-Cinlu. Successful DC 10 Spot checks and Listen checks allow the characters to notice that all traffic has suddenly disappeared from the street as civilians, merchants, and slaves flee from the coming fight.

To trigger this encounter, read:

Just moments ago, this area was bustling with activity. But now you notice the drow merchants hurriedly pushing their carts down the street, ordinary drow averting their eyes and quickening their pace, and goblin slaves scurrying madly into side alleys.

Suddenly, the stern voice of a male drow breaks the tension. "Outlanders! Lay down your weapons and surrender! I declare you to be slaves, justly claimed by the faithful servants of Lolth!"

The street is rough and uneven. Anyone who tries to run or charge must make a successful DC 10 Balance check or stumble and fall prone.

Stone buildings line both sides of the street. The PCs can scale them with successful DC 20 Climb checks. Several build-

ings feature ledges about 20 feet above the ground by windows that were bricked over long ago. Anyone who climbs to a ledge can stand on it and fire missile weapons to the street below by making a successful DC 12 Balance check. A climber who fails the check must immediately attempt a DC 15 Balance check. Success on the second check means that the character maintains her footing but cannot fire a weapon in this round. Failure indicates that the character loses her balance and falls off the ledge.

If any PCs are captured by the slavers, Valma confiscates their possessions and has them taken to the Ghetto of Chattel, where they are imprisoned in the compound run by Kholar Nyborix (see *Slave Buyer*, page 206). Party members who avoid capture must rescue their comrades before they are sold into slavery and possibly taken out of the city, out of the Underdark, or even to another plane.

If all the PCs are captured and sent to the compound, they must figure out a way to escape and retrieve their possessions.

VALMA PHAR'AEN

CR 6

Male drow rogue 4/fighter 2
NE Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +12, Spot +10
Languages Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16; uncanny dodge (+3 Dex, +5 armor, +1 shield)

hp 25 (6 HD)

Immune magic *sleep* effects

Resist evasion; **SR** 17

Fort +4, **Ref** +7, **Will** +2 (+4 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +2 rapier +10 (1d6+2/18–20 plus poison)

Ranged mwk dagger +9 (1d4/19–20 plus poison)

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +7

Atk Options poison (drow sleep poison, Fort DC 13, unconscious 1 minute/unconscious 2d4 hours), sneak attack +2d6

Combat Gear 4 doses of drow sleep poison

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th):

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Abilities Str 14, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 12

SQ trapfinding, trap sense +1

Feats Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Weapon Focus (rapier)

Skills Appraise +3, Balance +4, Bluff +4, Climb +6, Diplomacy +3, Disguise +2, Escape Artist +5, Gather Information +8, Hide +12, Intimidate +5, Jump +4, Knowledge (local) +6, Listen +12, Move Silently +10, Profession (slaver) +3, Search +7, Sense Motive +4, Spot +10, Tumble +4, Use Rope +4

Possessions combat gear plus +1 *chain shirt*, light steel shield, silver ring worth 200 gp (with a secret compartment [Disable Device DC 15] containing 1 dose drow sleep poison)

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

Valma is content to let his sister and their bugbear slaves do the fighting. The bugbears are trained to capture foes alive, and Valma tries to assist them from a distance with his spell-like abilities. However, if he gets the chance to make a sneak attack, he will treat his dagger or rapier with drow sleep poison and try to stab one of the PCs or deal nonlethal damage.

If four or more bugbears are defeated, Valma tries to flee, leaving Jhael'min to her fate.

JHAEL'MIN PHAR'AEN

CR 5

Female drow rogue 3/sorcerer 2

NE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +10, Spot +10

Languages Abyssal, Common, Drow Sign Language, Goblin, Elven, Undercommon

AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11

(+2 Dex, +1 armor)

hp 15 (5 HD)

Immune magic *sleep* effects

SR 16

Fort +1, **Ref** +5, **Will** +6 (+8 against spells, spell-like abilities, and other enchantments)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee mwk dagger +3 (1d4+1/19–20 plus poison)

Ranged mwk dagger +6 (1d4+1/19–20 plus poison)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +2

Atk Options poison (drow sleep poison, Fort DC 13, unconscious 1 minute/unconscious 2d4 hours)

Combat Gear 2 doses of drow sleep poison

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 2nd):

1st (5/day)—*cause fear* (DC 14), *magic missile*

0 (6/day)—*acid splash*, *daze* (DC 13), *detect poison*, *flare* (DC 13), *ray of frost* (+5 ranged touch)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th):

1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Abilities Str 9, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 17

Feats Alertness, Combat Casting

Skills Concentration +5, Balance +6, Decipher Script +7, Diplomacy +7, Escape Artist +6, Gather Information +12, Hide +8, Knowledge (local) +9, Listen +10, Move Silently +8, Open Lock +8, Profession (slaver) +3, Search +9, Spellcraft +8, Spot +10

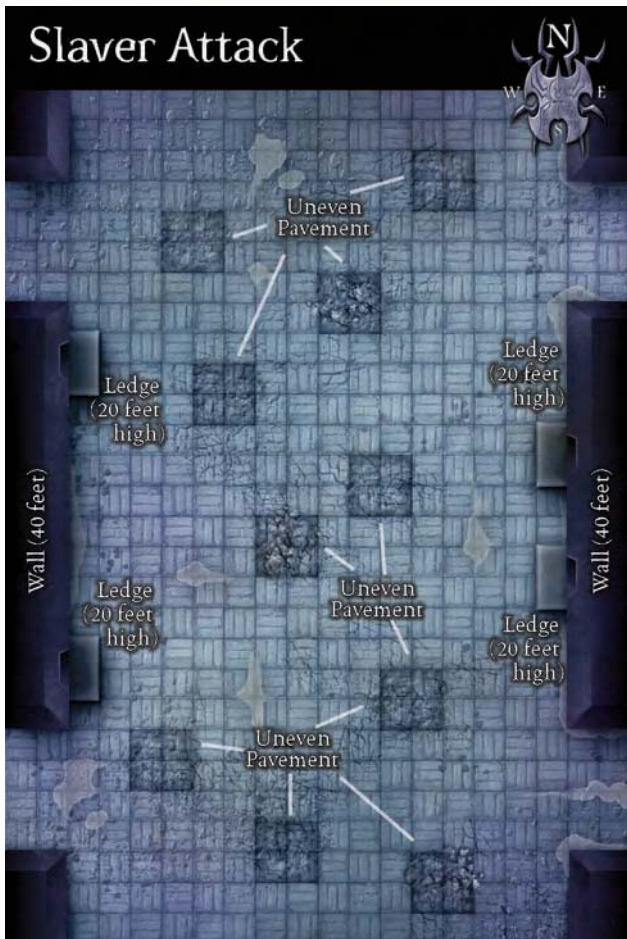
Possessions combat gear plus *bracers of armor* +1

Light Blindness (Ex) Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

Jhael'min has been commanded to aid her brother in his endeavors, a humiliating position for a female drow. Thus, her assistance is less than enthusiastic, and if the opportunity arises, she will let Valmar perish and take credit for the capture herself. In the meantime, she hangs back during combat, letting her brother and the bugbears do the fighting, half-heartedly casting a spell or two so she seems like an active participant.

Of course, since Valmar is also trying to stay out of combat, the siblings will realize the truth of the situation before long. At that point, one or both of them will join the battle, if only to make the other look bad. However, if the PCs gain the upper hand, both drow try to run away—in opposite directions. If

Slaver Attack



Jhael'min is captured, she offers to help the PCs against her brother, assuming he survived the battle.

6 BUGBEARS

CR 2

CE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Listen +4, Spot +4
Languages Undercommon, Goblin

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15
 (+1 Dex, +2 armor, +3 natural)

hp 16 (3 HD)

Fort +2, **Ref** +4, **Will** +1

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee club +5 (1d6+2)

Ranged net +5 (entangle)

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +4

Abilities Str 15, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 9

Feats Alertness, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (net)

Skills Climb +3, Hide +4, Listen +4, Move Silently +6, Spot +4

Possessions leather armor

Armed with clubs and equipped with nets, the bugbears are under strict orders to take foes alive if possible. Thus, they attempt to deal nonlethal damage and entangle the PCs. However, if Valma or Jhael'min are in danger, the drow will order the bugbears to kill the adventurers instead.

NECROPOLIS SQUARE (EL 6+)

The adventurers might be in the Ghetto of the Dead to pursue a foe, meet with an informant, or simply continue their exploration of the city. Eventually, they come upon Necropolis Square and observe a hasty drow funeral. The PCs will possibly not realize that ghouls lurk in the ruins that surround the square, waiting to consume the deceased. The swarm of undead should come as a surprise.

This encounter takes place when the PCs pass by Necropolis Square in the Ghetto of the Dead. They can see through the gates that a group of drow is holding a funeral in the middle of the plaza.

To trigger this encounter, read:

You stand before a vast courtyard ringed with iron gates. In the center of the plaza, within a circle of towering obelisks, two dozen or more drow crowd around a huge marble slab. On it lies the motionless form of a dark elf. At the foot of the slab, a priestess raises her arms and intones, "Now we lay to rest our brother, ever faithful to the Queen of Spiders, to his matron, and to his house, as loyal in death as he was in life. Hail Lolth!"

Then, with surprising haste, the mourners depart the courtyard, exiting through a wrought iron gate on the other side. The drow pull the gate shut behind them; it swings closed with a rusty shriek and then locks tight with a loud clang.

Suddenly, low moans begin to issue from all around you. Humanoid shapes stir in the shadowy ruins that surround the courtyard, shambling toward the marble slab and its lifeless inhabitant.

12+ GHOULS

CR 1

CE Medium undead

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +7

AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12

(+2 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 13 (2 HD)

Fort +0, **Ref** +2, **Will** +5

Immune undead traits (MM 317)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee bite +2 (1d6+1 plus ghoul fever and paralysis) and 2 claws each +0 (1d3 plus paralysis)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +2

Abilities Str 13, Dex 15, Con —, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 1

SQ +2 turn resistance, undead traits (MM 317)

Feats Multiattack

Skills Balance +6, Climb +5, Hide +6, Jump +5, Move Silently +6, Spot +7

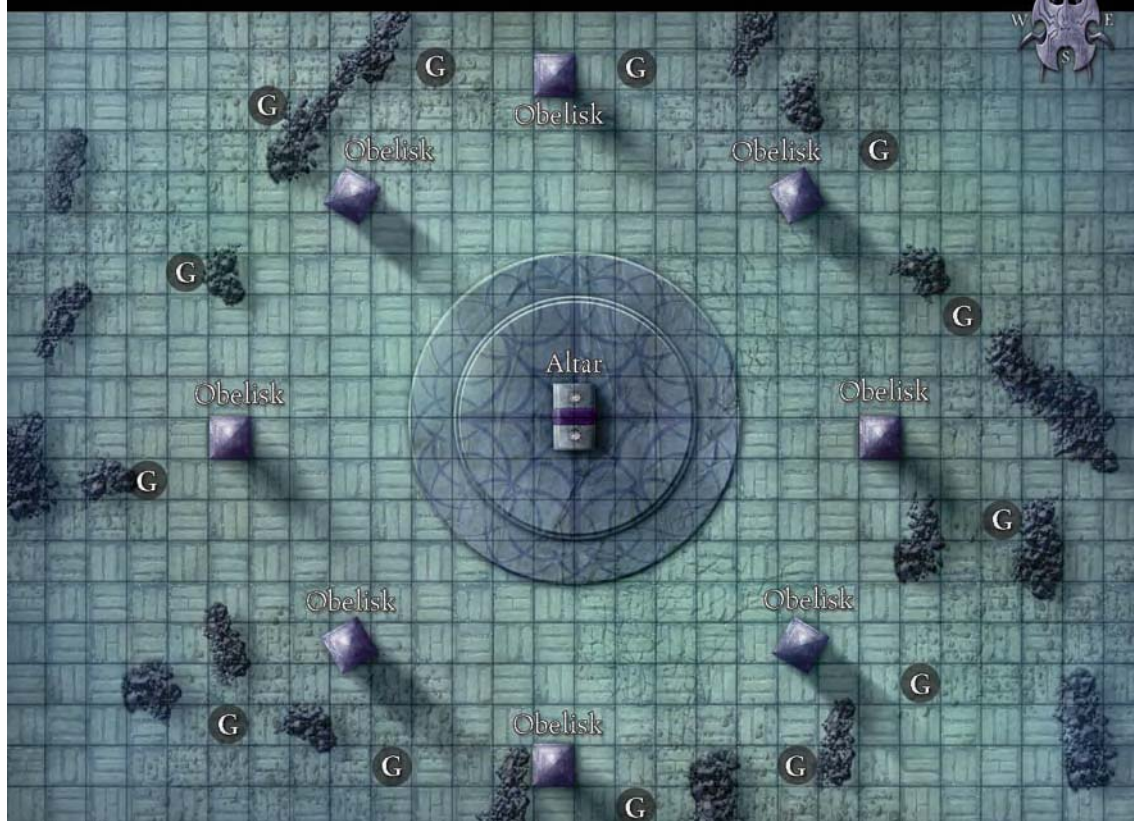
Ghoul Fever (Su) Disease—bite, Fort DC 12, incubation period 1 day, damage 1d3 Con and 1d3 Dex.

An afflicted humanoid who dies of ghoul fever rises as a ghoul at the next midnight. A humanoid who becomes a ghoul in this way retains none of the abilities it possessed in life. It is not under the control of any other ghouls, but it hungers for the flesh of the living and behaves like a normal ghoul in all respects. A humanoid of 4 Hit Dice or more rises as a ghast, not a ghoul.

Paralysis (Ex) Those hit by a ghoul's bite or claw attack must succeed on a DC 12 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1d4+1 rounds. Elves have immunity to this paralysis.

Necropolis Square

G = Ghoul Starting Position



If the PCs try to attack the mourners before they leave the courtyard, remind the players that there are at least two dozen drow, many of whom look formidable. If the adventurers attack anyway, let them fight for a few rounds. Before long, the drow, who know that the hungry ghouls will not restrain themselves forever, try to withdraw from battle and leave the foolish intruders to their fate.

As soon as the gate clangs shut, a dozen ghouls rise out of rubble at the positions shown on the map and move toward the altar. If they reach the corpse, they begin feeding on it. If the ghouls retreat before they finish consuming the body, the PCs can inspect it, but they find nothing unusual about the dead drow. He seems to have been a noble, and he departed the world with nothing but a black burial shroud. The pragmatic dark elves do not waste valuables on the deceased.

The PCs can try to conceal themselves in the courtyard, but eventually they are almost certain to be discovered. Since the ghouls prefer the flesh of the living, they immediately abandon the drow corpse and move to attack the party.

The altar is 6 feet long, 3 feet wide, and 4 feet high. A character on top of the altar gains the benefit of fighting from higher ground (PH 151).

Eight obelisks of polished black stone surround the altar. Each obelisk is approximately 80 feet tall and can be scaled with a successful DC 25 Climb check.

The rubble that surrounds Necropolis Square is all that remains of ancient burial sites, stretching into the gloom in

all directions. No longer used by the drow, they are home to the ghouls. It costs 2 squares of movement to enter a square of dense rubble. If the PCs move through the rubble, the DCs of their Balance checks and Tumble checks increase by 5, and the DCs of their Move Silently checks increase by 2.

At first, a dozen ghouls enter Necropolis Square, but you can adjust their number based on the party's current strength. Once the PCs defeat what you consider to be an appropriate number of ghouls, the others retreat into the ruins, but they continue to shadow the party throughout the Ghetto of the Dead.

ARENA BATTLE

If the PCs spend much time in Erelhei-Cinlu, they might eventually find themselves in the Ceremonial Arena (see page 203), fighting for gold, notoriety, or their lives. Death in the arena is a common sentence for foreigners tried before drow judges, or the PCs might volunteer for gladiatorial combat, hoping to grow rich and famous by defeating all comers. Either way, the arena has great potential for player characters who are oriented toward combat.

This encounter is different from the others in this chapter. Rather than detailing specific foes, it describes potential opponents, hazards, and traps that PCs in the arena might confront.

The overall map of the arena is only one possible configuration. For each battle, the drow determine a specific combat area and place obstacles and traps in cunning locations.

MATCHES AND OPPONENTS

Gladiatorial combat is one of the many ways that the drow have turned death into entertainment. These battles occur for various reasons—condemned criminals are sentenced to perish in the arena, slaves are bred specifically for combat, and foolhardy outlanders or bored drow nobles enter willingly to find wealth, fame, or a spectacular death.

The different scenarios and settings for arena combat are a tribute to the ingenuity of the dark elves. Some popular scenarios are described below, but they represent only a few of the possibilities.

One on One

The most basic and popular arena confrontation pits two individuals against each other in a fight to the death. The battle is not necessarily fair, though—the drow have no real concept of such things. Depending on the mood of the dark elves, a combatant might find himself equally matched, or he might be expected to slay an inferior opponent to please the bloodthirsty crowd. Worst of all, the gladiator might be the one intended as the sacrifice, struggling to overcome a vastly superior foe.

Dual Team

In this scenario, two teams of two combatants each face off. Usually, all four gladiators fight at the same time, but now and then the drow impose rules that permit only one combatant

at a time from each side. Sometimes, teams are experienced arena fighters with their own retinue, assistants, and fans in the stands. Other times, teams are thrown together at the last moment, and a bugbear barbarian might be forced to partner with a goblin rogue. The drow also enjoy putting mortal enemies on the same team, forcing them to work together and come to each other's aid—and then, if they are victorious, fighting each other to the death.

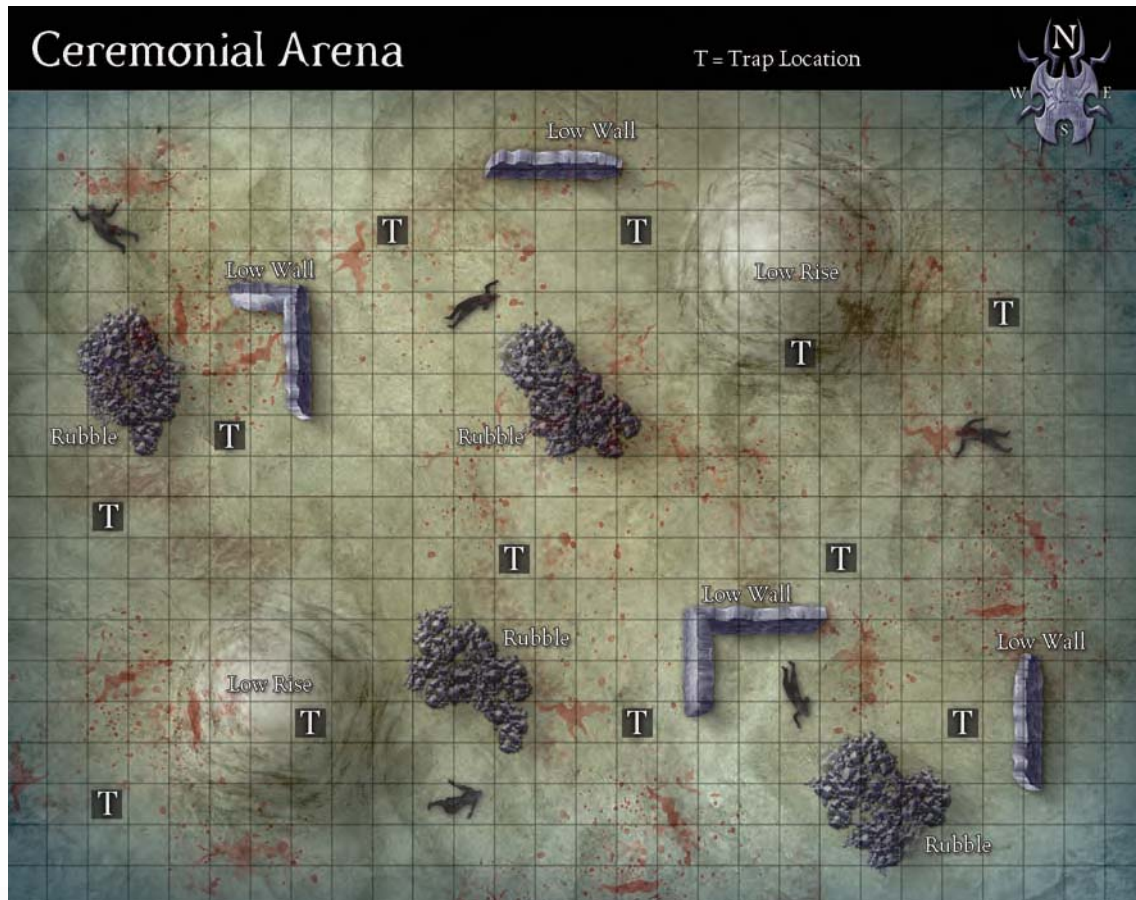
Team Battle

Larger teams of up to ten members per side are popular because of the increased bloodshed. As with dual teams, these larger groups are often assembled immediately before the combat, resulting in odd combinations.

The drow exploit the many possibilities of large team battles. For example, a team made up of creatures of the same race or characters of the same class might face a team of their opposites. Battles involving three or four teams always draw an enthusiastic crowd, eager to watch alliances be forged and broken from moment to moment, resulting in particularly enjoyable carnage.

Last Creature Standing

This free-for-all melee pits a dozen or more combatants against one another. The battle continues until a single victor emerges, or until all the participants are dead.



Humanoid against Monster

A single powerful creature is led into the arena. How many attackers will it slay before it is finally brought down? Slaves, prisoners, and gladiators of steadily increasing skill are sent in to battle the monster. The drow wager on the results, increasing or decreasing their bets as the odds change with each new engagement. This scenario usually involves creatures that are exotic, rare, or dangerous; the dark elves especially enjoy watching a mighty creature of good alignment meet an ignoble end.

Training

Watching warriors train is a spectator sport in Erelhei-Cinlu. When the warriors are drow, their training consists of slaying helpless opponents (to promote ruthlessness) and fighting well-armed foes (to promote martial skill and the survival instinct). Victims in these scenarios are slaves or captives who have been sentenced to death. Sometimes, for variety, the drow pit squads of warriors from two noble houses against each other, with the survivors earning promotions and better living conditions. The fact that these battles might weaken the city's overall military strength does not seem to bother the dark elves. On the contrary, they think that weeding out inferior warriors can only improve their ability to defend the city.

OBSTACLES AND TRAPS

At first glance, the Ceremonial Arena is a smooth expanse of sand, cleaned and raked by slaves after each battle. However, hidden beneath the sand are traps and obstacles intended to make the fights more interesting. As the DM, you can choose and place items carefully before combat begins, or you can roll randomly during a match to see what might come into play. Once an item emerges, it might continue to affect the combatants, or it might disappear after one use, only to be replaced by a different nefarious device.

Walls

The arena is fitted with a series of 5-foot-thick, 20-foot-high stone walls to create a labyrinth or a channeled battlefield. The walls can also move during a match, abruptly forcing combatants to change their tactics and cutting gladiators off from allies and routes to safety.

Triggered Column

When a combatant steps on a buried trigger, a 5-foot-square stone column shoots up out of the sand to a height of 20 feet. The combatant is lifted into the air atop the column and must make a successful DC 18 Reflex save to keep his footing. If he falls off, he lands in a random square adjacent to the column, takes 2d6 points of damage, and is prone.

In a variation on this obstacle, several adjacent 5-foot-square columns can rise together to form a wall. In addition, the wall might have gaps to channel subsequent combat.

TRIGGERED COLUMN

CR 2

Mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; Reflex DC 18 avoids fall; 20 ft. tall (2d6, fall); Search DC 21 from adjacent square locates; Disable Device DC 20 deactivates.

Terrain

Forests, mountains, swamps, and lakes can be recreated in the confines of the arena. The terrain is laid out so as to block as little of the spectators' view as possible, but otherwise, anything goes. You can create any layout desired, with each terrain type occupying one or more 5-foot squares. Try using trees, undergrowth, sand dunes, bogs, ice, and more (see the terrain descriptions in *Wilderness Adventures*, DMG 87–92).

In addition, consider placing any of the following obstacles in the arena.

Rubble: It costs 2 squares of movement to enter a square of dense rubble. The DCs of Balance checks and Tumble checks increase by 5, and the DCs of Move Silently checks increase by 2.

Low Wall: These stone walls are 3 to 4 feet high and provide cover (PH 151).

Low Rise: The drow like to create low hills by packing sand and debris over the piled corpses of the slain. Combatants who stand on a low rise gain the benefit of fighting from higher ground (PH 151).

Monsters

Now and then, it suits the drow's sadistic sense of humor to set monsters loose in the arena during a match. The dark elves can release anything from nuisance creatures, such as swarms of rats or bats, to deadlier threats, such as yugoloths, minotaurs, ropers, slimes, and other subterranean beasts. The creatures can be magically transported to the battleground or released through doors hidden around the arena.

Traps

Various traps can be located anywhere in the arena, and they are rarely in the same place twice. Prior to a battle involving the PCs, you can place traps on the map at the locations marked "T" or anywhere else you desire. Feel free to use any trap described in Chapter 3 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. However, it is best to choose traps that have a relatively low Challenge Rating, since such traps are designed to frustrate and confuse, rather than to kill outright—the gladiators are expected to take care of that. Common choices include pit traps of all varieties (up to 20 feet deep), fusillades of darts, *inflict light wounds* traps, net traps, and hails of needles.

The drow come up with all manner of devious and novel traps, and so should you. Two unusual traps are described below.

SCYTHE TRAP

CR 2

Mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; Atk +8 melee (1d8/×3); Search DC 21; Disable Device DC 20. Four scythes spring out from a pillar and spin, attacking anyone in adjacent squares.

WHIRLING CHAIN TRAP

CR 4

Mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; Atk +20 melee (2d4+8/×4, scythe); Search DC 21; Disable Device DC 18. Two spiked chains with heavy clubs spring out and spin around the trap, attacking anyone in adjacent squares.

Appendix: For Player Characters

The drow make for a frustrating and deadly foe for player characters with their gamut of magical abilities, twisted plots and manipulations honed and refined by their own society, and tricks and traps that have had centuries to be developed and perfected. In addition, they are typically found in one of the most hostile environments in a campaign world—the Underdark.

The dark elves have been the bogeymen of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game since their first appearance in 1978's *Dungeon Module G3: Hall of the Fire Giant King*. Since that time they have consistently both captivated and terrorized players ranging from the vilest of villains to the noblest of heroes. Unlike the majority of this book's material, this appendix is for the players. Its purpose is to help players handle encounters with hostile drow and live to tell of it as well as help them to successfully roleplay drow as player characters.

DROW AS FOES

The dangers to a party of adventurers in the Underdark come from all quarters and in every size and shape imaginable, but never far from the mind is the omnipresent threat of the drow. Nothing brings forth loathing and fear like the thought of an encounter with the dark elves in the cold tunnels of the earth, and it is well known that in their own environment an unexpected encounter with drow is likely to end badly for adventurers. Nevertheless, although most adventurers say a prayer to their respective gods for avoidance of the drow before plunging into the endless night, those wishing to trust to more than luck or the whim of a deity have given long thought and used battle-tested experience to come up with countermeasures against this implacable foe of all surface dwellers.

From the deep halls of fire giant kings to mountain passes of dwarf kingdoms to great cities hidden in cysts below the earth, the drow can be found in just about any setting at any time and always represent a terrible danger. However, it is widely known that as formidable as they are if encountered on the surface, the drow are much more to be feared when in their natural environment of lightless caverns and constrictive stone passages. Therefore, this appendix will primarily deal with methods for countering the drow in an Underdark environment where they are at their greatest advantage. These methods can largely be transferred for use in surface encounters as well, where the light of sun or moon and the great wide-open expanses unknown in the Underdark further reduce the dark elves' effectiveness.

First and foremost in combating the drow is the need for sight. Unless a party is full of characters who have the Blind-Fight feat and are ready and willing to miss on a significant portion of their attacks due to concealment, then they are going to want to be able to see in the dark. That said, Blind-Fight is an excellent feat to have as a backup in case things

don't go according to plan and a character does find himself fighting in the dark.

To counter the effects of darkness, the party should come equipped with darkvision, either naturally or through use of magic. Low-light vision is useful but probably will not cut it in the lightless environment of the Underdark. A must for all adventurers who are or might be facing drow is the *daylight* spell. It provides an incomparable advantage against the dark elves, rendering them blinded for the first round and dazzled every round thereafter that they remain within its area. Every ambush on drow should begin with a *daylight* spell, and even if the party finds itself on the receiving end of a drow ambush (a much more likely prospect), the first thought even before taking cover should be the use of *daylight*, because it buys time and reduces the ambushers' effectiveness. However, a single *daylight* spell is probably not enough, since it can be countered by *deeper darkness* or by a single ambusher with a readied action to disrupt spellcasters. Therefore, preparation of multiple *daylight* spells is a must. The inexpensive *daylight pellets* (see page 101) are especially useful in this regard.

THE UNPREPARED PARTY

When battle with drow begins, tactics differ depending on whether the PCs were prepared for the encounter. If they are in the Underdark, they should be prepared and at the very least have a *daylight* spell available. If a party has not prepared, then an organized retreat is usually the best option unless the characters are able to quickly discern that they are facing an inferior force that is easily dealt with. And with drow, if it looks like you're facing an inferior force that is easily dealt with, then that's probably just what they want you to think, and they actually are not. Retreat, preferably covered by a *daylight* spell, is probably the best option.

If the party is able to tell where the leader of the drow force is, then some sort of ranged area effect just to keep her busy might be in order as a parting shot. A spell such as *cloudkill* is ideal in that it does not allow spell resistance, it forces the target(s) to move to get out of its way, and it provides concealment to retreat under. In conjunction with a *daylight* spell, this attack can be particularly effective against a temporarily blinded drow who is unaware of its approach. Its Constitution damage might likewise prevent the drow from pursuing while instead seeking out a *restoration* spell.

To cover the retreat, spells such as *fog cloud* and *obscuring mist* are good because they are unaffected by spell resistance. In addition, if the drow have just encountered a *cloudkill*, they are much less likely to charge into another roiling cloud of mist. The retreat is an excellent time to summon any expendable monsters or allies to send back along the trail and hamper any pursuit. Once again, spell resistance doesn't help against a hungry fiendish dire wolverine. And it goes without saying that the versatility of spells such as *fly*, *expeditious retreat*, and *pass without trace* is valuable in such endeavors.

The party should stay together, however. One heroic soul who intends to hold the tunnel behind his retreating comrades is asking for trouble. First, the party should assume that character is lost and make plans to defend without him, since there is a good chance he will never be seen again. To

some this might seem a noble and self-sacrificing end, but to experienced drow-fighters it just means one less sword arm to defend the party when the drow finally catch up. In addition, this sacrifice might be ineffectual. In the labyrinth that is the Underdark, the drow probably know a half-dozen tertiary tunnels to reach the same place, so guarding one is unlikely to be particularly helpful. Finally, there is a good chance that the noble hero might not just be defeated but captured alive as well. Then it becomes a contest between the captive's will and the captor's inventiveness during the torture that is surely to follow to determine if the character spills his guts and reveals sensitive information about the party's plans, location, strengths, and weaknesses.

During the course of the retreat, the PCs should stay together until they reach some easily defensible position—scouted in advance for just such an occasion, if possible. If traps have been prepared in advance, that is even better. Just retreating beyond the area of the encounter is a bad option, because drow encounters usually fall into one of two categories. More than likely such an encounter is either a drow raiding party—in which case unless the drow have some better target in mind, they are going to pursue and ambush the party again. Otherwise, it is likely to be a patrol or guard post for some drow stronghold—in which case the drow are going to call for reinforcements and then pursue and attack again. If the characters are entrenched, though, the drow might find them to not be worth the trouble and withdraw. It is imperative in these defensive positions that the party keeps the approaches well lighted and has the characters with the highest Spot and Listen modifiers watching them. From this position, the party can then either retreat to the surface or prepare itself to face the drow for a rematch on more equal terms.

THE PREPARED PARTY

A prepared party enters the Underdark wondering not if but when it will encounter drow. As mentioned, this party always has plentiful *daylight* spells and *daylight pellets* at hand. *Wands of daylight* and *staves of illumination* also fit the bill nicely. These items should be distributed among different party members who are able to use them, in case any certain individual might become disabled early in the battle.

When going into a battle with drow, battlefield intelligence is key. Knowing who you're up against, how many, and where they are located is essential to effectively combating the tactical skills and martial abilities of the drow. It is always a good idea to identify leaders and spellcasters (often one and the same). That brief round when a *daylight* spell is activated is a good time to quickly take stock of who is around and where they are positioned. If the encounter is with a small or poorly deployed force, an immediate charge might be the thing to do. However, it is likely that there are troops providing a buffer between the party and its primary targets and/or the leaders are in some defensible position. In this case, a quick tactical withdrawal might be in order.

A withdrawal just a few hundred feet up a corridor, perhaps with a few of the retreating tactics mentioned above, is probably sufficient. If the drow are overzealous, the party might be able to lure them or some of their underlings into an ambush

themselves. If not, at least it gives the party time to prepare its own buffing spells and take stock of the situation to decide if they are up against a force they are capable of defeating or if an alternate route is preferable. The key to this tactical withdrawal is to not take too long—not more than a minute or so. During this time the drow, if not foolishly pursuing, are either using their own buffing spells, organizing their defenses, or sending for reinforcements. If the party intends to attack them, it needs to do so before any reinforcements arrive and possibly while some of the defenders are fetching those reinforcements.

Enemy Spellcasters

First and foremost in a party's mind when battling drow must be determining the number and locations of spellcasters. Typically, raiding parties and small guard posts have only one or two major spellcasters (perhaps a wizard as well as a cleric of Lolth). Although any number of the underlings—especially other drow—might have some levels as spellcasters, these spells are typically used for buffing or for minor attacks or effects. The principal focus must be on the main drow spellcasters to offset their more devastating spells that are often used in conjunction with their underlings' tactics to good effect.

To combat these deadly spellcasters, it is a good idea for a party to have a spellcaster of its own tasked as a dedicated counterspeller. This individual should have plenty of *dispel magic* spells on hand or preferably a *wand of dispel magic*. Once the primary drow spellcasters have been identified, this character readies an action to counterspell whenever a spellcaster begins to cast. In some cases, more than one counterspeller might be a good idea when there are two or more major spellcasters in the drow group that the party is facing.

It might be argued that devoting a spellcaster to counterspell duty is detrimental since it removes a primary offensive component from the party in the battle. This is largely untrue, because engaging in a spell duel with a highly spell-resistant foe is likely to lead to disaster, and drow are on their home turf when it comes to spell duels. In addition, the other tactics presented in this section offset the temporary loss of the offensive powers of the counterspeller by eliminating the threat of drow spellcasters early and then freeing the counterspeller up for more deadly use of his power. To further alleviate that loss of offensive capability, a *wand of dispel magic* in the hands of the party's bard or a rogue who has ranks in Use Magic Device goes a long way toward allowing the wizard or sorcerer to make other more versatile attacks.

Finally, if there simply is no spellcaster of sufficient power or magical resources available to complete this task, then a character skilled with ranged weapons can serve in a pinch. The various abilities provided by the Order of the Bow initiate^{CW} prestige class serve well in this capacity. The key to success is being able to hit the drow's probably high Armor Class and doing enough damage to overcome the drow's probably high ranks in Concentration. A potential benefit of this tactic is that doing damage to the drow spellcaster and thwarting his or her spellcasting attempts has a good chance of breaking that individual's morale and ending the battle as discussed in Negotiating a Surrender, below.

Player Character Spellcasting

The great equalizer in battles where the enemies outnumber the party is typically the varied and deadly spells available to the party to even the odds. A few *fireballs* usually settle down a horde of orcs pretty quickly. However, with drow this tactic becomes problematic, since they prove to be resistant to a significant portion of the spells cast at them. Nothing is more demoralizing than seeing those same *fireballs* launched, only to witness the enemy drow soldiers walking through the carnage unscathed. Worse, for a sorcerer, that spell took up a slot that could have been used for a different, more effective spell later.

The obvious solution to this problem, unless the party spellcasters are already engaged as counterspellers as discussed above, is to use spells that are not subject to spell resistance when battling the drow. However, this is easier said than done when one peruses the lists of spells favored by player characters and sees that entry stating “Spell Resistance: Yes” again and again. The Spell Penetration feat becomes invaluable in this case.

However, many useful spells that do not allow spell resistance can be of great assistance. A prime example is the lowly *glitterdust*, which can reveal an entire group of sneaking drow and render them blinded at the same time. Other low-level spells useful against drow are *acid splash* and *Melf's acid arrow* to cause damage and disrupt spellcasters and *snare, web, stinking cloud, entangle, animate rope*, or *grease* to disable or otherwise hinder them.

Spells such as *cloud-kill, acid fog, creeping doom, incendiary cloud, Evard's black tentacles*, and *insect plague* can damage entire groups of drow as well as hinder their spellcasting. The druid spell *repel stone or metal* can put a group of armored drow to flight. *Reverse gravity* is effective against well-entrenched drow. In addition, most illusion spells are unaffected by spell resistance and can be used to outwit the drow or to manipulate the field of battle (*hallucinatory terrain*). The *mislead* spell is valuable for its ability to escape or outflank drow opponents.

Forcecage is an excellent way to contain a particularly troublesome drow warrior or spellcaster.

Most divination spells are unaffected by spell resistance, and the use of a

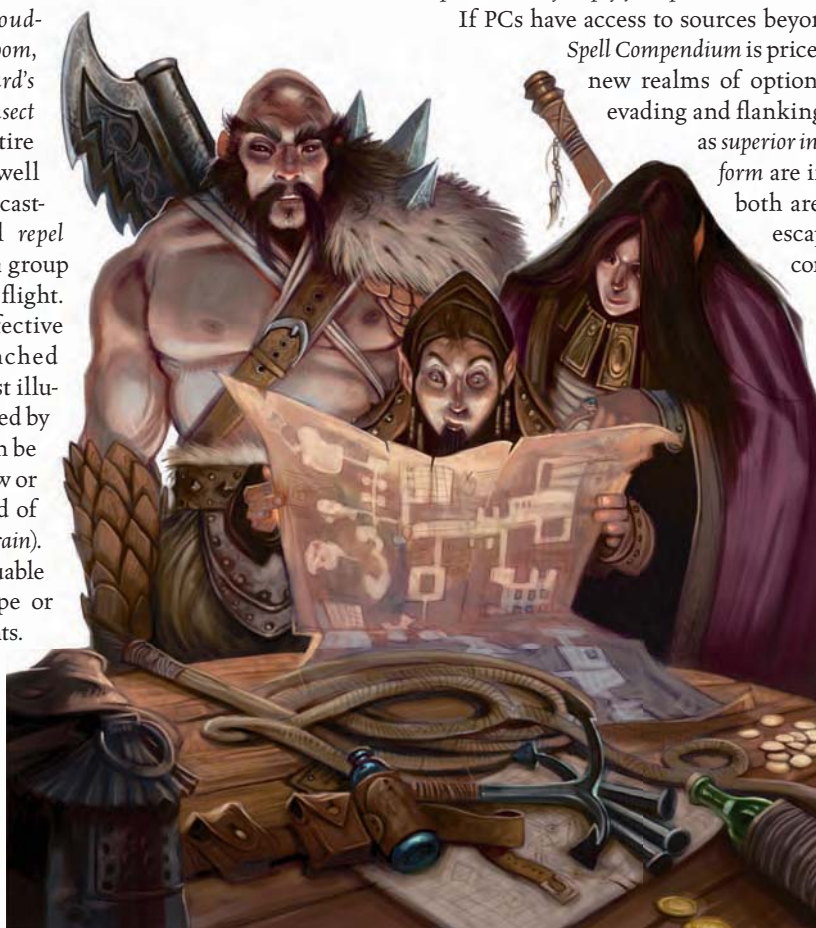
simple *clairaudience/clairvoyance* can greatly help in gathering intelligence on drow adversaries. Even *detect poison* can be useful in determining if any drow, known for wielding poison, are concealed beyond a closed door. In addition, a simple *alarm* spell on a campsite can foil attempts at infiltration by drow assassins.

On the battlefield, other spells that do not affect drow directly are still of great use in combat against them. Beyond the buffing spells that assist characters in combat, a spell such as *blink* can put even the greatest drow weaponmaster at a disadvantage by reducing his chances to hit by half, and *sanctuary* can be useful for moving around the battlefield to aid others. Also, spells that affect the field itself are extremely useful. Most of the wall spells (*wall of stone, wall of force*, and so forth) are unaffected by spell resistance and can be used to restrict the movement of drow foes and isolate them as necessary. In the often natural stone surroundings of the Underdark, *soften earth and stone* can impede the movements of drow combatants, and a well-placed *transmute rock to mud* on a cavern wall or roof can play havoc on drow positions. Even *control water* can be used to overflow a nearby stream or pool to flood out a drow strongpoint.

Finally, transportative spells can help party members circumvent the drow front-line fighters and get directly to the leaders and spellcasters as described in greater detail below. The spells of use for this purpose are the obvious choices such as *dimension door* and *teleport* or the less obvious ones such as *spider climb, jump, fly*, or *passwall*.

If PCs have access to sources beyond the core rulebooks, *Spell Compendium* is priceless, opening up whole new realms of options for spellcasters. For evading and flanking the drow, spells such as *superior invisibility* and *amorphous form* are invaluable. In addition, both are great spells to use to escape drow or withstand concentrated attacks from

them. *Amorphous form* in particular provides immunity to flanking, poison, and critical hits—all favorite tactics of the drow. Offsetting the disadvantages of fighting in the Underdark are spells such as *blacklight, blindsight, mass darkvision, deeper darkvision*, and *scent*. Spells that can turn the Underdark surroundings and creatures with which the drow are so comfortable against them include *earthlock*,



Adventurers prepare before a sojourn into the Underdark

ooze puppet, and slime wave. Finally, enough cannot be said for the spell *assay spell resistance*, which quickly levels the playing field for spellcasters who are engaging drow targets.

In addition to spells from sources outside the core rulebooks, some feats are available in these secondary sources that serve particularly well when facing drow opponents. Fortify Spell^{CAR} increases spell penetration, and Mage Slayer^{CAR} is extremely effective if a character is able to close with drow spellcasters, because it provides some resistance to their spells and prevents them from casting defensively if threatened. *Races of Stone* contains a number of feats that prove advantageous in an Underdark environment. Earth Sense and Steady Mountaineer provide greater awareness of foes and bonuses for movement in earthbound terrain and caverns. Tunnel Fighting gives an excellent advantage when forcing battle in a confined tunnel space, and Stoneback provides extra protection from any superior maneuverability that the drow might use in order to obtain flanking positions. Like Earth Sense, the feats Hear the Unseen, Blindsense, and Scent from *Complete Adventurer* provide additional sensory perceptions to locate and pinpoint the ever-elusive targets presented by drow in their natural environment.

Cut off the Head

A common tactic that has been used in battle to great effect is the concept of decapitation of the enemy chain of command. Nowhere is this tactic more useful than when fighting the drow. Unlike with typical armies where the order of the run-of-the-mill troops breaks down when their officers or war leaders are killed, the warriors of drow society are usually extremely well disciplined and capable of executing their own battle tactics with finesse and deadly effect. The decapitation of the drow battlefield command structure often works for a different reason.

Due to the chaotic and inherently evil nature of drow society, teamwork is not considered a virtue, and heightened self-interest rules the day. Many drow warriors follow their leaders out of fear or greed. Seeing that leader go down can cause the drow underlings to realize that their opponent is more to be feared than their leader was, that they no longer need fear their leader and no longer fear the consequences of retreat, or have seen that without their leader they no longer stand to gain from this battle and thus no longer have a stake in continuing it. This often leads to the withdrawal or outright flight of the lower-level drow warriors.

Oftentimes, the front-line fighters of a drow patrol or guardpost are not drow at all, but are thralls or slaves—bugbears, trolls, quaggoths, troglodytes, and the like—forced to fight for their drow masters through fear or magical compulsion. If these lesser troops are avoided initially and the drow leadership of a given group is destroyed, at the very least this approach can result in demoralized troops. Just as likely will be an all-out rout or even surrender and potentially the acquisition of allies against the drow. Even if these lesser troops continue to fight after the drow leaders and spellcasters have been eliminated, the party spellcasters are then freed to up to use their more traditional mass destruction spells to quickly cut through their ranks.

Negotiating a Surrender

As mentioned, greed and self-interest are two of the most prevalent traits in drow society. Only the most fanatical drow will throw away his or her life in hopeless combat if an escape presents itself. If a drow leader's life can be quickly threatened, its underlings avoided or neutralized, its peers dead or incapacitated, then a surrender might be negotiated. The most important thing to remember when negotiating such a situation with a drow is that it is not simply looking for escape; it has survived in drow society too long to settle for simple status quo survival, and it is still looking for the maximum gain from the situation—whether that is escape to return for eventual revenge or how best to use the situation against its enemies.

Keeping this in mind, parties negotiating a surrender should offer the drow more than simply its life, but a chance for the drow to profit as well. The party does not have to keep its word on any such negotiations unless alignment strictures require it (the drow certainly will not do so), but in the short term the characters can end the hostilities and remove that particular drow or group as an immediate obstacle. But the party had best beware on any return trips through the area. Any drow who were left behind will more than likely renege on any deals that were made, unless the agreed-to consideration was just too irresistible, and those same drow will now be much more familiar with the party's composition, strengths, and weaknesses.

Some negotiated deals that can hold a drow's interest long enough to ensure cooperation are helping a male drow gain wealth or power in a matriarchal society, elimination of drow from a rival house, or an agreement to help in the destruction of some enemy of the drow that they dare not tackle alone (for instance, a nearby illithid colony or surface-elf explorers). It is of note that any agreements entered into with a drow are likely to be inherently evil in nature or at the very least on the shady side of things. Paladins beware.

DROW AS CHARACTERS

Not all drow are the quintessential foes of player characters. Many times drow are used as PCs themselves. These might be renegade drow do-gooders that wander the surface or the Underdark seeking to escape their heritage and right the wrongs committed by their race, or these might be renegades of a more self-interested bent equally outcast but seeking only to gain their fame and fortune outside the oppressive hierarchy of drow society. In both of these cases, these characters are usually males who are disillusioned with the brutal matriarchal society they have left behind and sure there is a better life for them elsewhere.

Finally, drow characters might still be members of drow society. These characters are usually evil, though sometime neutral (never good), and they fulfill the same role in drow society that adventurers serve on the surface. However, in addition to seeking their fame and fortune, they navigate the pitfalls and plotting of the drow culture and seek to survive and thrive under the cruel dominance of the house matrons. These characters experience equal parts intrigue

and political maneuvering along with the more typical fare of the adventurer's life.

Regardless of their outlook, drow characters suit many classes very well because of their natural abilities and bonuses to ability scores.

Fighter Types: Perhaps most numerous among the drow population are those schooled in the arts of physical combat. This state of affairs is ironic for a race that has an inherent disadvantage in its stamina because of a Constitution penalty. It is best explained by the constant state of turmoil in which drow society exists and the constant need for warriors to provide some semblance of security.

Of all the combat-oriented classes (aside from warrior, which is essentially the default class for "ordinary" drow), fighter is by far the most common, chosen primarily for its quick access to a multiplicity of bonus feats and its sheer versatility. Most drow who train as fighters go on to defend the drow state or serve in the personal guard of the noble houses. Some are promoted into the ranks of the fang of Lolth prestige class (described in this book) or become blackguard champions of their houses or the priesthood.

Though they are less common, rangers also appear with some regularity due in large part to the drowish propensity to fight with two weapons. This near obsession is often taken so far as to cause drow rangers to fight with two one-handed weapons at the same time and accept the inherent penalties involved therein. Rangers also often go on to enter the cavetalker prestige class (also described herein) and become true masters of their Underdark environment.

Barbarians are a relative rarity in the more urbane culture of the drow, though those individuals who show a propensity for berserk combat are often coached along in anticipation of introduction to the kinslayer class described in this book.

Some few drow become monks, but the Lolth followers who are lawful enough to pursue such a profession are few and far between.

Stealthy Types: Second most common to the warriors of drow society are the rogues, those shiftier drow without any real stake to call their own who therefore must live off of what they can take from others. Since the powerful in drow society work very hard to ensure that they remain powerful, the best way to meet one's needs at the expense of others is through subterfuge rather than brute force. Furthermore, the natural agility of the drow race lends itself well to the roguish classes. The penultimate example of drow stealth taken to the extreme is the eye of Lolth prestige class (described herein)—spies and secret police who move throughout drow society unseen but feared by all.

Scouts are frequently employed in the far patrols through the Underdark, and assassins are far from uncommon in the endlessly cutthroat drow cities. Bards are less common in drow society, but the superior Charisma of the race allows exceptional examples of the class to exist such that the sheer beauty of their artistry is often admired by other Underdark and surface races—even those that are sworn enemies of the drow.

Divine Casters: The most prestigious of all individuals in drow society are the clerics, because of their divine con-

nection to the Spider Queen. Yet entry to this class is closely regulated, controlled almost entirely by the noble houses and existing priesthood and forbidden to males. Clerics of other drow deities do exist on the fringes of drow culture, but under the best circumstances they are seen as lesser stepchildren, if allied with the Fane of Lolth, and at worst they are seen as apostates and heretics worthy only of extermination, if they are unallied.

Druids are not entirely unknown but usually exist outside established drow communities, existing as near-hermits either in isolated caverns or even in the wilds of the surface. When discovered, they are usually actively hunted by the priestesses of Lolth as heretics.

Arcane Casters: Respected only slightly less than the priestesses of Lolth are the arcane casters. These are less numerous than clerics, but they still wield considerable power and are often males. Forbidden from pursuing careers as clerics, males with talent often become arcane casters to find a taste of some of the power that has eluded them.

Wizards and sorcerers are found in nearly equal numbers among the drow, and the race's superior Intelligence and Charisma works well for both. There are many magical societies and schools that tutor and train wizards, and sorcerous talent runs strong through the chaotic and inherently magical drow. Warmages are embraced and trained to serve as house wizards, and the most prestigious universities and noble houses turn out master wizards, archmages of power that rivals that of the high priestesses. Necromancers are not unheard of, but are always viewed somewhat distastefully—why work to manipulate the dead, when manipulating the living is so much more infinitely interesting?

Warlocks are not unknown among the drow, but they are seen as something of an oddity. The race's affinity with and connection to the Lower Planes is too great for them to not exhibit some sort of taint from beyond, and demonbinders are among the most common examples found. Many arcane casters likewise become arachnomancers—ever popular among the drow. (Both of these prestige classes are described in this book.)

Psionics Users: Finally, in a group by themselves are the ever-enigmatic psionics users. As in just about any society, the use of psionics is poorly understood and its practitioners viewed distrustfully, and the drow who are much more steeped in powers of the arcane and the divine are no exception. However, as a race that has had extensive dealings with creatures such as illithids and duergar, the drow are at least familiar with and somewhat more accepting of psionic power. The heads of society still view it skeptically and work to ensure it is no threat to them, but it is often seen as a useful and unexpected tool to use against one's enemies to gain whatever advantage possible in the continual dance macabre of drow politics.

Psychic warriors and soulknives are the most frequently accepted classes, their members often serving to augment a noble house's guard force or act as assassins. Psions are generally distrusted, being seen as rivals for the kind of power enjoyed by the divine and arcane spellcasting classes. They do make useful agents sometimes when dealing with psionically endowed races, however, and many envoys to illithid

or duergar communities have a powerful psion among their number. Wilders generally move invisibly through drow society, concealing their powers and causing no more chaos than what already exists in the streets. Only after manifesting a particularly powerful surge do wilders have to watch their backs, as the local authorities seek to harness or eliminate the source of the power revealed.

RACIAL CLASS LEVELS

One of the disadvantages of running a drow as a character is the race's +2 level adjustment. A 1st-level drow character has an effective character level (ECL) of 3rd, which is the sum of his level adjustment and his Hit Dice. Simply put, a character cannot be a 1st-level drow. Even if you have only one character level, you're still considered a 3rd-level character. This becomes a problem if you want to play a drow character, but your new campaign requires that you roll up a 1st-level character.

However, through the use of the new drow racial class, the various abilities of a drow that provide him with his level adjustment boost are now incorporated into the racial class levels. Only a drow character can take this racial class. Using this variant, a drow character has an effective level adjustment of +0 but does not gain all of his natural drow abilities until he advances in his racial class. These racial class levels can be integrated with any standard class levels. A racial class level might or might not grant Hit Dice independent of the character's class depending on the level attained. When taking a racial class, you can still take levels in one or more standard character classes, subject to the normal multiclassing restrictions.

NEW DROW FEAT

This feat is provided for half-elf characters with drow ancestry that wish to emphasize their dark elf heritage. This feat can be taken only at 1st level. In a FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign, this should be considered a regional feat and subject to the rules described on page 33 of *Player's Guide to Faerun*.

DROW LEGACY

The drow blood in your veins runs true and grants you some abilities from that heritage.

Prerequisite: Half-elf with drow ancestry.

Benefit: You have a +2 racial bonus on Will saves against spells and spell-like abilities. You have darkvision out to 60 feet. You receive Exotic Weapon Proficiency (hand crossbow), as well as, Undercommon and the drow dialect of Elven as automatic languages.

If you have an Intelligence score of 13 or higher, you also gain the following spell-like abilities, each usable once per day: *dancing lights*, *darkness*, and *faerie fire*. Your caster level equals your class level.

Normal: A half-elf with drow ancestry normally just receives the half-elf racial traits as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

Special: Taking this feat also causes you to have light sensitivity: You are dazzled (–1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks) in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

THE DROW RACIAL CLASS

The drow, also known as dark elves, are a depraved and evil offshoot of the more commonly known surface elves. They spend their lives continually plotting the downfall of their hated light-skinned kin. Although they share a common enemy, there is certainly no love lost among the drow themselves, since every individual only looks out for himself and sees any weakness in a compatriot as a chance to enhance his own place in society.

Through the millennia of their subterranean exile, and the machinations of their foul goddess, the drow have developed an affinity for arachnids and are typically accompanied by several of these vermin, from the smallest normal spiders to the most gargantuan monstrous varieties.

For more details on drow, see MM 103.

RACIAL CLASS FEATURES

The following features are gained by characters who take drow racial levels that are integrated with a standard class.

Class Level

The Class Level column of the accompanying table indicates whether a drow gains a standard class level at any given racial level. Some racial levels provide a standard class level, some racial levels provide a drow-specific ability, and some grant both. Class levels grant all the benefits normally associated with level advancement. This includes another Hit Die, other class abilities, and improvement in base attack bonus, base saves, and ability scores.

HALF-DROW PLAYER CHARACTERS

In the core DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game, the offspring of drow and humans are standard half-elves. The union of a drow and any other creature does not produce children. However, in the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting, there exists a race of half-drow as the offspring of humans and drow elves. This rare race is found primarily in the isolated land of Dambrath on the southernmost shores of Faerûn. It is not recommended that half-drow be used except in a FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign.

The half-drow race is detailed in the FORGOTTEN REALMS accessory *Races of Faerun* and is updated here. Half-drow have the standard racial traits of half-elves given in the *Player's Handbook*, except that their favored class is the class in which they have the most levels. In addition, rather than elf blood, they have drow blood. Since drow is a subrace of elf, the net effect is that they have elf blood as well. The specification of drow blood means that for all special abilities and effects particular to a drow, a half-drow is considered a drow. One piece of errata from *Races of Faerun* is that half-drow do not have darkvision. Rather, they have only the low-light vision typical of half-elves.

Though largely spurned by their arrogant full-blooded kin of the Underdark, the half-drow of Dambrath do own a distinct advantage over the drow in that they do not suffer the light blindness common to their pureblood cousins. To this end, they make excellent adventurers well suited to both the Underdark and the surface world.

THE DROW RACIAL CLASS

Racial Class		Abilities Gained
Level	Level	
1st	1st	Drow base traits, darkvision 60 ft., feat
2nd	1st	Spell-like abilities, +2 Int, +2 Cha
3rd	2nd	Darkvision 120 ft., immunities
4th	2nd	Spell resistance
5th	3rd	Feat
6th	4th	Ability score increase
7th	5th	—
8th	6th	Feat
9th	7th	—
10th	8th	Ability score increase
11th	9th	Feat
12th	10th	—
13th	11th	—
14th	12th	Ability score increase, feat
15th	13th	—
16th	14th	—
17th	15th	Feat
18th	16th	Ability score increase
19th	17th	—
20th	18th	Feat

Drow Base Traits

Drow have the following base racial traits, which apply to any character who takes 1st level in the drow racial class.

+2 Dexterity, –2 Constitution.

Medium Size: Drow have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.

Drow base land speed is 30 feet.

+2 racial bonus on saving throws against enchantment spells or effects.

+2 racial bonus on Listen, Search, and Spot checks. A drow who merely passes within 5 feet of a secret or concealed door is entitled to a Search check to notice it as if he was actively looking for it.

+2 racial bonus on Will saves against spells and spell-like abilities.

Light Blindness (Ex): Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they take a –1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks when in bright light.

Automatic Languages: Common, Elven, Undercommon. Bonus Languages: Abyssal, Aquan, Draconic, Drow Sign Language, Gnome, Goblin, Kuo-Toan.

Favored Class: Wizard (male) or cleric (female).

Darkvision: At 1st level, drow gain darkvision out to 60 feet.

Feat: Like every other character, a drow character gains one feat at 1st level and another at every Hit Die divisible by 3. These feats are in addition to any bonus feats granted as class features or any other bonus feats.

Abilities Gained at Higher Levels

Spell-like Abilities: At 2nd level in the racial class, a drow gains the ability to use each of the following spell-like abilities once per day: *dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*. Caster level equals the drow's class level.

+2 **Intelligence:** Also at 2nd level in the racial class, drow gain a +2 increase to their Intelligence scores.

+2 **Charisma:** At 2nd level in the racial class, drow also gain a +2 increase to their Charisma scores.

Darkvision: A drow who takes the 3rd drow racial level increases the extent of his darkvision to 120 feet.

Immunities: Also at 3rd level in the racial class, a drow gains immunity to magic *sleep* spells and effects.

Spell Resistance: At 4th level in the racial class, a drow gains spell resistance equal to 11 + class level.

Feat: Like every other character, a drow character gains an additional feat at every class level divisible by 3. These feats are in addition to any bonus feats granted as class features or any other bonus feats.

Ability Score Increase: Upon attaining any class level divisible by 4, a drow character increases one of his ability scores by 1 point. The player chooses which ability score to improve. The ability improvement is permanent.

ABOUT THE DESIGNERS

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ARI MARMELL has contributed to over forty RPG and fiction products, including *Vampire: The Requiem*, multiple books in the Scarred Lands setting, *Egyptian Adventures: Hamunaptra*, *Dawnforge*, and the novel *Gehenna: The Final Night*. His recent work for Wizards of the Coast includes *Heroes of Horror*, *Tome of Magic*, and *Faiths of Eberron*. He lives with his wife, two cats, and an entire pack of neuroses (EL 12).

ANTHONY PRYOR has been writing professionally in the gaming industry since 1985, working for numerous companies and game lines. In the dusty and distant past, he wrote many products for DUNGEONS & DRAGONS 2nd Edition, including *Lankhmar: City of Adventure*, *Elves of Evermeet*, and the Marco Volo trilogy. More recently, he has worked as a writer, an editor, and a developer for a variety of third-party d20 products.

GREG A. VAUGHAN is a lifelong gamer who lives in Oklahoma City. He has written primarily for *Dungeon Magazine*, including contributions to two Adventure Paths, and has designed an adventure series for Necromancer Games. This book is his second project for Wizards of the Coast, the first being *The Twilight Tomb*. Greg dedicates his contribution to this book to his new son, who will have joined his family by the time this sees print.

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