

DUSK ELVES: A RAVENLOFT SUBRACE



A Subrace Excerpt From
Ravenloft Archetypes: Nightmares of Barovia
For Elves in the Domains of Dread and Beyond

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NEW ELF SUBRACE:

DUSK ELF

At the dawn of creation, no difference between the different kinds of elves existed, and no wickedness sundered the drow from their light-dwelling kin. They were one people, bound through common love and life, and united by the eagerness and curiosity for the natural world's many wonders. All this ended when the dark goddess Lolth's poison sundered family and shattered bonds, beginning the dreaded war between the elves that altered the course of what would become high elves, wood elves, and dark elves for all time. Even as the elves rallied against their dark kin, some chose no side. They sought escape from the escalating violence and retreated to hidden parts of the mortal world. The nobles who led the sylvan armies against the dark host deemed those who fled traitors, and the most powerful of elven gods vowed vengeance against them for their cowardice. One goddess, however, saw their flight as fitting for those who embraced her tenets. This goddess is named as Mother Night among the dusk elves of Barovia and other Domains of Dread. In most worlds, she is identified as the elven goddess Sehanine. This goddess sheltered those who abstained from the war as her chosen people, raising a veil to hide them from anyone seeking retribution, as the drow were driven into the Underdark and Lolth was cast into the Abyss. Over the intervening generations, these elves lived in secret, forbidden from returning to their homelands and afraid to range too far from their hidden redoubts. Only after the ancient wars and their part in them began to fade did such elves venture farther afield. Elven memory is long indeed, and some bear the lost tribe, now called dusk elves, ill will, but many find ways to look beyond the ancient offense and take these people for who they now are.

BAROVIAN DUSK

At some point after the Strahd von Zarovich became a vampire, groups of dusk elves migrated to Barovia and other Domains of Dread. Elves of other kinds are much rarer in these benighted lands than in other worlds, which has slightly altered dusk elf culture here. They are still appropriately suspicious and fearful for dwelling in such haunted places, but the fact of their existence is not a total secret, though their racial enclaves are still guarded with deadly secrecy. Dusk elves here feel a sense of kinship with local humans, whose frightened paranoia mirrors their own. In fact, dusk elf colonies will engage in trade with humans living in the same domain. Residents of such communities are much more likely to venture out to see other lands. Human settlements in some domains, however, practice evil traditions openly, and in such places, dusk elves are just as secretive as usual. In the domain of Sithicus, where elves live in greater numbers than in any other Dark Lord's realm, the dusk elves maintain no settlements, and individuals who pass through are even more covert than normal. They do their best to avoid the strange elves who live in Sithicus, who they find even more alien and threatening than high elves and wood elves of other lands.

Physically, dusk elves are a slight folk, nearly identical to their elf counterparts. Where they differ is mostly in their choice of apparel, as they favor subdued colors and practical, unadorned garb. They are dark-skinned, with complexions ranging from a dark brown to a golden tan, complimented by lustrous black or auburn hair. These types tend to share the basic traits of their high elf and wood elf kin, but where those elves are free-spirited and mercurial, dusk elves are furtive, haunted, and suspicious. In a few communities, generally descended from elves who hid in refuges partially underground or near cave-riddled mountains, some dusk elves have abilities closer to those of the drow. Members of this small minority often differ in appearance from dusk elves elsewhere, with skin pale as moonlight. Dusk elves restrict their emotions to a narrow range, showing little joy and less grief. For all their disinclination for emotional displays, dusk elves are a people of deep feeling. When alone or among a trusted few, they give in to their happiness and sorrow with surprising intensity. Dusk elves value their privacy and guard their lands from trespassers. The dusk elves who protect their communities from trespass are a select group of deadly sentries, known as the gloaming guardians. They protect the routes into their communities, and if they encounter intruders, they use their stealthy talents to trick

or frighten interlopers away. Failing that, the guardians use their considerable martial prowess to pick such trespassers off one at a time, until they realize their error and return from whence they came. Gloaming guardians are sometimes the only dusk elves who meet other peoples.

During private moments, dusk elves reflect on their nature, their people's history, and the plans their patron goddess has for them. They see the natural world as a prison, albeit a beautiful one, and pine for the fabulous cities of the high elves and verdant fey lands of the wood elves.

Those who shrug off the accustomed melancholy of their people sometimes leave their hidden communities to see what the world has to offer. Adventuring is a common pastime for these bold souls, and they prove constant, though detached, comrades. They show little of the joy shared by other elves. However, dusk elves are sensitive about their reputations and might go overboard to prove their loyalty. Those who return from sojourns abroad have founded factions pushing for reconciliation with high elves and wood elves. They face strong opposition, but a few communities have been successful in establishing talks with their estranged kin.

DUSK ELF TRAITS

A dusk elf has the traits of another elven subrace, sharing close kinship with the other breeds of elves. The overwhelming majority have the traits of a high elf or wood elf; those rare dusk elves who share the qualities of a drow (including their sensitivity to sunlight) are seldom seen outside their communities, and playing one requires special DM permission.

DUSK ELF FEATS

While the base dusk elf is, mechanically, identical to your choice of another of the elf subraces (usually wood elf or high elf), adventuring dusk elves may learn to focus the unique blessings of their patron goddess in more potent ways. They combine the magic that helps hide them from the world with the training in stealth all dusk elves receive to frustrate and confuse their enemies. For player characters of this subrace, the Dusk Elf Stealth feat is a good way to express the special traits that differentiate them from their kin. In addition, the Shadow Sentinel feat (available to all races with an appropriate background, but especially suited to the dusk elf) is perfect for members of the gloaming guardians. These feats are described in the full PDF of *Ravenloft Archetypes: Nightmares of Barovia*, which is available as a low-priced download at DMsGuild.com.

BELIEFS AMONG DUSK ELVES

The goddess who granted them succor remains the most powerful religious presence among the dusk elves, and many exclude other gods on holy days. In most worlds outside the Shadowfell and the Domains of Dread, such as the Forgotten Realms, this goddess is known as Sehanine Moonbow, though in lands where Sehanine is not worshipped she is identified with goddesses of the moon and/or hunt such as Artemis. A central tenet of this faith is the notion of the night as a source of refuge and recovery, rather than a feared unknown. This ethos directly opposes gods of thievery and murder (such as Mask or Bhaal), whose worshippers tend to see the night as a cover for victimizing others.

Other faiths abide among the dusk elves as well. They have no disdain for gods of light, for example, and dusk elves in Barovia often pay homage to the Morninglord. In the Realms, they also venerate the good-aligned drow goddess Ellistraee, who represents the redemption of dark elves that their ancestors always believed was possible. However, the worship of those elven gods who swore vengeance on the dusk elves—such as Corellon Larethian in the Realms—is forbidden in most of their communities, and those who maintain these faiths must do so in secret, lest they face exile and ostracism. In some dusk elf settlements, rumors persist about cults worshipping Lolth.



This has been a preview of *Ravenloft Archetypes: Nightmares of Barovia*, available for just \$1.40 at <http://www.dmsguild.com/product/176799/Ravenloft-Archetypes-Nightmares-of-Barovia>

This supplement presents eight new subclasses as well as new spells, new monsters, new subraces, and more for the **Curse of Strahd** storyline and other 5th Edition D&D games set in the Domains of Dread and beyond. Portraying heroes with a dark side-- from vampiric paladins to warlocks empowered by the Dark Powers that rule Ravenloft itself-- these character options are written to emphasize themes of fantasy horror, yet be playable in any setting. New class archetypes contain not just rules, but full subclass descriptions and setting material to help you or your players role-play these new archetypes to the hilt. The all-new archetypes include:

- **The Path of the Sea**
Reaver: Barbarian raiders who strike from the sea to sow terror and chaos before fading into the night.
- **The College of Secrets:** Bards sworn to secret societies who use fear and psychological insight to defend their secret agendas.
- **The Slayer:** This fighter makes the hunters the hunted, waging war against the monsters who prey upon the innocent.
- **The Oath of Blood:** Paladins infected with vampirism who fight back their curse with divine power and unshakeable devotion to their cause.
- **The Stalker:** Rangers equally at home in the city or the wilderness who use unequalled powers of observation to act as investigators, spies, and vigilantes.
- **The Antiquarian*:** This rogue archaeologist is a raider of the lost tomb and trap-filled ruin who masters scholarly lore and wields a whip or other distinctive weapon to recover historical relics.
- **The Dark Powers:** Warlocks of this patron dare to make pacts with the Dark Powers of the Shadowfell and Ravenloft who gave Strahd Von Zarovich and the other Dark Lords their power... and their torment.
- **The School of Alienism*:** Wizards who learn eldritch secrets that would blast a weaker mind, all to steal even more forbidden knowledge from unknowable entities outside space and time.

Far more than just character options, this 37 page PDF also includes:

- **New Monsters:** In addition to creatures from the sinister Barovian Scarecrow to the cunning Vistani Scoundrel, conversions of the classic race-based vampire types from 2nd Edition D&D-- such as the elf vampire, the dwarf vampire, and more-- boast strange new powers and weaknesses adventurers will never see coming.
- **New Subraces:** Dusk Elves, the variant Vistani human, and the battle-scarred, paranoid Crag Dwarves.
- **New Spells:** One or more new spells for every single spellcasting class, including *blood curse*, *dread mercy*, *punishing strike*, and more!

A content-packed resource for players and DM's alike, *Ravenloft Archetypes: Nightmares of Barovia* is a must-have for campaigns set in Barovia or any of the other Dark Domains of Ravenloft, and a sinister treasure trove of darkly unique characters, monsters, and magic for any D&D 5th Edition game. Download it today at:

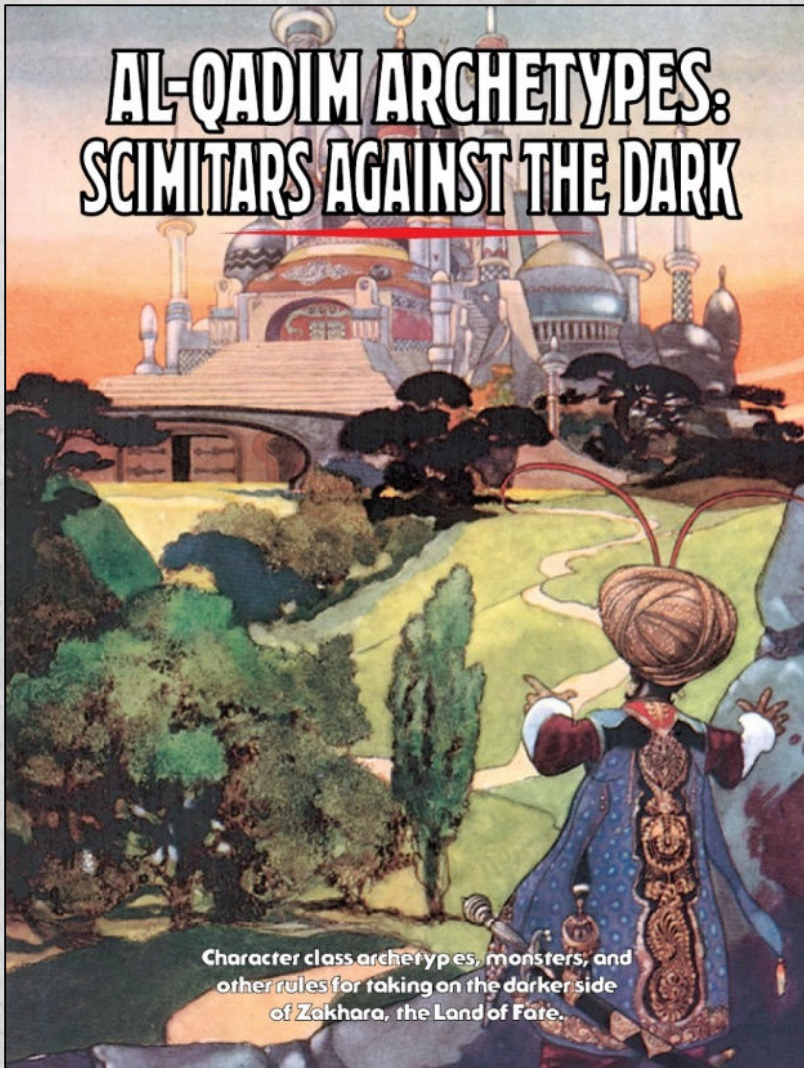
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RAVENLOFT ARCHETYPES: NIGHTMARES OF BAROVIA



Character class archetypes, monsters, and
other rules for campaigns in the
Domains of Dread and beyond.
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Also from author Jeremy Forbing:
Al-Qadim Archetypes: Scimitars Against the Dark

This PDF presents six new Forgotten Realms subclasses as well as new spells, new monsters for a wide range of challenge ratings, a new variant race and more, centered around the southern region of Zakhara, home of the *Al-Qadim* old-school D&D campaign setting. More than just rules, it includes roleplaying descriptions for each subclass, expanded setting material, and conversion suggestions to use these archetypes in any setting you wish. From fighters raised in a sworn brotherhood of soldiers and rangers born to sail the seven seas, to scholarly rogues who raid forbidden tombs armed with a distinctive weapon and wizards who slowly trade away their sanity for eldritch might, these archetypes are adapted from RPG legend Wolfgang Baur's classic article "Campaign Journal: Scimitars Against the Dark" and the original *Al-Qadim: Arabian Adventures* book. This lengthy (~30 pages) document contains everything you need to role-play these new character options to the hilt, and join the fight against the ancient evils that threaten the Land of Fate!

Price: \$1.40 **Length:** 32 pages + cover

Download from the DM's Guild website at:
dmsguild.com/product/172575/AlQadim-Archetypes-Scimitars-Against-the-Dark

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