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THE TOME OF DROW LORE



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Drow, the dark elves, banished to the Underdeep millennia ago by their surface cousins, they plot, scheme and straggle for survival. Beautiful yet wicked, brilliant and deadly, the drow are the knife in the dark, the threat in the deeps.

Since the drow were introduced to the roleplaying world some 25 years ago, they have become both favourites of many Games Masters and terrible foes to uncounted parties of Player Characters. Sadly, over time they have also become overused and oversimplified. There is no mystery to them any more. Players know exactly what to expect from an encounter with drow and exactly how to cope with it. Games Masters find themselves saddled with innumerable clichés and presumptions about the drow, making one raiding party just like any other, one drow city just like all the others.

Which is where this book comes in.

Within these pages, the reader will find that the drow are as complex and vibrant as any inhabitants of the surface of the world for this book is dedicated to the drow and to exploring all their varied, wicked splendour. In the millennia since the drow were forced underground in the Great Betrayal and dispersed throughout the Underdeep in the Sundering, the intense pressures of life beneath the surface have caused them to change dramatically. For years, they have been thought of as a sophisticated and cruel race, governed by an even crueller spider-worshipping matriarchy with absolute power over every drow. The truth is not so simple and arrogant adventurers who set out beneath the surface of the world, certain they know the full measure of the drow will find themselves quite unpleasantly surprised.

Within *The Tome of Drow Lore*, Games Masters will find information on a variety of drow cultures, religions, societies, Houses and even sub-races. In addition, there are new drow spells, feats and drow equipment, of magical, alchemical and mundane natures.

For those interested primarily in the archetypal spider-worshipping drow, they are certainly covered, as no book on drow would be complete without them. They are not the sum total of the drow, however. Scattered throughout the Underdeep, the dark elves have adapted to and been altered by their strange and hostile environment. Centuries spent in isolation from one another have given rise to a variety of cultures and beliefs. Games Masters interested in putting an entirely new spin on the drow may forsake the usual culture altogether with such options as the savage and brutal Kanahraun, insular Sulzthul or the martial Lorgreln who have divorced themselves entirely from their fey roots.

RECOMMENDED FOR PLAYERS & GAMES MASTERS ALIKE

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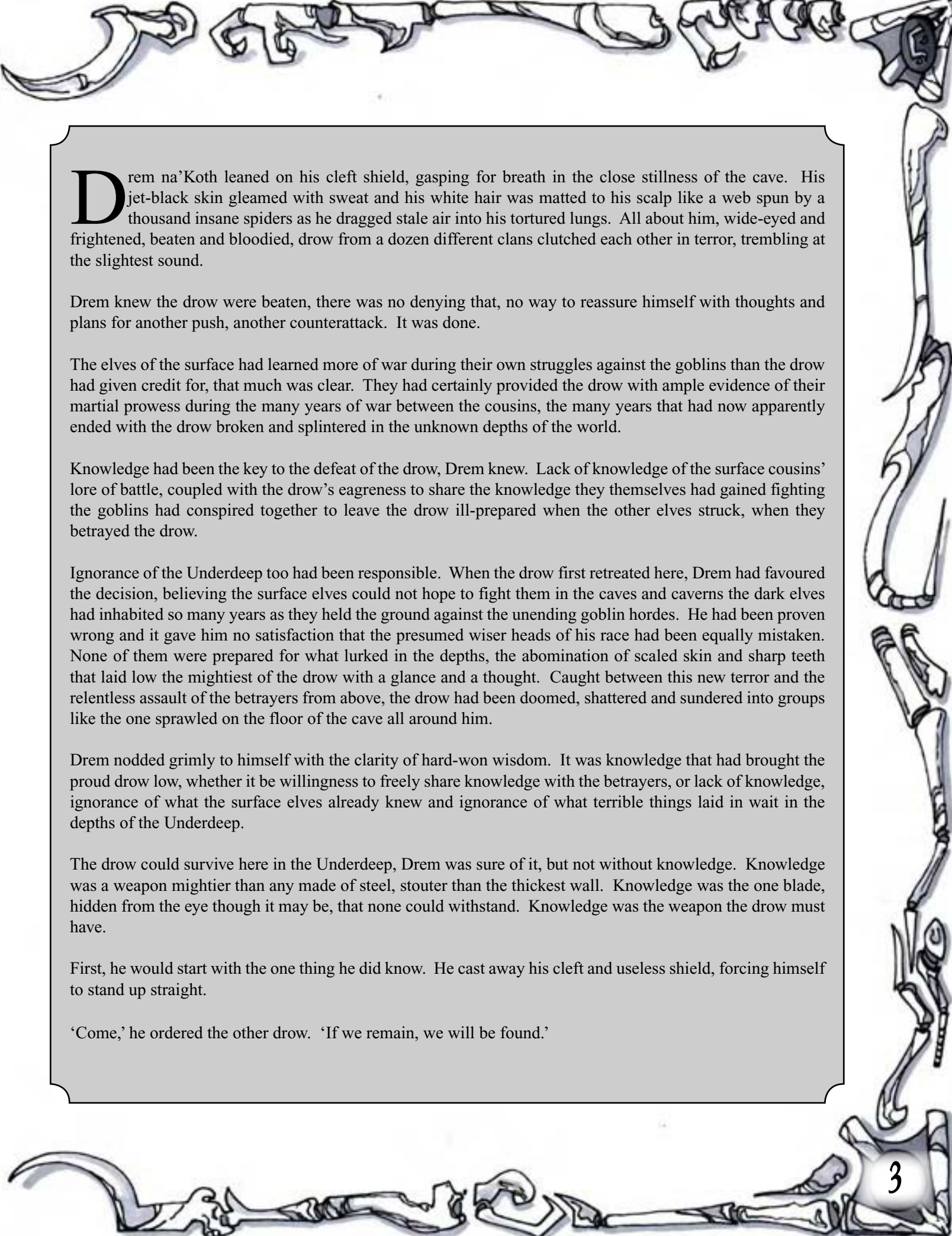
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Drem na’Koth leaned on his cleft shield, gasping for breath in the close stillness of the cave. His jet-black skin gleamed with sweat and his white hair was matted to his scalp like a web spun by a thousand insane spiders as he dragged stale air into his tortured lungs. All about him, wide-eyed and frightened, beaten and bloodied, drow from a dozen different clans clutched each other in terror, trembling at the slightest sound.

Drem knew the drow were beaten, there was no denying that, no way to reassure himself with thoughts and plans for another push, another counterattack. It was done.

The elves of the surface had learned more of war during their own struggles against the goblins than the drow had given credit for, that much was clear. They had certainly provided the drow with ample evidence of their martial prowess during the many years of war between the cousins, the many years that had now apparently ended with the drow broken and splintered in the unknown depths of the world.

Knowledge had been the key to the defeat of the drow, Drem knew. Lack of knowledge of the surface cousins’ lore of battle, coupled with the drow’s eagerness to share the knowledge they themselves had gained fighting the goblins had conspired together to leave the drow ill-prepared when the other elves struck, when they betrayed the drow.

Ignorance of the Underdeep too had been responsible. When the drow first retreated here, Drem had favoured the decision, believing the surface elves could not hope to fight them in the caves and caverns the dark elves had inhabited so many years as they held the ground against the unending goblin hordes. He had been proven wrong and it gave him no satisfaction that the presumed wiser heads of his race had been equally mistaken. None of them were prepared for what lurked in the depths, the abomination of scaled skin and sharp teeth that laid low the mightiest of the drow with a glance and a thought. Caught between this new terror and the relentless assault of the betrayers from above, the drow had been doomed, shattered and sundered into groups like the one sprawled on the floor of the cave all around him.

Drem nodded grimly to himself with the clarity of hard-won wisdom. It was knowledge that had brought the proud drow low, whether it be willingness to freely share knowledge with the betrayers, or lack of knowledge, ignorance of what the surface elves already knew and ignorance of what terrible things laid in wait in the depths of the Underdeep.

The drow could survive here in the Underdeep, Drem was sure of it, but not without knowledge. Knowledge was a weapon mightier than any made of steel, stouter than the thickest wall. Knowledge was the one blade, hidden from the eye though it may be, that none could withstand. Knowledge was the weapon the drow must have.

First, he would start with the one thing he did know. He cast away his cleft and useless shield, forcing himself to stand up straight.

‘Come,’ he ordered the other drow. ‘If we remain, we will be found.’

A decorative border at the top and bottom of the page, consisting of various anatomical parts of a drow, such as hands, arms, and legs, rendered in a stylized, line-art style.

Introduction

Drow; the dark elves. Banished to the Underdeep millennia ago by their surface cousins, they plot, scheme and struggle for survival. Beautiful yet wicked, brilliant and deadly, the drow are the knife in the dark, the threat in the deeps.

Since the drow were introduced to the roleplaying world some 25 years ago, they have become both favourites of many Games Masters and terrible foes to uncounted parties of Player Characters. Sadly, over time they have also become overused and oversimplified. There is no mystery to them any more. Players know exactly what to expect from an encounter with drow and exactly how to cope with it. Games Masters find themselves saddled with innumerable clichés and presumptions about the drow, making one raiding party just like any other, one drow city just like all the others.

Which is where this book comes in.

The philosophy behind *The Tome of Drow Lore* is that as a race, the drow are as complex and vibrant as any inhabitants of the surface of the world. This book is dedicated to the drow and to exploring all their varied, wicked splendour. In the millennia since the drow were forced underground in the Great Betrayal and dispersed throughout the Underdeep in the Sundering, the intense pressures of life beneath the surface have caused them to change dramatically. For years, they have been thought of as a sophisticated and cruel race, governed by an even crueler spider-worshipping matriarchy with absolute power over every drow. The truth is not so simple and arrogant adventurers who set out beneath the surface of the world, certain they know the full measure of the drow, will find themselves quite unpleasantly surprised.

Within *The Tome of Drow Lore*, Games Masters will find information on a variety of drow cultures, religions, societies, Houses and even sub-races. In addition, there are new drow spells, feats and drow equipment, of magical, alchemical and mundane natures.

For those interested primarily in the archetypal spider-worshipping drow, they are certainly covered, as no book on drow would be complete without them. They are not the sum total of the drow, however. Scattered throughout the Underdeep, the dark elves have adapted to and been altered by their strange and hostile environment. Centuries spent in isolation from one another gave rise to a variety of cultures and beliefs. While one drow city may be totally devoted to the Dark Mother, presenting the traditional perception of the drow, another may be dominated by worship of Mu'Ushket, or perhaps with power concentrated in the hands of a single noble House it has become a much more secular society. Games Masters interested in putting an entirely new spin on the drow may forsake the usual culture altogether. Instead, the intense pressures of the violent and barren Underdeep might have caused all drow to regress to a savage, brutal race like the Kanahraun, or perhaps a large underground sea is home to tens of thousands of Sulzthul after all other drow having been slowly exterminated by their many powerful enemies in the world beneath the surface.

The Tome of Drow Lore may be used as a stand-alone product, or it may be used in conjunction with *The Quintessential Drow* and *Encyclopaedia Arcane: Drow Magic*. As with any good roleplaying book, *The Tome of Drow Lore* is here to assist, not instruct. Games Masters should feel free to take what they like from these pages and ignore the rest.





History of the Drow

What follows is a tale of the origins of the race of dark elves, as it is known to most drow. Like any tale of its kind, it is an amalgamation of truth and myth, and not even the wisest among the drow still know how to differentiate between the two. The surface elves tell a very different story, when they can be persuaded to speak of the drow at all.

Regardless of its level of historical accuracy, this is generally regarded by the drow as the truth and it still fuels many of their hatreds and passions today.

The Beginning

Long ago, when the earth was young, when so many of the races that bestride the world today were not yet imaginings in the minds of nascent gods, the elves lived beneath the sun.

They lived so in peace and harmony, safe and untroubled in the dawn of the world. The many trials and enemies that would plague them were still unknown during those long years. The dragons were content to leave the elves alone, feeling the mammals had nothing to offer them; and the earth had not yet felt the tread of orcish, goblinoid, dwarven or human feet. The elves had no thoughts of war, or even of wants.

There was but one unified race of elves in those days, living in a series of tribes across the sunny plains, gentle hills, tall forests and alongside the eternal sea. There were no settlements, as there was no need for them. There was no need for anything at all, which is what ultimately sparked to the first division of the elves.

It came to pass that over the quiet and uneventful centuries, some elves slowly grew concerned over the state of the race, a concern they voiced to others. They felt the elves were becoming stagnant, learning nothing, doing nothing, only existing as does any mindless beast. Surely the Allfather wanted more for his creations than merely this?

The discussions lasted decades. There had never been discord among the elves before and they were unprepared to deal with it now that it had at last arisen. While some immediately opposed the idea of change, others quickly accepted it and still more asked, quite credulously, what it was that needed to be changed and in what manner this change should occur? The loose tribes that had hitherto


formed the elven people began to fragment and move apart both geographically and culturally as the discord continued. Unknown to the elves, however, the world itself was becoming a different place and the time was coming that change would be forced on them all.

The First War

Even as the tribes began to drift apart, primitive clans of orcs and goblinoids were multiplying in the lands nearby with a fecundity the elves could not imagine. Spurred onward by their barbarous gods, the expansion of the goblinoids' lands brought them closer and closer to the elves, finally breaching the ancient territories of the elder race. The elves were curious but unsettled to meet the newcomers, who seemed ugly and uncouth to their eyes and behaved in strange and unpredictable ways. For their part, the goblinoids were frightened by the older, wiser elves and so the two races withdrew from one another. Most elves were content to let the goblins and orcs go and to return to their former lives, untroubled by further thoughts of the crude younger races they had encountered, but one elf, a member of the tribe that was to become the drow, did not trust the goblinoids. Following advice he received in a rapturous dream, he gathered his tribesmen to him and they began to fashion the first crude elven weapons. The drow credit this dream as being the first intercession on the part of those deities that they would later come to worship as they ventured deep underground, gifting the elves with the knowledge they would need to become strong and survive the struggles lying ahead of them.

As the numbers of the goblinoids swelled, they found themselves moving again towards the land of the elves, driven by population pressures and their rapacious devouring of natural resources. Their gods too had given them knowledge of weapons, teaching them of the slung stone and sharpened stick, and they now drove their numerous children against the elves.

The goblinoids swept down upon the elves in vast numbers, sending the different tribes running before them. Even the drow had only begun to craft weapons and learn the arts of war and so they could not stand against the goblin hordes. As other elves were pushed into the mountains, the deep woods or even the sea, the drow found that their only path of retreat was into caves beneath the earth, the goblins pressing the attack in their wake and forcing them on.



Lyrgern na'Ranel, Hidden Blade of the Seekers of na'Koth, watched from the shadows as the human wizard picked her way slowly across the rough, rubble-strewn cavern floor, the light at the end of her staff casting harsh, dancing shadows all about her and throwing her features into sharp relief. She was pale-skinned, as the humans in this part of the world tended to be and seemed to be somewhere past middle-age, though what age exactly that would mean for a human Lyr gern was unsure. Their lives were so short in comparison to his own it was impossible to tell.

Doubtless she meant the light on her staff to put him at a disadvantage, but Lyr gern had anticipated such a thing. As the brilliant sphere grew closer, he settled his darkglass visor over his eyes. The wizard, Terlessa was her name, was casting about, looking for him. He waited until her eyes were elsewhere, then rose up from his hiding place, carefully making just enough noise that she would hear him. She turned in his direction and the well-concealed but not quite hidden look of surprise on her face brought a twitch of a smile to his lips.

'You impress me, human,' he said, adopting the common tongue of the surface races. 'I confess I doubted you would come, especially alone as we commanded. I wonder, is that courage or foolishness among humans, to come alone into the lands of the drow?'

'Neither,' she responded brusquely. 'It is only doing what must be done.'

'Well put,' Lyr gern nodded. 'Very well, you have done as we asked and paid the price we quoted, which again was a surprise. I have what you want.' He opened a na'orsuin pack and removed a thick sheaf of papers, holding it out for the wizard to take.

'Thank you,' she said, moving to stow the papers in her own pack before Lyr gern interrupted.

'I fear there is a misunderstanding. You asked us for a compilation of all our knowledge of the drow, and specifically, knowledge of our own order and we have delivered this. But we never agreed that you should keep it.'

'What nonsense is this?' she demanded angrily.

'No nonsense at all, human. You have paid our price and you may read what I have brought. But you may not take it from this place. Please understand teleportation is impossible here and there are drow waiting in case you decide to flee with those papers.'

'Why is it then, that I can read them here but not take them with me?' she asked in a voice filled with annoyance, but since she had begun looking for a place to sit, Lyr gern was inclined to think she meant to acquiesce.

'That will become clear as you read,' he told her. 'Now, as all stories must, this begins at the beginning...'

The war raged on and on and the drow began to despair. The fate of the other elven tribes was unknown to them as the goblins and orcs formed an impenetrable wall between the drow and their cousins. As the war continued, however, the drow began to adapt, learning the ways of their strange new subterranean environment and learning the skills and tactics needed to hold the goblin warbands at bay.

The goblins were a ruthless foe, an enemy that could only be defeated by greater ruthlessness. Still, their numbers kept pushing the drow deeper into the earth and so the elves were forced to change their culture further to deal with their changing surroundings and increasingly scarce resources. As they retreated, the voices of the elven gods grew fainter and fainter to their wise ones and elders, prompting greater despair and privations amongst the drow. At first, it was thought they had simply retreated too deeply into the earth for the voices of the gods to reach them but then, other voices became known to them, voices of which the earlier

dreams of weapons and warfare had merely been a distant, warning echo.

These voices offered knowledge and help in the drows' endless battle against the goblins, knowledge and help the drow desperately needed and gladly accepted. The voices told the wise ones that the old elven gods had forgotten and forsaken them, so deeply were the drow now buried in the earth. To some, they whispered of how the Allfather cared not for his most talented children and had not lifted a finger to save them, instead leaving them to rot at the hands of the goblins. Slowly, the drow began to worship these new gods who had made themselves known in their hour of need. Their worship was rewarded with gifts to make their survival possible in what the drow had come to call the Underdeep.

The drow chose to bide their time, building up their population and resources as their new gods commanded, preparing for their assault on the goblins. At last they struck, driving the goblin tribes before them as they strove back to the surface. The goblins were routed before their lethal warriors and the victorious drow burst out into the sunlit world once again.

The Return

The sun was painful to them after their long exile in the dark, but was not yet the crippling curse it has since become. With the remnants of the goblins fleeing before them, the drow chased their enemies down, slaughtering them in a glorious orgy of violence. The back of the enemy broken at last, the thoughts of the drow turned to the cousins they had left behind here on the surface and though the presence of the sun was an enduring burden, they were determined to seek out their kin.

Some drow had held tightly to their beliefs in the old gods, certain that when they returned again from the depths of the earth that the elven gods would see them and speak to the wise ones again. Yet even now, for the drow calling to the old gods in the dazzling light of the sun, there was only silence. Most drow had come to adhere to the worship of the new gods discovered during their long sojourn in the dark, the gods who



had taught them to fight and survive against the unending attacks of the goblins, the gods who had given them the tools and knowledge needed to defeat the hordes of their enemies. These gods spoke to them still and urged the drow to find the other elves of the world, so that their knowledge might be shared and the whole race protected.

Moving by night, they ranged throughout the lands in search of the other elves. The world had changed while the drow were beneath the earth and the scars of war marred the surface world they remembered, evidence of the conflicts between elves and goblins that had raged while the drow marshalled their strength far below. At last, beneath the eaves of a great forest, the drow found the first of their elven kin. There was confusion and surprise at the first meeting, as both tribes of elves had changed in the long years of the war. Separated for so long, even in terms of the lives of the elves, it was not just the cultures of the drow and their cousins that had diverged but indeed their very appearance.

Though no longer truly the same people, the different tribes of elves tried once again to live together in harmony but the lessons taught by the long war made that impossible. The elves of the surface would not turn from the worship of the old gods to the new, nor would they take up the ways of the drow. The drow, in their turn, realised that since the old gods still did not speak to them, the words of their new gods must be right and that they were now truly a different race, the most talented of the elven people who had been re-forged in the crucible of the Underdeep into something new and better. Still, they sought to help their old cousins, but the other elves and the old gods refused their help and animosity began to grow between the peoples of the elves. The drow saw this as the result of fear and envy on the part of their cousins, fear of change and both fear and envy of what those who would soon now be called the 'dark elves' had become.

The Great Betrayal

From the drow point of view, what came next was unprovoked and unjustified, enacted without warning upon their unsuspecting tribe by the perfidious elves. Proclaiming the ways of the drow and their gods to be evil and unnatural, the surface elves struck suddenly against their old cousins, igniting a war that would dwarf all that came before or have come since in its fury, savagery and



duration. Stunned by what became known among the drow as the Great Betrayal, the dark elves were forced back by the greater numbers of the surface elves. At first the drow sought to end it, but their calls for parley fell on deaf ears.

So momentous was the war that even the gods of both sides took part, balancing the struggle on a knife edge for years until the surface elves at last gained the upper hand. The drow had never truly become used to the sun after their long years beneath the ground, a vulnerability that was exploited when the elven Allfather stopped the very sun itself at the zenith of its arc in the sky, trapping the world in perpetual noon for many days and nights. The surface elves struck again and again with fresh zeal until the drow were at last driven back down into the deeps.

Even then, the elves would not stop their assault, driving their drow cousins deeper and deeper into the earth. But here, away from the sunlit surface, the dark elves and their gods were stronger. In the endless night of the Underdeep, they struck back at their kin, turning their terrible drive

and sending the elves back to the surface in fearful retreat with heavy losses. The war went on thus for years as the elves pushed against the drow to try and expunge them from the very records of time, yet were driven back farther and farther towards the surface each time as they learned to fear the dark and the sudden death that lurked within it. The elves of the sunlit world responded by recruiting allies to their side, the fledgling races of dwarves and gnomes. These creatures were more at home beneath the earth than the drow and thus the odds were turned against the dark elves once more, facing organised and driven foes more familiar with the paths and ways of the Underdeep than they. The drow wavered before the renewed and strengthened onslaught of the elves and their allies.

The Sundering

The elves gathered themselves for one last great strike against the drow, marshalling a huge host of their most dedicated and skilled warriors, wizards and pathfinders with great throngs of their allies ready at their sides. Striking suddenly and with such incredible force, the seemingly


unstoppable elves drove the drow before them, to depths the dark elves had never reached even during the years of their first exile below the surface. The surface elves pursued, pressing the drow into seemingly dead regions which, unknown to them, had already been laid claim to by the true powers of the Underdeep, creatures that the younger races of the surface had never even conceived of before. Most terrible of these were the shangu (see page 231), a race so alien and powerful neither drow nor elf could stand before them and who saw the trespassers breaching their domains not just as rivals but also as raw resources ripe for a grisly harvest. The drow were crushed between these new terrors and the elves harrowing them from behind, as if between the terrible hammer and monstrous anvil of a smith bent on entirely eradicating their tribe.

Assaulted from before and behind, the hosts of the drow were splintered and scattered throughout the Underdeep as terrified bands of refugees desperately seeking sanctuary and solace from those pursuing them. In their wake, the surface elves and the shangu met each other in a storm of carnage and destruction. War shook the deep caverns of

the world as potent magic and lethal warriors were unleashed, leaving the tunnels slick with the blood of the slain and the debris of cave-ins. Ultimately even the elves and their allies fared no better than had the drow, turning and fleeing before the horror of the shangu, but the damage to the drow was done. With untold thousands slaughtered and left for the shangu or the other scavengers lurking the depths, and the survivors separated from one another, fearing for their very survival and with their greatest leaders slain, the drow still refer to this terrible event as the Sundering.

The early years of their existence in the Underdeep were perilous for the drow. During the war with the goblins, they had lived close enough to the surface. Now, separated from the sun by leagues of rock and earth and scattered by the Sundering, the drow lived in hiding, scrounging their existence from dripping water and wild fungi. However, they remembered the lessons the gods had taught them during the goblin war and during the war with their cousins that had followed the Great Betrayal, and these lessons kept them alive. The





drow became true survivors, rebuilding their strength in the dark and hidden places of the deeps in preparation for the day that they would come forth once more to reclaim their place in the world and to take vengeance upon the surface elves that had betrayed them. The largest of the scattered communities during this terrible time were those that primarily worshipped the Dark Mother, and it was upon this foundation that the present strength of that deity's faith was built, buttressed by the zealous preaching of the priestesses and the dark gifts of the goddess herself.

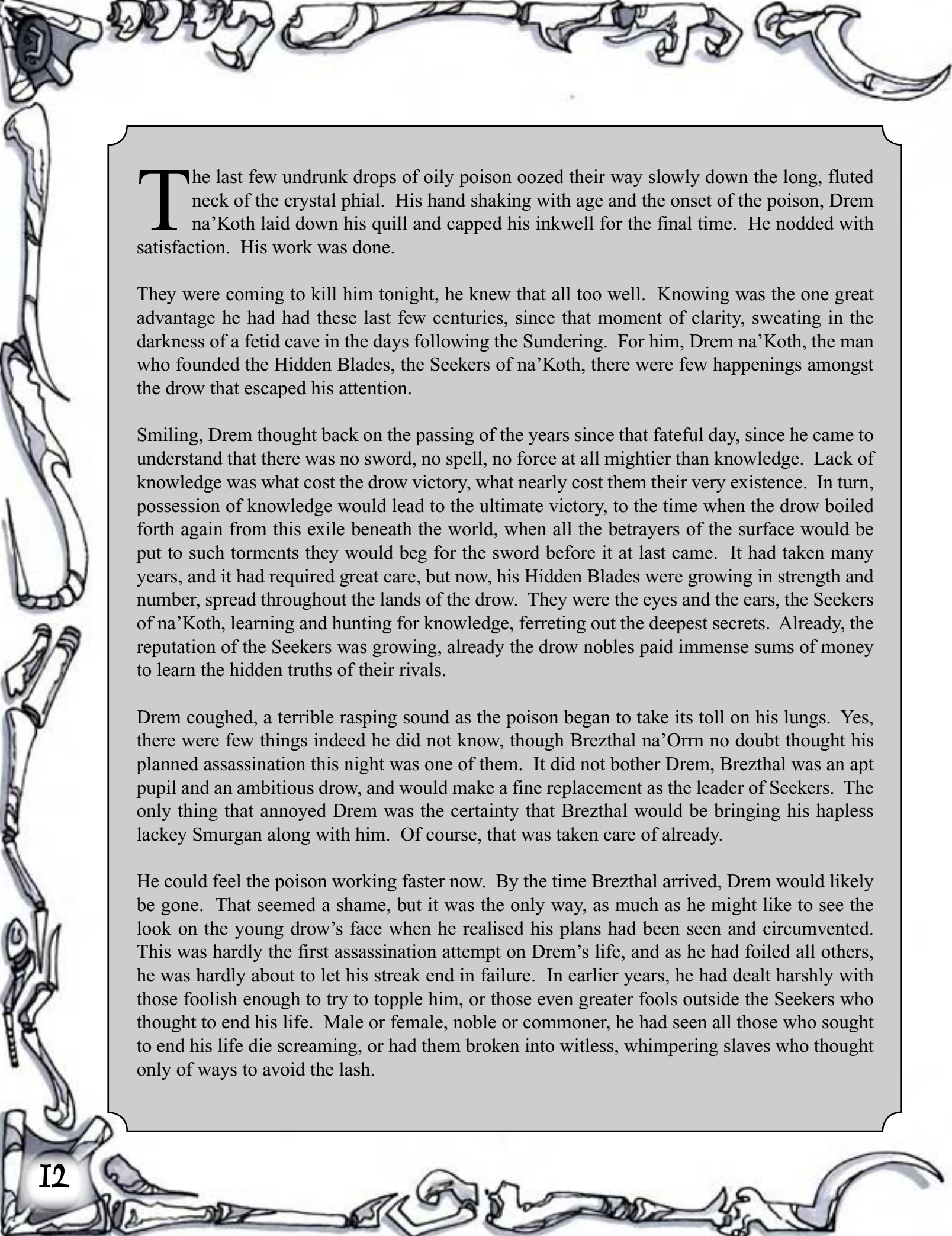
It was a long time before the drow grew strong enough to venture forth from the cramped, muddy caverns in which they had skulked, the scattered tribes seeking each other out and trying to reunite themselves. For most, however, it quickly became apparent that a true reunion was impossible. Even for elves it had been too many years of separation and the disparate groups of drow had established their own cultures. Amongst some, gods other than the Dark Mother had achieved primacy and the zealous priestesses of the Dark Mother demanded all drow return to worship of their goddess, by the sword if necessary. Only the intervention of cooler heads staved off a civil war that would almost certainly have ended with their society crippled beyond any hope of recuperation.

Slowly, once the initial conflicts and troubles of the first meetings with their brethren had passed, most of the different tribes of drow re-established contact and tentative relations with one another, always cautious for fear of more treachery or of bringing the hunger of the shangu down upon them again. As the years passed, the lines of connection between them grew stronger as trade routes among the drow settlements sprang up, those settlements grew into fortified cities and alliances were formed against the constant aggression of other denizens of the Underdeep. Still, all attempts to unify the drow have met with abysmal failure.

The closest the different civilisations of drow have come to unification is through the Noble Houses. Most of these Houses are the descendants of those who led the disparate groups of drow through the long years after the Sundering. Each with its own interests, ambitions, religious affiliations and strengths, the noble Houses commonly span across several drow cities, controlling everything from trade routes to government. A dozen of these Houses are described in detail in the Noble Houses chapter.

Not all drow were reunited after the Sundering. Many were spread too far, cut off from the rest by distance or geographical obstacles, or were in groups too small to

survive the rigours of the Underdeep. These are known now as the Lost Tribes of the drow, clans and tribes who have had to find their own ways through the perils of the Underdeep. It is from these Lost Tribes that all but one of the drow sub-races have arisen, as the needs of survival in the Underdeep, or sometimes the beings that lurk there, forced them to change in some substantial way from their drow roots. Contact with most of these Lost Tribes is either non-existent or rare, with a few major exceptions. More information on the Lost Tribes is found in the following chapters of *The Tome of Drow Lore*.

A decorative border of skeletal remains, including various bones, a skull, and a horn, surrounds the text area.

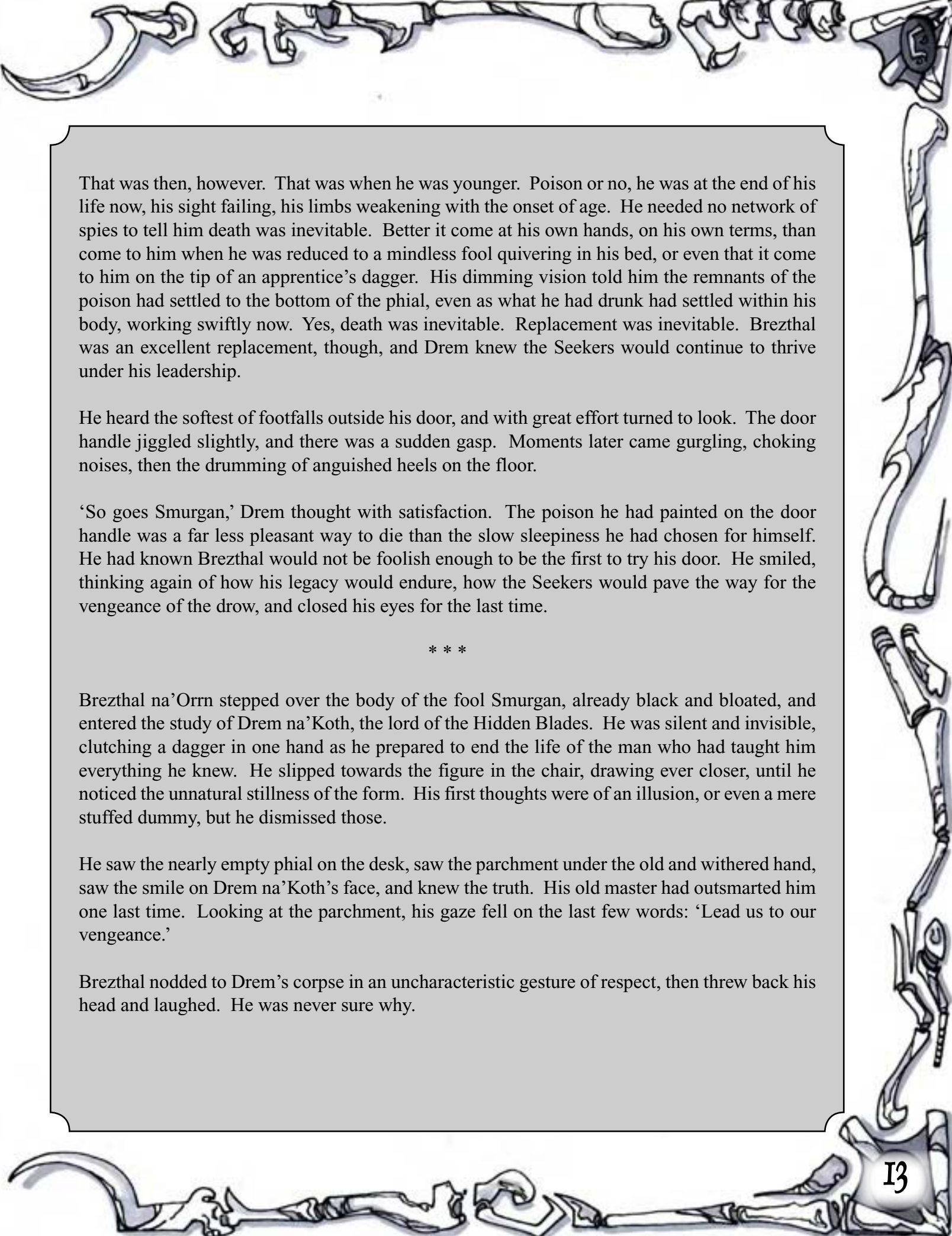
The last few undrunk drops of oily poison oozed their way slowly down the long, fluted neck of the crystal phial. His hand shaking with age and the onset of the poison, Drem na’Koth laid down his quill and capped his inkwell for the final time. He nodded with satisfaction. His work was done.

They were coming to kill him tonight, he knew that all too well. Knowing was the one great advantage he had had these last few centuries, since that moment of clarity, sweating in the darkness of a fetid cave in the days following the Sundering. For him, Drem na’Koth, the man who founded the Hidden Blades, the Seekers of na’Koth, there were few happenings amongst the drow that escaped his attention.

Smiling, Drem thought back on the passing of the years since that fateful day, since he came to understand that there was no sword, no spell, no force at all mightier than knowledge. Lack of knowledge was what cost the drow victory, what nearly cost them their very existence. In turn, possession of knowledge would lead to the ultimate victory, to the time when the drow boiled forth again from this exile beneath the world, when all the betrayers of the surface would be put to such torments they would beg for the sword before it at last came. It had taken many years, and it had required great care, but now, his Hidden Blades were growing in strength and number, spread throughout the lands of the drow. They were the eyes and the ears, the Seekers of na’Koth, learning and hunting for knowledge, ferreting out the deepest secrets. Already, the reputation of the Seekers was growing, already the drow nobles paid immense sums of money to learn the hidden truths of their rivals.

Drem coughed, a terrible rasping sound as the poison began to take its toll on his lungs. Yes, there were few things indeed he did not know, though Brezthal na’Orn no doubt thought his planned assassination this night was one of them. It did not bother Drem, Brezthal was an apt pupil and an ambitious drow, and would make a fine replacement as the leader of Seekers. The only thing that annoyed Drem was the certainty that Brezthal would be bringing his hapless lackey Smurgan along with him. Of course, that was taken care of already.

He could feel the poison working faster now. By the time Brezthal arrived, Drem would likely be gone. That seemed a shame, but it was the only way, as much as he might like to see the look on the young drow’s face when he realised his plans had been seen and circumvented. This was hardly the first assassination attempt on Drem’s life, and as he had foiled all others, he was hardly about to let his streak end in failure. In earlier years, he had dealt harshly with those foolish enough to try to topple him, or those even greater fools outside the Seekers who thought to end his life. Male or female, noble or commoner, he had seen all those who sought to end his life die screaming, or had them broken into witless, whimpering slaves who thought only of ways to avoid the lash.



That was then, however. That was when he was younger. Poison or no, he was at the end of his life now, his sight failing, his limbs weakening with the onset of age. He needed no network of spies to tell him death was inevitable. Better it come at his own hands, on his own terms, than come to him when he was reduced to a mindless fool quivering in his bed, or even that it come to him on the tip of an apprentice's dagger. His dimming vision told him the remnants of the poison had settled to the bottom of the phial, even as what he had drunk had settled within his body, working swiftly now. Yes, death was inevitable. Replacement was inevitable. Brezthal was an excellent replacement, though, and Drem knew the Seekers would continue to thrive under his leadership.

He heard the softest of footfalls outside his door, and with great effort turned to look. The door handle jiggled slightly, and there was a sudden gasp. Moments later came gurgling, choking noises, then the drumming of anguished heels on the floor.

'So goes Smurgan,' Drem thought with satisfaction. The poison he had painted on the door handle was a far less pleasant way to die than the slow sleepiness he had chosen for himself. He had known Brezthal would not be foolish enough to be the first to try his door. He smiled, thinking again of how his legacy would endure, how the Seekers would pave the way for the vengeance of the drow, and closed his eyes for the last time.

* * *

Brezthal na'Ornn stepped over the body of the fool Smurgan, already black and bloated, and entered the study of Drem na'Koth, the lord of the Hidden Blades. He was silent and invisible, clutching a dagger in one hand as he prepared to end the life of the man who had taught him everything he knew. He slipped towards the figure in the chair, drawing ever closer, until he noticed the unnatural stillness of the form. His first thoughts were of an illusion, or even a mere stuffed dummy, but he dismissed those.

He saw the nearly empty phial on the desk, saw the parchment under the old and withered hand, saw the smile on Drem na'Koth's face, and knew the truth. His old master had outsmarted him one last time. Looking at the parchment, his gaze fell on the last few words: 'Lead us to our vengeance.'

Brezthal nodded to Drem's corpse in an uncharacteristic gesture of respect, then threw back his head and laughed. He was never sure why.

An Overview of the Drow

This chapter is devoted to a general overview of the drow race, including their physiology, psychology and culture. The information presented here is meant only as a general baseline for the drow as a whole, as any given community of drow will have its own customs, rituals, beliefs and relationship with the world around it. Sub-races may differ quite substantially from the physiological norms mentioned here, particularly in the case of an exotic offshoot such as the Sulzthul. Less drastic but equally significant to anyone interacting with drow sub-races are the deviations in culture that can make them quite alien, even to other drow.

Drow Racial Traits


- +2 Dexterity, -2 Constitution, +2 Intelligence, +2 Charisma
- Medium size.
- A drow's base land speed is 30 feet.
- Immunity to *sleep* spells and effects and a +2 racial saving throw bonus against enchantment spells or effects.
- Darkvision out to 120 feet.
- Spell resistance equal to 11 + class level.
- +2 racial bonus on Will saves against spells and spell-like abilities.
- 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. On subsequent rounds, they are dazzled as long as they remain in the affected area.
- Favoured Class: Wizard (male) or cleric (female).
- Level adjustment +2.



Drow Physiology

Most drow are immediately recognizable as such by anyone with even a passing knowledge of what to look for. Some of the sub-races and Lost Tribes of drow deviate from the generally accepted idea of drow appearance, some greatly and some only slightly. These deviations are discussed in detail under the entries for the Lost Tribes.

It is in their appearance that drow differ most dramatically from their surface cousins. Their skin is jet black, with tone ranging from flat to almost glossy. The exact tone of a drow's skin seems somewhat determined by regional variation as well as which House the drow is attached to, though these are by no means hard and fast rules. The child of two glossy-skinned parents may well turn out to be flat-skinned. Though such a child may be the victim of some minor prejudice throughout his life should he live in a community of glossy-skinned drow, such births are common enough that most drow pay it little heed.



Drow are less dimorphic than surface elves, with males and female reaching roughly equal height and weight. Again, this is subject to deviation among different Houses of the drow. There are several Houses and cultures where worship of the Dark Mother is prominent, in which the females are remarkably larger and stronger than the males and often more intelligent as well.

Drow hair is most commonly white, though subtle hints of a pastel colour like violet or yellow are not uncommon. The hair is usually coarser than that of the surface elves and, if unchecked and uncut, will grow into a wild mane. Drow eyes are almost always a bright crimson, a result of their enhanced vision.

The fine features and large, almond-shaped eyes of the surface elves are still present in the drow, as are the slight, almost delicate-looking frames. Like their cousins, the drow are gifted with a remarkably efficient musculature, making their slender bodies as strong as that of a human of considerably greater mass.

Internally, drow seem to differ from surface elves little if at all, aside from the structure of their eyes. The darkvision that the drow possess is the result of a far more complex retina than is found in surface elves. Packed with additional receptors, the eyes of a drow reflect light in such a way that the eyes seem to almost glow when a light source is nearby, much like the eyes of a cat. Unfortunately their enhanced vision, the result of drow adaptation to the lightless depths in which they dwell, has rendered them largely incapable of returning to the sunlit lands above during the day simply because their sensitive eyes cannot cope with the intensity of the light. Even moonlight can be painfully bright for a drow.

There does not seem to be any physiological explanation for the innate spell abilities the drow are capable of, nor any physical reason for the spell resistance that makes them so dangerous to mages. The drow have researched this more thoroughly than any race in the world and many have concluded that these special abilities setting them apart from the surface elves must be a gift from those gods that came to the aid of the dark elves when they first ventured underground. Others point to the strange flows and odd phenomena of magic in the Underdeep for an explanation of the supernatural blessings that the drow possess, claiming that they have spent so long in this environment that the magic has suffused into the drow and changed them. Some look to the fey roots of their people for the answer, and assert that the drow are simply closer to their fey nature than the weak surface elves.

Drow Psychology

It is difficult to describe the disparate motivations of a race as old and varied as the drow in just a few short words. They are a race of strong-willed individuals, ambitious and dangerous, each with his own agenda, his own thoughts, fears, loves and ambitions. Still, there are a number of traits which most drow share.

Evil and the Drow

While the culture and society of the drow seem undeniably wicked to an outside observer, most drow do not consider themselves evil. Rather, they see the surface races, particularly other elves, as weak, while they are strong. They have been hardened in the kiln of the Underdeep for millennia, a trial which has made them able to survive in the hostile world they inhabit. They have become as they are in order to endure; they have survived where others would not. Even acts that would horrify an outsider are not commonly viewed as evil among the drow. Slavery, torture, sacrifice, all are performed on non-drow, or upon drow who have done something which in the eyes of their fellows merits such treatment. 'Let those who would judge us spend an age of the world in the Underdeep first' sums up the drow's dismissive thoughts of the opinions of outsiders.

There are, of course, drow who not only acknowledge their evil, but also revel in it. Sadly for the race as a whole, these individuals are often the ones holding the reins of power, particularly in cities dominated by worship of the Dark Mother, or in the bone-strewn caverns of the feral and necromantic Kanahraun.

However, the drow are no more genetically predisposed towards evil than are humans or surface elves. Rather, it is something imposed on the individual from the outside, from the gods they came to worship during their first sojourn beneath the surface, from the brutality required to survive and thrive in the Underdeep, and from the paranoia, suspicion and xenophobia that pervade their culture.

The Threats of the Underdeep

The drow are not alone in the Underdeep. The depths of the world hold races far more alien and far more malevolent than even the most vile and debased worshipper of the Dark Mother. The first meetings with creatures such as shangu and aboleth went poorly for the drow, who spent generations hiding in caverns and skulking through caves, ever hoping to avoid another such meeting until their strength was greater.



Far less alien but equally dangerous to the drow were some of the more common races that made their homes beneath the earth. Dwarves in particular were a threat, skilled craftsmen and engineers with an instinctive understanding of stone, who were also far deadlier warriors than any drow would willingly admit.

Pushed into the Underdeep by their kin after the Great Betrayal, the drow found themselves crushed between the terrible, alien races in the depths of the earth and the vengeful blades of their cousins. The dwarves and gnomes added their own weight to the crushing vice gripping the drow, splintering the fleeing race and causing what is still known as the Sundering. In all the millennia since, the drow have never truly known peace.

The violence that constantly grips the Underdeep springs from many sources, but the greatest of these is competition. Suitable dwelling spaces are in short supply, as are the simplest of resources and the drow are pitted against races such as the shangu in rivalry for territory. Though the drow are far stronger now than they were at the time of the Sundering, the pressures on them are no less great and war

with beings mightier than they is a constant fact of life as each struggles to bring the others under their domination.


This unending war has fostered the development of a sort of 'siege mentality' among the drow. The Underdeep outside the gates is filled with terrible creatures, most of which consider themselves enemies of the drow. As much as the bonds of race and memory, this 'siege mentality' is one of the ties binding the drow together. Though the drow battle constantly among themselves, be it with bared blade, whispered conspiracy or a poisoned needle in the crowded street, they do not forget that the enemy outside the gates is greater than the enemy within. When faced with an assault by one of their major rivals of the Underdeep, which range from shangu to dwarves, the drow will (mostly) forego their current rivalries and conflicts to defeat the invader. Should their rival drow lie dead on the battlefield when the war is done, so much the better, but vanquishing the enemy force is the priority.

The constant threat and possibility of such an attack has bound together drow cities and cultures that might otherwise fracture into various factions, each on its own too small to survive the perils of the Underdeep.

The frequent warfare of the Underdeep has had significant implications not simply on the drow psyche, but upon the race's culture as a whole. Elves reproduce slowly, and the drow are no exception to that rule. The constant attrition, not only through war with other races, but also through the frequent assassinations, backstabbing and betrayals so prevalent in drow society, cause a tremendous drain on the population's ability to propagate the race. The drow have taken a number of steps to alleviate this problem, described in greater detail in the section on 'Birth, Health and Death' (see page 18) and in the entries for the individual Noble Houses and Lost Tribes

The Price of Survival

The Underdeep is a brutal and dangerous place where any misplaced step, literally or figuratively, may mean death – either quick and sudden with a fall into a crumbling abyss or the strike of an unseen knife, or slow and painful at the hands of a wrathful enemy.



In an environment like this, mercy and pity are weaknesses too easily exploited by potential enemies, weaknesses that can compromise the strength of the drow. This viewpoint extends even to the care of children.

The drow notions of parenting walk a fine line. On the one hand, children are regarded as the greatest resource of the drow, the only means the race can be expected to thrive and continue, a viewpoint that dovetails easily with the natural instinct of any parent to protect his or her children. On the other hand, a coddled child cannot be coddled forever and such treatment will only leave the child unprepared to survive the rigours of life in the Underdeep, or even among his fellow drow.

The most common compromise amongst the drow is as follows: a child is protected by both parents and society until such time as he can be expected to fend for himself. At that time, he will remain part of the family, obviously, but cannot expect help from anyone but himself.

This is difficult for parent and child both. The parental instinct is as strong in the drow as it is in other sentient races and effectively abandoning a child to the dangers of life at such an early age is a painful experience for many parents. For this reason, many parents have little to do with the child as he or she is being raised, trusting that task to the child's siblings, as well as any tutors or mentors the parents might be able to provide for their offspring. This separation effectively prevents the parents and child from forming overly-strong attachments toward one another. However, the multiple means of procreation in drow society (prostitution, sexual rites and so forth) often provide a certain degree of ambiguity to a child's parentage, divorcing the child from the kind of bond a pair of mated drow might feel for him. For a child of the drow, the sudden and (at the time) inexplicable abandonment by his caretakers is often seen as a betrayal, hardening the child's heart at an early age. Society itself benefits from this however, as the child, upon reaching adulthood, will find it easier to let his own children fend for themselves.

Children are usually turned loose by their parents to learn to fend for themselves by the age of eight or nine, and certainly before the onset of puberty. By the time a drow child does reach puberty, he almost certainly will have acquired some familiarity with weapons and will likely have gained at least two levels in a character class.

Orphans and children who are abandoned at birth, an uncommon but hardly unknown occurrence, face a life even more difficult than that of children born to a drow family or even within a brothel. Unless the child has the

dubious fortune to be taken as a slave by a temple, guild or wealthy family, he will almost certainly not survive, as there are no orphanages or charitable institutions among the drow. Those few who do survive certainly turn out to be amongst the strongest, smartest and most determined of their kind.

Cruel though it may seem to outsiders, the drow consider their child-rearing practices an absolute necessity. Forcing a child to learn to fend for himself teaches strength and self-reliance from an early age. Those who do not survive the rigours of life outside the protective arms of their parents are not mourned (except perhaps by the parents themselves) as their failure proved them to be too weak to survive alone. If the child had been protected and coddled until reaching adulthood, as is common in surface races, the child would still have been weak and that weakness in an adult would have made the drow society as a whole weaker.

For many children, this 'survival of the fittest' approach ends with death or maiming, particularly those cultures who send youths out of the city on a hunt or expedition into the Underdeep to prove themselves. However, the vast majority survive and are made harder and stronger by the experience, sloughing off the innocence of childhood. Because of the trials all drow children endure, it is very rare to find a drow who does not have at least several levels in some character class.

Drow Society

Art

Art is an extremely important element of drow culture. They are fond of beauty, even though their definition of it may differ from that held by surface cultures. Still, the elegance of their works is undeniable.

Drow prefer three-dimensional art such as sculpture, architecture or even pottery to two-dimensional forms such as painting or mosaics. Whether the item in question is a simple vase or a mighty sculpture running up the side of a temple, there are common themes which predominate most drow cultures. The figure or item is likely to be simple and elongated, evoking a feeling of lightness and grace.

Excessive ornamentation is uncommon in most drow cultures, with a few exceptions. Rather than burden their art with the weight of incredible detail, drow artisans are adept at creating the effect of detail with just a few small strokes. A few simple cuts and chisellings, keeping in mind the play of light and shadow, can create a face on a sculpture which seems at first glance to be completely lifelike.



a toll which must somehow be made up or surpassed with each successive generation. The drow have several cultural, alchemical and biological factors that help them overcome their slow elven reproduction.

The drow culture in general is a lustful one, given to sexual rituals and outright orgies that might seem immoral or even pointless to an outsider, but are in fact rooted in the drow's need to constantly replenish their population. Of course, the drow are not blind to the pleasurable aspect of such activities and many tend towards such hedonism as much for a respite from the harsh realities of the Underdeep as out of any sense of duty to increase their numbers. Fuelled by drugs and alchemical aphrodisiacs, the drow can and often do keep their festivities going for days at a time. Most of the drow gods have their own particular times and rituals for such celebrations.

In addition to the drow's enthusiastic pursuit of conception through orgies and sexual rites, they also make use of various alchemical and magical potions and items designed to increase fertility. Most of these are of marginal effect at best, but do provide some assistance. Like the orgies themselves, items like this are more the province of the wealthy and the nobility than of the common and poor drow.

Prostitution is very common among most drow cultures, with male and female prostitutes in more or less equal supply. Children born of these couplings are not discriminated against as bastards, as would be the case in most surface cultures, but are instead given every opportunity available to the 'legitimate' children of the parent. The child is generally considered part of the mother's family, whether the mother is the prostitute or the one who hired the prostitute, though a Noble House in need of more heirs will often claim a child they believe was fathered by one of their members.

It is important to note that only children born to two pure drow parents are accepted in this manner. As many of the prostitutes working in drow cities are in fact slaves of other races, there are a fair number of half-drow born. These unfortunate souls will never become part of a Noble House; indeed, they will likely not survive their first month. Those who do may count themselves unlucky for it, as they are confined to the lowest rungs of society, scarcely above

This preference for elegance and simplicity extends to weaponry as well. The blades of the drow tend to be simple, elegant, graceful and efficient. Their armour, however, is another story entirely. The drow prefer ornate, even ostentatious armour, though they are not so foolish as to allow such preferences to interfere with the armour's vital function, nor to decrease its motility. Inlays of gold or precious gems are common, however, as are ridges, scrollwork and flared edges. When marching to war, drow of Noble Houses often wear armour which makes clear which House they belong to, the easier to tell friend from foe both during and immediately after the battle, when some drow try to settle old scores as the combat winds down.

Birth, Health and Death

As elves, the drow reproduce very slowly, a distinct liability in the Underdeep. Wars with outside races and the internecine struggles of the different factions of dark elves all take a heavy toll on the population of the drow,

slaves and are only called on by the true drow when there is work to be done or battles to be fought. In many drow cultures, it is considered a shame for a female drow of high standing to bear and give birth to a half-drow.

A pregnant drow is the safest drow in the world. Without exception, attacking or injuring a pregnant female is forbidden in drow societies and most temples will offer sanctuary to any pregnant female who requests it. A drow carrying a child is not completely safe, of course. Her enemies or those of her House may still try to strike at her, but they will certainly be much more careful in doing so and many decide it is easier to simply wait until she delivers the child before moving against the currently-pregnant drow.

Childbirth is relatively easy for drow, as for all elves, but is not without its dangers. For the wealthy drow, there is ready access to priests from the temples and the healing magic they can provide, but for the poor at the bottom levels of society, there is no such help. Still, it is rare that a drow woman dies in childbirth.

A common misperception about the drow is that since they live for hundreds of years, six to seven times the lifespan of a human, that each stage of a drow's life, from infancy to childhood to adolescence, adulthood and so on must last six to seven times as long as that stage lasts in a human child. The drow would not have survived the perils of the Underdeep if their young were effectively helpless for as much as half a century. Drow children mature nearly as quickly as do human children, until they reach puberty, when the aging process begins to slow down. By the age of 50, drow appear to be physically in their late teens (from a human perspective) and have achieved the near-timelessness of an adult.

The health of a drow throughout the course of his life is greatly dependent upon his status in society. The nobility and the wealthy can afford access to priestly healing magic, whether it is to heal wounds received in battle, undo the debilitating effects of a poison, cure a virulent disease, regrow a lost limb or even return from the dead. The poor have none of these even though their need is often greater, labouring in the fungus pits, cleaning the streets or any



other occupation open to them which also exposes them to greater risk of disease or accidental poisoning.

Death comes in many forms for the drow. Though they are gifted with long life (though not quite so long as other races of elves), it is uncommon for a drow to reach the end of his allotted years. No matter the social status of a drow, his life is full of hazards.

The lives of the poor, lower classes of the drow are under frequent menace from disease and privation, living and working as they do in the worst areas of a city. Scarcely above slaves in the social order, their lives are rarely their own and death may find them in the form of an escaped beast, a rebellious slave, a common thief or a bored noble.

The wealthy and noble classes of the drow face an entirely different but no less lethal set of dangers. Death from assassination or duel is always lurking around the corner - every cup may hold poison, every stranger might have a knife in his hand. Though the extremely wealthy may

have some hope of being restored to life, either through raise dead, resurrection or (if the drow has planned ahead) through emergence from a cloning tank, this is the very essence of putting one's life in another's hands and the drow do not ever count on being brought back from death.

Caught in the middle between the two extremes, the merchant classes of the drow may be the most safe of all, yet even they are hardly out of danger. They must still fear a summons to serve the city in one of the frequent wars of the drow, they must fear crude assassination attempts by their rivals and those intent on climbing the social ladder must be certain none of the powers of the city come to see them as a threat.

Those drow who survive all the perils of life in the Underdeep and among their people will still rarely die in bed, however. The drow are a proud race, to whom infirmity and weakness are despicable traits and very few drow who have survived the long centuries of their lives are willing to die helpless and bedridden. Further, no drow family would willingly

care for a relative so aged and infirm as to be nothing but a useless burden. Therefore, most drow reaching the full measure of their years choose to end their lives on their own terms, with a knife to their wrists or a vial of poison in their drink.

When death finally comes, very few drow can expect the body they leave behind to be treated with any kind of deference. With the exception of the wealthiest families, the drow do not bury their dead. Not only would it be too tempting a target for a necromancer looking for some raw material, but space is in very short supply in most drow cities, which certainly do not have the room to accommodate a graveyard. The disposition of the body after death is, like other things in drow culture, dictated by the individual's social standing in life.

The very wealthy can expect interment in catacombs beneath the family home, or in a family mausoleum, locked and guarded and warded by a network of spells against any intruders, though the possibility always exists of a wizard or priest within the family taking and using for body for his own purposes.

Those without access to such luxuries as a mausoleum and who live in a drow city with a plentiful air flow may choose to pay a fee to one of the temples for immolation services. In this case, the body of the dead drow is taken to the temple and burned as an offering to the god or goddess. In some drow cities, this is impossible, as there is not enough fresh air flowing through the city to allow for immolation. In this case, or in the case of drow too poor to pay for the service (the fees vary from temple to temple and city to city), there is only consignment to the fungus pits. The bodies of the dead are dumped into the fungus pits of the city, the main source of food, that they might nurture the fungus on which the living rely.

Clothing

Buried deep within the earth, the drow do not have access to the wide array of simple fibres and cloth made from plants that are taken for granted by those who dwell on the surface. Linen, cotton, even hemp cloth are rarities among the drow, worn only by those drow both wealthy and with easy access to trade routes running to the lands above.

Among those drow dedicated to worship of the Dark Mother, clothing spun from spider silk is not uncommon. It is not as fine as the true silk





made on the surface, nor does it take dye as well, but it is stronger. Drow cities with an abundance of spider silk find it to be a valuable trade resource with drow cities lacking such a thing.

The beasts of the Underdeep, herded by the drow for food, also provide hides which can be used as clothing. Such clothing is worn only by the poorest of drow, however, as wealthier drow consider garbing themselves in skins and hides as uncouth.

There are two herd beasts of the drow, the druuge (see page 219) and gursk (see page 220), whose fur can be sheared and woven into fabric, much like the wool taken from sheep on the surface.

By far the most common clothing among the drow is a wide variety of fabrics collectively known as na'orsuin (literally 'of the fungus'). It is made by weaving together the fibres of the various funguses of the Underdeep, soaking and tightening them until they become a pliable cloth. Each fungus used in the creation of na'orsuin has its own specific texture and appearance, making it easy to tell which part

of the Underdeep the drow wearing it hails from. More expensive and luxurious fabrics are made from combining the fibres of multiple fungi into a single cloth.

Clothing for the drow, while varied and distinctive, is more an item of ornamentation than necessity. The constant temperature of the Underdeep, while slightly cool, is not such to demand clothing for protection or warmth. This holds true throughout almost all of the Underdeep, save some of the shallower dwellings of House Merezzym in the far north of the world where the intense cold seeps down from the surface and the drow live in caves and caverns festooned with carved ice.

Along with the near-constant temperature of the lands they inhabit, the drow also have little need to worry about the vicissitudes of weather. There are no thunderstorms or blizzards to concern themselves with, or protect themselves from, in the Underdeep. People from the surface are often surprised to find that there is sometime rain in the caverns of the drow, however. A cavern with a large population and plentiful fresh water will often have condensation collect on the roof, which is shed in a kind of rain ranging from a near-constant mist to an occasional deluge lasting only a few seconds. Drow living in a cavern with a tendency for mist will often wear a cloak woven of gursk hair whenever they venture outside their structures.

Economy

Whether or not they are active worshippers of Alsythuh the Bloodied Coin (see page 33), necessity forces all drow cities to engage in trade and commerce, as this is the only way to provide for all the needs of a people living underground. The Underdeep is a place of scarcity and privation, where resources taken for granted on the surface are rare or absent.

Of all aspects of drow society, the economy is the most fragile. Though the Underdeep contains resources that can, barely, provide for most of the needs of the drow, they make for a spartan existence at best. Food, in particular, is always a concern, as the Underdeep contains nothing to eat save fungus and the flesh of the few species of beasts native to the depths.

To make up for the scarcity and monotony of the resources available to them, the drow are active traders with other underground races and even with the surface if they can find someone both brave and greedy enough to deal with them. The more fortunate and affluent communities of drow have access to universally prized goods like precious metals and gemstones, mined from the rock by small armies of slaves. Drow without such raw materials as resources must be more creative in trade.

The drow regard raiding as being every bit as important and legitimate a part of commerce as is trading. If something is easily taken, the thinking goes, why pay for it when it can simply be seized? This is particularly the case when it comes to dealing with other races. The drow consider themselves masters of the Underdeep, powerful and strong, and they see no reason not to simply take what they need from the weak.

Obviously, the implications of this viewpoint are not lost on the other races who make their homes in the Underdeep and trading caravans approaching any areas claimed by drow, or where drow raiding has occurred in the past, travel under extremely heavy guard. Though arrogant and condescending towards other races, the drow are not fools. If seizing the contents of some gnomish caravan is going to cost them heavily, they will trade instead.

As stated, some drow cities have the good fortune to have abundant, universally-prized trade goods literally at their doorstep, gems and precious metals that can be mined out of the rock by small armies of slaves. Those drow cities that have no such resources still must engage in trade and commerce, not only to grow in power and dominance but simply to survive. What exactly is offered in trade varies from city to city, of course, depending on the resources available as well as the talents and skills of the drow who


live there. However, the most common exports include various kinds of minor magic (the drow would never share something truly impressive with another race), finely-crafted weapons, slaves and sundry mundane but high quality goods like pottery or glass. The fabrics made by the drow are also in high demand as trade goods, from the strong and colourful *na'orsuin* to the light and pale spider silk fabrics spun in cities where worship of the Dark Mother is strong.

Not all drow cities generate their income in so benign a way, however. Drow that live near a weak city of another race rarely bother trading with their neighbours, preferring instead to extract money, slaves, goods or whatever else they desire as payment for protection. This is not protection by the drow against a third party, but rather is protection from the drow themselves.

Education

As with most civilised races living above or below the surface of the world, the level of education a drow receives is commensurate with his station in life. Those drow born to wealth and privilege can expect an education provided by the finest tutors available in the city, including instruction in the arcane arts, if he shows exceptional promise in that regard. Even after the time the child has been forced to





start fending for himself and dealing with his problems on his own, the wealthy family or Noble House to which he belongs will continue to see to his education, as the education of the child is a valuable investment in the future.

On the other hand, a child born to the poor drow of a city, the ones living in a small cave gouged into the rock of a back alley in the lowest levels, cannot expect any access to education whatsoever. Often, the only thing such children are taught is that they cannot rely on anyone else for help or aid. These children of the poor and desperate must learn to survive by their wits. Those with enough cunning, guile and luck will survive, and in the case of the truly fortunate, may even rise above their station. The rest will either die alone and unnoticed or will continue to eke out a meagre existence in the fetid gutters of the drow cities.

Somewhere in the middle are the children of the merchant classes, those clans and families of drow with some degree of wealth, but without the seemingly endless riches enjoyed by wealthy families of the Noble Houses. The children of these classes are usually trained in continuing the business practiced by the family, be it as a merchant or craftsman. Most of the education received is either directly from the parents or from a guild, if the drow child lives in one of the rare cities where guilds exist.

A child of the wealthy tends to receive his education from a number of sources. The extended family will teach the child about the history of the family and Noble House and hired tutors will instruct the child in the various basic subjects. Sometimes, educated slaves of other races are used as tutors, but only for extremely specialised fields of knowledge; generally speaking, the drow feel they have nothing to learn from other, lesser races.

Depending upon the culture and religions present in the city, a child of the wealthy may also have the opportunity to be educated by a local temple. Usually, this is done as a prelude to the child's expected entrance into the clergy of that temple, first as a servant (a stage which rankles both child and parents), then as an acolyte and finally as a priest. Aside from the time the child will spend as a servant, an education by a temple is highly-sought by drow families, as it offers the possibility of expanded power through the cooperation of a temple.

Apart from education in a temple, there are very few schools or academies devoted to general education in drow society, as conflict and chaos between the children of rival groups is all but inevitable. There would be much less likelihood of such conflict between children of the lower rungs of

society, but as the parents cannot pay, there is no incentive for any drow to run such a school.

Magical academies are also extremely rare among the drow, for all the reasons given above. If the child of a wealthy family demonstrates some particular and remarkable talent and facility for magic, the parents will attempt to find a mage who will take the child on as an apprentice. This is a difficult, painstaking and expensive process, most of the time and money of which is devoted to finding out where the political affiliations of a considered mage lie and once a suitable candidate is found, bribing him with enormous gifts.

Engineering

The drow are capable engineers, but they lag behind other more organised Underdeep races, the dwarves in particular. In a way, this is unavoidable. The drow as individuals are too chaotic and the drow culture too suspicious and plagued by infighting, to effectively establish the widespread sharing of knowledge among members of the race in the manner that has made the dwarves so tremendously adept at working with stone.

Additionally, the drow often rely too heavily on magic to accomplish quickly what would otherwise be a long and troublesome effort. For example, faced with a cavern with an unstable ceiling, dwarves would construct an array of thick buttresses capable of supporting the cavern's ceiling for the next ten millennia. Drow would prefer to throw up some *buttress* spells, then augment them with a series of fragile columns. If the spells fail and the cavern collapses, it can be dug out and the whole process done over again.

Viewed as a whole, drow engineering work tends to be as artistic as it is functional and many of the race's artistic preferences are expressed in the buildings they create. Tall, flowing buildings are the rule in drow cities, spires more graceful than the stalagmites and stalactites that surround them. The all-pervading use of magic in drow engineering means that their structures often sport lesser towers jutting off at impossible angles and delicate lattices that should not be able to hold up the weight of the stonework above.

Space is always at a premium in drow cities. Though the drow are certainly capable of enlarging the caverns in which they build their cities with magic and slave labour, such excavations must be undertaken very carefully. There are many stories, known very well among the drow, of the city of Ulsh Vaun whose people were reckless in their excavations and now lie buried beneath inestimable tons of broken stone.

The scarcity of building space in their cities has encouraged the drow to construct their buildings as tall, lean structures, usually as large below the 'surface' as they are above. These endless networks of cellars, tunnels and catacombs are rarely intended to connect to one another, but invariably, that is exactly what happens.

Aside from streets, bridges and passageways, the characteristics of which vary wildly depending on where the city is located, the drow build little in the way of infrastructure. Sewer systems in particular are rudimentary, if they exist at all. Generally, building such a thing would require lengthy and expensive tunnelling through solid rock, made all the more difficult by the necessity of circumventing the numerous cellars and catacombs beneath most drow cities. More importantly, no drow Noble House or temple ever has, and likely never will, feel inspired to fund such a public works project that would grant them no income whatsoever. By and large, the sewer systems of drow cities begin and end with the chamber pot, the contents of which are collected daily by slaves and used to fertilise the city's fungus pits.

When possible, the drow prefer to build their cities in large caverns with high ceilings and a floor that descends from top to bottom in a series of tiers. Such caverns, however,

are in short supply and high demand in the Underdeep and the drow have learned to incorporate many forms of Underdeep geography into the construction of their cities, displaying an amazing ingenuity for working within the constraints of the environment. Following are three examples of 'atypical' drow cities

- The city of Lashanthyl. Literally carved out of a succession of enormous, hollowed-out stalactites, Lashanthyl dangles over a two-mile deep pit in the Underdeep. The stalactites are connected to one another through an intricate system of *na'orsuin* catwalks and *levitating* bridges.
- The city of Sheoloth. Sheoloth is built in of a series of caves and fissures surrounding a narrow vertical pit, plunging down into a pool of lava far below.
- The city of Baramesh. A nearly bottomless fissure, its basalt sides only 30 feet apart, is the site of Baramesh, a city with no buildings, only deeply-dug and intricate caves. The two sides are joined by a complex network of magically-created stone bridges and *na'orsuin* catwalks.

Obviously, there are many other areas unique to Underdeep geography that could make fascinating sites for drow cities. Games Masters who prefer a more magic-heavy campaign setting might place a drow city on an island in a sea of magma, accessible only by *teleport* and protected from the heat and deadly fumes by a lattice of spells. Another option would be a drow city literally floating in the middle of an enormous chasm, invisible in the eternal darkness.

Visitors to drow cities are often surprised to discover that the wealthier areas of the city are lit. Though the drow enjoy *darkvision* with an exceptional range of 120 feet, that is still a shorter range of vision than the drow are comfortable with. The light is always soft and diffuse, so as not to bother the sensitive eyes of the drow. Most commonly, the lighting is a *continual flame* spell trapped inside a globe of prism crystal, casting light in a spray of muted tones. Other drow cities use luminous fungus or mould, while still others use *corpselights*, the barely-living bodies of non-drow. These unfortunate souls are nailed to posts or buildings in the city, burning with a white light that slowly consumes their bodies over the course of months (one month for every 20 pounds of body mass). The terrible spells that cause the *corpselights* to burn, also preserve life



in the body and the poor souls trapped within scream and blubber in horror and pain. This is probably the least common form of lighting in a drow city, for several reasons. First, the *corpselights* must be replaced periodically, unlike *continuous flame* that burns forever or luminous fungus that consistently renews itself. Second, many drow find the light from a *corpselight* uncomfortably bright and the unending screams annoying, though the clergy of the Dark Mother and Polshoath are quite fond of the unending, agonised serenade.

Unless a drow city is in a location in which luminous fungus occurs naturally, the only lighted areas of a city are the wealthiest. No drow would waste the time or resources to create *continuous flames* or *corpselights* for the poor, who must get by in the unending darkness as best they can.

Entertainment

The drow practice little of what surface dwellers would consider entertainment. Theatre, bardic song, dancing and oratory are relatively new concepts to them. These entertainments are at once passive and serve no true purpose. Most drow view them as frivolities, but they are gradually becoming accepted within the more powerful and secure drow realms.

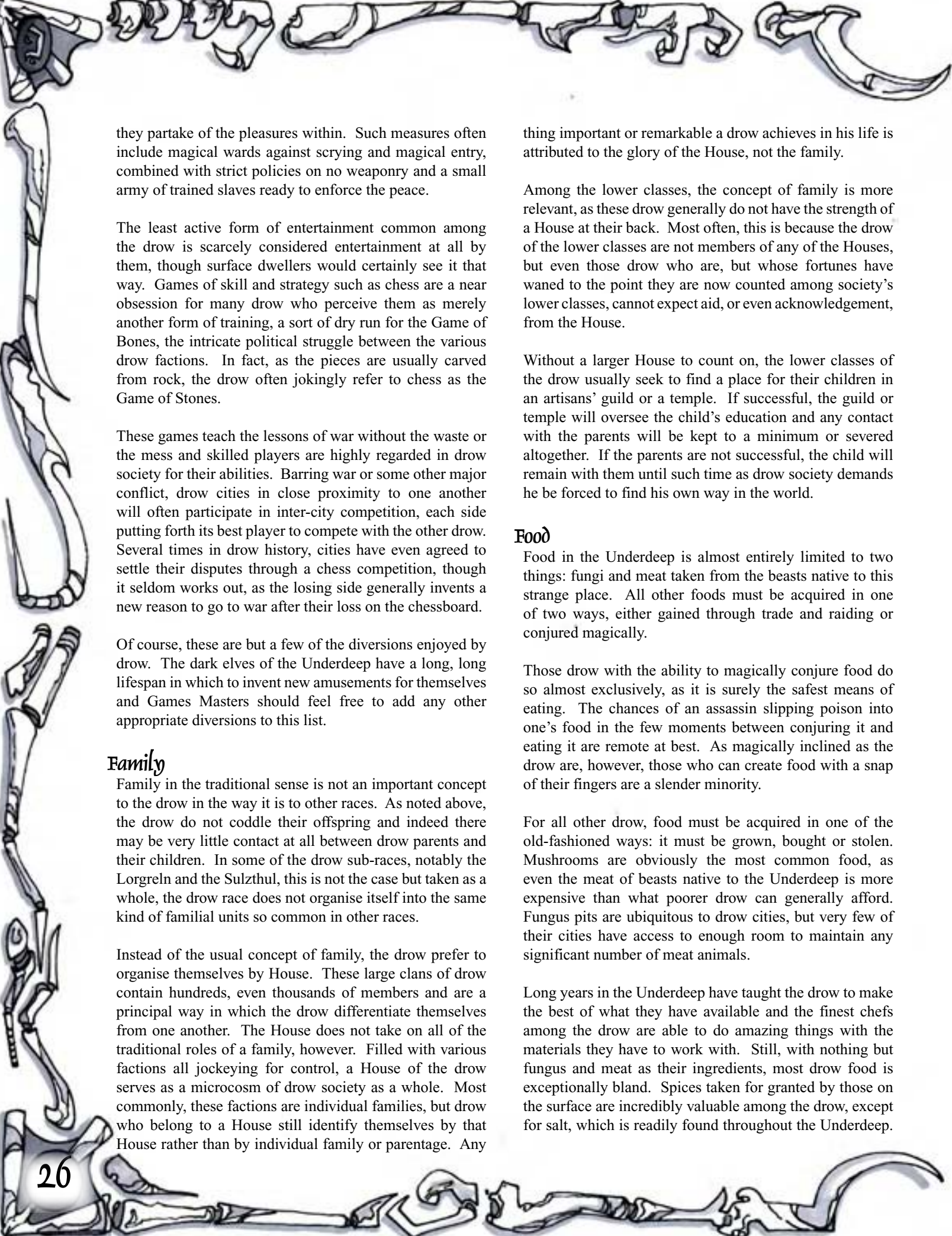
Life in the Underdeep is violent and vital and traditional drow entertainments reflect this fact. They serve not merely as pastimes, but as a way to train fighting and survival skills, or as a way to forget utterly the troubles of the Underdeep, if only for a little while.

A nearly universal practice and pleasure of the drow are gladiatorial contests. Even the smallest settlement of drow will almost certainly have a fighting pit of some kind and in the mightiest cities, gladiators will spill one another's blood in a magnificent coliseum to rival any that grace the surface of the world. The drow eagerly purchase and capture slaves for competition in the gladiatorial sports, with wealthy drow often maintaining large stables of fighters from dozens of races. Though there is no true hope of freedom or indeed anything but an eventual and inevitable bloody death, life as a gladiator is the best life a slave of the drow can hope for. Those slaves who are victorious in their battles earn both money and prestige for their owners and are in turn often treated as favoured pets, with comfortable accommodations and good food.



The gladiatorial bouts are not something the drow are content to just observe passively, however. A large number of these fights are designed to test the mettle and abilities of the dark elves themselves. A furious battle against an assortment of foes is considered appropriate, even necessary, for drow fighters to prepare themselves for combat against the many enemies of their race.

In stark contrast to the blood and spectacle of gladiatorial contests is another mainstay of drow entertainment – the pleasure den. Such places come in many forms, dependent on the culture of the drow in question, but most of them have at least some things in common. They are places for the drow to put aside, for a short time, the perils of the Underdeep and life among their fellow drow. As such, they offer customers the opportunity to engage in hedonistic, sense-numbing excess, be it in the form of prostitution, mind-altering drugs derived from the fungi of the Underdeep or simply the opportunity to torment a whimpering slave. Obviously, for such a place to attract and retain business, it must offer absolute protection for all its customers while

A decorative border of skeletal remains, including various bones, claws, and a horn, runs along the top, left, and bottom edges of the page.

they partake of the pleasures within. Such measures often include magical wards against scrying and magical entry, combined with strict policies on no weaponry and a small army of trained slaves ready to enforce the peace.

The least active form of entertainment common among the drow is scarcely considered entertainment at all by them, though surface dwellers would certainly see it that way. Games of skill and strategy such as chess are a near obsession for many drow who perceive them as merely another form of training, a sort of dry run for the Game of Bones, the intricate political struggle between the various drow factions. In fact, as the pieces are usually carved from rock, the drow often jokingly refer to chess as the Game of Stones.

These games teach the lessons of war without the waste or the mess and skilled players are highly regarded in drow society for their abilities. Barring war or some other major conflict, drow cities in close proximity to one another will often participate in inter-city competition, each side putting forth its best player to compete with the other drow. Several times in drow history, cities have even agreed to settle their disputes through a chess competition, though it seldom works out, as the losing side generally invents a new reason to go to war after their loss on the chessboard.

Of course, these are but a few of the diversions enjoyed by drow. The dark elves of the Underdeep have a long, long lifespan in which to invent new amusements for themselves and Games Masters should feel free to add any other appropriate diversions to this list.

Family

Family in the traditional sense is not an important concept to the drow in the way it is to other races. As noted above, the drow do not coddle their offspring and indeed there may be very little contact at all between drow parents and their children. In some of the drow sub-races, notably the Lorgreln and the Sulzthul, this is not the case but taken as a whole, the drow race does not organise itself into the same kind of familial units so common in other races.

Instead of the usual concept of family, the drow prefer to organise themselves by House. These large clans of drow contain hundreds, even thousands of members and are a principal way in which the drow differentiate themselves from one another. The House does not take on all of the traditional roles of a family, however. Filled with various factions all jockeying for control, a House of the drow serves as a microcosm of drow society as a whole. Most commonly, these factions are individual families, but drow who belong to a House still identify themselves by that House rather than by individual family or parentage. Any

thing important or remarkable a drow achieves in his life is attributed to the glory of the House, not the family.

Among the lower classes, the concept of family is more relevant, as these drow generally do not have the strength of a House at their back. Most often, this is because the drow of the lower classes are not members of any of the Houses, but even those drow who are, but whose fortunes have waned to the point they are now counted among society's lower classes, cannot expect aid, or even acknowledgement, from the House.

Without a larger House to count on, the lower classes of the drow usually seek to find a place for their children in an artisans' guild or a temple. If successful, the guild or temple will oversee the child's education and any contact with the parents will be kept to a minimum or severed altogether. If the parents are not successful, the child will remain with them until such time as drow society demands he be forced to find his own way in the world.

Food

Food in the Underdeep is almost entirely limited to two things: fungi and meat taken from the beasts native to this strange place. All other foods must be acquired in one of two ways, either gained through trade and raiding or conjured magically.

Those drow with the ability to magically conjure food do so almost exclusively, as it is surely the safest means of eating. The chances of an assassin slipping poison into one's food in the few moments between conjuring it and eating it are remote at best. As magically inclined as the drow are, however, those who can create food with a snap of their fingers are a slender minority.

For all other drow, food must be acquired in one of the old-fashioned ways: it must be grown, bought or stolen. Mushrooms are obviously the most common food, as even the meat of beasts native to the Underdeep is more expensive than what poorer drow can generally afford. Fungus pits are ubiquitous to drow cities, but very few of their cities have access to enough room to maintain any significant number of meat animals.

Long years in the Underdeep have taught the drow to make the best of what they have available and the finest chefs among the drow are able to do amazing things with the materials they have to work with. Still, with nothing but fungus and meat as their ingredients, most drow food is exceptionally bland. Spices taken for granted by those on the surface are incredibly valuable among the drow, except for salt, which is readily found throughout the Underdeep.

A drow with such simple things as pepper and garlic at his table is a rich drow indeed.

Not having access to the wide range of food and spices the surface dwellers enjoy has made the drow desire them that much more and has made trade in such items a primary source of income for several Noble Houses. Those drow who can afford to spend inordinate sums of money on spices and preserved foods from the surface, as such things are regarded as an important status symbol among the dark elves. In most cases, the more flavourful and esoteric the dish, the more highly it is regarded, though generally any fruit or vegetable from the surface is considered a delicacy.

This is something of a foolish vanity for the drow. Millennia of living on the numbingly bland foods available in the Underdeep has given the race as a whole a very sensitive palate, which does not react well to highly spiced foods from the surface. Simple spices such as pepper, oregano and others cause the drow no significant problems, but as already stated, the more flavourful the food, the more status attached to it. Nothing illustrates this better than the peppers grown in the southern nations of the surface world. Such things are rare and almost prohibitively expensive to import into drow cities and eating them will invariably cause pain and nausea, even vomiting, in a drow. Still, these items are considered a strong mark of status.

Obviously, this weakness is no secret among the drow and has often been exploited in the past. A House just finished with a large celebratory feast to celebrate a victory in battle, trade or politics makes an easy target for an assassin sent by a rival.

One significant exception to the drow's preoccupation with the most flavourful foods is bread. Taken for granted as a simple and readily available staple in the surface world, to the drow it is an item of significant value. Drow often trade with the surface merely to obtain wheat and other ingredients necessary to bake it and a baker skilled in making surface bread is all but assured of constant employment by a family within one of the Noble Houses. Serving bread at a drow table is considered a great compliment to the guests and most commonly used when sealing trade agreements or forming alliances. A cart full of bread delivered as a gift has been sufficient to put a centuries-old rivalry on the road to reconciliation.

The other major source for variety in the diet of the drow comes from trade with the drow sub-race of the Sulzthul, the aquatic drow. Drow cities lucky enough to have convinced their insular and exceedingly xenophobic cousins to trade

with them have access (albeit limited) to the variety of underwater vegetables harvested by the Sulzthul. These are not as flavourful as the foods which can be gotten from the surface, but most drow are anxious for any break at all from the dreary, unending diet of mushrooms on which they must otherwise subsist.

For the poorer members of a drow society, however, it is and likely always will be mushrooms that make up the entirety of their diet.

Government



T h e

government of a drow city differs from place to place depending on the balance of power in any given city. Most commonly however, power is shared unwillingly between the Noble Houses and the temples, with a slight advantage falling to the Noble Houses as they have a wider range of resources, income and influence on which they can draw.

Typically, there is a single Noble House which acts as the primary government in any given city, though there may well be other Noble Houses attempting to displace it as the power in the city. With control of a city come certain responsibilities, which most Noble Houses are only too glad to accept as they serve to further reinforce the House's grip on power. Most commonly, these responsibilities include little more than enforcing the law, levying taxes and seeing to the defence of the city.

Laws in drow cities are few, but they are usually brutally enforced. In cities where the church of Nazrakothe is a powerful presence, the task of policing the populace and enforcing the law is usually given to the temple, which embraces the responsibility with gusto. In other cities, these tasks are the province of the ruling power in the city. Consequently, the degree of law enforcement, as well as which acts are considered crimes, varies wildly from one drow city to the next. Some cities might be held under draconian rule, their streets patrolled constantly by drow warriors leading a band of ogre slaves to enforce the laws



and immediately punish anyone foolish enough to break them, while other drow cities may exist in a state of near or even total anarchy. In cities where control is in doubt, contested between two or more Noble Houses or temples, such anarchy is not uncommon and there may even be open war on the streets as factions take direct action against each other. Typically, the truth is somewhere in between the two extremes, as Noble Houses see to the protection of their own assets and interests, doing only what they must with the remainder of the city to keep it under their control.

As stated, laws in drow cities are few. Acts such as murder, theft and rape are usually considered crimes, as is blasphemy or heresy in any city where the temples hold a large portion of the power. Death, mutilation and enslavement are the most common punishments for these crimes; the drow see no benefit in building prisons and expending the resources required to imprison criminals. It can be safely assumed, however, that in any given drow city, those who hold the reins of power are not considered subject to that city's laws.

Overseeing the taxation of the city is an expensive and time-consuming business, but one which more than pays for itself for the Noble House or temple in charge of the city. Taxes vary from city to city but fees and tariffs of

10-20% are most common. This money goes directly to the Noble House or temple in control of the city, swelling their coffers and providing them with an ample income to maintain their grip on the city, one of the primary reasons most drow cities have had the same power in control for centuries or even millennia.

Ensuring the defence of the city is a more difficult prospect for the Noble House or temple in control. It requires working with and directing the efforts and forces of other powers in the city, all of whom will be thinking of ways they might seize power once the threat from the outside is past. Fortunately, drow are clannish enough to band together to face the many threats of the Underdeep, understanding that if the city falls none of them will be able to claim power. However, this is not enough of a motivation to prevent other Noble Houses or temples from attempting to withhold enough of their forces to make a play for control in the aftermath of the battle.

Magic

Magic is a way of life for the drow. It is part and parcel of who they are, from the innate spell abilities they enjoy to the ease with which spellcasting of both the arcane and divine varieties comes to them. The drow rely heavily on magic, using it whenever possible. It plays some role in virtually every aspect of their society, from building to combat to slave training to its myriad of uses in the Game of Bones (see page 88). Given a choice, the drow as a race would rather accomplish something with spells than with labour and tools, even when the labour and tools are provided by slaves.

Arcane and divine magic are both commonly practiced among the drow and are usually held in equal esteem. Some cities, controlled by a single cult, emphasise priestly magic above that which is practiced by wizards and sorcerers but still, even these temples usually retain their own forces of mages charged with keeping the cult in control and warding the city against any arcane assaults.

In combat, the drow are careful with the use of the incredibly destructive, large area of effect spells so common and popular with mages and priests on the surface, particularly when they are doing battle in unfamiliar terrain. A miscast lightning bolt in a cavern with an unstable roof can bring the combat to a quick end, with both parties buried beneath tons of collapsing stone. However, they have compensated for this self-imposed handicap with the creation of new spells that damage and kill only living things.



Religion

It is difficult to discuss, in a general fashion, the role of religion in the lives of the drow. Even more so than government, the impact of religion on the drow differs from city to city.

As a rule, drow are studiously observant when it comes to religion. The gods of the drow, after all, are the ones who gave them the knowledge and abilities they needed to survive the initial war with the goblins and to endure and thrive in the Underdeep after the Great Betrayal and the Sundering. Even in the most secular of drow cities, religion is still an important part of daily life, though the Noble House holding the reins of power is certain to try and stop the temples from gaining any real political influence in the city. Most of the drow cults can coexist with one another in a sort of guarded truce, though actual cooperation between them is usually impossible, a situation the Noble Houses do their best to foster and maintain as an allied group of temples would almost certainly be able to wrest power away from the secular authorities of the drow. The Dark Mother's church stands as a stark contrast to other temples in that it will not peacefully coexist with any of them. The Dark Mother sees herself as the only true deity of the drow, a position the other temples understandably reject. As a result, the presence of a Dark Mother cult in a city will always result in at least covert warfare being waged against the other faiths in a hidden battle for supremacy, if not outright violence.

Slavery and Slave Training

Slavery is integral to the culture of the drow. While it is rarely practiced upon other drow, the dark elves consider almost every other race above or below the surface of the earth to be fair game. As the drow are the pinnacle of life, the race eventually destined to rule, it is only fitting that other races be made to serve them. The only exceptions are creatures such as shangu, which are too powerful and dangerous to try to keep as slaves and are so deeply hated by the drow that they are killed on sight whenever possible. The situation is much the same with surface elves, who are not nearly as innately dangerous as shangu but are even more hated. Usually, a surface elf so unfortunate as to fall into the hands of the drow is doomed to a relatively short existence of such horror the elf will be glad for death when it comes, most likely on an altar to one of the gods of the drow pantheon. Dwarves too are seldom kept as slaves. Though the drow do not bear the same loathing for dwarves they do for their surface cousins and for shangu, there is certainly no love lost on either side. Dwarves, however, tend to be too stubborn and unyielding to be broken to slavery in any reasonable length of time. Further, the dwarves as a people have no tolerance for one of their own

being kept in servitude and wars between the dwarves and drow have broken out in the past over the discovery that the dark elves were keeping a meagre handful of dwarves in chains. However, the dwarven skill in stonework is such that some drow cities will willingly risk it.

Slavery is a part of almost every aspect of drow society. Slaves are used for labour, for mining, for cleaning the streets, for tending fungus pits, for sacrifice to the gods, for gladiator matches, for war and for pleasure. Even the smallest drow settlement will likely have some kind of slave market and in the larger cities there is often a building dedicated to that single purpose, thronged on auction days by buyers and by proxies.

Though training slaves is a well-regarded and prominent business in drow cities, most slaves sold at market are sold untrained. Drow who desire training for their newly-acquired slave, for example, if the slave is intended to be used as a house servant, will have to seek out a trainer after making the purchase. See the end of this section for more information on slave training among the drow.

The slaves at market might be sold untrained, but they are not sold unbroken. From the moment of capture until the moment the hammer falls on the auction block, the drow slavers engage in a thorough and time-honoured campaign of humiliation, degradation and punishment to break the new slave of thoughts of rebellion. This is also when new slaves begin to learn the drow tongue, as the slavers bark orders at the slaves and whip them mercilessly for not obeying. The lash provides a driving motivation for the new slave to learn to understand as quickly as possible. Before going on the block for the first time, the slave is stripped naked, blindfolded and all but hobbled by a heavy weight attached to the slave collar. He is then ordered to perform various tasks made all but impossible by the blindfold and the weight and whipped vigorously if his performance is deemed unsatisfactory.

Once a slave is bought, his troubles are only beginning. The drow see no worth or value in a slave beyond the money invested in his purchase. Specially trained slaves, particularly those who excel in their new capacity as gladiators, soldiers or concubines, are considered more valuable and sometimes even earn the fondness of their owners, but a slave straight from the auction block can expect no such considerations from his new master or mistress.

Drow abuse their slaves at will, often taking pleasure in the act. A slave is punished for the slightest infraction, real or imagined, and a new slave who is imperfectly obedient will quickly begin to accumulate an inventory of his failings in

the form of scars all over his body. More serious transgressions are likely to cost the slave toes, fingers, ears, eyes, the nose or even genitalia. Of course, any true act of rebellion is almost certain to result in the slave's death. If he is fortunate, his master or mistress will be angry enough to act rashly and kill him quickly. If not, he is probably doomed to a slow death of the most agonising torture his master can devise, possibly ending his days as a sacrifice on the altar of one of the drow gods. In most cities, any drow can punish any slave, even those belonging to another drow, in any way he sees fit – including death. If he does maim or kill the slave, however, he is expected to pay the slave's owner half again the cost of the slave to make up for the inconvenience.

Breeding slaves is uncommon among the drow. When it is done, it is only in the case of truly exceptional physical and mental specimens and even then is a rarity. Though the drow may value the gifts of an extremely useful slave, the breeding process and the following cost of caring for and feeding the offspring until it reaches maturity is simply too much trouble to bother with. It is far easier and cheaper to simply buy another slave, particularly for the wealthy drow who can afford such exceptional slaves, as they have much more important things to do with their time. There have been several attempts to breed slaves for profit, but the troubles involved, combined with the long childhood of most races used as slaves by the drow, make this all but impossible. The one major exception to the drow reluctance to engage in slave breeding comes from the mages of drow society, who sometimes breed slaves for the purposes of study and experimentation.

Humans and goblinoids of all stripes are among the drow's favoured races to keep as slaves, but are by no means the only ones commonly kept. Ogres, ettins, trolls and hill giants, though sometimes difficult to break to the collar of a slave (or collars, in the case of an ettin), are highly prized for their great strength, frequently making up the front ranks of a drow army or fighting in the arena for the pleasure of the drow. Trolls usually prove particularly hard to train due to their general disregard for pain of any kind other than fire and acid but are in turn greatly valued for their resilience.

The vast majority of slaves are untrained, save for whatever bare minimum is needed to accomplish the tasks they are given. They spend their short, miserable lives with the drow in capacities for which little training is needed, serving their masters as miners, labourers or fungus tenders before



death finally comes on the floor of the gladiatorial arena or on the altar of one of the drow gods.

For other tasks and labours, however, the drow find it useful to have their new slaves trained. This is not some mere matter of teaching the slave to fear the lash; that is easily accomplished and, indeed, is done to all slaves. Rather, slave training among the drow is a complex task that is highly lucrative for the drow who have mastered it.

Properly trained slaves serve their masters not out of fear of the lash or any other punishment, but because the trainer has broken them of the will or desire to do anything else. A properly trained slave views his master as the central point of his world and obedience as his reason for being. Such a slave can be trusted to watch over and protect his master at all times, even when his master is resting and could be killed with a single stroke. A well-trained slave would not consider such a betrayal of his master.

Every species has its own psychology, its own weak points to be exploited and used by a skilled slave trainer. As

complex as the process is, however, it is uncommon for a slave trainer to specialize in more than two different species. Drow with a slave of another species will have to find an alternate trainer, if one is available.

There are far more uses for trained slaves than for untrained, obviously. A trained slave can be trusted with money, weapons, even with his master's life. They are used as bodyguards, personal servants, concubines, skilled gladiators and soldiers to make up the front ranks of a drow army.

The Gods of the Drow

Even the haughtiest of the drow does not presume to understand the origins of the gods, where they came from or how they came to be. The official dogma of most drow churches is that the drow pantheon predates the existence of any other gods and it was through their primordial efforts to force their way into being that all other divinities were created. Despite the insistence of the clergy, this seems unlikely.

Another theory, which holds more currency with drow brave enough to entertain such thoughts, is that the gods of the drow were created concurrently with the gods of the surface elves. This theory holds that the two sets of gods are shadows of one another, precise opposites, light and dark, created alongside one another to accommodate the universe's need for balance in all things. Where there is an Allfather, there must be a Dark Mother and so with the other deities.

The gods of the drow have not seen fit to comment on the issue and no drow has ever been fool enough to ask.

Listed below are the gods worshipped by the drow, including descriptions of their spheres of influence, the kinds of worship performed in their name, the general makeup of the clergy and congregation and notes on the design of their temples.

The Dark Mother

Symbol: A black spider on a silver web. In traditional symbology, the web is depicted with barbed edges. More elaborate scenes add the flesh and bones of enemy races, including shangu, humans and of course elves from the surface. Amongst the common folk, her symbol is often reduced to a circle surrounded by eight crooked lines, a crude representation of the spider.

Alignment: Chaotic evil

Governs: Death, destruction, drow, fate

Domains: Chaos, Death, Evil, Protection

Favoured Weapons: Flails, whips

Requirements for Priesthood: Must be a female drow

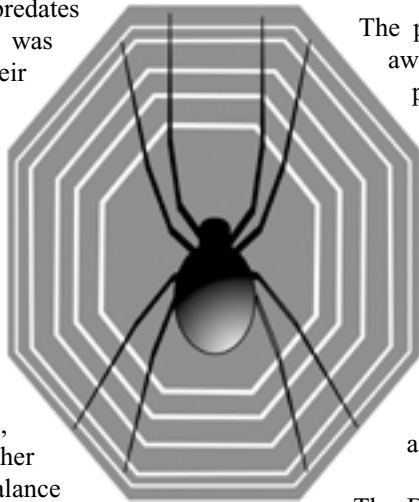
Background

The Dark Mother is the only deity of the drow that is well known on the surface world. Even among other Underdeep races, many gods and goddesses of the drow are virtually unknown, leading races throughout the world to some incorrect assumptions about the dark elves. Particularly on the surface, the drow are regarded as a single, monolithic culture, a connection of closely related cities populated in equal part by dark elves and giant spiders, ruled over with an iron fist by a cruel order of priestesses.

The priestesses of the Dark Mother are well aware of this belief and have always striven to propagate it. For the most part, they have succeeded and very few on the surface world are aware of the wide variety and diversity of beliefs and cultures found in the drow. Even some of the wisest heads of other races hold tightly to this belief, ignoring through sheer force of will the argument that a people as chaotic, individualistic and suspicious as the drow would not submit to a culture in which they were ruled over by a single, autocratic entity.

The Dark Mother, though a feminine deity, is focused on the darker aspects of motherhood such as vengeful protectiveness, control and obscene fecundity. She considers all the drow her children, a viewpoint that frequently puts her at odds with the other gods of the drow pantheon. She is fiercely protective of her children, but through her priestesses is equally fierce about destroying any children who cross her. There are always other worshippers, other children, other slaves.

In her role as a nurturer, the Dark Mother showers her priestesses with gifts, purchasing their loyalty through the bestowment of divine powers. In turn, she demands complete and absolute obedience and service. The price paid by a priestess who betrays the faith is terrible enough to make even the drow shudder. The more fortunate die after long and agonising torture as a sacrifice on a temple altar, while something worse awaits the most hated traitors. The Underdeep is littered with the horrific creatures known as the driders, pitiful and bitter wretches that once were drow favoured by the Dark Mother before they were judged unworthy or unfaithful and warped into their new forms.





Driders are monstrous outcasts that have nothing to do with drow society of any kind except when an opportunity to kill drow is made available. Other drow cults and faiths find the creation of the dangerous and uncontrolled driders as just another reason to enter conflict with the Dark Mother.

Men never serve as clergy for the Dark Mother, as she sees the masculine as weak and revolting, useful for one purpose only. That one purpose is the only contact the priestesses have with males (outside of their official duties, of course), when the priestesses take a male as a consort. This is done for breeding purposes only; no priestess of the Dark Mother is allowed to actually marry.

Priestesses are usually recruited from the wealthier drow, ideally from the Noble Houses themselves. Though the priestesses are required to give up their heritage and all ties to their former family when they take the blood oaths of service to the Dark Mother, it is important to the church that all priestesses are respected and feared, even by the drow nobility and having ranks filled with commoners is hardly the best way to accomplish this.

There are several demigods attached to worship of the Dark Mother, most of whom, according to the faith, fulfil

various functions otherwise attributed to other gods of the drow pantheon, such as war and deceit. Temples to these demigods are always found attached directly to the temple of the Dark Mother; they are never worshipped independently of her. All such demigods are, like the Dark Mother herself, depicted as arachnid in nature and mindset. These demigods are considered by drow of other faiths to be mere phantoms, further evidence of the desire of the Dark Mother to oust worship of other gods and bring all the drow into the web of her faith. Needless to say, the other churches of the drow take a very dim view of anyone worshipping such a demigod, particularly one to whom the powers and governances of their own god are ascribed.

Relations between the church of the Dark Mother and the church of Polshoath are particularly strained, as each holds a claim to governance of birth.

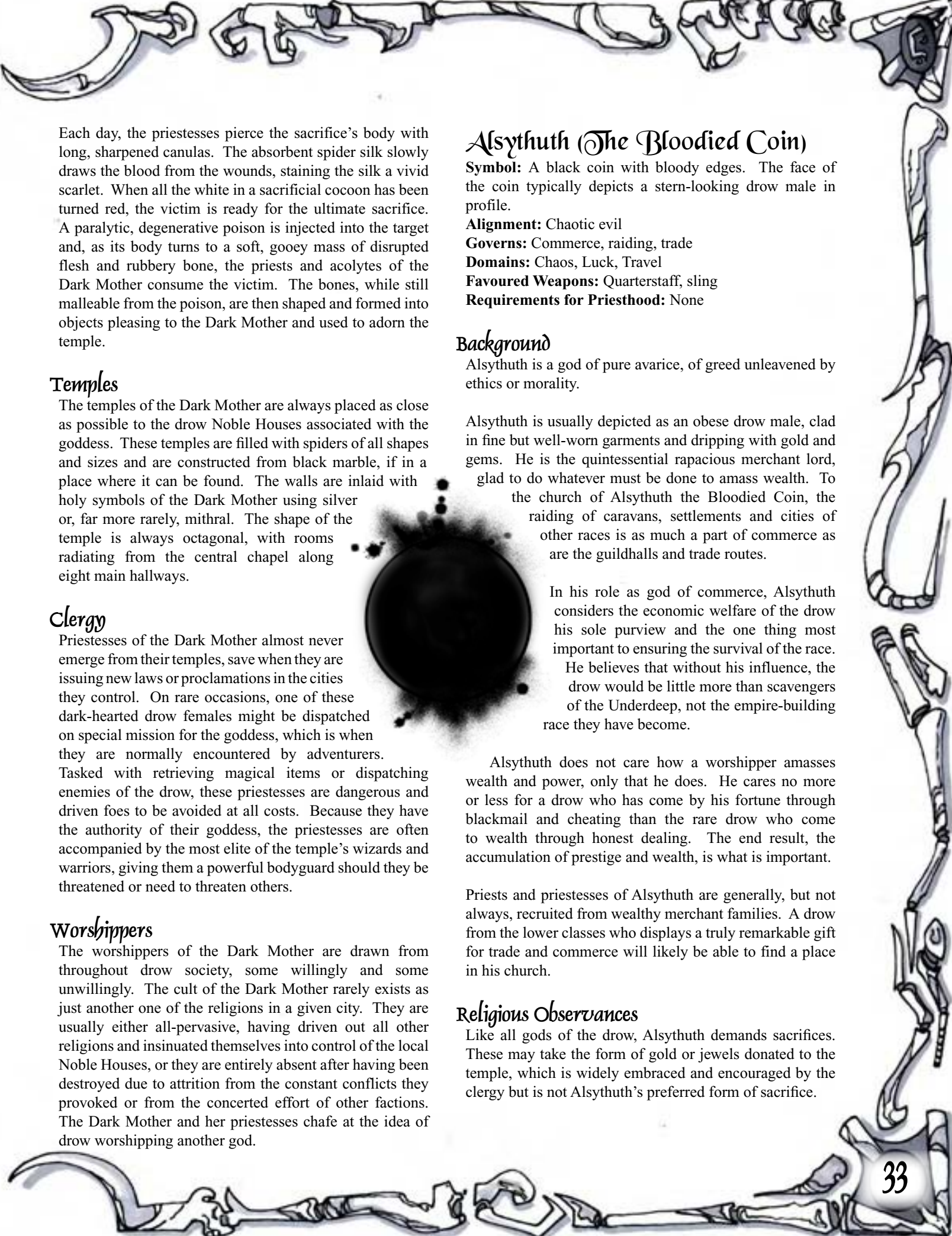
The Dark Mother and her priestesses regard the view the outside world holds of drow religion, of the Dark Mother's complete dominance over drow life, as the way things ought to be. In some cities and cultures, they have been successful and the worship of the Dark Mother overshadows all else in those places. In others, these attempts have only served to engender further antipathy and hostility between the Dark Mother's church and the churches of the other gods, not to mention the Noble Houses.

Vengeance upon the elves of the surface and indeed all the races that played a part in forcing the drow beneath the earth in the Great Betrayal and triggering the Sundering is a common theme in all but a very few drow cultures. Perhaps no organisation exemplifies it as well as the cult of the Dark Mother. One of the major reasons the Dark Mother is so well known on the surface is because of this drive for vengeance, a drive which has fuelled virtually every drow military expedition to leave the Underdeep and which has given the drow the reputation for cruelty and wickedness so widely held in the lands of the sun.

Religious Observances

The Dark Mother revels in the sacrifices offered her by her priestesses and all her temples keep several giant spiders for use in preparing those sacrifices for the altar. The ritual of sacrifice itself is a terrifying thing and the temples of the Dark Mother often ring with the agonised screams of the horrified victims.

A properly prepared sacrifice is first bound with spider thread, contorted and twisted into the proper form preferred by the Dark Mother and then is hung upside-down over the sacrificial altar. At the end of the process of preparation, only the victim's pain-wracked face is exposed.



Each day, the priestesses pierce the sacrifice's body with long, sharpened canulas. The absorbent spider silk slowly draws the blood from the wounds, staining the silk a vivid scarlet. When all the white in a sacrificial cocoon has been turned red, the victim is ready for the ultimate sacrifice. A paralytic, degenerative poison is injected into the target and, as its body turns to a soft, gooey mass of disrupted flesh and rubbery bone, the priests and acolytes of the Dark Mother consume the victim. The bones, while still malleable from the poison, are then shaped and formed into objects pleasing to the Dark Mother and used to adorn the temple.

Temples

The temples of the Dark Mother are always placed as close as possible to the drow Noble Houses associated with the goddess. These temples are filled with spiders of all shapes and sizes and are constructed from black marble, if in a place where it can be found. The walls are inlaid with holy symbols of the Dark Mother using silver or, far more rarely, mithral. The shape of the temple is always octagonal, with rooms radiating from the central chapel along eight main hallways.

Clergy

Priestesses of the Dark Mother almost never emerge from their temples, save when they are issuing new laws or proclamations in the cities they control. On rare occasions, one of these dark-hearted drow females might be dispatched on special mission for the goddess, which is when they are normally encountered by adventurers. Tasked with retrieving magical items or dispatching enemies of the drow, these priestesses are dangerous and driven foes to be avoided at all costs. Because they have the authority of their goddess, the priestesses are often accompanied by the most elite of the temple's wizards and warriors, giving them a powerful bodyguard should they be threatened or need to threaten others.

Worshippers

The worshippers of the Dark Mother are drawn from throughout drow society, some willingly and some unwillingly. The cult of the Dark Mother rarely exists as just another one of the religions in a given city. They are usually either all-pervasive, having driven out all other religions and insinuated themselves into control of the local Noble Houses, or they are entirely absent after having been destroyed due to attrition from the constant conflicts they provoked or from the concerted effort of other factions. The Dark Mother and her priestesses chafe at the idea of drow worshipping another god.

Alsythuth (The Bloodied Coin)

Symbol: A black coin with bloody edges. The face of the coin typically depicts a stern-looking drow male in profile.

Alignment: Chaotic evil

Governs: Commerce, raiding, trade

Domains: Chaos, Luck, Travel

Favoured Weapons: Quarterstaff, sling

Requirements for Priesthood: None

Background

Alsythuth is a god of pure avarice, of greed unleavened by ethics or morality.

Alsythuth is usually depicted as an obese drow male, clad in fine but well-worn garments and dripping with gold and gems. He is the quintessential rapacious merchant lord, glad to do whatever must be done to amass wealth. To the church of Alsythuth the Bloodied Coin, the raiding of caravans, settlements and cities of other races is as much a part of commerce as are the guildhalls and trade routes.

In his role as god of commerce, Alsythuth considers the economic welfare of the drow his sole purview and the one thing most important to ensuring the survival of the race. He believes that without his influence, the drow would be little more than scavengers of the Underdeep, not the empire-building race they have become.

Alsythuth does not care how a worshipper amasses wealth and power, only that he does. He cares no more or less for a drow who has come by his fortune through blackmail and cheating than the rare drow who come to wealth through honest dealing. The end result, the accumulation of prestige and wealth, is what is important.

Priests and priestesses of Alsythuth are generally, but not always, recruited from wealthy merchant families. A drow from the lower classes who displays a truly remarkable gift for trade and commerce will likely be able to find a place in his church.

Religious Observances

Like all gods of the drow, Alsythuth demands sacrifices. These may take the form of gold or jewels donated to the temple, which is widely embraced and encouraged by the clergy but is not Alsythuth's preferred form of sacrifice.

Sacrifices are made to Alsythuth at least twice a year by his worshippers. Additionally, it is customary to make a sacrifice to the Bloodied Coin before embarking on a trading expedition or sending forth a band of raiders. Ideally, such sacrifices are made with a member of the race to whom the caravan is to travel or the raiding party is to target, with the thought that such a soul offered up to the Bloodied Coin will make the expedition that much more profitable for the drow. The victim of the sacrifice is secured to the altar with a golden cord and a sacrificial knife of precious metal is then used to slowly bleed him dry.

Not all worship of Alsythuth is marked by sacrifices, of course. Every day, the temple sees drow come through to offer prayers and coins that their fortunes might thrive.

Temples

Temples to Alsythuth the Bloodied Coin tend to be ostentatious, even gaudy affairs, usually built as square blocks of multi-hued marble and inlaid with gold. Inside, every conceivable item and surface is gilded and studded with gems. Not content to count on the possible vengeance of Alsythuth against thieves, temples to the Bloodied Coin employ small armies of guards to watch over the treasures on display.

The temples are run as though they are a business, which is fitting for the cult of Alsythuth. Worshippers rent space to make offerings and prayers and the priests charge a fee to perform sacrifices. Worshippers are greeted by an acolyte of the Bloodied Coin upon entering the temple, who asks them what manner of worship they require for what ends and quotes them a price. True to form for Alsythuth, the final price is rarely the same as that quoted. The rare foolish drow who enters a temple of the Bloodied Coin and receives services for which he cannot pay can expect to become a sacrifice to Alsythuth.

Clergy

The priests and priestesses of Alsythuth are generally drawn from the wealthier merchant families of the drow, who actively seek to place their children within the temple ranks for the financial benefits sure to accrue to the family. In any drow society in which the Bloodied Coin is a dominant



cult, the clergy are very active and visible. It is difficult to miss them on the street, as they are always clad in an array of jewels and fine cloth in an ostentatious manner that pleases their god. The priests and priestesses of the Bloodied Coin live very well indeed and their coffers are constantly overflowing with coins and offerings given by drow seeking Alsythuth's help in their various enterprises.

Worshippers

Alsythuth the Bloodied Coin enjoys widespread worship among the Noble Houses and the merchant classes of the drow, who often use his temples as neutral ground to meet and broker new trading agreements. Wealth is a cornerstone of the power of the Noble Houses and so many House nobles who are dedicated to another deity still devote some measure of their worship to Alsythuth.

Though the workers on trading caravans and the warriors of raiding parties acknowledge the role Alsythuth plays in their livelihood, they usually reserve the majority of their worship for Thraun, the Pitiless Blade.

Belishtim (The Dark Seducer)

Symbol: A heart impaled on a black blade. This symbol ranges from delicately-crafted gold, ruby and onyx in the greater halls of worship to a simple oval with a line through it among the poorest drow.

Alignment: Chaotic Evil

Governs: Ambition, desire, lust

Domains: Air, Chaos, Trickery

Favoured Weapons: Darts, rapier

Requirements for Priesthood: A character must have a minimum Charisma score of 15 to be accepted as a priest or priestess of Belishtim.

Background

Belishtim lurks in the heart of every drow. She is the Dark Seducer, the whisper in the ear that drives the baser desires of the dark elves. She is always regarded as a feminine deity, yet she has nothing to do with reproduction (that aspect falls to either the Dark Mother or Polshoath). She is, however, given full credit for spurring on the urges that lead to reproduction, except within the church of the Dark Mother, which gives no credence to any other drow god.

Belishtim is the epitome of carnal lust, of thoughtless desire and of the driving ambition that spurs the drow to control and dominate one another and all those other races around them. She is most often portrayed as a lithe drow female, her face obscured and her body clad in little but shadow.

The Dark Seducer occupies an unusual place in the drow pantheon, as there are few concrete aspects of drow society that falls under her direct control. However, her influence is felt everywhere, from the wanton lusts displayed in the slave flesh pits of a drow city to the ruthless ambition that drives the Game of Bones or Sheathed War. To hear her clergy tell it, all drow worship Belishtim, even those who do not know it.

Religious Observances

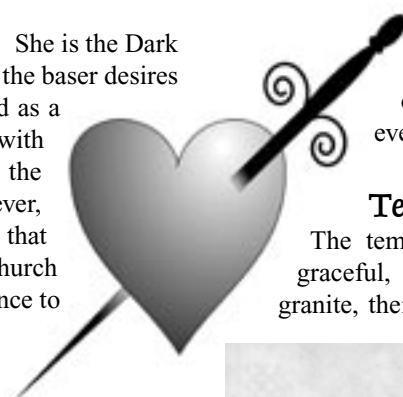
Though she is not merely the goddess of lust and desire, these aspects are most predominant in ceremonies worshipping Belishtim. Dozens, even hundreds of priests, priestesses and selected worshippers engage in drug-fuelled orgies that can last for days on end. Each moment of that act is considered a sacrifice to the Dark Seducer. It is not uncommon for a drow to die of exhaustion, privation or even overdose during these orgies and those deaths too are considered sacred to Belishtim.

Of course, since lust unfulfilled is also part of the worship of the Dark Seducer, this too must be included. One male and one female worshipper are chosen arbitrarily by the clergy and taken into the temple's sanctuary where the orgy is to take place. There, they are secured to a pair of pillars within a few feet of one another with ties of looped wire. Once securely in place, the two worshippers are fed a diet of drugs, alcohol and aphrodisiacs and forced to watch as the orgy rages on in front of them. Some drow, maddened beyond tolerance, have literally torn themselves apart trying to break free of the wire ties.

Aside from these elaborate and lengthy orgies, there are no formal religious observances for Belishtim. However, her temples are frequented often by drow coming in search of a prayer or something more powerful to satisfy a certain lust or obsession, be it for a person, a substance or even something intangible.

Temples

The temples of Belishtim the Dark Seducer are graceful, flowing structures built of red marble or granite, their angles and corners carefully softened to



create an impression of softness and roundness. Commonly, these temples are located in an area of a drow city sure to draw the greatest amount of foot traffic, though certainly well outside the domains of the poorer drow.

Inside, there is a single large sanctuary appointed with everything the drow might need or desire during the long worship services to their goddess. This ranges from floors strewn with cushions on one end to various devices and implements of pain on the other. There is no central altar, though there are icons of Belishtim everywhere in the room. The interior of these houses of worship is so atypical of what is found in other temples that adherents to the other deities of the drow pantheon commonly say the temples of Belishtim are more reminiscent of a slave brothel than anything else.

Clergy

The priests and priestesses of Belishtim are uniformly beautiful. While there may indeed be no such thing as a drow born ugly, the clergy of the Dark Seducer are culled from the most attractive of the race. This is done for two simple reasons. First, Belishtim finds physical ugliness revolting and wishes to be served only by the most beautiful of drow. Second, it is mere common sense that an ugly or misshapen priest of Belishtim will have a more difficult time doing his goddess' work, namely that of seduction.

Some of the acolytes found in a temple of Belishtim are merely young drow in training for priesthood, but there are others with a more complicated story. The clergy of the Dark Seducer make it their practice to lure priests and priestesses away from other faiths, slowly weaning them from the teachings of one god to introduce them completely to worship of Belishtim. This is difficult to accomplish, for obvious reasons, but the clergy of the Dark Seducer would not continue the practice were it never successful. Once the drow priest of another god has renounced his vows, usually in the throes of passion, he is hurriedly taken to the temple of the Belishtim, where he becomes an acolyte in the church of the Dark Seducer. He also becomes a prisoner in the temple, though this is as much for his own protection as anything else, for the followers of his forsaken god would surely kill him for his betrayal.

Worshippers

The worshippers of Belishtim the Dark Seducer come from all levels of drow society, from the Noble Houses to the

lower classes. Ambition, desire and lust are nearly universal preoccupations with the passionate and chaotic dark elves. Younger drow in particular are ardent worshippers of Belishtim, though many become involved simply for the promise of partaking in the infamously depraved orgies which constitute the Dark Seducer's worship ceremonies.

Kez'Skul (The Trickster, The Deceiver)

Symbol: A single flame flanked by two opposing and intricate symbols which seem reversed images of each other. These often take the form of intricate knotwork with no beginning or end.

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral (with evil tendencies)

Governs: Fire, humour, trickery

Domains: Chaos, Fire, Trickery

Favoured Weapons: Dagger, sap, sling

Requirements for Priesthood: At least two ranks each in Bluff and Sense Motive.

Background

In many pantheons, the deity fulfilling the role of the Trickster is barely tolerated, an unwelcome presence lurking on the fringes. Not so among the drow. Kez'Skul, the Trickster and Deceiver, is an important god to the drow, a race of beings for whom trickery and deceit are more commonly virtues to be applauded than faults to be shunned.



Kez'Skul is a Trickster in the truest vein of drow culture and society. He is not a jester or a fool; he is not a fun-loving, lighthearted deity like the Trickster of the surface elves. His provenance lies in deceit and spite, in lies and innuendo, in cruel jokes and manipulations. This is not to say Kez'Skul is without a sense of humour, but it is one that few races outside the drow would find amusing.

The drow conceive of the Trickster as a being of utter chaos, of constant change unbound by rules. It is this aspect of Kez'Skul that has given him governance over fire - dangerous, unpredictable and ever-changing.

Kez'Skul is, by turns, extremely possessive and extremely dismissive of his worshippers, dependent upon his whims. He shares the common desire of the drow pantheon to help his worshippers exact vengeance upon the surface races, but finds the concept of great clashes of arms boring and stale. He would prefer his worshippers devise a more interesting (and obviously, deceitful) plan.

The one near constant of Kez'Skul is that he hates to lose worshippers. Though he has kept his aspect as Vermthizzl (see page 48) secret even from his highest clergy, his annoyance at the loss of potential worshippers is at least part of the reason he created this aspect of himself for the Pol'Tah (see page 115). Of course, even that reason is overshadowed by the immensity of the joke he has perpetrated upon them.

Religious Observances

Kez'Skul revels in intricate falsehoods and well-crafted deceit. He has no interest in crudely obvious or lighthearted jokes, which is good, as the drow are hardly given to such pursuits. Rather, he prefers jests which in cultures other than the drow would be considered cruelty. For example, a worshipper of Kez'Skul who is able to craft an intricate web of lies, convincing a wealthy merchant his fortunes are failing and poverty is imminent before driving him to suicide, all while his fortunes are in fact *growing*, would receive great favour in the eyes of Kez'Skul.

The cult of the Deceiver does practice sacrifice, but it is less common than in most other drow faiths and certainly not the nearly-constant practice it is in the church of the Dark Mother. Kez'Skul has no interest in receiving the soul of a sacrifice brought kicking and screaming to the altar. Instead, sacrifices to the Trickster of the drow must be brought to the altar more subtly. Ideally, this involves tricking the potential sacrifice into freely making himself a victim to the Deceiver, or, even more satisfying, to convince a potential sacrifice to lie down on the altar without even realising what fate is in store for him. Obviously, this is an extremely difficult task for the clergy to accomplish, particularly given the suspicious nature of the drow and the fact that Kez'Skul's preferences for his sacrifices are known in drow society. The clergy of the Deceiver are themselves excellent at deceit, however, and they are sometimes successful.

Temples

The temples of Kez'Skul the Deceiver have nothing in common with one another save their utter randomness. They are large complexes but, as space is at a premium in drow cities, most of their volume is vertical. That is, they are built upward as high as the engineering arts of the drow can manage and delve even further than that into the

ground, precariously perched upon a labyrinth of tunnels and catacombs. They never have a single definable shape; they are not 'round' or 'square' but rather seem almost to have been built haphazardly. In those drow cities lucky enough to have a generously abundant air flow, temples usually have a large, constantly burning gas flame at the apex of the roof.

Inside, the temples are a warren of chaos. Secret passageways, false doors and rotating walls are the norm. A stranger to the temple will quickly become hopelessly lost in this intentionally-confusing maze, wandering aimlessly until he is either found by the clergy, makes his way out or meets his end in one of the many traps the worshippers of Kez'Skul build into his temples. A new recruit to the priesthood usually needs months to memorise the intricacies and pitfalls of the temple, during which time he is often, but not always, accompanied by a senior priest for his own protection.

Clergy

Clergy of the Trickster wear ceremonial vestments crafted of a specially-treated *na'orsuin*, which seems to shift colours depending on the light. While in the temple, all clergy wear a mask made of the same *na'orsuin* which conceals the face completely.

The priests and priestesses of Kez'Skul the Deceiver are taken from all walks of life in drow culture, for the church believes that each strata of society possesses its own gifts for deceit and trickery. Males and females exist in roughly equal numbers in the priesthood, a surprise to some who assume that females would be more adept at the work of the Trickster. Though the clergy of Kez'Skul move about freely and often outside the temple, they rarely do so in the masks and colour-shifting garments of their cult. This is not because of any particular fear, but simply to make it easier to keep themselves anonymous.

Though most drow cults and churches involve themselves somehow in the ongoing internecine drow struggle known either as the Game of Bones or the Sheathed War, the cult of Kez'Skul the Deceiver is almost certainly the most active. The Game of Bones is based on webs of lies, deceit, falsehood and innuendo and the priests and priestesses of the Trickster have a natural talent at such pursuits that makes them a dangerous foe.

Worshippers

The worshippers of Kez'Skul are many, but those solely devoted to him are comparatively few. For example, a wealthy merchant may pray to the Trickster for help in the Game of Bones while maintaining Alsythuth as his foremost god, just as a commander offers supplication to the Trickster that his flanking manoeuvre might succeed and fool the enemy while reserving his greater reverence for Thraud.

This is not always the case, of course. Though not so many as those who give Kez'Skul only a part of their worship, there are those drow outside the clergy who are dedicated to him utterly. Like the members of the priesthood, these drow come from all walks of life, from the Noble House prince obsessed with the Game of Bones to the common con artist working his trade in the grimy back alleys of the city.

Mu'Ushket (The Knife in the Dark)

Symbol: A field of black with an indistinct grey face inside it.

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

Governs: Assassins, secrets, shadow, stealth

Domains: Chaos, Death, Trickery

Favoured Weapons: Hand crossbow, short sword

Requirements for Priesthood: Must have at least one level of rogue

Background

Worship of Mu'Ushket is uncommon and his temples few in drow society. The primary reason for this is not his sphere of influence, as drow have no objections to assassinations except when directed at them personally. Rather, Mu'Ushket is an outsider among the gods themselves, or so it is believed.

Though the gods do not speak directly on this, or at least the priests have not conveyed such speech, Mu'Ushket is considered an outsider by the gods of the drow. According to legend, Mu'Ushket was born a mortal drow like any other but, through a life of scheming and stealthy acquisitions, he gained enormous power. Eventually, he chose to tread the perilous path towards godhood and succeeded where all other drow have failed.

This is considered an unlikely claim by many. That Mu'Ushket seems to be an outsider among the gods of the drow pantheon is undeniable, but those who doubt the

mortal roots of the Knife in the Dark believe he is simply another god who has chosen to attach himself to the drow. It is left to Games Masters to decide which of these beliefs, if either, is correct.

Whatever the truth of his origins, it is undeniable that Mu'Ushket has become a force in drow society and is a popular god among some elements of the lower classes. His control over shadows, stealth and secrets make him a natural divinity for assassins and thieves, whose worship he has almost entirely lured away from Kez'Skul the Deceiver. Mu'Ushket seems to return the hostile feelings of the other gods in the drow pantheon, and his cult has no relations with the churches of other deities. Mu'Ushket is protective of his worshippers, and watches them closely.

Religious Observances

There are no formalised rituals or observances involving multiple worshippers in the cult of Mu'Ushket, no sacred occasions on which his followers gather in great numbers. Considering that secrecy is one of the primary interests of Mu'Ushket, this is hardly surprising, as it is difficult to keep a large gathering a secret, especially in drow society.

The Knife in the Dark does accept sacrifices, but not through the usual means. Rather, any act of thievery by a worshipper of Mu'Ushket is considered a sacrifice (provided a portion of the spoils go to the church) and any assassination carried out by a follower of Mu'Ushket is also counted as a sacrifice (again, assuming some portion of the fee goes to the church).

Temples

The cult of Mu'Ushket does not maintain temples in drow cities in the usual sense. That is, there are no imposing edifices towering towards the stalactites, inlaid with holy symbols and proclaiming publicly the strength of the god. A deity of stealth and secrecy has no interest in such an obvious and vulnerable place of worship.

Instead, temples to the Knife in the Dark are maintained in secret. They are located in old cellars, hidden meeting rooms, even out in the Underdeep itself. When worshippers gather, they do so in small groups, never more than a handful, in a meeting place referred to as a Den.

There are persistent rumours of a large temple to Mu'Ushket hidden somewhere in the Underdeep, shrouded perpetually in magical darkness and home to dozens of Knives and priests. Some rumours even claim that an avatar of the



Knife in the Dark abides there, directing his followers on this plane. No attempts to locate this temple have been successful.

Clergy

It is commonly assumed in drow society that Mu'Ushket has no priests in the strictest sense of the word, only thieves, assassins and information brokers who act as his clergy. This is in fact not true, but it is an easy mistake to make.

As stated, the cult of Mu'Ushket maintains no temples (at least none within the bounds of a drow city), which is enough in itself to make many think there are no priests or priestesses. Further, the clergy have no ceremonial vestments of any kind, no visible clothing or insignia to differentiate themselves from any other worshipper of the Knife in the Dark. The clergy of Mu'Ushket do in fact have an emblem which allows them to identify one another, but it is unknown to any outside the clergy itself. The priests all bear a holy symbol of Mu'Ushket, as do many worshippers, but in the symbol borne by the priests, the indistinct face on the field of black has a pair of partially-defined eyes. It is all but impossible to notice for anyone not knowing what to look for (Spot check DC 30) but stands out well enough for the priests to use as a means of identification.

The last thing that makes most drow think there are no true priests of Mu'Ushket is the fact that very few of the clergy begin their careers as priests. Most have spent some part of their lives as thieves or assassins, whether it be a cutpurse lurking in the fetid

alleys of a drow city, an agile burglar robbing blind the Noble Houses or a deadly killer who measures death in gold.

Worshippers

There is, in many ways, little difference between the worshippers and the clergy of Mu'Ushket. The cult attracts thieves and assassins, some of whom will one day become priests and priestesses of the Knife in the Dark.

However, Mu'Ushket's domain of control includes secrecy as well, one thing which is very common throughout all levels of drow culture. Dark elves striving to keep secrets, trying to discover them or even trying to do both may seek out a priest of Mu'Ushket in order to pray for the god's aid. As mentioned earlier, the cult of Mu'Ushket does not maintain large temples in drow cities, making finding a priest a sometimes difficult task, but it is common knowledge that a drow who cannot even uncover the secret of where to find a priest has no hope of finding any help with the Knife in the Dark.

Nazrakoath

Symbol: A simple scale. Sometimes the scale is depicted as empty, but more often it is balanced by a pair of items, one in each tray. Most often, the items are a pair of bloodied daggers.

Alignment: Lawful evil

Governs: Law, vengeance

Domains: Destruction, Law, Strength

Favoured Weapons: Heavy mace, longsword

Requirements for Priesthood: None

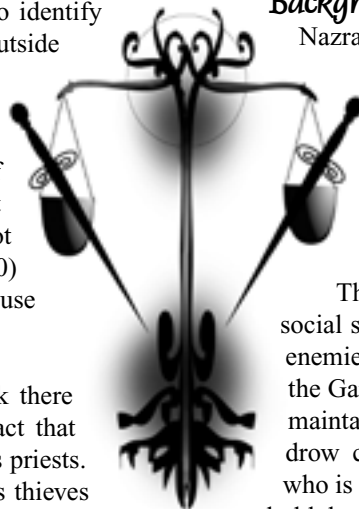
Background

Nazrakoath is the Eternal Judge, the Avenging Fist.

The most lawful of the gods of the drow, Nazrakoath represents not justice but punishment.

The drow are a chaotic people, like all elves, yet all but a small fringe of drow recognise the need for some manner of order in society.

This is maintained in a number of ways, from social standing to banding together against common enemies to the intricate rules and customs the mark the Game of Bones and the Sheathed War. It is also maintained by laws, which vary widely from one drow culture to another, depending entirely upon who is in charge in any given city and which temples hold dominance there.



Additionally, vengeance holds a high place in drow society. The drow are adept at noticing and remembering even the smallest slight against them and while they prefer to reciprocate immediately, they are capable of nurturing thoughts of revenge for years, decades, sometimes even centuries before finally striking. The drow savour revenge as if it were the finest delicacy brought from the surface world and some even consider it an art form.

Nazrakothe the Eternal Judge watches over and nurtures these traits in the drow. He is harsh and uncaring for the plight of his worshippers. His interests lie not in justice leavened with mercy, but in dominance and unflinching punishment, be it for the common thief caught pick pocketing or the caustic noble on whom someone's vengeance finally falls.

Religious Observances

The Avenging Fist is fond of pomp, circumstance and sacrifice. His priests hold daily services in his honour, long ceremonies complete with chanted hymns, incense, prayers and offerings. These services often, but not always, include the sacrifice of a sentient being to the Eternal Judge.

In conjunction with and at the pleasure of the Noble Houses, Nazrakothe's acolytes and clergy are often used as law enforcement in drow cities. This role gives them easy access to those sacrificial victims who would be pleasing to Nazrakothe. In general, the greater the crime of the victim, the more pleased the Avenging Fist is with the sacrifice. The sacrifice of a criminal can be carried out in any number of ways, but most commonly the manner of death chosen has some relation to the crime.

Temples

Temples of Nazrakothe tend to be squat, thick-walled, forbidding structures. Due to the function of the temple within society as the primary tool of law enforcement, these temples are as much courthouses and prisons as places of worship. See page 27 for more information on law and justice in drow society.

In the center of a temple to Nazrakothe is a circular sanctuary used for worship and sacrifice. Leading into this central area are hallways for the use of priests and worshippers and anywhere from two to six courtrooms in which prisoners are tried and sentenced.

Clergy

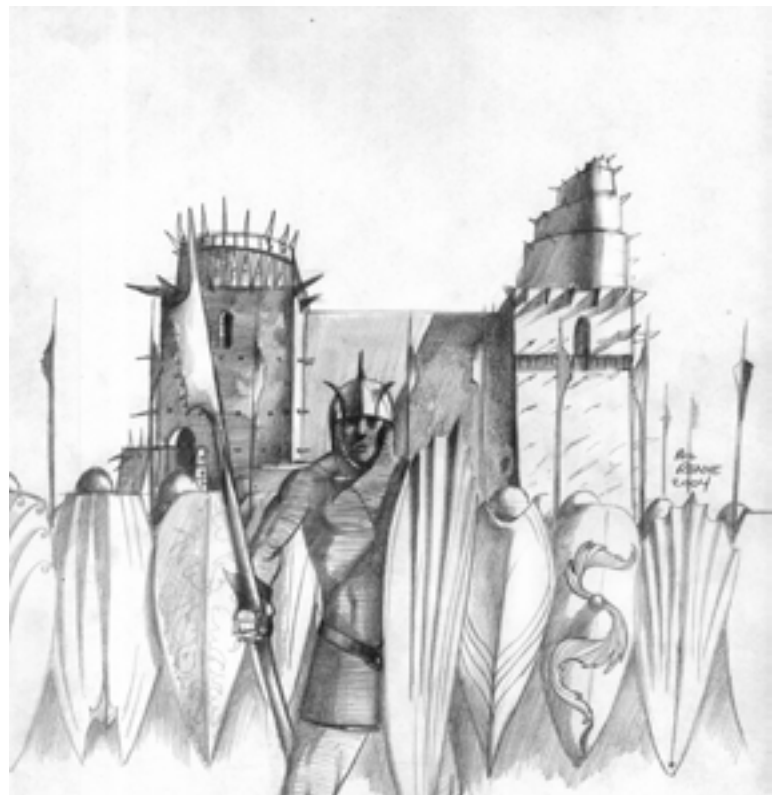
The priests and priestesses of Nazrakothe seldom leave their sombre temples, preferring to send the cult's acolytes out into the streets to enforce the law. They tend to come from the lower rungs of the merchant class or the upper rungs of the lower class. Service to the Eternal Judge is not considered a fitting vocation for noble drow, though it is not completely unknown for a well-born dark elf to devote his life to Nazrakothe.

The majority of the priesthood and the acolytes have some experience with combat, be it as a soldier or as a guard and have the skills necessary to defend themselves against criminals who would rather not be arrested.

The garb of priests and acolytes of Nazrakothe is severe and simple, consisting of a black chain shirt over black na'orsuin breeches and tunic. No member of Nazrakothe's clergy is ever seen unarmed.

Worshippers

Like the clergy, many worshippers of Nazrakothe are drawn from the ranks of soldiers and guards. Guards in particular are drawn to worship of the Eternal Judge, as every criminal taken off the street makes their job that much easier.



Olyet'Naru (The Taskmaster, the Tyrant of the Forge)

Symbol: A pair of drow hands, open as if reaching or grasping for something. Among the Lorgreln, the symbol is entirely different, consisting merely of a cold-wrought iron dagger.

Alignment: Neutral evil

Governs: Craftsmen, smiths

Domains: Earth, Magic, Strength

Favoured Weapons: Light crossbow, warhammer

Requirements for Priesthood: Minimum of four ranks in any Craft skill.

Background

The Taskmaster is a common god among the craftsmen of the drow and is generally well regarded amongst the population as a whole.

According to legend and to the dogma of the church, it was Olyet'Naru who first taught the drow how to survive in the Underdeep; how to build, mine, forge and create what was needed to preserve themselves during their first sojourn in the dark in the many long years of the first goblin war.

The cult of the Taskmaster is responsible for the overall excellent quality of goods produced by the drow. Olyet'Naru has no tolerance for anything less than perfection in the works done by his worshippers and a devout craftsman of the drow will gladly make and remake an item to avoid incurring the wrath of the Tyrant of the Forge. Obviously, this excludes items that are designed to fail, a not-infrequent request from one drow to bestow as a gift on an unsuspecting rival.

The focus of the Taskmaster varies depending upon the drow culture in question. For a culture in which magic is a predominant force, Olyet'Naru is most associated with the difficult task of crafting items able to take an enchantment. Among more militaristic drow cultures, the Lorgreln (see page 107) in particular, the primary representation and association of Olyet'Naru is his guise as the Tyrant of the Forge, a heavily-muscled, cruelly stern drow who is preoccupied with forging the weapons of war and cares little for other crafts.

Olyet'Naru sees the drow as a continuing work in progress, a weapon slowly being forged for the use of the drow pantheon. Beginning with dominance of the

Underdeep, one day that weapon will be unleashed on the surface world.

Religious Observances

Temples of the Taskmaster hold frequent services which are as much an opportunity for the clergy to collect money and offerings from the worshippers as anything else. Most of the true worship of Olyet'Naru is done individually, with craftsmen and smiths offering up a prayer to the Tyrant of the Forge before beginning any new project and offering up prayers again at its successful conclusion.

Offerings of blood are also expected by the Taskmaster. For an average project, such as a smith forging a dagger or a potter spinning a clay jar, the offering is expected to come from the smith or potter himself and is more a symbolic sacrifice than anything else. Using a small blade, the worshipper cuts his arm or hand just enough to create a superficial wound and then lets several drops of blood fall into the stock metal,



unworked clay or whatever other raw material is to be used in creation of this item.

For more important projects, Olyet’Naru demands a more impressive sacrifice. The worshipper informs a priest of the Taskmaster what this project will be and the priest advises the worshipper on what manner of sacrifice will be most pleasing to Olyet’Naru. Most commonly, the needed sacrifice is a slave, who can be bought from the temple and sacrificed to the Taskmaster for the benefit of the worshipper, though which manner of slave is needed depends on the project at hand.

Obviously, this is an expensive process, one beyond the means of many highly-skilled craftsmen. Some of the most skilled and talented drow craftsmen, if unable to find a patron, must settle for a life of creating small and inconsequential items, prevented from finding or soliciting more important work simply because of their inability to purchase the required sacrifices.

Temples

The temples of the Taskmaster vary widely from city to city. Constructed by the local artisans in each area, their exact nature is determined by the skills and focus of the city’s craftsmen. Temples attempt to incorporate the work of all the Taskmaster’s followers, which often leads to an intricate and impressive but somewhat confused-looking building, as masonry, glasswork, pottery and metalwork all compete against one another for dominance. Though garish to outside eyes, the worshippers of Olyet’Naru see it as a demonstration of the wide-ranging power of their god.

As noted earlier, the Lorgreln see Olyet’Naru primarily as the Tyrant of the Forge and his temples among the iron drow reflect this. Metalwork is the dominant theme here, both forged and cold-wrought, from the doors to the altar to the smallest ceremonial implements.

Clergy

The clergy of the Taskmaster are drawn primarily from the merchant and artisan classes of a drow city. They are the most secular of any of the drow religious orders and many of them marry and spend most of their time running their own businesses within the city, coming to the temple to serve in the capacity of the clergy for one day out of five.

The clergy of Olyet’Naru consist of priests and priestesses in roughly equal numbers, except among the Lorgreln, who bar women from the clergy.

Worshippers

Virtually every artisan among the drow devotes at least some of his worship to Olyet’Naru, though most also give worship to Alsythuth the Bloodied Coin.

Polshoath (The Dark Lady of Agony)

Symbol: A split oval within a black circle. The oval represents an egg, the beginning of life, broken open to unleash its occupant into the dark and cruel world of the Underdeep, symbolised by the black circle.

Alignment: Chaotic evil

Governs: Birth, life, pain

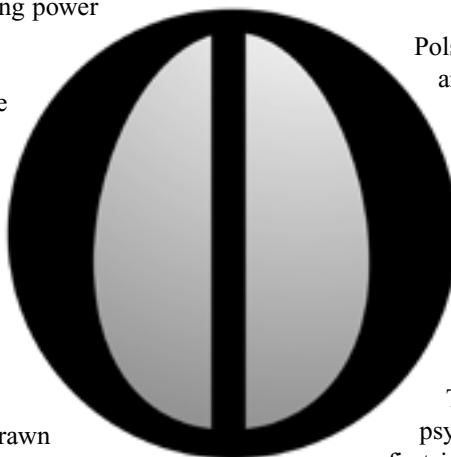
Domains: Chaos, Evil, Water

Favoured Weapons: Javelin, spiked chain

Requirements for Priesthood: Minimum of four ranks in Heal

Background

The Dark Lady of Agony is frequently in conflict with the Dark Mother, as both claim jurisdiction over that most important aspect of drow life - its beginning. Since the Dark Mother gives no credit to any other god in the drow pantheon, the relationship between her cult and the church of Polshoath is poisonous.



Polshoath believes life is and should be pain and hardship and that only through trouble and suffering can strength be found. She is a harsh mother to the drow, displaying none of the cruel protectiveness of the Dark Mother. Rather, she will willingly let them come to any manner of harm that befalls them, on the basis of the belief it will make the race stronger as a result.

This viewpoint feeds directly into drow psychology. Forced into the Underdeep, first in the goblin war and again in the Great Betrayal, the drow have suffered and endured beyond what they ever imagined possible. As a result of this pain and suffering, they have emerged as one of the greatest powers of the Underdeep. The drow still hold to this belief today, though it may be difficult to imagine exactly what pain and suffering is befalling the lord or lady of a Noble House.

The Dark Lady of Agony believes this pain begins at birth, a pain shared by mother and child. Though drow births are easier than those of many other races, they are certainly not without their share of pain and suffering, viewed by Polshoath as an introduction to the pains of life for the newborn and a stern reminder of those pains for the mother.

Religious Observances

Drow who worship Polshoath honour their goddess through sacrifice, pain and offerings to support the church.

Like Belisstim, the temples of the Dark Lady of Agony are frequently the site of orgiastic rituals. However, unlike the cult of the Seducer, these rituals are not devoted to lust or desire, but rather to pain and to procreation at all costs, an ongoing episode of torture and fornication which is designed to bring the drow involved ever closer to Polshoath.

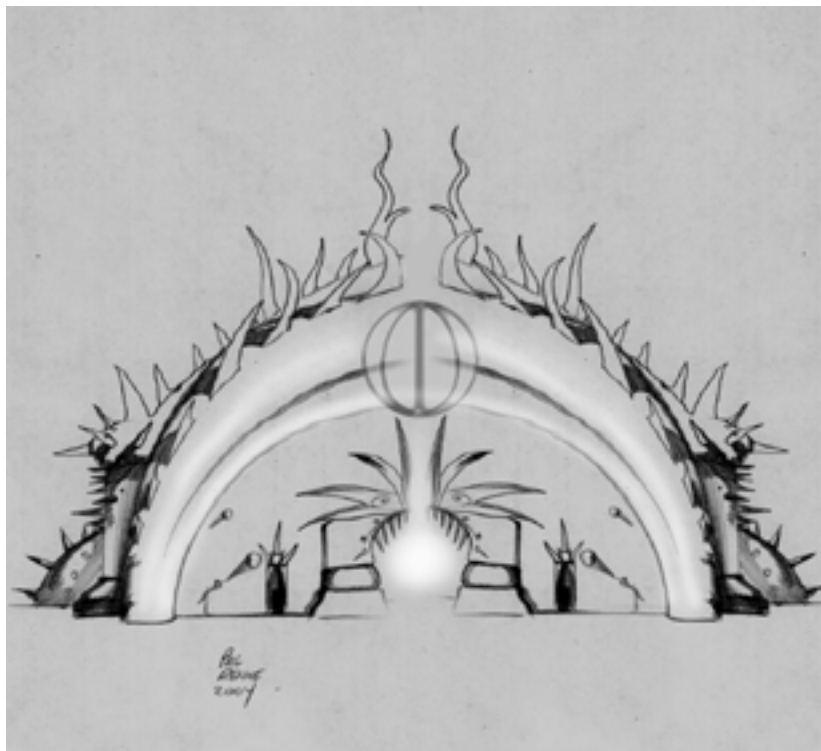
Birth itself is central and sacred to Polshoath and is carried out on an altar to the goddess, offering the pain of mother and child to the Dark Lady and ensuring that the newborn takes his or her first breath in the sight of Polshoath.

Sacrifices and offerings are frequently made to the Dark Lady in hopes of a successful impregnation and may take the form of anything from a ritualised flogging of the supplicant to the sacrifice of a specially-prepared slave to the goddess.

Temples

On the outside, the temples of Polshoath are made up of hard edges and sharp corners, squat, hulking buildings ringed with spikes and seemingly devoid of grace. On the inside, that pattern continues, with the addition of bright light in multiple areas, bright enough to cause the drow pain. To the drow, the entire structure appears uncomfortable and that is indeed the intent.

For the goddess who believes pain is the fire that will forge the drow into the mightiest race in the world, it would hardly do to have her worshippers relaxing in comfort while at one of her temples. Indeed, pain is thought to draw the drow nearer to the Dark Lady of Agony. In addition to the bright light and disquieting architecture, all areas of her temples (aside from utilitarian areas like storerooms) feature devices and implements for inflicting pain, either on oneself or on another.



Clergy

The clergy of Polshoath is primarily, but not exclusively, female. Unlike the cult of the Dark Mother, the necessity and worth of the males of the race is acknowledged but as they are, obviously, incapable of giving birth, they are not as well-esteemed in the eyes of the Dark Lady of Agony as are the females.

However, pain affects all drow equally and improves all drow equally. It is in this aspect of Polshoath that most of the males come to the clergy.

The priests and priestesses of Polshoath are recruited from all classes of drow society, though most do come from the upper classes. Still, the more of the ecstasy of their goddess the drow are able to bear, the higher they will climb in the clergy and it is not unknown for a priestess born in the back alleys of a city to rise to such a level she can claim absolute obedience from those members of the clergy born to pampered luxury.

Worshippers

Like the clergy, worshippers of Polshoath come from all levels of society. The constant need of the drow to replenish their population provides a continuous drive for drow of all stripes to see the services of the temples of the Dark Lady of Agony.

Thraud (The Pitiless Blade)

Symbol: A cleft shield. This is sometimes used as the entire symbol of Thraud the Pitiless, but often is complemented by scenes of battle in which the cleft shield stands as the central element.

Alignment: Lawful evil

Governs: Combat, conflict, soldiers, war

Domains: Death, Destruction, War

Favoured Weapons: Longspear, longsword, composite shortbow

Requirements for Priesthood: Must have at least one level of fighter

Background

Thraud is the epitome of the drow warrior. Deadly and merciless, he cares nothing for honour or fair play and expects the same from the warriors who worship him. All that matters is the destruction of the enemy and the iron discipline required of soldiers in order to achieve victory.

The Pitiless Blade is equal parts deadly warrior and shrewd strategist. Though the chaotic nature of the drow cries out for them to throw themselves on their enemies in a raging storm of steel and spells, Thraud has taught them that the path to victory is paved with rigid discipline and planning.

Thraud is quite proud of the drow, a race of chaotic creatures with little knowledge of war who have become, under his worship, one of the greatest powers of the Underdeep and indeed a race whose armies are feared throughout the world. In particular, he is extremely proud of the Lorgreln, the Iron Drow (see page 107), who through unyielding discipline and determination overcame tremendous odds to become some of the finest warriors in the Underdeep.

This pride is not enough to make the Pitiless Blade forgive any lapses on the part of the drow, however. A drow soldier who fails in his duty is hateful to Thraud and a warrior who deserts or shows cowardice before the enemy is doomed to a long, slow death when caught.

Religious Observances

Before going into battle, drow soldiers offer both prayers and a few drops of their own blood to Thraud, spilled on the ground as a sacrifice to him and in hopes there will be no more of their own blood lost that day.

Most drow sing hymns to the Pitiless Blade when marching into battle, hymns that continue even once the battle is joined. The Lorgreln, devout worshippers of Thraud though they are, do not sing as they enter the fray. Rather, they march to the beat of enormous drums carried at the rear of their force, drums with a deep, penetrating roll so low it is almost more a sensation than a sound.

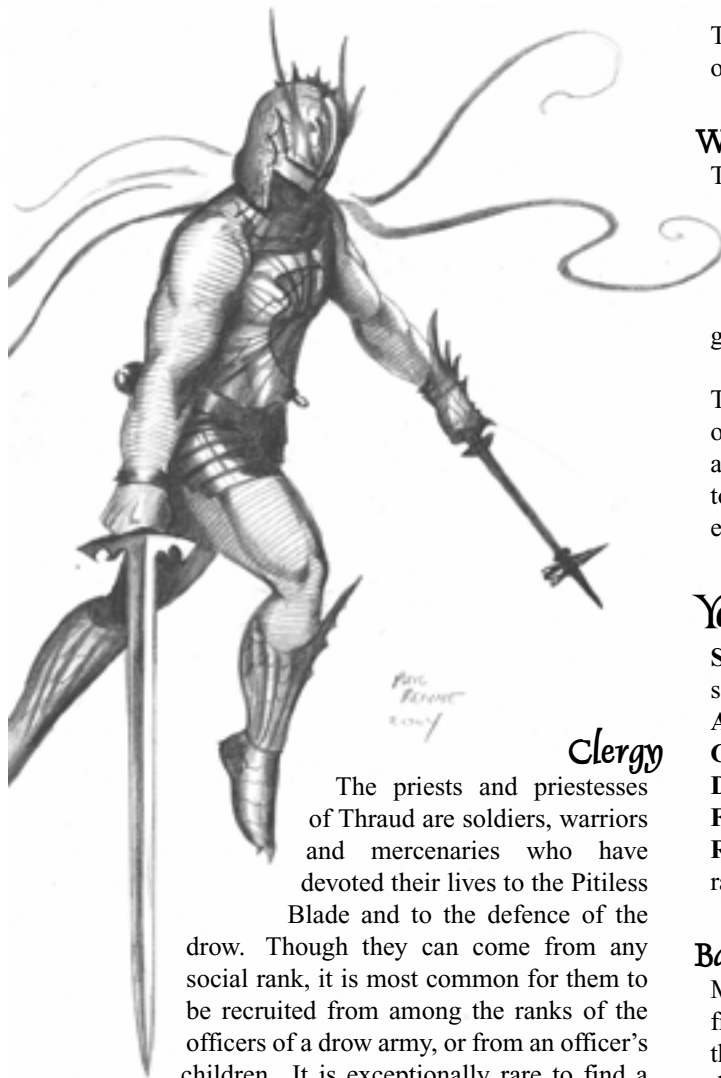
Following a victory in battle, the drow make offerings to Thraud in the form of prisoners taken and spoils won. If there are no prisoners, which is sometimes the case as few people are so foolish as to voluntarily surrender to the drow, the bodies of the highest-ranking enemy commanders are offered up to the Pitiless Blade. The sacrifices are piled on the altar (or, if the battle took place far from any drow city, on a large, flat rock) and burned. The Lorgreln, again, deviate from the common practice here. Trapped for so long in areas of the Underdeep with scarcely enough fresh air to support a few small cooking fires, the practice of burning sacrifices to Thraud was abandoned out of necessity.

Having forsaken fire as a means of sacrifice, the Lorgreln instead use the cold-wrought iron dagger that is ubiquitous to their culture, slitting the throat of enemy commanders on an altar to the Pitiless Blade. This is only done with commanders for all lesser enemy soldiers are enslaved, either doomed to years of working the mines of the Iron Drow or to a much shorter existence in gladiatorial contests.

Temples

Whether among normal drow or among the Lorgreln, temples to Thraud tend to do double duty as fortresses. Usually sited at the edge of a drow city, the temple is both a place of worship and a bulwark of defence against any invader.

Often, a temple of the Pitiless Blade is not so much constructed as it is gouged out of the stone on one or both sides of the entry to a drow cavern, creating a honeycomb of billets, armouries, storerooms, mess halls and, of course, a sanctuary. Stretched between the two sides of the entrance to the cavern is a wall of thick stone pierced with a single gate and fortified, like the fortress temples themselves, with dozens of spells and enchantments. These temples are often home not just to the priests and acolytes, but often to hundreds of drow soldiers as well.



Clergy

The priests and priestesses of Thraud are soldiers, warriors and mercenaries who have devoted their lives to the Pitiless Blade and to the defence of the drow. Though they can come from any social rank, it is most common for them to be recruited from among the ranks of the officers of a drow army, or from an officer's children. It is exceptionally rare to find a scion of a Noble House as a priest of Thraud,

just as it is rare to find the children of the lowest classes among the clergy.

The priests of Thraud are charged primarily with preparing the drow for battle and doing all that can be done to assure victory. Though they are skilled at healing, it is seen only as a tool to get a drow soldier back on his feet and back to the fighting.

The clergy of Thraud wear vestments that look as if they were designed to be worn into battle, which is indeed the case. The ceremonial garb of a priest of the Pitiless Blade consists of a burnished breastplate emblazoned with the cleft shield emblem of Thraud, a steel cap and a longsword.

Among most drow, the priesthood of Thraud is open to both males and females.



The Lorgreln, unsurprisingly, restrict the priesthood to men only.

Worshippers

The vast majority of worshippers of Thraud are soldiers, mercenaries, guards and others who make their living with the edge of their blade. This accounts for a significant percentage of the drow population, making the Pitiless Blade one of the most popularly worshipped gods among the drow.

Though Thraud has no specific interest in the ins and outs of the Game of Bones or the Sheathed War (see page 88), an increasing number of players in that game have begun to seek the blessings of the Pitiless Blade upon their endeavours.

Ydrillia (She of the Veil)

Symbol: An open book, its spine turned towards the viewer so the contents of the pages are hidden.

Alignment: Neutral evil

Governs: Knowledge, learning, magic, wisdom

Domains: Knowledge, Magic

Favoured Weapons: Quarterstaff, hand crossbow

Requirements for Priesthood: Must have at least four ranks each in Knowledge (arcana) and Spellcraft.

Background

Magic is an essential part of the drow, reflected in everything from the innate spell abilities with which they are born to the affinity they have for mastering magics both arcane and divine.

Ydrillia is the goddess of knowledge and magic in drow society, two things widely regarded as the most powerful weapons a dark elf may have at his side. It is thought in the cult of Ydrillia that She of the Veil is responsible for gifting the drow with their tremendous abilities and talents for magic.

Ydrillia is devoted to furthering the knowledge and magical ability of the drow, but not through any additional gifts granted without effort on the part of the dark elves. As evidenced by her symbol, of an open book with its spine turned towards the viewer to hide whatever is on the pages, She of the Veil makes the knowledge available, but the drow must work to learn it. Spurred on by the twin drives to further their knowledge and please their goddess,

worshippers of Ydrillia have mastered incredible feats of magic.

She of the Veil holds herself aloof from the other gods of the drow pantheon and does not involve herself in the eternal internecine warfare of the drow. Her focus is and always has been completely directed towards the knowledge and magic of her dark elf worshippers.

The theory that Ydrillia is the wellspring from which the innate spell abilities of the dark elves flow has slowly been falling out of favour since the drow re-established contact with the Lost Tribe of the Sulzthul (see page 125), who worship no gods at all but still have innate spell abilities. She of the Veil is not so generous as to bestow gifts upon those who not only do not worship her, but actively spurn her.

Religious Observances

The majority of the worship of Ydrillia is relatively sedate and simple, hymns and prayers said in her name before the worshippers turn their attention to those things of true value to She of the Veil - research and study.

This is not to say that Ydrillia does not demand sacrifice, as she does. The priests and priestesses of the Lady of the Veil demand her worshippers make a sacrifice or pay a monetary offering four times a year in order to maintain the goddess' favour upon their endeavours, whether it be researching a new spell or trying to learn new information about a rival Noble House.

The most remarkable aspect of worship for Ydrillia is a form of sacrifice known as *lifebinding*, in which a spellcaster attempting to create a magical item sacrifices the lives of one or more victims on an altar to Ydrillia, partially negating the experience point cost of the item's creation. More information about *lifebinding* can be found on page 188.

Temples

The temples of She of the Veil are small buildings, isolated from the remainder of the city by a succession of walls, guards and spells. Considering the small and specialised congregations, they are as much a wizard's laboratory and library as they are a temple. The interior of one of these temples consists of multiple isolated rooms for private study, with a larger sanctuary for worship at the back of



the building. The luxurious quarters of the clergy are usually located beneath the temple itself, in a long series of galleries magically dug from the stone. Deeper still, safely isolated behind yards of magically reinforced stone, are the summoning chambers.

Clergy

Most of the priests and priestesses of Ydrillia are multiclassed individuals, having taken up the path of the priest after beginning their careers as a wizard or sorcerer. This is not always the case, however, and anyone with the necessary power and knowledge who is willing to take the oaths and tests required may petition to become a member of the clergy of She of the Veil. The clergy of Ydrillia are among the least devoted of any drow god, not out of scorn for the goddess, but because many of them hold the pursuit of personal power or knowledge as their primary motivation.

Worshippers

Worshippers of Ydrillia are relatively few by comparison to the other gods of the drow, but what they lack in numbers they compensate for with magical strength. She of the Veil is worshipped by the arcane spellcasters of drow society, the sorcerers and wizards of minor or mighty power.

Azzanoth (The Glutton)

Symbol: A fang-filled mouth, usually scratched out in blood.

Alignment: Chaotic evil

Governs: Feral drow, cruelty, gluttony, necromancy

Domains: Chaos, Death, Evil

Favoured Weapons: Scimitar, shortspear, shortbow

Requirements for Priesthood: Must be born into the ruling class of the Kanahraun

Background

Azzanoth the Glutton is not a part of the drow pantheon at all. He is a demon lord from the infernal planes, whose attention was attracted by the Lost Tribe of the Kanahraun (see page 100) in the days after the Sundering.

Entwining himself among the Kanahraun after rescuing them from a slow but certain death, Azzanoth has made this band of dark elves a hobby of his. The prices he exacted for his aid, prices about which the Kanahraun foolishly did not inquire before accepting help, have turned the tribe into a subrace of feral drow, dangerous and depraved.

Azzanoth no longer lives among the Kanahraun. Indeed, that period was relatively brief and has been over for millennia but its influence is still felt, from the fiendish traits he passed on to the offspring he fathered upon the drow to the cannibalistic rituals with which the feral drow revere their demon lord.

Religious Observances

The Kanahraun worship the Glutton with a variety of rites which no outsider has ever seen and survived. Most of the rituals involve literally slaughtering and eating a victim alive, gifting the flesh to Azzanoth but at the same time taking sustenance from it, in deference to the Glutton's First Price. The least debased of the rituals are concerned with scarring and disfiguring one's own body in praise to Azzanoth, while the worst involve consuming the flesh of the undead.

Temples

There are few permanent temples to Azzanoth, as the Kanahraun are a nomadic people, prowling the Underdeep and hunting for food. Those temples which do exist, such as in the Kanahraun city of Gauth Sheol, are made almost entirely of bones taken from the feral drow's victims and melded together as part of a process taught to the Kanahraun

by Azzanoth that is known as boneforging (see page 186 for more information). The temples are constantly being added to and augmented, growing ever outward and upward with no thought given to form and creating a meaningless shape of chaos that Azzanoth finds more pleasing than any planned structure. The inside is built of a combination of stone as well as more bone, containing rooms of all sizes and dimensions.

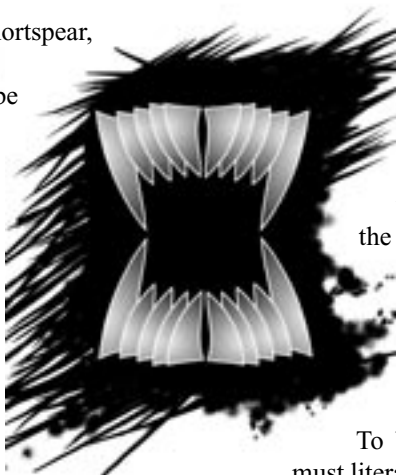
In front of the temple is an enormous altar of bone, on which the major sacrifices are made and feasts taken. In the deepest parts of the temple, however, is the area where the ruling class, the descendants of Azzanoth practice their own rituals, in rooms with walls of undead bone that grasp and scrape in constant pain.

Clergy

To be a priest or priestess of Azzanoth, one must literally be born to it. The Glutton only accepts those Kanahraun descended from his fiendish offspring as his priests.

Worshippers

Worship of Azzanoth is nonexistent outside of the Kanahraun, but within the clans of feral drow, it is the only religion and is vigorously adhered to by every Kanahraun.



Vermthizzl (The Light in the Deep)

Symbol: None

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral (with evil tendencies)

Governs: Deep drow, fire, humour, trickery

Domains: Chaos, Fire, Trickery

Favoured Weapons: Light pick, scimitar, spiked chain

Requirements for Priesthood: Must be chosen by the priesthood and pass a series of tests administered by the priesthood.

Background

Vermthizzl, the Light in the Deep, is actually just a false face created by Kez'Skul, the Trickster.

Before the end of the goblin war, when worship of the drow pantheon was growing to crowd out worship of the old elven pantheon in drow society, one clan that refused to give up worship of the elven Allfather broke off from the rest of the drow, determined to find a way around the goblins and back to the surface. After years of wandering through the previously unknown terrors and dangers of the Underdeep, their faith was waning. The Trickster had never stopped watching this clan of drow and, as their faith was at its ebb and they found themselves huddling in terror from the shangu at the bottom of the Underdeep, he appeared to them in the form of a flame.

The drow took this to be a manifestation of the Allfather, and the Trickster did nothing to disabuse them of this notion. They gladly worshipped him, and he urged them to remain hidden deep beneath the world, where eventually they became the Pol'Tah, the deep drow (see page 115). Slowly, the Trickster weaned the Pol'Tah away from the few tenets of the Allfather they still maintained, introducing them to a new religion he literally created as he went along. Never in all the long millennia since that day has he revealed himself for what he is, but the Pol'Tah have long since forgotten the name of Allfather, believing they have always worshipped Vermthizzl, the Light in the Deep. The practices of this religion, which the deep drow truly believe has not changed, would be abhorrent to the Allfather, which only makes this millennia-long joke on the deep drow all the funnier, at least from the perspective of the Trickster.

Still, the joke is beginning to grow stale for Kez'Skul. He has not yet abandoned the Pol'Tah, nor would he ever reveal the truth to them, but he has grown desirous for some kind of change to make his aspect as Vermthizzl entertaining again.



Religious Observances

Vermthizzl demands sacrifice but since the Pol'Tah have, until quite recently, had no contact with any intelligent race other than occasional battles with the shangu, they have had to sacrifice their own to keep the Light in the Deep burning. Every year, 16 children are chosen from the deep drow. Eight are chosen to enter the priesthood; eight others are kept in tiny cages within the temple, to be publicly sacrificed throughout the year.

Temples

There is only one temple to Vermthizzl, in the deep drow city of Drez Khelim. It is a featureless block of stone, the interior of which is forbidden to any not of the priesthood.

Clergy

As noted earlier, the priests of Vermthizzl choose 16 children at random from the population of the Pol'Tah. Eight of these children become sacrifices to the Light in the Deep; the other eight enter the priesthood.

Worshippers

All of the deep drow are worshippers of Vermthizzl. There is no other god in the society of the Pol'Tah.

Deity	Symbol	Alignment	Governs	Domains	Favoured Weapon	Worshippers
<i>Alsythuth</i>	Black coin with bloody edges	CE	Commerce, raiding, trade	Chaos, Luck, Travel	Quarterstaff, sling	Drow
<i>Azzanoth</i>	A fang-filled mouth	CE	Feral drow, cruelty, gluttony, necromancy	Chaos, Death, Evil	Scimitar, shortspear, shortbow	Kanahraun (The Feral Drow)
<i>Belishtim</i>	A heart impaled on a black blade	CE	Ambition, desire, lust	Air, Chaos, Trickery	Darts, rapier	Drow
<i>The Dark Mother</i>	A black spider on a silver web	CE	Death, destruction, drow, fate	Chaos, Death, Evil, Protection	Flails, whips	Drow
<i>Kez'Skul</i>	A single flame flanked by two opposing and intricate symbols which seem reversed images of each other	CN	Fire, humour, trickery	Chaos, Fire, Trickery	Dagger, sap, sling	Drow
<i>Mu'Ushket</i>	A field of black with an indistinct grey face inside it	CN	Assassins, secrets, shadow, stealth	Chaos, Death, Trickery	Hand crossbow, short sword	Drow
<i>Nazrakoth</i>	A simple scale	LE	Law, vengeance	Destruction, Law, Strength	Heavy mace, longsword	Drow
<i>Olyet'Naru</i>	A pair of drow hands, open as if reaching or grasping for something. Among the Lorgreln, the symbol consists merely of a cold-wrought iron dagger.	NE	Craftsmen, smiths	Earth, Magic, Strength	Light crossbow, war hammer	Drow and Lorgreln (The Iron Drow)
<i>Polshoath</i>	A split oval within a black circle	CE	Birth, life, pain	Chaos, Evil, Water	Spiked chain	Drow
<i>Thraud</i>	A cleft shield	LE	Combat, conflict, soldiers, war	Death, War, Destruction	Longspear, longsword, composite shortbow	Drow and Lorgreln (The Iron Drow)
<i>Vermthizzl</i>	None	CN	Deep drow, fire, humour, trickery	Chaos, Fire, Trickery	Light pick, scimitar, spiked chain	Pol'Tah (The Deep Drow)
<i>Ydrillia</i>	An open book, its spine turned towards the viewer so the contents of the pages are hidden	NE	Knowledge, learning, magic, wisdom	Knowledge, Magic	Quarterstaff, hand crossbow	Drow



The Noble Houses

Religion plays an extremely important role in the lives of drow from every walk of life, but it is not the sole driving force behind dark elf society and culture. Equally important are the Noble Houses of the drow, tribes and clans that have accumulated great power, immense wealth or most commonly both throughout the course of drow history.

The drow as a race are extremely chaotic and highly individualistic, which is reflected in the disparity of their cultures. While one drow city may be completely (or very nearly so) under the control of a religious sect (*Sheoloth – City of the Drow* is an outstanding example of such a city), other cities may have a more or less equal sharing of power, while still others may be all but completely secular. There have been many attempts throughout the history of the drow to unite the race under one government, be it religious or secular. All have ended in blood and failure. Generally speaking, however, the Noble Houses are the most constant power throughout the lands of the drow.

In the time of the Sundering, the drow were scattered throughout the Underdeep. Most of these groups were isolated and alone, unsure if any others of their race even survived the terrible trap of the wrath of their surface cousins and the horror of the shangu. For centuries, even millennia, the different groups of drow struggled for survival. At first they clung to life in crumbling caverns, living on dripping water and whatever fungus they could scrounge, then slowly carved out a place for themselves in the Underdeep, paying whatever price survival demanded until they at last became a power of the depths in their own right.

The long lives of elves mean change comes slowly to elven cultures, but it does come. This holds true for the drow as well. Separated from one another by the mapless maze of the Underdeep and all the nightmarish perils it held, uncertain if indeed any other drow had survived the Sundering, the different tribes of drow all created their own cultures and ways of life. For four of these groups, the Lost Tribes of the drow, the changes wrought by internal and external pressures were so great they are no longer truly considered drow at all, but are instead thought of as sub-races of the drow. Though the changes undergone by other scattered groups of drow were less profound, they were still significant enough to be felt today. Whether by scarcity or abundance of resources, relations with other races or the ascendancy of one god from the drow pantheon above the others, each of these far-flung tribes of drow adapted to the Underdeep in their own way. Eventually, all of the scattered

groups of drow felt their way back to one another, with the exception of the four groups known as the Lost Tribes – at least, that is what the drow currently believe, though there may well be more clans of drow out there somewhere in the eternal night of the Underdeep.

As these scattered drow found each other one by one, they did not meet one another with the open arms of long-lost friends, but with the caution and suspicion of strangers, traits that had been tempered in the fires of the Underdeep. Disagreements, misunderstandings and outright violence were not uncommon, as each group sought to claim dominance over the others based on religion, money, resources or simple arrogance. For a time, it seemed the drow might very well destroy one another, the entire race like a powder keg rolling towards an open flame.

In time, however, the likelihood of open warfare between the drow faded. The advice of cooler heads, the benefits of trade and the fears of the enemy outside overruled the conflicts within. Many of these conflicts were fomented by the priesthoods of the drow gods, each of which hoped to supplant the others and achieve supremacy for their respective deities among all the drow. However, some of the Noble Houses saw that warfare could not only cost them everything they had gained, but might well weaken the drow to the point their enemies could destroy the race entirely. It would be too much to say the Noble Houses worked together, but they did all work towards a common goal, to thwart the temples' drive towards war. Helping them behind the scenes was the relatively new order known as the Seekers of na'Koth (see page 79). It is conjectured it was during this time that the Game of Bones first began, as the Houses sought to out-manoeuvre the temples and assure their own supremacy.

The Noble Houses, for their part, dreamed of empire no less than did the temples, but harsh reality forced them all to shelve, though not abandon, those dreams. The idea of a unified drow people proved impossible for the simple reason that supreme rulership of the entire race was the only position acceptable to dozens of disparate factions. Though forming a single nation or culture of drow was no more possible then than it is now, allegiance to the race and the influence of the Noble Houses was enough to create a sort of guarded peace.

Eventually, the drumbeats of war began to fall silent, though the drow were still fractured. Instead of unification, the tribes and clans of drow scattered in the Sundering



of violent coups in which every faction with any power at all made its play for leadership of the tribe. By the time the scattered bands of drow began to seek one another out at last, the constant violence of various factions vying for control had ebbed.

Today, the Noble Houses vie with the priesthoods as the closest thing there is to a unifying factor in the drow. The various nations and tribes of the drow are tied together with a web of commerce and tentative alliances, much as is the case with many of the races on the surface world.


The drow concept of a House differs somewhat from how surface races would define the term. For example, the drow differentiate between a House and a Noble House, though the second is always part of the first. A House of the drow is a large group of dark elves, often numbering well into the hundreds or even thousands. The long life spans of the dark elves give them literally centuries to reproduce. Though reproduction is slow, this long window of opportunity makes up for it and tends to generate an intricate web of siblings, cousins and myriad other relations. Obviously, it is impossible for such a large number of people to hold the reins of power, which is where the Noble House comes in. The Noble House is that segment of the House with all the power and all the control, usually a single small family. Yet the cousins of that family, also members of the greater House, may be toiling away in the lower rungs of society,

remained separate, retaining their own societies and power structures while very slowly re-establishing ties to their rediscovered kin. Thus the drow remain; a people divided by time, distance and culture, but sharing such bonds as race, common defence against the other denizens of the Underdeep and above all, the dream of vengeance upon the hated betrayers in the world above.

Even in the time before the Sundering, the various clans and tribes of drow were led by Noble Houses. Though the Sundering changed many things, it did not change this. Some of the scattered tribes still had a Noble House with them immediately after the Sundering, a group of drow that clung ferociously to whatever power was left to them. Others had no Noble Houses among their number at all, a situation that was soon rectified either by the priesthood of one god or another seizing control and anointing a faithful group of followers as the nominal leaders, or by a series

with little hope of anything better and certainly no hope of any help from their wealthy cousins. This example is extreme, of course, and as a general rule, drow who can claim membership in a House enjoy an elevated social standing within that particular drow nation or culture, often occupying positions within the lower nobility or the merchant and artisan classes. Many of the tribes of drow scattered in the Sundering have become almost entirely members of one of more Houses, the long years of marriage and reproduction yielding a network of relations more intricate and criss-crossed than a spider's web.

It is a common misperception by those outside the race that the drow are all alike, each boasting identical (or very nearly so) powers and abilities. Once, millennia ago, this was true, but the Sundering and the time spent in the Underdeep has changed that. Though hardly changed as much as the four Lost Tribes, many Houses of drow have diverged in some small ways from the common conception



of the dark elves. The details of these deviations from the drow 'norms' can be found in the description for each of the Houses listed below.

Many of these changes may be passed on even to drow outside the House. In any drow city, the culture and society are dominated by the Houses that rule, particularly in those cities under the control of a single House. Drow from outside the House are naturally inclined to emulate their betters, practicing as well as they may the same crafts and habits of the drow of the House.

The role the Houses play in drow society is complex and governed by a wide variety of circumstances specific to any given culture or city. Several Houses, notably Arras'zur, Narrishtah and Zhakhun, are quite large and exist as powers in multiple drow cities, while others confine their operations to a single location on which they maintain a fierce grip. In some situations, the Houses will sometimes act as proxies for the temples, while in others the temples will grudgingly do the bidding of the Houses. The dominant social force varies from city to city and Games Masters have free rein to set the power levels of the temples and Houses as best fits the campaign.

The Noble Houses and the cults of the drow share power unwillingly and just as there is conflict among the churches, so too is there conflict among the Houses. Over the years, this internecine warfare of the Houses has come to be called the Game of Bones, or the Sheathed War, and it is a mark of just how much enmity exists between the Houses that they cannot even agree on the name of the conflict that endlessly divides them. Complete rules and a full description of this ongoing and eternal struggle can be found on page 88.

Though some of Noble Houses are quite old, proudly tracing their roots back to the time of the Sundering and before, this is not always the case. Other Houses are quite young, having risen to supplant older Houses that had grown weak and careless in their decadence. There is always resistance from the surviving older Houses to the acceptance of such upstarts into their ranks, but provided the new House has the power necessary to hold its newly acquired position and continues to be successful at the Game of Bones, acceptance will eventually come.

Listed below are ten of the most powerful Noble Houses of the drow. At the end of each description is a list of House features, skills and abilities.

House Features: This lists the natural bonuses and penalties that accrue to any drow of that House. These cost the drow character nothing, they are merely the effects of growing up in the culture of that particular House. These

features are in addition to normal drow traits, though in some cases they may enhance or negate a specific drow trait. As well as these features, it is worth noting that membership of a House brings other benefits and penalties, from the network of resources and contacts provided to the often inconvenient or dangerous demands placed on a drow in the service of their House.

House Skills: These are the prevalent skills learned and practiced by drow of that House. A drow character of the House always treats these skills as class skills.

Favoured Class: This is the most common character class to be found in that House of the drow and replaces the default favoured drow class of wizard or cleric.

Predominant Alignment: This is the alignment adhered to by the majority of drow of that House.

Predominant Religion: This is the god most commonly worshipped by drow of that House.

House Arras'zur and House Narrishtah


House Arras'zur and House Narrishtah are perhaps more responsible than any other drow for the reputation of the dark elves on the surface world, as well as the many misperceptions those in the sunlit lands hold regarding the drow.

Background

Two of the largest Houses at the time of the Sundering, House Arras'zur and House Narrishtah managed to escape the hosts of shangu and vengeful surface elves by fighting a slow retreat through the unknown passages of the Underdeep, rather than simply fleeing as did so many of the dark elves. So deadly were the shangu and so wrathful were the surface elves however, that even the combined forces of House Arras'zur and House Narrishtah could not stand against them.

Fortunately for the drow, they were able to slip out from between the two hosts of enemies, retreating away through the Underdeep while leaving just enough forces in combat to keep the enemies coming from both sides, ensuring that the hated cousins who betrayed them would run headlong into the alien menace marching up out of the depths of the world. This ploy cost the two Houses many of their finest warriors, but it was successful. In the trackless paths of the Underdeep, the betrayers of the surface met the shangu, the scaled abomination of the depths, and were forced to flee back to the lands of the sun.

In an attempt to cut off any pursuit by their enemies, the drow worked their most powerful magics and collapsed tunnels and caverns in their wake, filling the air around them



with choking dust. There was some concern about finding the other tribes of drow who had been scattered when the dark elves were caught between the surface elves and the shangu, but these were trumped by the concerns of House Arras'zur and House Narrishtah for their own survival. Satisfied at last that the job was done as the dust settled, the drow of these two great Houses, numbering well into the thousands even after the horrid losses of battle, collapsed in exhaustion amid the dry stone and billowing dust.

The drow knew little of the powers of the shangu however, or of the forces they could bring to bear. The ogre slaves of the shangu were busily clearing away the crumbled stone and digging new paths through the Underdeep, flogged ever onward by the desire of their masters to reach the two Houses, the greatest prize of breeding stock and slaves that had narrowly escaped their grasp.

The drow of House Arras'zur and House Narrishtah were taken unawares by this newest assault. Still reeling from their losses in the first meeting with the shangu mere days before and with many of their warriors lost in the scheme to bring the shangu and surface betrayers together to destroy one another, the exhausted drow were unable to mount a defence against the renewed attack. They fled into the Underdeep, a leaderless, frightened rabble with the shangu and their minions close on their heels.

The drow feared escape was impossible this time, that the two great Houses would be destroyed and consumed by this unimagined terror from the depths of the Underdeep. Desperate and terrified, they called out to their gods for deliverance from their enemies, and their prayers were answered. Ahead of the fleeing drow, the tunnel they ran through began to widen, silvery wisps of spider webs drifting and wafting through the air. The passageway grew ever broader, until the foremost of the drow saw, at the limits of their vision, a solid wall of spider webs sealing off the tunnel. Some began to panick, afraid that they had been trapped, but the more faithful continued forward, trampling the doubters, and the thick mesh of webs parted before them.

The drow found themselves in the first of a series of enormous caverns, glowing with the light of luminous fungus and resounding with the rush of water through an underground river. Spider webs festooned the walls and hung thickly from the ceiling and everywhere there was movement as the children of the Dark Mother scurried about to carry out her will. The shangu did not falter in their pursuit, undeterred by the prospect of mere spiders standing in their way. However, the drow that had been their prey were bolstered now with renewed hope and faith in the strength and power of their goddess, and with

hordes of arachnids gathering around them, they stood their ground in the face of the assault. As the enemy herded their slave-beasts forwards into the caverns and the battle began in earnest, swarms of spiders of all sizes rushed to meet the attackers. Mighty shangu leaders wrestled with giant, bloated webspinners as the remaining drow warriors cut through the beleaguered ogres and abominations, the magical webs of the Dark Mother's sanctuary hampering the invaders but letting the drow pass without obstacle. Soon the assault had been repelled and the shangu thrown back in defeat, and now the survivors found that *they* were the hunted, with innumerable spiders dogging their footsteps as they fled. Few shangu ever returned from those caverns, and many of the drow families of House Arras'zur and House Narrishtah still keep a shangu skull as a treasured heirloom of that day.

With the shangu gone, the drow gave thanks to the Dark Mother for their deliverance from the enemy. Some drow were not sufficiently grateful however, clinging instead to their devotions to the other gods of the drow and only mouthing the words of gratitude and supplication to the Dark Mother. The faithful drow called on the Dark Mother again and now the spiders infesting these caverns began to hunt among the dark elves, culling the faithless from the faithful and hanging the poisoned, screaming heretics in webbed cocoons from the ceiling beside the bloated corpses of the shangu and ogres upon which the vermin still feasted. Some few of the faithless fled the caverns before the spiders could come for them, but the dangers of the Underdeep soon overcame them.

The battles with the surface elves and shangu had depleted the numbers of the drow, as had the Dark Mother's culling of the heretical drow. House Arras'zur and House Narrishtah were large Houses however, and there were still several thousand drow between them when the last of the faithless was fed to the spiders. Convinced they were safe at last behind this screen of the Dark Mother's children, the drow of both Houses began to construct their new home, which would one day become the webbed city of Drak'kamuth.

The first construction to begin, before homes or fortifications or storehouses, was a temple to the Dark Mother. This early building still stands as part of the enormous temple complex in Drak'kamuth devoted to the Dark Mother.

House Arras'zur and House Narrishtah both had priests among their number and the peace that followed the war was soon broken by the two Houses contesting which of them would be in control of the burgeoning priesthood of the Dark Mother. This desire of the ruling families of each House to dominate her priestesses was insulting to the Dark Mother, who sent a plague of venomous spiders

into the homes of the rulers of House Narrishtah to slay some of the impertinent drow and provide an object lesson to the others. From that time onward, the priestesses of the Dark Mother have been held separate from the Houses of the drow in Drak'kamuth.

The plague of spiders sent by the Dark Mother was sufficient to bring the battle over control of the priestesses to a swift and sudden end, but in no way did it blunt the growing competition and distrust between the two Houses. However, it did instil a sufficient amount of fear that the priestesses of the Dark Mother were able to slowly bring the two Houses under their influence. Both House Arras'zur and House Narrishtah still wield tremendous power in Drak'kamuth, but long habit and experience have taught them to pay careful heed to the words of the priestesses.



The drow of House Arras'zur and House Narrishtah longed for vengeance upon the surface elves as much as did any drow, but even their hatred of the surface betrayers was eclipsed by the rage of the Dark Mother. The priestesses began to demand offerings to the goddess of surface races, of humans and dwarves and particularly elves, presented as a pledge by the drow of vengeance against the betrayers.

From the caverns near Drak'kamuth an easy pathway led to the surface world. The drow travelled this path on the first of an uncountable number of night time raids against the surface, capturing those who dwelt there for slavery or sacrifice and slaughtering all those they could not drag back into the Underdeep with them. As the surface races moved away, the drow of House Arras'zur and House Narrishtah found new routes to the surface, continuing a campaign of terror and vengeance against those who still dwelt in the sunlit lands. It is from these drow that most of the common perceptions of the dark elves in the surface world were formed.

In time, the drow of Drak'kamuth grew strong enough for the priestesses of the Dark Mother to deem it right to seek out any other drow who may have survived the Sundering, that they too could be made to worship only the Dark Mother. The other tribes of drow have since been found, but the goal of the priestesses to wipe out worship of any god but their own has thus far met with abject failure.

Culture

The culture of Drak'kamuth, House Arras'zur and House Narrishtah and the cities they have founded since has been fundamentally influenced by worship of the Dark Mother. Religion pervades every facet of life in these cities, from the ubiquitous spider motif in clothing, jewellery and buildings to the near-constant chanting that rises from the web-cloaked temples of the Dark Mother. Spiders are literally everywhere in these lands, ranging in size from tiny to large. Millennia of breeding and experimentation have created literally dozens of races of spiders, used by the drow for everything from food sources to silk manufacturers to guardian animals.

Among the drow of Houses Arras'zur and Narrishtah, everything is considered a gift of the Dark Mother to her worshippers, from the caverns in which they live to the skills with magic they possess. In the many years that have passed since the Dark Mother ended the feud over her priestesses, the drow of House Arras'zur have come to dominate the clergy of the Dark Mother, while the drow of House Narrishtah have embraced arcane magic. This is not a hard and fast division, as drow from each House practice both manners of magic, but it is a valid generalisation. Although there are a number of fighters among both Houses, they are not as prevalent as they are in many other drow Houses, the profession never having completely recovered from the near-total elimination of warriors from each of the Houses at the time of the Sundering.



House Arras'zur and House Narrishtah are in frequent conflict, as each tries to supplant the other and become the only true secular power in Drak'kamuth and its surrounding cities. The church of the Dark Mother does nothing to hinder the struggle between the two Houses, believing that competition will ensure only the best of the race survive, and while the Houses are in conflict with one another they are not challenging the rule of the priestesses. Both Arras'zur and Narrishtah have grown in power in the last millennia as ties with other drow were re-established and dozens of new trade routes sprang up like fungus throughout the Underdeep. The influx of money and trade goods has strengthened the Houses and they are beginning to press against the power of the clergy, who currently cling to control by a slender thread.

These dark elves believe themselves the quintessential vision of what the drow were intended to be. They will willingly trade with others of their race, but consider them apostates from the true faith of the Dark Mother. This idea meets with understandable resistance when shared with other groups of drow. Despite the animosity it creates, however, other drow are eager to trade with House Arras'zur and House Narrishtah, as the value of the goods they offer cannot be denied, from clothing spun of spider silk to treasures seized during surface raids. It is for this reason that many other Houses have established a presence

in Drak'kamuth and the surrounding cities. Initially, the priestesses of the Dark Mother sought to bar any outsiders from entering Drak'kamuth but in one of the first victories of the Houses over the clergy in millennia, the Houses were able to successfully force the issue.

House Arras'zur and House Narrishtah retain a healthy enmity for any non-drow, especially for the races of the surface world against which they regularly launch raids. Most of the slaves in Drak'kamuth are taken from the races of the surface and it is because of the actions of these two Houses that most surface races have the perceptions of drow that they do.

Religion

There is only one religion permitted in the lands of House Arras'zur and House Narrishtah, that of the Dark Mother. All other faiths are forbidden, either in public or private worship. The drow of House Arras'zur and House Narrishtah and their subjects do pay some worship to the demigods of the Dark Mother, lesser beings who are thought to control the same spheres of influence as the other gods in the drow pantheon.

House Arras'zur

House Features:

- ☛ +2 bonus on all Knowledge (religion) checks. Drow of House Arras'zur, both male and female, are exceptionally familiar with all elements of worship of the Dark Mother.
- ☛ +2 bonus to all Fortitude saves against poison. Constant exposure to the spiders in their cities means bites are common and most drow have built up a minor resistance to poison.
- ☛ -2 penalty on all Diplomacy checks against other races and with drow who do not worship the Dark Mother.

House Skills: Knowledge (religion)

Favoured Class: Cleric

Predominant Alignment: Chaotic evil

Predominant Religion: The Dark Mother

House Narrishtah

House Features:

- ☛ +2 bonus on all Knowledge (arcana) checks. Drow of House Narrishtah are brought up to be skilled wizards and sorcerers.
- ☛ +2 bonus to all Fortitude saves against poison. Constant exposure to the spiders in their cities means bites are common and most drow have built up a minor resistance to poison.
- ☛ -2 penalty on all Diplomacy checks against other races and with drow who do not worship the Dark Mother.

House Skills: Knowledge (arcana)

Favoured Class: Wizard
Predominant Alignment: Chaotic evil
Predominant Religion: The Dark Mother

House Devoren

The drow of House Devoren are the nomads of drow culture. They have few permanent settlements of their own, preferring to remain constantly on the move. The wealthy and the Noble Houses of House Devoren also move frequently, abandoning one drow city and moving on to the next, as the winds of the House's fortunes and interests take them. Of all the Noble Houses of the drow, the dark elves of House Devoren spend the least amount of time and energy on the Sheathed War.

Background

House Devoren has its roots as a chaotic jumble of drow, many of different Houses but most of no House at all, fleeing from the Sundering in a leaderless rabble. The shangu took no notice of them, but a zealous host of surface elves dogged their steps for days as they stumbled and staggered through the Underdeep. The elves finally gave up their pursuit and returned to the surface, but the drow never stopped moving.

The exhausted drow dragged themselves from place to place throughout the Underdeep, seeking a location of safety but unable to find it. The drow were weak and demoralised, unrecognisable as the deadly warriors and wizards they are today. Every path they trod in the Underdeep led them not to a new home, but to the lands of some other race. Defeated in battle after battle they would have rather avoided, the drow trudged ever onward.

In the beginning days of their travels, the drow who would become House Devoren were united by their bonds as a common people in the face of the enemies who would destroy them. This unity was short-lived however, as there were too few drow of too many disparate Houses for any one faction to retain control. As soon as one small group assumed leadership of the larger body of drow, there would be another defeat by another Underdeep race, or some other manner of tragedy would come to pass and another faction would seize on this as an opportunity to wrest control away from the ruling faction.

The process repeated itself over and over, keeping the drow rudderless and unguided in the brutal depths of the Underdeep, losing more of their people with every ill-advised confrontation with a new enemy. The drow began to despair, certain they would be

slowly ground away to nothing. As yet another battle for control between the dwindling numbers of noble drow raged on in the aftermath of a military loss to the duergar, a warrior named Marltea na'Devoren lost the last shred of her patience. Taking up her sword and rallying the other drow commoners to her side, she seized control of the drow through sheer force of numbers. Many of the noble drow were slain, the rest were taken captive. Turning the drow about, Marltea marched them back to the duergar, where she traded the surviving noble drow as slaves to the grey dwarves in exchange for weapons and promises of peace.

Now proudly calling themselves House Devoren, the drow continued their march through the Underdeep, but the once-dear dream of finding a place to settle and master was fading from their thoughts. It was in those days that they first reunited with the drow of House Kolnahos, the first meeting of two peoples of the drow scattered during the Sundering. There was hope from some of the people of House Devoren that House Kolnahos would welcome them into their cities, but there was no such welcome offered.



Even then, the slave trade was the dominant force of the economy of House Kolnahos, who were seeking new markets for their wares, as well as new lands in which they could find sentient beings to be enslaved. It quickly became clear the travels of House Devoren had given them vastly superior knowledge of the Underdeep to any possessed by House Kolnahos. Promising payments of wealth and goods, the slave traders asked House Devoren to guide their slave caravans.

That single offer set the drow of House Devoren on the path they still follow today. Other than the Noble House of Devoren, who make their homes in the cities of other drow, the dark elves of House Devoren are constantly on the move, acting as traders, guides and explorers in the trackless depths of the Underdeep.

Culture

The drow of House Devoren are nomads, most of whom spend their lives travelling with their long trading caravans across the Underdeep through secret paths only they know.

The society of House Devoren is divided into three tiers of drow. There are the Nobles, who oversee the House's trading network and are the descendants of Marltea na'Devoren. The Nobles are the most settled of any members of House Devoren, though even they rarely remain in any single place for as long as a century. The Nobles travel from city to city to broker new trade deals and organise new opportunities for their clan. Once the opportunities and trade demands are gone, the Nobles move on to another city and new challenges.

The Traders comprise a second tier of House Devoren society and are certainly the largest of the three. These are the drow that drive, guard and guide the immense trading caravans of House Devoren, or who hire themselves out as guides and guards to the caravans of other Houses. Those Traders who serve as guards often do double duty as raiders, using their great knowledge of the Underdeep to ambush the caravans of other races, or even other drow.

The third tier is potentially the most honoured of the drow of House Devoren. They are the Explorers, dark elves who devote themselves to learning and mastering the hidden pathways of the Underdeep. It is the Explorers, for example, who first discovered the existence of the Pol'Tah.

The fact that House Devoren has its roots as a band of commoners who overthrew the nobles among them to



seize control has not made House Devoren popular among the rulers of other Houses of the drow. Were it not for House Devoren's matchless knowledge of the Underdeep and the fact that their trading network is second only to that of House Pelshothe, the other Noble Houses might have little or nothing to do with the nomadic drow, but those things make such a stance economically foolish.

House Devoren, for its part, has little respect for the other Houses of the drow, believing them too sedentary and staid. Though they are notoriously free-spirited even for drow, the trials of a nomadic lifestyle in a place as perilous as the Underdeep have made the drow of House Devoren hard and dangerous, a people who find the other drow Houses soft and weak, too concerned with foolish pursuits. They also have little respect for the property of others and the arrival of a large number of House Devoren drow in the area is often quickly followed by a crime spree.

Rangers and rogues are the most common character classes in House Devoren, with wizards being the least common, though still not a true rarity. There are no druids in House Devoren, as the nomadic drow do not see the Underdeep as a place to respect and understand, though they have a

healthier appreciation than most for the dangers that lurk within it. Rather, they see the Underdeep as something to be dominated and used as they see fit.

Religion

The drow of House Devoren are not exceptionally religious and tolerate all religions of the drow within their society. Most of them however, are pledged to the church of Alsythuth.

House Features:

- ☛ Automatic proficiency with the longbow and both heavy and light crossbows. House Devoren drow are trained from an early age to use these favoured weapons of their House. However they do not gain the usual drow proficiency with hand crossbows.
- ☛ +2 to all Appraise, Sense Motive and Spot skill checks. Drow of House Devoren are exceptional traders and raiders.
- ☛ -2 penalty to all Knowledge skill checks except dungeoneering. House Devoren drow are nomadic, with little time for pursuing such knowledge.

House Skills: Appraise, Survival

Favoured Class: Ranger

Predominant Alignment: Neutral evil

Predominant Religion: Alsythuth the Bloodied Coin

House Draz'Kuri

Among the most dangerous and disciplined warriors in any House of the drow, the Draz'Kuri are renowned for their skill on the battlefield. To some of the older drow Houses, they are considered outsiders, as the Draz'Kuri were once merely a warrior clan that rose to power by eliminating the House that retained them.

Background

At the time of the Sundering, the Draz'Kuri were a small clan of warrior drow, renowned for their martial prowess but possessing little in the way of power. They were pledged in service to a large and influential House named Arbustil and were charged with fighting a long and punishing rear-guard defence as House Arbustil and their followers fled through the Underdeep after the drow were routed.

The drow led by House Arbustil eventually came to settle in a series of caverns accessible only through narrow fissures, too small for more than two drow to walk abreast through. Other fissures opened up from the cavern ceilings into the darkness beyond, eventually leading all the way to the surface of the world. House Arbustil and its followers had been travelling for many days and this place, with its defensibility, resources, water, food and fresh air, seemed



to be a perfect place for the drow to rest and regain their strength until they could find other survivors of the Sundering. Time passed and the drow led by House Arbustil waited, but there was no sign, no scout, no emissary of any other dark elves. The rulership of the House began to guess there were no other survivors.

Still pledged to service of House Arbustil, the Draz'Kuri clan sought permission to go in search of other drow, but the rulers of the House refused, having now convinced themselves that no other dark elves had endured the Sundering. Instead, the leadership of the House chose to use the Draz'Kuri as a scouting and raiding force, frequently sending them out into the Underdeep to bring back any knowledge or supplies they could find. The Draz'Kuri were cautious about this plan, thinking too much raiding could bring the existence of the drow to the attention of potential enemies. However, they were sworn to the service of House Arbustil and thus carried out the orders.



They were correct in their fears. The raiding roused the anger of other races in the Underdeep, races far superior to the drow in numbers if nothing else. The Draz'Kuri were constantly occupied with battle outside the city, blunting the attacks of the enemy and turning them aside before they could find the hidden fastness of the drow. The clan of Draz'Kuri warriors found their fame and influence with the other drow were growing as a result of these efforts, a predictable yet unwelcome turn of events in the eyes of House Arbustil.

The rulers of House Arbustil were a fractious, mistrustful and disingenuous lot. They felt threatened by the growing influence of the Draz'Kuri, seeing the warriors as another potential rival for their power, but were unsure how to proceed as the Draz'Kuri were the only true military force available to defend House Arbustil. Finally, it was decided the House would create its own military out of the lower classes of the drow, meanwhile sending the Draz'Kuri out into the Underdeep in a succession of meaningless wars in order to winnow their powerful ranks and remove them as a threat. The leaders of House Arbustil sent their minions out

among the people, spreading rumours of armies marching on the drow, of terrible plots in the offing, until people from all rungs of society were clamouring for war. With great fanfare, the Draz'Kuri were sent forth to crush the enemies of the drow.

The Draz'Kuri were not in the Underdeep long before they discovered the perfidy of the rulers of House Arbustil. Not only had the nobles lied to the warriors, sending them forth on the invented premise of enemies that in truth existed only in imagination and fanciful stories told to the people, but they had even plotted a series of terrible 'accidents' to befall the marching army and sent out agents to ensure that the Draz'Kuri were beset by problems. Unfortunately for House Arbustil, the highly skilled warriors quickly detected and captured the treacherous drow that had been sent after them and wrung the truth from the agents in short order. The Draz'Kuri had served House Arbustil as warriors for many years; they were loyal and orderly, schooled to military precision. Yet this act constituted betrayal and it was too much for Goren'dral, war leader of the Draz'Kuri, to countenance. He ordered his clan to return to the city, angry thoughts of vengeance in his mind.

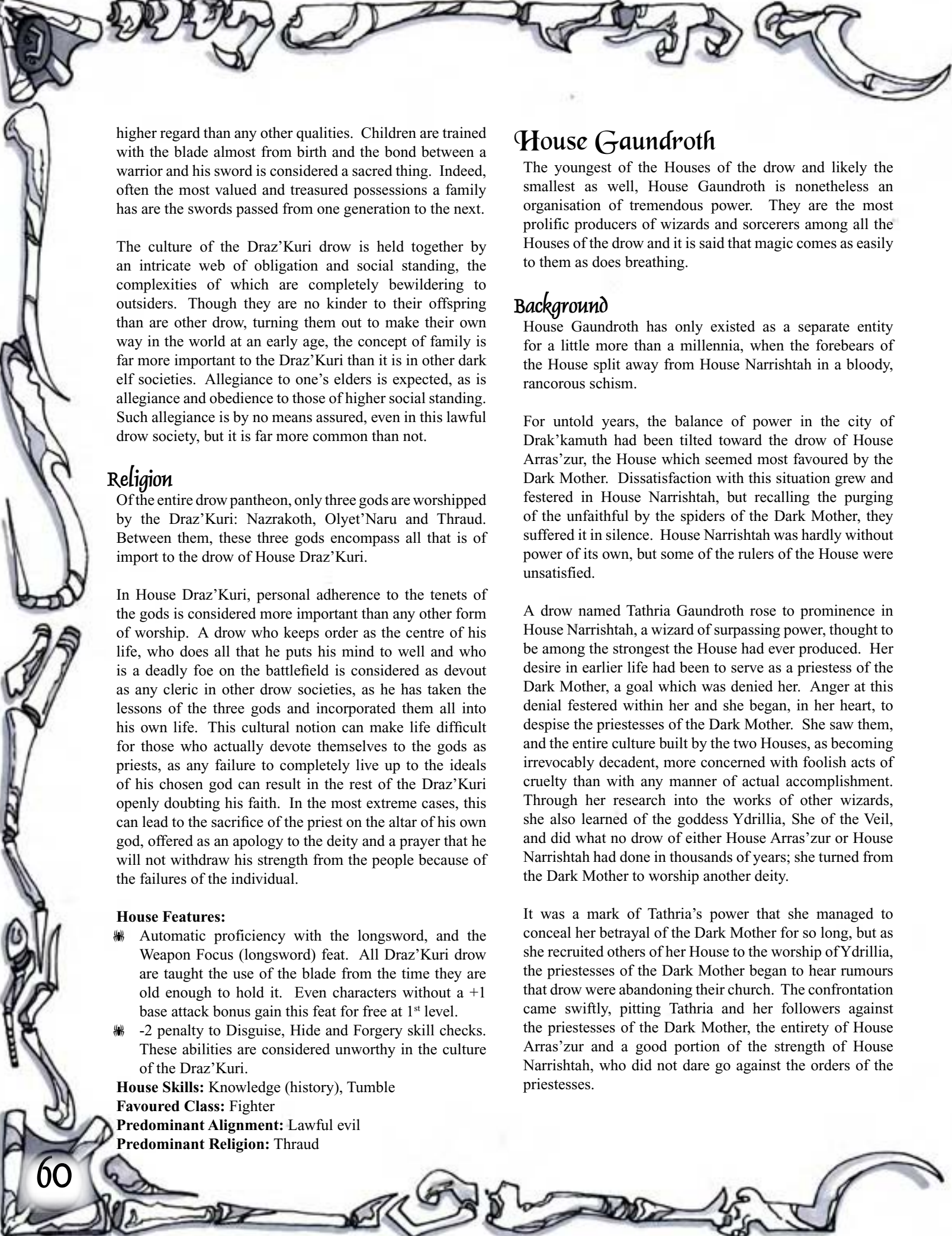
The Draz'Kuri returned home to find House Arbustil convulsed in a power struggle, as other families within the House sought to claim the reins of leadership. The new army that House Arbustil had sought to create had splintered into various factions, fighting one another in the streets and leaving the borders of the city unguarded. In a frenzy of rage and disgust, Goren'dral and his Draz'Kuri slaughtered the ruling members of House Arbustil and seized control of the colony.

Culture

Following the coup against and destruction of House Arbustil, the military structure and organisation of the Draz'Kuri spread quickly through the remaining drow. Indeed, such changes were welcomed by the drow as a whole, as they had lived too long in fear and doubt under the erratic rule of House Arbustil.

This emphasis on order, so uncharacteristic for the dark elves, has forged House Draz'Kuri into a unique drow culture. House Draz'Kuri is still based in the city of Khoztal, located in the caverns where House Arbustil first settled and has grown so large that a full half of the population can count itself a member of the House. The other half, for their part, emulate the practices and habits of the House to the extent that outsiders cannot tell the difference.

House Draz'Kuri has created a true warrior culture, in which a drow's skill at arms, tactics and strategy is held in



higher regard than any other qualities. Children are trained with the blade almost from birth and the bond between a warrior and his sword is considered a sacred thing. Indeed, often the most valued and treasured possessions a family has are the swords passed from one generation to the next.

The culture of the Draz'Kuri drow is held together by an intricate web of obligation and social standing, the complexities of which are completely bewildering to outsiders. Though they are no kinder to their offspring than are other drow, turning them out to make their own way in the world at an early age, the concept of family is far more important to the Draz'Kuri than it is in other dark elf societies. Allegiance to one's elders is expected, as is allegiance and obedience to those of higher social standing. Such allegiance is by no means assured, even in this lawful drow society, but it is far more common than not.

Religion

Of the entire drow pantheon, only three gods are worshipped by the Draz'Kuri: Nazrakothe, Olyet'Naru and Thraud. Between them, these three gods encompass all that is of import to the drow of House Draz'Kuri.

In House Draz'Kuri, personal adherence to the tenets of the gods is considered more important than any other form of worship. A drow who keeps order as the centre of his life, who does all that he puts his mind to well and who is a deadly foe on the battlefield is considered as devout as any cleric in other drow societies, as he has taken the lessons of the three gods and incorporated them all into his own life. This cultural notion can make life difficult for those who actually devote themselves to the gods as priests, as any failure to completely live up to the ideals of his chosen god can result in the rest of the Draz'Kuri openly doubting his faith. In the most extreme cases, this can lead to the sacrifice of the priest on the altar of his own god, offered as an apology to the deity and a prayer that he will not withdraw his strength from the people because of the failures of the individual.

House Features:

- ☛ Automatic proficiency with the longsword, and the Weapon Focus (longsword) feat. All Draz'Kuri drow are taught the use of the blade from the time they are old enough to hold it. Even characters without a +1 base attack bonus gain this feat for free at 1st level.
- ☛ -2 penalty to Disguise, Hide and Forgery skill checks. These abilities are considered unworthy in the culture of the Draz'Kuri.

House Skills: Knowledge (history), Tumble

Favoured Class: Fighter

Predominant Alignment: Lawful evil

Predominant Religion: Thraud

House Gaundroth

The youngest of the Houses of the drow and likely the smallest as well, House Gaundroth is nonetheless an organisation of tremendous power. They are the most prolific producers of wizards and sorcerers among all the Houses of the drow and it is said that magic comes as easily to them as does breathing.

Background

House Gaundroth has only existed as a separate entity for a little more than a millennia, when the forebears of the House split away from House Narrishtah in a bloody, rancorous schism.

For untold years, the balance of power in the city of Drak'kamuth had been tilted toward the drow of House Arras'zur, the House which seemed most favoured by the Dark Mother. Dissatisfaction with this situation grew and festered in House Narrishtah, but recalling the purging of the unfaithful by the spiders of the Dark Mother, they suffered it in silence. House Narrishtah was hardly without power of its own, but some of the rulers of the House were unsatisfied.

A drow named Tathria Gaundroth rose to prominence in House Narrishtah, a wizard of surpassing power, thought to be among the strongest the House had ever produced. Her desire in earlier life had been to serve as a priestess of the Dark Mother, a goal which was denied her. Anger at this denial festered within her and she began, in her heart, to despise the priestesses of the Dark Mother. She saw them, and the entire culture built by the two Houses, as becoming irrevocably decadent, more concerned with foolish acts of cruelty than with any manner of actual accomplishment. Through her research into the works of other wizards, she also learned of the goddess Ydrillia, She of the Veil, and did what no drow of either House Arras'zur or House Narrishtah had done in thousands of years; she turned from the Dark Mother to worship another deity.

It was a mark of Tathria's power that she managed to conceal her betrayal of the Dark Mother for so long, but as she recruited others of her House to the worship of Ydrillia, the priestesses of the Dark Mother began to hear rumours that drow were abandoning their church. The confrontation came swiftly, pitting Tathria and her followers against the priestesses of the Dark Mother, the entirety of House Arras'zur and a good portion of the strength of House Narrishtah, who did not dare go against the orders of the priestesses.



many years, they and their descendants remained isolated in their new city, mastering the magical arts and delving into the deepest mysteries of the arcane.

The drow of House Gaundroth were skilled in all manner of wizardry, but that aspect at which they truly excelled was summoning. Much of the city of Ser Unthoul, in fact, was constructed by summoned and dominated creatures from other planes, a fact that makes sense of some of the stranger and more alien areas of architecture in that settlement.

Eventually, the House Gaundroth drow chose to venture forth once again from their secret fastness. Though they knew the enmity with the priestesses of the Dark Mother would be eternal, they had hopes to re-establish contact with the other Houses of the drow, for when House Gaundroth broke away from House Narrishtah, most of the scattered tribes had already made themselves known to each other once again.

They discovered the other Houses of drow were more than eager to deal with them and so House Gaundroth built a second city, both to accommodate its burgeoning population and to create a place for open trade with other drow that would not betray the location of Ser Unthoul. This new city they named simply na'Tathria, in honour of their recently departed matriarch.

The battle was as brief as it was sudden, as Tathria and several hundred of her followers were forced to flee from Drak'kamuth into the Underdeep and out of the lands claimed by the two Houses. They would surely not have survived, were it not for the magical preparations put in place by Tathria, who had foreseen the likely result of such a struggle.

Tathria had discovered a hidden corner of the Underdeep, impenetrable to magical *scrying* or *teleportation*. Though she had considered using it as her personal lair, she chose instead to bring those who had followed her from Drak'kamuth to this secret place. Though the search for Tathria and her followers has never been abandoned by the priestesses of the Dark Mother, they never found this hidden fastness where Tathria brought her people to hide.

Tathria declared herself Magus of House Gaundroth, its sole ruler and high priestess. At her command, her followers began construction of a new city of the drow in their hidden cavern, a city they named Ser Unthoul. For

In the centuries since, the drow of House Gaundroth have fought a number of wars against the forces of the Dark Mother, against the deep trolls and, most recently, against the shangu. Though less numerous than their foes, the magical prowess of House Gaundroth has allowed it to survive each such encounter.

Culture

The defining aspect of House Gaundroth is magic. Magic suffuses their culture and is the ultimate aim for many drow who claim membership in this House. It is also their primary source of commerce, as no other House or society of the drow produces the quantity and quality of magical items that come from the laboratories of House Gaundroth.

Although the House boasts specialists of every sort, the most common are the conjurers, whose influence can be seen in every aspect of House Gaundroth life. Much of the work done in the cities and homes of House Gaundroth

is done by summoned and magically compelled creatures and minor demons, hurrying about the errands of their drow masters, are a common enough sight on the streets of Ser Unthoul.

House Gaundroth is unique among the major Houses of the drow in that it has only one Noble House, the descendants of Tathria Gaundroth, who have maintained a tight grip on the reins of power since the days of House Gaundroth's founding. Ostensibly, the House is ruled by a single monarch, known as a Magus, who also acts as the high priest or priestess of Ydrillia. In practice, however, this is rarely the case, as the Magus quickly finds himself compromised on all sides by the powerful and influential and thus actual rulership of the House devolves to the Noble House as a whole.

The drow of House Gaundroth do practice slavery, but not to the extent found in most drow cultures. More precisely, they prefer to enslave beings summoned from other planes to do their bidding. Most slaves captured from races of the Underdeep end their lives in one of the many laboratories of Ser Unthoul or another House Gaundroth settlement.

Likewise, the majority of the House's military force is made up of summoned creatures, mostly demons and elementals, lashed into the fray by the eldritch commands of their summoners. There were very few drow devoted to the arts of the sword and bow that followed Tathria out of Drak'kamuth and their numbers have increased only slightly. Without the summoned creatures to fight for them, there would be little enough standing between an attacking force and the spellcasters of House Gaundroth.


The drow of House Gaundroth have nothing but disdain for House Arras'zur and House Narrishtah, believing them to be decadent fools who are more interested in putting all their effort into acts of inefficient cruelty than in actually accomplishing anything worthwhile. Most of the other Houses they have no particular feelings for at all, save for the certainty of their own superiority, a fact made manifest in House Gaundroth's tremendous facility with magic. However, the more pragmatic understand they need these other Houses to thrive, as House Gaundroth produces little enough besides that magic.



The majority of House Gaundroth drow are, unsurprisingly, wizards though sorcerers run a close second. There are few if any non-multiclassed clerics in this House, as past experience with the priestesses of the Dark Mother has taught them to beware anyone who prizes only religion. However, cleric/wizards and cleric/sorcerers are both fairly common, being members of the clergy of Ydrillia. There are, likewise, few fighters or similar classes to be found in House Gaundroth, though in recent years the number of rogues has grown swiftly.

Religion

Though House Gaundroth is officially open to all religions save that of the Dark Mother, in practice it is worship of



Ydrillia that dominates their society. It was because of Ydrillia that Tathria Gaundroth broke away from House Narrishtah and they believe it is she who has made them so very adept in the arcane arts. Indeed, nearly a third of all Lords and Ladies of the Veil (see page 151) can claim House Gaundroth as their home House.

House Features:

- ☞ +1 bonus to caster level for all conjuration spells. This does not grant the caster any additional spells; it merely determines the properties of the spells he can cast.
- ☞ +2 bonus on all Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (the planes) and Spellcraft skill checks.
- ☞ Gaundroth drow have focused all their attention on the arcane arts, to the detriment of their combat abilities. Unlike other elves, drow of House Gaundroth are not automatically proficient with the hand crossbow, rapier and short sword. To learn the use of these weapons, a Gaundroth drow must either purchase the appropriate feats or take a level in a class which grants knowledge of their use.

House Skills: Decipher Script, Knowledge (arcana)

Favoured Class: Wizard

Predominant Alignment: Neutral evil

Predominant Religion: Ydrillia, She of the Veil

House Kolnahos

All but a very few drow practice slavery in some form or fashion but for the drow of House Kolnahos, it is a way of life. The dark elves of this House are the principal slavers in the nations of the drow, buying, selling and trading sentient beings in a longstanding business which has made this House one of the richest among all the drow.

Background

House Kolnahos was all but destroyed in the Sundering. Caught between the hosts of surface elves and the rampaging legions of the shangu's ogre servants, the drow of House Kolnahos had no means of escape. The crush of the two enemies threatened to overcome the dark elves completely, shattering their ranks and casting the drow into confusion and disarray. Their warriors, led by Carryzn na'Baruss, mounted a desperate counterattack and cut their way at great price through the enemy hordes, blazing a way clear of certain death for the other drow of the House to follow.

House Kolnahos finally won free and fled into the Underdeep. Most of its rulers and nobles lay dead in the caverns and catacombs behind them, as did its spellcasters, craftsmen and the bulk of its warriors. What was left was for the most part an untrained, unskilled and unequipped rabble facing the unknown terrors of the Underdeep. The

great warrior Carryzn na'Baruss had been slain in the Sundering, killed by the shangu, but her children survived, a fact which would prove troublesome for House Kolnahos in the future.

With bribes and offers of authority, the few remaining rulers of House Kolnahos were able to secure the loyalty of the warriors who were left in the House, fearful that otherwise they would take advantage of the situation and attempt to seize power themselves. Free for the moment of the danger of betrayal from within, the rulers of House Kolnahos led the rest of the drow through the winding ways of the Underdeep. Unlike most of their kind scattered in the Sundering, the rulers of House Kolnahos were not interested in finding the other groups of their people. They assumed that in their weakened state, other Houses of the drow would see and seize the opportunity to eradicate the rulers and assume control of the remainder of House Kolnahos.

Therefore, the dark elves ventured ever further into the Underdeep, seeking some place safe and secluded enough for the House to begin to recuperate the terrible losses it had suffered. Wandering lost down winding paths of old lava tubes, the drow came abruptly to what seemed like a bottomless pit, a cleft in the earth as though the stone had been struck by an enormous axe. The cleft itself was some 30 feet across, an opening in the cliff face marking where the lava tubes they had been following continued. The drow could see that the cliffs on either side were pockmarked with deep caves and finally decided they had found their new home.

Years of privation and desperation followed, as the dark elves huddled in the rude caves of the cliffside eking out a scant existence on wild fungus and a few streams of sulphur-heavy water. The concept of family was all but forgotten for most of the drow, as the rulers of the House forced upon their subjects an aggressive breeding campaign to replenish the numbers lost in the Sundering. Enforced by the warriors loyal to House Kolnahos, this campaign involved pairing up the drow believed to be most fertile. If no child resulted from the efforts, the pair were split apart and each paired with a new drow in hopes of achieving better results.

The progress was slow, but eventually the numbers of House Kolnahos began to climb. The drow had been fortunate to choose a portion of the Underdeep that was all but uninhabited to build their city and many years of comparative peace came and went, as the dark elves gradually rebuilt their strength. As their strength grew so too did that of the cliff city, which the drow had named Klat'huan.

Though their numbers were beginning to increase, the drow of House Kolnahos still lived a primitive life in the cliffs of Klat'huan. Many of the House's skilled artisans and craftsmen had died in the Sundering, or had been swept away by the tide of battle and escaped the carnage with some other band of drow. Little time or attention had been paid to relearning lost skills, as the drow were too occupied with trying to eke out the simplest necessities of living and increasing their dangerously small numbers to concern themselves with anything that was not an immediate need. Slowly, however, the thoughts of the drow began to turn to things besides these base needs.


The drow were growing angry and disconsolate in their cliffside homes. Shamed by their loss to the surface elves, their near-destruction in the Sundering and the lowly, primitive lives they were forced to endure, the drow cried out for something more. Watching nervously as their subjects grew more and more restless, the rulers of House Kolnahos knew that if they did not soon find a way to placate and distract the people, they would be overthrown. However, much of what the people wanted could not be provided, as too many craftsmen and artisans had been lost in the Sundering.

What followed was an event so serendipitous that many drow felt it must be a gift from Polshoath, the Dark Lady of Agony to whom the drow of House Kolnahos had devoted themselves in their drive to increase their population. Scouts returned to the drow to report that a large tribe of goblins had entered the area, where it had previously been uninhabited for considerable distances apart from the drow themselves. The wounds from the goblin war were still fresh in the minds of the drow at that time and the rulers of House Kolnahos knew this was their opportunity to both provide for the drow and remain in power.

Marshalling their warriors, the drow fell on the passing tribe of goblins. Many goblins were slain in mere moments as the dark elves, filled with rage and frustration at their current fate and not to mention lingering feelings of hate and vengeance for goblinkind, poured those passions into the goblins through their blood-slick swords. For each goblin killed however, two were taken captive, brought back to Klat'huan in chains to serve the drow as slaves.

For most of these goblins, life as a slave was miserable and short as their drow masters took out ancient grudges and new frustrations on the helpless slaves to whom the war with the elves was ancient history. Some of the goblins, those with skills in crafting and building that the drow had lost, were kept alive as long as they could work. Others were tortured and tormented until they met their death on an





altar of Polshoath. Still others were the subject of multiple magical experiments, their bodies warped and twisted by the whims of the few wizards left to the House until they could no longer sustain life.

Even as torment and labour were claiming the lives of the first goblin slaves captured by House Kolnahos, the warriors and scouts were searching for more, locating and enslaving tribes of goblins throughout this region of the Underdeep. Soon, the goblin slaves in Klat'huan outnumbered their drow masters, ten slaves for every drow in the city. It had become clear to even the dimmest goblin that the drow thirst for vengeance over ancient wrongs could never be slaked, that there was nothing for them in their future save more torture and eventual sacrifice on the altar. As the tormented screams of a new batch of captured slaves echoed in the pit dividing Klat'huan, the goblins tried to strike back at their captors. The battle was swift and bloody; the numbers of the goblins were quickly overcome by the superior skill and equipment of the drow, who slaughtered all but a handful of their most useful goblin slaves, casting the rent bodies of the others into the pit.

The drow of House Kolnahos were not deterred by the insurrection and, in truth, they needed slaves as badly as ever, as they had come to depend on the slaves' skills to provide them with items and knowledge the drow could not make themselves. As there seemed an almost inexhaustible supply of goblins in the Underdeep, the hunters and warriors of the drow set out to capture more slaves to serve the people of Klat'huan. However, the slave insurrection did have a lasting effect on House Kolnahos, as the drow concluded the best way to avoid another such incident was to break their slaves of all thoughts of rebellion. Additionally, there were rumours in the city that would not die, rumours that the insurrection had actually been fomented by drow.

This led to the founding of the first slaver guilds within the House and, with them, slavers who specialised in training. There was little call at first for their services, a situation that changed when the slave hunters of the House discovered a small city of deep gnomes some distance from Klat'huan. The gnomes were much more difficult quarry, but their long lives and impressive abilities with stone made them well worth the trouble. With the introduction of gnome slaves, the need for slave trainers grew overnight.

The drow also discovered a city of duergar some ten days' journey from Klat'huan. Though the first few meetings of the two races ended in violence, the drow eventually opened up trade relations with the grey dwarves, offering trained slaves in exchange for weapons and other items of dwarven make, far superior to what their goblin slaves were capable of producing.

With the labour of their slaves, the drow set about expanding Klat'huan, enlarging the tunnels and caves, building bridges and even adding some basic engineering to the city. The demand for well-trained gnome slaves only increased, and drow population was outgrowing even the expanded capacity of Klat'huan. Opting to deal with both needs at once, the drow attacked the gnome city from which they had been taking their slaves, clapping the entire population in chains after an assault of astounding brutality that terrified the gnomes into submission, and moved their own people into its walls.

It was at this time that House Devoren first found House Kolnahos, a propitious development for both Houses. The nobles of Kolnahos had been seeking to expand their trading routes, currently limited to whatever deals they could reach with the duergar. House Devoren, far more familiar with the ways of the Underdeep than any other beings House Kolnahos had encountered, agreed to guide their slave caravans to new markets where the demand for such living property was high. Within a few years, several Houses of the drow had re-established contact through House Devoren's traders and House Kolnahos was able to export trained slaves throughout the drow realms in exchange for weapons, armour and other items.

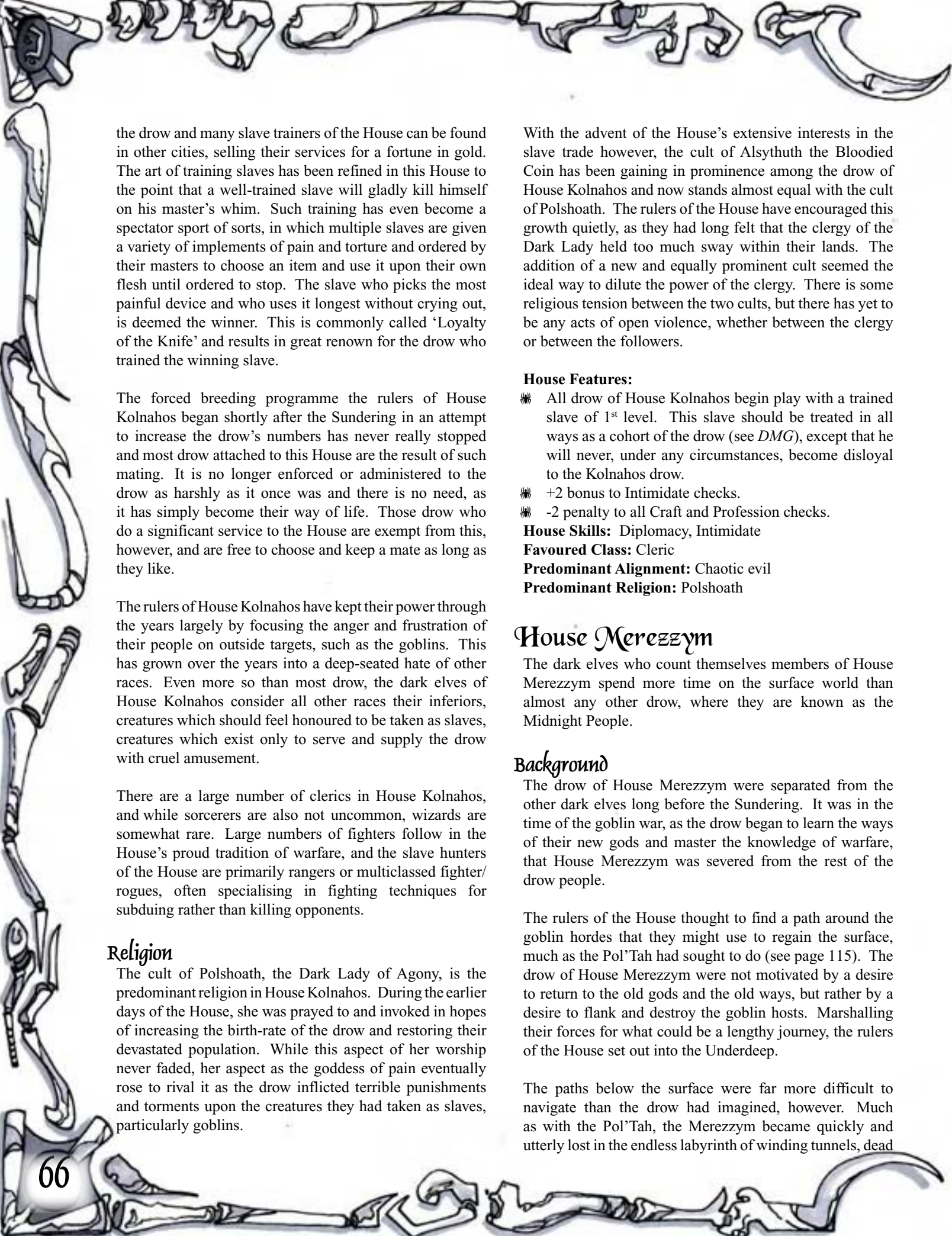
Culture

The central focus of House Kolnahos is the slave trade and their cities are filled with slaves of a dozen races, all obediently going about their business of serving the drow.

The majority of the House's economy is built upon trading and training slaves, sending caravans of them through the Underdeep to other cities of the drow and sending large forces of slave hunters out on missions to capture new slaves. They work frequently with House Devoren's Explorers, hiring them to seek out new populations of everything from giants to gnomes for House Kolnahos to enslave.

This focus has made House Kolnahos dependent upon the slave trade in more ways than simple economics, however. Compared to other drow, House Kolnahos has few craftsmen and artisans among its ranks. Many skilled drow were lost in the Sundering and, rather than relearn the crafts, House Kolnahos has come to rely on skilled slaves and trade with other drow to make up the lack. If they were to be robbed of their slaves and the slave trade, the House would not be able to sustain itself with the paucity of knowledge they possess of such simple things as potting and weaving.

One area of knowledge in which House Kolnahos excels, however, is in slave training. Their skills and abilities with this profession are renowned throughout the civilisations of



the drow and many slave trainers of the House can be found in other cities, selling their services for a fortune in gold. The art of training slaves has been refined in this House to the point that a well-trained slave will gladly kill himself on his master's whim. Such training has even become a spectator sport of sorts, in which multiple slaves are given a variety of implements of pain and torture and ordered by their masters to choose an item and use it upon their own flesh until ordered to stop. The slave who picks the most painful device and who uses it longest without crying out, is deemed the winner. This is commonly called 'Loyalty of the Knife' and results in great renown for the drow who trained the winning slave.

The forced breeding programme the rulers of House Kolnahos began shortly after the Sundering in an attempt to increase the drow's numbers has never really stopped and most drow attached to this House are the result of such mating. It is no longer enforced or administered to the drow as harshly as it once was and there is no need, as it has simply become their way of life. Those drow who do a significant service to the House are exempt from this, however, and are free to choose and keep a mate as long as they like.

The rulers of House Kolnahos have kept their power through the years largely by focusing the anger and frustration of their people on outside targets, such as the goblins. This has grown over the years into a deep-seated hate of other races. Even more so than most drow, the dark elves of House Kolnahos consider all other races their inferiors, creatures which should feel honoured to be taken as slaves, creatures which exist only to serve and supply the drow with cruel amusement.

There are a large number of clerics in House Kolnahos, and while sorcerers are also not uncommon, wizards are somewhat rare. Large numbers of fighters follow in the House's proud tradition of warfare, and the slave hunters of the House are primarily rangers or multiclassed fighter/rogues, often specialising in fighting techniques for subduing rather than killing opponents.

Religion

The cult of Polshoath, the Dark Lady of Agony, is the predominant religion in House Kolnahos. During the earlier days of the House, she was prayed to and invoked in hopes of increasing the birth-rate of the drow and restoring their devastated population. While this aspect of her worship never faded, her aspect as the goddess of pain eventually rose to rival it as the drow inflicted terrible punishments and torments upon the creatures they had taken as slaves, particularly goblins.

With the advent of the House's extensive interests in the slave trade however, the cult of Alsythuth the Bloodied Coin has been gaining in prominence among the drow of House Kolnahos and now stands almost equal with the cult of Polshoath. The rulers of the House have encouraged this growth quietly, as they had long felt that the clergy of the Dark Lady held too much sway within their lands. The addition of a new and equally prominent cult seemed the ideal way to dilute the power of the clergy. There is some religious tension between the two cults, but there has yet to be any acts of open violence, whether between the clergy or between the followers.

House Features:

- ☞ All drow of House Kolnahos begin play with a trained slave of 1st level. This slave should be treated in all ways as a cohort of the drow (see *DMG*), except that he will never, under any circumstances, become disloyal to the Kolnahos drow.
- ☞ +2 bonus to Intimidate checks.
- ☞ -2 penalty to all Craft and Profession checks.

House Skills: Diplomacy, Intimidate

Favoured Class: Cleric

Predominant Alignment: Chaotic evil

Predominant Religion: Polshoath

House Merezzym

The dark elves who count themselves members of House Merezzym spend more time on the surface world than almost any other drow, where they are known as the Midnight People.

Background

The drow of House Merezzym were separated from the other dark elves long before the Sundering. It was in the time of the goblin war, as the drow began to learn the ways of their new gods and master the knowledge of warfare, that House Merezzym was severed from the rest of the drow people.

The rulers of the House thought to find a path around the goblin hordes that they might use to regain the surface, much as the Pol'Tah had sought to do (see page 115). The drow of House Merezzym were not motivated by a desire to return to the old gods and the old ways, but rather by a desire to flank and destroy the goblin hosts. Marshalling their forces for what could be a lengthy journey, the rulers of the House set out into the Underdeep.

The paths below the surface were far more difficult to navigate than the drow had imagined, however. Much as with the Pol'Tah, the Merezzym became quickly and utterly lost in the endless labyrinth of winding tunnels, dead

ends and nightmarish dangers. For years, the Merezzym wandered hopelessly through the deadly maze, facing privation, despair and terrible creatures unlike anything they had ever imagined, such as the wholly evil and immensely dangerous shangu (see page 231).

Lost and desperate, the grand plans to reach the surface and flank the goblin hosts were quickly abandoned by the drow, but by the time the rulers of House Merezzym ordered a return to the rest of their people, it was too late. The path back to the other drow was lost in the tangled web of galleries and passageways.

Robbed of all other options, they pressed onward. The air and the stone around them grew steadily colder until they emerged into a series of caverns whose walls were covered in glassy sheets of ice. Beyond the caverns were still more passageways, leading eventually to the very thing the drow of House Merezzym had sought in the first place, a path to the surface. This surface was not the way the drow

remembered it, however. It seemed forbiddingly cold and unimaginably bright, lit by a brilliant sun that would never set. Unwilling to turn back now that the goal they had all but forgotten was at last realised, the drow chose to wait for the sunset to come.

At last, the sun slipped below the horizon to begin the second phase of its yearly cycle this far towards the pole, plunging the surface world into a night that seemed as endless as the day had been. The drow emerged into the surface world, into a landscape filled with objects that had once been familiar to their people, with trees and mountains, objects that now seemed alien and abnormal after the long years spent in the Underdeep. Covering everything was a blanket of white, of ice and snow, forcing the shivering drow to turn their attention first to surviving the plunging temperatures brought on by the darkness.

Arming themselves with fire and thick clothing made of the hides and furs of the beasts that roamed this frozen region, the drow set out to explore the surface world, searching for any sign of their elven kin or of the goblin hordes. Instead, they encountered primitive tribes of humans and orcs, who were awed by the appearance and the power of the drow, naming them the Midnight People. The orcs were frightened and hostile, while the humans thought of the drow as gods, a belief the dark elves were glad to encourage. The drow, for their part, saw both groups as yet another resource to be exploited.

With their superior equipment and skill, the drow were easily able to overcome the scattered tribes of orcs, enslaving the survivors and putting them to work constructing a fortress for the drow in a series of immense, ice-coated caves. The drow allowed the humans to remain free for the time being, preferring to use their status as gods to direct the actions of the humans. Among many other things, this involved sending runners to the south to seek out any news of elvenkind. The freedom of the humans ended when the runners returned, bearing news of a war. Though the details were few, the drow were able to piece them together to understand what the humans did not - that the surface elves, the humans and other races had banded together to attack the drow. In a



spasm of rage at this betrayal, the drow struck against the closest enemy at hand, slaughtering the leaders of the humans and clapping the confused and terrified survivors in chains.

After that night, the drow of House Merezzym became obsessed with finding their own people once again, but also unwilling to give up this foothold on the frozen surface world they had established. Scouts ventured forth into the Underdeep to look for the other drow, but most either vanished or returned empty-handed. Some few, however, came back with rumours and scraps of stories about an immense battle in which the drow were crushed and driven throughout the Underdeep. Few of the House's human slaves survived the retribution that such news brought.

Though attempts to find other drow continued, many of the people of House Merezzym gave up and assumed the worst, that the betrayal by the surface elves and their allies had eradicated the rest of their race. The drow began to turn their attention more and more towards establishing their own realm in the frozen north of the world. From their slaves, both human and orc, they learned the wisdom needed to thrive in this place, of planting crops and hunting for prey. During the months-long nights, the drow would venture forth from their caverns to explore the surface world. At first, they satisfied themselves with raiding, but they slowly began to carve out their own empire on the surface and so the land of the Midnight People quickly acquired an evil reputation amongst the other races of the north as a place ruled by strange, black-skinned beings with red eyes, who boiled forth from the ground to kill and enslave.

Millennia passed before the dark elves of House Merezzym finally learned they were not the only remaining drow in the world, when a party of House Devoren Explorers happened upon their frozen caves.


Culture

The drow of House Merezzym can spend nearly half their lives above ground in the long nights of the far north, a situation other drow both envy and distrust. Living underground has been an essential element of the drow for so long, other Houses wonder how truly drow the dark elves of Merezzym can still be.



Despite the reservations of others, those of House Merezzym have no doubts whatsoever that they are truly drow. Often, they consider themselves more truly drow than those of other Houses, as Merezzym has never suffered a military embarrassment like the Sundering.

The drow of Merezzym live in a series of large caves just below the surface of the world, known collectively as the city of Siplawth. The buildings of this city, assembled and maintained by slaves, are mostly of stone though some smaller buildings are constructed entirely of ice, considered a viable building material here because Siplawth never becomes warm enough for the ice to melt. Because of



the constant chill, the drow tend to dress in warm furs and hides; the *na'orsuin* and spidersilk garments favoured in other Houses would be too flimsy for a drow to wear them and survive.

House Merezzym controls a substantial amount of land on the surface, a frozen empire made up of communities of humans, orcs and other races from whom the drow extract stiff levies in food, slaves and goods. The drow have created a number of items to help them cope with the brilliant light of the surface sun, from simple mundane items like goggles of smoked glass to magical creations like the *necklace of shade*. Despite these measures however, the drow are wary of going abroad when the sun is in the sky and must trust the administration of their realms to their slaves and to the human leaders whose loyalty the drow have bought with baubles. Fortunately, many of House Merezzym's slaves are descended from generation after generation of slaves and obedience to their dark elf masters is the only thing these slaves know. House Merezzym is among the only drow cultures to actively involve itself in breeding slaves, a move which was considered necessary to cultivate the absolute devotion required of slaves tasked with running an empire for half the year.

The presence of so many human slaves has, unsurprisingly, resulted in a fair number of half-drow children. While still consigned to the bottom rungs of society, half-drow are not reviled by House Merezzym as they are among most other drow cultures.

Rangers and clerics are the most common character classes to be found in House Merezzym, though there are some barbarians as well. However, the lack of any organised enemies has degraded the House's skill in battle and there are not many pure fighters to be found in their ranks. Likewise, the number of wizards is small when compared to other drow populations, but the Merezzym compensate for this loss with an above-average number of sorcerers.

Even more so than other drow, the dark elves of House Merezzym have a penchant for keeping score and plotting vengeance. A drow of House Merezzym will never let a wrong go unavenged and a well-crafted, unsuspected and publicly executed act of revenge is considered an art form, the kind of thing that can garner fame and notoriety for the drow who plotted it.

Religion

Obsession with vengeance has long been a trait of House Merezzym, be it vengeance against the goblins or vengeance for the Great Betrayal and the Sundering. Worship of most other gods has all but fallen out of their culture, leaving veneration of Nazrakothe the Avenging Fist as the

pre-eminent religion of Merezzym drow. Initially, the Merezzym focused on the vengeance aspect of Nazrakothe more than any other, but with the concerns of running an empire always in their minds, they have also begun to worship Nazrakothe's aspect as the Eternal Judge and the rule of law he represents. More importantly, they have raised their slaves to worship this aspect of Nazrakothe, further instilling a sense of submission to authority in them.

House Features:

- ☞ Cold resistance 3. The drow of House Merezzym live in a climate which is all but intolerable to those not born to it. Over the years, they have become accustomed to the brutal cold of their home, a fact that lets them ignore some of the damage of an incoming cold attack, or of extremely inclement weather.
- ☞ +2 bonus on Survival skill checks.
- ☞ -2 penalty on all Charisma-based skill checks except Intimidate. The drow of House Merezzym are used to making commands, not requests.

House Skills: Survival

Favoured Class: Cleric or Ranger

Predominant Alignment: Neutral evil

Predominant Religion: Nazrakothe

House na'Khotan

Secretive and reclusive, the drow of House na'Khotan have little to do with the remainder of their race. They are only marginally involved in the Game of Bones and have no holdings outside the ancient cities in which they have lived since the time of the Sundering.

Background

The House of na'Khotan was the last of the tribes scattered by the Sundering, aside from those now known as the Lost Tribes, to re-establish ties with the other drow. Still considered outsiders by many of the older Houses, the House of na'Khotan is based almost entirely in the areas of the Underdeep in which their people lived until reuniting with other drow.

After travelling uncounted leagues through the Underdeep after the Sundering, the drow of House na'Khotan stumbled upon an enormous cavern, in the middle of which stood a city built of black stone, unlike anything found in the cavern walls all about it. The city was bustling with activity, populated by short, slight humanoid creatures the drow had never seen before. The sudden arrival of several thousand dark elves was greeted with consternation and confusion, as work all about the city suddenly stopped and the short creatures fled into the safety of its borders. An armed group of several hundred marched out to meet the drow, who themselves

were exhausted near prostration by the long flight from the Sundering.

The inhabitants of the city were deep gnomes, a race the na'Khotan had never heard of before. The two sides approached one another with caution, fully aware of the many dangers in the Underdeep, the drow more acutely than ever before. Spying an opportunity for safety, the leaders of House na'Khotan stepped forward and spoke at length with the deep gnomes, explaining what had befallen the drow and entreating the gnomes for help.

Just as the drow knew nothing of the gnomes, so the gnomes in turn knew nothing of the drow. They did know of the shangu however and felt obligated to help any creature they could escape the grasp of those abominations of the deeps. Additionally, they knew that if a force of shangu and their enslaved minions did arrive, the gnomes would not be spared battle no matter whether or not the drow were still there. In an act of kindness the gnomes regret still, they offered the drow sanctuary within their city. The drow gladly accepted, for the time feeling only gratitude and relief.

The na'Khotan moved into the city and the gnomes were able to find enough space to accommodate the dark elves, though barely. At first, there was peace between the two groups, but it did not last. From their hosts, the drow discovered the city was not built by gnomes at all, but instead was standing here abandoned when the gnomes happened upon it years earlier. Further, the gnomes informed them the stone from which every building was cut did not exist within 100 miles of this cavern. Of who built the city or how, there was no sign. There were no artefacts of any kind left behind to tell the tale of who had lived here, but it was evident from the construction that the builders had been taller than the gnomes, taller even than the drow. The gnomes called the city Murellin, the Empty Place.

Time passed, and still the host of shangu and umber hulks the drow believed were following them did not arrive. Tensions between the drow and their hosts began to grow, as the drow demanded more room for their people and the gnomes began to murmur it was time for the dark elves to depart. Disagreements became


arguments and arguments gave way to violence, until the city erupted into open battle between the two races. How the conflict began is unknown, but according to the drow, it was the gnomes who struck first. The violence was brief but bloody, pitting the superior numbers of the gnomes against the superior warriors and mages of the drow. At the end, the drow were victorious, though it had cost them heavily.

The drow of House na'Khotan enslaved the remaining gnomes, teaching them obedience with whips and chains, forcing them to continue working as they had in the city, only now for new masters. Some few gnomes had escaped in the aftermath of the battle however, eluding their drow pursuers in the Underdeep and the drow were wise enough to know they would return at the head of a vengeful army.

The numbers of House na'Khotan were too depleted by the Sundering and the battle to seize Murellin to hold off an assault on the city, leaving the drow no choice but to use their newly enslaved gnomes as reinforcements. Knowing the slaves would turn on them the moment a gnome army approached the city however, the drow chose a grisly but foolproof way of ensuring obedience. Heavy doses of poison were fed to the slaves in their meagre daily rations, slaying all but a few who were promptly dispatched by the knife. As the gnome army continued marching towards Murellin, the mages and priests of House na'Khotan set to work animating the corpses, creating an army of undead to meet the coming force.

When the gnomes entered the cavern of Murellin, they were horrified to find a host of their kin consigned to undeath





and waiting to meet them in battle. Rage at the drow for this heinous act overcame their horror however, and the battle was joined. Again, the drow were victorious and took enough prisoners to replenish the ranks of their slaves. Though the hatred of the gnomes for House na'Khotan has never faded, they never again dared attack Murellin alone.

With the threat of the gnomes removed, the drow discovered the true value of the city of Murellin. Beneath the city, protected by its walls and fortifications, lay a mithral mine of tremendous wealth. Its existence had been kept secret from the drow, a secret none of the gnomes revealed even under pain of death. Despite its richness however, it was a perilous place, full of oozes, poisonous gas, crumbling rock and other dangers that caused a high death rate among the gnome slaves House na'Khotan forced to work in its depths.

Determined to reclaim a source of such great wealth, the gnomes had set their thoughts to recruiting allies for the next assault on the drow. With tales of drow cruelty and waiting gold, the gnomes had found the help they were looking for among the humans of the surface. Unlike the previous wars with the gnomes, this one was slow and arduous, lasting for generations of human lives, but again, the drow were victorious.

The three wars with the gnomes, though more than three centuries apart, had depleted the population of House na'Khotan to a dangerously low number. Faced with near-certain defeat should another war come soon, the drow knew they had two options. They could either abandon Murellin and its mithral mine, or they could find some way to increase their population. They chose the latter.

At first, the drow of House na'Khotan attempted to increase their population in a regimen of selected breeding and procreation, but this had only a negligible impact on the House's reproduction. The fear of another war growing greater daily in their minds, House na'Khotan turned to alchemy to increase the fertility of their people.

The process was long and painstaking and yielded results that were less than what had been hoped for, but it was enough for the House to begin to recover. Fortunately, by the time the gnomes made another attempt to reclaim Murellin, House na'Khotan was ready to meet them. This time, the gnomes themselves were outnumbered by the host of surface races recruited with promises of wealth to make war in the depths. After finally throwing back the assault, the drow turned their attention again to the surface world they had left behind so long ago. Many humans had been captured and enslaved in the last battle of the war and, under the most persuasive torments the drow could devise,

revealed everything House na'Khotan needed to know to send spies safely to the surface.

Finding the path to the surface was simple, as it had been trod so recently by so many and spies sent by the na'Khotan were some of the first drow to venture beneath the open sky in a millennia. The work was difficult and many spies did not return, but enough information came back regarding the happenings on the surface the drow felt it wisest to continue the practice.

Meanwhile, House na'Khotan continued using its alchemical concoctions to increase the drow birth-rate, never considering there might be side effects. The first female to give birth to a pale-skinned, black-haired child was a spy recently returned from the surface. Assuming the woman had been foolish enough to lie down with a surface elf, the rulers of House na'Khotan subjected mother and child to torture and sacrifice. Though she pleaded her ignorance, her cries were ignored as the lies they must be. However, a year later there was another such birth, this time to a female who had never left Murellin. Soon, the drow learned the truth; that the alchemy increasing their birth-rate had also damaged them, making the House prone to albinism, which manifests in drow with pale skin, black hair and grey eyes as its primary physical symptoms.

For a time, the House simply killed any such children at the moment of their birth, until one of the House's spies who had barely escaped the surface with her life, Urthisa na'Khotan, came up with another idea. The use of drow spies on the surface was so difficult, she said, because of the obvious physical features of drow. Even with the best disguise, drow could not always hide their true nature and magical illusions to conceal the spy's race were too easily detected. The albinos, Urthisa argued, could serve as spies on the surface and never concern themselves with disguises of any kind, so strongly did they resemble surface elves. The rulers of the House saw the wisdom of her words, and since then, the na'Khotan have groomed their albino offspring to work as spies in the surface world. Approximately one in every 20 births is an albino child, perhaps half of which will survive to adulthood.

Culture

House na'Khotan was the last House to re-establish relations with the remainder of drow society and remains the most separate of the Houses. Though they remain withdrawn and isolated from all others in the Underdeep, the na'Khotan maintain a network of surface spies that outstrips any other such effort by the drow. They also trade with the surface as much or more than any other drow culture, as they have found the surface races comprise an eager market for the mithral mined beneath Murellin.

The enmity between House na'Khotan and the deep gnomes has never abated and the na'Khotan drow despise them above all other creatures, even the surface elves. Slave traders know they can always find a market for gnome slaves in the lands of the na'Khotan.

The insularity of the na'Khotan has created a heavily clannish mindset in the House, who are distrustful and suspicious of any outsiders. Conversely, na'Khotan feel a stronger connection to others of their House than is usually the case with drow.

The albino children of House na'Khotan are another story altogether. Tolerated for their usefulness as spies on the surface, such children resemble surface elves far too much to ever be accepted in society. They are kept in isolation during their early childhood, being tutored by drow and educated slaves in how to pass for a surface elf, including such things as mannerisms, speaking without a drow accent and so on. Unsurprisingly, these traits only make them more loathed among the remainder of the na'Khotan population.

This mistreatment of those they would send out as spies has backfired on the na'Khotan in the past, particularly those spies sent to infiltrate communities of surface elves. After a lifetime of prejudice and abuse at the hands of their fellow drow, some of these spies have been overwhelmed by the acceptance and joy they have found amongst the surface elves and have turned their backs completely on their old people. This is an exceptionally dangerous choice for them to make, not only because the na'Khotan will certainly send assassins after any spy who abandons them, but because the revelation of the spy's true nature to the surface elves might easily result in death as well.

Religion

The most dominant religion in the lands of the na'Khotan is Kez'Skul, the Trickster, but it is only recently that this became the case. In the earlier days of the House, many of the drow gods were worshipped by its members and no single cult was ever able to achieve dominance.



However, as the na'Khotan involved themselves more and more with the happenings on the surface world, trading through proxies and establishing a wide-flung network of spies, the worship of Kez'Skul inexorably became ascendant in their culture. There are still a number of other gods worshipped, most notably Alsythuth the Bloodied Coin and Ydrillia, but for now the Trickster ranks above all.

House Features:

- ☛ A drow of House na'Khotan can purchase mithral items from his own people for ten percent less than the listed cost.
- ☛ Only the drow of House na'Khotan produce albino offspring, drow which can pass for surface elves with their pale skin and black hair. Though persecuted in their home, these albinos can move about in the surface world without being the focus of the kind of prejudice that usually welcomes the drow. Albino children have identical abilities to other drow of House na'Khotan, except they suffer an additional -2 penalty to Constitution and are not subject to the usual light sensitivity of their dark elf kin.

House Skills: Gather Information, Hide

Favoured Class: Rogue

Predominant Alignment: Chaotic evil

Predominant Religion: Kez'Skul

House Pelshothe

Renowned craftsmen and traders, the drow of House Pelshothe are well-known throughout the lands of the dark elves for their skill at artifice and commerce, as well as the distinctive weapons and armour used by the House. Though one of the last Houses to re-establish contact with other drow, they have grown and thrived in the years since and have become one of the foremost economic powers of the drow.

Background

One of the smallest groups to survive the Sundering, the House of Pelshothe fled for many miles through the Underdeep, leaving the weak and the old where they fell, until those strong enough to have survived the seemingly endless days of the journey at last collapsed from exhaustion.

Tired and bloodied, the warriors and mages of House Pelshothe prepared to meet the drow's pursuers, listening intently in the utter darkness for the sound of approaching feet. Above the gurgle of nearby water and the low rumble of shifting stone in the deep however, there was only silence. The drow of House Pelshothe waited anxiously, trembling in exhaustion and terror, but no scaled-skinned shangu rushed forward to consume them, no lumbering ogre charged into their midst. At last, almost unbelieving of their good fortune, the drow realised they had somehow run far and fast enough to reach safety.

Not willing to trust this good fortune too far, the drow of House Pelshothe took time to rest and recuperate before moving on, following the sounds of water until they came at last to a tangled web of caves surrounding a great underground river. With such an abundance of food and water at the ready, the leaders of House Pelshothe chose to make these caves their temporary home. They had no way to know it would soon become a permanent abode.

The shangu had not truly given up the search for the bounty of easy prey that had bumbled unsuspectingly into their

lands, sniffing out the trail of the drow with their magic and enslaved servants. Scouts left behind by the rulers of House Pelshothe discovered the slow but steady pursuit of the shangu and returned to the rest of the House with this terrible news. The decision to keep running was made in moments.

To slow the pursuit of the shangu, the mages of House Pelshothe used their spells to collapse the entrances to the tunnels inhabited by the drow, before the entire House began making its slow way downstream. The journey was no more than a few days old, however, when it abruptly ended at the lip of a waterfall plunging more than a thousand feet into the unknown darkness below. There seemed no way to descend the glass-smooth rock beneath the cataract, much as there seemed no way to escape through the twisting tunnels that surrounded the river. Convinced this would be their last stand, the drow of House Pelshothe prepared for battle. It never came. For reasons the Pelshothe never knew but gladly accepted, the shangu did not pursue them past the collapsed tunnels.

Now, however, the Pelshothe found themselves sealed in. The scouts who went to explore the tunnels found a tortured labyrinth with no way out, but which was inhabited by a nightmarish menagerie of slimes and oozes. The few mages capable of casting *fly* who descended into the depths of the earth beside the rushing waterfall returned to report that there was nothing at the bottom save an enormous underground lake, again with no exits. The idea of clearing



the collapsed tunnel was abandoned every time it was mentioned, as that would mean directly exposing House Pelshothe to the shangu yet again. Resigned at last to their fate, the rulers of the House chose to remain where they were, to regroup and rebuild until they felt they were strong enough to brave the Underdeep again. They named their new settlement Roszhan.

As they explored their surroundings and took stock of their resources, the Pelshothe drow made a sobering discovery. Despite the plentiful food, water and air to care for the immediate needs of the dark elves, there was little enough else to be found in these tunnels. The most abundant resource that they possessed were great beds of clay around the great river. Coal was present in plenty as well, along with a number of gemstones, but the best efforts of the Pelshothe craftsmen were unable to locate any metal ore at all.


This situation became rather more pressing when the Pelshothe learned they were not, after all, alone in this place. The eerie stillness of Roszhan was broken with the sudden attack of creatures the drow had never before encountered. Though far less dangerous than the shangu, these morgoshe (see page 226) were savage foes and the Pelshothe paid a heavy price to drive them from Roszhan, forcing them to retreat back down the waterfall from whence they had come. Though the brief but brutal war supplanted every other priority for a time, its aftermath made the absence of metal ore in the tunnels around Roszhan all the more pressing. The warm and constantly wet environment was quickly taking its toll on the weapons and armour the Pelshothe did still possess, threatening to rust them into uselessness.

Drow craftsmen and mages set to work expanding the tunnels, creating great galleries in the stone as they searched for iron or even copper to forge into weapons, dumping hundreds of tons of stone down the waterfall, but the quest was in vain. The morgoshe were not enthused about the new drow practice of pouring rocks down on them and another war between the two races began, ending in bloody stalemate for both sides. Even with weapons scavenged from the dead morgoshe however, the situation was becoming dire for the Pelshothe.

A young mage and alchemist named Vezzia na'Pelshothe came up with the solution to the dilemma. She reasoned that it must be possible, through alchemy, to create an alternative to metal. After several failed attempts with bone and na'orsuin, she realised she was ignoring the largest resource the Pelshothe had at their disposal, the vast beds of clay in and around the river. Perfecting the process of alchemically treating the clay took some time and the end result was not quite as strong as steel, but soon, the Pelshothe had at their disposal a virtually limitless resource from which to craft ceramic weapons and armour, as well as dozens of other items.

The morgoshe soon returned to make war on the drow once again, but this time the dark elves were better prepared. Driving the fish-men before them in retreat, the drow at last discovered the network of hidden passageways and ladders the morgoshe had used to reach them. Pursuing





the morgoshe back to their submerged city with the help of the mages of the Pelshothe, the drow finally crushed their enemy.

This victory and the discovery of two hidden passages opening out of the sides of the deep lake left the Pelshothe free to expand their holdings, which they did gladly. However, any hopes this new territory would yield them a rich harvest of iron ore were soon dashed. Rather, the drow found more morgoshe.

For the next five centuries, battle seemed the natural state of the drow, alternated only occasionally with a swiftly-broken truce. After a gruelling war of attrition, the Pelshothe finally defeated the morgoshe tribes arrayed against them and enslaved the survivors.

With the pathways into the Underdeep open to them at last, the Pelshothe eagerly set out in search of other drow. Finding them took a long time however and, in the interim, the dark elves met many other species such as the deep dwarves and the bugbears and learned they had a knack for trade. Though it was certainly impossible to think of such hideous creatures as equals, the Pelshothe were weary of war and pleased to deal with another race in any way other than with the tip of a sword. By the time they re-established contact with other drow, the Pelshothe already enjoyed an extensive trade network with other races of the Underdeep.

Culture

Despite their long isolation, with no contact with other races save the frequent and bloody wars with the morgoshe, the Pelshothe are not an insular House. Rather, they are among the most gregarious of the dark elves. Their trading caravans have established routes from their home city of Roszhan to more than a dozen drow cities as well as many settlements of other races and the Pelshothe are a common sight in the streets of those cities.

Indeed, the Pelshothe are quite possibly the least warlike of the drow, having known little but war for so long. With the exception of the morgoshe, whom they actively loathe, the drow of House Pelshothe would rather engage in trade than war. However, they also do not shrink from combat when it is upon them. The centuries of battle with the morgoshian fish-men and the Pelshothe reliance on their ceramic weapons have taught them to be skilled warriors unconcerned with anything but victory.

The long years of war with the morgoshe and the toll those years exacted in dead drow had a deep and likely permanent impact on House Pelshothe. The concept of family was not completely abandoned, but the need for frequent procreation

became paramount in their society. Female members of childbearing age in House Pelshothe were expected to bear a child once every decade. Failure to do so resulted in intervention of the Noble House of the Pelshothe, who would first ensure the female and her mate (if she had one) were doing everything possible to conceive. If that failed, the female would be required to attempt procreation with other available males. Likewise, any male not otherwise attached was expected to make himself available to any female who demanded his help. This rather draconian approach to procreation has relaxed somewhat now that the Pelshothe are no longer at war but the Pelshothe are still extremely concerned with reproduction and tend to be promiscuous and have large families.

The measures taken by the Pelshothe can make determining the paternity of a child difficult to ascertain, so lineage is determined by the mother. This practice has made House Pelshothe into a matriarchal society, with females of the House assuming the top leadership roles. Males are not especially discriminated against however, unlike societies dominated by the priestesses of the Dark Mother.

Additionally, the constant intermarrying and interbreeding of the drow during the long years of war effectively brought the entire population into House Pelshothe. Unlike most other drow cities, the dark elves who live in places like Roszhan are – every man, woman and child – members of the House.

The vast trade network controlled by House Pelshothe gives those drow easy access to something that was for so long denied them - metal. However, after centuries of making and using ceramic arms, armour and sundry other items, it has become an essential part of House Pelshothe society. The sole exception is gold, which some of the drow use as adornment or jewellery. Using any other metal, with the exception of metal currency in trade, is considered an insult to the House and its history. One infraction might earn a stern warning, but a second will surely result in the individual's expulsion from the House itself and forfeiture of all his possessions.

Soon after mastering the craft of making weapons and armour from ceramic, the drow of House Pelshothe learned to create dyes and glazes for those items. Soon, each major family within the House as a whole had chosen its own colour. From deepest black to brilliant red to pale blue, the colours of the equipment provide an easy way for any member of House Pelshothe to determine what family any other member of the House belongs to.



Religion

The drow of House Pelshothe are not particularly religious. Among their numbers in the time of the Sundering there were only a very few priests and the only two to survive the trek through the Underdeep to Roszhan were clerics of Alsythuth and Olyet'Naru. Isolated in Roszhan, with no contact with any races beyond the wars with the morgoshe, there was little call for worship of Alsythuth the Bloodied Coin. On the other hand, Olyet'Naru was called on frequently as the drow sought a way to survive in their new environment.

Still, it is commonly held in House Pelshothe society that it was the drow who discovered the ways needed to survive, not Olyet'Naru, and his temples are little more than shrines even in the major cities of House Pelshothe.

House Features:

- ☛ A House Pelshothe drow may never use metal arms or armour, or he risks expulsion from and the enmity of his House.
- ☛ +2 House bonus on all Appraise, Bluff, Diplomacy and Gather Information skill checks. The drow of House Pelshothe are almost notoriously gregarious.

House Skills: The drow of House Pelshothe are constantly seeking to acquire new knowledge. The player of a House Pelshothe Player Character may pick any two skills from the *PHB* which always count as class skills for him.

Favoured Class: Fighter

Predominant Alignment: Neutral evil

Predominant Religion: Olyet'Naru

House Zhakhun

The drow of House Zhakhun are a warrior culture, but not in the militaristic way of House Draz'Kuri, instead caring more for personal strength and fortitude. One of the primary foundations of their culture is the hunt and they are known throughout the Underdeep for their prowess as trackers.

Background

House Zhakhun was, at the time of the Sundering, not a House at all but rather was a large force of drow warriors who had split off from the remainder of the drow to attempt a counterattack on the pursuing elves. It was not long after they left the drow host, however, that the rest of that host ran headlong into the advancing shangu, touching off the first true battle of the Sundering.

With the drow, elves and even the shangu thrown into confusion and fear by the sudden and awful battles, the warriors under the command of Orenth Zhakhun turned

about and marched to rejoin their people. They had taken too long already however and found themselves cut off from the rest of the drow by a series of collapsing tunnels.

Orenth Zhakhun was determined to rejoin with his people and led his warriors on a desperate march through the Underdeep, attempting to circumvent the barriers of caved-in passageways. As they travelled, they met other drow still fleeing the battle, mostly nothing more than a rabble of commoners, rushing leaderless through unknown tunnels and caverns. Pursued by a large force of shangu and ogres, they were overjoyed to see the warriors under Orenth Zhakhun.

Though his warriors wanted to meet the oncoming enemy face to face, to finally have the fight they had longed for but which the elves were no longer present to give them, Orenth Zhakhun was too wise to allow it, wise enough to know he knew nothing of these terrible creatures from the depths, or what their abilities might be. He ordered his warriors to retreat, taking the other drow with them as they fell back before the oncoming enemy. However, he could not deny his warriors all their chances to strike back at their foes and began dispatching groups of them to remain behind, to hunt and kill any enemy scouts or frontrunners.

No one of House Zhakhun knows how long this slow retreat went on, or of how much blood was spilled on both sides, but eventually the shangu gave up the chase, leaving Orenth Zhakhun's battered warriors and the frightened drow on their own in the trackless dark of the Underdeep. Though Orenth Zhakhun longed to turn his forces around, to strike back at the enemy, he knew that was a foolish notion. The drow were hungry, exhausted and lost somewhere in the Underdeep. Cursing fate, the mysterious shangu and, above all, the treasonous surface elves, Orenth ordered his people to move on.

For many years, the drow of House Zhakhun (as they had begun to refer to themselves) moved from place to place in the Underdeep, searching for the rest of their people and hunting the shangu wherever they could find them. Usually, this is what precipitated the move from one settlement to another, as the shangu's magic was able to circumvent any fortifications the drow were able to construct.

Eventually, forced out of yet another home, the drow came upon a wide underground lake with a large island in the middle, barely visible at the edge of their darkvision. The island and the lake were inhabited by a colony of morgoshe, most of which the drow slew. Enslaving the survivors, the drow occupied the island, which they named Veth Surzhil. Though this island was more defensible against the shangu

than any other place House Zhakhun had tried to call home, it was not without its disadvantages.

The most prominent problem was the lack of food. There was little in the way of edible fungus to be found in the area and the lake lacked enough fish to feed all of House Zhakhun. Under pain of torture, the newly enslaved morgoshe revealed where the drow could find herds of wild gursk. For a time, these beasts sustained the drow, but as the population grew, the drow still needed new food sources. Putting to use the skills learned during their long guerrilla war against the shangu, the drow warriors left Veth Surzhil to hunt for more beasts to feed their people.

Over time, these hunters encountered other races, such as orcs, goblins and deep gnomes, some of which they enslaved and others they did not. Those the drow left free were not left alone, however. The drow of House Zhakhun used their own strength and power to extort food and other supplies from the people they allowed to remain free. Slowly, this practice made hunting obsolete as a form of gathering food, but it had become so ingrained in the society of the drow that the practice of hunting continued unabated.

Now that food was no longer a concern however, the drow were no longer constrained to hunt unintelligent animals. Many remembered the old stories of their forebears hunting shangu as House Zhakhun retreated from the Sundering and so they set out in search of that deadly prey. Others merely took to hunting goblins and orcs in the winding paths of the Underdeep. Whole sets of traditions and rituals began to grow up around the hunt and more and more drow began to embrace it as a way of life, as a means of proving the superiority of the drow over all other races in the simplest way possible.

In time, the presence of the House Zhakhun hunters in the Underdeep came to the attention of the shangu, who had lost track of the drow after the last major conflict. Marshalling their forces, the shangu struck at Veth Surzhil and for the first time the drow were able to turn them back. Defeated, the shangu slunk back to their own cities in the depths of the Underdeep.

With the threat of the shangu removed for the time being at least,

the drow of House Zhakhun began to expand, founding new cities and enslaving or subjugating new races. Most of them spared little thought for the other drow by this point and so discovering the fate of the rest of their race or reuniting with them was not considered terribly important. Instead, the hunt took on ever-greater significance.

As the House Zhakhun hunters became more and more skilful, they grew bored with the potential quarry, longing for something that would prove a challenge. Many set out through the Underdeep, searching for shangu, deep trolls, aboleth, dragons and other creatures of great personal power that would make for thrilling quarry. Other hunters had a different idea, one that quickly became popular and is now in widespread practice, mostly in House Zhakhun but also among nobles of other drow cultures who happen to enjoy the hunt.

By this time, the drow of House Zhakhun had slaves from a variety of different races, from lowly kobolds to deadly trolls. Unlike most drow, House Zhakhun would occasionally breed its slaves, either to create new hybrids or to attempt to pass on certain desirable traits from one generation of slaves to the next. The hunters took it upon themselves to create an entirely new class of slaves, the prey-slave. Almost from the moment of his birth, a prey-slave is subjected to a rigorous regimen of training and conditioning. He is taught how to fight, how to hide, how to escape traps, how to survive in the Underdeep. In short,





he is taught how to be challenging quarry for a House Zhakhun hunter. Such is the training of these prey-slaves that they consider their role in the hunt as sacred as do the hunters.

The far-ranging activities of the House Zhakhun hunters inevitably brought them back into contact with other drow descended from survivors of the Sundering, first with a group of House Devoren Traders, then gradually with the remainder of their race.

Culture

The most important aspect of House Zhakhun culture is the hunt, as it has been for centuries and likely always will be. The Zhakhun drow view the hunt as a primal test, an ultimate trial of personal strength and skill, and think of it as proof of their innate superiority over all other beings.


This almost obsessive focus on personal strength and ability has come at the expense of the strength of society as a whole however and there is no true binding sense of community keeping the House intact. House Zhakhun is frequently rife with different factions and there is little or no communication between the various cities of the House. At this point, no city or faction has yet declared itself a separate House, but that day is surely coming soon.

The drow of House Zhakhun are the only drow to commonly use tattoos. Although the practice of tattooing is a simple enough art for the drow to master, their pitch-black skin makes normal tattooing an exercise in futility, as their skin tone would hide any ink used. However, the Zhakhun drow have mastered the ability to harvest luminescent ink from some of the glowing fungi that live in their lands. Properly prepared and applied, this ink can create glowing tattoos easily visible against a drow's skin. As a glowing tattoo would be a potential liability in hunting, the tattoos are often small and located on the upper arm, where they can be easily hidden.

Though these tattoos may seem pointless to outsiders, they are used by the drow of House Zhakhun to denote which city and faction each drow belongs to. Each of the factions has created a glyph to differentiate itself from the others and the tattoos almost always take the form of this glyph. When drow of House Zhakhun come upon each other in the Underdeep, they will commonly call on one another to reveal their glyphs, letting them know if the drow approaching are friendly, hostile or neither.

The drow of House Zhakhun are self-sufficient, as most of them are trained hunters and have the ability to survive the harsh world of the Underdeep on their own, if need be. However, this knowledge is not often put into practice outside of the hunt. In their cities and societies, the Zhakhun rely upon their slaves and upon the races they have subjugated. They are certainly not as dependent upon the abilities of slaves as are the drow of House Kolnahos but they do receive a great deal of their food and basic goods through the crushing levies they inflict on other races in the Underdeep.

The drow of House Zhakhun are taught to hunt from childhood and usually spend at least a decade or two of their youth ranging either alone or in small bands throughout the Underdeep, seeking prey and proof of their own abilities. Those drow of the lower classes seek to emulate their betters as much as possible by training themselves to hunt, but obviously cannot afford to spend decades wandering about the Underdeep and making no money at all.



By far the most common class of House Zhakhun is the ranger, though fighters, clerics and sorcerers are also in good supply.

Religion

House Zhakhun has its roots in the host of warriors under the command of Orenth Zhakhun at the time of the Sundering and though the culture and society of these drow has changed dramatically since that day, the worship of Thraud the Pitiless Blade has never faded from them.

However, Thraud is not the only god worshipped by the drow of House Zhakhun, who also revere Alsythuth, Olyet'Naru and Polshoath, all of whom the drow have associated somehow with hunting, whether from Alsythuth's control of raiders or Polshoath's governance over life. The drow of House Zhakhun also actively worship Belishtim, though her worship has nothing to do with hunting.

House Features:

- ☞ Bonus feat Track. All drow of House Zhakhun learn to track their prey from the time they are children.
- ☞ +2 bonus to Move Silently and Survival
- ☞ -2 penalty to Wisdom-based skill checks except Survival. Though they are exceptional hunters, the rash and overconfident House Zhakhun drow have often proven that they are not amongst the wisest of their race.

House Skills: Move Silently, Survival

Favoured Class: Ranger

Predominant Alignment: Neutral evil

Predominant Religion: Thraud (but also Alsythuth, Belishtim, Olyet'Naru and Polshoath)

Other Powers of the Drow

The Seekers of na'Koth

Many drow know the name of the Seekers of na'Koth but few know anything more than that about this shadowy organisation. The Seekers are everywhere and nowhere, hidden within drow society and working towards what ends no one knows, though there is of course a wealth of rumours. Generally, they are considered to be nothing more than information brokers, albeit the most resourceful and reliable ones available. The true purpose of the Seekers runs somewhat deeper than that.

Background

More days after the Sundering, the warrior Drem na'Koth was leading a small, bedraggled group of his people through the unfamiliar ways of the Underdeep. Stealing a

few moments' rest in a dank, stale cavern, the thoughts of the great warrior turned to the reasons such a terrible fate had befallen his people - first the Great Betrayal, then the Sundering. With what he later called a moment of clarity, he understood how this had happened, that it was ignorance that caused the downfall of the drow; ignorance of the martial prowess of the surface elves, ignorance of what lurked in the depths of the Underdeep. Drem understood then that knowledge was the key to the future of the drow. Knowledge is what would let the drow survive the horrors in the Underdeep, what would strengthen the drow for their eventual return to the surface for vengeance against the surface elves. Knowledge, Drem understood at that moment, was the mightiest weapon one could wield, an invisible blade to overcome any enemy.

In the years that followed, once the immediate danger of the Sundering, of the surface elves and of the shangu was past, Drem began his quest to bring his vision to fruition. He gathered together a handful of other drow whom he knew well, forming the core of what would soon grow into a much larger organisation. These were the first Seekers of na'Koth.

Drem's original vision had simply been the creation of a storehouse of knowledge, one which would serve the drow well in the present and in the future. However, he also understood that without wealth and influence, the Seekers could never grow and indeed were unlikely to survive even to the end of Drem's life. It was then he realised knowledge could be more than a weapon, it could be a commodity of nearly infinite value. Thus the Seekers entered the business which has since become their primary reason for being, acting as information brokers throughout the lands of the drow.

Wealth began to pour into the coffers of the Seekers as the temples and Noble Houses of the drow clamoured for the services of Drem na'Koth and his followers, offering up chests of gold to know the most closely-kept secrets of their rivals. In this sudden demand for their services, the Seekers saw an opportunity.

Drem na'Koth's agenda was always to strengthen the drow race, to make them powerful enough to dominate the Underdeep, mighty enough to come forth again from beneath the surface to destroy the traitorous surface elves. To his mind, some of the factions rising among the drow were well-suited to those aims, while others were less so. Further, he decided the Seekers must do all in their power to prevent one of these factions from achieving its inevitable goal of dominion over all the drow, for while competition builds strength, the stagnancy of a single power would lessen it. It was with this agenda firmly in mind that Drem

na’Koth began brokering secrets to the different powers of the drow.

Drem was always careful not to show any blatant favouritism in his dealings with the temples and Noble Houses. Though there were no truly great powers among the drow at that time, there were many more powerful than the Seekers, a small band of warriors and spies without even a central base. Drem knew the Seekers could not yet withstand a real enemy. Therefore, he presented a front of objectivity, which still holds today. In the case of dealing with a power Drem felt was antithetical to the best interests of the drow, he would either charge a ridiculous price or claim the information the power wanted was, simply, unavailable.

This tactic did not work perfectly, of course, and a number of Noble Houses, temples and other powers of the drow suspected the Seekers were doing exactly what they were doing. However, it worked well enough to prevent anyone from openly declaring war on the Seekers, who grew more and more powerful with the gold their knowledge earned.

This new gold was put to good use by the Seekers, who spent it on the construction of a base of operations, a fortified warren built into a solid column of granite in the Underdeep and known among the Seekers as the Hidden Keep. As its name suggests, its location is a closely guarded secret of the Seekers, one of the few they will sell to no one.

With the growth in power came growth in numbers, as the Seekers expanded into still more drow settlements and cities, recruiting new agents with dizzying speed. Several times, this practice could have destroyed the Seekers, as organisations that had come to see Drem na’Koth’s Hidden Blades as a threat slipped a spy into the ranks of the Seekers. In all cases so far, however, any spy’s duplicity was discovered before he could do any great harm to the Seekers. Since those incidents, the Seekers have been far more circumspect in who they recruit.

After all the millennia that have passed since the Sundering, the Seekers of na’Koth have remained surprisingly true to the original goals of Drem na’Koth - gathering information and knowledge to strengthen the drow upon their return to the surface world. In addition to the Hidden Keep, the Seekers have carefully concealed bases in almost every drow city, a safe house for the use of the Hidden Blades.


Culture

The culture within the Seekers of na’Koth revolves around secrecy and patience. The goals of the organisation are incredibly long term in scope, focusing on dominion by the drow over the Underdeep and the eventual return of the dark elves to the surface of the world, where they may take



their vengeance upon the traitorous elves and the various allies of their hated kin. Over the course of the centuries, naturally, other goals come and go, but the Seekers always keep an eye on the final prize, envisioned by Drem na’Koth in the time of the Sundering as he leaned on his shield in exhaustion and lamented the fate of his people.

Some of the Seekers believe their organisation has become *too* patient, that the time has come for the drow to control the Underdeep and at last make full-scale war upon the surface elves. They believe the Seekers have become so used to the business of gathering information and playing at the Game of Bones that they are now unwilling to embrace



the fulfilment of their mission. Thus far however, these voices are in the minority.

Seekers have little trust for anyone, even those inside their own ranks, given that attempts to advance in rank sometimes involve assassinations (see Leadership below). Those outside the organisation however, are the true subjects of suspicion. Information is a priceless commodity to the Noble Houses and temples and there have been many attempts (some successful) to kill or capture a member of the Seekers. The agents of the Seekers keep to the shadows and remain hidden, careful never to reveal who they truly are. A drow who identifies himself as a Seeker is almost certainly lying.

As a result of the work they do to carry out Drem na’Koth’s vision, Seekers tend to believe they know what is best for the drow and what must be done to achieve it.

The dominant alignments among the Seekers are chaotic evil and neutral evil.

Leadership

The Seekers of na’Koth are a large organisation, the exact workings of which are privy only to a few. It is led by a single drow known as the Seer, who fills the role Drem na’Koth himself played in the Seekers. The title of Seer however, was invented by Drem’s successor Brezthal na’Ornn; Drem himself never took a title.

Below the Seer are the Eyes of na’Koth, a group of seven drow responsible for maintaining the Seekers’ huge store of knowledge and directing the activities of the other Seekers. Next rank the Hidden Blades, those Seekers who are tasked with carrying out the orders of the Eyes and of the Seer, be it meeting with a potential client or investigating some strange rumour in the wilds of the Underdeep. Lastly, there are the Ears of na’Koth, paid informants stationed in every city of the drow, whose function it is to learn whatever they can and pass on any information to one of the Hidden Blades. Frequently, contact with a single Hidden Blade is the only contact one of the Ears has with the Seekers and even they rarely know the Blade’s true identity.

It is virtually impossible for one of the Ears of na’Koth to ever achieve a higher ranking within the organisation; they are rarely even considered to be truly a part of the Seekers. From time to time, an Ear of na’Koth who has truly distinguished himself in some way may be tested as a Hidden Blade, but it is a rarity. The Hidden Blades are usually recruited carefully from the population of the drow, with special attention given those accomplished thieves and assassins who have not pledged themselves to Mu’Ushket.

Additionally, drow of a high social ranking make a prime prospect for recruitment.

From the Hidden Blades come the Eyes of na’Koth, a prestigious position only made available when one of the Eyes dies. Likewise, advancement to the position of Seer is only possible for the seven Eyes of na’Koth. As all posts within the organisation, with the exception of the Ears, are held for life, advancement can be agonisingly slow for the ambitious.

Assassination is a perfectly acceptable form of advancement among the Seekers, whether moving from Hidden Blade to Eye or even Eye to Seer. The Seekers consider any of their members unable to discover and thwart an assassination attempt to be unworthy members, given that the sole stated purpose of the organisation is the gathering of information. However, most Seekers are indeed worthy of their membership in the order, which makes assassination attempts an extremely risky business, considering the consequences of failure are generally death or enslavement. Failing assassination, a drow holds a post in the Seekers until he resigns it, a very rare occurrence, or until he dies.

Place in Drow Society

The most common function of the Seekers in drow society is their role as information brokers. To the temples and Noble Houses involved in the Sheathed War (see page 88), the Seekers are an invaluable but hideously expensive resource through which they may be able to discover the deepest secrets of their rivals. In the minds of most drow, that is where the role of the Seekers begins and ends.

However, the Seekers have deeper aims, goals the entire organisation is dedicated to fulfilling. To serve those ends, the Seekers sometimes become involved in the Sheathed War on their own, often acting through proxies to aid or hinder one of the other combatants, using the group’s tremendous influence to manipulate events from behind the scenes, always with an eye towards the ultimate fulfilment of Drem na’Koth’s vision.

The Cabal

To most drow, the Cabal exist only in rumour, a small band of powerful, renegade mages determined to force their rulership upon the entire race of drow. As much of a simplification as that may be, it strikes uncomfortably close to the truth.

Background

The Cabal is relatively new among the powers of the drow, a group that has only been in existence for a little more than

1,000 years. The names of its founders are a carefully-kept secret, as is its membership and even its agenda. Secrecy is, in fact, the essence of the organisation, the thing which helps it remain both powerful and feared.

In fact, the Cabal was formed by a group of powerful drow wizards who call themselves the Circle of Five. With the passing of the years and the waxing of their power, these wizards had grown disillusioned and distrustful of all those who hold the reins of power in drow society, from the Noble Houses to the temples. The wizards of the Cabal came to believe those entities were unworthy to be in control of the destiny of a race as mighty as the drow, that they were frittering away the strength of the dark elf people in an unending series of petty conflicts, trivial vendettas, childish displays of strength and the maddening, pointless quest to outdo one another in the Game of Bones. The wizards were certain they could do better.

Rather than declaring their independence from their fellow drow or proclaiming their apostasy from the cult of Ydrillia, which they regard as hopelessly mired in mediocrity, the five mages entirely divorced themselves from drow society, even going so far as to orchestrate their own apparent deaths, before withdrawing to a hidden corner of the Underdeep, where they formed the Cabal. From this lair, cloaked and warded with innumerable spells and enchantments, the wizards of the Cabal have worked for a millennia, labouring to bring about their own vision for the future of the drow.

Culture

It is the belief of the Cabal that rulership of the drow should not be dispersed among dozens of factions of the wealthy or the faithful, but should reside instead with a single group of the powerful.

As mighty as the founders of the Cabal may be, they realise this is a lofty goal. Their race is too chaotic, too distrustful, too individualistic to allow itself to be led by any one group. Even if enough power could be mustered to enforce obedience, the threat of insurrection would always loom. With this in mind, the Cabal has chosen to work through the existing powers of the drow rather than attempt to replace them. It is more effective to subvert rulers to one's will than to expend the resources needed to openly supplant them, the wizards believe. Moreover, as long as they remain invisible behind the scenes, the other powers of the drow will not be able to move effectively against them, as there will be no place for them to strike.

Recruitment is handled very carefully with the Cabal. Not only do they insist on bringing only the most competent wizards and sorcerers into their ranks, they also must ensure as best as possible that the potential recruit will be able




to maintain the secrecy the Cabal thrives on. The Cabal actively recruits mages of all skill levels, though most new entrants are extremely talented neophytes, who are much easier to train and indoctrinate than their more powerful peers.

The Cabal currently numbers some 150 mages of varying abilities, most of whom are stationed throughout a number of drow cities working to carry out the Cabal's agenda and very few of whom know the identities of other members of the Cabal. The great Spellhold of the Cabal is usually home to no more than a score of wizards and sorcerers.

Leadership

The Cabal is still firmly ruled by the five wizards who first created it, mages who have long since cast off their mortal lives and embraced undeath as liches. They rarely, if ever, leave the Spellhold any more, relying instead on proxies to carry out their orders and directives. It is remarkable indeed that these five mighty wizards have maintained their capability, even willingness, to work together throughout the centuries. There has not always been agreement but the Spellhold has not yet been the scene of violent disagreement between the liches.

The number 'five' is considered significant by the Cabal, if for no other reason than the fact it represents the five founders of the organisation. The hierarchy of the Cabal below the founders is therefore arranged in five Tiers of



power, from Fifth (the lowest) to First (ranking just below the Cabal in influence and power). The five founders of the Cabal are still known as the Circle. Each Tier of the Cabal has a limited number of total positions, as determined and sometimes altered by the Circle, but as with the number of the Circle and the number of Tiers, the number of positions in any given Tier is always a number divisible by five. Currently, the First Tier has 10 positions, the Second Tier has 15, the Third Tier a total of 20 and the Fourth Tier is made up of 25 mages. The sole exception is the Fifth Tier, which has no set number to limit its membership.

The Cabal was founded on the principle that the right to rule the drow should fall to the strong, not the wealthy or the faithful and it is through strength in magic that members of the Cabal advance from one Tier to the next. Whenever a member of one Tier feels ready to move up to the next, he must do two things. First, he must discover the identity of a member of the higher Tier, which is no small feat as the Cabal keeps the identities of its members concealed from those of lower Tiers. Second, upon discovering the identity of the mage, he must defeat him in a magical duel.

There is no requirement that such duels end in the death of one of the combatants, but it is exceedingly rare that both survive. If the challenger prevails, he is elevated to the next Tier and the defeated defender (if he lives) is relegated down one Tier. However, the Circle prizes strength and despises weakness, so much so that a member of the Cabal who is defeated by a challenger will almost certainly be seen as a weakness in the organisation as a whole, a weakness that cannot be tolerated. Unless the disgraced mage is able to do something very quickly to prove his continued worth to the organisation, it is likely he will have survived the duel only to find himself murdered on orders of the Circle.

Technically, these duels of ascension should involve a challenge, an acceptance of that challenge and a stating of the time and place of the duel. In practice, this is rarely the case. In the past, the Circle has turned a blind eye to the breaking of these rules, as they believe any member of the Cabal should be ready at all times to defend himself. However, after several relatively recent, highly visible duels of ascension, particularly one only a few years ago in which two archmages battling for a position on the First Tier obliterated half the drow city of Leer'atz, the Circle is urging its followers to be more circumspect.

Place in Drow Society

The Cabal has no place in drow society. The organisation, its rulers and its members are considered enemies of nearly every drow culture. After the tremendous destruction in Leer'atz, many of the Noble Houses placed bounties on the heads of every member of the Cabal, not out of sympathy

for the mangled city, but out of concern the same thing might happen in their own domains.

The cult of Ydrillia in particular is aligned against the Cabal, eagerly hunting and killing any members it can find. The idea of a group of powerful mages who have turned their backs on She of the Veil is terrifying to the priesthood of Ydrillia, who fear that if it is not stopped, it may result in even more mages turning from the cult.

Dark Fey

More nomadic even than House Devoren, the loose association of drow known collectively as the Dark Fey wander the Underdeep unconstrained by any sense of civilisation, turning away from drow society to embrace the ancient roots of their race.

Background

The Dark Fey are the true free spirits of the drow, dark elves who have abandoned the culture of their people and sought instead a return to the faerie roots of the drow. Unburdened and unbounded by society and civilisation, they have embraced chaos and disorder.

There are those who argue the Dark Fey have always been present, part and parcel of the drow and a throwback to their fey heritage. Others argue the Dark Fey are a more recent development. Many believe they are not what they seem to be at all, but instead are an aspect of the Darkling Sky (see page 85), determined to lure dark elves away from proper worship of the drow pantheon.

One reason there is so much confusion about the Dark Fey is because of the very nature of its people. They are predisposed to tricks, lies and deceit, with just enough truth thrown in to make it impossible to know when one of them is speaking honestly. They are not fond of speaking to other drow, let alone educating them and every drow who has attempted to learn the truth about the Dark Fey has come away with a radically different story. Even the name is something imposed on them from without, as the Dark Fey are not the sort to allow themselves to be categorised together in a single group.

In fact, the Dark Fey were 'founded' in the years following the Sundering. Years of endless privation, misery and fear drove some of the drow utterly mad. While many of these insane drow were used as sacrifices to the gods, others wandered off into the Underdeep. Very few of these drow survived any significant length of time in the trackless Underdeep, but some endured through the perils. There was one, a male drow with no name he ever gave, who would wander into drow cities from time to time, speaking



of the majesty of the Underdeep and the secrets it had taught him, now that he had thrown off his old life and embraced his fey roots.

His words struck a chord in the hearts of a very few drow, who gave up their lives in drow society and struck out into the wilds of the Underdeep. Like those before them, few survived, but there were enough who endured the dangers to form a loose association.

The Dark Fey, as they soon came to be known, were quickly branded heretics by the cults of the drow and ceased coming anywhere near the drow cities. Still, from time to time, a drow would choose to abandon his life and station in drow society and strike out into the Underdeep to join them. Only those who truly sought to become the Dark Fey have ever managed to locate the others; the many cult-sponsored attempts to destroy them have always met with utter failure.

Culture

Every member of the Dark Fey is at least a little bit mad. Whether he was made so by magic, by too much drug use or even by witnessing and partaking in rituals that broke his sanity seems to make no real difference. Upon leaving behind his old life and seeking out the Dark Fey, the drow also usually leaves behind his old name, taking up a new appellation upon joining the Dark Fey.

The Dark Fey are devoted to the Underdeep. They consider it their natural domain, and see themselves as students and

shepherds of its trackless depths. They believe the life they lead, of utter freedom and complete self-determination, is the natural lifestyle for the drow and feel sorrow for those drow still trapped in their stinking cities by the oppressive grasp of greedy beings masquerading as gods.

The goal of a Dark Fey is to become attuned to his fey roots, to that element of faerie which still resides deep in the soul of every drow. They have embraced the trickster aspect of the fey, but not in the benign spirit of many faeries of the surface. They entrap and destroy wanderers in the Underdeep, deceiving travellers with false paths and cunning traps, leading them to their doom. This, they believe, is the essence of the Underdeep and they honour it by destroying those who do not understand. Malicious and mischievous, they consider all races other than themselves as trespassers in the Underdeep.

The Dark Fey contain the only significant number of druids in the lands of the drow. Many members of the Dark Fey are multi-classed, having abandoned their old profession to take up the path of the druid upon joining the Dark Fey. There are some sorcerers in its ranks, as well as rangers and rogues.


The Dark Fey have no central organisation, no leaders and no servants. They wander the Underdeep in small numbers, meeting once every year to drink, celebrate and mate. Each year the meeting is in a different place, yet each year the drow of the Dark Fey know exactly where to go.

The other races of the Underdeep consider the Dark Fey to be more like a natural hazard than an enemy, just as likely to ignore an unprotected trading caravan as they are to attack it. Though chaotic and slightly mad, the Dark Fey are not stupid and will not engage in a fight they cannot win, unless there is no other choice.

Place in Society

The Dark Fey have no position in drow society, as they have divorced themselves from it entirely, eschewing all of its trappings and conventions, even their own names, to live as they believe the drow should.

When rumours of the Dark Fey first reached the ears of other drow, they were ignored as inconsequential. As time passed, however, and the rumours continued, the clergy of most drow cults denounced the Dark Fey as heretics and the faithful among the drow began to hunt them. It proved all but impossible to find, let alone capture, the Dark Fey and innumerable hunting parties returned empty-handed. Fearing they would look like fools if they continued the search, the clergy of the various drow gods ceased to hunt the renegade dark elves, publicly dismissing them as



meaningless. Though they are still considered heretics, the drow cults no longer concern themselves with trying to destroy the Dark Fey.

For their part, the Dark Fey studiously avoid the cities of the drow, knowing that to enter one would mean capture and, most likely, sacrifice to one of the false gods worshipped by their benighted kin.

Religion

Most of the Dark Fey have no true religion in the traditional sense of the drow. Rather, they believe the entire world is occupied by various spirits and that the Underdeep itself is one enormous spirit. They attempt to communicate with this spirit, to carry out its wishes and understand its mind. They believe that the druids of the Dark Fey receive their spells directly from this being.

The Dark Fey believe the true nature of the drow lies in the race's fey roots and that only by embracing the vestiges of faerie that remain within them can they become what they were meant to become.

There are some Dark Fey, presumably the less insane of their number, that continue to worship the drow god Kez'Skul, the Trickster. At the Games Master's option, it may be that Kez'Skul is responsible for the creation of the Dark Fey themselves, that he has deceived the ultimate deceivers into worshipping him unwittingly.

Darkling Sky

Hunted and hated by drow society, the Darkling Sky is perhaps the most secret organisation in all of drow culture. It has to be, otherwise it would never survive.

Background

No one in the Darkling Sky knows how far back the roots of this organisation reach, nor do they know who is responsible for forming it. Most believe it has existed in one form or another since the days of the goblin war, when the drow discovered new gods in the depths of the earth.

In fact, it is not so old as that, though the Darkling Sky is still ancient in its origins, formed only a few generations after the Sundering. It began in House Kolnahos, unlikely though that is, in the time after that House discovered the tribes of goblins and hobgoblins living nearby the Kolnahos city of Klat'huan. Still filled with bitterness for the Sundering and goblin war that preceded it, the drow captured and enslaved these goblinoids, torturing them, working them to death, conducting magical experiments on them, all in a futile effort to slake their thirst for revenge,

a thirst that only grew stronger with each goblin corpse dropped into the crevasse that split Klat'huan in half. As the hunters and warriors of House Kolnahos ventured into the Underdeep in search of more races to enslave and the chants to Polshoath, the Dark Lady of Agony rose ever higher, echoing in the canyon of Klat'huan, some very few drow began to question the wisdom of the path their people followed.

The first of those to question were the descendants of Carryzn na'Baruss, the great warrior of House Kolnahos whose bravery and skill allowed the House to escape the grinding mill of the Sundering before they were completely destroyed. These two, a brother and sister who had followed their family's path as warriors, looked at the recent history of the drow and were dismayed. The drow were beaten, almost broken, scattered through the Underdeep like leaves before a gale. To the minds of Carielie and Lashan na'Baruss, the drow had first set foot on the path towards their current calamitous situation by turning away from the old ways, the old gods, during the goblin war. By embracing new gods, by their willingness to do anything to destroy the enemy, the drow had laid the foundations of their own undoing. The siblings were not so foolish as to openly speak of these thoughts, choosing instead to bide their time.

When a caravan of House Devoren Traders first made contact with House Kolnahos, the children of na'Baruss chose to act, leaving their people behind to join the caravan. The two of them lived an existence as nomadic as any of the drow of House Devoren for the remainder of their lives. They practiced tremendous caution in which drow they spoke to, rightfully frightened of the fate they both knew would be theirs if they were discovered. They espoused a return to the old ways, the old gods. They spoke of a return to the surface of the world, where the drow might live again in peace with their elven kin beneath the darkling sky.

In the end, their precautions were not enough and the heretical thoughts of both brother and sister were discovered; they spent the rest of their short and miserable lives as slaves before finally meeting their deaths on the altar (the Dark Mother for Lashan, Thraud for Carielie). Though they died terribly, the seed they had planted in the hearts of some drow did not.

The Darkling Sky remains today as it was when it was founded, a group of drow of good or neutral heart who desire a return to the old ways, to the surface, to life as it was before the new gods came and corrupted the souls of the drow.



Culture

The culture in the Darkling Sky is, like the rest of drow society, one of suspicion and paranoia. This is for good reason, as membership in this group, whose very existence is denied by most temples and Noble Houses, is nonetheless always punished by torture and death.

It is the belief of the Darkling Sky that the drow have lost their way, through their fault and through the influence of the new gods discovered in the Underdeep during the days of the goblin war. The Darkling Sky is, at its core, an attempt to turn the drow away from the culture that resulted in their banishment to the Underdeep. Their ultimate hope is that the drow will turn away from the terrible path they now follow.

In practice, however, the Darkling Sky is primarily concerned with not being discovered and destroyed by other drow. Within drow culture, they are considered heretics and traitors, weaklings and fools who must be eliminated before they spread the poison of their beliefs to others. A member of the Darkling Sky who is discovered and captured can expect a long, exquisitely painful death.

The Darkling Sky offers hope to the rare drow who survives childhood and adolescence in drow society without falling into the evil that pervades drow culture. These individuals are usually discovered and eliminated long before the Darkling Sky is even aware of them however, as maintaining a noble heart without calling attention to it in the world of the drow is a narrow line to walk.

Leadership

The Darkling Sky is divided into small groups called glades. A glade consists of only three or four individuals, most of whom do not even know the names of the others in their glade. This is a necessary precaution to prevent a captured member of the Darkling Sky from revealing the names and identities of other members of the organisation through torture or after death through a *speak with dead* spell.

Each glade has a single leader, who knows how to leave a message or establish contact with someone else in the organisation. There is no central command structure in the Darkling Sky, though there are rumours of a single drow who acts as the head of the entire organisation.

Generally, drow who join the Darkling Sky do so with the desire to flee drow society, and most of the members of the organisation have done just that, making their new home in the surface world. They still live in hiding even in the sunlit lands, not only from the prejudice of the surface races but

out of fear that, if discovered, the drow from whom they fled might come to the surface to retrieve them. However, having a contingent of drow living on the surface makes the Darkling Sky unique in that it exists both above and below the surface.

Place in Society

The official stance of the drow churches and most Noble Houses is that the Darkling Sky does not even exist. Unofficially, of course, they know quite well that it exists and consider it a grave and continuing threat to the drow, a sickness that will weaken and destroy the dark elves in a way even the Sundering could not. The members of the Darkling Sky are hunted mercilessly, with secrecy as their only shield against capture and a horrible death.

For some very few drow, however, the Darkling Sky is a slender ray of hope. Those drow who find the most basic trappings of drow society repulsive and intolerable, those who have managed to maintain a noble heart despite the place in which they live, have a chance to either escape from the lands of their race or stay and attempt to make a difference if they can contact and join the Darkling Sky.

Religion

The Darkling Sky is devoted to the elven gods the drow once worshipped, but whom they abandoned during their first exile into the Underdeep. However, the gods of the elves have not forgotten that the drow spurned them, nor have they been blind to the evil and cruelty the drow have perpetrated upon so many others. They have not forgiven the drow for these terrible crimes and it is exceedingly difficult for even the most pious, good-hearted drow of the Darkling Sky to gain the acceptance of one of the elven gods. Most of those in the Darkling Sky see this as a penance for the crimes their race has committed and studiously maintain their faith in the elven pantheon, hopeful that someday the elven gods will offer them forgiveness.

Mercenary Organisations

Background

There are many mercenary organisations living on the fringes of drow society. Often made up mostly of drow from the lower social classes, these organisations roam in and around the lands of the drow, seeking employment as armies, guards or criminals.

Mercenary organisations range in size from just a handful of specialised individuals to a large host. The largest and most well known of these is the Fist of the Deep, an army for hire that consists of more than 5,000 drow warriors and



an equal number of war slaves - ogres, ettins and trolls broken to the will of their drow handlers.

Most commonly, these mercenary organisations are formed by drow warriors who, after being pressed into service to fight for one of the Noble Houses, are unwilling to go back to their dreary lives in the lowest depths of drow cities. By recruiting enough like-minded drow into their ranks, these drow warriors can escape the tedium and destitution of their ordinary lives for the fame and wealth of a mercenary. The drow who make this choice consider the short but exciting life of a mercenary a fair trade when compared to centuries spent in the dark pits of a drow city.

At the other end of the spectrum lie the smallest mercenary companies. Usually, these are simply adventuring companies for hire, consisting of a handful of highly skilled and talented individuals. Rather than hiring themselves out to fight wars, these groups tend to specialise in thievery, assassination, exploration and bodyguard work.

Culture and Leadership

The primary culture in most mercenary groups is extremely military in nature. Authority is based on rank, and any order given by a superior is expected to be followed instantly. Discipline and punishment in a group of mercenaries is generally stricter and crueller than in a regular army and is necessary to maintain order in a group of violent, armed dark elves.

The smaller mercenary companies of skilled adventurers are usually not so strictly organised, as there is less need of it among such a close group. However, there is usually one individual who proves more charismatic than the others and slips into the leadership role.

Place in Drow Society

Mercenary companies would not exist if their services were not in demand. Though many Noble Houses dislike having a force of uncertain allegiance like the Fist of the Deep pass near their city, Noble Houses are also the most frequent users of such mercenary companies.

Smaller Noble Houses make use of mercenaries to supplement their limited forces, whether for an assault on a rival or for defence against an assault by a rival. The larger and more powerful Noble Houses rarely use mercenaries as defensive forces, preferring to hire such companies for risky ventures in some distant area of the Underdeep while keeping their own, more loyal forces close at hand.

One risk for anyone who hires a mercenary company for battle is the possibility the other side will purchase the company's services in the middle of combat. Some companies are infamous for this practice, while others are renowned for never accepting such an offer while under contract to an employer. Obviously, the latter can charge more for their services.

None of the drow mercenary companies charge a flat fee for their services. Rather, the fee is based upon the kind of work required and the number of mercenaries required to do it. Guarding a Noble House's fortress home for a few days, for example, will certainly be less expensive than sending an entire mercenary company into battle against a host of morgoshe. Not only does the latter require more mercenaries, but it is extremely dangerous.

Small companies of adventurers are hired by large and small Noble Houses, temples and anyone else with the coin to pay their usually disproportionate fees. Much like the larger mercenary companies, the fees for these small groups of adventurers are predicated upon the danger inherent in the task they are being hired to perform.

The Game of Bones - the Sheathed War

The rules for the Game of Bones were originally presented in *The Quintessential Drow*. They have been expanded and updated to take advantage of the increased options made available in *The Tome of Drow Lore*.

The drow appear, from the outside, to have an organised, structured society. They have their castes of noble families, the loyal merchants who oil the machines of commerce and the servants and the slaves that see to the needs of their masters. Law enforcement depends upon the city and culture, of course, but is most commonly organised and efficient, operating quickly and savagely to deal with those who commit crimes and acting with no qualms about using extreme force to put an end to disruptive behaviours within the drow cities. To those who do not know better, drow civilisation seems to mimic most of the same political and societal structures as any lawful civilisation on the surface.

It is, of course, a sham. The appearance is a façade, a construct based around mutual fear and hatred. The drow are ruled by those with the strength to hold the position, their nobility cannot assume that birth assures their station and their entire society is built upon the supposition that those with the strength and cunning to take something are entitled to have it. What keeps the drow from falling upon one another like a pack of wild jackals are the ancient customs and systems of battle they all respect. Only barbarians fall upon their enemies like common brawlers and the drow believe they are the pinnacle of civilised development.

Informally, the drow refer to their systems of competition and intraspecies warfare as either 'The Game of Bones' or 'The Sheathed War' and it is telling that the drow cannot even agree on that. A complex system of owed debts, granted boons and personal power is one of the few ties that hold the society together and prevent the drow from devolving into constantly warring tribes. Part religious belief, part self-preservation, the Game of Bones or the Sheathed War is a deadly social conflict. More often than not, the deadly turns of this game are never even seen by those not directly involved. Throughout this section, the Game of Bones and the Sheathed War are phrases which are used interchangeably.

The Frame of the Game of Bones

Within drow society, there are those who fight the Sheathed War and those who do not. In general, players of the Game are of the ruling nobility and the upper ranks of the merchant class. The involvement of the religious class is somewhat more complex, as clergy of some of the gods actively involve themselves (indeed, the priests of Kez'Skul could hardly help themselves) while others prefer to work through proxies within the noble class (such as the cult of the Dark Mother). Either way, the assistance of the clergy can be critical in securing one's place within the shifting power structure the Game creates. Drow with considerable personal power, particularly arcane spellcasters and adventurers of all stripes, also enter the Sheathed War but may find themselves without the social contacts and interpersonal skills to survive the deadly web of alliances.

Once involved in the Game, a Player's position (and survivability) is based on two critical factors: his influence and his power. Influence measures the ability of the Player to convince others to do things for him, leveraging their power for his own benefit. Power is the raw ability of a Player to do something himself, to get a job done using his personal resources. The greater the resources possessed by the Player, the more impressive his Power and the easier it is for him to get things done.

The complexity in the Sheathed War rises from the opposition of its combatants. While having a high Power is impressive, it is not terribly useful without the Influence to keep others from ganging up on



Gaining Influence

Action	Influence Gained	Skill DC
Hire a spy for one month	100	Gather Information (15)
Own a tavern or other gathering place	200	Profession (Merchant) (20)
Use blackmail to gain control of an enemy	100 per power level of the enemy	Bluff (30)
Kill a rival or enemy	300 per power level of the enemy	See below*
Gain control of a powerful magical item (10,000 gp value or more)	100 per 10,000 gp value of the item	No skill check – only available by purchasing, stealing or otherwise acquiring the item.
Having a priest in the organisation	100 per level of the priest, 200 per level if the priest is of the most dominant cult of the area.	No skill check – getting a priest into the organisation is a matter of birth.

*Killing a rival or enemy must be handled either by hiring an assassin (see below) or performing the job personally. This is perhaps the most dangerous and least common way to gain Influence because it is so easily exposed if it goes poorly.

the combatant. Likewise, while Influence can be a very useful way to get something done without dirtying your own hands, without Power it can begin to wane. After all, the drow pride themselves on their personal abilities and will consider weak and spineless anyone who constantly uses others to accomplish even the simplest of tasks. There are those who take great pride in manipulating others while keeping their hands clean, but it can be very difficult to maintain such a stance indefinitely without appearing weak to those whom the combatant influences.

At its most basic, the Game of Bones is a set of rules for the use of influence and power within drow culture. Players struggle to maintain or improve their position by using their own resources, or convincing others to do their work for them (or to simply not compete against them), all while watching their enemies for a potentially devastating counterattack.

Individuals and Groups in the Sheathed War

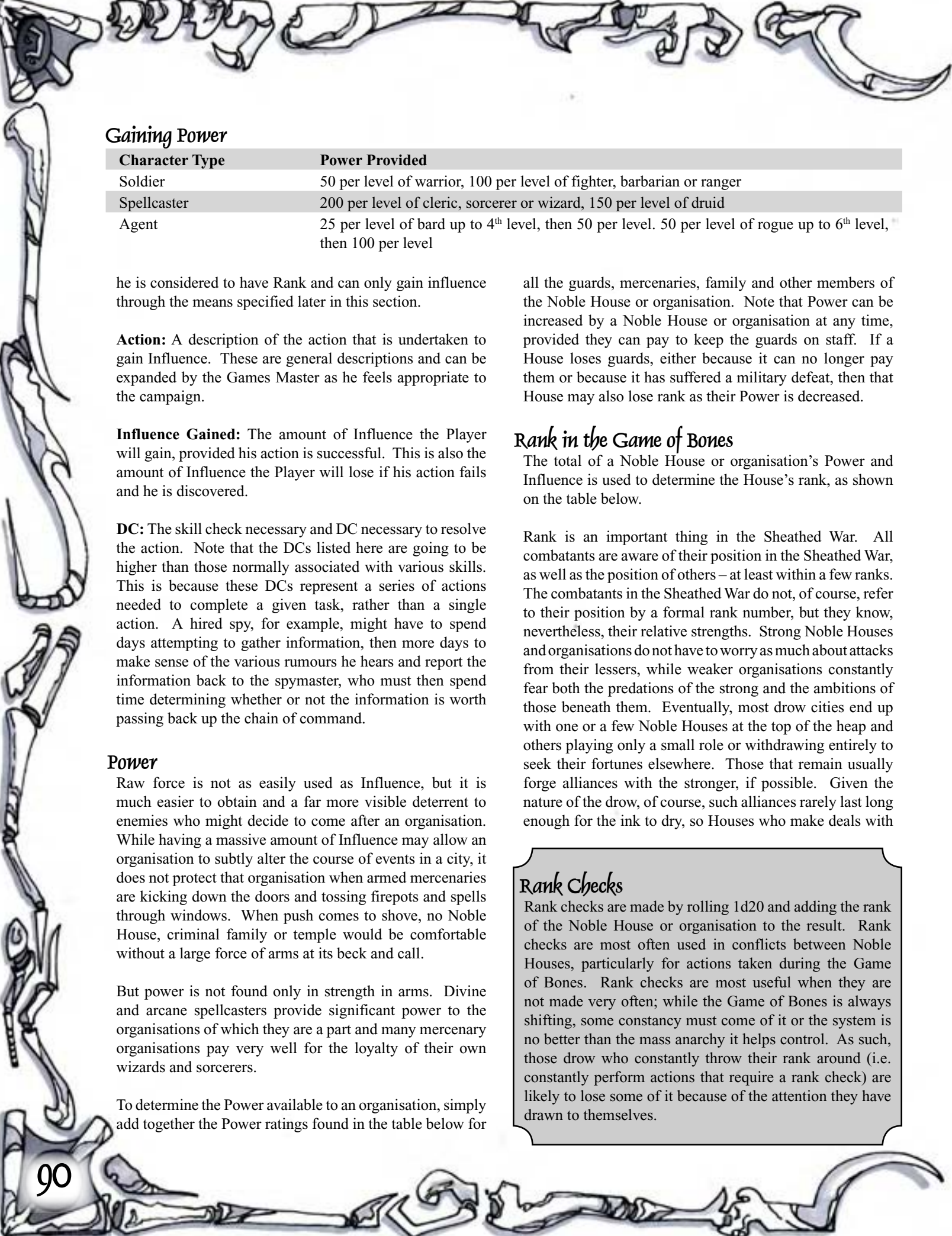
It is very rare for a single dark elf to fight the Sheathed War without outside assistance. While it is certainly conceivable for a single drow to amass enough power and influence to become a combatant, doing so has its risks. For starters, such powerful individuals are highly sought after commodities by the Noble Houses, temples and other political structures within the Sheathed War. While some of these organisations may accept a polite refusal to join their number, many others see such a refusal as a personal insult and will bring whatever power and influence they possess to bear in an attempt to destroy the upstart. The wise individual will seek out a group with which to ally before he enters the Sheathed War, using the group to protect his own standing while contributing to the overall power and influence of his new allies.

Because the web of influence extending from any single individual is limited, solo Players in the Game of Bones find themselves at a disadvantage in this regard when facing off against groups. The pyramid structure of most groups guarantees an expanding base of influence as the number of contacts increases with the number of individuals in the group. Because the overall Diplomacy skill of a character determines the number of contacts he can maintain at any one time, it is clearly advantageous to ally with others in order to expand influence.

This combination of factors ensures the most successful combatants within the Sheathed War are part of one or more political organisations that they can use to augment their own power and influence in the struggle.

Influence

Before a character enters the Game of Bones, he must amass a certain amount of influence and power. The precise amounts of each vary considerably from area to area and from culture to culture and are based entirely on the total influence available in any given city or area of contention. The larger the city, the more difficult it is to enter the Game as anything other than a bit player unworthy of notice. Influence, like Power, is measured by points, which are amassed by either gaining control over areas, earning the favour of others or even gaining the blessings of one or more of the gods (or at least, their priesthoods). Influence can also be purchased, though the outright buying of influence normally leaves the customer poorer while only gaining a short-term advantage. The table below describes ways in which Influence can be gained and how much Influence is gained for each action. Note that this table is not used once a person or group enters the Game of Bones – once he reaches a combined total of 1,000 Influence and Power,



Gaining Power

Character Type	Power Provided
Soldier	50 per level of warrior, 100 per level of fighter, barbarian or ranger
Spellcaster	200 per level of cleric, sorcerer or wizard, 150 per level of druid
Agent	25 per level of bard up to 4 th level, then 50 per level. 50 per level of rogue up to 6 th level, then 100 per level

he is considered to have Rank and can only gain influence through the means specified later in this section.

Action: A description of the action that is undertaken to gain Influence. These are general descriptions and can be expanded by the Games Master as he feels appropriate to the campaign.

Influence Gained: The amount of Influence the Player will gain, provided his action is successful. This is also the amount of Influence the Player will lose if his action fails and he is discovered.

DC: The skill check necessary and DC necessary to resolve the action. Note that the DCs listed here are going to be higher than those normally associated with various skills. This is because these DCs represent a series of actions needed to complete a given task, rather than a single action. A hired spy, for example, might have to spend days attempting to gather information, then more days to make sense of the various rumours he hears and report the information back to the spymaster, who must then spend time determining whether or not the information is worth passing back up the chain of command.

Power

Raw force is not as easily used as Influence, but it is much easier to obtain and a far more visible deterrent to enemies who might decide to come after an organisation. While having a massive amount of Influence may allow an organisation to subtly alter the course of events in a city, it does not protect that organisation when armed mercenaries are kicking down the doors and tossing firepots and spells through windows. When push comes to shove, no Noble House, criminal family or temple would be comfortable without a large force of arms at its beck and call.

But power is not found only in strength in arms. Divine and arcane spellcasters provide significant power to the organisations of which they are a part and many mercenary organisations pay very well for the loyalty of their own wizards and sorcerers.

To determine the Power available to an organisation, simply add together the Power ratings found in the table below for

all the guards, mercenaries, family and other members of the Noble House or organisation. Note that Power can be increased by a Noble House or organisation at any time, provided they can pay to keep the guards on staff. If a House loses guards, either because it can no longer pay them or because it has suffered a military defeat, then that House may also lose rank as their Power is decreased.

Rank in the Game of Bones

The total of a Noble House or organisation's Power and Influence is used to determine the House's rank, as shown on the table below.

Rank is an important thing in the Sheathed War. All combatants are aware of their position in the Sheathed War, as well as the position of others – at least within a few ranks. The combatants in the Sheathed War do not, of course, refer to their position by a formal rank number, but they know, nevertheless, their relative strengths. Strong Noble Houses and organisations do not have to worry as much about attacks from their lessers, while weaker organisations constantly fear both the predations of the strong and the ambitions of those beneath them. Eventually, most drow cities end up with one or a few Noble Houses at the top of the heap and others playing only a small role or withdrawing entirely to seek their fortunes elsewhere. Those that remain usually forge alliances with the stronger, if possible. Given the nature of the drow, of course, such alliances rarely last long enough for the ink to dry, so Houses who make deals with

Rank Checks

Rank checks are made by rolling 1d20 and adding the rank of the Noble House or organisation to the result. Rank checks are most often used in conflicts between Noble Houses, particularly for actions taken during the Game of Bones. Rank checks are most useful when they are not made very often; while the Game of Bones is always shifting, some constancy must come of it or the system is no better than the mass anarchy it helps control. As such, those drow who constantly throw their rank around (i.e. constantly perform actions that require a rank check) are likely to lose some of it because of the attention they have drawn to themselves.

Rank by Power and Influence

Total Power and Influence	Rank	Action Bonus	Influence/Power Defence
1,000	1	+1	+2/+0
4,000	2	+2	+3/+0
9,000	3	+3	+3/+1
16,000	4	+4	+4/+1
25,000	5	+5	+4/+1
36,000	6	+6/+1	+5/+2
49,000	7	+7/+2	+5/+2
64,000	8	+8/+3	+6/+2
81,000	9	+9/+4	+6/+3
100,000	10	+10/+5	+7/+3
121,000	11	+11/+6/+1	+7/+3
144,000	12	+12/+7/+2	+8/+4
169,000	13	+13/+8/+3	+8/+4
196,000	14	+14/+9/+4	+9/+4
225,000	15	+15/+10/+5	+9/+5
256,000	16	+16/+11/+6/+1	+10/+5
289,000	17	+17/+12/+7/+2	+10/+5
324,000	18	+18/+13/+8/+3	+11/+6
361,000	19	+19/+14/+9/+4	+11/+6
400,000	20	+20/+15/+10/+5	+12/+6

one another do so knowing full well that betrayal lies in wait.

Total Power and Influence: Add the Noble House or organisation's Power and Influence together and consult this column to determine the rank of the Noble House or organisation.

Rank: This is the rank of the Noble House or organisation, as determined by its Total Power and Influence.

Action Bonus: The organisation has an Action Bonus that works very similarly to the base attack bonus for an individual. As the organisation grows larger, it is able to undertake more actions without fear of overextending itself, though each action has progressively less chance of success.

Influence/Power Defence: The Power and Influence Defence ratings of Noble Houses or organisations represent their ability to deal with threats of Influence or Power. If the Noble House's Power rating is higher than its Influence rating, its power defence is higher and vice versa. This rating is used when the organisation defends itself from hostile action (see below).

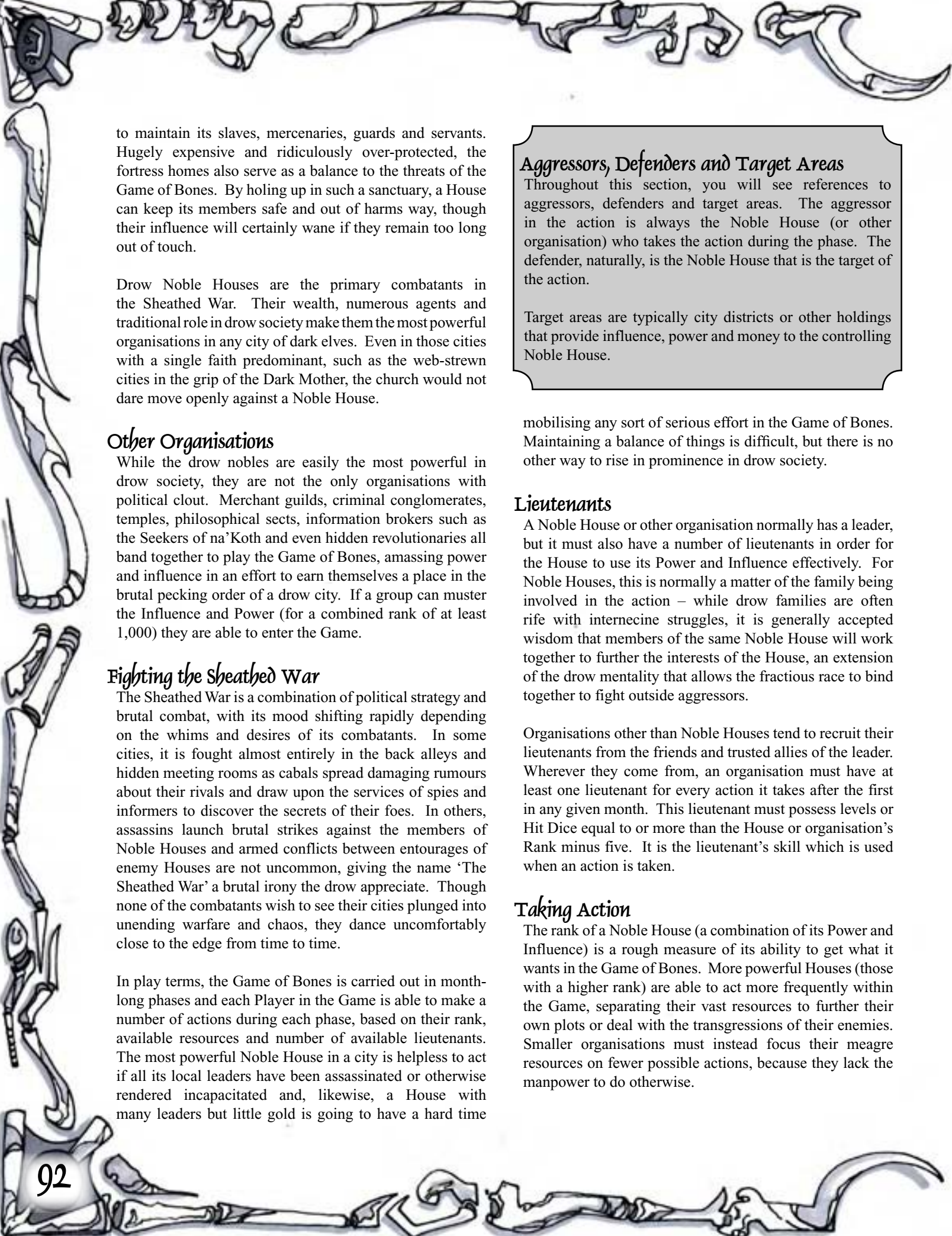
Players of the Game of Bones

For the drow, the Game of Bones is the ultimate expression of what it means to survive and thrive in the Underdeep. The drow believe in the dominance of the weak by the strong for the benefit of the race and the Game of Bones represents a clean, clear expression of that principle. On the other hand, the Game of Bones does offer some protection to the weak, because the strong simply are not able to act fast or decisively enough to wipe them out. Given the utility of the weak as tools for the strong, some weaker Players survive purely by doing as they are told, stifling individual ambitions to cling to the shards of power they already have, while dreaming of the day of their own ascendancy.

Drow Noble Houses

The most pervasive rulers of drow society are the Noble Houses, the most powerful of which are detailed in this book. However, there are innumerable other Houses, as well as splinters of the great Houses, all of whom play their own part in the ongoing Sheathed War.

While members of a Noble House may live within the fortress home in whichever city they inhabit, some do not, preferring their own bolt-holes in the city, hidden from their enemies and their family members. The House fortresses do serve as symbols of power and a place for the House



to maintain its slaves, mercenaries, guards and servants. Hugely expensive and ridiculously over-protected, the fortress homes also serve as a balance to the threats of the Game of Bones. By holing up in such a sanctuary, a House can keep its members safe and out of harms way, though their influence will certainly wane if they remain too long out of touch.

Drow Noble Houses are the primary combatants in the Sheathed War. Their wealth, numerous agents and traditional role in drow society make them the most powerful organisations in any city of dark elves. Even in those cities with a single faith predominant, such as the web-strewn cities in the grip of the Dark Mother, the church would not dare move openly against a Noble House.

Other Organisations

While the drow nobles are easily the most powerful in drow society, they are not the only organisations with political clout. Merchant guilds, criminal conglomerates, temples, philosophical sects, information brokers such as the Seekers of na'Koth and even hidden revolutionaries all band together to play the Game of Bones, amassing power and influence in an effort to earn themselves a place in the brutal pecking order of a drow city. If a group can muster the Influence and Power (for a combined rank of at least 1,000) they are able to enter the Game.

Fighting the Sheathed War

The Sheathed War is a combination of political strategy and brutal combat, with its mood shifting rapidly depending on the whims and desires of its combatants. In some cities, it is fought almost entirely in the back alleys and hidden meeting rooms as cabals spread damaging rumours about their rivals and draw upon the services of spies and informers to discover the secrets of their foes. In others, assassins launch brutal strikes against the members of Noble Houses and armed conflicts between entourages of enemy Houses are not uncommon, giving the name 'The Sheathed War' a brutal irony the drow appreciate. Though none of the combatants wish to see their cities plunged into unending warfare and chaos, they dance uncomfortably close to the edge from time to time.

In play terms, the Game of Bones is carried out in month-long phases and each Player in the Game is able to make a number of actions during each phase, based on their rank, available resources and number of available lieutenants. The most powerful Noble House in a city is helpless to act if all its local leaders have been assassinated or otherwise rendered incapacitated and, likewise, a House with many leaders but little gold is going to have a hard time

Aggressors, Defenders and Target Areas

Throughout this section, you will see references to aggressors, defenders and target areas. The aggressor in the action is always the Noble House (or other organisation) who takes the action during the phase. The defender, naturally, is the Noble House that is the target of the action.

Target areas are typically city districts or other holdings that provide influence, power and money to the controlling Noble House.

mobilising any sort of serious effort in the Game of Bones. Maintaining a balance of things is difficult, but there is no other way to rise in prominence in drow society.

Lieutenants

A Noble House or other organisation normally has a leader, but it must also have a number of lieutenants in order for the House to use its Power and Influence effectively. For Noble Houses, this is normally a matter of the family being involved in the action – while drow families are often rife with internecine struggles, it is generally accepted wisdom that members of the same Noble House will work together to further the interests of the House, an extension of the drow mentality that allows the fractious race to bind together to fight outside aggressors.

Organisations other than Noble Houses tend to recruit their lieutenants from the friends and trusted allies of the leader. Wherever they come from, an organisation must have at least one lieutenant for every action it takes after the first in any given month. This lieutenant must possess levels or Hit Dice equal to or more than the House or organisation's Rank minus five. It is the lieutenant's skill which is used when an action is taken.

Taking Action

The rank of a Noble House (a combination of its Power and Influence) is a rough measure of its ability to get what it wants in the Game of Bones. More powerful Houses (those with a higher rank) are able to act more frequently within the Game, separating their vast resources to further their own plots or deal with the transgressions of their enemies. Smaller organisations must instead focus their meagre resources on fewer possible actions, because they lack the manpower to do otherwise.

Below are various actions a Noble House may take during a given phase of the Game. Each action is presented in the following format:

Name: The name of the action in question, used only for reference.

Influence Requirement: The minimum Influence a Noble House or other Player must have in order to take the action.

Power Requirement: The minimum Power a Noble House or other Player must have in order to take the action. While two Houses of similar rank have a wide variety of options available to them, the options are very different based on whether the House is Influence-based or Power-based.

Cost: The cost of the action. This can have as many as three distinct portions: the Power cost, the Influence Cost and the actual cost. The Power and Influence costs indicate the amount of time and type of resources the House must devote to the action. These costs do not reduce the Power or Influence of the House, but must be dedicated to the action – they cannot be used for any other actions or any defences during the course of the action. The actual cost is typically in gold, though some may allow the substitution of magical items or other forms of payment in place of hard cash.

Time: The amount of time the action takes to complete.

Skill DC: This is the skill needed to initiate the action and, if necessary, needed to defend against it, as well as the DC for the skill check. The primary leader of the action always makes this skill check and may be assisted by the other leaders or his staff (see below for more information).

Success Result: If the action succeeds, the results are spelled out here. This is normally related to the amount by which the skill check succeeded.

Failure Result: When an action fails, there is always a penalty of some sort, even if the penalty is only the temporary disposition of resources towards a failed effort. The results of a failure are detailed here and, like the Success Result, are often tied to the degree of failure.

Assassination

An assassination attempt is very straightforward – you choose a target and hire an assassin to take him out. Regarded by many drow as a dangerous tactic due to the risk of having their assassin captured and interrogated, assassination is still a time-honoured tradition. This tool is especially likely to be wielded by drow too impatient to take their foe down through less violent means.

Influence Requirement: 500

Power Requirement: 100

Cost: 1,000 Influence per level or Hit Die of the target; 1,000gp per level or Hit Die of the target

Time: Two weeks

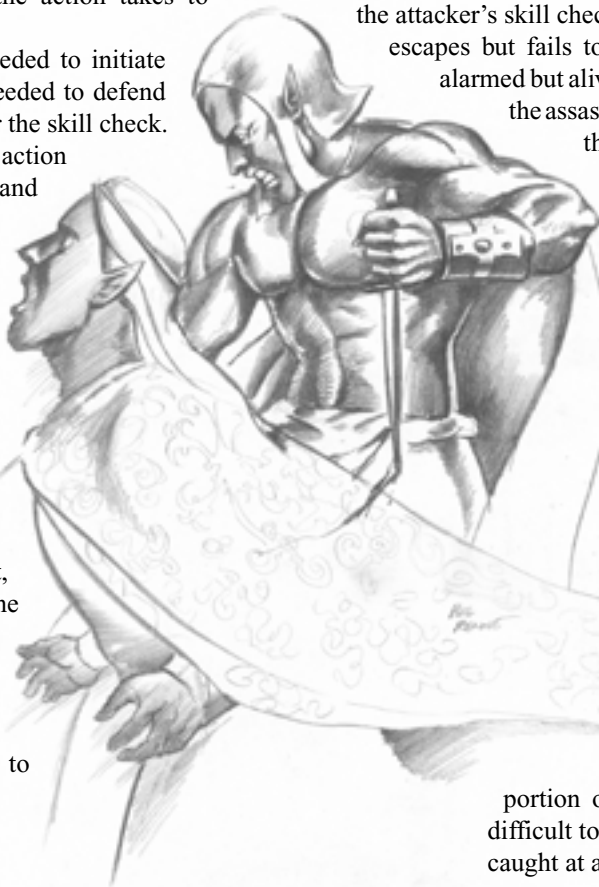
Skill DC: Gather Information (DC 20 + 1 per level or Hit Die of the target), opposed check

Success Result: If the attacker's Gather Information check exceeds the defender's by ten or more, the target is killed outright. If the check succeeds by less than ten, the target is entitled to a Reflex Saving Throw (DC 20) to avoid death. If the save fails, the target is killed.

Failure Result: If the attacker's Gather Information check fails by ten or more, the assassin is captured and provides a +10 bonus to the next Gather Information check made by the target to determine where the attack came from. If the attacker's skill check fails by less than ten, the assassin escapes but fails to close the deal, leaving the target alarmed but alive. Failing by less than five indicates the assassin did not make the attempt, because the target was too well protected, not where he was anticipated or was otherwise inaccessible within the assassination parameters.

Assault

Frontal assaults against a location are rare in the Game of Bones, but are sometimes used to finish off a weakened opponent or to severely weaken an overly aggressive House. While technically illegal in most drow cultures, such assaults are rarely carried out except by the most powerful Houses, who can and do flaunt the law at their whim, much to the annoyance of the priests of Nazrakoth. An assault requires a significant portion of the aggressor's resources and is difficult to succeed with unless the defender is caught at a weak point.



Influence Requirement: 0

Power Requirement: See below

Cost: Variable Power cost, see below. For every 1,000 Power the aggressor devotes to the assault, he must also expend 500 gp in supplies and bribes.

Time: One week

Skill DC: None. For every 1,000 Power the aggressor devotes to the assault, he receives a +1 bonus to his Rank check. For every 750 Power the defender has in position at the place of the assault he receives a +1 bonus to his Rank check. An opposed Rank check is made to determine the result of the assault.

Success Result: For every five points by which the aggressor beats the defender, the defender suffers a permanent loss of 1,000 Power, up to the maximum Power at the assault site.

Failure Result: For every three points by which the defender beats the aggressor, the aggressor suffers a permanent loss of 1,000 Power, up to the maximum Power the aggressor used in the assault.

Blackmail

Effective use of blackmail is a time-honoured tradition among the drow and one of the only actions through which a combatant in the Sheathed War can gain Influence. A combatant may come upon information suitable for blackmailing a rival through sheer luck, through a Knowledge is Influence action or through an Intelligence Gathering action. The rules for the Blackmail action assume the combatant already has the pertinent knowledge in hand. Through judicious use of this information, the combatant is able to coerce his rival into doing as he directs, thereby increasing his Influence. This lasts as long as the price of exposing the blackmailer is greater than the price of doing as the blackmailer demands, which in a race as long-lived as the drow can be very long indeed.

Influence Requirement: 2,000

Power Requirement: None

Cost: 500 Influence per level or Hit Die of the target

Time: One month

Skill DC: Intimidate (DC 20 + 1 per level or Hit Die of the target), opposed by target's Intimidate skill

Success Result: If the aggressor's skill check result exceeds the defender's skill check result by less than ten, the aggressor gains a permanent increase of 500 Influence. If the aggressor's skill check result exceeds the defender's skill check result by more than ten, the aggressor gains a permanent increase of 1,000 Influence.

Failure Result: If the defender's skill check result exceeds the aggressor's skill check result by less than ten, the defender refuses to go along with the blackmail demands. If the defender's skill check result exceeds the aggressor's skill check result by more than ten, the aggressor's blackmail

material is useless and he is exposed by the defender. The resulting humiliation is expensive, costing the aggressor 500 permanent Influence.

Counterintelligence

It is sometimes just as important to keep a foe from understanding what you are up to as it is to find out what they are planning. Counterintelligence is a very useful way to keep other drow guessing about your intentions and prevents others from finding out your secrets.

Influence Requirement: 5,000

Power Requirement: 1,000

Cost: 500 Influence per rank of the Noble House

Time: One month

Skill DC: Gather Information (DC 25)

Success Result: For every five points by which you exceed the DC of the Gather Information skill check, all aggressors who direct Smear Campaigns, Force Assessments, Frame Ups and Poison Pill actions against you suffer a -1 circumstance penalty to all skill checks related to those actions.

Failure Result: You tip your hand while attempting to prevent others from uncovering your plots, making your House or organisation more vulnerable to attack. For every five points by which you fail the DC of the Gather Information skill check, all aggressors who direct Smear Campaigns, Force Assessments, Frame Ups and Poison Pill actions against you enjoy a +1 circumstance bonus related to those actions.

Cover Up

There are times when a Noble House or other organisation may wish to undertake an action they do not want tied to their reputation. This action covers up all evidence of the action in question, but can burn up resources at an alarming rate if used to conceal large-scale operations.

Influence Requirement: The same as the total Influence and Power requirements of the action being covered up.

Power Requirement: None

Cost: 250 Influence per Rank of the Noble House

Time: The same as the action being covered up

Skill DC: Diplomacy (DC 25)

Success Result: If the action succeeds, all evidence tying the Noble House to the action it wishes to disavow is destroyed. Others may know the action happened, but they will not know who was responsible for it. They may have their suspicions however and can certainly act on them if they so choose.

Failure Result: The action is not covered up.

Divine Petition

Seeking the favour of the divine is a longstanding drow tradition. The cost and the benefit of this Action is largely dependent upon the power of the specific church in the specific drow culture. The costs and benefits listed below represent a range of possibilities, from a mostly secular society in which the gods are casually worshipped to a theocratic society in which the church is life. It is the responsibility of the Games Master to determine the appropriate cost and benefit of the Divine Petition Action in a specific drow city.

Influence Requirement: From 5,000 to 20,000

Power Requirement: None

Cost: 2,000 to 10,000 Influence; 500 to 5,000 gp

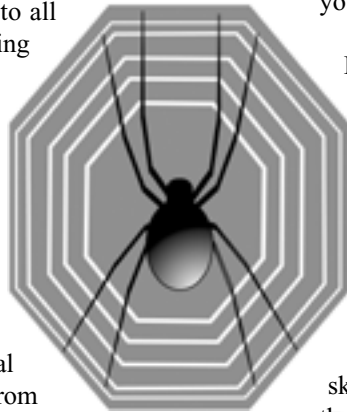
Time: One month

Skill DC: Bluff (DC 30)

Success Result: The clergy agrees to provide you with divine sanction, inflicting a circumstance penalty of from -2 to -6 on all rivals who interfere with your actions during the next phase. Those you directly target suffer a penalty of from -1 to -4 to all skill checks made while defending against your actions.

Failure Result: Your petition fails to sway the clergy, who instead decide to condemn your actions. You suffer a -1 or -2 penalty to all Skill checks made while defending against the actions of other Houses.

Special: The Divine Petition Action can be countered by a rival seeking his own Divine Petition from another church.



Extortion

Extortion is a favourite game amongst smaller combatants in the Sheathed War, who delight in tweaking the noses of their peers. By threatening the livelihood and health of business owners, thugs from these combatants extract bribes from the proprietors. Though it is rare for extortion rackets to exist long in one area due to the risk of attracting armed response from a local Noble House, even sporadic flare-ups of this type can be damaging to a House's finances.

Influence Requirement: 1,000

Power Requirement: 2,000

Cost: 500 gp + 200 gp per targeted area; 500 Power per targeted area

Time: One month

Skill DC: Intimidate (DC 20). This is opposed by the target's Sense Motive skill.

Success Result: For every point by which the aggressor's skill check exceeds the skill check of the defender, the aggressor receives five percent of the targeted area's income for the month. This reduces the amount of income received by the defender in control of the target area by the same amount.

Failure Result: The defender receives a +2 circumstance bonus to any defensive action it takes in response to this action, and a +5 circumstance bonus if its skill check result exceeds the skill check result of the aggressor by ten or more.

Force Assessment

Before charging into an area, it is wise to know what you are likely to face when you get there. This manoeuvre is most often used prior to an assault action, to judge the potential danger in an area. This is also very useful if you are attempting to discover what enemy agents are up to in one of your own areas, or an area you intend to take for your own.

Influence Requirement: 3,000

Power Requirement: Variable

Cost: 1,000 gp per target area; 200 Influence per target area

Time: One week

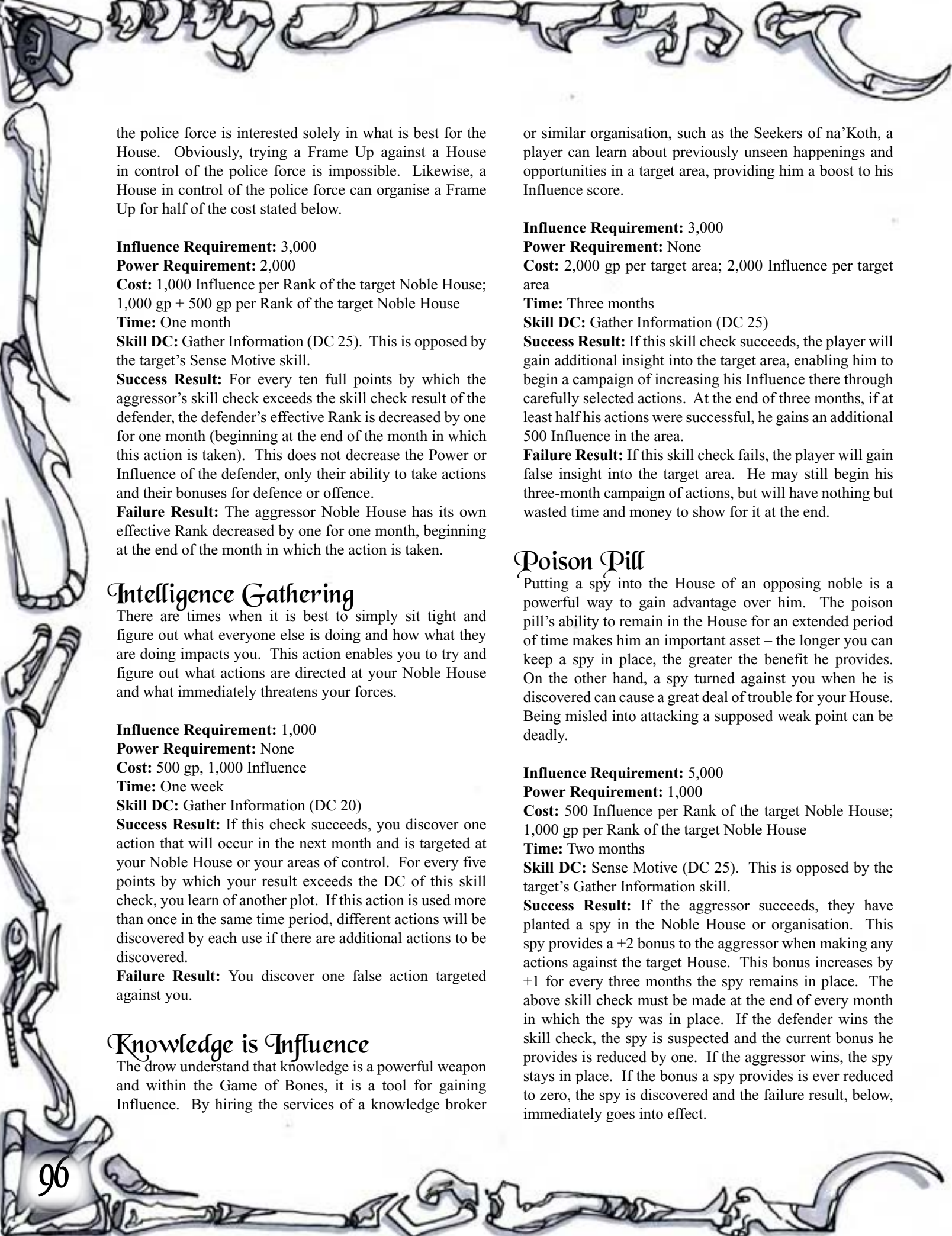
Skill DC: Gather Information (DC 20)

Success Result: The acting Noble House learns of the type and number of troops and agents in a given area, as well as their approximate strength (average level of all agents and troops in the area). If the result of this skill check exceeds the DC by ten or more, the plans for those troops are also discovered. This allows the spies to know what the forces will be doing during the next week.

Failure Result: The acting Noble House learns nothing about the disposition of troops in the area. If the skill check total fails by ten or more, then the acting House believes there are more or less troops in the area than are actually present.

Frame Up

Drow law enforcement tends to be terribly corrupt. In areas where the cult of Nazrakothe holds a dominant role, it is slightly less so, but the priests of the Eternal Judge know very well they cannot match the power of the Noble Houses and thus tend to turn a blind eye to the doings of the nobles. In areas without a significant presence of the church of Nazrakothe, law enforcement is usually handled privately by one or more Noble Houses, in which case



the police force is interested solely in what is best for the House. Obviously, trying a Frame Up against a House in control of the police force is impossible. Likewise, a House in control of the police force can organise a Frame Up for half of the cost stated below.

Influence Requirement: 3,000

Power Requirement: 2,000

Cost: 1,000 Influence per Rank of the target Noble House; 1,000 gp + 500 gp per Rank of the target Noble House

Time: One month

Skill DC: Gather Information (DC 25). This is opposed by the target's Sense Motive skill.

Success Result: For every ten full points by which the aggressor's skill check exceeds the skill check result of the defender, the defender's effective Rank is decreased by one for one month (beginning at the end of the month in which this action is taken). This does not decrease the Power or Influence of the defender, only their ability to take actions and their bonuses for defence or offence.

Failure Result: The aggressor Noble House has its own effective Rank decreased by one for one month, beginning at the end of the month in which the action is taken.

Intelligence Gathering

There are times when it is best to simply sit tight and figure out what everyone else is doing and how what they are doing impacts you. This action enables you to try and figure out what actions are directed at your Noble House and what immediately threatens your forces.

Influence Requirement: 1,000

Power Requirement: None

Cost: 500 gp, 1,000 Influence

Time: One week

Skill DC: Gather Information (DC 20)

Success Result: If this check succeeds, you discover one action that will occur in the next month and is targeted at your Noble House or your areas of control. For every five points by which your result exceeds the DC of this skill check, you learn of another plot. If this action is used more than once in the same time period, different actions will be discovered by each use if there are additional actions to be discovered.

Failure Result: You discover one false action targeted against you.

Knowledge is Influence

The drow understand that knowledge is a powerful weapon and within the Game of Bones, it is a tool for gaining Influence. By hiring the services of a knowledge broker

or similar organisation, such as the Seekers of na'Koth, a player can learn about previously unseen happenings and opportunities in a target area, providing him a boost to his Influence score.

Influence Requirement: 3,000

Power Requirement: None

Cost: 2,000 gp per target area; 2,000 Influence per target area

Time: Three months

Skill DC: Gather Information (DC 25)

Success Result: If this skill check succeeds, the player will gain additional insight into the target area, enabling him to begin a campaign of increasing his Influence there through carefully selected actions. At the end of three months, if at least half his actions were successful, he gains an additional 500 Influence in the area.

Failure Result: If this skill check fails, the player will gain false insight into the target area. He may still begin his three-month campaign of actions, but will have nothing but wasted time and money to show for it at the end.

Poison Pill

Putting a spy into the House of an opposing noble is a powerful way to gain advantage over him. The poison pill's ability to remain in the House for an extended period of time makes him an important asset – the longer you can keep a spy in place, the greater the benefit he provides. On the other hand, a spy turned against you when he is discovered can cause a great deal of trouble for your House. Being misled into attacking a supposed weak point can be deadly.

Influence Requirement: 5,000

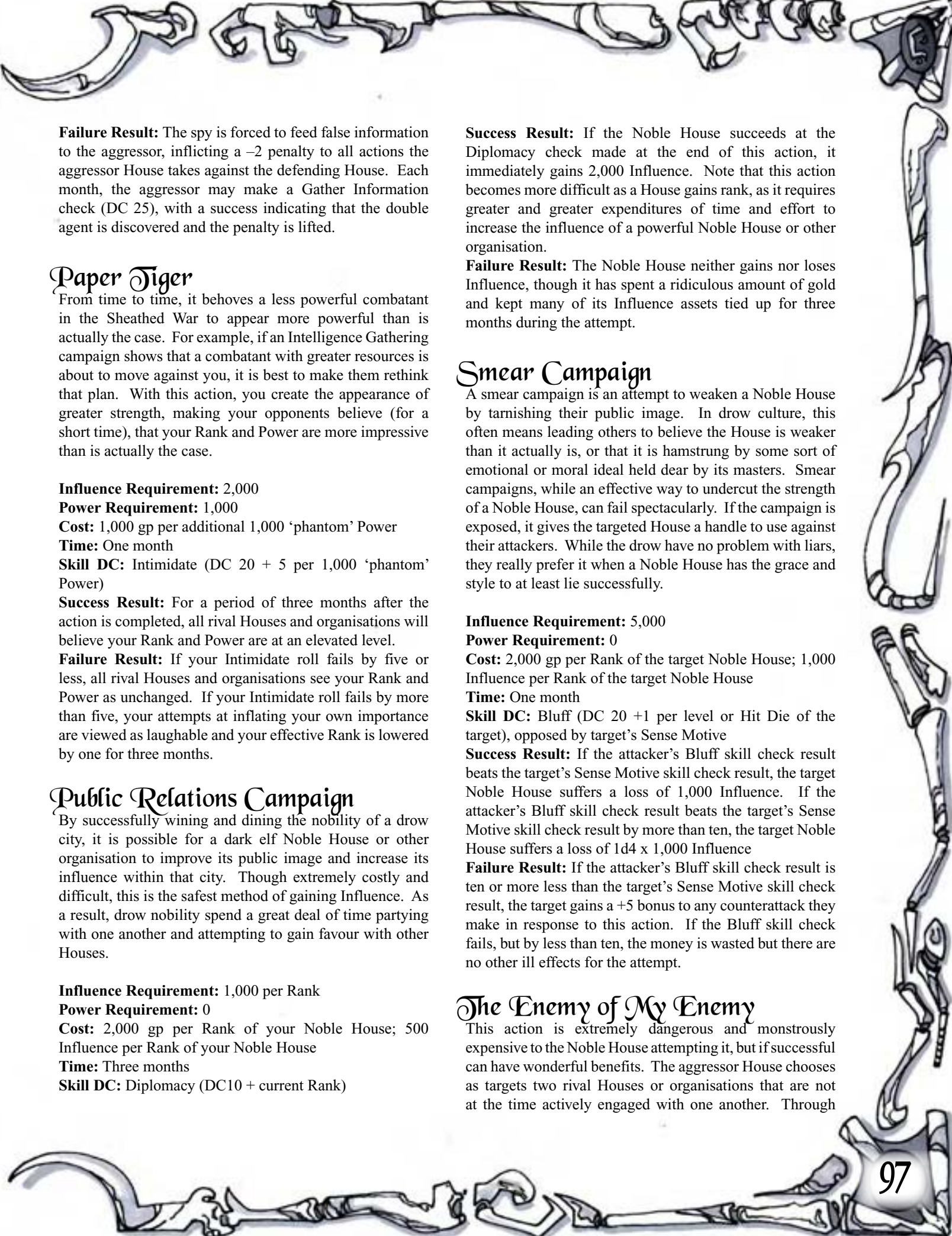
Power Requirement: 1,000

Cost: 500 Influence per Rank of the target Noble House; 1,000 gp per Rank of the target Noble House

Time: Two months

Skill DC: Sense Motive (DC 25). This is opposed by the target's Gather Information skill.

Success Result: If the aggressor succeeds, they have planted a spy in the Noble House or organisation. This spy provides a +2 bonus to the aggressor when making any actions against the target House. This bonus increases by +1 for every three months the spy remains in place. The above skill check must be made at the end of every month in which the spy was in place. If the defender wins the skill check, the spy is suspected and the current bonus he provides is reduced by one. If the aggressor wins, the spy stays in place. If the bonus a spy provides is ever reduced to zero, the spy is discovered and the failure result, below, immediately goes into effect.



Failure Result: The spy is forced to feed false information to the aggressor, inflicting a -2 penalty to all actions the aggressor House takes against the defending House. Each month, the aggressor may make a Gather Information check (DC 25), with a success indicating that the double agent is discovered and the penalty is lifted.

Paper Tiger

From time to time, it behoves a less powerful combatant in the Sheathed War to appear more powerful than is actually the case. For example, if an Intelligence Gathering campaign shows that a combatant with greater resources is about to move against you, it is best to make them rethink that plan. With this action, you create the appearance of greater strength, making your opponents believe (for a short time), that your Rank and Power are more impressive than is actually the case.

Influence Requirement: 2,000

Power Requirement: 1,000

Cost: 1,000 gp per additional 1,000 'phantom' Power

Time: One month

Skill DC: Intimidate (DC 20 + 5 per 1,000 'phantom' Power)

Success Result: For a period of three months after the action is completed, all rival Houses and organisations will believe your Rank and Power are at an elevated level.

Failure Result: If your Intimidate roll fails by five or less, all rival Houses and organisations see your Rank and Power as unchanged. If your Intimidate roll fails by more than five, your attempts at inflating your own importance are viewed as laughable and your effective Rank is lowered by one for three months.

Public Relations Campaign

By successfully wining and dining the nobility of a drow city, it is possible for a dark elf Noble House or other organisation to improve its public image and increase its influence within that city. Though extremely costly and difficult, this is the safest method of gaining Influence. As a result, drow nobility spend a great deal of time partying with one another and attempting to gain favour with other Houses.

Influence Requirement: 1,000 per Rank

Power Requirement: 0

Cost: 2,000 gp per Rank of your Noble House; 500 Influence per Rank of your Noble House

Time: Three months

Skill DC: Diplomacy (DC10 + current Rank)

Success Result: If the Noble House succeeds at the Diplomacy check made at the end of this action, it immediately gains 2,000 Influence. Note that this action becomes more difficult as a House gains rank, as it requires greater and greater expenditures of time and effort to increase the influence of a powerful Noble House or other organisation.

Failure Result: The Noble House neither gains nor loses Influence, though it has spent a ridiculous amount of gold and kept many of its Influence assets tied up for three months during the attempt.

Smear Campaign

A smear campaign is an attempt to weaken a Noble House by tarnishing their public image. In drow culture, this often means leading others to believe the House is weaker than it actually is, or that it is hamstrung by some sort of emotional or moral ideal held dear by its masters. Smear campaigns, while an effective way to undercut the strength of a Noble House, can fail spectacularly. If the campaign is exposed, it gives the targeted House a handle to use against their attackers. While the drow have no problem with liars, they really prefer it when a Noble House has the grace and style to at least lie successfully.

Influence Requirement: 5,000

Power Requirement: 0

Cost: 2,000 gp per Rank of the target Noble House; 1,000 Influence per Rank of the target Noble House

Time: One month

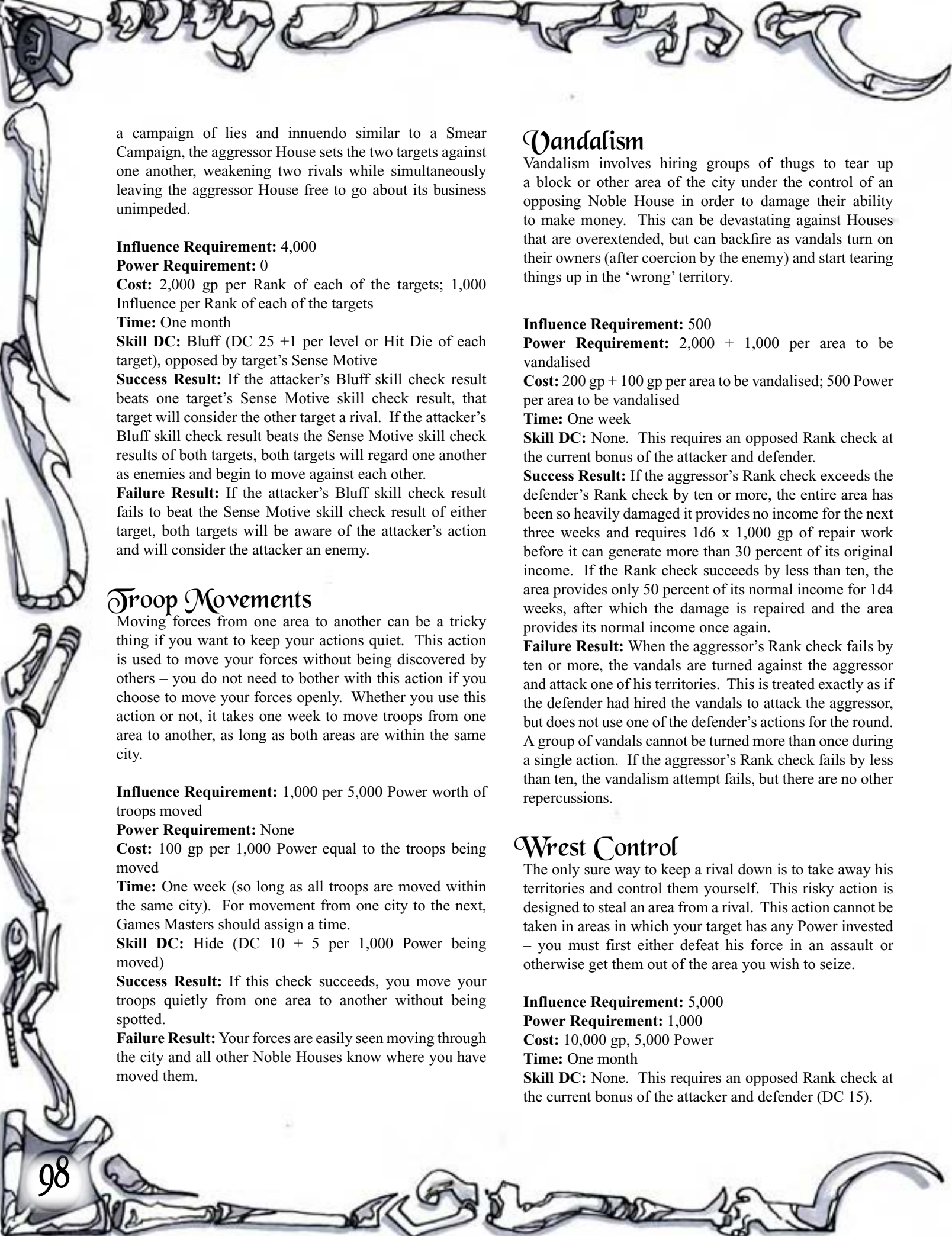
Skill DC: Bluff (DC 20 +1 per level or Hit Die of the target), opposed by target's Sense Motive

Success Result: If the attacker's Bluff skill check result beats the target's Sense Motive skill check result, the target Noble House suffers a loss of 1,000 Influence. If the attacker's Bluff skill check result beats the target's Sense Motive skill check result by more than ten, the target Noble House suffers a loss of 1d4 x 1,000 Influence

Failure Result: If the attacker's Bluff skill check result is ten or more less than the target's Sense Motive skill check result, the target gains a +5 bonus to any counterattack they make in response to this action. If the Bluff skill check fails, but by less than ten, the money is wasted but there are no other ill effects for the attempt.

The Enemy of My Enemy

This action is extremely dangerous and monstrously expensive to the Noble House attempting it, but if successful can have wonderful benefits. The aggressor House chooses as targets two rival Houses or organisations that are not at the time actively engaged with one another. Through



a campaign of lies and innuendo similar to a Smear Campaign, the aggressor House sets the two targets against one another, weakening two rivals while simultaneously leaving the aggressor House free to go about its business unimpeded.

Influence Requirement: 4,000

Power Requirement: 0

Cost: 2,000 gp per Rank of each of the targets; 1,000 Influence per Rank of each of the targets

Time: One month

Skill DC: Bluff (DC 25 +1 per level or Hit Die of each target), opposed by target's Sense Motive

Success Result: If the attacker's Bluff skill check result beats one target's Sense Motive skill check result, that target will consider the other target a rival. If the attacker's Bluff skill check result beats the Sense Motive skill check results of both targets, both targets will regard one another as enemies and begin to move against each other.

Failure Result: If the attacker's Bluff skill check result fails to beat the Sense Motive skill check result of either target, both targets will be aware of the attacker's action and will consider the attacker an enemy.

Troop Movements

Moving forces from one area to another can be a tricky thing if you want to keep your actions quiet. This action is used to move your forces without being discovered by others – you do not need to bother with this action if you choose to move your forces openly. Whether you use this action or not, it takes one week to move troops from one area to another, as long as both areas are within the same city.

Influence Requirement: 1,000 per 5,000 Power worth of troops moved

Power Requirement: None

Cost: 100 gp per 1,000 Power equal to the troops being moved

Time: One week (so long as all troops are moved within the same city). For movement from one city to the next, Games Masters should assign a time.

Skill DC: Hide (DC 10 + 5 per 1,000 Power being moved)

Success Result: If this check succeeds, you move your troops quietly from one area to another without being spotted.

Failure Result: Your forces are easily seen moving through the city and all other Noble Houses know where you have moved them.

Vandalism

Vandalism involves hiring groups of thugs to tear up a block or other area of the city under the control of an opposing Noble House in order to damage their ability to make money. This can be devastating against Houses that are overextended, but can backfire as vandals turn on their owners (after coercion by the enemy) and start tearing things up in the 'wrong' territory.

Influence Requirement: 500

Power Requirement: 2,000 + 1,000 per area to be vandalised

Cost: 200 gp + 100 gp per area to be vandalised; 500 Power per area to be vandalised

Time: One week

Skill DC: None. This requires an opposed Rank check at the current bonus of the attacker and defender.

Success Result: If the aggressor's Rank check exceeds the defender's Rank check by ten or more, the entire area has been so heavily damaged it provides no income for the next three weeks and requires 1d6 x 1,000 gp of repair work before it can generate more than 30 percent of its original income. If the Rank check succeeds by less than ten, the area provides only 50 percent of its normal income for 1d4 weeks, after which the damage is repaired and the area provides its normal income once again.

Failure Result: When the aggressor's Rank check fails by ten or more, the vandals are turned against the aggressor and attack one of his territories. This is treated exactly as if the defender had hired the vandals to attack the aggressor, but does not use one of the defender's actions for the round. A group of vandals cannot be turned more than once during a single action. If the aggressor's Rank check fails by less than ten, the vandalism attempt fails, but there are no other repercussions.

Wrest Control

The only sure way to keep a rival down is to take away his territories and control them yourself. This risky action is designed to steal an area from a rival. This action cannot be taken in areas in which your target has any Power invested – you must first either defeat his force in an assault or otherwise get them out of the area you wish to seize.

Influence Requirement: 5,000

Power Requirement: 1,000

Cost: 10,000 gp, 5,000 Power

Time: One month

Skill DC: None. This requires an opposed Rank check at the current bonus of the attacker and defender (DC 15).

Success Result: If the aggressor's Rank check defeats the defender's by ten or more, the aggressor has seized control of the target area from the defender. This is usually accompanied by a significant Influence increase, depending on the nature of the area seized.

Failure Result: If the aggressor's Rank check fails by ten or more, the defender has managed to use the opening provided by the attack to turn public opinion against the aggressor. For the next 1d6 months, the aggressor suffers an effective reduction of 5,000 Influence. At the end of this time the aggressor suffers a permanent reduction of 2,500 Influence.

Destroying an Enemy House

Noble Houses and organisations are very resilient. While it is certainly possible to wipe one out, doing so requires a considerable amount of effort and a fanatical zeal to get the job done. To completely destroy a House or organisation, you must reduce it to a Rank of one and then kill the leader and all lieutenants. This effectively destroys the House and ensures others cannot pick up the loose ends and start over.

In the event of a destroyed Noble House or other organisation, all areas controlled by that House or organisation become uncontrolled and are open for the taking once again.

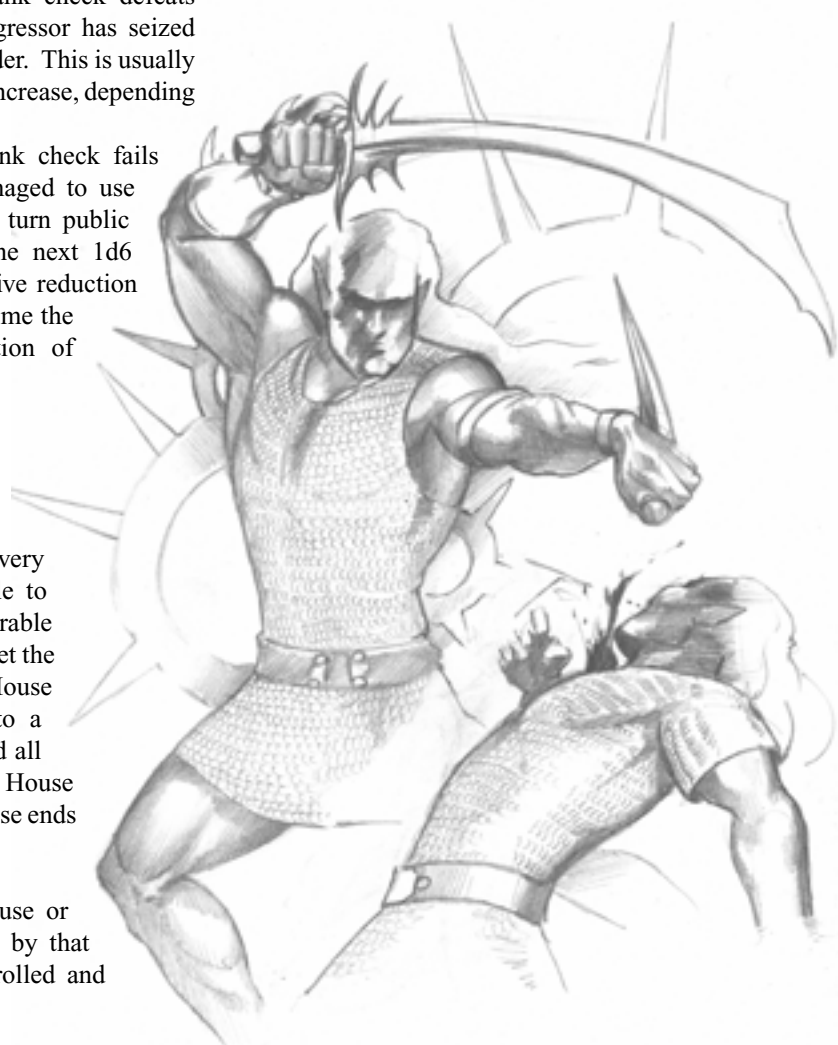
The Game of Bones and Player Characters

The rules provided for the Game of Bones supply the framework for political and military conflict in the world of the drow, enabling the Games Master to quickly adjudicate the actions of many Noble Houses and other organisations on a large scale. When Player Characters are involved, however, this system may be too abstract and arbitrary. The following additions to the system can greatly enhance the roleplaying opportunities for the Game of Bones

First, if Player Characters are involved in the Sheathed War, only use the systems above to determine the possible outcome, provided the Player Characters do not become directly involved in the action. This is if the Player Characters were not around, the results determined by the above systems would come to pass. Then create short adventures that allow the characters to overcome these results through specific actions.

Second, make sure the Player Characters are in a position to take actions of their own. If they have control over a portion of their Noble House's forces, then they may be perfectly happy setting things in motion and waiting to see how they turn out. This is a perfect set up for an espionage-based campaign, wherein characters use the forces of the House to find out information they can then act upon.

Third, remember that drow culture is a hotbed of betrayal and deceit. Play up these aspects within their House to keep the Player Characters guessing about who their enemies and allies really are.



The Lost Tribes

The Lost Tribes are groups of drow who became separated from the rest of their race in the vast labyrinth of the Underdeep. Three of these, the Sulzthul, the Kanahraun and the Lorgreln, were separated from their kin at the time of the Sundering. The fourth, the Pol'Tah, left the remainder of the drow even before the end of the first goblin war. There were, obviously, other groups that split off from the drow throughout the course of dozens of millennia, but these four tribes are the only ones who survived the terrors of the Underdeep.

Though the Lost Tribes survived the Underdeep, they did not do so while remaining unchanged. Whether by the work of a malevolent outside force, as in the case of the Sulzthul and Kanahraun, or simply as a result of adapting to the pressures of the environment, these Lost Tribes are no longer truly drow, either in their eyes or in the eyes of the drow race. Though it could be argued that every group of drow at some point constituted a Lost Tribe, splintered into small clans at the Sundering when they were struck between the hammer of the surface elves and the anvil of the shangu, most of these groups eventually re-established contact and resumed their place within the drow people.

The true Lost Tribes, the four groups presented in this chapter, are a different story. Fundamentally changed by their trials in the Underdeep, these groups are the sub-races of the drow. They take no part in the lives of their 'true drow' cousins, they do not live among them and have no stake in the Game of Bones.

From the drow perspective, it is only recently that these Lost Tribes resumed any contact at all with the dark elves. Indeed, it was less than a century ago that the drow discovered the existence of the Pol'Tah, the deep drow, living in a world of eternal night in the lowest reaches of the Underdeep. Relations between the drow and the sub-races are tenuous at best, as both sides have come to regard the other as alien.

The four sub-races of the drow are extensively detailed below. Games Masters will find information on the history of these Lost Tribes, the abilities and characteristics that set them apart from 'true drow' and a thorough treatment on the unique cultures and societies created by the sub-races in order to survive the Underdeep.

The Kanahraun - The Feral Drow

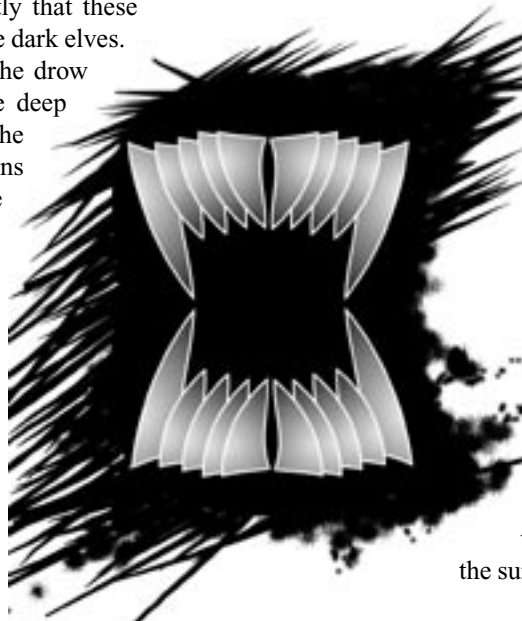
The Kanahraun demonstrate just how deeply into savagery the drow can sink. They are not so much a sub-race as merely bestial and feral drow, warped and corrupted into cunning barbarians and necromancers of the deep, twisted by the cruelties of fate and the machinations of the evil being they worship.

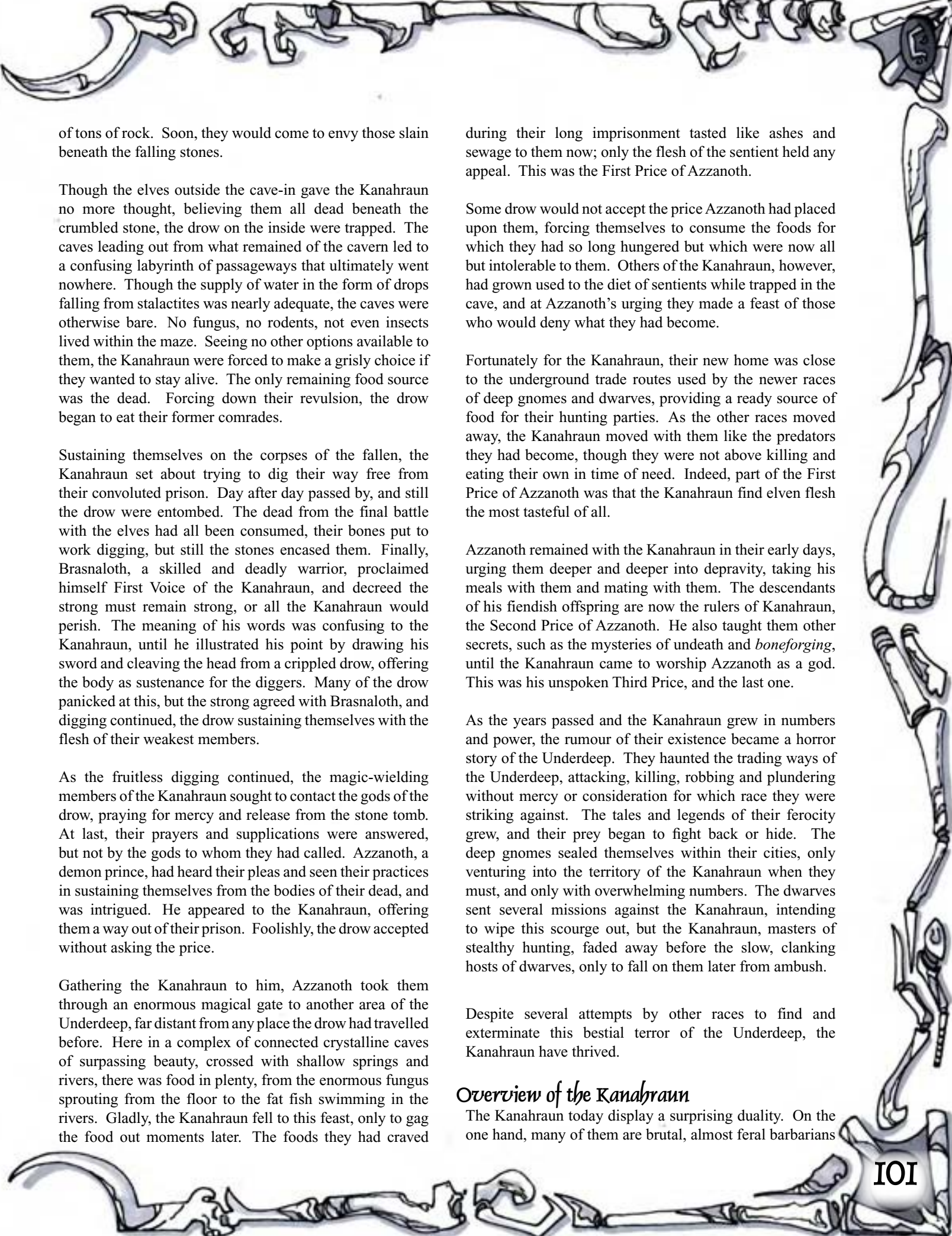
Unlike most other drow who have developed independently of the main race, the Kanahraun were not separated from the main host of the drow during the Sundering, but instead, just afterward. The Kanahraun were some of the most skilled warriors and magicians of the drow and were determined to strike back against the surface elves, chafing at the thought of their traitorous cousins banishing the drow to the Underdeep and its previously unguessed horrors before escaping unhindered to the surface again. Despite the cries of wiser heads that the drow were already too dispersed by the Sundering, the Kanahraun set out in pursuit of the surface elves, intending to take a full measure of bloody vengeance against those who had turned on them.

They caught the surface elves, and began to harry their forces from behind, striking and darting away again into the shadows. Until they struck too deeply, and the retreating elves turned on them. Pursued by a greatly superior force of vengeful elves, the drow who would become the Kanahraun were driven deeper into the Underdeep. They

came at last to a cavern, the walls of which yawned with dozens of caves, and decided to make their stand here against the merciless assault of their cousins.

The elves, however, saw a different opportunity and, using their most destructive magics, brought the cavern's ceiling down on the waiting drow. Many of the Kanahraun were killed in that single stroke, but the remainder were sealed off, safe from the surface elves behind thousands





of tons of rock. Soon, they would come to envy those slain beneath the falling stones.

Though the elves outside the cave-in gave the Kanahraun no more thought, believing them all dead beneath the crumbled stone, the drow on the inside were trapped. The caves leading out from what remained of the cavern led to a confusing labyrinth of passageways that ultimately went nowhere. Though the supply of water in the form of drops falling from stalactites was nearly adequate, the caves were otherwise bare. No fungus, no rodents, not even insects lived within the maze. Seeing no other options available to them, the Kanahraun were forced to make a grisly choice if they wanted to stay alive. The only remaining food source was the dead. Forcing down their revulsion, the drow began to eat their former comrades.

Sustaining themselves on the corpses of the fallen, the Kanahraun set about trying to dig their way free from their convoluted prison. Day after day passed by, and still the drow were entombed. The dead from the final battle with the elves had all been consumed, their bones put to work digging, but still the stones encased them. Finally, Brasnaloth, a skilled and deadly warrior, proclaimed himself First Voice of the Kanahraun, and decreed the strong must remain strong, or all the Kanahraun would perish. The meaning of his words was confusing to the Kanahraun, until he illustrated his point by drawing his sword and cleaving the head from a crippled drow, offering the body as sustenance for the diggers. Many of the drow panicked at this, but the strong agreed with Brasnaloth, and digging continued, the drow sustaining themselves with the flesh of their weakest members.

As the fruitless digging continued, the magic-wielding members of the Kanahraun sought to contact the gods of the drow, praying for mercy and release from the stone tomb. At last, their prayers and supplications were answered, but not by the gods to whom they had called. Azzanoth, a demon prince, had heard their pleas and seen their practices in sustaining themselves from the bodies of their dead, and was intrigued. He appeared to the Kanahraun, offering them a way out of their prison. Foolishly, the drow accepted without asking the price.

Gathering the Kanahraun to him, Azzanoth took them through an enormous magical gate to another area of the Underdeep, far distant from any place the drow had travelled before. Here in a complex of connected crystalline caves of surpassing beauty, crossed with shallow springs and rivers, there was food in plenty, from the enormous fungus sprouting from the floor to the fat fish swimming in the rivers. Gladly, the Kanahraun fell to this feast, only to gag the food out moments later. The foods they had craved

during their long imprisonment tasted like ashes and sewage to them now; only the flesh of the sentient held any appeal. This was the First Price of Azzanoth.

Some drow would not accept the price Azzanoth had placed upon them, forcing themselves to consume the foods for which they had so long hungered but which were now all but intolerable to them. Others of the Kanahraun, however, had grown used to the diet of sentients while trapped in the cave, and at Azzanoth's urging they made a feast of those who would deny what they had become.

Fortunately for the Kanahraun, their new home was close to the underground trade routes used by the newer races of deep gnomes and dwarves, providing a ready source of food for their hunting parties. As the other races moved away, the Kanahraun moved with them like the predators they had become, though they were not above killing and eating their own in time of need. Indeed, part of the First Price of Azzanoth was that the Kanahraun find elven flesh the most tasteful of all.


Azzanoth remained with the Kanahraun in their early days, urging them deeper and deeper into depravity, taking his meals with them and mating with them. The descendants of his fiendish offspring are now the rulers of Kanahraun, the Second Price of Azzanoth. He also taught them other secrets, such as the mysteries of undeath and *boneforging*, until the Kanahraun came to worship Azzanoth as a god. This was his unspoken Third Price, and the last one.

As the years passed and the Kanahraun grew in numbers and power, the rumour of their existence became a horror story of the Underdeep. They haunted the trading ways of the Underdeep, attacking, killing, robbing and plundering without mercy or consideration for which race they were striking against. The tales and legends of their ferocity grew, and their prey began to fight back or hide. The deep gnomes sealed themselves within their cities, only venturing into the territory of the Kanahraun when they must, and only with overwhelming numbers. The dwarves sent several missions against the Kanahraun, intending to wipe this scourge out, but the Kanahraun, masters of stealthy hunting, faded away before the slow, clanking hosts of dwarves, only to fall on them later from ambush.

Despite several attempts by other races to find and exterminate this bestial terror of the Underdeep, the Kanahraun have thrived.

Overview of the Kanahraun

The Kanahraun today display a surprising duality. On the one hand, many of them are brutal, almost feral barbarians



Kathricia would not stop screaming. My attempts to quiet her only doubled her efforts, so mad had she become by what she had seen. I slit her throat.

I believe I have escaped from the Kanahraun, or rather, survived without them taking notice of me. Still, I shall not feel safe until I am far from this place.

As noted in my previous entries, we had journeyed to the lands claimed by the Kanahraun under the protection of two score mercenaries bought with a fortune in the Seekers' gold. We had thought that more than sufficient, but we were wrong.

The Kanahraun are not mere bone-wielding regressed savages of our race, though they are savage and barbarous beyond measure. I had thought the tales of them only fanciful exaggeration. Instead, I have found they fall far short of the truth.

The first group we encountered was but a handful, and so stealthy we scarcely noticed them. They melted away before our numbers, and we followed, hoping to learn if they had a city or settlement, hoping to find what had happened to them following the Sundering. In a sense, we did.

The first group led us into an ambush so cunning we remained ignorant of it until the first spears fell. Then, the Kanahraun were among us. Kathricia and I were invisible, which is all that saved us. These feral drow attacked with the fury of a rabid beast, leaping upon our hired swords, their scarred and pierced bodies clad in patchwork armour barely visible beneath the tanned skins and scalps of their victims. Commanding them was a male drow with the eyes of a snake, armed and armoured with bones that seemed fused together. Strong men withered and died at the touch of his sword.

Within moments, our mercenaries were slain. And then the Kanahraun began to feast, ripping the flesh of the fallen with teeth filed into fangs and slurping the blood from still-seeping wounds. When they had eaten their fill, the snake-eyed man chanted an invocation to a god of whom I have never heard, Azzanoth the Glutton, and the bodies of the slain mercenaries rose, shuffling to follow the Kanahraun, strips of their mangled flesh trailing the ground behind them.

Already, Kathricia was beginning to murmur, lips shaking in fear, but I was able to muffle her for the moment. The memory drove her mad over the next few days, and it is doubtless for the best she is dead, as someone so weak would have made a poor Hidden Blade.

Now that I have seen the Kanahraun in battle, I believe we must try again to make contact with them. When the time comes for the Return, they would make a powerful weapon.

- From the Journal of Meassath tel'Rassahn, Hidden Blade of the Seekers of na'Koth

with filed teeth and an insatiable lust for blood. On the other hand are the Kanahraun's ruling class, born of the descendants of Azzanoth, full of cruel sophistication and steeped in wicked knowledge. The second control the first with an iron fist, keeping them leashed and in line like one would a not-quite-trained attack dog.

At birth, the Kanahraun do not appear any different from normal drow, with the exception of the minor fiendish attributes seen in the ruling class, commonly born with claws, fangs or slitted eyes. This resemblance to other drow soon ends, however.

Beginning in childhood, the Kanahraun torment and disfigure their own bodies in praise of Azzanoth the Glutton. By the time an individual reaches adulthood, his

body is a map of ritual scars, gouged and branded into his flesh. The ears are notched and even the hair is marred with scars dug into the flesh of the scalp. The mouth may be the most-altered part of the Kanahraun anatomy, with split lips, teeth filed into fangs and a tongue slit to resemble that of a snake all common traits.

Life and Death with the Kanahraun

There is no real concept of marriage or family among the Kanahraun, only of clan and class. The strongest mate with whomever they choose, and gladly fight to the death should jealousy in their choice of mate rear its head. The closest thing to marriage in the society is when a particularly strong and powerful drow scars or brands his or her favoured mate with a mark to indicate ownership. This is usually not necessary, as by the time such an action is taken, the other



Kanahraun know to leave the mate alone unless they wish a fight.

Among the ruling class of the Kanahraun, the situation is much the same, but is handled more subtly. Members of the ruling class can, of course, choose any mate they desire, even one marked by a warrior of the lower class.

No matter which class she belongs to, a pregnant female is treated with deference in Kanahraun society. From the time her pregnancy becomes known until the time the child is weaned, all the new mother's needs are seen to by the ruling class.

Most Kanahraun have no real skill in the healing arts, but the ruling class stands as a stark exception. Well-acquainted with everything from healing herbs to curative magics, the ruling class oversees the health of the whole tribe. The

level of care given is generally commensurate with the drow's useful to society and to the ruling class, which provides the lower class an excellent incentive to obey their leaders.

Death usually comes early to the Kanahraun; the violent and cruel life they lead in the Underdeep makes a death of old age and infirmity nearly impossible. The Kanahraun are glad of that, for of the very few things that frighten them, death of old age, doddering and weak, is perhaps the most terrible to their minds.

When death comes to a member of the lower class, the body of the Kanahraun is cooked and consumed by the remainder of the tribe. The corpses of the ruling class are consumed only by other members of the class, when indeed the Kanahraun is actually dead. It is not uncommon for members of the ruling class to preserve themselves long after the spark of life has gone out by transforming themselves into undead, with liches and vampires being the most common forms.

Clothing

The Kanahraun do not wear fabrics of any kind. Rather, they prefer to craft their clothing from the flayed and tanned skins of their victims. Ideally, the skin will retain as many of the features of its original owner as possible, so that an observer can easily see which part of the victim's anatomy is what in the new clothing.


They do not wear the skins of animals, except for their boots. The skins of most sentient races are too fragile to function effectively as footwear.

Additionally, Kanahraun venturing into an area of the Underdeep which is either exceedingly hot or exceedingly cold will wear the skins of beasts as protection.

Combat

The Kanahraun are a true horror in combat. They are merciless opponents, bloody barbarians skilled in battle and tactics and seemingly without fear. Groups of Kanahraun are rarely encountered without at least one member of the ruling class in attendance, supplementing the terror of the barbarous attack with dark, necromantic magics.

An attack by the Kanahraun is enough to incite panic and terror in most races, who know all too well what will happen to them if the Kanahraun are victorious. The feral drow are well aware of the panic their appearance causes, and gladly use it to their advantage.



The Kanahraun nobles wield and wear weapons and armour formed from the bones of their victims through a necromantic process known only to the ruling class, called *boneforging*. Nearly as strong as steel but much lighter, *boneforged* arms and armour are often made with the bones of undead, retaining some of the undead's terrible abilities and channelling them through the weapons and armour used by the Kanahraun. More details on *boneforging* and the items created with it can be found in Chapter 7, Drow Magic and Equipment.

Though it is usually only the ruling class of the Kanahraun who have access to a full set of boneforged regalia, the weapons and armour used by Kanahraun barbarians are no less horrible to the eye. Kanahraun prefer weapons such as barbed spears or heavy, cleaving blades, and usually fight with a buckler in one hand. They wear whatever armour they have ransacked from the corpses of their victims, or, failing that, leather armour made from the hide of some Underdeep beast. Whatever kind of armour they don, the Kanahraun festoon it with bones and cover it with the tanned skins of their victims. The bucklers they wield usually have the tanned and stretched face of some unfortunate sentient covering the front.

As terrible as an assault by either class of Kanahraun might be, the feral elves have a weapon in their arsenal still more terrifying. These are the Reavers, Kanahraun who have been bound together into small groups of absolute savages who feed on one another's strength in battle, the survivors growing ever stronger when one of their number is killed. Many in the Underdeep deny that the Reavers exist, insisting the tales of Reaver attacks must be pure fiction. In fact, there is no one outside the Kanahraun with any understanding of the Reavers' abilities, but those who deny they are real are quite wrong.

Into every generation of Kanahraun are born eight male children destined to become Reavers. In childhood, the destiny is hidden; even the mightiest priests of the ruling class are unable to determine which children will one day be Reavers. Upon the advent of puberty, however, the destiny is made plain. Following the first kill made by the Kanahraun child after the onset of adolescence, a mark like a white fang appears on his forehead and he begins to slip quickly into utter madness, plagued by dreams and visions of horror too intense for even the Kanahraun to tolerate. The feral drow consider this a gift from Azzanoth the Glutton.

The child is quickly taken to Gauth Sheol, to the great temple of Azzanoth, where he is kept caged until the other seven destined children of his generation can be gathered there. Once they have all eight in hand, the priests of the

Glutton perform a ritual known as Dul Merzim, the Joining. The eight children marked with the white fang are joined together into a single group of Reavers, known as a Pact. They remain individuals, but now also share a link of their thoughts, sensations and impulses, allowing them to act as a perfectly coordinated unit in battle. Maddened by bloodlust and visions of horror beyond mortal understanding, but made absolutely and utterly obedient to the ruling class by the ritual of Joining, the Reavers exist only to kill and slaughter. More information about Reavers can be found in Chapter 8, Creatures of the Underdeep.

Culture

Bestial and primitive as they are, the Kanahraun are not without rituals and traditions which bind the tribe together. The most important of these is the feast. Through feasting, they believe, they are honouring Azzanoth the Glutton, who delivered the Kanahraun from their entombment, and they are honouring themselves as well, for having risen above what they were to become what they are.

The scars and brands marking the flesh of the Kanahraun also each have their own significance and meaning. Many are religious in nature, others denote the tribe and class of the individual, others indicate great accomplishments and still more are used to convey ownership. The tally of enemies killed in battle is meticulously kept on the ears of the Kanahraun, with a warrior receiving one notch in his ear for every 10 enemies slain.


The Kanahraun consider themselves the superiors of every other race, the perfect predator taking its meals from lower life forms. This view has instilled in them an unshakable arrogance towards all others, including other drow. While the ruling class may covet some of the knowledge held by other races, they consider it, like everything else, something which is their due.

Economy

The Kanahraun have no real economy. The lower class labours and raids to provide for all the requirements of the tribe, and the ruling class distributes food and goods as needed. They do not trade with any other race, nor do they have any manner of currency. The concept of business is alien to them. So long as a Kanahraun continues to aid the tribe, all his needs are met.

Education

Like their society, education among the Kanahraun varies widely depending on the class of the child. Children of the lower class are taught simple skills and the basics of combat by anyone willing to spend the time needed to do so. Once the child has shown a preference or superior



ability, the ruling class will dictate he be instructed in that area thenceforth, whether the area is question is combat, cooking, tanning or weaving.

The children of the ruling class receive a much more thorough education. The Kanahraun are commonly perceived as pure savages, little more than animals. This is not without an element of truth when applied to the lower class, but the ruling class, dangerous and degenerate as they may be, is another story entirely. From the early days of the Kanahraun, when Azzanoth still lived among the feral drow, the ruling class has eagerly gathered knowledge of all kinds, with a special interest in magical lore.

The ruling class in larger tribes of Kanahraun typically have access to all manner of knowledge in the form of books, whether captured in a raid or penned by one of the ruling Kanahraun. Books written by the Kanahraun are as frightening as one would expect them to be: pages of skin, bound in bone and written in blood.

Though the ruling Kanahraun are far more educated than most outsiders would ever guess, the education available in even the largest tribe of feral drow is not equal to what can be had in most other drow cultures. The ruling Kanahraun are aware of this, and have in the last century or so begun ordering the lower class warriors to seek out and capture as many educated members of other races as possible, that the Kanahraun might gain their knowledge.

The education of a young member of the Kanahraun ruling class focuses primarily on combat, necromancy (or another magic if the child shows a particular aptitude) and worship of Azzanoth the Glutton.

Engineering

The Kanahraun have few permanent settlements as they tend to follow their prey throughout the Underdeep. Continuously moving also has the advantage of making the Kanahraun harder to find during the times one Underdeep race or another decides to strike against them.

The dearth of permanent settlements means the feral drow lag far behind their fellow drow in engineering expertise. They have little understanding of stonework or building, and their settlements conform to the dimensions of whatever space they are currently inhabiting. When the Kanahraun move into a new hunting ground, it is rarely with the intent to remain. They will erect some fortifications, often boneforged walls constructed by the ruling class, which are kept under constant guard. Other than that, the Kanahraun build very little, making use of whatever natural features the area offers.

There are two tribes of Kanahraun who have turned from the nomadic lifestyle of the rest of the feral drow and have created permanent cities in the Underdeep. The greater of these is at Gauth Sheol, the site of the first settlement of the Kanahraun and the place to which Azzanoth brought them upon releasing the Kanahraun from their imprisonment in that collapsed cavern in the days after the Sundering. Gauth Sheol is home to more than 10,000 Kanahraun, an enormous population that requires both constant raiding and extensive maintenance of captive races to sustain. It is also a city of striking juxtaposition. Built through a series of three caverns of glimmering crystal and clear streams of great beauty, the buildings are the stuff of other races' nightmares. Towers, temples and sprawling galleries of boneforged walls spread throughout the caverns, constantly added to and augmented as the meals of the Kanahraun provide ever more building material.

Entertainment

Many of the entertainments popular among the Kanahraun echo those of other drow. They too tend to prefer vital, active pleasures and entertainments.

There is, of course, the gladiatorial contest, which is a particular favourite among the Kanahraun. Captives and Kanahraun hunters are faced off against one another for the amusement of the crowd. On occasions of particular significance, these gladiatorial matches take the form of a ritual sacrifice, with several captives fighting until slain and then fed to the crowd.

Unlike most of their cousins, the Kanahraun have a tremendous interest in music and song. Primarily focused on worship of Azzanoth, the subject matter of their songs would be chilling to an outsider, but those few who have heard the Kanahraun sing and lived to tell about it cannot deny the abilities and talent of the feral drow.

Family

The Kanahraun have no concept of family in the traditional sense. There is loyalty to the class, to the tribe and to Azzanoth, but nothing else. Children of the Kanahraun are raised and cared for by their mothers until such time as they can be put to work in the tribe.

Food

The eating habits of the Kanahraun are what have made the feral drow so infamous in the Underdeep. The First Price of Azzanoth has never faded, and the Kanahraun still pay it every day. The staple food in their society is the flesh of other sentient races, with elven flesh prized above all.

For the most part, however, the Kanahraun dine on other races, as constantly consuming one another would quickly wipe out the people, a fact the ruling class understands very well. Thus, most Kanahraun eat a regular diet of gnomes, goblins and other weaker races to be found in the Underdeep. Tribes of Kanahraun keep a stable of drugged and crippled sentients to be used as food in times of privation.

Not content to practice what they preach, the ruling Kanahraun dine almost exclusively on drow flesh. To ensure a constant supply of the choicest cuts, the rulers of the Kanahraun prefer to keep one or two drow secured to their table with *boneforged* bonds. Each day, they will harvest the flesh they desire then apply healing magics to keep the unfortunate drow alive and restore his body, so that they may feast on the same cut of meat from the same drow the next day, should they so choose.

Even the ruling Kanahraun seldom consume their own people, however. They much prefer to eat the flesh of other drow, those who hold themselves above their feral cousins. For the most part, Kanahraun are only eaten by their fellows upon their death, when the body is cooked and divided as equally as possible among the rest of the tribe. This not an act of base hunger or greed but one of respect for the dead and as a means of ensuring that their strength stays within the tribe.

A practice of the Kanahraun which may be more terrifying than any other is their propensity to eat the flesh of the undead. When a corporeal undead servant has served out its useful time and has been damaged beyond recall, the Kanahraun eat the undead flesh, often reanimating the bones so that the corpse may have renewed usefulness as a skeleton servant.

Kanahraun can eat foods other than the flesh of sentient races, of course, and are perfectly capable of subsisting on such things. However, the taste is all but intolerable to them, and they will only eat such foods to stave off starvation.

Government


The Kanahraun are composed of two classes, the ruling class and the lower class. In every Kanahraun community, great or small, it is the ruling class that holds all the power. Descended from the offspring of Azzanoth, these drow have bred out much of their fiendish heritage, but there is usually still enough to mark them for what they are. They control all magic in the Kanahraun, they act as priests and



priestesses to Azzanoth the Glutton and they rule the lower class of the feral drow with both the stick and the carrot.

The ruling class makes up about 10 percent of the population of the Kanahraun, and not all of them can rule. Actual leadership of any group of Kanahraun falls to a single member of the ruling class, chosen from among all contenders in a five-day bloody rite that remains a secret outside the temples of Azzanoth. This one individual is responsible for all governance of the community, from distribution of food to ordering of raiding parties. In larger settlements, the leader, still known as First Voice after the title Brasnaloth bestowed upon himself, will appoint others of the ruling class to share some of the burdens of rule, but this is considered an invitation to challenge and seldom lasts long.

There are only two actions among the Kanahraun which are considered crimes; that is, something the ruling class must step in to deal with. The first of these is insurrection



against the ruling class by a member of the lower class; the second is worship of any god but Azzanoth the Glutton. Punishment for either of these crimes is simple – the offender is cast into the nearest Reaver pit. Any other actions which would be considered crimes in virtually any culture, such as murder, theft or rape, are ignored by the ruling class. The Kanahraun way is to leave it to the offended party to avenge the crime; if he is strong enough to do so, it is his right. If he is not strong enough, he has no right to vengeance.

Magic

Magic is an essential element of the Kanahraun. The lower class has no real knowledge of it, though they do retain the basic drow spellcasting abilities.

The ruling class, on the other hand, uses magic on a near-daily basis. They are accomplished necromancers and summoners, and most Kanahraun communities include a number of undead, bound to serve the ruling class and protect the settlement. In Gauth Sheol, for example, there are more than 1,000 undead of varying types, labouring in the service of their feral drow masters.

The ruling class contains arcane and divine spellcasters in roughly equal numbers, with many Kanahraun embracing both paths to magic. Sorcerers tend to outnumber wizards as fewer Kanahraun, even among the ruling class, have the discipline the path of the wizard requires.

Relations with Others

The Kanahraun relate with other races by eating them. That is an oversimplification, of course, but not without a core of truth. They have no allies in the Underdeep, no trading partners or allegiances. Attempts by other drow to deal with the Kanahraun tend to end badly, for one side or the other. As the tales of Kanahraun depravity have spread, and with them the tales of the drow's inability to bring them under control, many drow societies have begun to insist there is no relation between the drow and the Kanahraun. This assertion would be laughable if the drow were not so willing to punctuate their argument with a knife.

Religion

Azzanoth the Glutton is the sole deity of the Kanahraun, a demon lord of terrible power who condemned them to the feral existence in which they now revel. Worship of this being is a centrepiece to the society, ruled over by his priests and priestesses. Most activities of the Kanahraun are somehow related to worship of Azzanoth.

Slavery

The Kanahraun practice slavery, but not in quite the same way as other drow. The slaves taken by the feral drow are used for three purposes: as cheap labour, as raw materials for the creation of more undead and as a larder to be used for food when the hunting and raiding are going poorly.

Often, the Kanahraun's slaves wind up serving at least two of those purposes. A slave might be worked and whipped to death, then consumed by the Kanahraun, only to have the gnawed skeleton animated by the priests of Azzanoth to continue working at the task that killed the skeleton's original owner.

Obviously, people taken as slaves by the Kanahraun do not last long, and given the stories known throughout the Underdeep of what happens to such unfortunates, most prefer death to capture by the feral drow.

The Lorgreln - The Iron Drow

As House Lorgreln fled from the shangu during the time of the Sundering, they were pursued for miles beneath the earth. They were hunted first by the shangu, then, when those abominations had eaten their fill, they sent their foul servants to continue the pursuit of the drow. At last the pursuers were thrown off, but by this time the Lorgreln were hopelessly lost in the labyrinth of the Underdeep, and frightened to venture far in exploration lest they become hunted once again.

The narrow, muddy tunnels that made up the new home of the House were laced with veins of metal and blossoming with edible fungus. Even fresh water was plentiful, and the Lorgreln counted themselves fortunate. The air, however, was unnervingly thin and still, a fact that became plainer still when the Lorgreln lit their first fires. Within moments, the smoke of the coal filled the tunnels, the fire consuming the thin air until it was all but impossible to breathe. The fires were quickly stamped out.

The drow had always known the Underdeep could be a place of privation, with food and even water in terribly short supply, but they had never realised that air, too, could be scarce. Without the wind and weather systems enjoyed by the surface world, vast areas of the Underdeep had no air movement at all, or were filled with poisonous fumes. The tunnels of the Lorgreln's new home were such a place, a strange land where air could be taken for granted no more than could safety.

The warrior leaders of House Lorgreln determined they must find a way out of this place, but all attempts to scout a way to another settlement ended with the scout fleeing back

to the Lorgreln with warnings of shangu. Eventually, the Lorgreln realised they were trapped, with no way to leave the tunnels they now inhabited save through a just-established colony of shangu. Desperate as the warriors were to depart, they could not overcome the fears of the rest of the population.

Sealed off from other drow in the thin air of their tunnels, the Lorgreln tried several schemes to circumvent their peculiar handicap, including tunnelling farther away from the shangu. When they discovered a gigantic cavern, they were elated. The air seemed cleaner and fresher inside and indeed, the Lorgreln were able at last to start some small fires to cook their food and warm themselves at night.

The Lorgreln were fortunate to have some skilled smiths among their number, who went to work preparing a furnace to smelt the rich veins of metal in the tunnel walls into forged steel. The warriors of the Lorgreln had accepted at last that they would remain here with the rest of their people, and while the smiths went to work, the warriors supervised the remainder of the Lorgreln in the construction of crude dwellings and fortifications within the cavern.

The Lorgreln had few stoneworking tools, or indeed, tools of any kind with them at the time of the Sundering. Those tools they did have, as well as weapons which could be modified to serve, were all but worn to uselessness in the early construction of their settlement. Using hard stone and the last remnants of their metal tools, the drow began to extract iron ore from the walls of the tunnels to forge into new weapons and equipment. The ore that came from the walls was almost pure, so rich were the veins.

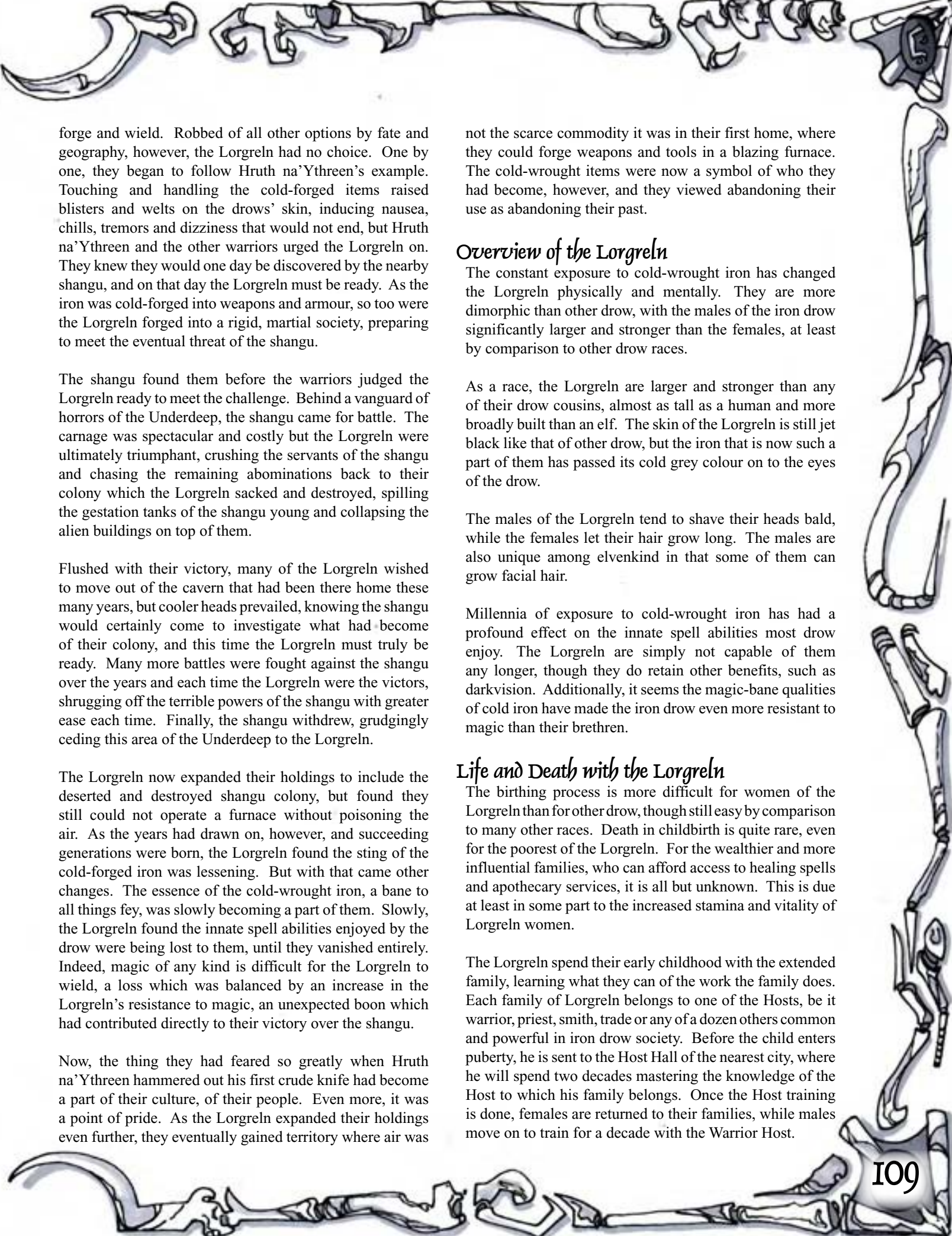
As the small furnace built by the smiths was fired for the first time, however, and the first of the ore was fed into its roaring maw, the Lorgreln realised they had not overcome the air problem at all. The furnace hungrily gulped the air



of their new cavern home, belching out noxious smoke that quickly hung like a choking fog throughout the area. With no other option, the drow extinguished the furnace.

They were quick to realise the increased danger of their situation. Only a short distance from a colony of shangu, they remained trapped but now had few useful weapons to defend themselves with. One of the smiths, a skilled craftsman and warrior named Hruth na'Ythreen, whose name is still revered by the Lorgreln, came at last to a difficult decision. Taking one of the only hammers left to the Lorgreln, and seizing a misshapen lump of iron, he began the slow and ultimately painful process of cold-forging an iron knife.

The drow, like the surface elves, are distant from their fey roots, but there remains enough of faerie in them to make cold-forged iron a painful thing to even touch, let alone



forge and wield. Robbed of all other options by fate and geography, however, the Lorgreln had no choice. One by one, they began to follow Hruth na'Ythreen's example. Touching and handling the cold-forged items raised blisters and welts on the drows' skin, inducing nausea, chills, tremors and dizziness that would not end, but Hruth na'Ythreen and the other warriors urged the Lorgreln on. They knew they would one day be discovered by the nearby shangu, and on that day the Lorgreln must be ready. As the iron was cold-forged into weapons and armour, so too were the Lorgreln forged into a rigid, martial society, preparing to meet the eventual threat of the shangu.

The shangu found them before the warriors judged the Lorgreln ready to meet the challenge. Behind a vanguard of horrors of the Underdeep, the shangu came for battle. The carnage was spectacular and costly but the Lorgreln were ultimately triumphant, crushing the servants of the shangu and chasing the remaining abominations back to their colony which the Lorgreln sacked and destroyed, spilling the gestation tanks of the shangu young and collapsing the alien buildings on top of them.

Flushed with their victory, many of the Lorgreln wished to move out of the cavern that had been there home these many years, but cooler heads prevailed, knowing the shangu would certainly come to investigate what had become of their colony, and this time the Lorgreln must truly be ready. Many more battles were fought against the shangu over the years and each time the Lorgreln were the victors, shrugging off the terrible powers of the shangu with greater ease each time. Finally, the shangu withdrew, grudgingly ceding this area of the Underdeep to the Lorgreln.

The Lorgreln now expanded their holdings to include the deserted and destroyed shangu colony, but found they still could not operate a furnace without poisoning the air. As the years had drawn on, however, and succeeding generations were born, the Lorgreln found the sting of the cold-forged iron was lessening. But with that came other changes. The essence of the cold-wrought iron, a bane to all things fey, was slowly becoming a part of them. Slowly, the Lorgreln found the innate spell abilities enjoyed by the drow were being lost to them, until they vanished entirely. Indeed, magic of any kind is difficult for the Lorgreln to wield, a loss which was balanced by an increase in the Lorgreln's resistance to magic, an unexpected boon which had contributed directly to their victory over the shangu.

Now, the thing they had feared so greatly when Hruth na'Ythreen hammered out his first crude knife had become a part of their culture, of their people. Even more, it was a point of pride. As the Lorgreln expanded their holdings even further, they eventually gained territory where air was

not the scarce commodity it was in their first home, where they could forge weapons and tools in a blazing furnace. The cold-wrought items were now a symbol of who they had become, however, and they viewed abandoning their use as abandoning their past.

Overview of the Lorgreln

The constant exposure to cold-wrought iron has changed the Lorgreln physically and mentally. They are more dimorphic than other drow, with the males of the iron drow significantly larger and stronger than the females, at least by comparison to other drow races.

As a race, the Lorgreln are larger and stronger than any of their drow cousins, almost as tall as a human and more broadly built than an elf. The skin of the Lorgreln is still jet black like that of other drow, but the iron that is now such a part of them has passed its cold grey colour on to the eyes of the drow.

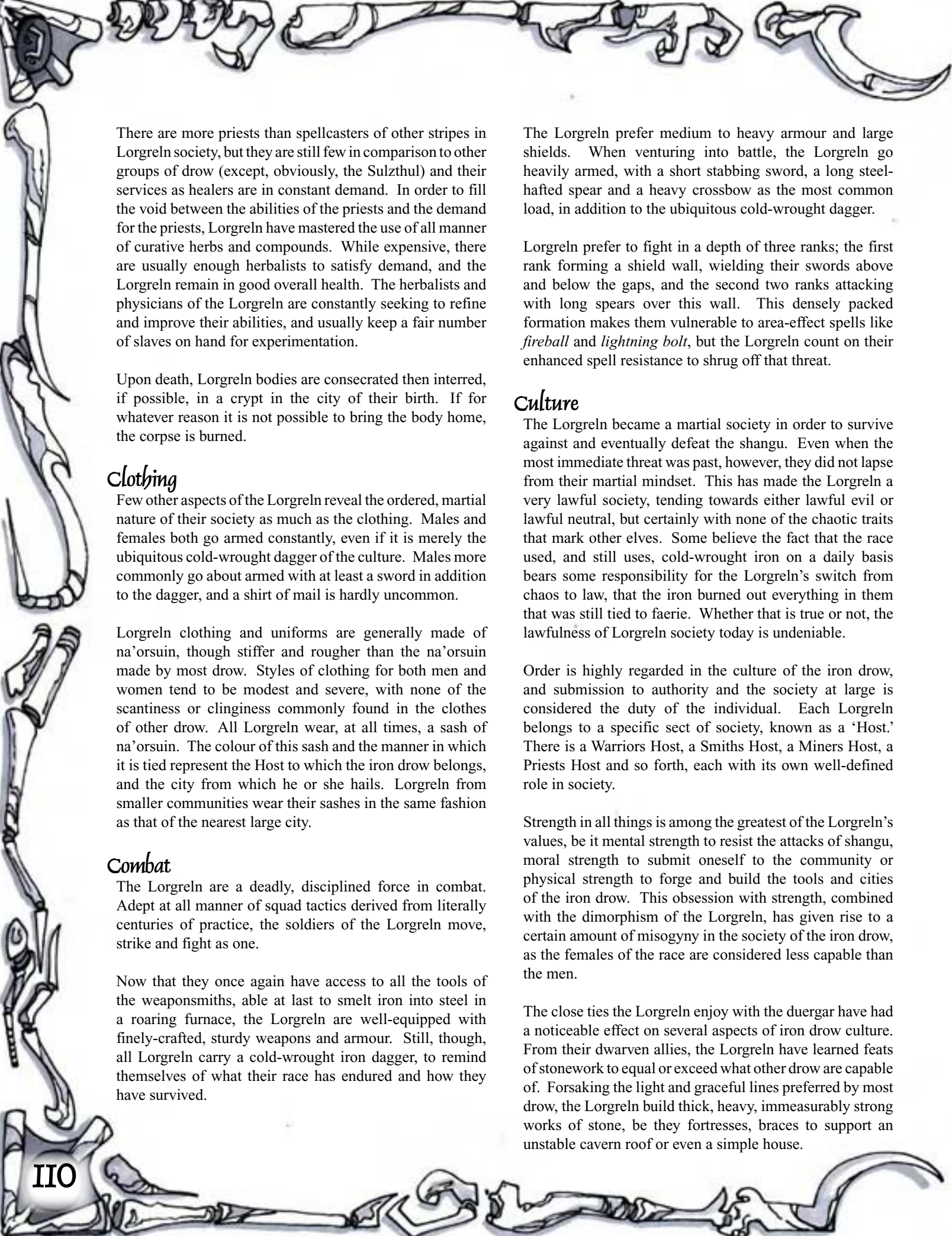
The males of the Lorgreln tend to shave their heads bald, while the females let their hair grow long. The males are also unique among elvenkind in that some of them can grow facial hair.

Millennia of exposure to cold-wrought iron has had a profound effect on the innate spell abilities most drow enjoy. The Lorgreln are simply not capable of them any longer, though they do retain other benefits, such as darkvision. Additionally, it seems the magic-bane qualities of cold iron have made the iron drow even more resistant to magic than their brethren.

Life and Death with the Lorgreln

The birthing process is more difficult for women of the Lorgreln than for other drow, though still easy by comparison to many other races. Death in childbirth is quite rare, even for the poorest of the Lorgreln. For the wealthier and more influential families, who can afford access to healing spells and apothecary services, it is all but unknown. This is due at least in some part to the increased stamina and vitality of Lorgreln women.

The Lorgreln spend their early childhood with the extended family, learning what they can of the work the family does. Each family of Lorgreln belongs to one of the Hosts, be it warrior, priest, smith, trade or any of a dozen others common and powerful in iron drow society. Before the child enters puberty, he is sent to the Host Hall of the nearest city, where he will spend two decades mastering the knowledge of the Host to which his family belongs. Once the Host training is done, females are returned to their families, while males move on to train for a decade with the Warrior Host.



There are more priests than spellcasters of other stripes in Lorgreln society, but they are still few in comparison to other groups of drow (except, obviously, the Sulzthul) and their services as healers are in constant demand. In order to fill the void between the abilities of the priests and the demand for the priests, Lorgreln have mastered the use of all manner of curative herbs and compounds. While expensive, there are usually enough herbalists to satisfy demand, and the Lorgreln remain in good overall health. The herbalists and physicians of the Lorgreln are constantly seeking to refine and improve their abilities, and usually keep a fair number of slaves on hand for experimentation.

Upon death, Lorgreln bodies are consecrated then interred, if possible, in a crypt in the city of their birth. If for whatever reason it is not possible to bring the body home, the corpse is burned.

Clothing

Few other aspects of the Lorgreln reveal the ordered, martial nature of their society as much as the clothing. Males and females both go armed constantly, even if it is merely the ubiquitous cold-wrought dagger of the culture. Males more commonly go about armed with at least a sword in addition to the dagger, and a shirt of mail is hardly uncommon.

Lorgreln clothing and uniforms are generally made of na'orsuin, though stiffer and rougher than the na'orsuin made by most drow. Styles of clothing for both men and women tend to be modest and severe, with none of the scantiness or clinginess commonly found in the clothes of other drow. All Lorgreln wear, at all times, a sash of na'orsuin. The colour of this sash and the manner in which it is tied represent the Host to which the iron drow belongs, and the city from which he or she hails. Lorgreln from smaller communities wear their sashes in the same fashion as that of the nearest large city.

Combat

The Lorgreln are a deadly, disciplined force in combat. Adept at all manner of squad tactics derived from literally centuries of practice, the soldiers of the Lorgreln move, strike and fight as one.

Now that they once again have access to all the tools of the weaponsmiths, able at last to smelt iron into steel in a roaring furnace, the Lorgreln are well-equipped with finely-crafted, sturdy weapons and armour. Still, though, all Lorgreln carry a cold-wrought iron dagger, to remind themselves of what their race has endured and how they have survived.

The Lorgreln prefer medium to heavy armour and large shields. When venturing into battle, the Lorgreln go heavily armed, with a short stabbing sword, a long steel-hafted spear and a heavy crossbow as the most common load, in addition to the ubiquitous cold-wrought dagger.

Lorgreln prefer to fight in a depth of three ranks; the first rank forming a shield wall, wielding their swords above and below the gaps, and the second two ranks attacking with long spears over this wall. This densely packed formation makes them vulnerable to area-effect spells like *fireball* and *lightning bolt*, but the Lorgreln count on their enhanced spell resistance to shrug off that threat.

Culture

The Lorgreln became a martial society in order to survive against and eventually defeat the shangu. Even when the most immediate threat was past, however, they did not lapse from their martial mindset. This has made the Lorgreln a very lawful society, tending towards either lawful evil or lawful neutral, but certainly with none of the chaotic traits that mark other elves. Some believe the fact that the race used, and still uses, cold-wrought iron on a daily basis bears some responsibility for the Lorgreln's switch from chaos to law, that the iron burned out everything in them that was still tied to faerie. Whether that is true or not, the lawfulness of Lorgreln society today is undeniable.

Order is highly regarded in the culture of the iron drow, and submission to authority and the society at large is considered the duty of the individual. Each Lorgreln belongs to a specific sect of society, known as a 'Host.' There is a Warriors Host, a Smiths Host, a Miners Host, a Priests Host and so forth, each with its own well-defined role in society.

Strength in all things is among the greatest of the Lorgreln's values, be it mental strength to resist the attacks of shangu, moral strength to submit oneself to the community or physical strength to forge and build the tools and cities of the iron drow. This obsession with strength, combined with the dimorphism of the Lorgreln, has given rise to a certain amount of misogyny in the society of the iron drow, as the females of the race are considered less capable than the men.

The close ties the Lorgreln enjoy with the duergar have had a noticeable effect on several aspects of iron drow culture. From their dwarven allies, the Lorgreln have learned feats of stonework to equal or exceed what other drow are capable of. Forsaking the light and graceful lines preferred by most drow, the Lorgreln build thick, heavy, immeasurably strong works of stone, be they fortresses, braces to support an unstable cavern roof or even a simple house.



nowhere else, there are other factors at work which ensure the trade interests of the Lorgreln continue to grow.

The first and simplest of these is the undeniable and unerring quality of goods produced by the Lorgreln. The iron drow are among the finest craftsmen in the Underdeep, combining attention to detail and an ambition to perfect their craft with the long centuries of a drow lifespan.

The second reason the Lorgreln trading concerns continue to increase is the fact their caravans are so well guarded. Because of the iron drow reputation for delivering items unharmed and as promised, stipulated in rigid terms though it may be, the other races of the Underdeep who are in contact with the Lorgreln often pay the iron drow to transport cargo for them, paying a steep percentage of the worth of the cargo in exchange for its safe arrival.

Lastly, the Lorgreln occupy a unique position. Though relations with other drow are cool and cordial at best, as alien to one another as the two races have become, they are still capable of leery cooperation. Further, the iron drow enjoy relations with the duergar which could almost be classified as warm, a wide departure from the hostility which exists between the grey dwarves and most drow. The Lorgreln act as the bridge between the two races, not to bring them together or allay hostilities, but rather to act as the middlemen for trade.

Some outsiders suggest this influence of the duergar spreads so far as to be the reason Lorgreln males often shave their heads, though most are wise enough not to suggest it in front of a Lorgreln.

Economy

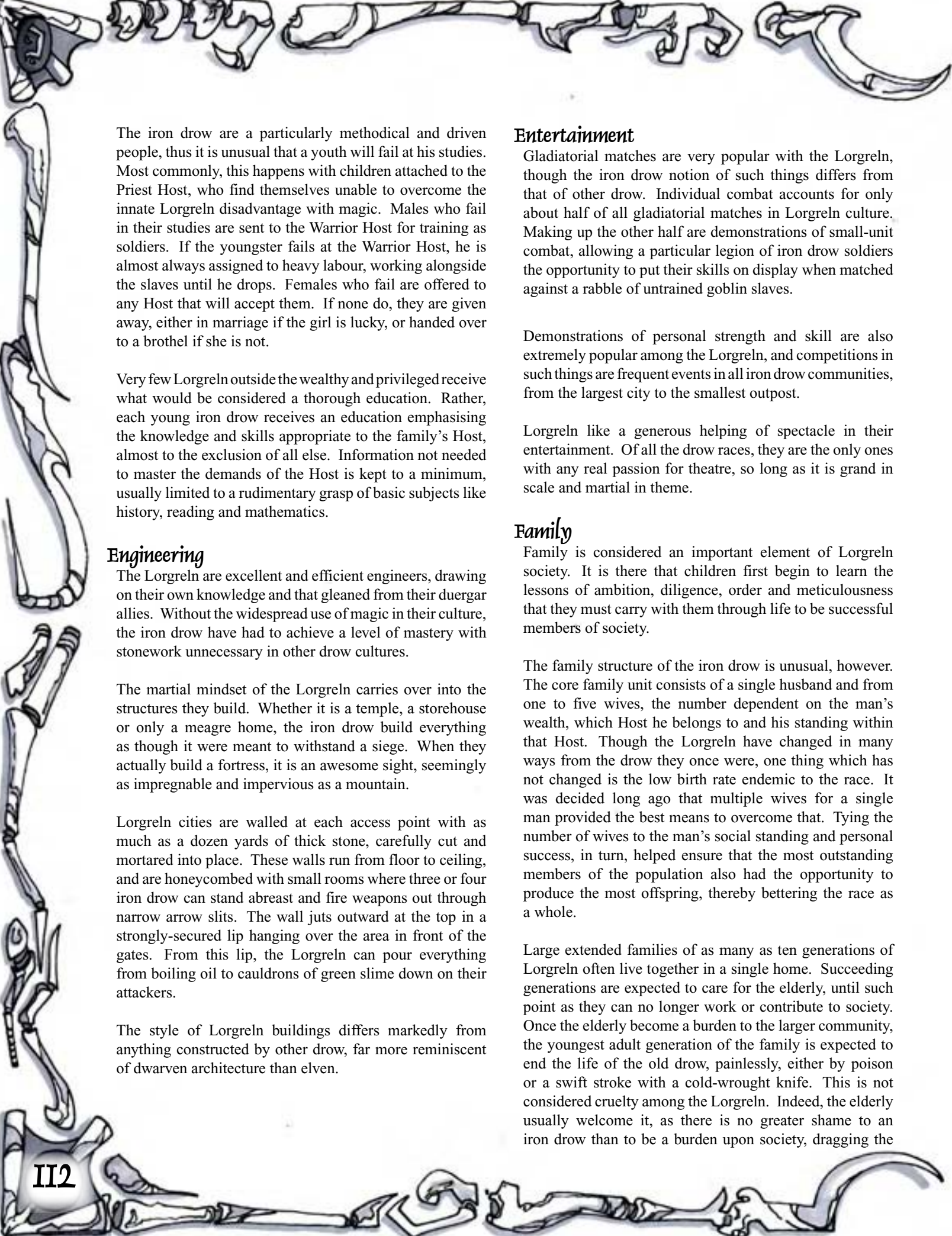
The economy of the Lorgreln is robust. They are industrious and well-organised workers, skilled at mining ores and gems, and forging various trade goods for export to other races. Their trade caravans travel through the Underdeep like an army on the march, so well-guarded are they. Though this practice requires a good deal of manpower, it also ensures, as much as is possible, that the caravan will arrive unmolested at its destination.

Though the iron drow have no particular trade good which is unique to them, no single item which can be gotten

Education

The Lorgreln spend their early childhood with the extended family, learning what they can of the work the family does. Each family of Lorgreln belongs to one of the Hosts, be it warrior, priest, smith, trade or any of a dozen others common and powerful in iron drow society. Where the parents are from two different Hosts, the patriarchal society of the Lorgreln dictates that the child is considered a member of the father's Host. Before the child enters puberty, he is sent to the appropriate Host Hall of the nearest city, where he will spend two decades mastering the knowledge of the Host to which his family belongs. Once the Host training is done, females are returned to their families, while males move on to train for a decade with the Warrior Host.

This education is expected of every member of Lorgreln society, up to and including the offspring of the king.



The iron drow are a particularly methodical and driven people, thus it is unusual that a youth will fail at his studies. Most commonly, this happens with children attached to the Priest Host, who find themselves unable to overcome the innate Lorgreln disadvantage with magic. Males who fail in their studies are sent to the Warrior Host for training as soldiers. If the youngster fails at the Warrior Host, he is almost always assigned to heavy labour, working alongside the slaves until he drops. Females who fail are offered to any Host that will accept them. If none do, they are given away, either in marriage if the girl is lucky, or handed over to a brothel if she is not.

Very few Lorgreln outside the wealthy and privileged receive what would be considered a thorough education. Rather, each young iron drow receives an education emphasising the knowledge and skills appropriate to the family's Host, almost to the exclusion of all else. Information not needed to master the demands of the Host is kept to a minimum, usually limited to a rudimentary grasp of basic subjects like history, reading and mathematics.

Engineering

The Lorgreln are excellent and efficient engineers, drawing on their own knowledge and that gleaned from their duergar allies. Without the widespread use of magic in their culture, the iron drow have had to achieve a level of mastery with stonework unnecessary in other drow cultures.

The martial mindset of the Lorgreln carries over into the structures they build. Whether it is a temple, a storehouse or only a meagre home, the iron drow build everything as though it were meant to withstand a siege. When they actually build a fortress, it is an awesome sight, seemingly as impregnable and impervious as a mountain.

Lorgreln cities are walled at each access point with as much as a dozen yards of thick stone, carefully cut and mortared into place. These walls run from floor to ceiling, and are honeycombed with small rooms where three or four iron drow can stand abreast and fire weapons out through narrow arrow slits. The wall juts outward at the top in a strongly-secured lip hanging over the area in front of the gates. From this lip, the Lorgreln can pour everything from boiling oil to cauldrons of green slime down on their attackers.

The style of Lorgreln buildings differs markedly from anything constructed by other drow, far more reminiscent of dwarven architecture than elven.

Entertainment

Gladiatorial matches are very popular with the Lorgreln, though the iron drow notion of such things differs from that of other drow. Individual combat accounts for only about half of all gladiatorial matches in Lorgreln culture. Making up the other half are demonstrations of small-unit combat, allowing a particular legion of iron drow soldiers the opportunity to put their skills on display when matched against a rabble of untrained goblin slaves.

Demonstrations of personal strength and skill are also extremely popular among the Lorgreln, and competitions in such things are frequent events in all iron drow communities, from the largest city to the smallest outpost.


Lorgreln like a generous helping of spectacle in their entertainment. Of all the drow races, they are the only ones with any real passion for theatre, so long as it is grand in scale and martial in theme.

Family

Family is considered an important element of Lorgreln society. It is there that children first begin to learn the lessons of ambition, diligence, order and meticulousness that they must carry with them through life to be successful members of society.

The family structure of the iron drow is unusual, however. The core family unit consists of a single husband and from one to five wives, the number dependent on the man's wealth, which Host he belongs to and his standing within that Host. Though the Lorgreln have changed in many ways from the drow they once were, one thing which has not changed is the low birth rate endemic to the race. It was decided long ago that multiple wives for a single man provided the best means to overcome that. Tying the number of wives to the man's social standing and personal success, in turn, helped ensure that the most outstanding members of the population also had the opportunity to produce the most offspring, thereby bettering the race as a whole.

Large extended families of as many as ten generations of Lorgreln often live together in a single home. Succeeding generations are expected to care for the elderly, until such point as they can no longer work or contribute to society. Once the elderly become a burden to the larger community, the youngest adult generation of the family is expected to end the life of the old drow, painlessly, either by poison or a swift stroke with a cold-wrought knife. This is not considered cruelty among the Lorgreln. Indeed, the elderly usually welcome it, as there is no greater shame to an iron drow than to be a burden upon society, dragging the



community down rather than helping it reach new heights. The elderly drow, once slain, is then entombed with the full honour of any other funeral.

Food

The food harvested and eaten by the Lorgreln is as simple and bland as that of other drow, consisting primarily of mushrooms. Meat and fish caught in the Underdeep is more of a luxury than a staple.

However, the wide trade networks of the Lorgreln, including the races who pay the iron drow to transport their goods, provide the Lorgreln with the opportunity to import more exotic and flavourful foods. This is not the status symbol it is among other drow, but it is a welcome departure from the usual fare for those who can afford vegetables from the surface or the Sulzthul, not to mention fruits, spices and sundry other foods.

One thing the iron drow and other drow do have in common is a love of bread, though it is even harder for the Lorgreln to acquire the necessary grain. Bread is uncommon at even the richest tables of the iron drow, and rarely is it enjoyed by anyone of a social standing lower than among the top hierarchy of a Host.

Government

The Lorgreln, alone among the drow, have a single centralised government uniting their cities and villages. The government itself is, in its simplest terms, a monarchy, controlled by a single powerful family with a strong claim to descent from Hruth na'Ythreen. The family's name is, of course, Ythreen, but it is widely whispered by those Lorgreln who would seek to supplant the current ruling family that the Ythreen name is merely an affectation, adopted to help seize control of the throne from the previous ruling family.

Though the Lorgreln government might seem simple at first glance, it is anything but. Indeed, the complexity of rulership is one of the few things the iron drow share with their drow cousins. The king is advised by a council, made up of one representative from each Host, and each Host has its own sphere of control within the government which is jealously guarded against interference by others, even the king himself.

Each of the Six Cities of the Lorgreln is ruled over by a Warden, a governor appointed to his post by the king, and each Warden is also advised by a group of representatives from each of the Hosts, again with their own spheres of influence. Trade agreements or other relations between two cities of the Lorgreln must be handled through the appropriate Hosts. Even the smallest community of iron

drow is not exempt from these rules, as no matter how small the group of Lorgreln, it is ruled over by a Warden appointed by the king.

The only real exception to the tight grip the Hosts maintain on their power is the Warrior Host, which does answer directly to the king. No monarch who allowed his military to answer to the control of someone else would sit on the Unforged Throne of the Lorgreln for very long. Likewise, warriors based in one of the Six Cities are answerable directly to the Warden of that city. The Warden of a city is responsible for the enforcement of law in his city, and has authority to appoint tribunals to weigh criminal cases. All laws, however, are the province of the monarchy. No other laws may be created, and none deleted, by the Wardens.

This highly stratified form of government does have its advantages. Assassinations are rare in Lorgreln government, as all important decisions and appointments descend from the king. Without a complete coup of the government (which has happened a few times) it is difficult, if not impossible, to seize power through assassination.


Magic

Of all the societies of the drow and the sub-races which have sprung from the drow, the culture of the Lorgreln is the least magical.

This is widely held to be a result of the race's long tenure in caves and caverns with air too thin and still to support the use of a smelting furnace, forcing the Lorgreln to turn to cold-wrought iron as their only source of weaponry. It is thought that the millennia of touching and wielding those cold-wrought blades, a substance which is anathema to all things fey, burned all remaining elements of faerie from the Lorgreln. Whether this is the truth or not, certain facts are undeniable, most prominently that the iron drow have lost all of the innate spellcasting abilities taken for granted by other drow, seemingly beyond recall.

The Lorgreln also have difficulty learning any of the magical arts, despite the single-minded determination they are capable of. They are certainly no less intelligent than any other drow, yet it requires roughly twice as long for them to learn magic as it does the members of any other race. Those Lorgreln who do practice magic are exclusively priests and wizards as only those willing to suffer long hours in study or prayer can begin to channel magic. Sorcerers do not exist in iron drow society.

Though the Lorgreln have lost access to the useful innate spell abilities that were part of their drow heritage, they have made up for that loss in other ways having to do with magic. The innate spell resistance of the drow is intact



in the iron drow; indeed, it seems to be considerably stronger, a fact which enabled them to face and destroy a host of shangu to escape the caverns they had inhabited since the time of the Sundering.

Relations with Others

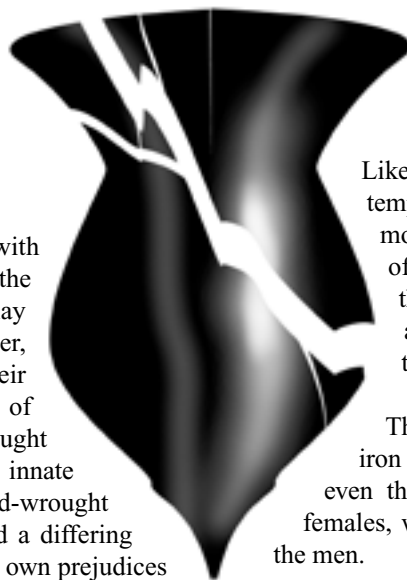
The Lorgreln re-established contact with the other drow not long after shattering the shangu's grasp on the territory which lay between the two groups of drow. However, the passing of many long years since their separation had made the two groups of drow alien to one another. The drow thought the Lorgreln had devolved, losing their innate magical abilities and foolishly using cold-wrought iron. The Lorgreln, understandably, held a differing perspective. With each group bringing its own prejudices to the table, in addition to the fundamental difference between the drow's chaotic viewpoint and the Lorgreln's lawful, true communication was impossible between the two groups, let alone re-assimilation of the Lorgreln into the larger community of the drow.

However, neither group was blind to the opportunities presented by trade between the races. A steady business quickly grew between the drow and their newfound cousins, though it is still marked on both sides by a healthy amount of suspicion. Still, of all the drow sub-races, the Lorgreln have the strongest connection with the drow.

Despite the healthy trade relations, the Lorgreln have never felt comfortable with their drow cousins, as the two peoples hold so little in common. The iron drow were depressed that the reunion they had hoped for through the millennia was impossible, but they soon found an unlikely kindred spirit in the duergar, a race of lawful evil dwarves who make their home in the Underdeep. Through recent history, the Lorgreln and the duergar have maintained close ties, bound with multiple treaties, agreements and trade compacts. The dwarven culture of the duergar has impacted many aspects of current Lorgreln society, from stonemasonry to warfare.

Religion

The Lorgreln are an unrelentingly martial society, and as such, worship of Thraud and Olyet'Naru dominates all other religions, reducing them to irrelevance or obsolescence. Indeed,



the churches of the Pitiless Blade and the Taskmaster are so completely pervasive that worship of the other gods of the drow is illegal.

Like all other buildings of the Lorgreln, the temples are constructed like fortresses, only more so. Temples maintain their own forces of fanatically dedicated soldiers, billeted in the temple walls and kept ever ready for anything from marching to war to keeping the peace.

The clergy of Thraud and Olyet'Naru among iron drow society are both entirely male and even the inner areas of a temple are barred to females, who must worship in a separate area from the men.

Slavery

The Lorgreln maintain large numbers of slaves, but they do not practice slavery on other drow. Of all the drow nations and sub-races, the iron drow are only actively hostile towards the Kanahraun. Capturing one of the feral drow alive is all but impossible, and when one is captured, it makes a very poor slave. Given that, the Lorgreln simply kill any Kanahraun they happen to capture.

The Lorgreln consider themselves among the upper echelon of beings inhabiting the Underdeep. Races such as the goblins, kobolds, orcs and others are considered lesser races, crude and undisciplined, and therefore fitting slaves to work the mines of the iron drow.

Few, if any, Lorgreln keep slaves as personal servants. Rather, the slaves of the Lorgreln are used primarily for dangerous and deadly work. Mining is a primary use of such slaves, as are other forms of heavy labour - for example, hauling loads of stone and ore. Large numbers of slaves meet their deaths in the gladiatorial matches of the iron drow, cut down by an elite force of highly skilled and trained Lorgreln soldiers.

Perhaps the least lucky slaves of all are those who find themselves in the custody of one of the Lorgreln healers. Always anxious to test the efficacy of new compounds or procedures, or to test the limits of endurance, some of the more ambitious iron drow healers may kill dozens of slaves every month.





The Pol'Tah - The Deep Drow

The Pol'Tah, the Deep Drow, are the oldest of the drow sub-races, the only one whose creation is not linked somehow to the Sundering.

The drow were as one when they began their first exile from the surface world, when they were forced to take shelter underground during the first war with the goblins. As noted in the history of the drow (see page 6), it was during that time the voices of the elven gods the drow had always worshipped began to grow faint to the priests and elders of the drow. With the fading of the voices of the old gods came the first whispers of new gods, divine beings who reached out to the drow and were embraced by the beleaguered elves.

Not all drow were willing to listen to the new voices, however, and many clung to the worship of the elder gods, silence or no. For some time, the two religious factions, those devoted to the old faiths and those devoted to the new, existed together in relative peace, all eyes fixed on the continuing menace of the goblins. As time passed and worship of the new deities became stronger among the drow, many of those still devoted to the old gods fell silent, either turning to worship of the new or merely feigning such worship.

One large group still devoted to the old religion would not bend or feign worship, however. This large clan that would one day become the Pol'Tah counted many warriors among its members, men and women who often slipped in among the goblins to wreak terrible and merciless slaughter on the foes of the drow.

The followers of the new gods, in particular the Dark Mother, became increasingly aggressive in their faith, decrying the old gods as weak and ineffective. Where were the Allfather and his lackeys, they asked, when the drow were driven before the goblin hordes? The Dark Mother and the others had taught the drow how to survive in the harsh world of the Underdeep, had taught them how to fight back against their foes. The Pol'Tah and other worshippers of the old gods responded that faith must be maintained. At last, as such things must, the competition between the religions led to open confrontation.

Though the Pol'Tah had influence and power and were well regarded for their deeds against the goblins, it was not enough. Except for the Pol'Tah, the worship of the Allfather and other elven gods had all but vanished from the drow and the Pol'Tah were badly outnumbered. Foreseeing that if they stayed then the confrontation with the worshippers of the new gods could only end in blood,

the Pol'Tah began to plan their departure. They wished to return to the surface, to bask in the sun once again and hear the words of the Allfather, but the paths to the lands of light were blocked by uncountable hordes of goblins. With the threat of a religious war growing every day among the drow, the Pol'Tah finally chose to journey deeper into the earth, hoping to find another path to the surface.

The Pol'Tah do not know how long they wandered, braving the unknown perils of the Underdeep and searching in vain for a way back to the sun. As they travelled, though, they found themselves moving deeper and deeper into the earth, far past any areas the drow had ventured before. Hopelessly lost, they crawled for months through filthy tunnels and gas-choked caverns, foraging for food and hoping to find a clear path out of the Underdeep. Ironically, this trial was the last straw to some of the Pol'Tah, and after leaving the drow over their beliefs in the old gods, some began to doubt whether the old gods were really worthy of their worship after all.

The confused wandering of the Pol'Tah nearly came to a sudden and unfortunate end, as they were the first drow to meet the shangu, the great abomination of the Underdeep. The shangu, with their unguessed powers, easily routed the Pol'Tah, capturing many of them as slaves and as food. From these captives, the shangu learned of the existence of the rest of the drow and began, with inhuman patience, to put into motion plans for a move against the dark elves that would only come to fruition many long years in the future, ultimately leading to the attack that caused the Sundering.

The remaining drow of Pol'Tah fled in stark terror from the shangu, rushing heedlessly down passage after passage and stumbling from cavern to cavern in a desperate need to outdistance the scaled monsters that so easily overcame them. This terrified flight took them deeper still into the earth, farther below the surface than even the deepest shangu citadel, to a realm of pitch-black, mist-filled tunnels and stifling heat.

Even the exceptional vision of the drow was of little use in this strange place, as the thick mist that filled the air blocked the sight of the Pol'Tah, enabling them to see no more than a few feet in front of them. However, food and water were plentiful, with an amazing variety of fungus growing throughout the tunnels and caverns and a host of strange beasts for hunting. Most importantly, it seemed safe from the terror of the shangu.

The air in this alien place had a strange quality to its movement. Not still and stale like the choking air of so many other places the Pol'Tah passed through, the air here moved. It would drift sluggishly in one direction down a




passageway then a few minutes later, with a barely-audible sigh, turn and drift in the other direction, as though some great beast was breathing in and out.

By now, hopes of ever returning to the surface had begun to seem like a fool's dream and faith in the Allfather, so strong among the Pol'Tah only a few years earlier, had begun to fray under the constant trials and troubles afflicting the Pol'Tah. By the thinnest of margins, the Pol'Tah chose to remain here in these caverns, rather than brave their way past the shangu and thousands of other dangers in yet another fruitless drive towards the surface. The strange,

breath-like pulse of the air led them to name the area Drez Khelim, or Earth Heart.

Of course, it was not the drow's depth beneath the earth that caused the voices of the Allfather and other elven gods to grow faint to their ears then vanish entirely. Rather, it was the drow's unwitting descent into evil that caused their old gods to turn away, and other beings to take notice. Though all but forgotten by the other drow, the Pol'Tah had not been forgotten at all by the new gods of the drow. As the last of the Pol'Tah faithful offered up prayers to the Allfather, Kez'Skul the Trickster responded in the aspect of a bright flame that spread life-giving warmth and light



amongst them. The Pol'Tah were easily fooled by his trickery and all the people rejoiced that the Allfather was speaking to them again after so many years of silence.

Speaking through the prayers and meditations of the priests and elders of the Pol'Tah, Kez'Skul urged them to follow a path more to his liking. He found their self-imposed exile in the deepest regions of the Underdeep amusing, and urged them to remain. He also began to slowly move them away from those few tenets of the Allfather's faith to which they still adhered. Eventually, Kez'Skul would wean the Pol'Tah away from all memory of the Allfather and his teachings, substituting a newly created aspect of himself, Vermthizzl, the Light in the Deep.

This new land of the Pol'Tah, though too deep for the shangu, was not without its perils. Though the drow quickly began herding and keeping the beasts that could be used for food, there were other creatures in the deeps more inclined to use the drow themselves as food. The most dangerous of these were the purple worms, near-mindless eating and burrowing machines that came through the Drez Khelim with alarming frequency. Before long, the Pol'Tah found out why.

In a cavern just below the complex of tunnels the Pol'Tah had made their own was a purple worm spawning ground. The drow, sensing an opportunity, absconded from the cavern with some of the eggs which, after hatching, they raised to maturity. They maintain the tradition still of domesticating purple worms, which they use for tunnelling, trash disposal, transportation and combat.

For millennia now, the Pol'Tah have lived in the deepest regions of the Underdeep, the vast majority of their population still in and around Drez Khelim. They have forgotten the sun; they have forgotten the Allfather. And until relatively recently, when a far-ranging band of House Devoren Explorers happened upon them, they had forgotten other drow.

Overview of the Pol'Tah

Millennia spent in the misty tunnels of Drez Khelim have had a profound influence on the Pol'Tah. They are all but completely blind now, their sight atrophied by its uselessness here. Their eyes appear as milky-white orbs, with a faded blotch of pink where the pupil would be. Only the brightest of lights can still register on their failed vision, a sensation they find uncomfortable but fascinating. Vermthizzl, the aspect of Kez'Skul they still worship, is known as the Light in the Deep for that very reason.

The Pol'Tah have more than compensated for their blindness, however. Their hearing is uncommonly sharp,

even for elves. More importantly, they have developed tremorsense and blindsight as innate abilities. The Pol'Tah are completely at home in the dark, and their new abilities make them the equal of any sighted foe.

Life and Death with the Pol'Tah


The Pol'Tah are born to darkness, and in darkness they remain.

Like all other drow save the Sulzthul, the deep drow reproduce slowly. Also like other drow, they have experimented with magical and alchemical means of making themselves more fertile, with some success. While prostitution is less of an ingrained institution in Pol'Tah society than in that of other drow, it is certainly still present, and used to speed up the birth rate that much more.

One unique feature of Pol'Tah births is the frequency of multiple offspring, twins to be specific. These births are not so frequent as to be common, but they happen far more often among the deep drow than among other drow, for whom a multiple birth is a nearly mythic rarity. No one knows why this is the case with the Pol'Tah and indeed until contact was re-established with other drow in recent years, the deep drow had long since ceased to think of it as anything unusual. There are many theories, including something in the food, some long-forgotten attempt to increase the Pol'Tah's fertility, even that the multiple births are a result of the influence of the living earth itself. None of these are correct. The frequency of twins is a hint given to the Pol'Tah by Vermthizzl, the only clue he has ever given to his true nature – the Trickster, the being with two faces. The Pol'Tah never considered such an idea however, which Vermthizzl found greatly disappointing.

The Pol'Tah have always been extremely healthy, kept that way by their isolation, by the arts of their alchemists and herbalists and, for the wealthy, by the spells of the priests of Vermthizzl. Disease is beginning to be a problem in their society, however, as renewed contact with the drow above has introduced new ailments and diseases to the deep drow civilisation.

When death comes for the Pol'Tah, whether from battle, accident or old age, the body is disposed of in one of two ways. For those deep drow of high standing, or even those who can afford a modest fee, there is interment. The body is taken to a cavern several miles from Drez Khelim called the Lair of Bones. There, a tame purple worm is used to gouge a hole some 10 feet deep into the rock wall. The body is interred there, the hole sealed up and a marker placed on the site. After several particularly opportunistic necromancers began to use the Lair of Bones as a handy supply depot for raw materials, the place came to be under



For the last few leagues, the choking mist in the air around us had grown thicker, even as the heat had grown more oppressive. When we reached the place described by the House Devoren Explorer, I barely realised it, sweating in the thick heat and unable to see more than a few feet through the dense mists surrounding us. For a moment, I felt a tickle of fear, and hoped the trade goods we had brought would be sufficient for my needs.

The stone beneath my feet quivered, then the walls. There was a brief roar as of collapsing stone, and I knew true fear for a moment before realising the tunnel was not falling down upon us. More heard than seen, something enormous rushed past us in the mists, then passed us again. This time, I was able to see a portion of the massive, muscular form of an enormous worm. It appears the Pol'Tah have indeed found some means to tame the beasts, a valuable secret to be sure.

At last, a voice and a figure appeared out of the blinding fog, and I had my first look at these deep drow. I am unsure what I expected, but was nonetheless surprised to note how strongly he resembled our true race. Save for the somewhat disturbing, staring eyes, he could have passed for a drow in any of a dozen cities. I hear that the deep drow are not, in fact, completely blind, but that only a few things are bright enough to register on what remains of their sight. However, they have more than compensated for the loss of sight with other abilities. Indeed, in those mist-filled caverns, it was I who was blind.

The Pol'Tah's speech was difficult to understand, strangely accented and peppered with unfamiliar words, but not so much as to make converse impossible. After much discussion, he agreed to take me to the Pol'Tah city of Drez Khelim, where I could speak to the Wreculth, a council of some manner that governs these deep drow. He forced us to walk ahead of him through the mist, as he rode that monstrous worm along behind us and called out directions as we stumbled and fumbled along the corridor.

At last, we reached the city, or so I was told. The area remained as mist-choked as ever, and I was unable to see any more in the cavern of the city than I had in the passageway where we first encountered the Pol'Tah. I was taken under guard to meet the Wreculth, for whom I unveiled the most precious of the goods we had brought in trade, the bound and gagged drow of House Devoren who was one of the few to escape after attempting to cheat the Pol'Tah in trade. They were greatly pleased by this, and took the drow away; to what fate I can only guess.

I learned much of the Pol'Tah during the next few days. However, they have no interest in leaving their home in the depths of the earth, and are unlikely, at this time, to be willing to aid us in a return to the surface.

Though remarkable in many ways, these deep drow are less impressive than the great beasts they keep as servants and mounts. I submit to the Eyes that the purple worms are a mightier force than the Pol'Tah, and that we should consider learning their secrets of raising and training the great monsters as our primary concern.

The Pol'Tah would no doubt resist this, but if we are quick and sudden, I believe we can silence this resistance with the sword. I further believe we may be able to find influential allies among the Pol'Tah. Even now, I must leave for a meeting with the Wormkeeper, the drow who oversees the hatchery of the purple worms. I believe he can be made to see our position.

I shall convey more later.

From the Journal of Nabrushe Chesad, Hidden Blade of the Seekers of na'Koth, found in a pile of worm tailings by Geres na'Serach, Hidden Blade of the Seekers of na'Koth

constant guard (the necromancers themselves were given to the families of those whose graves had been desecrated, and were tortured to death).

Those Pol'Tah without high standing in society and without the coin to pay for interment in the Lair of Bones, are buried in the deep loam of the fungus fields of Drez

Khelim, so that the body, in death, may contribute to the survival of the people.

Clothing

The clothing worn by the Pol'Tah is simple and unadorned, as the deep drow have no concept of, nor way to appreciate,



the intricacy of colour and decoration so common to other drow. Rather, the Pol'Tah use clothing simply for protection. The only manner of fabric available to them is na'orsuin, which is repeatedly beaten and treated to soften it. The stifling heat of Drez Khelim makes hide too warm to wear as clothing, relegating it to use solely as armour. With no way or reason to be concerned with appearance and little choice in the manner of cloth available, the deep drow have not concerned themselves with clothing.

That is beginning to change, however. The first appearance of cloth spun from spider silk met with great excitement from the Pol'Tah, as it was softer and more pleasing to the touch than any na'orsuin the deep drow could weave. The rare trading caravan that ventures to the bottom of the Underdeep for commerce with the Pol'Tah is now laden exclusively with spider silk clothing and the demand among the deep drow is only growing. The importance they place on the feel and texture of things is at least as great as the importance sighted races place on appearance.

The priestesses of the Dark Mother see this as a golden opportunity to expand worship of their goddess, but have not yet moved on it.

Combat

The Pol'Tah are ferocious in combat, striking quickly and overwhelmingly against any foe foolish enough to venture into the mist-choked tunnels of their home. In this place, it is the outsiders who are truly blind, fumbling through

the choking darkness while the Pol'Tah, able to 'see' everything, cut through them like a scythe.


Despite their blindness, the Pol'Tah are skilled weaponsmiths, harvesting raw ore left from the tailings of their purple worms and forging it into an array of weapons. They prefer light, quick weapons in combat, with scimitars, light picks and spiked chains as their special favourites.

Generally speaking, the Pol'Tah are lightly armoured, which better serves their quick, dodging fighting style. In addition, the heat in the tunnels of the deep drow is such that heavy armour would be cripplingly hot. Breastplates are not uncommon as armour, but leather armour formed of the tanned hide of one of the strange

beasts the Pol'Tah herd for food is the most prevalent. Less common but by no means rare is worm armour, formed of the hide of a purple worm. Light, incredibly strong and offering a substantial protection against poison, worm armour is the pride of any Pol'Tah who possesses it. The deep drow are loyal to their purple worms and the hide of one is only harvested after its death.

The hide for worm armour is hardly the most impressive contribution these domesticated monsters make to the Pol'Tah on the battlefield. The purple worms domesticated by the Pol'Tah are used in several capacities in combat. Their simplest use is merely to fight alongside the drow, especially against larger forces. They are also used as mounts, with a hardened and covered 'saddle' attached which keeps the rider (mostly) safe from harm as the worm tunnels through rock. The position of wormrider is among the most revered ranks a soldier of the Pol'Tah can obtain.

The rarest use of purple worms by the Pol'Tah is also the most terrifying and disorienting for a foe, but because of the danger to the deep drow involved, it is only done when a lightning-quick strike against a very powerful foe is needed. Millennia of training, breeding and magical experimentation have altered these purple worms somewhat from the base creature, enlarging the throat and stomach in front of the gizzard to allow the worms to swallow more matter, be it garbage or ore that needs refining. Coating themselves in a special alchemical substance called simply *burnshield oil* that protects the deep drow from the acid



of the worm's stomach, they climb inside it, packing themselves in until as many as a dozen drow are cramped into the hot, foul throat of the massive worm. When this tactic is used, it is never done with just a single worm, but rather with five or even 10 worms. The worms are then ridden into battle by wormriders, bursting upon the enemy from all sides and laying into them with all the devastating attacks in a purple worm's arsenal. Within a few rounds, as the enemy struggles to regroup and meet the new threat, one of the drow hidden in the worm's gullet spills open a bag of alchemical powder, triggering the beast's gag reflex, disgorging a spray of acid and spilling a dozen combat-ready deep drow into the midst of the confused – and now likely panicked – enemy.

This tactic, while startlingly effective, is not without its perils. The drow within the worm's gullet are not subjected to the same punishment creatures swallowed by a normal purple worm must endure, but it is still a painful experience, dealing 1d3 points of crushing damage every round to the Pol'Tah inside the worm. Further, the *burnshield oil*, effective as it is against acid, has some debilitating side effects that set in an hour after its application. *Burnshield oil* is described in greater detail in the chapter on Drow Magic.

All Pol'Tah are well trained for war, a tradition which began when they were still under the imminent threat of danger from the shangu and continues today. Male or female, rich or poor, every deep drow has been taught to fight, and most have served some time as soldiers.

Culture

It might be expected that the Pol'Tah, alone in the deepest places of the world, would have regressed into savagery and barbarism. In fact they have done quite the opposite, instead growing more sophisticated during their long exile.

Living in almost complete isolation from other sentient races, save for hostile encounters with abominations like the shangu, has combined with the loss of their sight to make the Pol'Tah culture markedly different from that of other drow.

Without sight, the deep drow focus more on sound and touch in relating to the world around them. To them, personal beauty lies in form of movement, in texture and in sound, as they have no appreciation of, or even concept of, the fleeting details that determine beauty to the sighted races. This obviously extends to the art and architecture of the Pol'Tah as well. Their buildings tend to be intricately carved up to the height an average deep drow can reach, and plain unadorned stone above that. When centuries of

touching wear down the carvings, the entire thing is sanded smooth and redone.

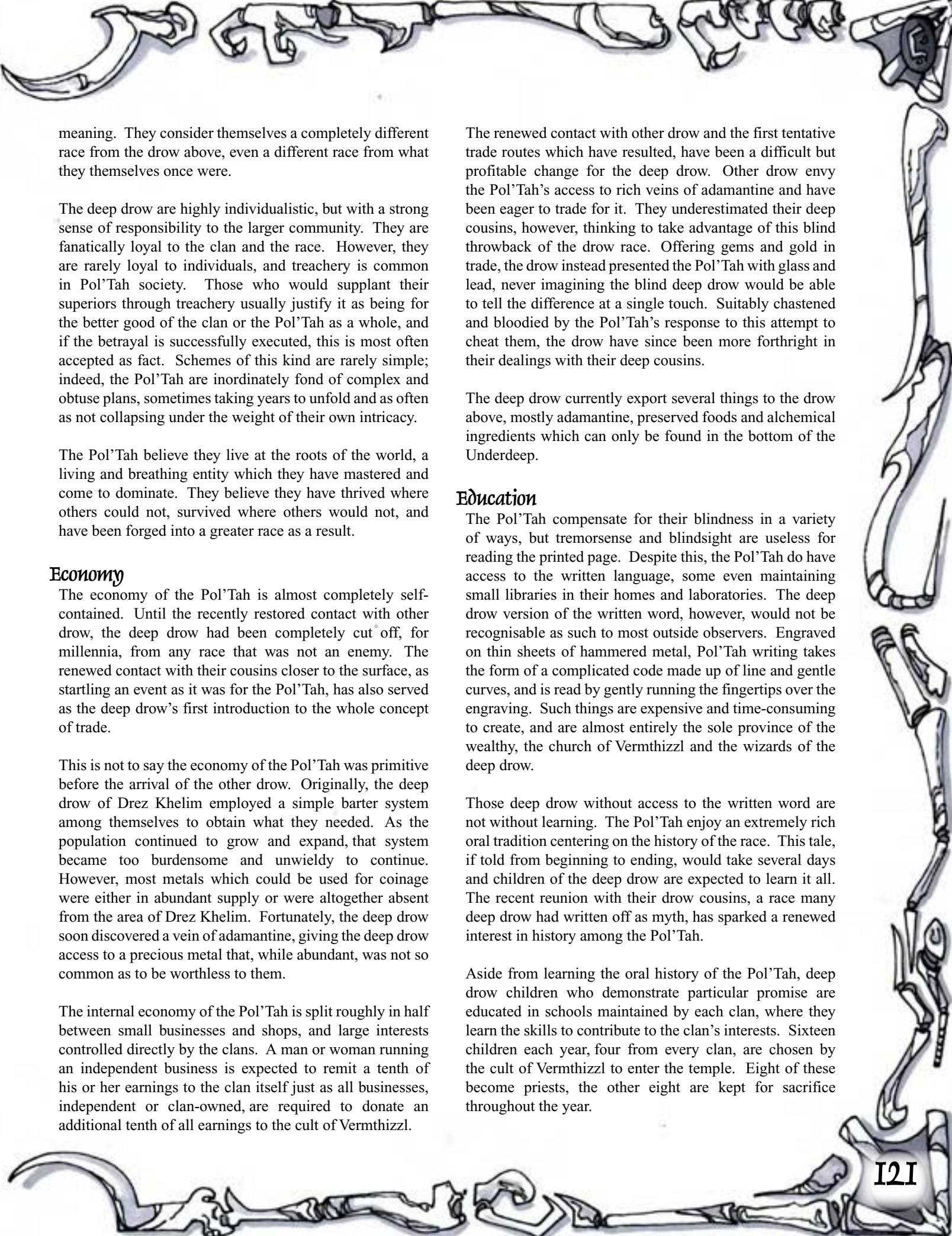
The Pol'Tah are divided into four clans, the Ugtholn, the Vurprell, the Szekhtohn and the Pillafan, each with its own interests and ambitions. The clans, taken together, make up the entire population of the deep drow. Generally, the clans are peaceful towards one another. Each has laid claim to a quarter of the city of Drez Khelim, where they maintain their homes and most of their businesses. Except for very unusual circumstances, the various clans do not intermarry. Of course, marriage itself is a rather different institution in Pol'Tah culture.

Each clan has its own strengths and interests. For example, the Ugtholn count the largest number of smiths among their clan, the Vurprell boast the most stoneworkers, the Szekhtohn the greatest number of wizards and the Pillafan outnumber the other clans in terms of artisans. These are hardly the only interests of these clans, nor are they exclusionary -- the Ugtholn may have the most smiths, but they certainly do not have all the smiths of the Pol'Tah and each of the other three clans counts smiths among its members. However, it does make a useful guideline for Games Masters to determine which clan a deep drow will most likely belong to.

Males and females are more or less equals in Pol'Tah society, though with the lion's share of the clergy of Vermthizzl being priestesses, a slight advantage may go to the females of the deep drow.

The Pol'Tah value strength, as do all drow, but they also place a tremendous value on patience, a quality rarely seen among other drow races, and one that might come as a surprise to anyone who has even been on the receiving end of a ferocious attack by the deep drow and their purple worm allies.

Alone among the drow races, the Pol'Tah feel no antagonism towards the surface races, beings they have all but completely forgotten. They had left the drow many years before the Great Betrayal forced the drow back into exile beneath the earth. As far as the deep drow are concerned, the surface elves have done them no harm. Nor do they hold any particular animosity towards other drow, whom some of the deep drow had begun to think were nothing but a myth until the chance meeting with the Explorers of House Devoren reminded them of the truths in even their oldest tales. The recent reunion with their cousins has revived some of the oldest oral traditions of the Pol'Tah, reminding them why they left the drow so many millennia before, but those reasons no longer hold any



meaning. They consider themselves a completely different race from the drow above, even a different race from what they themselves once were.

The deep drow are highly individualistic, but with a strong sense of responsibility to the larger community. They are fanatically loyal to the clan and the race. However, they are rarely loyal to individuals, and treachery is common in Pol'Tah society. Those who would supplant their superiors through treachery usually justify it as being for the better good of the clan or the Pol'Tah as a whole, and if the betrayal is successfully executed, this is most often accepted as fact. Schemes of this kind are rarely simple; indeed, the Pol'Tah are inordinately fond of complex and obtuse plans, sometimes taking years to unfold and as often as not collapsing under the weight of their own intricacy.

The Pol'Tah believe they live at the roots of the world, a living and breathing entity which they have mastered and come to dominate. They believe they have thrived where others could not, survived where others would not, and have been forged into a greater race as a result.

Economy

The economy of the Pol'Tah is almost completely self-contained. Until the recently restored contact with other drow, the deep drow had been completely cut off, for millennia, from any race that was not an enemy. The renewed contact with their cousins closer to the surface, as startling an event as it was for the Pol'Tah, has also served as the deep drow's first introduction to the whole concept of trade.

This is not to say the economy of the Pol'Tah was primitive before the arrival of the other drow. Originally, the deep drow of Drez Khelim employed a simple barter system among themselves to obtain what they needed. As the population continued to grow and expand, that system became too burdensome and unwieldy to continue. However, most metals which could be used for coinage were either in abundant supply or were altogether absent from the area of Drez Khelim. Fortunately, the deep drow soon discovered a vein of adamantine, giving the deep drow access to a precious metal that, while abundant, was not so common as to be worthless to them.

The internal economy of the Pol'Tah is split roughly in half between small businesses and shops, and large interests controlled directly by the clans. A man or woman running an independent business is expected to remit a tenth of his or her earnings to the clan itself just as all businesses, independent or clan-owned, are required to donate an additional tenth of all earnings to the cult of Vermthizzl.

The renewed contact with other drow and the first tentative trade routes which have resulted, have been a difficult but profitable change for the deep drow. Other drow envy the Pol'Tah's access to rich veins of adamantine and have been eager to trade for it. They underestimated their deep cousins, however, thinking to take advantage of this blind throwback of the drow race. Offering gems and gold in trade, the drow instead presented the Pol'Tah with glass and lead, never imagining the blind deep drow would be able to tell the difference at a single touch. Suitably chastened and bloodied by the Pol'Tah's response to this attempt to cheat them, the drow have since been more forthright in their dealings with their deep cousins.

The deep drow currently export several things to the drow above, mostly adamantine, preserved foods and alchemical ingredients which can only be found in the bottom of the Underdeep.

Education

The Pol'Tah compensate for their blindness in a variety of ways, but tremorsense and blindsight are useless for reading the printed page. Despite this, the Pol'Tah do have access to the written language, some even maintaining small libraries in their homes and laboratories. The deep drow version of the written word, however, would not be recognisable as such to most outside observers. Engraved on thin sheets of hammered metal, Pol'Tah writing takes the form of a complicated code made up of line and gentle curves, and is read by gently running the fingertips over the engraving. Such things are expensive and time-consuming to create, and are almost entirely the sole province of the wealthy, the church of Vermthizzl and the wizards of the deep drow.

Those deep drow without access to the written word are not without learning. The Pol'Tah enjoy an extremely rich oral tradition centering on the history of the race. This tale, if told from beginning to ending, would take several days and children of the deep drow are expected to learn it all. The recent reunion with their drow cousins, a race many deep drow had written off as myth, has sparked a renewed interest in history among the Pol'Tah.

Aside from learning the oral history of the Pol'Tah, deep drow children who demonstrate particular promise are educated in schools maintained by each clan, where they learn the skills to contribute to the clan's interests. Sixteen children each year, four from every clan, are chosen by the cult of Vermthizzl to enter the temple. Eight of these become priests, the other eight are kept for sacrifice throughout the year.

A decorative border of skeletal remains, including various bones and skulls, runs along the top, left, and bottom edges of the page. The bones are rendered in a detailed, line-art style with some shading to indicate depth and texture.

Engineering

The Pol'Tah are capable engineers, if not remarkable. Quite simply, there is less need of engineering and construction skills among the deep drow than there is among the other races of the drow. Indeed, there is less need than among most races of the Underdeep.

One reason for this is the centralised location of the Pol'Tah. Few of their number have ever left the vicinity of Drez Khelim, and few of those have ever returned. Thus, the deep drow have remained concentrated over the many millennia in the series of caverns they first colonised. Drez Khelim has been built and rebuilt literally dozens of times over the years, and now there is little room left for expansion.

The second reason lies with the purple worms kept by the Pol'Tah. Natural tunnellers and diggers, the purple worms of the deep drow do most of the work for their drow masters. A great deal of the engineering work done by the Pol'Tah involves cleaning out and seeing to the stability of tunnels dug through the rock by their worms.

Entertainment

Music, dance and displays of skill summarise the entertainments popular with the Pol'Tah.

The music of the deep drow has a unique sound that seems alien to those of other races, characterised by a deep, pounding, insistent beat hammered out on enormous drums and complemented by an array of wind and string instruments. The music is terribly complex, sometimes even atonal to outside ears; but then, the Pol'Tah consider what little music they have heard performed by other drow to be simplistic and repetitive.

Dance seems at first like an odd passion for a blind race to have but the tremorsense of the deep drow enables them to enjoy it on two levels simultaneously, both in the movement of the dancers and in the rhythm of the dancers' feet as they hit the ground. The combination of the thunder of the drums and the pounding of hundreds of feet in these warlike dances are enough to make the cavern walls shake and the air tremble.

It is in displays of skill, however, that the deep drow place their greatest enthusiasm. Athletics and combat are considered much the same thing by the deep drow, and make up the majority of skill demonstrations. Also extremely popular are competitions between smiths, judged on speed and craftsmanship. The Pol'Tah revere the profession of the smith, both because of the much-needed items he produces and for the glowing heat of the forge, whose white-hot

fires are one of the only things in Drez Khelim that will still register on the atrophied sight of the deep drow. The Pol'Tah consider the forge as symbolic and representative of the bright form of the Light in the Deep itself.

Most beloved of all the displays of skill are the exhibitions of the wormriders. Watching the riders direct these gargantuan and colossal beasts as they move with terrible speed and precision in and out of walls of solid rock, dancing around one another in the midst of a great cavern, is a thrill to the senses of the Pol'Tah and a sight that would likely terrify an outsider into catatonia, were it possible to see it at all through the dense fog of the deep drow homeland.

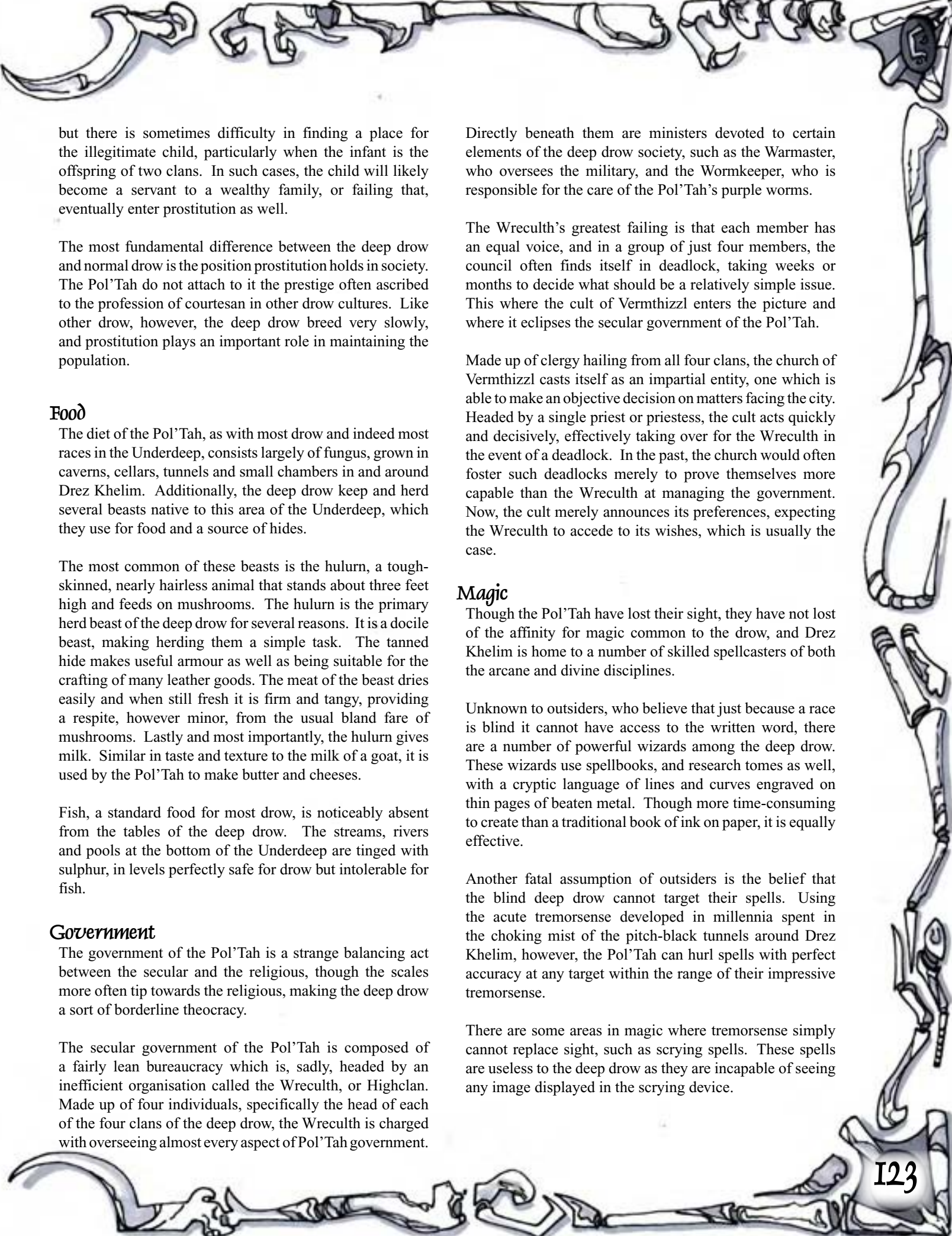
Another favourite entertainment of the Pol'Tah is the duel. Though most often a killing in Drez Khelim is done quickly and quietly, sometimes a pair of drow will chose to settle their scores in public. Any deep drow may challenge any other to a duel, which always takes place in an open area of the city so that as many Pol'Tah as possible may crowd about and enjoy the show.

Family

The Pol'Tah have no single family structure. Each of the four clans has its own unique approach, each significantly different from the other three. The Vurprell practice the structure most familiar to outsiders, consisting of a single mated male and female and their offspring. Among the Pillafan, each female may have up to four husbands, while the Ugtholn are at the other end of the spectrum, allowing up to three wives for each male. Strangest are the Szekhtohn, who organise their families in larger groups, consisting of three males and three females each -- the males each have three wives, the females each have three husbands. The children of these families are considered the offspring of all six adults, but the terms 'brother' and 'sister' are not sufficient to cover all the relationships. The Szekhtohn have multiple terms and concepts delineating the degree of blood relation between these 'siblings', which have extremely complex rules and are terribly confusing to an outsider trying to grasp the idea.

How these differing customs got started is unknown, but is likely the end result of some joke on the part of Vermthizzl. There has been tension in the past between the clans over their marriage practices, but most clans are content to do things their way and let other clans do as they see fit. However, it does explain why there is so little intermarriage between the clans of the Pol'Tah.

Prostitution and illegitimate births are somewhat less common among the deep drow than among their cousins closer to the surface, but are by no means rare. Such births are not considered a stigma *per se* in Pol'Tah society,



but there is sometimes difficulty in finding a place for the illegitimate child, particularly when the infant is the offspring of two clans. In such cases, the child will likely become a servant to a wealthy family, or failing that, eventually enter prostitution as well.

The most fundamental difference between the deep drow and normal drow is the position prostitution holds in society. The Pol'Tah do not attach to it the prestige often ascribed to the profession of courtesan in other drow cultures. Like other drow, however, the deep drow breed very slowly, and prostitution plays an important role in maintaining the population.

Food

The diet of the Pol'Tah, as with most drow and indeed most races in the Underdeep, consists largely of fungus, grown in caverns, cellars, tunnels and small chambers in and around Drez Khelim. Additionally, the deep drow keep and herd several beasts native to this area of the Underdeep, which they use for food and a source of hides.

The most common of these beasts is the hulurn, a tough-skinned, nearly hairless animal that stands about three feet high and feeds on mushrooms. The hulurn is the primary herd beast of the deep drow for several reasons. It is a docile beast, making herding them a simple task. The tanned hide makes useful armour as well as being suitable for the crafting of many leather goods. The meat of the beast dries easily and when still fresh it is firm and tangy, providing a respite, however minor, from the usual bland fare of mushrooms. Lastly and most importantly, the hulurn gives milk. Similar in taste and texture to the milk of a goat, it is used by the Pol'Tah to make butter and cheeses.

Fish, a standard food for most drow, is noticeably absent from the tables of the deep drow. The streams, rivers and pools at the bottom of the Underdeep are tinged with sulphur, in levels perfectly safe for drow but intolerable for fish.

Government

The government of the Pol'Tah is a strange balancing act between the secular and the religious, though the scales more often tip towards the religious, making the deep drow a sort of borderline theocracy.

The secular government of the Pol'Tah is composed of a fairly lean bureaucracy which is, sadly, headed by an inefficient organisation called the Wreculth, or Highclan. Made up of four individuals, specifically the head of each of the four clans of the deep drow, the Wreculth is charged with overseeing almost every aspect of Pol'Tah government.

Directly beneath them are ministers devoted to certain elements of the deep drow society, such as the Warmaster, who oversees the military, and the Wormkeeper, who is responsible for the care of the Pol'Tah's purple worms.

The Wreculth's greatest failing is that each member has an equal voice, and in a group of just four members, the council often finds itself in deadlock, taking weeks or months to decide what should be a relatively simple issue. This where the cult of Vermthizzl enters the picture and where it eclipses the secular government of the Pol'Tah.

Made up of clergy hailing from all four clans, the church of Vermthizzl casts itself as an impartial entity, one which is able to make an objective decision on matters facing the city. Headed by a single priest or priestess, the cult acts quickly and decisively, effectively taking over for the Wreculth in the event of a deadlock. In the past, the church would often foster such deadlocks merely to prove themselves more capable than the Wreculth at managing the government. Now, the cult merely announces its preferences, expecting the Wreculth to accede to its wishes, which is usually the case.

Magic

Though the Pol'Tah have lost their sight, they have not lost of the affinity for magic common to the drow, and Drez Khelim is home to a number of skilled spellcasters of both the arcane and divine disciplines.

Unknown to outsiders, who believe that just because a race is blind it cannot have access to the written word, there are a number of powerful wizards among the deep drow. These wizards use spellbooks, and research tomes as well, with a cryptic language of lines and curves engraved on thin pages of beaten metal. Though more time-consuming to create than a traditional book of ink on paper, it is equally effective.

Another fatal assumption of outsiders is the belief that the blind deep drow cannot target their spells. Using the acute tremorsense developed in millennia spent in the choking mist of the pitch-black tunnels around Drez Khelim, however, the Pol'Tah can hurl spells with perfect accuracy at any target within the range of their impressive tremorsense.

There are some areas in magic where tremorsense simply cannot replace sight, such as scrying spells. These spells are useless to the deep drow as they are incapable of seeing any image displayed in the scrying device.

Relations with Others

The Pol'Tah have few relations with other races. For millennia, the deep drow rarely encountered any sentient creatures other than shangu and their assorted minions, with whom they unsurprisingly had a very hostile relationship. From time to time, other races would stumble upon the deep drow, and those who survived the meeting returned to their homes with stories of the strange drow living deep in the beating heart of the earth and riding on the backs of enormous purple worms. Other drow heard these stories, but dismissed them as pure fancy.

It was with some surprise, then, that a party of House Devoren Explorers encountered a group of deep drow only a few years ago, and it was with some degree of good fortune the sudden meeting did not end in violence. Since that day, the drow and their deep cousins have begun a tentative trading relationship.

The Pol'Tah, despite the oral tradition of history so prevalent among the people, scarcely remembered the existence of other drow, and the revelation that the cousins they left so long ago have survived and flourished in the Underdeep came as quite a blow to the deep drow. They had been isolated for so long in the heart of the world that the existence of other races (aside from the shangu) was difficult for the people to accept.

The deep drow and their cousins still treat each other with a fair degree of suspicion, a situation made that much worse when the drow tried to take advantage of the Pol'Tah's blindness and cheat them in the first trading deals. Both sides also view each other with condescension, the drow viewing the Pol'Tah as a race of cowardly cripples hiding at the bottom of the Underdeep, and the deep drow regarding their cousins as a race of weak fools who could never have endured the rigours of life in the centre of the earth.

Religion

The Pol'Tah left the other drow out of their continuing reverence for the elven Allfather when all other drow were falling away from that faith to worship the new gods revealed to them during the war with the goblins. Even then, however, the Pol'Tah were drifting far from the Allfather's teachings.

As they wandered in the Underdeep, Kez'Skul, the trickster of the new drow pantheon, appeared to them masquerading as the Allfather. The Pol'Tah thought they were delivered,

but instead, they were fooled. In the millennia which have passed since that time, Kez'Skul, in the guise of Vermthizzl, the Light in the Deep, has long since lured the deep drow away from anything resembling worship of the Allfather.

Considering the reason they left the other drow, it is a cruel irony the deep drow have utterly forgotten the Allfather, and have given themselves over completely to worship of Vermthizzl. For some time, Vermthizzl found this greatly amusing, but his interest in the deep drow has been waning in recent centuries. They have paid for his joke and he found it quite entertaining, but now the joke is done. Whether or not he will abandon the Pol'Tah remains to be seen.

More clergy of Vermthizzl are female than male, a fact which seems to be pure happenstance as there is no preference given in the god's teachings. The cult recruits new priests and priestesses yearly, when 16 children, four from each clan, are chose to enter the temple. Once inside and settled, the children are subjected to an intense and intricate testing process comprehensible only to the clergy of Vermthizzl. At the end of the test, the priests and priestesses choose which eight children performed most satisfactorily, and those eight start down the road towards priesthood. The eight failures are kept locked in the temple and used as sacrifices to Vermthizzl throughout the year.


The high priest or priestess of the cult of Vermthizzl is known as the Bright Flame.

Slavery

The Pol'Tah do not practice slavery, as they have never had the opportunity to do so. They rarely venture far from Drez Khelim, and have little or no contact with other sentient races. For centuries, the only intelligent beings they encountered were shangu, which the deep drow would either flee from or kill. Now that they have re-established contact with the other drow, the concept of slavery may be introduced to the Pol'Tah society, but it is too soon to tell.

The chances are against slavery taking hold among the deep drow as they have so little need of it. Most of the hard and dangerous labour for which slaves would be useful is accomplished quickly, easily and safely with the tame purple worms the Pol'Tah have been keeping for millennia. From tunnelling to mining to carrying heavy loads, the work the worms are capable of performing in days is superior to what an army of slaves could achieve in weeks.





The Sulzthul - The Aquatic Drow

The Sulzthul did not naturally evolve or change from normal drow through the pressures of the Underdeep, but instead they had change forced upon them.

In the days of the Sundering, many groups of drow were splintered off from the main body of the race, fleeing the attacks of the surface elves and their allies, as well as the previously unseen terrors rising up from the Underdeep. One large group of drow, mostly non-combatants from several different clans, were separated from their kin and driven for several miles by a rolling cave-in that chewed at their heels and roared in their ears.

Leaderless and terrified, the drow who would become the Sulzthul came at last to a wide cavern through which wandered two wide rivers. To their naive eyes, it seemed safe. As it provided a ready source of both water and fish, was lit by luminous fungus and not to mention it provided more room than a cramped tunnel, some of the drow wanted to remain. After much discussion, the drow chose to wait in the comparative comfort of the cavern until scouts from the other splintered groups of their race came to find them.

How much time passed even those who endured the waiting could not know, isolated from their people and miles beneath the earth. The tales told now by the Sulzthul vary wildly in the estimation, holding it to be anywhere from a few days to a year or more. Whatever the truth, the event that ended the waiting is not in doubt.

As the Sulzthul sat and waited in their cavern, the first of the aboleth came upon them without warning, swimming with unnatural speed. In the dim light of the fungus, the drow stared at it in shock, this creature unlike anything they had ever seen. Moments later, more aboleth flooded into the cavern, and the attack began. The drow were swiftly overwhelmed by the strange powers and abilities of the aboleth, and the survivors taken into slavery in the strange, underwater city the aboleth inhabited.

Though many drow were slain by the aboleth in the initial assault and still more killed in the days and months that followed, many were kept alive, toiling pitifully for their new masters, living off of algae and bound to the water by the aboleth's mucus. The aboleth had found them to be useful slaves, though hampered by dependence on air.

None of the Sulzthul know how what follows was accomplished, any more than they know which aboleth first proposed it. The aboleth began to experiment on their drow

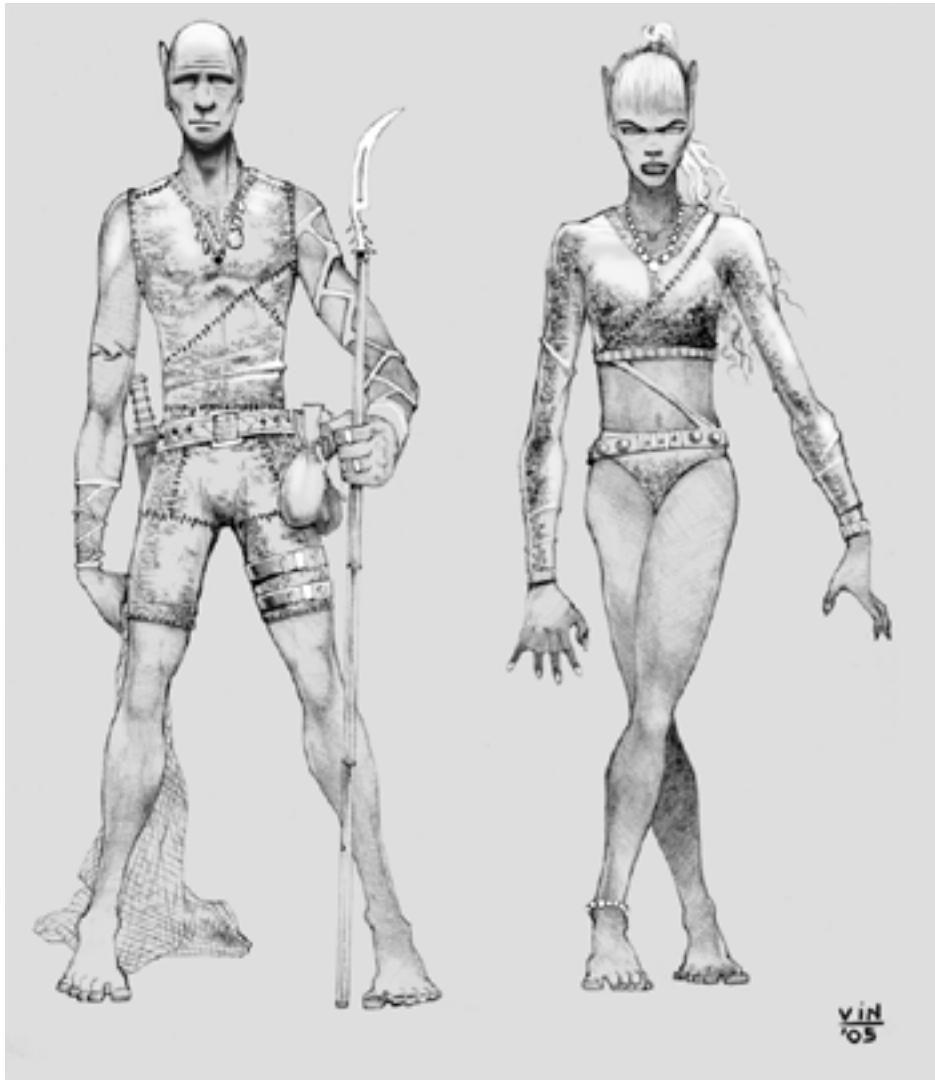
slaves, wielding magic, psionics and alchemy in an attempt to fundamentally alter the drow. Dozens, even hundreds of drow died gasping and screaming, twisted and stunted into misshapen monsters by what was done to them. Eventually, however, the aboleth were successful.

During the years since their enslavement, the drow of Sulzthul had at least remained drow, cursed and scarred as they were by the aboleth. Though every adult drow's skin had been transformed by the aboleth into the slick mucus that forced them to remain in the water, the children born to them were still true drow until the time of the child's own transformation at the slimy tentacles of the masters. This next mighty and terrible work of the aboleth robbed their drow slaves of even that tie to their old selves.

Only the strongest of the drow survived the experiments, but when they were at last successful, the Sulzthul were no longer truly drow at all. Their skin, though it appeared black still, was now permanently altered into something similar to the mucus with which the aboleth had cursed them. This new skin was less dependent on immersion in water, allowing the Sulzthul to spend as much as four or five very uncomfortable days out of the water. More valuable from the aboleth perspective however, was the decreased reliance the Sulzthul now had on air. Expanded lungs and the ability of their new skin to process oxygen directly from the water gave the Sulzthul the capacity to go as long as 12 hours without taking a breath. Perhaps the most fundamental change, however, was that these new attributes were not something limited to the individual drow, but rather were passed on to their offspring. It is widely thought that the lessons learned by the aboleth in creating the Sulzthul were later put to use on humans who fell into the aboleths' slimy grip, enabling them to effect a much more thorough transformation and creating the race of skum.

Revulsion at this new horror inflicted on them was too much for many of the Sulzthul to bear, some of whom went mad or, breaking free for a moment of the aboleths' control, took their own lives to escape. Still, the strongest of the Sulzthul endured, clinging to the frayed hope of freedom and the bright lust for revenge.

For millennia they were held in bondage by the aboleth, until the descendants of the strongest of the Sulzthul, the offspring of those who survived the aboleths' terrible experiments, at last got their chance for freedom and revenge. The aboleth city they were forced to serve was never very large, with only a few hundred of the creatures inhabiting it, and by now the Sulzthul numbered several thousand, the result of an aggressive breeding programme instituted by the aboleth.



Through his own strength of will, a slave to one of the ruling aboleth of the city named Ssil na'Than threw off his master's control. Wisely, he waited to act, biding his time and continuing to behave as though he remained under the monster's thrall. When the ruling aboleth next gathered in council, he at last judged the time was right to strike. He derived a poison from the shell of a rare and exotic Underdeep clam and fed it to the fish that were to make up the council's meal. The poison quickly slew the cruel beasts that had enslaved the Sulzthul, and as his master and others twisted in their final agonies, Ssil na'Than rallied the other drow to shake off the aboleths' control and rise up in rebellion.

The battle was brutal and furious, lasting for hours. Many drow were slain in their desperate fight for freedom but the Sulzthul were at last victorious, for with the ruling council of the aboleths slain, the foul aberrations were without leadership or co-ordination in their defence. The drow

indulged in an orgy of slaughter, stabbing, clawing and beating at the corpses of their tormentors until there was no piece left larger than a child's fist and the aboleth city they had served for so long was stained with the ichor of their former masters. Still, they would have kept going, pouring out centuries of hate and rage in a potentially endless act of vengeance, if Ssil na'Than had not intervened. He realised the drow were not safe and that soon the lack of any word from this city would bring aboleth of other cities, a force his people could not hope to stand against. By turns pleading and threatening, Ssil na'Than at last led the Sulzthul away from the terrible place of their enslavement.


The flight of the drow from the aboleth was a long and dangerous journey through winding Underdeep waterways, always with the threat of the aboleth behind them and of the unknown Underdeep all about them. Ssil na'Than led the Sulzthul through miles of passageways, forcing them to walk for days out of the water to reach a new and unexplored river or lake, until they

came at last to a wide, low-ceilinged cavern pocked with small lakes and pools, all of which were connected beneath the surface by an intricate system of caves. Convinced they were safe at last, Sulzthul settled in this new home, and called it Uthzo Tesslath, the Broken Chain.

The Sulzthul breed quickly and are far more fertile than most drow. Before long, their burgeoning population grew too large for Uthzo Tesslath and the descendants of Ssil na'Than led the first of several groups of colonists to a new home. Within a few centuries, there were some two dozen cities and villages of the Sulzthul thriving in the Underdeep.

Overview of the Sulzthul

From a distance, the Sulzthul look like other drow, but a closer inspection will quickly reveal something is amiss. Their skin, while black, gleams with mucus, and has an almost translucent quality to it. Their ears are less



It has been some time since my last entry, and I am unsure of the date. For an unknown time, though it feels like days, I have been fleeing through unknown regions of the Underdeep, unsure whether I should be more wary of the dangers that might lie ahead or the death chasing at my heels.

Now at last I am safe, and have accomplished what the Seekers sent me for. I have seen Ssil.

I must begin with the beginning.

I had joined a caravan of House Devoren as a mercenary guard, setting out on the third trading expedition with the Sulzthul, those drow who were twisted and devolved in the time after the Sundering when they were enslaved by the aboleth. After many days of travel and two easily-won battles against the little rodents known as kobolds, we found our way to the meeting place decreed by the Sulzthul, who will allow no one to come to their cities.

The meeting place was in a narrow cavern, carved from the rock by the river that flowed through one side. Even as we arrived, the Sulzthul rose from the water, weapons ready. They looked more like true drow than I had expected, though their skin gleamed with a strange shine that I afterward learned was a natural, slick covering of some kind. Moving warily, they emerged from the water and approached the caravan, obviously not completely at home on dry land.

While the Sulzthul spoke to the House Devoren caravan master in our tongue, accented by odd gurgling noises, I slipped out of sight long enough to deploy the magics that would -- I hoped -- see me through to Ssil. When the business was concluded and the Sulzthul left, dragging bundles behind them in the water, I entered the river as noiselessly as I could and began to follow. Though it took great care, I was not noticed, which is well, for otherwise I would not have found the city nor would I be alive to write these words.

I cannot say how many twists and turns led at last to the great lake where the underwater city lies, but I began to fear I would lose track of the Sulzthul I followed. The city itself is striking in appearance, a single immense column of stone beneath the waves pierced with hundreds of caves where the Sulzthul make their homes. Fields of underwater crops spread out all around it and, most surprisingly, the entire area was lit by thousands of floating, translucent creatures that glowed with a variety of colours.

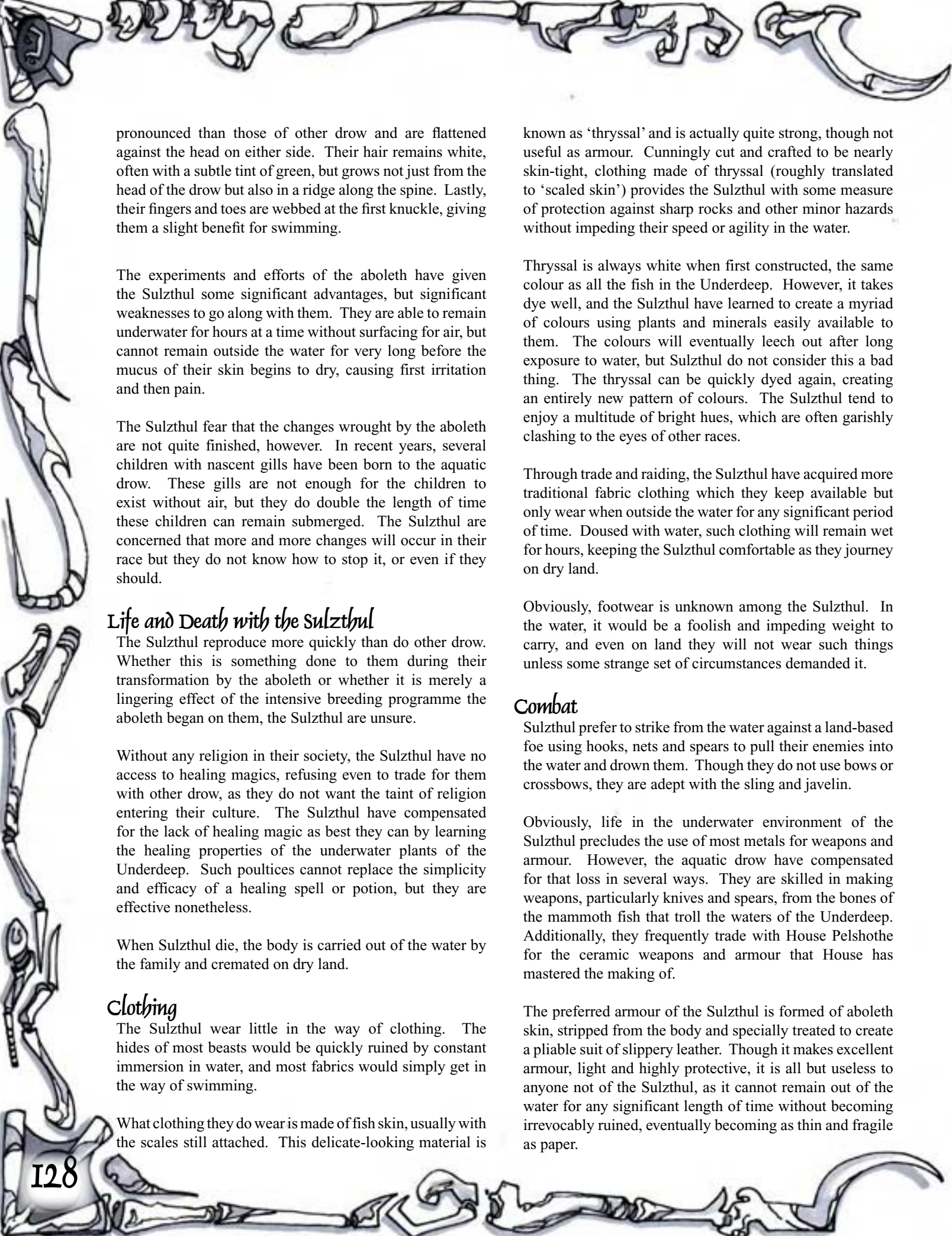
As we expected, the entryways to the city were well guarded, but I was able to slip through. For a full day, I made my way about the city as well as I was able. I quickly learned the Sulzthul are comfortable at depths beyond what we can endure, and the strange creatures that light their great city are agonisingly painful to touch, though it seems not to bother the Sulzthul.

Only by the use of magic was I able to comprehend the speech of the Sulzthul when distorted by the water, but what I overheard was a wealth of new information for our archives. Unfortunately, I was discovered before I could learn everything I would wish, and before I was able to find a lone Sulzthul to bring back for further study. I am unsure how this happened, but I believe one of their sorcerers detected the spells I was using.

Infuriated, the Sulzthul came for me, but again through the use of magic I was able to outpace even them in the water. I came up again from the river at an unfamiliar location, and had no opportunity to gain my bearings before the Sulzthul were upon me. Though they are fallen from true drow, I am not so foolish as to imagine them incapable of meting out swift death to any whom they capture violating their lands.

I will record my findings below, and I encourage the Hidden Eyes to plan a return trip to Ssil, that we may learn more of these strange creatures.

From the Journal of Irazz Balagothe, Hidden Blade of the Seekers of na'Koth



pronounced than those of other drow and are flattened against the head on either side. Their hair remains white, often with a subtle tint of green, but grows not just from the head of the drow but also in a ridge along the spine. Lastly, their fingers and toes are webbed at the first knuckle, giving them a slight benefit for swimming.

The experiments and efforts of the aboleth have given the Sulzthul some significant advantages, but significant weaknesses to go along with them. They are able to remain underwater for hours at a time without surfacing for air, but cannot remain outside the water for very long before the mucus of their skin begins to dry, causing first irritation and then pain.

The Sulzthul fear that the changes wrought by the aboleth are not quite finished, however. In recent years, several children with nascent gills have been born to the aquatic drow. These gills are not enough for the children to exist without air, but they do double the length of time these children can remain submerged. The Sulzthul are concerned that more and more changes will occur in their race but they do not know how to stop it, or even if they should.

Life and Death with the Sulzthul

The Sulzthul reproduce more quickly than do other drow. Whether this is something done to them during their transformation by the aboleth or whether it is merely a lingering effect of the intensive breeding programme the aboleth began on them, the Sulzthul are unsure.

Without any religion in their society, the Sulzthul have no access to healing magics, refusing even to trade for them with other drow, as they do not want the taint of religion entering their culture. The Sulzthul have compensated for the lack of healing magic as best they can by learning the healing properties of the underwater plants of the Underdeep. Such poultices cannot replace the simplicity and efficacy of a healing spell or potion, but they are effective nonetheless.

When Sulzthul die, the body is carried out of the water by the family and cremated on dry land.

Clothing

The Sulzthul wear little in the way of clothing. The hides of most beasts would be quickly ruined by constant immersion in water, and most fabrics would simply get in the way of swimming.

What clothing they do wear is made of fish skin, usually with the scales still attached. This delicate-looking material is

known as 'thryssal' and is actually quite strong, though not useful as armour. Cunningly cut and crafted to be nearly skin-tight, clothing made of thryssal (roughly translated to 'scaled skin') provides the Sulzthul with some measure of protection against sharp rocks and other minor hazards without impeding their speed or agility in the water.

Thryssal is always white when first constructed, the same colour as all the fish in the Underdeep. However, it takes dye well, and the Sulzthul have learned to create a myriad of colours using plants and minerals easily available to them. The colours will eventually leech out after long exposure to water, but Sulzthul do not consider this a bad thing. The thryssal can be quickly dyed again, creating an entirely new pattern of colours. The Sulzthul tend to enjoy a multitude of bright hues, which are often garishly clashing to the eyes of other races.

Through trade and raiding, the Sulzthul have acquired more traditional fabric clothing which they keep available but only wear when outside the water for any significant period of time. Doused with water, such clothing will remain wet for hours, keeping the Sulzthul comfortable as they journey on dry land.

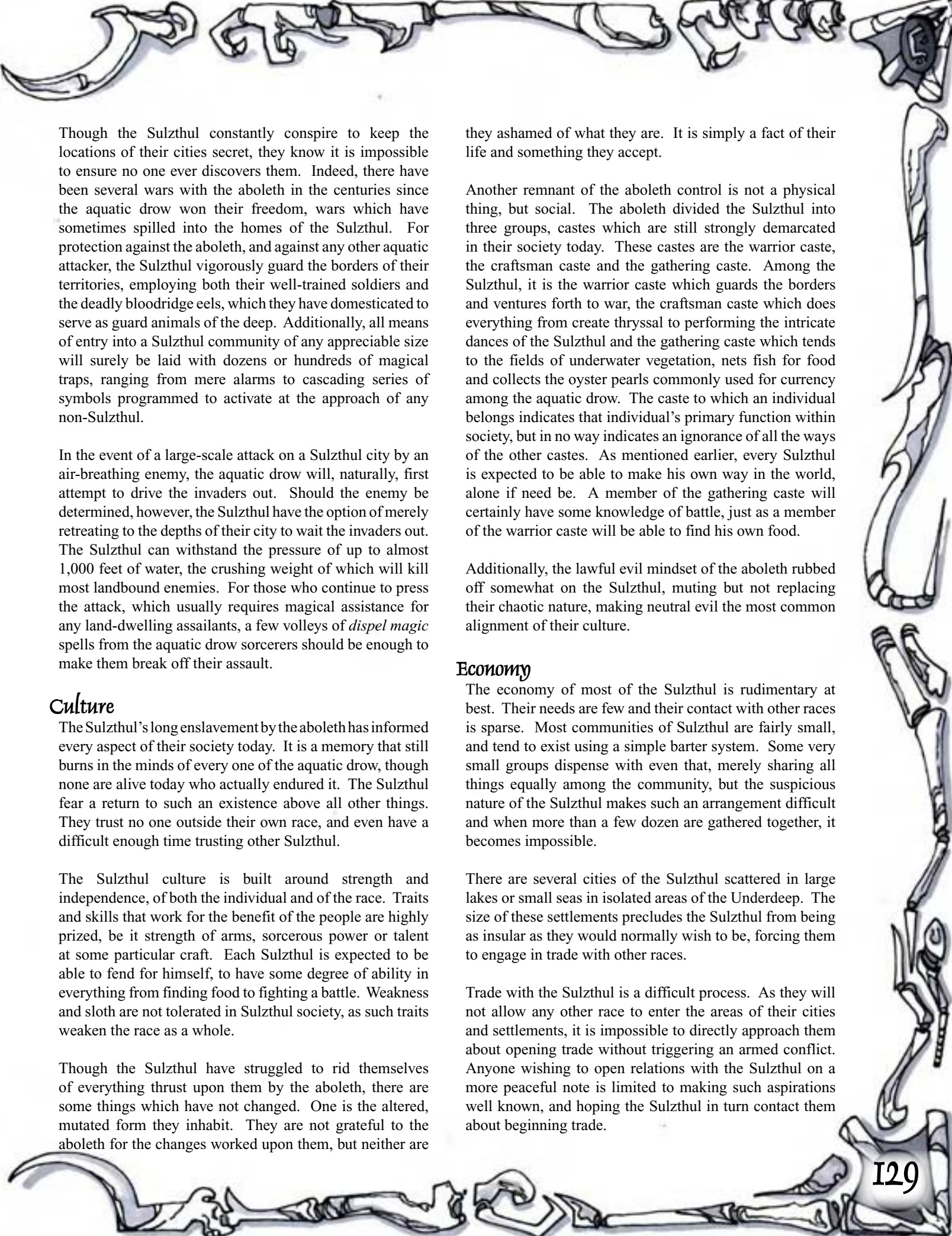
Obviously, footwear is unknown among the Sulzthul. In the water, it would be a foolish and impeding weight to carry, and even on land they will not wear such things unless some strange set of circumstances demanded it.

Combat

Sulzthul prefer to strike from the water against a land-based foe using hooks, nets and spears to pull their enemies into the water and drown them. Though they do not use bows or crossbows, they are adept with the sling and javelin.

Obviously, life in the underwater environment of the Sulzthul precludes the use of most metals for weapons and armour. However, the aquatic drow have compensated for that loss in several ways. They are skilled in making weapons, particularly knives and spears, from the bones of the mammoth fish that troll the waters of the Underdeep. Additionally, they frequently trade with House Pelshothe for the ceramic weapons and armour that House has mastered the making of.

The preferred armour of the Sulzthul is formed of aboleth skin, stripped from the body and specially treated to create a pliable suit of slippery leather. Though it makes excellent armour, light and highly protective, it is all but useless to anyone not of the Sulzthul, as it cannot remain out of the water for any significant length of time without becoming irrevocably ruined, eventually becoming as thin and fragile as paper.



Though the Sulzthul constantly conspire to keep the locations of their cities secret, they know it is impossible to ensure no one ever discovers them. Indeed, there have been several wars with the aboleth in the centuries since the aquatic drow won their freedom, wars which have sometimes spilled into the homes of the Sulzthul. For protection against the aboleth, and against any other aquatic attacker, the Sulzthul vigorously guard the borders of their territories, employing both their well-trained soldiers and the deadly bloodridge eels, which they have domesticated to serve as guard animals of the deep. Additionally, all means of entry into a Sulzthul community of any appreciable size will surely be laid with dozens or hundreds of magical traps, ranging from mere alarms to cascading series of symbols programmed to activate at the approach of any non-Sulzthul.

In the event of a large-scale attack on a Sulzthul city by an air-breathing enemy, the aquatic drow will, naturally, first attempt to drive the invaders out. Should the enemy be determined, however, the Sulzthul have the option of merely retreating to the depths of their city to wait the invaders out. The Sulzthul can withstand the pressure of up to almost 1,000 feet of water, the crushing weight of which will kill most landbound enemies. For those who continue to press the attack, which usually requires magical assistance for any land-dwelling assailants, a few volleys of *dispel magic* spells from the aquatic drow sorcerers should be enough to make them break off their assault.

Culture

The Sulzthul's long enslavement by the aboleth has informed every aspect of their society today. It is a memory that still burns in the minds of every one of the aquatic drow, though none are alive today who actually endured it. The Sulzthul fear a return to such an existence above all other things. They trust no one outside their own race, and even have a difficult enough time trusting other Sulzthul.

The Sulzthul culture is built around strength and independence, of both the individual and of the race. Traits and skills that work for the benefit of the people are highly prized, be it strength of arms, sorcerous power or talent at some particular craft. Each Sulzthul is expected to be able to fend for himself, to have some degree of ability in everything from finding food to fighting a battle. Weakness and sloth are not tolerated in Sulzthul society, as such traits weaken the race as a whole.

Though the Sulzthul have struggled to rid themselves of everything thrust upon them by the aboleth, there are some things which have not changed. One is the altered, mutated form they inhabit. They are not grateful to the aboleth for the changes worked upon them, but neither are

they ashamed of what they are. It is simply a fact of their life and something they accept.

Another remnant of the aboleth control is not a physical thing, but social. The aboleth divided the Sulzthul into three groups, castes which are still strongly demarcated in their society today. These castes are the warrior caste, the craftsman caste and the gathering caste. Among the Sulzthul, it is the warrior caste which guards the borders and ventures forth to war, the craftsman caste which does everything from create thryssal to performing the intricate dances of the Sulzthul and the gathering caste which tends to the fields of underwater vegetation, nets fish for food and collects the oyster pearls commonly used for currency among the aquatic drow. The caste to which an individual belongs indicates that individual's primary function within society, but in no way indicates an ignorance of all the ways of the other castes. As mentioned earlier, every Sulzthul is expected to be able to make his own way in the world, alone if need be. A member of the gathering caste will certainly have some knowledge of battle, just as a member of the warrior caste will be able to find his own food.

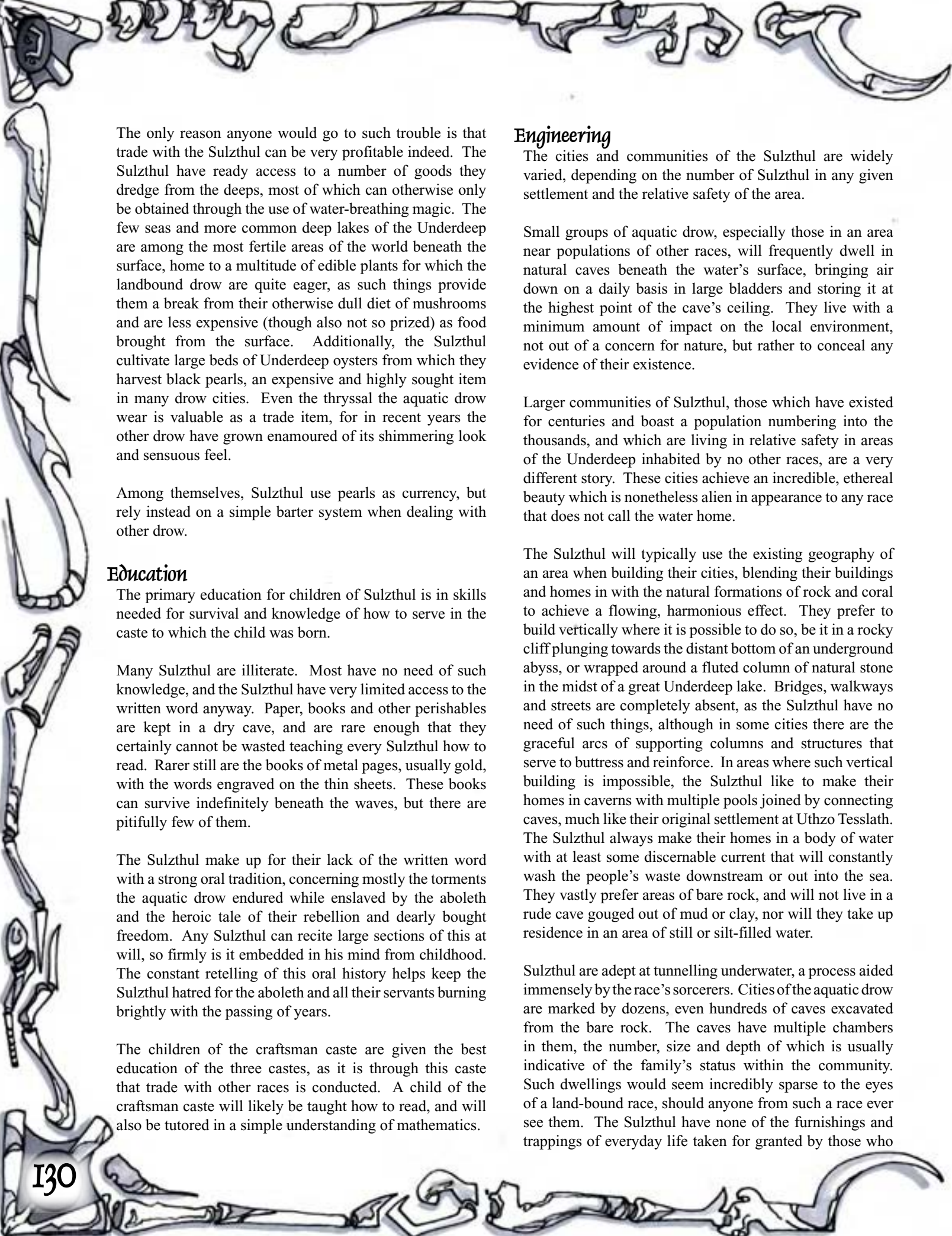
Additionally, the lawful evil mindset of the aboleth rubbed off somewhat on the Sulzthul, muting but not replacing their chaotic nature, making neutral evil the most common alignment of their culture.

Economy

The economy of most of the Sulzthul is rudimentary at best. Their needs are few and their contact with other races is sparse. Most communities of Sulzthul are fairly small, and tend to exist using a simple barter system. Some very small groups dispense with even that, merely sharing all things equally among the community, but the suspicious nature of the Sulzthul makes such an arrangement difficult and when more than a few dozen are gathered together, it becomes impossible.

There are several cities of the Sulzthul scattered in large lakes or small seas in isolated areas of the Underdeep. The size of these settlements precludes the Sulzthul from being as insular as they would normally wish to be, forcing them to engage in trade with other races.

Trade with the Sulzthul is a difficult process. As they will not allow any other race to enter the areas of their cities and settlements, it is impossible to directly approach them about opening trade without triggering an armed conflict. Anyone wishing to open relations with the Sulzthul on a more peaceful note is limited to making such aspirations well known, and hoping the Sulzthul in turn contact them about beginning trade.



The only reason anyone would go to such trouble is that trade with the Sulzthul can be very profitable indeed. The Sulzthul have ready access to a number of goods they dredge from the deeps, most of which can otherwise only be obtained through the use of water-breathing magic. The few seas and more common deep lakes of the Underdeep are among the most fertile areas of the world beneath the surface, home to a multitude of edible plants for which the landbound drow are quite eager, as such things provide them a break from their otherwise dull diet of mushrooms and are less expensive (though also not so prized) as food brought from the surface. Additionally, the Sulzthul cultivate large beds of Underdeep oysters from which they harvest black pearls, an expensive and highly sought item in many drow cities. Even the thryssal the aquatic drow wear is valuable as a trade item, for in recent years the other drow have grown enamoured of its shimmering look and sensuous feel.

Among themselves, Sulzthul use pearls as currency, but rely instead on a simple barter system when dealing with other drow.

Education

The primary education for children of Sulzthul is in skills needed for survival and knowledge of how to serve in the caste to which the child was born.

Many Sulzthul are illiterate. Most have no need of such knowledge, and the Sulzthul have very limited access to the written word anyway. Paper, books and other perishables are kept in a dry cave, and are rare enough that they certainly cannot be wasted teaching every Sulzthul how to read. Rarer still are the books of metal pages, usually gold, with the words engraved on the thin sheets. These books can survive indefinitely beneath the waves, but there are pitifully few of them.

The Sulzthul make up for their lack of the written word with a strong oral tradition, concerning mostly the torments the aquatic drow endured while enslaved by the aboleth and the heroic tale of their rebellion and dearly bought freedom. Any Sulzthul can recite large sections of this at will, so firmly is it embedded in his mind from childhood. The constant retelling of this oral history helps keep the Sulzthul hatred for the aboleth and all their servants burning brightly with the passing of years.

The children of the craftsman caste are given the best education of the three castes, as it is through this caste that trade with other races is conducted. A child of the craftsman caste will likely be taught how to read, and will also be tutored in a simple understanding of mathematics.

Engineering

The cities and communities of the Sulzthul are widely varied, depending on the number of Sulzthul in any given settlement and the relative safety of the area.

Small groups of aquatic drow, especially those in an area near populations of other races, will frequently dwell in natural caves beneath the water's surface, bringing air down on a daily basis in large bladders and storing it at the highest point of the cave's ceiling. They live with a minimum amount of impact on the local environment, not out of a concern for nature, but rather to conceal any evidence of their existence.

Larger communities of Sulzthul, those which have existed for centuries and boast a population numbering into the thousands, and which are living in relative safety in areas of the Underdeep inhabited by no other races, are a very different story. These cities achieve an incredible, ethereal beauty which is nonetheless alien in appearance to any race that does not call the water home.

The Sulzthul will typically use the existing geography of an area when building their cities, blending their buildings and homes in with the natural formations of rock and coral to achieve a flowing, harmonious effect. They prefer to build vertically where it is possible to do so, be it in a rocky cliff plunging towards the distant bottom of an underground abyss, or wrapped around a fluted column of natural stone in the midst of a great Underdeep lake. Bridges, walkways and streets are completely absent, as the Sulzthul have no need of such things, although in some cities there are the graceful arcs of supporting columns and structures that serve to buttress and reinforce. In areas where such vertical building is impossible, the Sulzthul like to make their homes in caverns with multiple pools joined by connecting caves, much like their original settlement at Uthzo Tesslath. The Sulzthul always make their homes in a body of water with at least some discernable current that will constantly wash the people's waste downstream or out into the sea. They vastly prefer areas of bare rock, and will not live in a rude cave gouged out of mud or clay, nor will they take up residence in an area of still or silt-filled water.

Sulzthul are adept at tunnelling underwater, a process aided immensely by the race's sorcerers. Cities of the aquatic drow are marked by dozens, even hundreds of caves excavated from the bare rock. The caves have multiple chambers in them, the number, size and depth of which is usually indicative of the family's status within the community. Such dwellings would seem incredibly sparse to the eyes of a land-bound race, should anyone from such a race ever see them. The Sulzthul have none of the furnishings and trappings of everyday life taken for granted by those who



make their homes on dry land. Chairs, beds, tables, all are noticeably absent, as the Sulzthul have no use for any of them.

Every city will have several 'dry caves' used for everything which simply cannot be done underwater, from cooking to tanning thryssal to storing items like books or anything else which cannot survive immersion. These caves are often on the surface or very near it, connected to the air above by a narrow chimney to carry the smoke away. As they are commonly the most exposed area of any Sulzthul settlement, they are not connected in any way to the remainder of the community.


The greatest of the Sulzthul cities is Ssil, originally founded by the descendants of Ssil na'Than after leaving their first settlement at Uthzo Tesslath and named in his honour. Built around a wide, fluted column of rock in the midst of a deep lake, it is home to nearly 20,000 Sulzthul. The pillar of stone itself is pierced with hundreds of multi-chambered caves dug out of the rock by the Sulzthul for use as homes and businesses. The city is constantly lit by literally thousands of luminescent jellyfish of varying colours swimming lazily along with the currents, creatures whose dangerous sting has no effect on the peculiar skin of the Sulzthul. Fresh air for the Sulzthul is provided by several tiny one-way gates to the elemental plane of air which the sorcerers of the Sulzthul constructed at the base of the city. Air pours from these gates in a constant stream, jetting towards the surface to be caught in the smooth, scalloped overhangs at the entrance to the Sulzthul caves.

Ranging out from the city in all directions are the farmlands of Ssil. The rich soil at the bottom of the lake, combined with the light provided by the jellyfish, allow the Sulzthul to grow and harvest a variety of underwater plants. Most of these plants are edible, making them a valuable trade item in the Underdeep. Others are used for everything from dyes to healing poultices.

Entertainment

Life beneath the waves has dramatically altered the kinds of entertainment available to the Sulzthul. Many amusements common on dry land are either impractical or simply impossible here. What little music they make, for example, is limited to simple percussion instruments. The Sulzthul can hear perfectly well underwater, but most instruments simply will not function when wet.

Gladiatorial contests are much less common among the Sulzthul than they are in other drow cultures. Sulzthul warriors frequently compete against one another to hone their abilities, but the aquatic drow do not have the same ease of access to slaves and other unwilling combatants other drow enjoy. Water-breathing sentient races are comparatively few, the aboleth being the most significant in the Underdeep, and the Sulzthul slaughter those creatures the moment they find one, they do not bring it back to a drow city for gladiatorial combat. Further, a water-based race is not as easily confined as a land-bound race; while a simple pit or ornate coliseum can contain land-bound combatants, it is impossible to build such a structure underwater than can prevent an unwilling combatant from fleeing.



The exception to this is the rare occasion the Sulzthul capture land-bound trespassers in their domain. Those not killed when captured will often be used as gladiatorial combatants, equipped with a *water breathing* spell (and little else) and pitted against an array of the finest warriors the Sulzthul have to offer.

The most remarkable form of entertainment the Sulzthul have is dancing. Not confined by gravity, the aquatic elves have created amazingly intricate and complex dances involving dozens of performers floating and swimming in all three dimensions, without the accompaniment of any music whatsoever. Clad in the brightest thryssal garments the Sulzthul can create, glowing with *faerie fire* and surrounded by *dancing lights*, such dances are celebrations of incredible, unearthly beauty and grace which have, sadly, never been seen by an outsider and likely never will.

Family

Family is an extremely important concept to the Sulzthul. Intensely distrustful and suspicious by nature, the Sulzthul make an exception when it comes to their immediate family. The bonds between spouses, between parents and children, are considered nearly inviolable ties of trust and loyalty.

The most basic unit of authority among the Sulzthul is the family. The family is given the authority and first opportunity to deal with or correct a problem with one of its members, except in cases of major crimes, when such matters fall to the Council.

Just as with the society as a whole, the individual is expected to be a useful member of the family. Childhood is brief, and the Sulzthul are expected to contribute as much to the family and community as an adult even before reaching puberty. Malingerers and slothful family members are not tolerated; they are an embarrassment to the family and are commonly given one opportunity to correct their ways before the weight of the family's punishment falls on them. Most often, this punishment comes in one of two forms: either banishment from the community or time spent in the breeding cave. Sometimes, the family will offer a choice of punishments.

Banishment is a near-certain death sentence to a Sulzthul. To prevent any possibility of a banished individual revealing the location of the Sulzthul settlement, the individual is drugged into a deep sleep and deposited somewhere far from the settlement. Wandering the unfamiliar Underdeep alone results in a quick death for most Sulzthul. Even those who find another settlement are unlikely to be taken in, as all know the only reason this individual would be out in the Underdeep alone is if he were banished. This punishment is usually inflicted on males.

The breeding cave is a less dangerous but no less demeaning punishment. The closest thing the Sulzthul have to slavery, the aquatic drow sentenced to this are kept shut up in a single cave, and are used for both pleasure and procreation by the free Sulzthul. This punishment is usually inflicted on females, and any children born of them are generally accepted into the female's family at birth.

Food

In some ways, the Sulzthul enjoy a more varied diet than do most other drow. Their homes beneath the water provide them with easy access to many types of fish and, for the most fortunate Sulzthul communities, an array of underwater vegetables.

Unlike most drow, the diet of the Sulzthul consists of very few mushrooms, only what grows within the community's dry cave or what they harvest when they venture out of the water. Rather, fish is the staple of the aquatic drow. Using nets woven of underwater reeds, groups of Sulzthul troll through the waters near their homes, capturing large schools of blind fish and bringing them back to feed their people. Larger fish are hunted with spears and are far more prized, both for the firm texture of their meat and the various uses to which the mammoth bones of these Underdeep behemoths can be put.


Shellfish are also a substantial part of the Sulzthul diet, with both clams and oysters in ready supply in many of the larger bodies of water in the Underdeep.

Very little Sulzthul food is cooked. From fish to clams to seaweed, the aquatic drow almost always devour their food raw. Cooking food is something done for special occasions and celebrations, usually involving the entire community and becoming the major focus of the dry cave for several days.

Government

Governing the Sulzthul is extremely difficult. Though not as chaotic in nature as other drow, the aquatic drow are a race of strong individuals who do not submit well to outside authority. Additionally, the millennia of their enslavement by the aboleth, a memory that will never fade, has made them intensely distrustful of anyone attempting to exercise even the smallest measure of control over their lives.

However, a large community cannot exist without some form of government, and the Sulzthul have learned to marginally sublimate their thirst for utter freedom for the greater good of the race. They know they could never have successfully risen up against the aboleth nor maintained their freedom and very survival in the wars



with the abominations that have followed were it not for the unification of their society.

The Council is the name usually given to the tribunal of Sulzthul who govern, as much as is possible, each individual community of Sulzthul. Consisting of one representative from each caste, the Council decides such matters as when to go to war, how to distribute food, how to punish criminals and whether to respond to an outsider's desire to open up trade relations.

Magic

The Sulzthul retain the innate magical abilities and spell resistance found in most other races of drow. Additionally, they are able to cast *water breathing* (self only) once per day. Like their other innate spell abilities, this is cast identically to a spell cast by a sorcerer of the drow's character level, and is commonly initiated by the Sulzthul before they rest for the night. This is not necessary, as they can easily hold their breath for the four hours of rest they require, but it is more comfortable to just breathe normally.

As noted in the section on religion, there are no priests among the Sulzthul, as they do not worship any gods. Nor are there any wizards, as the constraints of life underwater make such an avocation very difficult indeed to pursue – the books needed for study by a wizard do not respond well to constant immersion in water, and the Sulzthul have rarely spent the time and resources to create pages of thin sheets of metal or other materials which can survive the water. The Sulzthul do, however, make excellent sorcerers. As the only spellcasters, sorcerers are highly regarded among the aquatic drow.

Relations with Others

The Sulzthul are so xenophobic they make other drow seem gregarious. The long centuries of their enslavement by the aboleth made them intensely distrustful of any other race, even other drow. Should strangers enter the area of one of their settlements, the Sulzthul will either hide if the newcomers seem too powerful and have not noticed them, or they will attack with a terrible ferocity. The thought of other races knowing where they live is terrifying to them, as they fear it will only lead to another attempt to enslave them.

The Sulzthul do not actively hate most races, they merely seek to avoid them. Contact with other races is extremely limited, though the Sulzthul will sometimes trade with other drow under strictly controlled circumstances. They will not allow a trading caravan near one of their settlements and indeed, they go to great lengths to make sure the locations of their homes are kept secret. When they do engage in trade,

they will meet the other party at a pre-determined location, preferably one they can access through an underground river, making the chances of anyone following them home as slender as possible.

Though their relations with other races can generally be characterised as mistrust, the Sulzthul have an intense, burning hatred for the aboleth. They have a healthy respect for the power of those abominations, but it is not enough to keep them from hunting and killing aboleth whenever they can find a vulnerable group. The aboleth return their hatred, and have never forgotten the slave race that rose up against them and slaughtered dozens of their number. The aboleth actively hunt the Sulzthul, just as the aquatic drow hunt the aboleth, and there have been several wars of terrible ferocity between the two races.

The Sulzthul also bear an especially deep hatred for skum, the slave race created by the aboleth after the Sulzthul successfully rebelled. The mindless devotion of the skum to their masters reminds the Sulzthul all too well of what they once were.

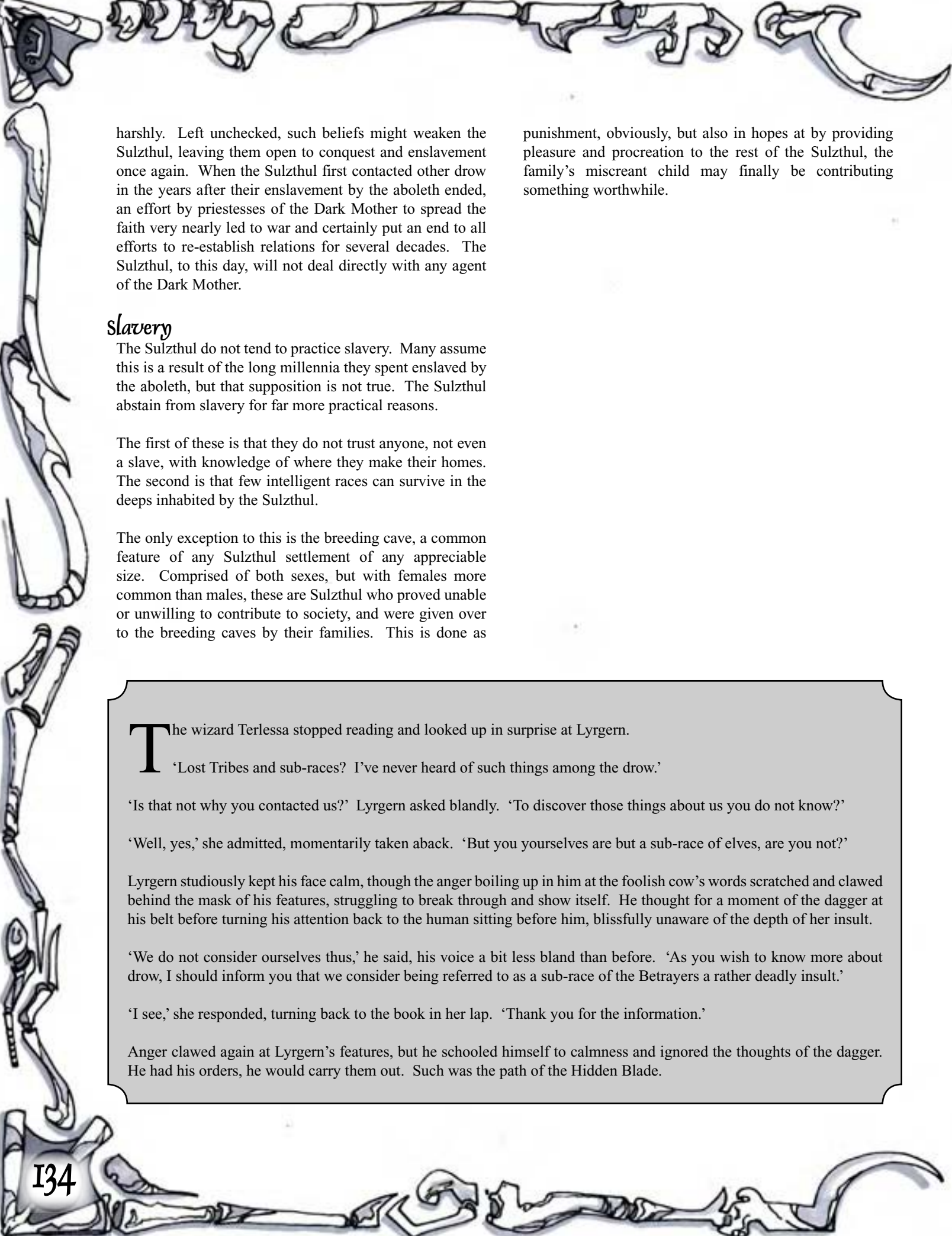
The foe the Sulzthul face most often, however, is the race of the morgoshe. These fishlike creatures compete with the aquatic drow for living space, often trying to move into an area already under the control of the drow. Though the Sulzthul do not hold the same hate for morgoshe they do for aboleth and skum, they will not hesitate to kill them should the opportunity arise.

Religion

The Sulzthul officially have no religion in their society. They are not atheists, indeed, they are certain that the gods do exist, but they refuse to give the gods worship. If the gods would do nothing to help them during the Sundering and during their wandering in the unfamiliar Underdeep, if the gods would do nothing to deliver them from their slavery and torment and transformation under the aboleth, what right do the gods have to ask the Sulzthul for their worship now?

There are, of course, some Sulzthul who still cling to religion and worship the gods, but they do so in secret. Religion is considered a weakness among the Sulzthul, an inability to cope with the rigours of life in the Underdeep on the basis of one's own strength. It is commonly believed that dedication to the gods weakened the ancestors of the Sulzthul, making them dependant on the whims of other beings, rather than willing to cope with the dangers facing them directly.

There have been very few attempts to reintegrate religion in the society of Sulzthul and any such attempts are dealt with



harshly. Left unchecked, such beliefs might weaken the Sulzthul, leaving them open to conquest and enslavement once again. When the Sulzthul first contacted other drow in the years after their enslavement by the aboleth ended, an effort by priestesses of the Dark Mother to spread the faith very nearly led to war and certainly put an end to all efforts to re-establish relations for several decades. The Sulzthul, to this day, will not deal directly with any agent of the Dark Mother.

Slavery

The Sulzthul do not tend to practice slavery. Many assume this is a result of the long millennia they spent enslaved by the aboleth, but that supposition is not true. The Sulzthul abstain from slavery for far more practical reasons.

The first of these is that they do not trust anyone, not even a slave, with knowledge of where they make their homes. The second is that few intelligent races can survive in the deeps inhabited by the Sulzthul.

The only exception to this is the breeding cave, a common feature of any Sulzthul settlement of any appreciable size. Comprised of both sexes, but with females more common than males, these are Sulzthul who proved unable or unwilling to contribute to society, and were given over to the breeding caves by their families. This is done as

punishment, obviously, but also in hopes at by providing pleasure and procreation to the rest of the Sulzthul, the family's miscreant child may finally be contributing something worthwhile.

The wizard Terlessa stopped reading and looked up in surprise at Lyrgern.

‘Lost Tribes and sub-races? I’ve never heard of such things among the drow.’

‘Is that not why you contacted us?’ Lyrgern asked blandly. ‘To discover those things about us you do not know?’

‘Well, yes,’ she admitted, momentarily taken aback. ‘But you yourselves are but a sub-race of elves, are you not?’

Lyrgern studiously kept his face calm, though the anger boiling up in him at the foolish cow’s words scratched and clawed behind the mask of his features, struggling to break through and show itself. He thought for a moment of the dagger at his belt before turning his attention back to the human sitting before him, blissfully unaware of the depth of her insult.

‘We do not consider ourselves thus,’ he said, his voice a bit less bland than before. ‘As you wish to know more about drow, I should inform you that we consider being referred to as a sub-race of the Betrayers a rather deadly insult.’

‘I see,’ she responded, turning back to the book in her lap. ‘Thank you for the information.’

Anger clawed again at Lyrgern’s features, but he schooled himself to calmness and ignored the thoughts of the dagger. He had his orders, he would carry them out. Such was the path of the Hidden Blade.

The Drow in the Campaign

This chapter addresses the use of drow in a fantasy campaign. It offers Games Masters assistance and ideas for how to incorporate the drow in the game as enemies, allies or even as Player Characters. Additionally, it contains information on how prevalent the base character classes are in drow society, a slew of new prestige classes for the drow and of course new feats.

How to Use the Drow in a Campaign

For more than a quarter century, the drow have been a part of gaming. They have become iconic figures in fantasy roleplaying, bedeviling parties of Player Characters that range from the neophyte to the epic. In some campaigns they may appear only infrequently, while in others the drow may be presented as the primary enemy of the Player Characters. Whichever the case, the drow as presented in *The Tome of Drow Lore* offer enough variety and surprises to make the infamous dark elves mysterious and frightening to even the most jaded roleplayer. Spending some time to flesh out the role the drow will play in the campaign can be an interesting and challenging task for a Games Master,

but one which will result in a more satisfying experience at the gaming table.


The Drow as Enemies

In most campaigns, the drow appear as enemies of the Player Characters, but how they perform this role can vary dramatically. In some campaigns, the drow might appear as little more than wandering monsters, an unfortunate encounter for Player Characters going about their own business. In others, the drow might take on the role of the ultimate enemy of the Player Characters, weaving plot after plot for the heroes to unravel before the campaign ends with a climactic confrontation in the cramped darkness of the Underdeep. This section takes a closer look at some of the ways a Games Master might use the drow in his campaign.

The Drow as Monsters

Not every campaign that includes drow must rely on them as the ultimate enemy of the Player Characters. Though the drow are certainly plotting and scheming in the depths of the world, there is no reason those plots and schemes





should ever touch more than tangentially on the lives of the Player Characters. In this campaign, the drow might appear as a chance encounter in the Underdeep or in some dungeon.

In such a campaign, the drow will not appear as the primary instigators of events. While the drow would never assume the role of lackey or hapless servant, they may act as allies of the campaign's true enemy. Likewise, there are many mercenary companies of drow to be found in the Underdeep, who will willingly sell their services to anyone that can pay their price. Additionally, it is not impossible for the drow to be manipulated into serving the ends of another entity, someone who is brave and clever enough to play on the goals, aspirations and hatreds of the dark elves.

The information in this book will certainly make sure a fight against the drow is a memorable one, something to be discussed and dissected for months to come. There is no reason an encounter with the drow must be a cusp event in the campaign. A chance encounter with a band of Kanahraun Reavers, for example, is something no Player Character would ever forget.

Listed below are some ways the Games Master might use to incorporate drow into his campaign in the role of monsters.

- ☛ The Player Characters are seeking a specific item and find themselves crossing paths with a group of drow in search of the same item.
- ☛ One of the primary enemies of the Player Characters hires a pair of drow assassins to remove the Player Characters permanently.
- ☛ The Player Characters find themselves trapped in a maze-like dungeon, which has also ensnared a band of drow. The two groups are faced with a choice of fighting or working together to get out and the Player Characters must beware a likely betrayal by the drow when the two groups do find the exit, especially if some sort of prize or treasure is involved.
- ☛ A band of drow have been raiding villages on the surface, carrying supplies and slaves with them back into the Underdeep. They must be stopped.
- ☛ Camped in the wilds at night, the Player Characters hear the sounds of battle. A group of high elves is embattled by a larger group of drow and will need the help of the Player Characters to prevail.
- ☛ A deep gnome approaches the Player Characters, offering to hire them to retrieve an item. When the drow overran the gnome's village in the Underdeep, he was forced to leave a family heirloom behind, hidden in his old home.

The Drow as Manipulators

The drow come from a culture of suspicion and scheming, of endless struggles for power played out in plots that can take decades to unfold. Gifted with incredibly long life, at least as compared to humans, the drow are able to spend literally centuries hatching and crafting plans of near-infinite complexity and misdirection.

Games Masters can easily take this aspect of drow society and use it as the basis for the involvement of drow in the campaign. In such a campaign, drow are the puppeteers, the schemers that work behind the scenes. They will appear in the campaign far less often than their many minions, spies, allies, agents and proxies, who work to bring about the fruition of whatever longstanding plan the drow have concocted. The drow build networks of these agents on a foundation of greed and ambition, though many of them are likely to be completely unaware of the fact they are indeed working for the dark elves. These widespread nets of power enjoyed by the drow allow them to launch multiple plots and schemes which can become a series of story arcs in a roleplaying campaign, or even the major thrust of the campaign itself.

In this scenario, the drow are not random encounters, nor are they being used and manipulated by a greater enemy. They are primary villains, recruiting and using other creatures and Non-Player Characters at their whim as lackeys, minions and footsoldiers. In such a campaign, the Player Characters may have to unravel a number of plots or survive several story arcs before the involvement of the drow is even revealed.

Listed below are some ways the Games Master might use to incorporate drow into his campaign in the role of manipulators.

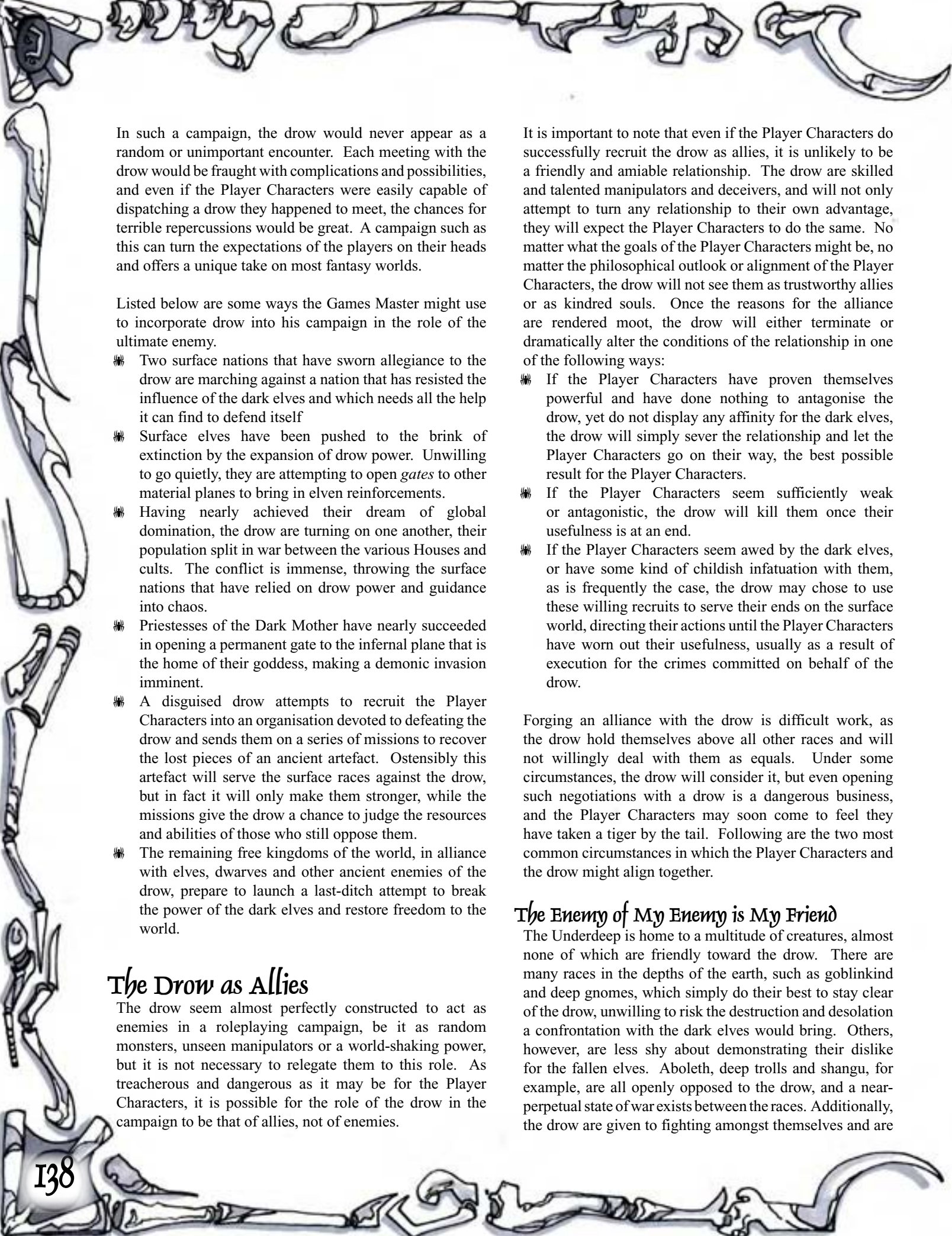
- ☛ Working through proxies, the drow fund a rebellion against a ruler of a surface nation, intending to become a power behind the throne of the new government
- ☛ The drow assassinate the heads of major guilds in several large surface cities, replacing them with polymorphed drow. This gives them exceptional influence over one important aspect of the regional economy, allowing them to funnel money into the Underdeep or create chaos on the surface.
- ☛ By magically controlling the leader of a large tribe of goblins, the drow are able to send the goblins on a series of carefully orchestrated raids into the surface, retrieving slaves and goods without revealing the dark elf presence.
- ☛ The drow use their immense wealth and influence to stoke the fires of war between two formerly friendly surface nations.



- ☛ Persistent rumours of an ancient artefact of incredible power, broken into five pieces and long thought lost forever, are luring groups of adventurers into the Underdeep. The drow have planted the rumour as a means of eliminating potent threats on the surface and as an easy way to garner powerful magical items for themselves, stripped from the corpses of greedy adventurers.
- ☛ The drow acquire influence (magical influence, blackmail or extortion) over several nobles of a surface kingdom, forcing them to push the nation's king towards open warfare against a nearby elven community.

The Drow as the Ultimate Enemy

The immense power, long lives, ambitions and wealth of the drow make it a simple matter for them to step into the role of the ultimate enemy in a roleplaying campaign. In such a campaign, the drow are not merely the masterminds and manipulators behind plots and schemes that bedevil the Player Characters, they are a primary force in the workings of the world. From the impregnable fortress of the Underdeep, the hand of the drow reaches forth to guide the happenings of the surface, to crush the enemies of the dark elves and to move the nations of the sunlit world as pawns in a global Game of Bones.



In such a campaign, the drow would never appear as a random or unimportant encounter. Each meeting with the drow would be fraught with complications and possibilities, and even if the Player Characters were easily capable of dispatching a drow they happened to meet, the chances for terrible repercussions would be great. A campaign such as this can turn the expectations of the players on their heads and offers a unique take on most fantasy worlds.

Listed below are some ways the Games Master might use to incorporate drow into his campaign in the role of the ultimate enemy.

- ☛ Two surface nations that have sworn allegiance to the drow are marching against a nation that has resisted the influence of the dark elves and which needs all the help it can find to defend itself
- ☛ Surface elves have been pushed to the brink of extinction by the expansion of drow power. Unwilling to go quietly, they are attempting to open *gates* to other material planes to bring in elven reinforcements.
- ☛ Having nearly achieved their dream of global domination, the drow are turning on one another, their population split in war between the various Houses and cults. The conflict is immense, throwing the surface nations that have relied on drow power and guidance into chaos.
- ☛ Priestesses of the Dark Mother have nearly succeeded in opening a permanent gate to the infernal plane that is the home of their goddess, making a demonic invasion imminent.
- ☛ A disguised drow attempts to recruit the Player Characters into an organisation devoted to defeating the drow and sends them on a series of missions to recover the lost pieces of an ancient artefact. Ostensibly this artefact will serve the surface races against the drow, but in fact it will only make them stronger, while the missions give the drow a chance to judge the resources and abilities of those who still oppose them.
- ☛ The remaining free kingdoms of the world, in alliance with elves, dwarves and other ancient enemies of the drow, prepare to launch a last-ditch attempt to break the power of the dark elves and restore freedom to the world.

The Drow as Allies

The drow seem almost perfectly constructed to act as enemies in a roleplaying campaign, be it as random monsters, unseen manipulators or a world-shaking power, but it is not necessary to relegate them to this role. As treacherous and dangerous as it may be for the Player Characters, it is possible for the role of the drow in the campaign to be that of allies, not of enemies.


It is important to note that even if the Player Characters do successfully recruit the drow as allies, it is unlikely to be a friendly and amiable relationship. The drow are skilled and talented manipulators and deceivers, and will not only attempt to turn any relationship to their own advantage, they will expect the Player Characters to do the same. No matter what the goals of the Player Characters might be, no matter the philosophical outlook or alignment of the Player Characters, the drow will not see them as trustworthy allies or as kindred souls. Once the reasons for the alliance are rendered moot, the drow will either terminate or dramatically alter the conditions of the relationship in one of the following ways:

- ☛ If the Player Characters have proven themselves powerful and have done nothing to antagonise the drow, yet do not display any affinity for the dark elves, the drow will simply sever the relationship and let the Player Characters go on their way, the best possible result for the Player Characters.
- ☛ If the Player Characters seem sufficiently weak or antagonistic, the drow will kill them once their usefulness is at an end.
- ☛ If the Player Characters seem awed by the dark elves, or have some kind of childish infatuation with them, as is frequently the case, the drow may choose to use these willing recruits to serve their ends on the surface world, directing their actions until the Player Characters have worn out their usefulness, usually as a result of execution for the crimes committed on behalf of the drow.

Forging an alliance with the drow is difficult work, as the drow hold themselves above all other races and will not willingly deal with them as equals. Under some circumstances, the drow will consider it, but even opening such negotiations with a drow is a dangerous business, and the Player Characters may soon come to feel they have taken a tiger by the tail. Following are the two most common circumstances in which the Player Characters and the drow might align together.

The Enemy of My Enemy is My Friend

The Underdeep is home to a multitude of creatures, almost none of which are friendly toward the drow. There are many races in the depths of the earth, such as goblinkind and deep gnomes, which simply do their best to stay clear of the drow, unwilling to risk the destruction and desolation a confrontation with the dark elves would bring. Others, however, are less shy about demonstrating their dislike for the fallen elves. Aboleth, deep trolls and shangu, for example, are all openly opposed to the drow, and a near-perpetual state of war exists between the races. Additionally, the drow are given to fighting amongst themselves and are



only too happy to use pawns of other races in the constant internecine warfare of their people.

Listed below are some of the ways in which the Player Characters and the drow might find themselves aligned against a common foe.

- After making themselves the mortal enemies of one drow House, the Player Characters turn to a rival House for protection, which will come with a hefty price.
- The shangu, all but dormant for centuries, have emerged from their mysterious homes to ravage the lands above and below the surface. Faced with this common threat, the Player Characters find themselves fighting alongside drow against the aggression by the abominations.
- On the trail of a wizard who is a long-standing enemy, the Player Characters find a small settlement of drow in the Underdeep which the wizard's minions have been raiding for supplies and subjects for his monstrous experiments. The drow wish to mount a strike against the wizard, and will gladly accept the help of the Player Characters.
- A small band of drow, adherents of the Darkling Sky, entreats the Player Characters for help and protection.

The Lesser of Two Evils

Though the surface elves might disagree, there are worse things in heaven and earth than the drow. From time to time, the Player Characters might find their own purposes aligning with those of the drow simply because the alternative is so terrible as to make the drow seem benign.

Listed below are some of the ways in which the Player Characters and the drow might find themselves serving one another's interests:

- An ancient artefact has been awoken in the Underdeep, causing an escalating string of natural disasters that will devastate the lands above and below the surface if it is not found and destroyed.
- Trapped in a maze-like dungeon inhabited by nightmarish beasts, the Player Characters meet a band of drow who have suffered a similar fate. The drow claim to know the way out, but will need the assistance of the Player Characters to make it there.
- An insane wizard has created a series of gates to the infernal planes, bringing forth a plague of devils into the world. The gates exist above and below the surface, causing equal damage to the sunlit realms and the Underdeep, and can only be closed with the death of the wizard.
- A force of vampiric shangu is marching through the Underdeep on its path to the surface, creating more legions of undead with every force that has confronted it. If it is not stopped, the drow and the surface world both will suffer.

The Drow as Player Characters

The question of whether or not to allow drow into the campaign as Player Characters is a difficult one, but one which is faced by most Games Masters at some point in their career. A Games Master must balance his decision between two points that are at times polar opposites: the conscientious Games Master's desire to accommodate his players' wishes with the need to maintain the integrity of the campaign.

Although the Games Master is obviously in charge of running the game, and is the final arbiter of events in the campaign world, there will not be a game for very long if the players are unhappy. Wise Games Masters understand that sometimes compromise and accommodation are called for when a player makes a request a Games Master might be inclined to deny. With a little work and effort from both sides, it should be easy enough to reach a mutual decision regarding the inclusion of drow in the campaign as Player Characters. At the other end of the spectrum are any legitimate concerns the Games Master may have about how including drow Player Characters will affect his campaign, and whether their inclusion is something which will be a benefit or a detriment to the campaign (and the roleplaying sessions) as a whole.

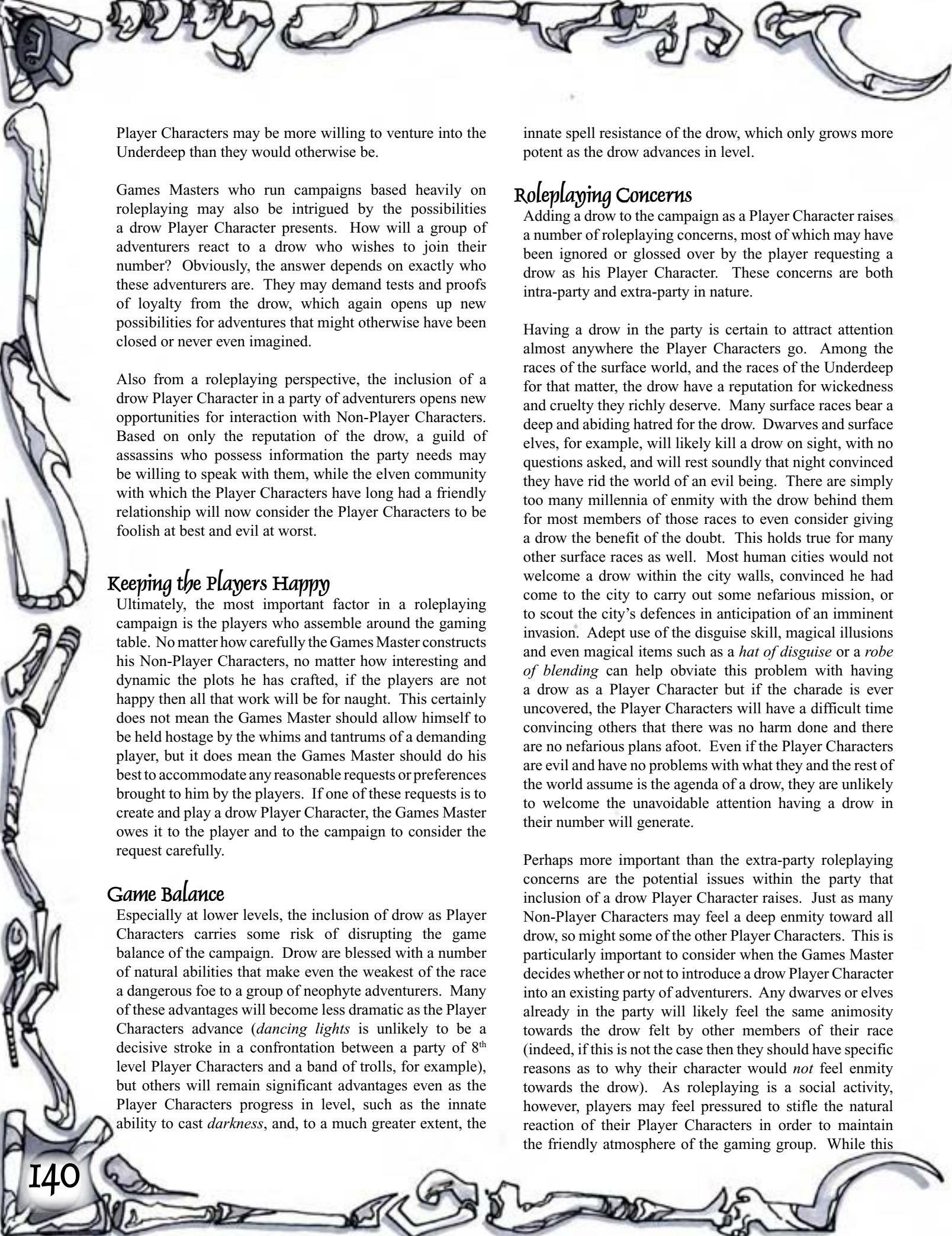
Both sides of the 'drow as Player Characters' argument are tackled below, along with some sample scenarios for inclusion of drow as Player Characters.

Variety is the Spice of Roleplaying

Roleplaying groups that have been together for some time often fall into patterns in which races and classes they select as Player Characters. For example, one player always creates a human ranger, while another always chooses a halfling thief and a third is given to playing elven paladins. While there is certainly nothing wrong with this, it can sometimes create a sense of stagnancy in the group. Spread over several campaigns, the repetition of these character types can begin to seem like reiterations of the same character, unless the players are skilled roleplayers and the Games Master offers plentiful opportunities to define and refine the individual personalities of the Player Characters. The sudden and unexpected inclusion of a drow Player Character into such a group can be a perfect shot in the arm to revitalise the campaign, breaking the players free of their old habits and forcing them to cope with an entirely new dynamic within the party of Player Characters.

Opening New Possibilities

Including a drow as a Player Character in a roleplaying group opens a significant number of options to the Games Master. With a drow there to guide them, for example, the



Player Characters may be more willing to venture into the Underdeep than they would otherwise be.

Games Masters who run campaigns based heavily on roleplaying may also be intrigued by the possibilities a drow Player Character presents. How will a group of adventurers react to a drow who wishes to join their number? Obviously, the answer depends on exactly who these adventurers are. They may demand tests and proofs of loyalty from the drow, which again opens up new possibilities for adventures that might otherwise have been closed or never even imagined.

Also from a roleplaying perspective, the inclusion of a drow Player Character in a party of adventurers opens new opportunities for interaction with Non-Player Characters. Based on only the reputation of the drow, a guild of assassins who possess information the party needs may be willing to speak with them, while the elven community with which the Player Characters have long had a friendly relationship will now consider the Player Characters to be foolish at best and evil at worst.

Keeping the Players Happy

Ultimately, the most important factor in a roleplaying campaign is the players who assemble around the gaming table. No matter how carefully the Games Master constructs his Non-Player Characters, no matter how interesting and dynamic the plots he has crafted, if the players are not happy then all that work will be for naught. This certainly does not mean the Games Master should allow himself to be held hostage by the whims and tantrums of a demanding player, but it does mean the Games Master should do his best to accommodate any reasonable requests or preferences brought to him by the players. If one of these requests is to create and play a drow Player Character, the Games Master owes it to the player and to the campaign to consider the request carefully.

Game Balance

Especially at lower levels, the inclusion of drow as Player Characters carries some risk of disrupting the game balance of the campaign. Drow are blessed with a number of natural abilities that make even the weakest of the race a dangerous foe to a group of neophyte adventurers. Many of these advantages will become less dramatic as the Player Characters advance (*dancing lights* is unlikely to be a decisive stroke in a confrontation between a party of 8th level Player Characters and a band of trolls, for example), but others will remain significant advantages even as the Player Characters progress in level, such as the innate ability to cast *darkness*, and, to a much greater extent, the


innate spell resistance of the drow, which only grows more potent as the drow advances in level.

Roleplaying Concerns

Adding a drow to the campaign as a Player Character raises a number of roleplaying concerns, most of which may have been ignored or glossed over by the player requesting a drow as his Player Character. These concerns are both intra-party and extra-party in nature.

Having a drow in the party is certain to attract attention almost anywhere the Player Characters go. Among the races of the surface world, and the races of the Underdeep for that matter, the drow have a reputation for wickedness and cruelty they richly deserve. Many surface races bear a deep and abiding hatred for the drow. Dwarves and surface elves, for example, will likely kill a drow on sight, with no questions asked, and will rest soundly that night convinced they have rid the world of an evil being. There are simply too many millennia of enmity with the drow behind them for most members of those races to even consider giving a drow the benefit of the doubt. This holds true for many other surface races as well. Most human cities would not welcome a drow within the city walls, convinced he had come to the city to carry out some nefarious mission, or to scout the city's defences in anticipation of an imminent invasion. Adept use of the disguise skill, magical illusions and even magical items such as a *hat of disguise* or a *robe of blending* can help obviate this problem with having a drow as a Player Character but if the charade is ever uncovered, the Player Characters will have a difficult time convincing others that there was no harm done and there are no nefarious plans afoot. Even if the Player Characters are evil and have no problems with what they and the rest of the world assume is the agenda of a drow, they are unlikely to welcome the unavoidable attention having a drow in their number will generate.

Perhaps more important than the extra-party roleplaying concerns are the potential issues within the party that inclusion of a drow Player Character raises. Just as many Non-Player Characters may feel a deep enmity toward all drow, so might some of the other Player Characters. This is particularly important to consider when the Games Master decides whether or not to introduce a drow Player Character into an existing party of adventurers. Any dwarves or elves already in the party will likely feel the same animosity towards the drow felt by other members of their race (indeed, if this is not the case then they should have specific reasons as to why their character would *not* feel enmity towards the drow). As roleplaying is a social activity, however, players may feel pressured to stifle the natural reaction of their Player Characters in order to maintain the friendly atmosphere of the gaming group. While this



allows the drow to join the party as a Player Character, it compromises the roleplaying of the other Player Characters who would normally be hostile towards the drow, and cheapens the game experience for their players. This is not merely limited to elves, dwarves and other traditional enemies of the drow. A paladin, for example, would be unlikely to trust a drow under any circumstances.

Keeping the Mystery

A Games Master may decide against allowing drow Player Characters into the campaign simply because he desires to keep the drow a mystery to the Player Characters. Perhaps he is intending the story arc of the campaign to eventually draw the Player Characters into the Underdeep, even into a confrontation with the drow. A drow Player Character could create all manner of unwelcome complications for the Games Master, from smoothing the adventurers' travels through the Underdeep to providing intimate knowledge of the dark elves which the Games Master would rather keep secret until the first confrontation with the drow. Using the many Houses and Lost Tribes available in this book can help obviate this problem but if the Games Master has taken the drow in an entirely different direction than what the knowledge the Player Characters have available suggests, he may wish to keep the Player Characters, and the players themselves, in the dark until he is able to spring his surprise on them.

The Final Decision

Ultimately, the inclusion of a drow Player Character in a campaign will carry both benefits and disadvantages, and it is the responsibility of the Games Master to decide which outweighs the other. A drow Player Character can bring some interesting twists to the campaign, reinvigorating a group of players who have fallen into stagnancy. However, the Games Master must handle the integration of a drow into a party of Player Characters and into the campaign itself with great care.

In most fantasy settings, the drow are infamous as a race that is held to be as cruel and evil as any in the world. Further, the appearance of the drow is so distinctive that, when combined with the widespread reputation of the race, it is exceptionally difficult for a drow not to be recognised for what he is unless he is constantly disguised, whether he is travelling in a great metropolis or a tiny farming hamlet. This does not mean the Games Master should constantly have the drow Player Character pursued across the countryside by mobs of farmers with torches and pitchforks, but it does mean the Games Master should remember the hatred and/or fear with which much of the world views the drow. The reputation of the dark elves is one of the few disadvantages of playing one as a Player Character, and

one which should be kept in mind by the Games Master at all times. If the drow Player Character is merely treated as any other elf or indeed as any other Player Character, the campaign loses some of its realism and the Games Master is cheating himself and his players out of the opportunity for some interesting and unusual scenarios, not to mention making the life of the drow Player Character much easier than it ought to be on the surface world.

There are many options for bringing a drow Player Character into a campaign. Listed below are a few possibilities.

- ☛ The drow Player Character does not appear to be a drow at all, being in fact one of the albino spies of House na'Khotan. This can easily play out in one of two ways. First, the drow Player Character might be there to spy on or merely use the rest of the Player Characters for a specific purpose, eventually betraying them. This is not highly recommended, as such actions by a Player Character can easily lead to a sense of betrayal and hurt feelings not just among the other Player Characters, but among the players as well. The second option is both more heroic and more likely to generate some long-running and interesting plotlines. In this scenario, the albino na'Khotan has decided to turn his back on the drow and embrace life as a surface elf, as much as he is able. In addition to the roleplaying possibilities as the na'Khotan attempts to adjust to his new life, this scenario lets the Games Master bring a whole new enemy into the campaign, the drow House na'Khotan, which will stop at nothing to reclaim its treasonous spy.
- ☛ The good drow is a now-famous archetype, a dark elf that either never fell into evil or has undergone some climactic event that turned his heart to good. Hated in the surface world for his race, and hunted by the drow for his treachery, the good drow needs the protection and company of a group of heroes who can see past his race to his noble heart. Though this scenario has certainly been used before, it remains a powerful storyline for the Games Master to incorporate into his campaign.
- ☛ Sometimes common cause can make strange bedfellows. Perhaps the Player Characters and a drow are both pursuing the same goal, and decide to join forces to increase their chance for success. After the goal has been accomplished, the drow may choose to remain with the other Player Characters, or he may return to the Underdeep. In this scenario, the drow begins almost as a glorified Non-Player Character, joining the Player Characters with the stated intention of not remaining once the mutual goal is accomplished. This is one of the best scenarios to test out the inclusion of a drow Player Character in the campaign. The presumably temporary nature of the association between the drow and the other Player Characters will not only help the players




be more honest in portraying their Player Characters' reactions to a drow, but if the Games Master decides having a drow as a permanent Player Character is not right for his campaign, the drow is easily removed once the mutual goal is accomplished.

- ☛ For higher-level campaigns, the Games Master might consider introducing a drow Player Character as the victim of a curse. Perhaps he recently fell victim to a *helm of opposite alignment* or similar item, and, with his new and wildly-shifted worldview, has fled to the surface to escape what he now perceives as the evil ways of his race. However, as a prominent member of a drow Noble House, he is considered too valuable by his kin to simply abandon him. Intent on retrieving him and restoring his mind, his family sends hunting parties out searching for him.
- ☛ Sometimes evil simply flocks together. A party of evilly-aligned Player Characters would be more likely than good characters to accept a drow Player Character into their midst.

- ☛ A Games Master and his players might be willing to try a whole new twist on adventuring. Rather than the standard group of adventurers, they might create a group composed entirely of drow and based out of the Underdeep. In this 'reverse dungeon' scenario, the Player Characters would venture into the alien and hostile surface world for adventuring, then fall back into the Underdeep to the drow city in which they are based to rest, recuperate and reequip.

Evil and the Player Character

Though this is often the easiest way to introduce drow Player Characters, a campaign of evil Player Characters is something that should be approached with caution by players and Games Masters alike. There is a certain appeal in the idea of shrugging off social conventions in a roleplaying game, to embrace selfishness, greed and other motivations shunned in politically correct culture.



Having an evil Player Character is more complicated than merely writing 'evil' in the alignment portion of the character sheet, however, and this begs the question of what exactly qualifies as evil in a roleplaying game. Most people would agree that ransacking tombs is highly questionable, and that invading a creature's home to kill it and steal its wealth is evil, but these activities are central to the lives of almost all Player Characters. The defining point, which determines whether these actions are good or evil, is usually assumed to be the race and alignment of the creature whose home the Player Characters invade and whose treasure they steal. There are a number of arguments to be made against this, but it is the artificial morality upon which the alignment system is based, and it is probably best to leave it alone.

There are two major pitfalls in playing a group of evil Player Characters which the Games Master would be wise to address before the campaign gets started.

The first of these pitfalls is how the evil Player Characters will behave within the confines of the party. Some players may see an evil alignment as giving them free rein to cheat, betray, even kill the other Player Characters. In the social setting of the roleplaying game, this can easily lead to hurt feelings, grudges, even players abandoning the game. Nor is it an accurate portrayal of life within any evil organisation. Certainly there is scheming and backstabbing in any evil group or society, but evil people would not form organisations if there were no benefit in doing so, such as mutual protection or pooling of resources. The players should be encouraged to approach the mechanics of inner-party politics from this perspective.

The second of these pitfalls is just how far to take evil. Games Masters should be careful to establish some mutually accepted rules and guidelines before beginning play in a campaign of evil Player Characters as to just what the acceptable boundaries will be in the game. Roleplayers tend to be unconcerned by Player Characters engaging in robbery, extortion, even assassination. However, there are a number of other, traditionally evil activities in which most Player Characters do not engage, and rarely enter a roleplaying campaign in any significant detail. These include actions such as torture, rape and mutilation. There is a good reason these actions are rarely detailed in a roleplaying campaign, as they tend to make people nervous, uncomfortable or even repulsed. When this happens, the campaign suffers greatly, and players may well leave the game out of disgust. If a Games Master and his players can work out an acceptable range of activities before play begins, he can prevent this from happening. There is more than enough evil to be had in actions that will not be uncomfortable to the players.

Throw Them a Curve

One of the primary purposes of *The Tome of Drow Lore* is to provide Games Masters with additional options and choices in how to present the drow in a roleplaying campaign, as well as what role the drow themselves will play in that campaign. After all, the drow are a numerous people scattered throughout the regions of the Underdeep. Combined with the highly individualistic traits found in many drow, it only makes sense the dark elves would have created a wide range of differing societies.

Many of these societies and cultures are presented in this book, a number of which deviate dramatically from the stereotypical vision of the drow most players and most Player Characters are familiar with. Using only the information presented in *The Tome of Drow Lore*, Games Masters should have no trouble confronting the Player Characters with all manner of exciting (though potentially painful) surprises. There is no need, however, to colour within the lines. A Games Master might prefer to create additional drow cultures and sub-races or modify those presented herein, either to better suit his campaign or merely make sure the Player Characters never stop guessing. Here are a few examples of how to modify the drow even further, be it a cultural or a physical modification.

- ☛ The cult of the Dark Mother, ever chafing at the thought of drow worshipping another deity, finally struck out at the other faiths, igniting a religious war throughout the lands of the drow. Games Masters may choose to have the Player Characters become involved with the drow while this war rages on, whether aligning themselves with one faction or acting as agents of an outside enemy of the dark elves, rushing to the attack now that the drow are at each others' throats. Alternatively, he may prefer to involve the Player Characters only after the war has ended, whether it be when the cult of the Dark Mother is triumphant, or when the cult has been all but destroyed by the wrath of the other gods and is reduced to a tiny faith clinging to the fringes of drow society.
- ☛ An unlikely alliance of the dark elves' enemies within the Underdeep (the shangu, the aboleth and others) has finally overthrown the drow. Their cities crushed and people scattered, the drow live as ragged bands of nomads wandering the Underdeep or hiring themselves out to other races as skilled mercenaries. There are rumours of a single remaining drow city hidden somewhere in the Underdeep, the sole hope for the race of the drow.
- ☛ Despite the rumours and stories known to everyone on the surface of the earth, the drow are not evil but are simply misunderstood, the victim of ancient prejudices. Though certainly tempted to, they never succumbed to evil as they struggled for survival in the deep places

of the world. This will require some substantial adjustment of the history and cultures of the drow as presented in *The Tome of Drow Lore*.

- ☛ After untold millennia of mutual hatred, the second war of the elves has at last begun. The Games Master may choose to involve the Player Characters directly in the events of the war, or he may simply prefer to keep the war as a backdrop against which the action of the campaign takes place. Either way, it will be a demanding job for the Games Master but will also be intensely rewarding both for himself and for his players. The game world will certainly be changed dramatically by these events, as two ancient and powerful enemies finally fling themselves at one another, their rage and might shaking the world to its foundations, even threatening to destroy it utterly. Whichever race is the final victor, a campaign set during such a tumultuous time is certain to be remembered by the players long after the last die has been rolled.
- ☛ The pressures of the Underdeep have forced some of the drow to develop in ways not covered in *The Tome of Drow Lore*. Games Masters should feel free to create a new Lost Tribe of the drow, or even to alter one of the existing sub-races. Perhaps the fiendish taint of Azzanoth's bloodline has spread through the entire race of Kanahraun and has strengthened over the years, creating an entire race of winged drow that lair in hollow stalactites and jagged cracks.
- ☛ The drow are actually a race of elves which is not native to this plane. They were long ago forced into this world from the infernal plane where their race was created, for reasons long since forgotten. Games Masters using this idea for the drow might consider granting them some fiendish traits in addition to their standard racial characteristics.

The Drow and the Core Classes

Some of the base character classes are more prominent than others among the drow, and some are absent altogether. Listed below are the base character classes and how they fit into drow society.

Barbarian

Aside from the hordes of the lower class of the Kanahraun, there are few drow who take up the life of the barbarian. Drow culture, despite its many arguable faults, is very civilised. Further, the drow tend to gather in large cities for mutual protection, something which makes the emergence of barbarians as a common character class all but impossible. Among some of the Houses that make the exploration of the Underdeep their business,

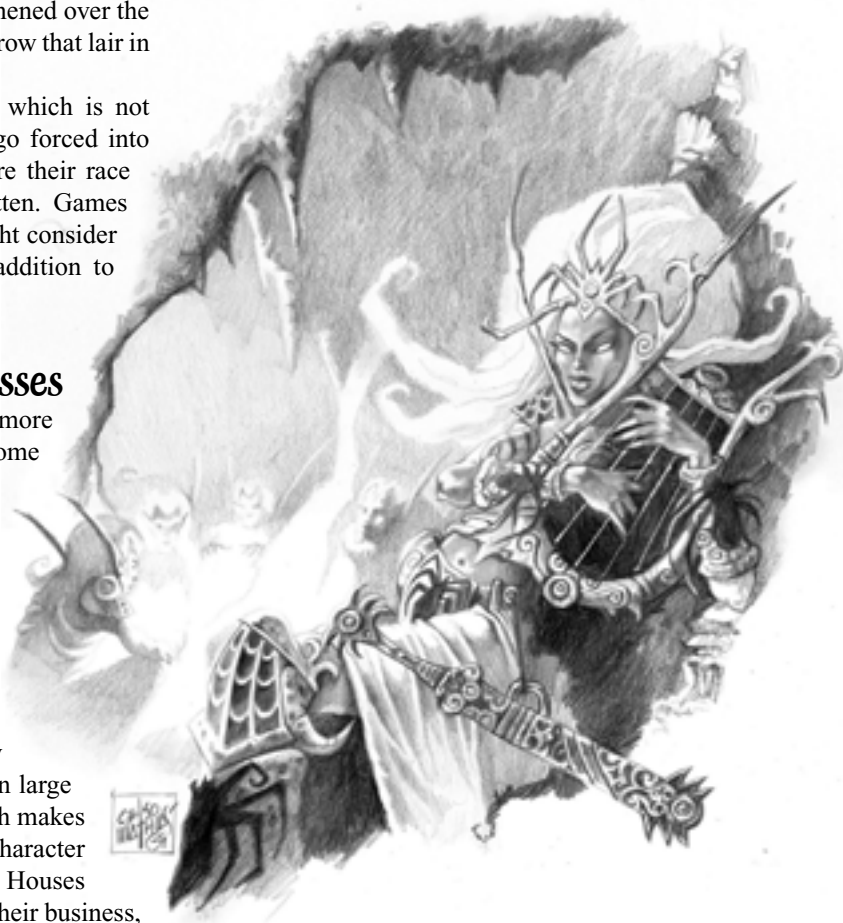
such as House Devoren, there are a few barbarians, but most choose the path of the ranger instead.


Bard

Bards are exceptionally rare among the drow. The primary gifts of the bard, of music, song and oratory, are not popular amusements to the drow, who prefer to read their stories and histories in a book, and consider most music a waste of time, a pleasantry to be sure, but not something to which one should devote his life. This is not the case among some of the drow subraces, particularly the Pol'Tah, who treasure music, dance and the oral history of their people. To the deep drow, bards are held in high esteem as those responsible for preserving the culture and history of the sub-race.

Cleric

Religion is an extremely important part of drow life, and the position of priest at one of the temples is a highly-regarded profession among the dark elves. Even the acolytes of the temples have a place of honour in drow society. This is, obviously, more noticeable in those drow cultures where the temples enjoy a large measure of





control over the population, but even in the most secular of societies, the cleric is respected.

Most clerics in drow culture have a fine line they must walk, however. As priests of one of the drow gods, their primary motivation and allegiance is expected to be to that god and his temple. However, most clerics are also recruited from the upper ranks of society, from positions within the Houses, which can end up dividing their loyalty between the religious and the secular.

Druid

The drow see the Underdeep and indeed nature itself as something to be mastered, not something they should live in harmony with or even really try to understand. The resources of the earth are there to be used and exploited as they see fit, not to be respected and honoured. This position has ended in disaster for some drow, who have used up all the resources on which they had come to depend or who have been buried in collapsing stone from recklessly digging tunnels and chambers in and around their cities, but the remaining dark elves pay little attention to these mishaps. This outlook leaves little room for druids in drow society, though some may be found in the few small and outlying settlements of the drow, and amongst the sinister Dark Fey.

Fighter

The fighter class is among the most popular with the drow, and even many drow who have chosen to follow a different profession often have at least one or two levels of fighter, skills learned to survive the harsh realities of drow society and life in the Underdeep. Children from all levels of society save the very lowest have the opportunity to learn the ways of the sword and it is the drow fighters who have, more than any other dark elves, carved out the cities and empires of the dark elves.

Drow fighters are acknowledged throughout the Underdeep as warriors of deadly efficiency and devastating skill. The drow usually fight in light or medium armour, using a style of combat that focuses more on the innate speed and agility of the race than on mere physical strength. The soldiers of House Draz’Kuri in particular are renowned for their quick and deadly prowess on the battlefield, honed over centuries of gruelling practice. So too are the warriors of the Lorgreln regarded, though the troops of the iron drow emphasise group tactics and crushing attacks over subtlety and speed.

Monk

The class of the monk is all but unknown in the culture of the drow. The path this class must tread requires a more

rigid discipline and adherence to order than most drow are capable of undertaking. Indeed, it is something which would be intolerable to the chaotic hearts of the majority of dark elves. Even the Lorgreln, who do have the mental discipline required to pursue this path, have no monks among their number as they feel fighting without weapons would be an insult to their ancestors.

There is a small group of drow from House Draz’Kuri who practice the ways of the monk. Known as the Nos na’Khelim, or the Way of Stone, this group consists of a few score of drow who have divorced themselves from the chaos and suspicion of everyday life in their race and have dedicated themselves to the perfection of mind and body. They remain loyal to their House, however, and will respond with deadly force should the home of House Draz’Kuri ever be threatened by an enemy.

Paladin

The paladin is the rarest of all character classes among the drow. It is exceptionally difficult for any non-evil drow to survive in the society of the dark elves. Even a drow of neutral alignment is unlikely to endure the rigours of the society and a drow of good heart will almost certainly be discovered and revealed for the ‘perverted weakling’ he is. The qualities which mark an individual of good alignment are considered faults and failings by the drow as a whole. Some few of those drow who, against all odds, have embraced the cause of good find their way to the Darkling Sky (see page 85), but most either end their miserable lives as a sacrifice in a drow temple or are tormented and tortured for their beliefs until all the good has been wrung from their spirit.

For those drow who do win free of the repression and persecution of dark elf society, there are yet more obstacles in the way of assuming the mantle of paladinhood, the most prominent being finding a god willing to accept a drow as a servant, no matter how pure his heart. Although there are rumours which surface from time to time of a drow paladin struggling against the forces of evil, even against his own people, the actual number of drow paladins could almost certainly be counted on the fingers of one hand, and it may well be that none of the dark elves have ever truly followed the path to become a paladin.

Ranger

Rangers are a fairly common class among some of the drow Houses and their servants. Houses with widespread interests in trading and exploration can count many drow rangers among their number. The ranger’s abilities with fighting, stealth and knowledge of the dangerous environment of the Underdeep make them nearly indispensable as scouts and

caravan guards, and rangers are frequently employed as skirmishers in drow armies.

Rangers are less common among the drow sub-races. The Pol'Tah do not travel far from their home in the bottom of the Underdeep, the Kanahraun are too brutal and feral even for the ranger class and the Lorgreln despise such a 'mixed-fighter' avocation as a ranger. The Sulzthul, on the other hand, have many rangers, used by the aquatic drow to patrol their borders and seek out new trade routes which are inaccessible to other races.

Rogue

As long as drow society is as it is, there will be a place for rogues among the dark elves. Eminently useful as spies, thieves, saboteurs and assassins, either aligned with a specific power or selling their services to the highest bidder, rogues find their skills and talents in constant demand in drow culture. Guilds and societies of rogues are scattered throughout the lands of the dark elves and all of them are kept busy by the needs of the drow. However, the actual social standing of any given society of rogues may vary dramatically. While the Seekers of na'Koth are well-respected by those who know anything about them, many of the followers of Mu'Ushket are spurned, though much of this has to do with those who believe the worshippers of Mu'Ushket are following a false god.

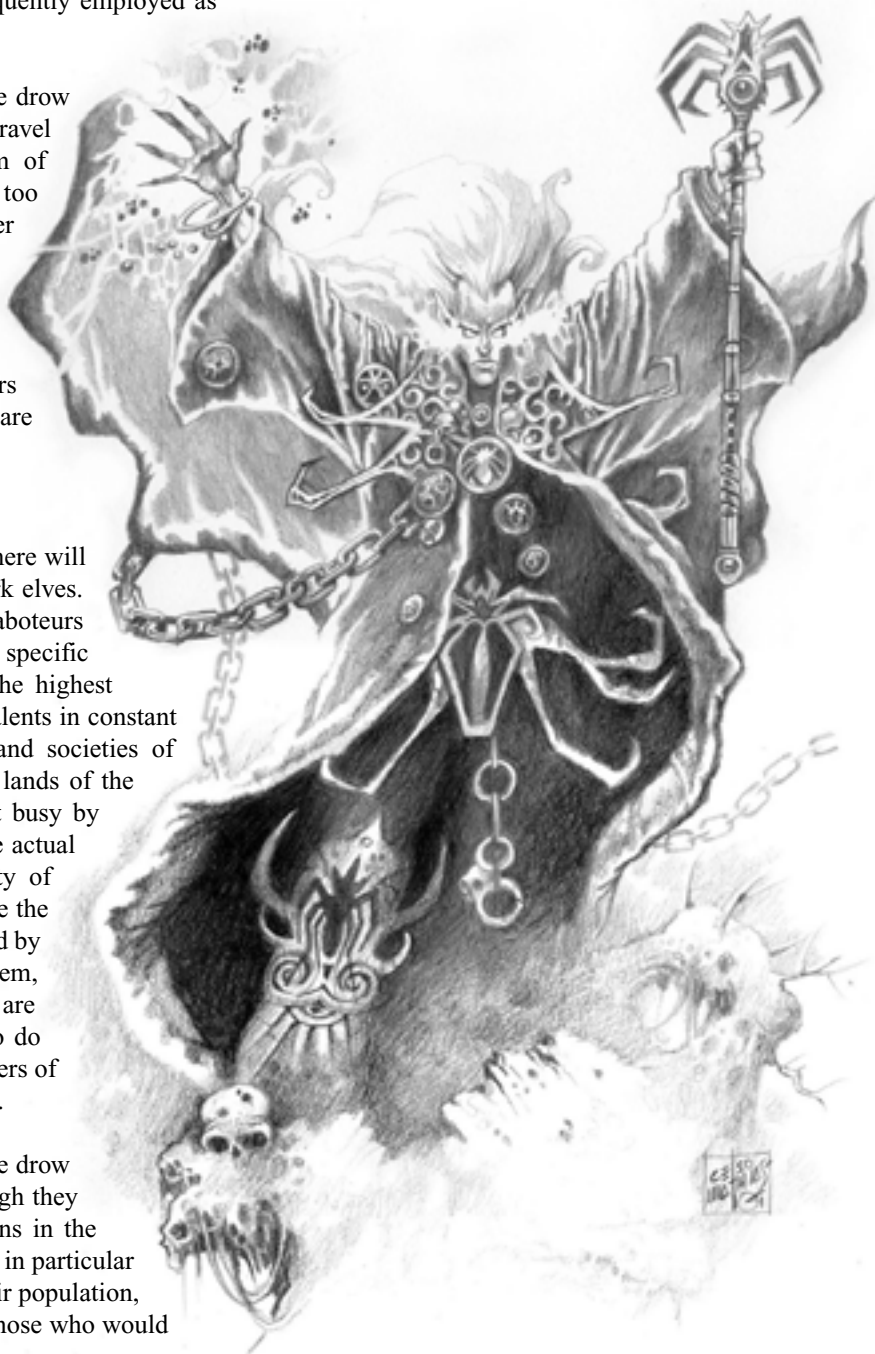
Rogues have a place as well in all the drow sub-races, even the Kanahraun, though they are vastly outnumbered by barbarians in the ranks of the feral drow. The Pol'Tah in particular have a large number of rogues in their population, skilled at striking from the mists at those who would invade the deep drow homeland.

Sorcerer

For many years there was resistance to the sorcerer in some parts of drow society, as the priests of Ydrillia were unwilling to grant the sorcerer the same respect given to wizards. However, the chaotic nature of the drow was a perfect match for the unfettered mindset of a sorcerer, and their numbers within drow society grew until the priests of She of the Veil welcomed them as equals in the church. Sorcerers are still outnumbered by wizards among the drow, given the vast

research and academic resources available in larger drow cities, but their ranks continue to grow.

Sorcerers are more common than wizards among the Pol'Tah, and are the only spellcasters (aside from rangers) among the Sulzthul. The Lorgreln have no sorcerers, as the iron drow's magical handicaps and strict, orderly mindset make them impossible. There are a number of sorcerers in the ruling class of the Kanahraun, but there has never been one born to the lower class.



Wizard

The wizard is the very embodiment of the drow facility with magic and they are both respected and feared throughout drow society. Drow wizards often come from the upper ranks of society and even those who do not can climb there with ease. Wizards are commonly the leaders of Noble Houses and hold high posts in all the drow cults, not simply in the hierarchy of the church of Ydrillia. Any drow city of any size is likely to have at least one school or academy for wizards. Organisations of wizards rarely last long among the drow, however. There have been many attempts at the creation of a wizards' guild or society over the years but they almost always collapse in upon themselves. Educated and disciplined as they are, drow wizards cannot overcome their own culture, and the combination of chaotic nature of the dark elves, drow ambition and suspicion with the powers of a wizard can lead to devastating results. The other powers of the drow, particularly the Noble Houses and the temples, often do their best to aid in the dissolution of these wizard societies as they see in them an inherent threat to their own grip on power. It is partially for this reason that the Cabal (see page 81), one of the very few societies of wizards which has survived any length of time, is considered an enemy by virtually all drow cultures.

The class of wizard is somewhat less common in the drow sub-races than it is among the drow themselves. Only the Pol'Tah and the ruling class of Kanahraun practice wizardry to any great degree. The Sulzthul have no wizards, as they have never really learned the art of creating pages which can survive immersion in water. There are some wizards among the Lorgreln, but only those iron drow with an unyielding will and commitment to the study are capable of mastering magic.

Prestige Classes and the Drow

This section takes a closer look at some of the prestige classes available to the drow, especially those offered to the faithful of each of the drow gods. Some of the other prestige classes could also be appropriate for non-drow characters, and Games Masters might consider making them available to other races in the campaign world.

Additionally, there are two prestige classes listed below which are not available to the drow at all, but are nonetheless closely tied to the dark elves. The Elven Avenger, for example, is a prestige class available to surface elves who have devoted their lives to eradicating the evil cousins of the elves who lair beneath the surface of the world.

Explorer

Most explorers are members of House Devoren. Indeed, there is an entire segment of their nomadic society devoted entirely to exploring and mapping the Underdeep. However, very few Houses of the drow are insular and there is no reason for them to trust to House Devoren for all their information regarding the Underdeep all around. Thus, other Houses often boast groups of explorers and, while not as numerous as those of House Devoren, it is certainly possible to meet explorers from virtually any House of the drow.

The explorer does not fit in well in drow society. This is usually not because he takes issue with the way his fellow drow live, but rather because he prefers the visible and rather more honest danger of the Underdeep to the hidden danger of life in a drow city. He is more at home in the trackless, eternally dark reaches of the Underdeep than he is in the cramped alleys or echoing caverns his people inhabit.

Explorers wander the Underdeep, usually in small bands as a single individual walking those tunnels and caves is almost by definition a fool. They are most often in the employ of one of the Noble Houses, churches or other factions of the drow, scouting trade routes, invasion routes, potential areas to colonise or merely performing reconnaissance on one of their employer's enemies.

The explorer is more in tune with the Underdeep than are most drow and of all elements of dark elf society, they are the only ones who accept the Dark Fey. This prestige class is open to all classes, provided the character meets the requirements, but is most often chosen by rangers.

Hit Die: d8

Requirements

Base Attack Bonus: +6

Feats: Self-Sufficient, Track

Race: Drow or drow sub-race

Skills: Knowledge (dungeoneering) 6 ranks, Knowledge (geography) 6 ranks, Survival 8 ranks

Special: Must have spent at least a month away from civilisation, journeying the wilds of the Underdeep.

Class Skills: The class skills of an Explorer (and the key ability for each skill) are: Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Knowledge (dungeoneering) (Int), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Profession (Wis), Search (Int), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str) and Use Rope (Dex).

The Explorer

Class Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+2	+0	+0	Endurance
2	+2	+3	+0	+0	Stonecunning
3	+3	+3	+1	+1	Armoured Grace
4	+4	+4	+1	+1	Evasion
5	+5	+4	+1	+1	Certain Stride
6	+6	+5	+2	+2	Elusive
7	+7	+5	+2	+2	Unerring Direction
8	+8	+6	+2	+2	Improved Evasion
9	+9	+6	+3	+3	
10	+10	+7	+3	+3	Hide in Plain Sight

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the explorer prestige class.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: An explorer is proficient with all simple weapons and all types of armour.

Endurance (Ex): The explorer gains Endurance as a bonus feat. If he already has Endurance, he gains Diehard as a bonus feat instead.

Stonecunning (Ex): An explorer is familiar with the Underdeep, with what belongs and what does not. At 2nd level, the explorer gains the stonecunning ability, granting a +2 bonus on Search checks to notice unusual stonework, enabling him to make a Search skill check when he comes within 10 feet of unusual stonework as though he were actively searching and allowing him to use his Search skill to find stonework traps just as a rogue does. The explorer is also able to intuit his depth below ground, sensing it naturally in the same way as a human can sense which way is up.

Armoured Grace (Ex): An explorer is seldom unarmoured, as venturing through the Underdeep is a dangerous vocation indeed. By 3rd level, the Explorer has become so accustomed to the constant use of his armour that he is no longer impeded by it the way other characters are. The maximum Dexterity bonus of any armour he wears is increased by one, and armour check penalties are decreased by two to a minimum of zero. He also no longer suffers any penalties for sleeping in armour.



Evasion (Ex): At 4th level, an explorer has learnt evasive techniques, avoiding even magical and unusual attacks with his tremendous agility. If he makes a successful Reflex saving throw against an attack that normally deals half damage on a successful save (such as a *fireball* spell), he instead takes no damage from that attack, though a failed save still results in full damage. This ability can only be used when the explorer is wearing light or no armour.

Certain Stride (Ex): The Underdeep is not a place of level floors and wide passages, but rather is one of shifting slopes, crumbled rubble and narrow crevices. The explorer is able to move easily through terrain that would be difficult for others. So long as the terrain is at all passable, the explorer retains his normal movement speed while passing through it.

Elusive (Ex): Catching an explorer who does not wish to be caught is all but impossible. At 6th level, the explorer gains the elusive ability, granting him two major benefits. The first is the ability to *pass without trace* while travelling in the Underdeep. This extraordinary ability works in the same manner as the spell and is always active, but only works within the environment of the Underdeep. This ability also allows the explorer to lose pursuers who are hot on his heels through his superior knowledge of the ways of the Underdeep. By taking a penalty of -5 on his skill checks, the explorer may use both his Hide and Move Silently skills while he is moving at a run through Underdeep terrain.

Unerring Direction (Ex): The Underdeep is a maze of shafts, tunnels and caverns, but it is the place the explorer calls home. By the time the explorer reaches 7th level, he never becomes lost; he is always certain of his location within the Underdeep and always knows which paths to choose to find his way back to where he started. This ability also makes the explorer immune to the effects of *maze* spells.

Improved Evasion (Ex): At 8th level, an explorer has become a master of avoiding even magical and unusual attacks with his tremendous agility. If he makes a successful Reflex saving throw against an attack that normally deals half damage on a successful save (such as a *fireball* spell), he instead takes no damage from that attack, and a failed save results in only half damage. This ability can only be used when the explorer is wearing light or no armour. Obviously, an explorer who has somehow been rendered helpless cannot use improved evasion. If the explorer already

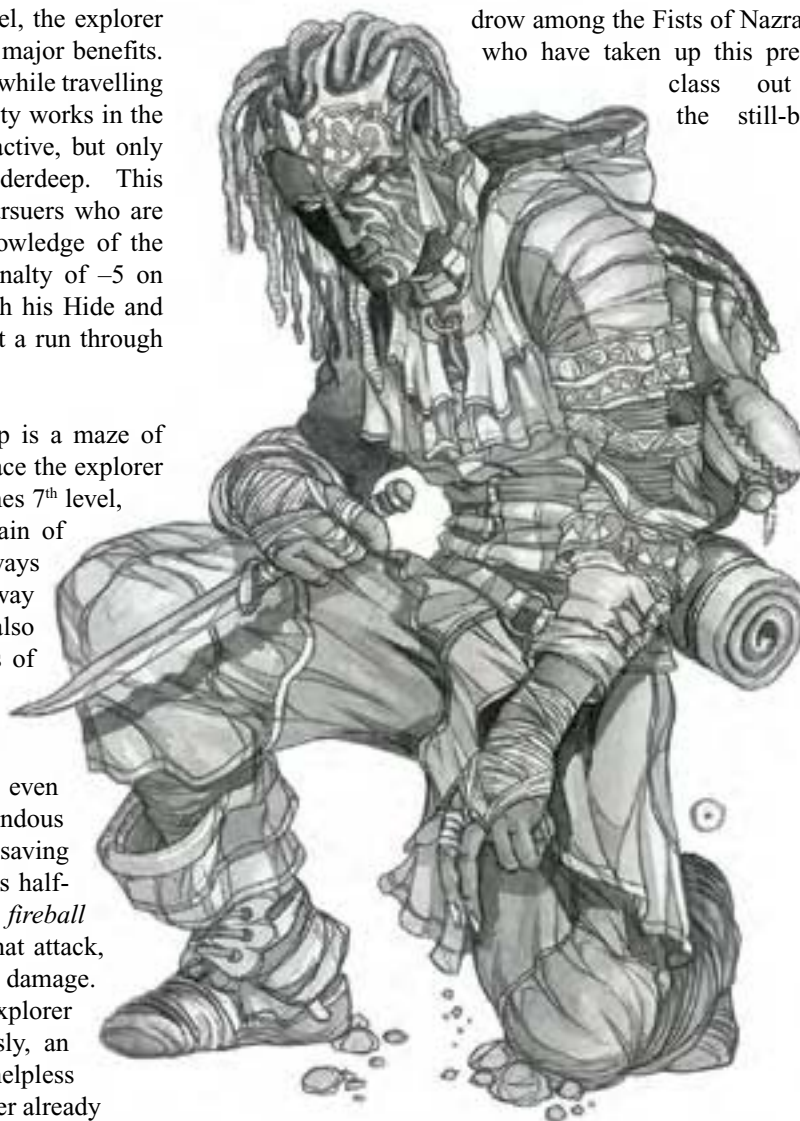
has improved evasion as a class ability, he instead gains a bonus feat.

Hide in Plain Sight (Ex): While in the Underdeep, an Explorer of 10th level may use his Hide skill even while he is being observed.

Fist of Nazrako

The Fist of Nazrako is not devoted to justice, but to punishment and vengeance.

This class is populated by drow who feel they have been the victims of some terrible wrong. For some, this may mean a lust for revenge against the Noble House that destroyed everything they held dear. For others, it may mean vengeance upon some past enemy for wounds and humiliation inflicted. There are many drow among the Fists of Nazrako who have taken up this prestige class out of the still-bright



The Fist of Nazrakoth

Class Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1	+1	+2	+0	+2	Hated Foe	+1 level of divine spellcasting class
2	+2	+3	+0	+3	Foebane	
3	+3	+3	+1	+3	Find Foe I	+1 level of divine spellcasting class
4	+4	+4	+1	+4	Hated Foe Damage Reduction 5/ -	+1 level of divine spellcasting class
5	+5	+4	+1	+4		
6	+6	+5	+2	+5	Find Foe II	+1 level of divine spellcasting class
7	+7	+5	+2	+5	Vengeful Strike	+1 level of divine spellcasting class
8	+8	+6	+2	+6	Hated Foe Damage Reduction 10/ -	
9	+9	+6	+3	+6	Find Foe III	+1 level of divine spellcasting class
10	+10	+7	+3	+7	Final Vengeance	+1 level of divine spellcasting class

feeling of rage against the surface elves for the Great Betrayal.

The Fist of Nazrakoth does not forgive and he does not forget. The Eternal Judge has granted him powers to avenge the wrong that was done him, and he will never lose sight of the path that will lead him to his vengeance, though he may... *deviate* from it from time to time.

Hit Die: d8

Requirements

Feats: Great Fortitude, Iron Will

Race: Drow or drow sub-race

Skills: Bluff 4 ranks, Concentration 4 ranks, Intimidate 6 ranks, Knowledge (religion) 5 ranks, Sense Motive 4 ranks

Other: Must be able to cast at least 2nd level divine spells

Class Skills: The class skills of a Fist of Nazrakoth (and the key ability for each skill) are: Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis) and Spellcraft (Int).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Fist of Nazrakoth prestige class.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: A Fist of Nazrakoth is proficient with all simple weapons.

Spells per Day: When a new Fist of Nazrakoth level is gained, the character gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in whatever divine spellcasting he belonged to before he added the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (such as improved abilities to turn or rebuke undead, additional favoured enemies and so on).

Hated Foe (Ex): Those who embrace the path of the Fist of Nazrakoth do so for a reason, for vengeance against those who have wronged them. This is the hated foe of the Fist. The Fist may choose a race, organisation or even a single individual as his Hated Foe. The Fist studies the habits and customs of his Hated Foe in detail and as a result enjoys significant advantages over that foe. In addition to a +2 bonus to all attack rolls and damage rolls made against the Hated Foe, the Fist gains a +2 bonus to all Bluff, Intimidate and Sense Motive skill checks made against the Hated Foe.

It may come to pass that a Fist of Nazrakoth successfully enacts his vengeance and slays the object of his hatred, hunting down and killing the individual who wronged him

or shattering an organisation or House that brought about his woes. Slaughtering an entire hated race is a rather more unlikely prospect for a character to achieve, but is also possible. Rather than losing his granted powers, such an individual is in fact more greatly favoured by Nazrakoth than before as he has proven his strength to the Eternal Judge. After a month, the Fist may select a new Hated Foe as the target of his hatred. Most drow have a rather long list of enemies and rivals so a Fist will rarely run out of motivation to continue his campaign of vengeance against the world, and Nazrakoth glories in every kill enacted in his name.

Foebane (Su): Once per day, for a number of rounds equal to his Wisdom modifier, the Fist of Nazrakoth may imbue his melee weapon with his hatred. This allows the Fist's weapon to strike true against his Hated Foe, automatically confirming any critical threats that the fist makes against the Foe during those rounds.

Find Foe I (Su): At 3rd level, the Fist of Nazrakoth gains a +4 enhancement bonus to any Listen, Search, Spot and Survival checks made to detect his Hated Foe or any trace of their passing.

Hated Foe Damage Reduction 5/- (Ex): At 4th level, the Fist of Nazrakoth can ignore some or all of the damage from any attack made against him by his Hated Foe, shrugging off injuries due to sheer vengeful rage and force of will. This damage reduction may reduce any incoming damage to zero, but not below zero. This ability does not stack with any other damage reduction the Fist of Nazrakoth might possess.

Find Foe II (Su): As Find Foe I, except the bonus increases to +8.

Vengeful Strike (Ex): At 7th level, the Fist's bonus to attack and damage rolls against his Hated Foe now increases to +4.

Hated Foe Damage Reduction 10/- (Ex): At 8th level, the Fist of Nazrakoth's damage reduction against his Hated Foe increases to 10/-.

Find Foe III (Su): As Find Foe II, except the bonus increases to +12.

Final Vengeance (Ex): At 10th level, the Fist of Nazrakoth gains the ability to make a killing strike against his Hated Foe once per day per class level, as part of a normal attack. The Fist

must declare the use of this ability before making the attack roll and, on a successful hit, the Hated Foe must make an immediate Fortitude saving throw as if struck for massive damage. The save DC is 15 and failure results in immediate death.

Lord (Lady) of the Veil

The Lord of the Veil is devoted to magic above all else. For most of them, even worship of Ydrillia comes second to their own pursuit of power, though none would ever acknowledge this. She of the Veil is aware of this but does not care, as Ydrillia sees herself as the source of all drow magic, and considers any drow who casts a spell or even uses a spell-like ability as giving homage to her.



The Lord (Lady) of the Veil

Class Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Additional Innate Spell I	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	Channel Innate Magic	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
3	+1	+1	+1	+3		+1 level of existing spellcasting class
4	+2	+1	+1	+4	Additional Innate Spell II	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
5	+2	+1	+1	+4	Mage Hand	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
6	+3	+2	+2	+5		+1 level of existing spellcasting class
7	+3	+2	+2	+5	Bonus Feat	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
8	+4	+2	+2	+6	Wellspring	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
9	+4	+3	+3	+6		+1 level of existing spellcasting class
10	+5	+3	+3	+7	Eldritch Understanding	+1 level of existing spellcasting class

The Lord of the Veil works to further his own magical power, to plumb new depths of eldritch might and to reveal the greatest mysteries of magic. Though Ydrillia allows and encourages such ambition in her servants, despite the fact they believe they serve themselves, should any Lord of the Veil cease in carrying on at least the trappings of devotion to her then she will certainly strip him of his powers and leave him helpless amongst the drow.

The prestige class of Lord of the Veil is open to any spellcasting class, but those characters who are multiclassed cleric/sorcerers or cleric/wizards will benefit most from the gifts of Ydrillia.

Hit Die: d4

Requirements

Feats: At least one Item Creation feat, at least one Metamagic feat, Skill Focus (Knowledge (arcana))

Race: Drow

Skills: Concentration 4 ranks, Knowledge (arcana) 8 ranks, Knowledge (religion) 8 ranks, Spellcraft 8 ranks

Other: Must be able to cast at least 4th level arcane or divine spells

Class Skills: The class skills of a Lord (Lady) of the Veil (and the key ability for each skill) are: Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (all, though taken individually) (Int), Profession (Wis), Spellcraft (Int).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Lord (Lady) of the Veil prestige class.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: A Lord (Lady) of the Veil gains no proficiencies with weapons or armour.

Spells per Day: When a new Lord (Lady) of the Veil level is gained, the character gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in whatever arcane or divine spellcasting he belonged to before he added the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (such as improved abilities to turn or rebuke undead, bonus metamagic feats and so on). If a character had more than one spellcasting class before he became a Lord (Lady) of the Veil, he must decide to which class he adds each level of Lord (Lady) of the Veil for the purpose of determining spells per day.

Additional Innate Spell I (Sp): The new Lord of the Veil may, at 1st level, choose a 1st level spell available to him as a new innate ability. From this point forward, the spell is considered an innate spell-like ability, useable once per day, just as the other spell-like abilities of the drow.

Channel Innate Magic (Su): At 3rd level, the Lord of the Veil discovers how to blend his innate spells and the power that he wields together to further augment his magic. Whenever the Lord of the Veil casts a spell, he may use up the daily use of one of his innate spell-like abilities, increasing the caster level of the spell cast by the level of the spell-like ability discharged.

Additional Innate Spell II (Sp): As Additional Innate Spell I, except the Lord of the Veil may choose any 2nd level spell to which he has access as a new innate spell-like ability.

Mage Hand (Sp): At 5th level, the Lord of the Veil gains the ability to cast *mage hand* at will as a spell-like ability. He may not use *mage hand* for his channel innate magic ability.

Bonus Feat (Ex): At 7th level, the Lord of the Veil may choose a bonus feat taken from the following list: any item creation feat, any metamagic feat, Greater Spell Focus, Greater Spell Penetration, Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Spell Focus, Spell Mastery, Spell Penetration. He must meet the feat's prerequisites in order to take it as a bonus feat.

Wellspring (Su): At 9th level, the Lord of the Veil has touched the wellspring of magic, becoming favoured of Ydrillia. He begins to understand the most fundamental aspects of magic, and how to use them to his own advantage. A Lord of the Veil with multiple spellcasting classes may use this fundamental understanding of magic so that his caster level is equal to the number of levels he has combined in any spell-casting classes. Thus a Lord of the Veil who was a 9th level wizard and 5th level cleric casts both arcane and divine spells at 14th caster level.

Eldritch Understanding (Ex): The Lord of the Veil's magical understanding deepens further, making all metamagic feats he possesses easier to use. All

metamagic feats in the Lord of the Veil's repertoire now have their level penalties decreased by one. For example, a Lord of the Veil who uses the Spare Companions feat to cast a *fireball* into melee now casts the *fireball* as a 6th level spell, not a 7th level spell. This ability has no effect on those metamagic feats with a level modifier of one level.

Pitiless Slayer

The Pitiless Slayer is the quintessential warrior of the drow. He cares nothing for the rules of combat, or for the niceties of convention. His goal is the destruction of the enemy for his own glory and for that of Thraud the Pitiless Blade.

The Pitiless Slayer focuses on offensive rather than defensive fighting, and generally wears light or medium



The Pitiless Blade

Class Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+2	+0	+0	No Fear
2	+2	+3	+0	+0	Press the Attack
3	+3	+3	+1	+1	Damage Reduction 1/-
4	+4	+4	+1	+1	No Mercy
5	+5	+4	+1	+1	To the Last
6	+6	+5	+2	+2	Bloodlust
7	+7	+5	+2	+2	Damage Reduction 2/-
8	+8	+6	+2	+2	
9	+9	+6	+3	+3	Death's Door
10	+10	+7	+3	+3	Slaughter

armour, wielding light to medium weapons. This is not always the case, as a number of Lorgreln have taken up the path of the Pitiless Slayer and trudge into battle in plate armour, brandishing a greatsword. The life of the Pitiless Slayer is focused on battle, often to the exclusion of all else as the Pitiless Slayer constantly practices and hones his abilities.

Pitiless Slayers are regarded with respect and some amount of nervousness in drow cultures in which Thraud is a powerful presence, as the tales of a Pitiless Slayer's abilities are enough to make most other drow studiously avoid doing anything that might provoke the Pitiless Slayer's ire. On the battlefield, the Pitiless Slayer is viewed with awe by his allies and terror by his enemies. The arrival of a large group of Pitiless Slayers has been enough to cause an enemy to retreat or surrender, even before the drow strike a single blow.

Pitiless Slayers may come from any level of society and from any culture of the drow that reveres Thraud. Fighters and fighter/clerics most often become Pitiless Slayers, but it is equally possible for rangers, barbarians and clerics to follow the bloody road of this prestige class.

Hit Die: d10

Requirements

Base Attack Bonus: +5

Feats: Cleave, Combat Expertise, Iron Will, Power Attack

Skills: Knowledge (Religion) 6 ranks

Race: Drow or drow sub-race

Class Skills: The class skills of a Pitiless Slayer (and the key ability for each skill) are: Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Jump

(Str), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), and Swim (Str).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Pitiless Slayer prestige class.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: A Pitiless Slayer is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, all types of armour and shields.

No Fear (Ex): A Pitiless Slayer simply knows no fear, and is immune to all fear effects.

Press the Attack (Ex): The Pitiless Slayer gains Press the Attack as a bonus feat, even if he does not fulfil the prerequisites. If he already has the Press the Attack feat, he may choose another feat from the list of fighter bonus feats to take its place.

Damage Reduction 1/- (Ex): The Pitiless Slayer is toughened and hardened from decades, even centuries of combat, allowing him to shrug off part of the damage of incoming attacks. This ability does not stack with any other damage reduction the Pitiless Slayer might possess.

No Mercy (Ex): A Pitiless Slayer may perform a coup de grace as a free action up to once per round. This coup de grace does not provoke an attack of opportunity, as the Pitiless Slayer is quite used to dispatching helpless enemies on the battlefield as he moves through combat.

To the Last (Ex): At 5th level, the Pitiless Slayer becomes an almost unstoppable foe. Even when reduced to negative

hit points, he continues to fight on, ignoring his terrible wounds to strike his opponents again and again. With *To the Last*, a Pitiless Slayer may continue fighting until his hit points fall below -10 plus his level as a Pitiless Slayer (for example, a 5th level Pitiless Slayer could continue fighting until his hit points reach -15). If his hit points drop below this number, the Pitiless Slayer will fall. He can continue fighting at negative hit points until all his foes are dead or have fled. If the Pitiless Slayer is below -10 hit points when the combat ends, he falls dead. If his hit points are between 0 and -9 , he merely collapses, unconscious and doubtless in need of healing.

Bloodlust (Ex): The Pitiless Slayer lives for combat, the chaos and carnage of the battlefield are the things that fire his soul, and the sight of his enemy's blood spilling from a fresh wound only stokes that fire. In any round in which the Pitiless Slayer wounds an enemy, his next attack of that same round against the same enemy is made with a bonus of +2 to the attack and damage rolls, as the ferocity of the Pitiless Slayer's assault is redoubled. These bonuses are cumulative with multiple attacks in the round. For example, if the Pitiless Slayer has four attacks per round and directs them all at the same foe, assuming the first three hit, the Pitiless Slayer will enjoy a bonus of +6 to his fourth attack that round. Multiple attacks must be made against the same target to take advantage of this ability, as long as that target is still standing. If he falls, the Pitiless Slayer may transfer his current bonus to the next target. Feats which grant extra attacks in a round, such as *Cleave* or *Great Cleave*, may serve to increase the Pitiless Slayer's bloodlust bonus as well. If the Pitiless Slayer misses an attack roll, the bonus is lost. In any case, the bonus is reset to zero at the end of the Pitiless Slayer's turn.

Damage Reduction 2/- (Ex): The Pitiless Slayer is toughened and hardened from decades or even centuries of combat, allowing him to shrug off part of the damage of incoming attacks. This ability does not stack with any other damage reduction the Pitiless Slayer might possess.

Death's Door (Ex): The Pitiless Slayer does not fear death, but he clings to life when most mortals would fall into the embrace of their gods. With the *Death's Door* ability, a Pitiless Slayer remains alive even when his hit points reach -10 . A Pitiless Slayer is considered to be dying, but not dead, until his hit points reach -10 plus his level as a Pitiless Slayer (for example, a 9th level Pitiless Slayer is not considered dead until his hit points fall below -19). In conjunction with *To the Last*, this ability serves to keep the Pitiless Slayer alive and slaying on the battlefield longer than any other mortal could hope to stand.

Slaughter (Ex): At 10th level, the Pitiless Slayer's mastery of combat reaches a pinnacle. Once per day per class level, the Pitiless Slayer may automatically confirm a critical threat with no need for a further roll.

Raider of the Bloodied Coin

Skulking through the Underdeep, preying on the caravans and communities of other races, the Raider of the Bloodied Coin is a terror to traders everywhere.

Though the first members of this prestige class were dedicated to *Alsythuth* in his aspect as raider and pillager, this is no longer always the case. Though the drow culture that does not engage in raiding the possessions of other races is rare indeed, the cult of the Bloodied Coin is not present in all of them. Still, most dark elven societies do produce

The Raider of the Bloodied Coin

Class Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+2	+2	+0	Sneak Attack +1d6
2	+1	+3	+3	+0	Shot on the Run, Judge Value I
3	+2	+3	+3	+1	Fast Reflexes
4	+3	+4	+4	+1	Track, Uncanny Dodge
5	+3	+4	+4	+1	First Strike
6	+4	+5	+5	+2	Sneak Attack +2d6
7	+5	+5	+5	+2	Missile Defence
8	+6	+6	+6	+2	Bonus Feat, Judge Value II
9	+6	+6	+6	+3	Ranged Threat
10	+7	+7	+7	+3	Distant Sneak Attack

raiders, drow who are charged with taking what the elves need or desire from the inferior races that infest the Underdeep. Raiders of the Bloodied Coin are predators stalking the deeps, as much showing the superiority of Alsyluth's chosen over weak non-drow by taking their possessions as they are fulfilling their greed for goods and gold. Many Raiders operate as freelancers or mercenaries, selling their services to various factions of power amongst the drow, or merely working as Underdeep bandits concerned only with their own profit. Raiders are commonly employed as scouts or skirmishers in drow armies.

Raiders have not only a keen understanding of combat but an eye for value as well. They are able to discern easily whether a passing caravan is hauling anything of interest or value, seeing telltale evidence even when the cargo is concealed.

The path of the Raider holds great appeal to such classes as barbarians, fighters, rangers and rogues.

Hit Die: d8

Requirements

Base Attack Bonus: +4 or higher

Feats: Run, Weapon Focus (any)

Race: Drow or drow sub-race

Skills: Appraise 6 ranks, Hide 8 ranks, Knowledge (dungeoneering) 6 ranks, Move Silently 6 ranks, Survival 4 ranks

Class Skills: The class skills of a Raider of the Bloodied Coin (and the key ability for each skill) are: Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Knowledge (dungeoneering) (Int), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Profession (Wis), Search (Int), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str) and Use Rope (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Raider of the Bloodied Coin prestige class.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: A Raider of the Bloodied Coin is proficient with all simple weapons and with light armour.



Sneak Attack +1d6 (Ex): This works exactly like a rogue's sneak attack ability. If the Raider of the Bloodied Coin already has sneak attack as a class ability, the damage stacks.

Shot on the Run (Ex): At 2nd level, the Raider of the Bloodied Coin gains the Shot on the Run feat for free. He gains the ability to use this feat even if he does not meet the prerequisites.

Judge Value I (Ex): By observing a target for 10 consecutive rounds, be it a caravan wagon or a person, the Raider of the Bloodied Coin can make an Appraise skill check at a bonus of +4 to determine the value of the items the target is carrying. This is only effective in determining the value of mundane items and the Raider cannot yet judge the value of magical items.

Fast Reflexes (Ex): Acting before your enemy can be the key to surviving and winning any battle. At 3rd level, the Raider of the Bloodied Coin may add his levels as a Raider

(not including levels from any other class) to his Initiative check.

Track (Ex): At 4th level, the Raider of the Bloodied Coin gains the Track feat for free. If he already has the Track feat, he receives Skill Focus (Survival) instead.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): As the Raider reaches 4th level, he gains access to the uncanny dodge ability. He is able to retain his Dexterity bonus to AC even if he is caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker, though he still loses his Dexterity bonus to AC if he is immobilised or helpless. If the Raider already has uncanny dodge, whether from a background as a barbarian or rogue, he gains improved uncanny dodge instead.

First Strike (Ex): The Raider of the Bloodied Coin knows the first moments of combat are often the most decisive. In the first round of a combat, the Raider gains either an additional standard action or move action.

Sneak Attack +2d6 (Ex): At 6th level, the sneak attack ability of the Raider of the Bloodied Coin improves, granting him an additional 2d6 points of damage on a successful sneak attack. If the Raider of the Bloodied Coin already has sneak attack as a class ability, the damage stacks.

Missile Defence (Ex): Though perfectly capable of using melee weapons, most Raiders prefer ranged weapons. Beginning at 7th level, the Raider can fire his ranged weapon in melee without triggering an attack of opportunity from any foes in adjacent squares.

Bonus Feat (Ex): The Raider gains a bonus feat, which must be taken from the following list: Far Shot, Greater Weapon Focus (any ranged), Greater Weapon Specialisation (any ranged), Improved Precise Shot, Manyshot, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Reload, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (any ranged), Weapon Specialisation (any ranged).

Judge Value II (Ex): As Judge Value I, except the Raider may now determine the value of any magical items to within 50,000 gp.

Ranged Threat (Ex): When using a ranged weapon with readied ammunition (in the case of a bow, for example, the arrow must be nocked and prepared to fire), the Raider threatens an area around him as if he had a reach of 10 feet.

Distant Sneak Attack (Ex): The range at which a Raider of the Bloodied Coin may make a sneak attack with a ranged weapon is increased to 60 feet.

Seducer of Belishtim

A Seducer of Belishtim is devoted to the carnal side of the drow goddess of ambition, desire and lust. Chosen by the clergy for physical beauty and devotion to Belishtim, the Seducer is widely revered and deeply envied.

A Seducer is charged with furthering the interests of his goddess among the drow, inciting desire and lust wherever he goes. Obviously, this requires Seducers of both sexes, and the class is always even distributed between male and female members. The Seducer has a number of abilities to help him in this endeavour.

Seducers do not concern themselves overmuch with Belishtim's interest in ambition, though their actions often indirectly spur ambition in one of the drow. Rather, they work tirelessly to accentuate the traits of desire and lust among the followers of their goddess. They commonly lead the great orgies that comprise the religious ceremonies of Belishtim.

The prestige class of Seducer is open to any class, so long as the individual himself is attractive enough to qualify for membership.

Hit Die: d6

Requirements

Feats: Allure, Dodge

Skills: Bluff 8 ranks, Diplomacy 8 ranks, Perform (Any) 8 ranks

Class Skills: The class skills for a Seducer (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis) and Spellcraft (Int).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Seducer of Belishtim prestige class.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: A Seducer of Belishtim gains no proficiency with weapons or armour.

Kiss of Desire (Su): A Seducer is able to bestow a kiss upon a target that infuses them with desire and lust. To use this mind-affecting ability, the Seducer must actually kiss the flesh of the target which requires a melee touch attack. Any



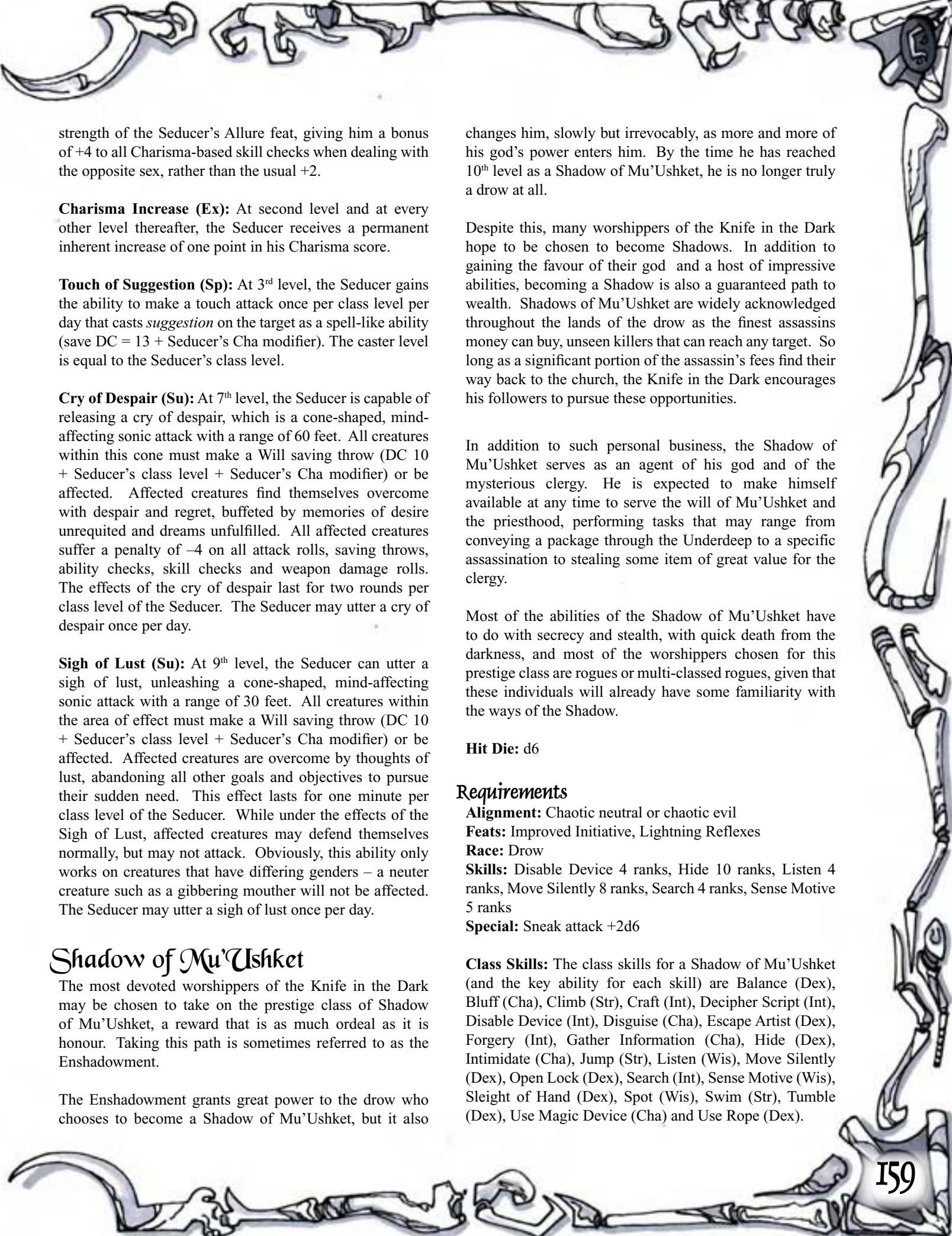
creature of sexual orientation who would be attracted to the Seducer and is of similar race who receives the kiss of desire will find himself preoccupied with thoughts of the Seducer for the next 24 hours. During this time, he suffers a penalty of -2 on all attack rolls and skill checks, as well as on Will saves made against any further mind-affecting spells or abilities

used by the Seducer on the target. If the target is able to act on his desire for the Seducer before the 24 hours have elapsed, the effect ends. Seducers rarely use this ability as an attack, preferring to use it to enhance the enjoyment of the orgies the worshippers of Belishtim engage in.

Sexual Attraction (Ex): The Seducer is, unsurprisingly, so adept in the arts of seduction that he exudes an aura of sexual attraction. This has the effect of doubling the

The Seducer of Belishtim

Class Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+0	+2	+2	Kiss of Desire, Sexual Attraction
2	+1	+0	+3	+3	Charisma Increase +1
3	+2	+1	+3	+3	Touch of Suggestion
4	+3	+1	+4	+4	Charisma Increase +2
5	+3	+1	+4	+4	
6	+4	+2	+5	+5	Charisma Increase +3
7	+5	+2	+5	+5	Cry of Despair
8	+6	+2	+6	+6	Charisma Increase +4
9	+6	+3	+6	+6	Sigh of Lust
10	+7	+3	+7	+7	Charisma Increase +5



strength of the Seducer's Allure feat, giving him a bonus of +4 to all Charisma-based skill checks when dealing with the opposite sex, rather than the usual +2.

Charisma Increase (Ex): At second level and at every other level thereafter, the Seducer receives a permanent inherent increase of one point in his Charisma score.

Touch of Suggestion (Sp): At 3rd level, the Seducer gains the ability to make a touch attack once per class level per day that casts *suggestion* on the target as a spell-like ability (save DC = 13 + Seducer's Cha modifier). The caster level is equal to the Seducer's class level.

Cry of Despair (Su): At 7th level, the Seducer is capable of releasing a cry of despair, which is a cone-shaped, mind-affecting sonic attack with a range of 60 feet. All creatures within this cone must make a Will saving throw (DC 10 + Seducer's class level + Seducer's Cha modifier) or be affected. Affected creatures find themselves overcome with despair and regret, buffeted by memories of desire unrequited and dreams unfulfilled. All affected creatures suffer a penalty of -4 on all attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, skill checks and weapon damage rolls. The effects of the cry of despair last for two rounds per class level of the Seducer. The Seducer may utter a cry of despair once per day.

Sigh of Lust (Su): At 9th level, the Seducer can utter a sigh of lust, unleashing a cone-shaped, mind-affecting sonic attack with a range of 30 feet. All creatures within the area of effect must make a Will saving throw (DC 10 + Seducer's class level + Seducer's Cha modifier) or be affected. Affected creatures are overcome by thoughts of lust, abandoning all other goals and objectives to pursue their sudden need. This effect lasts for one minute per class level of the Seducer. While under the effects of the Sigh of Lust, affected creatures may defend themselves normally, but may not attack. Obviously, this ability only works on creatures that have differing genders – a neuter creature such as a gibbering moulder will not be affected. The Seducer may utter a sigh of lust once per day.

Shadow of Mu'Ushket

The most devoted worshippers of the Knife in the Dark may be chosen to take on the prestige class of Shadow of Mu'Ushket, a reward that is as much ordeal as it is honour. Taking this path is sometimes referred to as the Enshadowment.

The Enshadowment grants great power to the drow who chooses to become a Shadow of Mu'Ushket, but it also

changes him, slowly but irrevocably, as more and more of his god's power enters him. By the time he has reached 10th level as a Shadow of Mu'Ushket, he is no longer truly a drow at all.

Despite this, many worshippers of the Knife in the Dark hope to be chosen to become Shadows. In addition to gaining the favour of their god and a host of impressive abilities, becoming a Shadow is also a guaranteed path to wealth. Shadows of Mu'Ushket are widely acknowledged throughout the lands of the drow as the finest assassins money can buy, unseen killers that can reach any target. So long as a significant portion of the assassin's fees find their way back to the church, the Knife in the Dark encourages his followers to pursue these opportunities.

In addition to such personal business, the Shadow of Mu'Ushket serves as an agent of his god and of the mysterious clergy. He is expected to make himself available at any time to serve the will of Mu'Ushket and the priesthood, performing tasks that may range from conveying a package through the Underdeep to a specific assassination to stealing some item of great value for the clergy.

Most of the abilities of the Shadow of Mu'Ushket have to do with secrecy and stealth, with quick death from the darkness, and most of the worshippers chosen for this prestige class are rogues or multi-classed rogues, given that these individuals will already have some familiarity with the ways of the Shadow.

Hit Die: d6

Requirements

Alignment: Chaotic neutral or chaotic evil

Feats: Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes

Race: Drow

Skills: Disable Device 4 ranks, Hide 10 ranks, Listen 4 ranks, Move Silently 8 ranks, Search 4 ranks, Sense Motive 5 ranks

Special: Sneak attack +2d6

Class Skills: The class skills for a Shadow of Mu'Ushket (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Disable Device (Int), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), Tumble (Dex), Use Magic Device (Cha) and Use Rope (Dex).

Shadow of Mu'Ushket

Class Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+0	+2	+0	Deepsight
2	+1	+0	+3	+0	First Change, Shadowspeed
3	+2	+1	+3	+1	Stalking Shadow
4	+3	+1	+4	+1	Second Change, Sneak Attack +1d6
5	+3	+1	+4	+1	Shadow Jump
6	+4	+2	+5	+2	Fast Healing, Sneak Attack +2d6
7	+5	+2	+5	+2	New Truth, Third Change
8	+6	+2	+6	+2	Bring Darkness, Sneak Attack +3d6
9	+6	+3	+6	+3	Shadow Ally
10	+7	+3	+7	+3	Enshadowment

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Shadow of Mu'Ushket prestige class.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: A Shadow of Mu'Ushket gains no proficiency with weapons or armour.

Deepsight (Su): The darkvision of the new Shadow of Mu'Ushket is enhanced, allowing him to see through even magical darkness, though not through invisibility, fog or other concealment.

First Change (Su): The advancement of the Shadow of Mu'Ushket through this prestige class is marked by physical changes brought on by his increasing connection to his god. At 2nd level, the first of these changes become apparent, as the Shadow's hair turns from white to a dull grey.

Shadowspeed (Su): The Shadow of Mu'Ushket's increasing affinity for darkness allows him to move with surprising speed amidst the gloom, increasing his base movement speed by 10 feet while in shadow.

Stalking Shadow (Su): The Shadow of Mu'Ushket can cause his shadow to elongate, stretching away from him at a rate of 10 feet per round, to a distance of up to 10 feet per level as a Shadow of Mu'Ushket. The shadow moves along floors and up walls at the Shadow's discretion, and can easily slip through windows or under doors. The Shadow can see and hear through his shadow, but may otherwise take

no action through his shadow, which is no more vulnerable to harm when animated this way than it would be normally. The shadow makes no sound as it moves and is extremely difficult to discern from any normal shadow (Spot check DC 25). This ability can be used once per day and lasts five rounds per level of the Shadow of Mu'Ushket. It cannot be used in total or magical darkness, as there must be a shadow to be animated.

Second Change (Su): As first change, except the Shadow's skin fades from pure black into a dark grey.

Sneak Attack +1d6 (Ex): This works exactly like a rogue's sneak attack ability. If the Shadow of Mu'Ushket already has sneak attack as a class ability, the damage stacks.

Shadow Jump (Su): The Shadow of Mu'Ushket, as he becomes more and more infused with his god's power, gains the ability to leap from shadow to shadow. As a move action, the Shadow may instantly transport himself from his current position to any shadow he can see within 200 feet. This ability may be used every three rounds, and is blocked by anything which prevents magical transport.

Fast Healing (Ex): The Shadow of Mu'Ushket, as he becomes more and more a vessel of his god's power, gains supernaturally fast healing. So long as he is in shade, the Shadow gains fast healing 1.

Sneak Attack +2d6 (Ex): This works exactly like a rogue's sneak attack ability. If the Shadow of Mu'Ushket already has sneak attack as a class ability, the damage stacks.



has sneak attack as a class ability, the damage stacks.

Shadow Ally (Su): Once per day, the Shadow of Mu'Ushket is able to animate the shadow of an enemy and use it to attack that foe. This ability has a range of 10 feet per level of the Shadow. The animated shadow has all the properties and characteristics of a standard undead shadow.

Enshadowment (Su): This is the final change for the Shadow of Mu'Ushket, as he casts off his drow heritage and his type is forever changed to 'outsider.' In addition to the normal characteristics of an outsider, the Shadow now enjoys a +2 enhancement bonus to his Strength, Dexterity and Constitution whenever he is in shadow. Additionally, enshadowment enables him to literally transform himself, a number of times per day equal to his Charisma modifier, into a shadow. This shadow seems in all ways like a normal, non-undead shadow. It is able to move as a shadow does, climbing walls and slipping under doors, but otherwise has no abilities the Shadow does not normally possess. The Shadow is difficult to notice in this form (+10 to Hide checks, and he may use his Hide skill while moving at normal speed), but he may be attacked, damaged and even killed while in shadow form as normal. The Shadow must return to his normal form to fight back, a move action. This ability lasts for five rounds per level of the Shadow.

New Truth (Sp): For a number of times per day equal to the Shadow's Charisma modifier, he may use the new truth ability. This works almost identically to the bard spell modify memory, except the subject gains no saving throw against its effects (spell resistance still applies).

Third Change (Su): A first change, except the Shadow's eyes become solid black, with no discernible iris or pupil. They also no longer reflect light, seeming almost like a pair of bottomless pits.

Bring Darkness (Su): At 8th level, the Shadow of Mu'Ushket can modify the light in his vicinity to his liking, able to increase or decrease the overall light in a 100 foot radius (centred on him) by 20 percent per point of his Charisma modifier. This change in illumination may be enough to grant concealment from the altered light levels.

Sneak Attack +3d6 (Ex): This works exactly like a rogue's sneak attack ability. If the Shadow of Mu'Ushket already

Talon of the Dark Mother

The Talon of the Dark Mother is the listening ear and clenched fist of the goddess, charged with protecting her worshippers, enforcing her will and exposing disloyalty wherever it arises. Unlike any other aspect of the clergy of the Dark Mother, this prestige class is open to men as well as women.

The Talon is a devoted defender of his goddess, responsible for commanding the guards at her temples, protecting the clergy, making war on the goddess' enemies and venturing abroad on important missions for the priestesses. Webmistresses of the Dark Mother (see page 31) often have several Talons as personal bodyguards.

The strength of the Dark Mother flows through the Talon, making him a devastating warrior. He can continue fighting when others would have fallen, and can focus the strength

The Talon of the Dark Mother

Class Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+2	+0	+2	Bonus Feat, Cow Believers
2	+2	+3	+0	+3	Detect Loyalty
3	+3	+3	+1	+3	Poison Use
4	+4	+4	+1	+4	Dark Mother's Gift
5	+5	+4	+1	+4	Webwalker
6	+6	+5	+2	+5	Smite Unbeliever
7	+7	+5	+2	+5	Detect Thoughts,
8	+8	+6	+2	+6	Spiderspies
9	+9	+6	+3	+6	Dark Mother's Strike
10	+10	+7	+3	+7	Zone of Truth

of his goddess through himself to crush the Dark Mother's enemies.

The primary focus of the Talon is his role as a warrior; therefore this prestige class is most commonly taken by fighters or fighter/clerics. However, he is also useful as an inquisitor, and commonly is employed at temples to the Dark Mother to find and root out any disloyalty, whether among the clergy or the worshippers.

The path to becoming a Talon is not easy, however, and only the most devoted worshippers of the Dark Mother are selected. The most difficult aspect of becoming a Talon is passing the Test of the Dark Mother, administered by the Webmistresses. Those who fail the Test are not merely barred from becoming Talons, they are also cursed by the Dark Mother and transformed into driders, twisted creatures who are forever outcast from drow society.

Hit Die: d8

Requirements

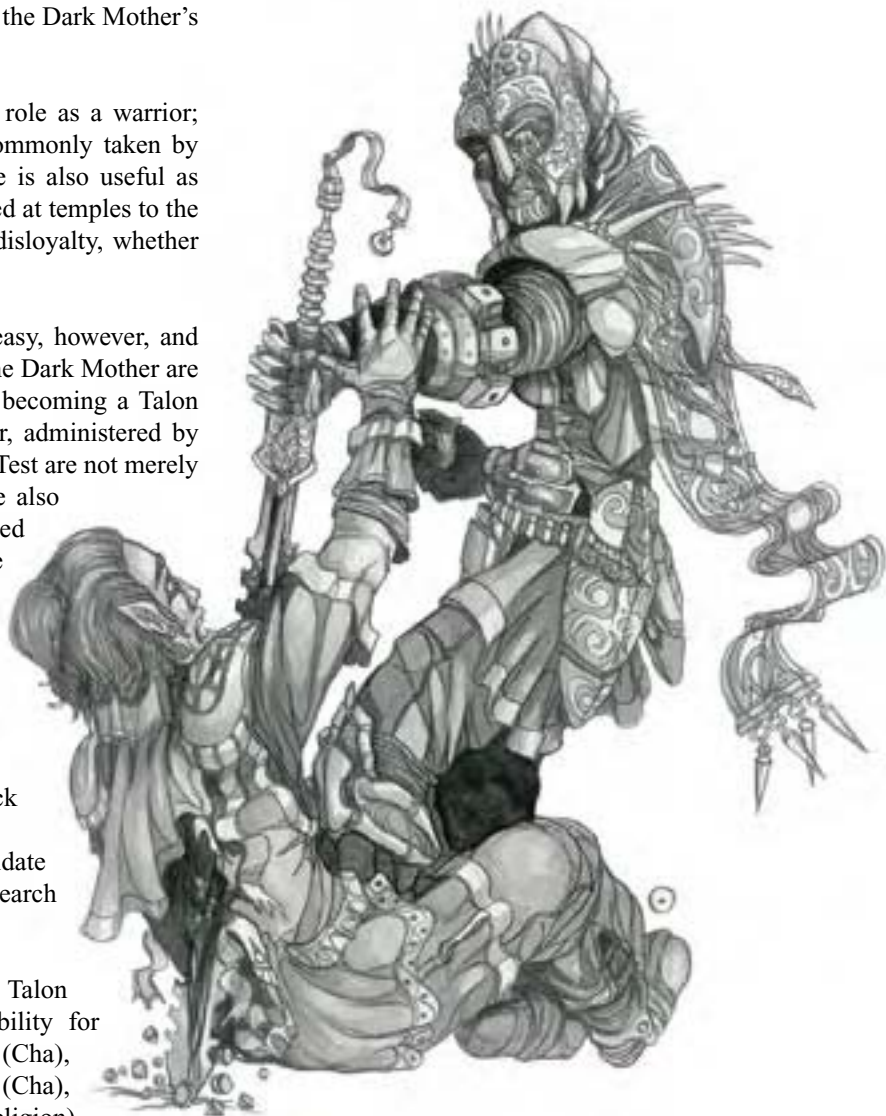
Alignment: Chaotic evil


Feats: Cleave, Investigator, Power Attack

Race: Drow

Skills: Gather Information 4 ranks, Intimidate 4 ranks, Knowledge (religion) 6 ranks, Search 5 ranks, Sense Motive 5 ranks

Class Skills: The class skills for a Talon of the Dark Mother (and the key ability for each skill) are Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (local) (Int), Knowledge (religion)





(Int), Listen (Wis), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis) and Spot (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Talon of the Dark Mother prestige class.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: A Talon of the Dark Mother is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, and all types of armour.

Bonus Feat (Ex): At first level, the Talon of the Dark Mother may select a bonus feat from the list of fighter bonus feats.

Cow Believers (Ex): The Talon of the Dark Mother has a fearsome reputation among the drow, especially so in those regions and cultures where worship of the Dark Mother is predominant. When dealing with any drow from such a culture who is aware of the Talon's status, the Talon enjoys a +4 bonus to all Bluff, Gather Information, Intimidate and Sense Motive skill checks.

Detect Loyalty (Sp): Once per day, the Talon of the Dark Mother may examine a follower of the cult of the Dark Mother to determine if the follower has been at all disloyal to the Dark Mother, or has acted in any way that might be detrimental to her church. If the follower has been disloyal in the past month, the Talon of the Dark Mother is immediately aware of it. This ability costs a standard action to use.

Poison Use (Ex): At 3rd level the Talon becomes trained in the use of poison, and never risks accidentally poisoning himself when applying poison to a blade.

Dark Mother's Gift (Su): The power of the Dark Mother protects her devoted servants. The Talon of the Dark Mother may, upon gaining 4th level in this class, apply his Charisma modifier as a bonus to all saving throw rolls.

Webwalker (Su): At 5th level, the Talon is able to move through spider webs of any kind without hindrance, as if under the effects of a *freedom of movement* spell.

Smite Unbeliever (Su): Once per day, the Talon of the Dark Mother may attempt to smite a creature who does not worship the Dark Mother with a normal melee attack. He adds his Charisma bonus to the attack roll, and deals one additional point of damage per class level. If he accidentally uses this ability against a worshipper of the Dark Mother, it has no effect but is still expended for the day.

Detect Thoughts (Sp): Once per day, the Talon of the Dark Mother may call upon his goddess' power to cast *detect thoughts* as a spell-like ability.

Spiderspies (Ex): At 8th level, the Talon becomes able to communicate with spiders. Spiders are ubiquitous in the lands occupied by the drow for whom the Dark Mother is the dominant deity. Large or tiny, they are everywhere, and it is very nearly impossible to go anywhere or say anything without a spider being nearby. The spiders know the Talon of the Dark Mother is the instrument of their goddess, and will willingly report to him anything they see or hear. They will not seek out the Talon, but if he asks them, they will certainly help him. However, due to the Intelligence score of the average spider, the Talon cannot count on them to recall for him any information more than 24 hours old.

Dark Mother's Strike (Ex): At 9th level, the Talon of the Dark Mother can focus his goddess' power to deliver devastating strikes that are laden with sickening energy against his enemies. Whenever the Talon hits an enemy with any form of melee attack, the target must make a Fortitude save (DC = 10 + Talon's class level + Talon's Charisma modifier) or become *sickened* for d6 rounds.

Zone of Truth (Sp): At 10th level, the Talon can cast *zone of truth* as a spell-like ability once per day.

Taskmaster of Olyet'Naru

Those who follow Olyet'Naru, the Tyrant of the Forge, are less concerned with combat than they are with craftsmanship. However, those who forge the weapons of the drow are certainly not unskilled in their use.

The Taskmaster follows a difficult path, specialising in one area of craftsmanship without ignoring the others. He is, in essence, a jack of all trades, and an undisputed master of one.

Perfecting his craft is the primary motivation of the Taskmaster. Now that he has taken on the mantle of this prestige class, he knows the eyes of the Tyrant of the Forge are always upon him, and that failure in the eyes of his god will mean punishment. As a result, he works tirelessly, and is an expert in extracting the best performance from those around him as well, especially the slaves under his command.

The Taskmaster prestige class is limited to the clergy of Olyet'Naru.

Hit Die: d8

The Taskmaster of Olyet’Naru

Class Levels	Base Bonus	Attack	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1	+0		+2	+0	+2	Slavedriver	+1 level of divine spellcasting class
2	+1		+3	+0	+3	Automatic Skill Focus	
3	+2		+3	+1	+3	Synergistic Understanding I	+1 level of divine spellcasting class
4	+3		+4	+1	+4	Expert Craftsman	
5	+3		+4	+1	+4	Trapfinding	+1 level of divine spellcasting class
6	+4		+5	+2	+5	Perfect Strike	
7	+5		+5	+2	+5	Master Craftsman	+1 level of divine spellcasting class
8	+6		+6	+2	+6	Synergistic Understanding II	
9	+6		+6	+3	+6	Legendary Craftsman	+1 level of divine spellcasting class
10	+7		+7	+3	+7	Destroy Construct	

Requirements

Feats: Skill Focus (Craft (any))

Race: Drow

Skills: Craft (any) 8 ranks, Craft (weaponsmithing) 6 ranks, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) 5 ranks

Other: Must be able to cast at least 2nd level divine spells

Class Skills: The class skills for a Taskmaster of Olyet’Naru (and the key ability for each skill) are Alchemy (Int), Appraise (Int), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Disable Device (Int), Knowledge (arcane) (Int), Knowledge (architecture and engineering) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Open Lock (Dex) and Spellcraft (Int).

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Taskmaster of Olyet’Naru prestige class.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: A Taskmaster gains no proficiency with weapons or armour.

Spells per Day: When the first Taskmaster level is gained and at every other Taskmaster level gained afterwards, the character gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in whatever divine spellcasting he belonged to before

he added the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (such as improved abilities to turn or rebuke undead, favoured enemy progression and so on). If a character had more than one spellcasting class before he became a Taskmaster, he must decide to which class he adds each level of Taskmaster for the purpose of determining spells per day.

Slave Driver (Ex): The Taskmaster of Olyet’Naru knows just how to use words and lashings to get the most work possible out of those serving him. Whenever he is supervising a group of at least five workers labouring on a single project, he is able to squeeze every drop of effort from them, effectively reducing the total time for the project by 20 percent.

Automatic Skill Focus (Ex): The Taskmaster picks up new skills and knowledge with great ease, drawing on his prior experience with similar skills to give himself a quick familiarity with any new skills. Whenever a Taskmaster learns a new Craft skill, he automatically gains the Skill Focus feat for that Craft skill. This ability has no effect on any non-Craft skills.

Synergistic Understanding I (Ex): A Taskmaster’s broad range of knowledge serves him well when confronted with



the unfamiliar. Synergistic Understanding I grants the Taskmaster a competence bonus of +2 to Appraise, Craft, Disable Device and Open Locks skill checks when dealing with any object that was created with a Craft skill. This includes magically-created items that required the caster to make a Craft check at the time of the casting, such as *fabricate* or *minor creation*.

Expert Craftsman (Ex): The Taskmaster may choose one Craft skill in which he intends to truly excel. At 4th level, he is considered an expert craftsman in that skill, and may deduct five from the DC of any skill check for that skill. For example, a Taskmaster who has chosen to specialise in Craft (weaponsmithing) may, when he becomes an expert craftsman, create a martial melee or thrown weapon by succeeding in a Craft (weaponsmithing) skill check against a DC 10, rather than a DC 15.

Trapfinding (Ex): The Taskmaster's understanding of multiple crafts and principles of engineering allows him to find and disable traps using his Search and Disable Device skills just as a rogue can.

Perfect Strike (Ex): A Taskmaster's intimate understanding of weapons and armour gives him the opportunity to make exceptionally devastating attacks in combat. When using a

weapon the Taskmaster created for himself, the Taskmaster may slip his weapon through the chinks in his opponent's armour, possibly inflicting a more punishing critical hit than would be normally be possible with the weapon. While wielding the weapon he created, any critical hit scored by the Taskmaster has its damage calculated at the next highest multiplier. For example, a longsword normally has a critical multiplier of x2, but with perfect strike, the multiplier becomes x3.

Master Craftsman (Ex): As Expert Craftsman, except the DC of the skill check is now reduced by 10.

Synergistic Understanding II (Ex): As Synergistic Understanding I, except the bonus is now +4.

Legendary Craftsman (Ex): A Taskmaster's skill has risen to the point that he can create items in half the time it would take a less skilled craftsman with no loss of quality.

Destroy Construct (Ex): The Taskmaster's knowledge and skill enable him to destroy a construct with his bare hands. To do so, however, he must successfully grapple the construct. On his next standard action, he makes a Knowledge (architecture and engineering) skill check, which is opposed by the construct's Fortitude save. If the construct fails, it is destroyed.

Tormentor of Polshoath

The worshippers of Polshoath view pain as the fire that has forged the drow into one of the great powers of the Underdeep, and the Tormentor, the instrument of the Dark Lady of Agony on the Material Plane, is charged with bringing the goddess' much-needed gift of pain to the drow.

The Tormentor's primary concern is, of course, pain. He is unconcerned with the rest of the aspects of his goddess' influence, namely birth and life, except for how they are connected with pain.

The Tormentor has been granted significant abilities to inflict and master pain. He may play an active role in the ceremonies of worship performed for Polshoath, or he may spend most of his time hiring out his abilities to the drow of Noble Houses, acting as a torturer for hire. His ability to inflict pain with a touch also makes him a remarkably dangerous combatant, one who is often underestimated by those with no understanding of the exquisite agony a touch of the Tormentor's fingers can bring.

Usually it is clerics of Polshoath who choose to follow the path of the Tormentor, but they are not the only ones. Multiclassed cleric/rogues are particularly fond of this

class as well, and their sneak attack abilities will serve them well. It is not unknown even for wizards and sorcerers to embrace the way of the Tormentor.

Hit Die: d6

Requirements

Base Attack Bonus: +5

Feats: Improved Unarmed Strike

Race: Drow

Skills: Heal 8 ranks, Intimidate 5 ranks, Knowledge (nature) 4 ranks

Other: Must be able to cast spells of at least 4th level

Class Skills: The class skills for a Tormentor (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Escape Artist (Dex), Gather Information (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Intimidate (Cha), Listen (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Spellcraft (Int) and Use Rope (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Tormentor of Polshoath prestige class.

The Tormentor of Polshoath

Class Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1	+0	+0	+2	+0	Pain Immunity	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
2	+1	+0	+3	+0	Touch of Anguish	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
3	+1	+1	+3	+1	Remove Pain	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
4	+2	+1	+4	+1	Draw Out the Pain	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
5	+2	+1	+4	+1		+1 level of existing spellcasting class
6	+3	+2	+5	+2	Fear's Dominance	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
7	+3	+2	+5	+2	Grip of Torment	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
8	+4	+2	+6	+2	Enervating Strike	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
9	+4	+3	+6	+3		+1 level of existing spellcasting class
10	+5	+3	+7	+3	Voice of Pain	+1 level of existing spellcasting class

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: A Tormentor gains no proficiency with weapons or armour.

Spells per Day: When a new Tormentor level is gained, the character gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in whatever divine spellcasting he belonged to before he added the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (such as improved abilities to turn or rebuke undead, favoured enemy progression and so on). If a character had more than one spellcasting class before he became a Tormentor, he must decide to which class he adds each level of Tormentor for the purpose of determining spells per day.

Pain Immunity (Ex): The Tormentor no longer suffers any debilitating effects from any form of pain, including spells such as *symbol of pain*. He has suffered far greater agony born from the fertile imagination of the clergy of the Dark

Lady of Agony than anything mere magic can conjure. The Tormentor still feels any pain he is caused, but through long experience and an amazing tolerance, he is able to act normally even when he is in agony.

Touch of Anguish (Su): The Tormentor carries his goddess' gift of pain in his very fingertips. By making a successful melee touch attack on a foe, the Tormentor may inflict 1d6 points of nonlethal damage to his enemy. This may not be used in conjunction with a weapon strike, nor may it be used through any means of delivering touch spells from a distance (such as through the *spectral hand* spell). However, it may be used in conjunction with a sneak attack, with an unarmed strike or with a touch-delivered spell (such as *cause light wounds* or *shocking grasp*). The Tormentor may add his Strength modifier to damage. This ability may be used any time the Tormentor is in physical contact with an enemy, for example if the Tormentor is grappled.

Remove Pain (Sp): Sometimes, Polshoath's gift of pain must be removed. Using his mastery over pain, the Tormentor is able to remove all physically and magically caused pain with a touch. If, for example, a Tormentor is travelling with a group of companions when they encounter a hostile wizard who incapacitates all but the Tormentor with a *symbol of pain* spell, the Tormentor may use this ability to remove the effects of the spell from one of his companions. The ability also heals 1d6 nonlethal damage per class level of the Tormentor. The Tormentor may use this ability once per class level per day.

Draw Out the Pain (Ex): At 4th level, the Tormentor is so familiar with pain that he can extend the duration of any pain spell he casts, doubling the length of time the targets of the spell will be under its effects. Note that this only affects spells which specifically cause pain (such as *symbol of pain*), not spells whose primary function is to inflict hit point damage with pain as an unavoidable side effect.

Fear's Dominance (Ex): The Tormentor knows that sometimes the threat of pain can be as persuasive as pain itself. With this ability, the Tormentor is entitled to a +5 circumstance bonus to any Intimidate skill checks made against a foe that has felt the pain of one of the Tormentor's special attacks. Tormentors commonly use this ability on torture victims.



Grip of Torment (Su): By the time the Tormentor reaches 7th level, he is intimately familiar with the pain and nerve centres in most humanoid bodies as well as those of far more exotic and alien beasts. By making a successful grapple attack on an enemy, the Tormentor can visit horrific agony upon that enemy merely by touching a few pressure points and straining a handful of joints. The target of the grip of torment is afterward hampered in all his actions by the waves of pain shooting through him, inflicting a -4 penalty on all attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, skill checks and weapon damage rolls. This penalty lasts for one round for each point of the Tormentor's Wisdom modifier (minimum one round).

Enervating Strike (Ex): Pain can make even the mightiest foe helpless before the Tormentor. By making only a single attack for the round and accepting a penalty of -2 on his attack roll, the Tormentor may attempt an Enervating Strike against his enemy. If the attack is successful, the target of the attack may make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + total damage dealt). If the saving throw is successful, the target merely takes the damage inflicted by the Tormentor's attack and combat continues. If the saving throw fails, however, the target is overcome by searing pain from the Tormentor's perfectly placed attack. This pain is so intense the target is rendered unable to fight for a duration of one round per point of the Tormentor's Wisdom modifier (minimum one round). The target is not considered helpless, and thus is not subject to coup de grace attempts, but he is unable to attack or engage in any other action requiring concentration.

Voice of Pain (Sp): This ability is identical to the *power word pain* spell (see page 198). The Tormentor may use this ability once per day. For the purposes of determining caster level, it is considered to be the sum of all the Tormentor's spellcasting class levels.

Trickster of Kez'Skul

Rarely trustworthy and usually deceitful, the Trickster of Kez'Skul seeks always to embody the most desired traits of his god.

The Trickster prefers to avoid combat where he can or better yet leaves combat up to unwilling or unwitting proxies, but he is capable of defending himself. He would rather defeat his enemies through lies and innuendo however, and views true victory over a foe as tricking that foe into spelling his own doom.

The Trickster is an expert at the Game of Bones, and is often sought out by Noble Houses to act as their lieutenant in the constant cut and thrust of the Sheathed War. The Trickster sees this as the truest test of his abilities, and indeed spends much of his time playing at the Game of Bones, often taking on multiple clients without their knowledge and playing both sides against each other to ensure his own personal goals are met.

The most common character class to take up the path of the Trickster is, unsurprisingly, the rogue although it is open to any character who can meet the requirements.

Hit Die: d6

Requirements

Alignment: Any chaotic

Feats: Combat Expertise, Deceitful

Race: Drow or drow sub-type

Skills: Bluff 8 ranks, Diplomacy 8 ranks, Gather Information 8 ranks

The Trickster of Kez'Skul

Class Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+0	+2	+0	Worthy Lieutenant I
2	+1	+0	+3	+0	Favour, Prestidigitation
3	+2	+1	+3	+1	Slippery Mind
4	+3	+1	+4	+1	Worthy Lieutenant II, Spread Information
5	+3	+1	+4	+1	Closed Mind, Favour
6	+4	+2	+5	+2	Improved Feint
7	+5	+2	+5	+2	Worthy Lieutenant III
8	+6	+2	+6	+2	
9	+6	+3	+6	+3	Politically Active
10	+7	+3	+7	+3	False Vision



Class Skills: The class skills for a Trickster of Kez'Skul (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disable Device (Int), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Knowledge (any) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Search (Int), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Spot (Wis), Tumble (Dex) and Use Rope (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Trickster of Kez'Skul prestige class.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: A Trickster gains no proficiency with weapons or armour.

Worthy Lieutenant I (Ex): The Trickster of Kez'Skul is a gifted and accomplished player of the Game of Bones. When acting as a Lieutenant in the Game of Bones, he receives

a +1 bonus to his skill check when performing the following actions: Blackmail, Counterintelligence, Cover-Up, Extortion, Frame Up, Intelligence Gathering, Knowledge is Influence, Paper Tiger, Poison Pill, Public Relations Campaign, Smear Campaign, The Enemy of my Enemy.

Favour (Ex): At 2nd and 5th level, the Trickster has spent enough time at playing the Game of Bones that someone within the city he works owes him a huge favour. The exact details of this favour should be worked out between the player and Games Master, but it is commonly only a one-use ability that cannot be called upon again once expended unless the Player Character spends time and roleplaying to establish a new favour.

Prestidigitation (Sp): At 2nd level, the Trickster of Kez'Skul can cast *prestidigitation* as an innate spell ability three times per day. This works exactly as do the other spell abilities of the drow.

Slippery Mind (Ex): This ability represents the Trickster's special ability to wriggle free from magical effects that would otherwise control or compel him. If a Trickster with Slippery Mind is affected by an enchantment spell or effect and fails his saving throw, he may attempt it again one round later at the same DC. He only gets one extra chance to succeed on his saving throw. A Trickster who already has Slippery Mind as a class ability may instead choose another ability from the list of rogue special abilities.

Worthy Lieutenant II (Ex): As Worthy Lieutenant I, except the bonus is now +2.

Spread Information (Ex): The Trickster may use his Gather Information skill to disseminate information, inserting a plausible lie into the common knowledge of the people of a given city or community. This takes at least one evening of work (1d4+1 hours) and has a base DC 20 for the skill check, adjusted by the Games Master for any factors which would affect the Trickster's ability to spread lies. The length of time required for these lies to become

widely known varies with the location, but 2d4 days can be considered to be an acceptable average.

Closed Mind (Su): At 5th level, the Trickster of Kez'Skul becomes magically inscrutable, immune to *detect thoughts*, *discern lies* and any attempt to magically determine his alignment. This is a constant effect.

Improved Feint (Ex): At 6th level, the Trickster receives Improved Feint as a bonus feat, even if he does not fulfil the prerequisites for the feat.

Worthy Lieutenant III (Ex): As Worthy Lieutenant I, except the bonus is now +3.

Politically Active (Ex): At 9th level, the Trickster receives Politically Active as a bonus feat.

False Vision (Sp): Whenever the Trickster becomes aware of an attempt to scry on him, he may immediately use his *false vision* ability to provide the viewer with a completely fabricated scene. Though it is not prepared in advance, this ability works in all other ways like the *false vision* spell.

Webmistress of the Dark Mother

Of all the servants of the Dark Mother, the Webmistress is most revered. The path to this prestige class is difficult and entry into it is barred to all but the favourites of the Dark Mother, but the rewards for achieving it are great, both in personal and political power.


Webmistresses are the foremost instruments of their goddess among the drow and, as such, must have a background as a cleric. Most often, only pure clerics become Webmistresses, but it is not unknown for a multiclassed cleric to take up the mantle of Webmistress. Multiclassed cleric/fighters and cleric/wizards are the most common of these.

Webmistresses exist at the upper rungs of the drow society in which they live and act as the high priestesses of the Dark Mother's temples. As all priestesses of the Dark Mother are recruited from the upper class of society and usually are members of one of the Noble Houses, the Webmistress is also sometimes a secular authority, ruling her family's House as well as the temple of the Dark Mother.

Webmistresses seldom venture forth from the cities of the drow. When they do, it is either on some mission of

The Webmistress of the Dark Mother

Class Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Spider Familiar, Web Friend	+1 level of divine spellcasting class
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	Spider Speech	+1 level of divine spellcasting class
3	+2	+1	+1	+3	Poison Immunity	+1 level of divine spellcasting class
4	+3	+1	+1	+4	Webwalker	+1 level of divine spellcasting class
5	+3	+1	+1	+4	Spider Climb	+1 level of divine spellcasting class
6	+4	+2	+2	+5	Spider Horde I	+1 level of divine spellcasting class
7	+5	+2	+2	+5	Web	+1 level of divine spellcasting class
8	+6	+2	+2	+6	Spider Horde II	+1 level of divine spellcasting class
9	+6	+3	+3	+6		+1 level of divine spellcasting class
10	+7	+3	+3	+7	Transformation	+1 level of divine spellcasting class



immense importance, or the Webmistress is newly risen to her rank and is seeking to prove herself.

Hit Die: d8

Requirements

Alignment: Chaotic Evil

Feats: Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Leadership

Gender: Female

Race: Drow

Skills: Knowledge (arcana) 6 ranks, Knowledge (religion) 8 ranks, Knowledge (the planes) 6 ranks, Speak Language (Abyssal)

Other: Must be able to cast at least 4th level divine spells; must be worshipper of the Dark Mother

Class Skills: The class skills of a Webmistress (and the key ability for each skill) are: Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (arcane) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Sense Motive (Wis) and Spellcraft (Int).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Webmistress of the Dark Mother prestige class.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: A Webmistress gains no proficiency with weapons or armour.

Spells per Day: When a new Webmistress level is gained, the character gains new spells per day as if she had also gained a level in whatever divine spellcasting he belonged to before she added the prestige class. She does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (such as improved abilities to turn or rebuke undead, favoured enemy progression and so on). If a character had more than one spellcasting class before she became a Webmistress, she must decide to which class she adds each level of Webmistress for the purpose of determining spells per day.

Spider Familiar (Su): As a gift from the Dark Mother, all Webmistresses receive a spider familiar upon their entry to this prestige class. The familiar is a small monstrous spider. The spider follows all the normal rules for familiars, and is in addition to any existing familiars that the character may possess from other classes. To determine the spider's abilities as a familiar, use the combined cleric and Webmistress levels of the character.

Web Friend (Su): The Dark Mother is the queen of spiders, and the Webmistress her chosen servant among the drow. No spider will intentionally harm a Webmistress in any way. Even if the spider is under magical compulsion, it gains an immediate saving throw with a +4 profane bonus to throw off the magical coercion if it is ordered to do anything that will directly harm a Webmistress.

Spider Speech (Su): At 2nd level, the Webmistress gains the ability to converse with spiders. This includes all spiders, from the tiniest house spider to the enormous horrors that prowl the deep caverns.

Poison Immunity (Ex): The Webmistress is no longer susceptible to any kind of poison.

Webwalker (Su): At 4th level, webs of any kind, real or magical, no longer act as a barrier to the Webmistress, who may walk through them as though she were under the influence of a *freedom of movement* spell. Additionally, she may walk normally on any spider web, and may walk vertically or even upside down as easily as she would walk on level ground.

Spider Climb (Su): When the Webmistress reaches 5th level, she is able to walk on any vertical surface as though under the influence of the *spider climb* spell. However, she is not required to keep her hands free.

Spider Horde I (Su): As she reaches 6th level, the favour the Dark Mother holds for the Webmistress becomes steadily more apparent. She is accompanied at all times by a horde of several thousand tiny spiders, flowing along the walls, floors and ceilings all around her and hiding by the hundreds in her clothing, her hair and on her back. These spiders are so tiny that even in their vast numbers they are difficult to notice (Spot check DC 20). The spiders act as eyes and ears for the Webmistress, reporting to her (on her command) anything they see and hear. The Webmistress may direct these spiders to range out as far as half a mile from her position. Though the spiders serve the Webmistress unfailingly, their first loyalty is obviously to the Dark Mother, and they also report to their goddess any actions on the part of the Webmistress which are not in keeping with the cult of the Dark Mother.

Web (Sp): A number of times per day equal to her Wisdom modifier, a Webmistress may use a lock of her own hair to create a *web* as a spell-like ability.

Spider Horde II (Su): At 8th level, the host of spiders accompanying the Webmistress can begin to aid her in combat. At her command, the spiders will flow forth toward an enemy or enemies designated by the Webmistress. This

effect is identical to the *insect plague*, save that it is a spider swarm. The Webmistress may call upon this power a number of times per day equal to her Wisdom modifier.

Transformation (Su): At 10th level, the Webmistress undergoes the Transformation. The spider horde that has been with her since 6th level converges on her, cocooning her within an enormous web. The Webmistress slumbers

in this chrysalis for a full month, during which time her body changes in fundamental ways, though her appearance remains the same. By the time she emerges from the cocoon, she has become a blessed being of the Dark Mother, and her type is changed from 'humanoid' to 'outsider', as well as gaining a +2 profane bonus to her Wisdom. She is treated in all ways from this point forward as a native outsider.



Wormrider (Pol'Tah)

The Wormrider is the most honoured warrior of the Pol'Tah military, and indeed one of the most honoured people in all of deep drow society.

Since their earliest days in the bottom of the Underdeep, the deep drow have kept purple worms, and are in fact the only people in the world known to have domesticated the gargantuan beasts. In the millennia that have passed, the worms have become an important, even essential element in deep drow society, and are treated almost with reverence for their role among the dark elves. The Wormrider is the ultimate expression of that reverence, a warrior who can ride a purple worm into battle, who can bond with it, speak with it and fight with it as one.

A Wormrider raises his mount from the time it is still in the egg, tending and caring for it as it hatches and grows. Though a purple worm is not an intelligent creature, this process allows the worm and rider to bond, forging a connection that will allow them to act almost as a single creature.

The Wormrider's role in deep drow society is diverse, acting as both scout and war leader, patrolling the outer reaches of Pol'Tah territory one day and commanding an army of fellow deep drow the next. A Wormrider whose purple worm is slain is not dishonoured, nor does he lose his status as a Wormrider, but he is not simply given another full-grown steed. Instead, he must raise a hatchling worm from the egg until it is large enough for him to ride into battle again.

Hit Die: d10

The Wormrider

Class Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+2	+0	+0	Worm Bonding
2	+2	+3	+0	+0	Worm Friendship
3	+3	+3	+1	+1	Empathy
4	+4	+4	+1	+1	Poison Immunity
5	+5	+4	+1	+1	Combined Assault
6	+6	+5	+2	+2	Fight As One
7	+7	+5	+2	+2	Awaken Intellect
8	+8	+6	+2	+2	Telepathy
9	+9	+6	+3	+3	
10	+10	+7	+3	+3	Worm Swarm

Requirements

Base Attack Bonus: +8

Feats: Animal Affinity, Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack

Race: Pol'Tah

Skills: Handle Animal 8 ranks, Ride 8 ranks

Special: Must raise a purple worm from an egg, using the time-honoured traditions and methods employed by the Pol'Tah.

Class Skills: The class skills of a Wormrider (and the key ability for each skill) are: Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Ride (Dex) and Sense Motive (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Wormrider prestige class.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: A Wormrider gains no proficiency with weapons or armour.

Worm Bonding (Ex): The Wormrider must be a part of his purple worm's life from the time the worm is still in the egg. Through training and constant association, the Wormrider forms a bond with the worm the moment it breaks free of the egg. This worm bonding is the basis for the majority of the Wormrider's other prestige class abilities. This ability works in the same way as a druid's animal companion ability except, of course, only on a purple worm. The only differences are that the purple worm's abilities increase as the Wormrider advances in levels in the Wormrider prestige class, and the connection between a Wormrider and his purple worm may not be broken, save by death.

Worm Friendship (Ex): The Wormrider's close association with the species means that purple worms, even those with which he is not bonded, perceive him as friendly and will not attack. A purple worm operating under magical compulsion may still be commanded to attack the Wormrider, however.

Empathy (Ex): The Wormrider enjoys a constant empathic connection with his purple worm. Through this connection, the Wormrider can issue basic orders and receive simple information from the worm. This connection cannot be severed and has a range of one mile.

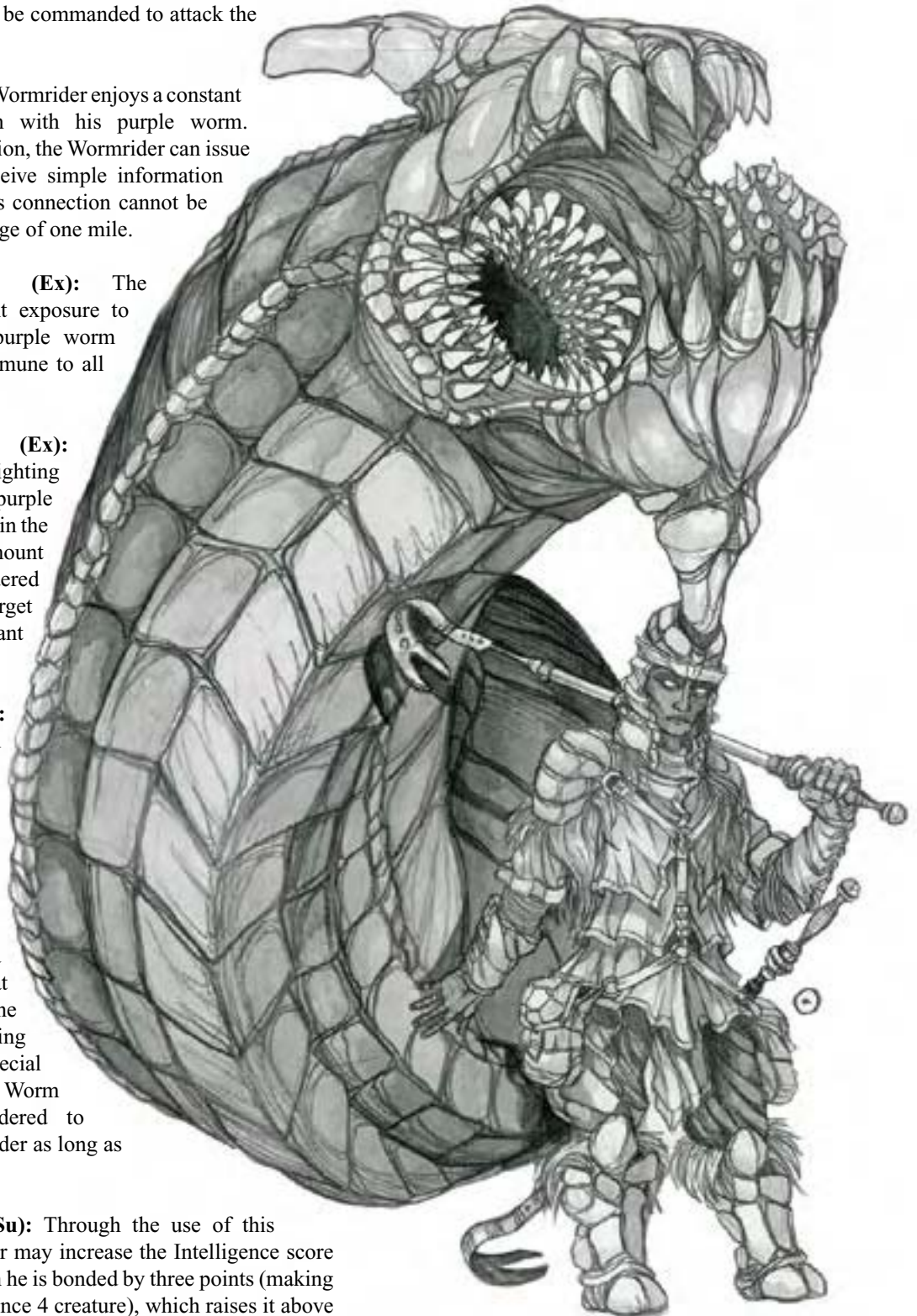
Poison Immunity (Ex): The Wormrider's constant exposure to the poison of the purple worm has rendered him immune to all poisons.

Combined Assault (Ex): When a Wormrider fighting from the back of a purple worm attacks a target in the same round as his mount does, he is considered as flanking the target and gains the relevant bonuses.

Fight As One (Ex): While mounted on his purple worm, the Wormrider and the worm are considered to share feats. For example, if the Wormrider has the Dodge feat, the worm is considered to possess the feat as well as long as the Wormrider is riding it. Likewise, the special abilities granted by Worm Bonding are considered to extend to the Wormrider as long as he is mounted.

Awaken Intellect (Su): Through the use of this ability, the Wormrider may increase the Intelligence score of a worm with which he is bonded by three points (making the worm an Intelligence 4 creature), which raises it above

the level of animal and makes it a sentient creature. This can only be done once on any individual purple worm and permanently costs the Wormrider a point of his own Charisma score.



Telepathy (Su): The Wormrider shares a telepathic bond with the purple worm, allowing a free exchange of thoughts, requests and orders. Games Masters should remember that even after the use of Awaken Intellect, the purple worm is still a rather stupid creature that will have difficulty with overly complex orders. This connection cannot be severed and has a range of one mile.

Worm Swarm (Ex): At 10th level, a Wormrider may send out an empathic call for aid to any purple worms within a five-mile radius once per day. Worms that receive this call will head toward the Wormrider at maximum speed.

Elven Avenger

The hatred of the drow for their surface cousins is nearly legendary, an epic and seething rage that has not abated over the years. That hatred and loathing has not gone unreturned.

The Elven Avenger is the ultimate expression of the revulsion the surface elves feel toward their fallen kin. Though many surface elves feel pity or sorrow at the fate of the drow, thinking of them as twisted grace or as beauty lost to darkness, the Elven Avenger feels none of these things. To him, the drow are irretrievably,

irredeemably evil, a stain on the elven race and a vile growth that must be removed.

Elven Avengers hunt the drow in the reaches of the Underdeep, or haunt their raiding parties on the surface, killing the dark elves wherever they can be found. This is nothing less than a holy mission for the Elven Avenger, whose remarkable abilities derive from the Allfather himself, and the Avenger considers himself an instrument of the Allfather's retribution on the drow.

The Elven Avenger requires prowess with both the sword and the spell, making fighter/clerics, fighter/wizards and fighter/sorcerers the most likely candidates for this prestige class. Elven paladins who can no longer abide the crimes of the drow also sometimes take up the mantle of the Elven Avenger.

Hit Die: d8

Requirements

Alignment: Any good



The Elven Avenger

Class Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+0	+2	+2	Darkvision
2	+2	+0	+3	+3	Pierce the Shadow I
3	+3	+1	+3	+3	Allfather's Blessing
4	+4	+1	+4	+4	Light of Truth
5	+5	+1	+4	+4	Pierce the Shadow II
6	+6	+2	+5	+5	Deepsight
7	+7	+2	+5	+5	Cry of Vengeance
8	+8	+2	+6	+6	Pierce the Shadow III
9	+9	+3	+6	+6	Bane
10	+10	+3	+7	+7	Wrath of the Allfather

Feats: Combat Casting, Iron Will, Martial Weapon Proficiency (Any), Weapon Focus (any)

Race: Elf (any subtype)

Skills: Knowledge (dungeoneering) 4 ranks, Knowledge (religion) 4 ranks, Spellcraft 4 ranks

Other: Must be able to cast either arcane or divine spells of at least 3rd level.

Class Skills: The class skills of an Elven Avenger (and the key ability for each skill) are: Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (arcane) (Int), Knowledge (dungeoneering) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis) and Swim (Str).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier

Class Features

The following are the class features for the Elven Avenger prestige class.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: An Elven Avenger gains no proficiency with weapons or armour.

Darkvision (Ex): The Elven Avenger gains darkvision to a range of 120 feet. This replaces his usual elven low light vision.

Pierce the Shadow I (Ex): The spell resistance of the drow is one of the greatest abilities of the dark elves, but from 2nd level, the Elven Avenger is equipped to counter it. Whenever the Elven Avenger casts a spell, he may add a bonus of +2 to his roll to overcome the spell resistance of his target.

Allfather's Blessing (Su): At 3rd level, the might of the Allfather works through the Elven Avenger, allowing him to add his Charisma modifier (if positive) as a bonus to all saving throw checks.

Light of Truth (Sp): At 4th level, the Elven Avenger may, as a free action, activate the Light of Truth ability. This ability causes the Elven Avenger to glow brilliantly, as though he were affected by a *daylight* spell, except that the duration is up to 10 rounds per class level. The Light of Truth may be ended at any time before its duration runs out, but may not be dispelled by *deeper darkness*. The Elven Avenger may use this ability once per day for every two levels he has in the Elven Avenger prestige class.

Pierce the Shadow II (Ex): As Pierce the Shadow I, except the bonus is +4.

Deepsight (Su): The *darkness* spells cast by the drow are no impediment to the Elven Avenger, whose darkvision ability allows him to see in even magical darkness.

Cry of Vengeance (Su): So bright and righteous is the wrath of the Elven Avenger that his enemies quail before him at the sound of his battle cry, which he may make once per day per class level as a free action. Any drow within a 30 ft. radius of the Elven Avenger who means him harm and hears his battle cry must make a Will save (DC 10 + Avenger's class level + Avenger's Charisma modifier) or suffer a -2 penalty on all attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, skill checks and damage rolls. This effect lasts for two rounds per level of the Elven Avenger.

Pierce the Shadow III (Ex): As Pierce the Shadow I, except the bonus is +6.

Bane (Su): Once per day, the Elven Avenger may call on the Allfather's power to imbue his weapon with the *bane* ability. This *bane* is specifically targeted against drow, but otherwise works exactly as the magical weapon special ability. The *bane* remains for one round per character level of the Elven Avenger.

Wrath of the Allfather (Su): At 10th level, the Elven Avenger can unleash the anger of the elven Allfather upon the drow as a free action. Any attack that hits while the Avenger is using Wrath of the Allfather automatically counts as a massive damage hit, regardless of the damage actually done, and forces the target to make a Fortitude saving throw against DC 15 or immediately die. This effect can be triggered a number of times per day equal to the Elven Avenger's Charisma modifier (minimum once per day), and lasts for a number of rounds equal to the Avenger's Wisdom modifier (minimum one round). The Wrath of the Allfather is only effective against drow and drow sub-races.

Elven Infiltrator

Though the Elven Avenger is commonly considered a hero among his race, it is the Elven Infiltrator who truly lives his life in constant peril. Just as the drow attempt to spy on their enemies in the surface world, so too do the elves of surface attempt to keep tabs on what their cousins in the Underdeep are planning. The Elven Infiltrator fulfils the most dangerous role in this deadly but necessary campaign of spying.

The Elven Infiltrator is tasked with descending into the Underdeep in disguise and living, undetected, among the drow, learning all he can of the happenings among the dark elves, be it plans for invasion, defence, ongoing power struggles or even the rise of dissident factions among the drow which the surface elves might use to fragment the dark elves and keep their strength blunted.

Though the Elven Infiltrator has a number of abilities that allow him to blend in to drow society, to disappear among its masses and escape detection, they are often not enough.



The drow are well aware of the existence of these spies and there are always dark elves hunting for them. Most Elven Infiltrators are eventually captured by the drow and either take their own lives at the last moment or spend months in unimaginable torture. For this reason, Elven Infiltrators are commonly kept ignorant of the goals and objectives of those who send them into the dark pit of the Underdeep, quite possibly never to return.

Despite the peril of their role, the Elven Infiltrators have served their race well, funnelling information of the drow's movements to the elves above and working with dark elf

The Elven Infiltrator

Class Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+0	+2	+0	Darkvision, Allfather's Embrace
2	+1	+0	+3	+0	Nondetection, Sneak Attack +1d6
3	+2	+1	+3	+1	Evasion, Cultural Chameleon
4	+3	+1	+4	+1	Slippery Mind, Scrying Block
5	+3	+1	+4	+1	Unremarkable
6	+4	+2	+5	+2	Sneak Attack +2d6
7	+5	+2	+5	+2	Stunning Fist
8	+6	+2	+6	+2	Greater Sneak Attack
9	+6	+3	+6	+3	Total Recall
10	+7	+3	+7	+3	Mind Blank

factions who have no knowledge of the Infiltrator's true identity to fracture drow society.

The Elven Infiltrator prestige class relies on a number of different skills, making rogues the most common class to choose this dangerous path. However, knowledge of the sword and the spell will certainly serve the Elven Infiltrator in good stead, a fact which has brought many multiclassed rogues to the ranks of the Elven Infiltrator. However, any character who can meet this prestige class's requirements is acceptable.

Hit Die: d8

Requirements

Alignment: Any good

Feats: Deceitful, Persuasive, Skill Focus (Disguise)

Race: Elf (any subtype except aquatic)

Skills: Bluff 6 ranks, Diplomacy 5 ranks, Disguise 8 ranks, Gather Information 8 ranks, Knowledge (dungeoneering) 4 ranks, Knowledge (local) 6 ranks, Sense Motive 8 ranks

Class Skills: The class skills of an Elven Infiltrator (and the key ability for each skill) are: Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disable Device (Int), Disguise (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (arcane) (Int), Knowledge (dungeoneering) (Int), Knowledge (local – specific House or city of the drow) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis) and Tumble (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 8 + Int modifier

Class Features

The following are the class features for the Elven Infiltrator prestige class.

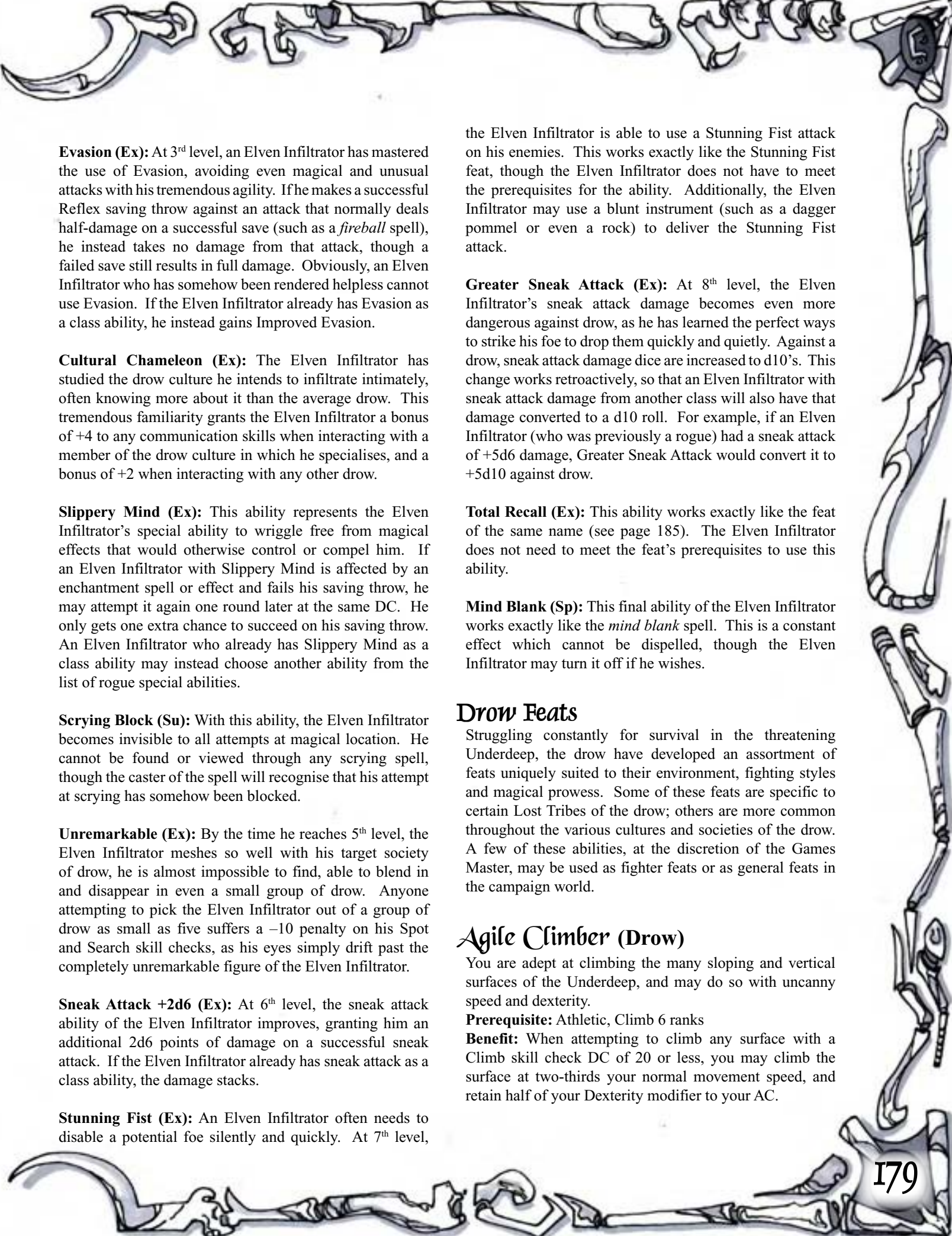
Weapon and Armour Proficiency: An Elven Infiltrator gains no proficiency with weapons or armour.

Darkvision (Ex): The Elven Infiltrator has darkvision to a range of 120 feet. This replaces his usual elven low light vision.

Allfather's Embrace (Ex): By simply willing it to happen, the Elven Infiltrator can end his life. This is a free action, the last one he will ever take. Obviously, this is an ability the Elven Infiltrator only uses when he has been found by the drow and it is clear he cannot escape. Bringing an Elven Infiltrator who has died by means of the Allfather's Embrace back to life is extremely difficult, requiring the intercession of a high-level priest of the Allfather, or even one of the Allfather's celestial servants.

Nondetection (Sp): From 2nd level, the Elven Infiltrator is protected by a constant *nondetection* effect identical to the spell, shielding him from magical location. To determine the DC of overcoming this ability, the Elven Infiltrator is considered to have cast the spell on himself, and his total character levels are used to calculate his caster level.

Sneak Attack +1d6 (Ex): At 2nd level, the Elven Infiltrator gains the sneak attack ability. This works exactly like a rogue's sneak attack ability. If the Elven Infiltrator already has sneak attack as a class ability, the damage stacks.



Evasion (Ex): At 3rd level, an Elven Infiltrator has mastered the use of Evasion, avoiding even magical and unusual attacks with his tremendous agility. If he makes a successful Reflex saving throw against an attack that normally deals half-damage on a successful save (such as a *fireball* spell), he instead takes no damage from that attack, though a failed save still results in full damage. Obviously, an Elven Infiltrator who has somehow been rendered helpless cannot use Evasion. If the Elven Infiltrator already has Evasion as a class ability, he instead gains Improved Evasion.

Cultural Chameleon (Ex): The Elven Infiltrator has studied the drow culture he intends to infiltrate intimately, often knowing more about it than the average drow. This tremendous familiarity grants the Elven Infiltrator a bonus of +4 to any communication skills when interacting with a member of the drow culture in which he specialises, and a bonus of +2 when interacting with any other drow.

Slippery Mind (Ex): This ability represents the Elven Infiltrator's special ability to wriggle free from magical effects that would otherwise control or compel him. If an Elven Infiltrator with Slippery Mind is affected by an enchantment spell or effect and fails his saving throw, he may attempt it again one round later at the same DC. He only gets one extra chance to succeed on his saving throw. An Elven Infiltrator who already has Slippery Mind as a class ability may instead choose another ability from the list of rogue special abilities.

Scrying Block (Su): With this ability, the Elven Infiltrator becomes invisible to all attempts at magical location. He cannot be found or viewed through any scrying spell, though the caster of the spell will recognise that his attempt at scrying has somehow been blocked.

Unremarkable (Ex): By the time he reaches 5th level, the Elven Infiltrator meshes so well with his target society of drow, he is almost impossible to find, able to blend in and disappear in even a small group of drow. Anyone attempting to pick the Elven Infiltrator out of a group of drow as small as five suffers a -10 penalty on his Spot and Search skill checks, as his eyes simply drift past the completely unremarkable figure of the Elven Infiltrator.

Sneak Attack +2d6 (Ex): At 6th level, the sneak attack ability of the Elven Infiltrator improves, granting him an additional 2d6 points of damage on a successful sneak attack. If the Elven Infiltrator already has sneak attack as a class ability, the damage stacks.

Stunning Fist (Ex): An Elven Infiltrator often needs to disable a potential foe silently and quickly. At 7th level,

the Elven Infiltrator is able to use a Stunning Fist attack on his enemies. This works exactly like the Stunning Fist feat, though the Elven Infiltrator does not have to meet the prerequisites for the ability. Additionally, the Elven Infiltrator may use a blunt instrument (such as a dagger pommel or even a rock) to deliver the Stunning Fist attack.

Greater Sneak Attack (Ex): At 8th level, the Elven Infiltrator's sneak attack damage becomes even more dangerous against drow, as he has learned the perfect ways to strike his foe to drop them quickly and quietly. Against a drow, sneak attack damage dice are increased to d10's. This change works retroactively, so that an Elven Infiltrator with sneak attack damage from another class will also have that damage converted to a d10 roll. For example, if an Elven Infiltrator (who was previously a rogue) had a sneak attack of +5d6 damage, Greater Sneak Attack would convert it to +5d10 against drow.

Total Recall (Ex): This ability works exactly like the feat of the same name (see page 185). The Elven Infiltrator does not need to meet the feat's prerequisites to use this ability.

Mind Blank (Sp): This final ability of the Elven Infiltrator works exactly like the *mind blank* spell. This is a constant effect which cannot be dispelled, though the Elven Infiltrator may turn it off if he wishes.

Drow Feats

Struggling constantly for survival in the threatening Underdeep, the drow have developed an assortment of feats uniquely suited to their environment, fighting styles and magical prowess. Some of these feats are specific to certain Lost Tribes of the drow; others are more common throughout the various cultures and societies of the drow. A few of these abilities, at the discretion of the Games Master, may be used as fighter feats or as general feats in the campaign world.

Agile Climber (Drow)

You are adept at climbing the many sloping and vertical surfaces of the Underdeep, and may do so with uncanny speed and dexterity.

Prerequisite: Athletic, Climb 6 ranks

Benefit: When attempting to climb any surface with a Climb skill check DC of 20 or less, you may climb the surface at two-thirds your normal movement speed, and retain half of your Dexterity modifier to your AC.

Normal: When you climb any surface, your movement is reduced to one-quarter normal speed and you lose all Dexterity modifiers to your AC.

Allure (General)

Though a combination of physical attractiveness, personal magnetism and careful innuendo, you are especially appealing to the opposite sex.

Prerequisite: Cha 15

Benefit: Whenever you speak to an individual of the opposite sex and similar race who is not already hostile to you, you receive a bonus of +2 on all Charisma-based skill checks.

Special: At the Games Masters' option, this feat may be expanded to add bonuses when using the Perform skill on individuals of suitable race and sex as well.

Alternate Innate Magic (Drow)

Rather than the standard spell abilities of your race, you can choose alternate spells as innate abilities.

Prerequisite: Must have innate spell abilities as a racial feature.

Benefit: Rather than the standard drow spell abilities of *dancing lights*, *darkness* and *faerie fire*, you may choose three alternate spells of equal levels to possess as innate spell abilities. This feat is open to all the drow sub-races save the Lorgreln, as they no longer have innate spell abilities.

Normal: Normal drow are restricted to *dancing lights*, *darkness* and *faerie fire* as their innate spell abilities.

Special: This feat may only be taken at 1st level.

Arise (Drow)

You know that to be prone in combat may mean to be dead a moment later, and have mastered the art of rising instantly to your feet.

Prerequisites: Improved Initiative, Dex 13

Benefit: If at any point in a battle you are prone on the ground, you may rise up from prone as a free action. You may only do this on your turn.

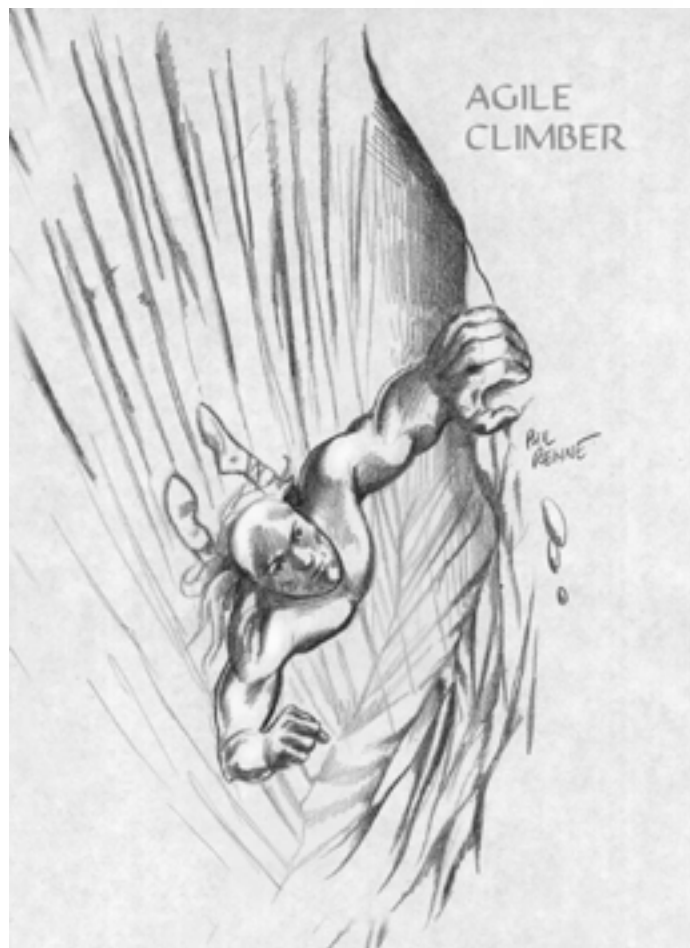
Normal: Standing up from prone is a move action.

Ascending Blow (Drow)

You may make a sudden and unexpected attack against an enemy as you rise up from a prone position.

Prerequisites: Arise, Dex 15, base attack bonus +4

Benefit: You may deliver an unexpected attack against your opponents as you stand up from prone, catching them off-guard as your weapon rises with you. If you make a melee attack against an opponent in the same round as you



stand up from prone using the Arise feat, your first melee attack that round is made with a +2 bonus to the attack roll and your opponent is considered flat-footed against the attack, allowing you to use any additional attack options you possess (such as sneak attack). This feat may also be used in conjunction with Drawn Strike (see below)

Normal: You must wait until you have risen from prone before attacking your enemies, and do not enjoy any particular bonuses or advantages.

Boneforging (Item Creation)

This feat allows you to use the Craft (bone) skill to create *boneforged* items.

Prerequisites: Int 13, Craft (alchemy) 5 ranks, Craft (bone) 5 ranks, must be member of Kanahraun ruling class

Benefit: Through the knowledge imparted to the feral drow by Azzanoth the Glutton, you may create *boneforged* items ranging from weapons and armour to entire buildings. Appropriate ranks in other Craft skills are required to create a quality product (weaponsmithing for swords, architecture and engineering for buildings).

Close Combat (Drow)

The Underdeep is filled with cramped tunnels and narrow crevices, and all too often these are the place where combat occurs. Long practice has taught you to be able to fight normally in small spaces that would otherwise be too restrictive.

Prerequisites: Dodge

Benefit: When you are in combat in area that is too narrow for you to move normally, but is still at least half as wide as the space you require for normal movement (which is 5 ft. for medium humanoids), you may fight normally while squeezing through the area. If the area is less than half as wide as the space you require for normal movement, you suffer all applicable penalties to combat while squeezing through the space (see *The Player's Handbook, Chapter 8, Combat, Terrain and Obstacles*).

Normal: When moving through a space that is at least half as wide as the space you require for normal movement, you suffer a -4 penalty to attack rolls and AC.

Craft Lifebinding Item (Item Creation)

By sacrificing sentient creatures, you may use their experience points to offset the experience point cost of creating magic items.

Prerequisite: You must have the base item creation feat for the kind of item you are trying to create through *lifebinding*.

Benefit: By using *lifebinding* to create a magic item, you are able to use the experience points of your sacrifice to partially obviate your own cost in experience points. *Lifebinding* is described in detail on page 188.

Drawn Strike (Drow)

You have mastered the art of attacking as you draw your sword from its sheath, inflicting additional damage to your enemy with the powerful and unexpected blow.

Prerequisite: Quick Draw, Weapon Focus, base attack bonus +5, must be a member of House Draz'Kuri

Benefit: If your opponent is flat-footed and you have not yet drawn your weapon, you may attempt a Drawn Strike against him as a standard melee attack. By drawing and attacking in a single, fluid motion, you may strike your enemy with a devastatingly powerful blow. If your attack roll against your foe is successful, you may double your weapon's base damage die to calculate damage from the attack. For example, a drow striking his foe with a longsword would roll 2d8 for damage, rather than 1d8. A successful attack using this feat only doubles the weapon's



base damage; other modifiers to damage such as Strength modifiers, magical enhancements and other feats such as Weapon Specialisation are not doubled. In the event of a critical hit, Drawn Strike still only allows one additional die of damage.

Normal: You must draw your weapon as either a move action or (with Quick Draw) as a free action. Regardless, you cannot strike in the same motion as drawing the weapon.

Special: Though this feat is traditionally only taught among the warriors of House Draz'Kuri, it is possible, with the permission of the Games Master, for a drow from another House to learn it.

Enhanced Spell Resistance (Drow)

You are able to shrug off the effects of incoming spells even more effectively than other drow.

Prerequisite: Must have spell resistance as an innate ability.

Benefit: Choosing this feat increases your spell resistance by two points. In the case of a normal drow, this equates to spell resistance of 13 + character level.

Normal: Normally drow have spell resistance of 11 + character level.

Special: This feat may be taken multiple times, each time increasing your base spell resistance by two points. Lorgreln may take this feat as well.

Fearsome Reputation (Drow)

Everyone knows the drow are pure evil, with the ability to curdle the blood in your veins or stop your heart with one glance from their burning red eyes. This reputation has stood the drow in good stead, and allows you to cow others who might actually be in a stronger position than they believe.

Prerequisite: Intimidate 3 ranks

Benefit: When dealing with any non-drow, you gain a +4 circumstance bonus to all Intimidation skill checks. This bonus increases to +6 when dealing with anyone whose culture has been brutalised by the drow in the past, but is reduced to +2 when dealing with other denizens of the Underdeep.

Hold the Charge (Metamagic)

You can cast a spell in advance and hold it in reserve to release later.

Benefit: With Hold the Charge, you can cast a spell but hold the power in reserve to release later as a free action. Holding a spell back, once cast, is a difficult and exhausting ordeal, and you can only restrain the spell's power for a number of rounds equal to twice your Constitution modifier. You may cast other spells during this time, but doing so incurs a Concentration skill check (DC 10 + the combined levels of both spells). Failure results in the immediate loss of both spells. As releasing a held spell counts as a free action, it is possible to release the spell then use your standard action to cast another, effectively granting you two spell attacks in a single round. A spell cast with Hold the Charge uses up a spell slot two levels higher than the actual level of the spell.

Improved Blindsight (Pol'Tah)

Your blindsight has a significantly extended range, allowing you to operate even more effectively in areas where sight is impossible.

Prerequisite: You must have blindsight as a racial ability.

Benefit: The range of your blindsight is doubled to 60 feet.

Normal: Pol'Tah normally have blindsight only to 30 feet.

Improved Tremorsense (Pol'Tah)

Your tremorsense has a significantly extended range, allowing you to operate even more effectively in areas where sight is impossible.

Prerequisite: You must have tremorsense as a racial ability.

Benefit: The range of your tremorsense is doubled to 240 feet.

Normal: Pol'Tah normally have tremorsense only to 120 feet.

Light Tolerance (Drow)

Through extensive and painful practice, you have fortified yourself against the worst effects sudden exposure to bright light (as by a daylight spell) or sunlight visits upon other drow. You still suffer from such exposure, and find it terribly uncomfortable, but it does not debilitate you as it does other drow.

Prerequisite: Must be drow, but cannot be Pol'Tah

Benefit: When exposed to bright light, as by sunlight or a daylight spell, you are dazzled but not blinded.

Normal: Normally, when a drow is exposed to bright light, he is blinded for one round and dazzled afterward, for as long as he remains in the area of the bright light.

Politically Active (Drow)



You are very well-connected in the political arena and are able to perform very well in your home city. This feat must be taken once for every city in which you wish to be politically active.

Prerequisite: Gather Information 10 ranks

Benefit: You receive a +4 bonus to any skill checks made while acting as a Lieutenant for a Noble House or other faction of the drow. This bonus applies only to actions taken in the Game of Bones.

Press the Attack (General)

You are unwilling to let your enemy leave the battle. If he tries to step away from you in combat, you may follow him immediately.

Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +6, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative

Benefit: If one of the enemies in a square you threaten takes a 5-foot step to get away from you, you may immediately follow him. This uses up one of your attacks of opportunity.

Normal: You must wait until your turn to follow an opponent who leaves melee.

Relentless (General)

You take advantage of every opening your opponent gives you, punishing him for the slightest mistake in combat.

Prerequisite: Combat Reflexes

Benefit: Any critical threat that you make with a weapon as part of a successful attack of opportunity is automatically confirmed without need for a further roll.

Rend the Throat (Drow)

Your teeth have been filed into needle-like fangs and you have mastered the art of using them as a formidable and terrifying weapon against your enemies.

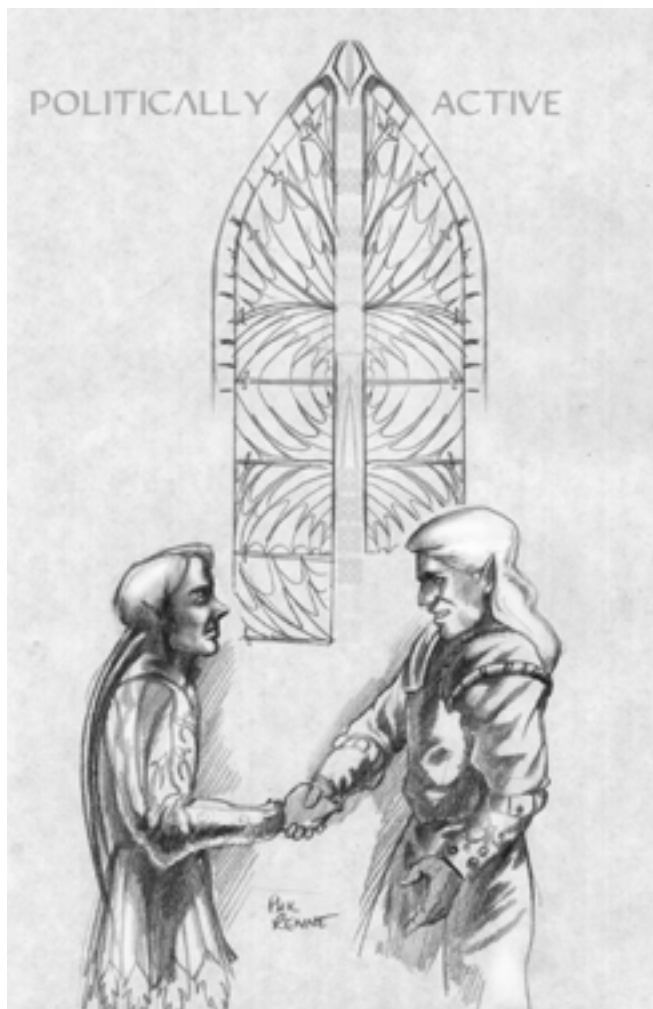
Prerequisite: Kanahraun sub-race

Benefit: When you succeed with a grapple attack in melee, you may make an additional bite attack at your base attack bonus on your opponent as a free action. The attack deals d6 damage plus your Strength modifier. If the opponent is flatfooted or otherwise unable to use his Dexterity against you, this may be used as a sneak attack. This feat cannot be used against a foe in heavy armour, as there is no appropriate target for the attack.

Sacrificial Spell (Metamagic)

You may fulfil part of the experience point cost of your spells through the sacrifice of another person.

Prerequisite: Craft *Lifebinding* Item



Benefit: By killing another sentient being in a ritual sacrifice, you may use your knowledge of *lifebinding* (see page 188) to power part of the experience point cost of spells which require the expenditure of experience points. A sacrificial spell uses up a spell slot one level higher than the spell's actual level.

Silken Step (Drow)

You have learned to move with such grace and care that you can avoid registering on an opponent's tremorsense capability.

Prerequisite: Dex 17, Stealthy

Benefit: When using the Silken Step feat, you may not be detected by an opponent's tremorsense ability. Speed is reduced to one-third normal while using this ability, which also adds a penalty of -10 to any skill check rolls made. Actions requiring dramatic movement, such as tumbling, casting a spell with somatic components or making an attack automatically result in your immediate detection by the creature with tremorsense. If you are detected, you may not 'hide' from that creature again by the use of this

feat, unless you leave the range of its tremorsense and then return.

Special: Characters wearing medium or heavy armour may not use this feat, nor may any character who is more than lightly encumbered.

Skilful Shot (Drow)

You have mastered the use of your bow, achieving a nearly supernatural skill with the weapon. Through great care and concentration, you are able to shoot at and hit even the smallest vulnerable spot on your target.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +8, Weapon Focus, Precise Shot

Benefit: To use this feat, you must make a single attack as a full round action, and must also suffer a -6 penalty on your attack roll. If your attack is successful, however, it automatically counts as a critical threat, no matter the number actually rolled on the attack die. The critical hit must still be confirmed.

Normal: Normally, you must roll within the critical threat range of your weapon to open the possibility of a critical hit.

Special: This feat must be used with the ranged weapon for which you have Weapon Focus. For example, if you have Weapon Focus (longbow), you cannot use a short bow or any other ranged weapon to execute a Skilful Shot.

Skilful Strike (Fighter)

You have mastered the use of your weapon, achieving a nearly supernatural skill with it. Through great care and concentration, you are able to strike at and hit even the smallest vulnerable spot on your target.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +8, Weapon Focus, Weapon Specialisation

Benefit: To use this feat, you must make a single attack as a full round action, and must also suffer a -6 penalty on your attack roll. If your attack is successful, however, it automatically counts as a critical threat, no matter the number actually rolled on the attack die. The critical hit must still be confirmed.

Normal: Normally, you must roll within the critical threat range of your weapon to open the possibility of a critical hit.

Special: This feat must be used with the melee weapon for which you have Weapon Focus and Weapon Specialisation. For example, if you have Weapon Focus (longsword), you cannot use a short sword or any other melee weapon to execute a Skilful Strike.



Spare Companions (Metamagic)

You can manipulate your area effect spells so that they only affect your enemies, leaving your companions untouched.

Benefit: With this metamagic feat, you may alter your area effect spells to exclude the spaces occupied by your companions from the spell's effects. For example, if you have three companions engaged in melee with a group of enemies, you can cast a *fireball* into the combat, manipulating the spell to leave the three spaces your companions occupy free of fire while still inflicting the full effects of the spell on the enemies. The spaces left unaffected by the spell still count toward the spell's area of effect. If one of your companions is grappled by an enemy or is otherwise occupying the same square as an enemy, it is impossible to exclude him from the spell's effects without also sparing the enemy. A spell that spares your companions uses up a spell slot that is three levels higher than the spell's actual level.

Total Recall (Drow)

Through careful training and practice, you have honed your memory to perfection. You can instantly memorise anything you see.

Prerequisites: Int 15

Benefit: You can instantly commit almost anything you see to memory; only a few seconds of viewing will allow you to reproduce it perfectly. This can be anything from the defensive layout and fortifications of a Noble House fortress home you spy on from afar to a letter or map. You can effectively memorise a number of pages or objects equal to twice your Intelligence modifier. Attempting to memorise more pages or objects will cause those memorised earlier to be lost. Spells cannot be memorised using this feat, whether they are from spellbooks or scrolls.

Water-Breathing (Sulzthul)

The changes wrought on your ancestors by the aboleth are continuing, and you are the proof. The Sulzthul were transformed into an aquatic race to serve the aboleth, but have always relied on air to breathe. In recent generations, however, some of the aquatic drow have been born with a set of nascent gills, and you are one of them.

Benefit: Though the gills do not allow you to remain submerged indefinitely, as they are not yet developed to full functionality in your generation, they do increase the amount of time you can go without air. By culling some oxygen from the water, you can remain underwater with no ill effects for twice as long as a normal Sulzthul (for 24 hours instead of 12).

Weapon Conduit (Metamagic)

You can deliver touch attack spells through a blow with your weapon.

Prerequisite: Weapon Focus

Benefit: You can cast touch attack spells and deliver them through an attack with the weapon in which you have the Weapon Focus feat. To successfully deliver the spell, you must succeed with a melee attack roll with the weapon, rather than a normal touch attack. If the blow strikes home, the target takes weapon damage and the spell effect simultaneously. If the attack does no damage to the enemy (for example, if the enemy has damage resistance which your blow does not penetrate), the spell is wasted. A spell cast with Weapon Conduit follows all normal rules for touch attack spells. This feat may be used with reach weapons, but not with ranged weapons. A spell cast with weapon conduit uses a spell slot one level higher than the actual level of the spell.





Drow Magic and Equipment

In their long years of exile in the Underdeep, the drow have learned tricks and secrets of magic unknown to the other races of the world. This chapter covers the magic of the drow, from the mysterious rituals of *boneforging* and *lifebinding* to a selection of new drow spells and magical items.

Rituals

The drow have developed a number of magical rituals, strange rites that are but rumours to outside races. This section deals with two of the most famous ritual magics of the drow. The first is *boneforging*, an alchemical and magical process known only to the feral drow that was a gift to them from their demonic god. The second is *lifebinding*, a powerful ritual which allows the drow to force a sacrificial victim to shoulder part of the cost of magic item creation.

Boneforging

Boneforging is a blanket term applied to several aspects of Kanahraun alchemy and magic. They were first taught the secrets of *boneforging* by Azzanoth the Glutton, and have refined the craft even further in the millennia since. A skilled Kanahraun *boneforger* can create items from bone as easily as a smith can work steel.

The feral drow have a nearly unending supply of bone to use, making *boneforging* in some ways easier than creating items from metal. However, possession of a *boneforged* item is a mark of some degree of status or accomplishment within Kanahraun society, and most feral drow either make do with the weapons and armour they scavenge from their victims or are awarded metal items created by feral drow smiths.

In the simplest terms, *boneforging* is the process of taking a bone from a dead (or undead) creature and moulding it into a new form. This new form can be almost anything the creator desires it to be, so long as there is sufficient mass in the bones he has to work with to create what he has in mind. When the *boneforger* is finished with his work, the item is still clearly bone, but has assumed an entirely new shape and has been strengthened to very nearly the hardness of steel. *Boneforging* has multiple applications in feral drow society, used to create the arms and armour of the ruling class as well to build structures in the Kanahraun cities. The mammoth temple to Azzanoth in Gauth Sheol, for example, is constructed entirely of bone.

At its most basic, *boneforging* is an alchemical process, known only to those of the Kanahraun ruling class with the Boneforging feat. Those with this feat have the knowledge of the correct processes and ingredients needed to make the bones pliable and malleable, able to form them into a new shape or even mould multiple bones together to create a single mass of bone. The same processes that make the bones malleable cause them to harden again, this time with a strength only slightly less than that of steel. In order to form the softened bones into a useful item, of course, the *boneforger* must also have the Craft (bone) skill.

Note that *boneforgers* may not take 10 or 20 on their Craft (bone) skill checks, as once the bone has hardened, it is impervious to any attempts to soften it again.

The final boneforged product may be left as a mundane item, or it may be enchanted. As with all magical armour and weapons, the boneforger must possess a masterwork boneforged set of armour or weapon in order to enchant it.

Boneforging and the Undead

The most skilled, talented and daring *boneforgers* test their abilities by creating *boneforged* items from the bones of the undead. This is difficult, time-consuming and terribly expensive and though the feral drow have no monetary system, acquiring the necessary ingredients will take up a large amount of time and a great many favours.

If done correctly, the *boneforger* attempting to make an item from the bones of an undead is able to retain some of the undead creature's powers within the bone itself, harnessing that power for his own use. Successfully *boneforging* the bones of an undead requires two Craft (bone) skill checks (with a different DC for each class of undead), one to harvest the bone successfully and another to forge it into the desired item. This process also counts as magic item creation, requiring the *boneforger* to possess the appropriate item creation feat to construct the item he desires. In the case of armour and weapons, the item must be enchanted with at least a +1 bonus during the process of *boneforging* in order to retain its undead properties. This is rarely, if ever, performed with bones of such inconsequential undead as skeletons and zombies, as they have no particular powers to harness. The most common undead to be used in this way is the ghoul, though the most powerful boneforgers will sometimes attempt to manipulate the bones of such mighty undead as mummies and vampires. Obviously, boneforging can only be used on the corporeal undead, placing such terrible beings as ghosts

Boneforging DC's and Cost

Craft (bone) Skill Check DC	Undead	Cost
10	Skeleton	10 gp
15	Zombie	10 gp
25	Ghoul	1,000 gp
28	Ghast	2,000 gp
30	Mummy	9,000 gp
33	Wight	16,000 gp
33	Mummy Lord	16,000 gp
35	Vampire	25,000 gp

and wraiths beyond the reach of the feral drow. The cost listed on the table above represents the approximate value of the alchemical ingredients needed to properly extract and forge the undead bone. This includes keeping the undead bone from crumbling into dust or otherwise rotting away when removed from the body.

This list only represents a few of the undead that might be used in creating a *boneforged* item. Games Masters may feel free to add additional undead to this table.

Uses of the Undead in Boneforging

This section takes a quick look at some of the potential uses for undead bones in a *boneforged* item. For a more detailed explanation of a sample of *boneforged* items, see Magic Items (page 202).

Skeletons and Zombies

These minor undead have no innate abilities which can be passed on to a *boneforged* item. For example, the skeleton's damage reduction is directly tied to its physical characteristics, and cannot be imbued into a set of armour.

Ghouls and Ghosts

These are the most common undead to be used in *boneforged* items, primarily because their bones are the easiest to harvest. Both ghouls and ghosts are used to create weapons imbued with the undead's paralysis ability, and the bones of ghosts are occasionally used to create armour with the ghost's stench ability.

Mummies and Mummy Lords

Items created from the bones of a mummy are the rarest from the undead listed on the table above, as mummification is seldom practiced among the races of the Underdeep. However, when the feral drow do have a mummy or mummy lord to mine for bones, weapons that inflict the curse of mummy rot are usually the highest priority. The bones may also be fused into armour, taking advantage of

the mummy's despair ability and its damage reduction. Weapons and armour made from the bones of a mummy are no more susceptible to fire than any other *boneforged* item.

Wights

The bones of a wight have only one purpose in *boneforging* – to create a fell weapon capable of draining life from its target. Because of this, such weapons are greatly coveted among the feral drow, though there are few *boneforgers* with sufficient skill to safely harvest the bones from these terrible undead.

Vampires

Only the greatest Kanahraun *boneforgers* would attempt to take the bones of a vampire to forge into an item. For those capable of the feat, however, vampires can yield a wealth of mighty items, from energy-draining weapons to damage reduction armour to helms of *domination*. However, items created from the bones of a vampire have a tremendous drawback, in that the vampire must never be completely destroyed, or else the item made from its bones will also crumble to dust. Thus, there are pits hidden deep beneath Kanahraun cities in which are sealed vampires, waiting eternally with stakes driven into their chests.

The Cost of Carelessness

An item created from the bones of the undead can be a very dangerous thing, particularly if the *boneforger* was less successful than he believed in his creation of the item. A *boneforger* who makes a mistake in this process may very well inflict the full weight of the undead being's power upon himself. Worse still, he may create a weapon that inflicts its special properties (such as *energy drain*) upon both the target and the wielder, or a suit of armour that no living being can wear. Games Masters should feel free to indulge their creativity in regard to any *boneforged* item that was improperly prepared.



A Final Word on Boneforging

Boneforging is the greatest of the gifts of Azzanoth the Glutton to the Kanahraun who worship him, but some Games Masters may feel these items are too powerful for their campaigns. In any event, Games Masters are encouraged to strictly limit *boneforged* items, as the secrets of their construction are the sole purview of the feral drow, who do not sell or trade them to any other race.

There are other routes Games Masters may consider to limit the power of *boneforged* items, should it be considered necessary. For example, it may be that all energy-draining weapons inflict this damage on target and wielder both, or that they only function a limited number of times. Alternatively, Games Masters may wish to rule that any creature slain with an energy-draining *boneforged* weapon will rise as the same type of undead from which the bone was originally taken, a being obsessed with finding and killing the individual that condemned him to this unlife. More drastically, Games Masters may wish to rule that *boneforging* cannot be used to create magical items.

In summary, *boneforging* is a marvellous way to depict the savagery and depravity of the feral drow, but as always, the final decision lies with the Games Master.

Lifebinding

The process of *lifebinding* was first discovered by the clergy of Ydrillia, She of the Veil. However, they did not hold the secret for long before it was stolen, and knowledge of *lifebinding* is now widespread amongst the drow. The clergy of Ydrillia never identified the thief who first took the knowledge from them, and though thousands of years have passed, they have never ceased looking to exact vengeance.

Through *lifebinding*, a spellcaster creating a magical item may use a willing or unwilling sacrifice to provide a portion of the experience point cost, literally ripping away part of the sacrifice's soul to power his latest magical creation. This may also be done for spells that require the expenditure of experience points, such as *wish*.

Whether the sacrifice is willing or unwilling, he is unable to generate more than half the experience points needed for any given purpose. The remainder must be provided by the drow performing the sacrifice and creating the magical item. Unlike the caster, it is quite possible for the sacrificial creature to lose one or more levels through this process, but as the ritual also involves his painful death, the loss of levels is likely to be the least of his worries. Obviously, the amount of experience the sacrifice can donate to the ritual is also limited by the amount of experience points the sacrifice actually has; no more than half of the sacrifice's total experience points may be used in the ritual of *lifebinding*. The *lifebinding* ritual allows only one sacrifice, be it willing or unwilling, to be used in magic item construction. Thus, the spellcaster must be prepared to donate at least half the experience point cost to create the magic item.

A willing sacrifice may give half of his experience points to the ritual, but an unwilling sacrifice may fight against his tormentor even to his death, holding his soul together by strength of mind as the drow performing the *lifebinding* attempts to extract it. In game terms, this struggle is expressed as a Wisdom ability check. The unwilling sacrifice must roll on the chart below, and the result of his Wisdom ability check will determine the percentage of his experience points wrested from him in the *lifebinding* ritual.

If the unwilling sacrifice succeeds mightily on his Wisdom ability check, he deprives the drow performing the ritual of all but a small portion of his experience points. The drow must then make up the remainder himself.

Obviously, a willing sacrifice is better for the *lifebinding* ritual, but such a sacrifice is much more difficult to obtain than an unwilling one. However, using an unwilling



Unwilling Sacrifice Wisdom Check

Wisdom Check Result	Percent of Total Experience Drained
26+	5%
23-25	10%
20-22	15%
18-19	20%
16-17	30%
14-15	40%
Less than 14	50%

sacrifice holds dangers beyond merely obtaining less experience points than expected. An unwilling sacrifice may very well ruin the item entirely.

Forcing a traumatised soul into the delicate process of magic item creation can have a number of unexpected effects on the final product. A resisting sacrifice may, as his last, unwitting act of defiance, alter or spoil the item fabrication procedure, making the item less useful, utterly useless or even quite dangerous to touch. Despite these concerns, the opportunity to offset half the experience point cost of creating a magical item is more than enough incentive for most drow spellcasters to use *lifebinding* whenever possible.

The exact effects that a resisting sacrifice can have on the *lifebinding* ritual vary with the nature of the item under construction. To determine what, if any, impact the unwilling soul has on the final magical item, find the appropriate table below and roll 1d20. This roll is modified by the difference in levels between the spellcaster performing the *lifebinding* ritual and the unwilling sacrifice. For this purpose, only the spellcaster's level in the class he is using to create the item is counted (for example, a drow with four levels of fighter and five levels of wizard would be counted as a 5th level character). However, the total levels of the sacrifice (before the loss of any experience points due to the *lifebinding*) are counted for the purposes

of this check. Therefore, if the drow mentioned above were to be an unwilling sacrifice, rather than the performer of the ritual, he would be counted as a 9th level character. For every level by which the spellcaster exceeds the sacrifice, subtract one from d20 roll. Conversely, for every level the sacrifice exceeds the spellcaster, add one to the d20 roll. No matter what the result, the experience points of both the sacrifice and the spellcaster are considered spent.

Monsters as Lifebinding Sacrifices

A drow may certainly use a monster as his sacrifice for the *lifebinding* ritual. The only true stipulation is that the sacrifice must be sentient, as the gods of the drow will be unimpressed if one of their followers kills a simple gursk in hopes of making a magical item. To assess the number of experience points that can be gleaned from a monster as a *lifebinding* sacrifice, simply determine its effective character level by adding together its Hit Dice and its level adjustment (if any). Assume the monster has the minimum experience required to meet its effective character level.

Potions

The *lifebinding* ritual is rarely used to prepare potions, as their cost in experience points is slight enough that it is simply not worth the time, trouble or risk to a spellcaster. However, many inexperienced drow cut their teeth in the *lifebinding* ritual by first using it in the creation of potions.

Potions

Roll	Effect
1-14	Potion functions normally
15-16	Potion functions normally, but with additional unwanted effect
17	Potion is inert
18	Poison I
19	Poison II
20	Poison III



Scrolls

Roll	Effect
1-16	Scroll functions as intended
17-18	Scroll is gibberish
19	Scroll is cursed
20	Explosive runes

Effect Descriptions for Potions

- ☛ Potion functions normally: The potion is in all ways indistinguishable from one created without the *lifebinding* ritual.
- ☛ Potion functions normally, but with additional unwanted effect: Essentially, the potion works as planned (a potion of *cure light wounds*, for example, will heal hit point damage). However, there is some unplanned and unwanted side effect which accompanies the potion's function, such as causing the imbibers hair to fall out or changing the colour of his skin. These side effects are minor, and do not directly damage the caster (though a drow whose skin turns pale may soon have a host of other problems). These effects may be undone with *dispel magic* or *remove curse*.
- ☛ Potion is inert: The potion is simply a phial of oddly coloured, foul-tasting liquid with no magical properties whatsoever. This can be determined before drinking by casting *detect magic*.
- ☛ Poison I: Ingested poison, DC 11. Initial damage 1 Con, secondary damage 1d6 Con
- ☛ Poison II: Ingested poison, DC 15. Initial damage 1d4 Int, secondary damage 1d4 Con, 1d4 Int
- ☛ Poison III: Ingested poison, DC 20. Initial damage 1d6 Wis, secondary damage 1d6 Wis, 1d6 Int. This poison cannot be detected by the *detect poison* spell.

Scrolls

Like potions, scrolls are rarely created through *lifebinding*, for much the same reasons. However, it is not unknown for a wizard or a temple with the need to create a large number of scrolls as soon as possible to shepherd dozens of unwilling slaves onto the sacrificial altar to aid in the fabrication of the needed scrolls.

Effect Descriptions for Scrolls

- ☛ Scroll functions as intended: The scroll is in all ways indistinguishable from one created without the *lifebinding* ritual.
- ☛ Scroll is gibberish: The scroll is an insane mess of lines and characters that mean nothing, and certainly cannot be used to cast a spell.
- ☛ Scroll is cursed: The scroll functions, but in a way totally opposite of the reader's wishes. For example, a scroll of *fireball* would create a *fireball* that burst in the same square as the reader, rather than travelling to the intended target. Likewise, a scroll of *heal* would actually inflict *harm* on the target. It is impossible to tell the scroll is anything other than what it was intended to be until it is read and the curse manifests.
- ☛ Explosive runes: The scroll has no spell on it, merely *explosive runes* that detonate as a maximised spell upon reading.

Armour and Weapons

Armour and weapons are among the most common items created through *lifebinding*, but due to the number of things that can go wrong with them, it is usually only the most accomplished and powerful drow spellcasters who feel comfortable creating them for their own use. More often, armour and weapons created by *lifebinding* an unwilling sacrifice are given to servants or sold.

Effect Descriptions for Armour and Weapons

- ☛ Item functions as intended: The armour or weapon is in all ways indistinguishable from one created without the *lifebinding* ritual.
- ☛ Item is non-magical: The experience points invested in the item by both the sacrifice and the caster are lost, leaving only a non-magical item. The item is still considered enchantable, if the spellcaster wishes to try again.
- ☛ Item has a drawback: The resistance of the sacrifice has altered the enchantment of the item in some minor way. Roll on the drawback table (see *DMG*) to see what effect manifests.
- ☛ Item has half the expected effect: The 'plus' of the armour or weapon is only half of what was intended. For example, a spellcaster attempting to make a +2 *longsword* with *lifebinding* will find it is only a +1 *longsword*. The item's cost in gold and experience,

Armour and Weapons

Roll	Effect
1-11	Item functions as intended
12-13	Item is non-magical
14-15	Item has a drawback
16	Item has half the expected effect
17	Item is cursed
18	Item is intelligent
19	Item is insane
20	Ghost anchor

however, is still that of a +2 longsword. In the case of a caster only making a +1 item, or in the case of a special set of armour or weapon, the Games Master should give the item a drawback instead.

- ☞ Item is cursed: Much more dangerous than a mere drawback, this item's function was shaped by the last, cursing shrieks of the sacrifice. It has the 'opposite effect or target' curse upon it (see *DMG*), which cannot be removed from the item by any means, save destroying its enchantment.
- ☞ Item is intelligent: Some part of the unwilling sacrifice's soul and intellect has passed into the item, making the new magical creation intelligent and forever inimical to the spellcaster who performed the *lifebinding* and anyone it perceives as aligned with or related to the spellcaster in any way. To determine the exact abilities of the new, intelligent item, consult the *DMG*. Games Masters may consider giving this item a Special Purpose (see *DMG*) to defeat/slay the spellcaster's race or any members of the religion to which he adheres.
- ☞ Item is insane: As an intelligent item, but the terror and hate felt by the sacrifice in his last moments have infused the item, making it completely and hopelessly mad. This item will ferociously resist being used by anyone, and will strike with all its power against any wielder overcome by its Ego (see *DMG*). Additionally, Games Masters may consider boosting the Ego of the insane item by five or even 10 points, to reflect its overwhelming hate and rage. Even someone strong enough to master the item's Ego will be subjected a constant bombardment of insane babbling, feelings or even thoughts, depending upon the insane item's means of communication (see *DMG*).
- ☞ Ghost anchor: The item works normally, but holds a significant and unseen danger. Rather than travelling on to whatever afterlife awaits it, the fury of the unwilling sacrifice at the spellcaster has caused it to linger on this plane as a ghost (see *MM*). The ghost is tied to the item it unwillingly helped create, though it now spends most of its time in the ethereal plane. Every day, there is a five percent chance the ghost will appear and attack the

possessor of the item for which its experience was used. The creator of the item suffers a -4 penalty to all saving throws against the ghost's special attacks. The ghost may be turned, though it enjoys an additional +4 to its turn resistance (granting it a total of +8). However, it may never be permanently destroyed or banished as long as the item it is tied to still exists; the item anchors it to this world and to its undead existence. Note that destroying the item does not, in and of itself, destroy the ghost; rather, it makes it *possible* to destroy the ghost.

Rods, Staves and Wondrous Items

Like armour and weapons, rods, staves and wondrous items are among the most common items created through *lifebinding*, but there are almost as many potential side effects with these as with armour and weapons. These items are commonly created through *lifebinding* only by the very powerful who feel certain of overwhelming any sacrifice, and by the inexperienced who have no other option to create the powerful items they crave.

Effect Descriptions for Rods, Staves and Wondrous Items

- ☞ Item functions as intended: The item is in all ways indistinguishable from one created without the *lifebinding* ritual.
- ☞ Item is non-magical: The experience points invested in the item by both the sacrifice and the caster are lost, leaving only a non-magical item. The item is still considered enchantable, if the spellcaster wishes to try again.
- ☞ Item has a drawback: The resistance of the sacrifice has altered the enchantment of the item in some minor way. Roll on the drawback table (see *DMG*) to see what effect manifests.



Rods, Staves and Wondrous Items

Roll	Effect
1-12	Item functions as intended
13-14	Item is non-magical
15-16	Item has a drawback
17	Item is cursed
18	Item is intelligent
19	Item is insane
20	Ghost anchor

- ☞ Item is cursed: Much more dangerous than a mere drawback, this item's function was shaped by the last, cursing shrieks of the sacrifice. It has the 'opposite effect or target' curse upon it (see *DMG*), which cannot be removed from the item by any means, save destroying its enchantment.
- ☞ Item is intelligent: Some part of the unwilling sacrifice's soul and intellect has passed into the item, making the new magical creation intelligent and forever inimical to the spellcaster who performed the *lifebinding* and anyone it perceives as aligned with or related to the spellcaster in any way. To determine the exact abilities of the new, intelligent item, consult the *DMG*. Games Masters may consider giving this item a Special Purpose (see *DMG*) to defeat/slay the spellcaster's race or any members of the religion to which he adheres.
- ☞ Item is insane: As an intelligent item, but the terror and hate felt by the sacrifice in his last moments have infused the item, making it hopelessly and completely mad. This item will ferociously resist being used by anyone, and will strike with all its power against any wielder overcome by its Ego (see *DMG*). Additionally, Games Masters may consider boosting the Ego of the insane item by five or even 10 points, to reflect its overwhelming hate and rage. Even someone strong enough to master the item's Ego will be subjected a constant bombardment of insane babbling, feelings or even thoughts, depending upon the insane item's means of communication (see *DMG*).
- ☞ Ghost anchor: The item works normally, but holds a significant and unseen danger. Rather than travelling on to whatever afterlife awaits it, the fury of the unwilling sacrifice at the spellcaster has caused it to linger on this plane as a ghost (see *MM*). The ghost is tied to the item it unwillingly helped create, though it now spends most of its time in the ethereal plane. Every day, there is a five percent chance the ghost will appear and attack the possessor of the item for which its experience was used. The creator of the item suffers a -4 penalty to all saving throws against the ghost's special attacks. The ghost may be turned, though it enjoys an additional +4 to its

turn resistance (granting it a total of +8). However, it may never be permanently destroyed or banished as long as the item it is tied to still exists; the item anchors it to this world and to its undead existence. Note that destroying the item does not, in and of itself, destroy the ghost; rather, it makes it *possible* to destroy the ghost.

Wands

Wands are perhaps the safest of all semi-permanent items to create by means of *lifebinding*, though the potential for catastrophe still merits caution.

Effect Descriptions for Wands

- ☞ Wand functions as intended: The wand is in all ways indistinguishable from one created without the *lifebinding* ritual.
- ☞ Wand is partially charged: The resistance of the sacrifice prevented the wand from absorbing all the magical power it should have at its creation. Roll d100 and divide by two (round down, minimum one charge) to determine the number of charges present in the wand. Though the wand may be recharged later, it may never exceed this original number of charges.
- ☞ Wand is inert: The experience points invested in the item by both the sacrifice and the caster are lost, leaving only a non-magical stick. The wand is still considered enchantable, if the spellcaster wishes to try again.
- ☞ Wand has a drawback: The resistance of the sacrifice has altered the enchantment of the wand in some minor way. Roll on the drawback table (see *DMG*) to see what effect manifests.
- ☞ Wand is cursed: This wand's function was shaped by the last, cursing shrieks of the sacrifice. It has the 'opposite effect or target' curse upon it (see *DMG*), which cannot be removed from the wand by any means, save destroying its enchantment.

Life After Lifebinding

It is possible to restore a creature that served as a sacrifice in a *lifebinding* ritual to life, but under some circumstances it may prove exceptionally difficult. In most cases, it

Wands

Roll	Effect
1-16	Wand functions as intended
17	Wand is partially charged
18	Wand is inert
19	Wand has a drawback
20	Wand is cursed

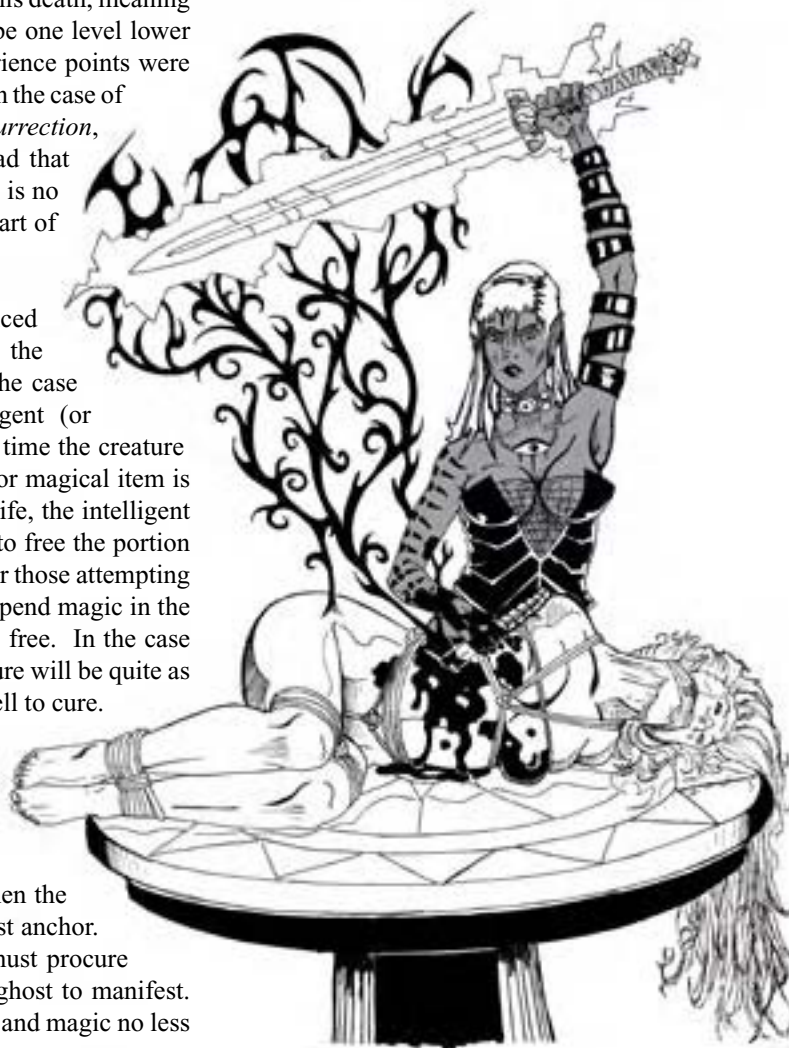
is simply a matter of obtaining the body or, failing that, to perform the *raise dead*, *reincarnate* or *resurrection* in the place where the creature died (no easy task, to be sure, considering most *lifebinding* rituals take place in drow temples or the fortified homes of mages). However, assuming these conditions are met, the creature can be returned to life. A creature who has been sacrificed in a *lifebinding* is assumed to have lost all experience points consumed by the ritual at the moment of his death, meaning that when he is restored to life, he will be one level lower than he would have been *after* the experience points were drained away in *lifebinding*. Obviously, in the case of exceedingly powerful magic like *true resurrection*, or any other means of restoring the dead that does not require the loss of a level, there is no additional experience point loss on the part of the creature being brought back to life.

In some cases, restoring the sacrificed creature to life may require more than the mighty magics already mentioned. In the case of an item which has become intelligent (or insane), that item must be present at the time the creature is restored to life. At the time the spell or magical item is used to bring the dead creature back to life, the intelligent or insane item must either be destroyed to free the portion of the creature's psyche trapped within, or those attempting to bring the creature back to life must expend magic in the order of a *limited wish* to set the psyche free. In the case of an insane item, the newly-raised creature will be quite as mad as the item was, requiring a *heal* spell to cure. It is left to the Games Master's discretion whether the item that housed the psyche still retains any magical properties or intelligence.

Most difficult of all circumstances is when the sacrifice has become a ghost, as per ghost anchor. In such a case, the would-be rescuers must procure the ghost anchor item and wait for the ghost to manifest. At that time, the item must be destroyed, and magic no less

powerful than a *wish* or *miracle* expended to free the spirit from its undead existence. Only then can the usual means of *resurrection* be pursued.

New Spells



Acid



Wave

Conjuration [Acid]

Level: Sor/Wiz 5

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: 60 ft.

Area: Cone-shaped burst

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Reflex half

Spell Resistance: Yes

When a spellcaster creates an *acid wave*, he sprays a huge volume of acid from his mouth, proceeding outward from himself in a cone. This cone deals 1d6 points of acid damage per level of the caster (maximum 15d6) to every creature within the area.

The *acid wave* can destroy and consume inanimate objects in its path as well. If the damage caused to an interposing barrier destroys or melts the barrier, the acid wave may continue beyond the barrier if the area permits; otherwise it stops at the barrier just as any other spell effect does.

Material Component: A tiny drop of acid the spellcaster must place on his tongue before vomiting forth the *acid wave*. This drop of acid causes 1 hit point of damage to the caster.

Buttress

Evocation (Force)

Level: Sor/Wiz 6

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Effect: Buttress an area of up to 20 ft. square/level

Duration: 1 hour/level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

This spell is used by the drow for equal parts engineering and defense. It creates a modified *wall of force* that adheres to a solid surface (for example, the roof of a cave). Unlike *wall of force*, however, *buttress* conforms to the contours of any surface it is cast on.

As an engineering tool, *buttress* is primarily used to support unstable roofs and walls in the caverns where the drow make their homes, preventing a partial or total collapse. The drow also use it, whenever possible, in an area where they are certain a battle is soon to take place, freeing them to use their most destructive spells without worrying about half the Underdeep collapsing on their heads from a cave-in.

As a defensive measure, *buttress* is applied to all ceilings, walls and floors in major drow cities. The Underdeep is home to many creatures that can dig easily through solid rock, bypassing all fortifications. The *buttress* forms a barrier against these creatures.

Buttress can be made permanent with a *permanency* spell, which is, indeed, its most common use.

Material Component: A clear pane of glass.

Compression

Transmutation

Level: Sor/Wiz 5

Components: S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: 1 creature

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: Reflex negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

Compression is just what it sounds like, a crushing attack. The air about the target becomes as hard as steel and closes in around the victim, constricting him and holding him fast. A successful Reflex saving throw allows the victim to slip out of the trap before he is caught.

The air changes from transparent to misty, and it is possible to carve the victim out of the field. The mist has a hardness of 10 and 60 hit points.

The *compression* spell inflicts 1d10 points of damage per round, and makes spells with somatic components impossible to cast. This cocoon of hardened air is not airtight, and any creature capable of assuming gaseous form or shrinking to tiny size can escape it.

Material Component: A sealed tube, which is smashed when the spell is cast.

Conceal Poison

Illusion

Level: Clr 3, Sor/Wiz 3

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: 1 dose of poison or one poisoned item

Duration: 1 day/ 2 levels

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

This spell makes one dose of poison or one poisoned item impervious to detection as poisonous. Anyone attempting to ascertain whether or not poison is present by use of skills will fail to detect it. Likewise, any attempts to find poison through the use of *detect poison* or similar spells or magic items will fail. *Purify food and drink* will still remove any poison under the influence of a *conceal poison* spell.

Disease Burst

Necromancy

Level: Clr 5, Sor/Wiz 6

Components: V, S, M/DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Effect: 20 ft. radius spread

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: See text

Spell Resistance: Yes

Those caught in the area of effect of a *disease burst* may not think, at first, that they have been exposed to anything more dangerous than a pocket of foul air in the Underdeep. The spell makes no sound as it calls into existence a bubble of pestilence 40 feet from side to side. The area within the spell's borders is instantly made rife with a plethora of infectious diseases and fevers.

Every living creature within the area of effect will be exposed to at least one illness from the *disease burst* spell. Roll 1d12 and consult the chart below to determine which disease(s) affect each individual. The exact effects and save DCs of the diseases can be found in the *DMG*. Fortified by magic, these diseases each have their base saving throw DCs increased by the level of the *disease burst* spell for

Disease Burst

D12 Result	Disease
1	Blinding sickness
2	Cackle fever
3	Demon fever
4	Devil chills
5	Filth fever
6	Mindfire
7	Mummy rot
8	Red ache
9	Shakes
10	Slimy doom
11	Roll twice
12	Roll thrice

the initial save that a victim must make to resist infection. Further, they have extremely short incubation periods (1d3 rounds). However, infected individuals are not considered to be contagious, posing no danger of infection to those who were outside the spell's area of effect.

Material Component: A fingernail clipping from someone who died of a disease.

Dreams of Dark Desire

Enchantment (Mind-Affecting)

Level: Sor/Wiz 7

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: Unlimited

Target: One living creature

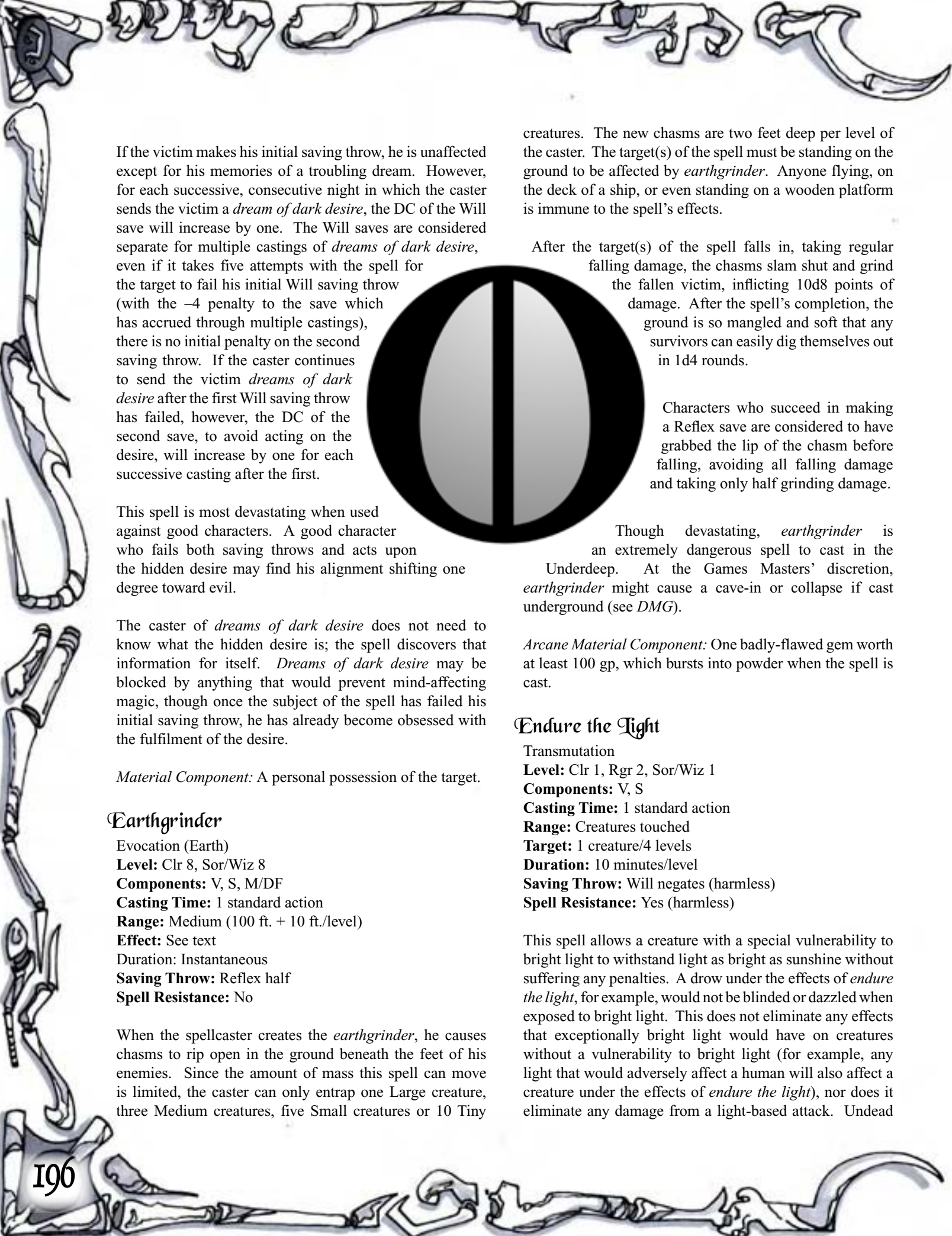
Duration: See text

Saving Throw: See text

Spell Resistance: Yes

The drow, like all elves, do not sleep and *dreams of dark desire* is therefore useless on them. However, many of their enemies do sleep and dream, and it is for these enemies that the drow have developed this insidious spell.

The spellcaster sends the victim of the spell a dream, which ferrets out the deepest, most shameful desire buried in the subject's heart and composes a dream around its fulfilment. Upon awaking, the victim of dreams of dark desire must immediately make a Will save or become obsessed with the fulfilment of this desire. If the victim fails his saving throw, the obsession takes hold in his mind. When he is next presented with an opportunity to fulfil the desire, he must make another Will saving throw (against the DC of the spell) or immediately act upon the desire.



If the victim makes his initial saving throw, he is unaffected except for his memories of a troubling dream. However, for each successive, consecutive night in which the caster sends the victim a *dream of dark desire*, the DC of the Will save will increase by one. The Will saves are considered separate for multiple castings of *dreams of dark desire*, even if it takes five attempts with the spell for the target to fail his initial Will saving throw (with the -4 penalty to the save which has accrued through multiple castings), there is no initial penalty on the second saving throw. If the caster continues to send the victim *dreams of dark desire* after the first Will saving throw has failed, however, the DC of the second save, to avoid acting on the desire, will increase by one for each successive casting after the first.

This spell is most devastating when used against good characters. A good character who fails both saving throws and acts upon the hidden desire may find his alignment shifting one degree toward evil.

The caster of *dreams of dark desire* does not need to know what the hidden desire is; the spell discovers that information for itself. *Dreams of dark desire* may be blocked by anything that would prevent mind-affecting magic, though once the subject of the spell has failed his initial saving throw, he has already become obsessed with the fulfilment of the desire.

Material Component: A personal possession of the target.

Earthgrinder

Evocation (Earth)

Level: Clr 8, Sor/Wiz 8

Components: V, S, M/DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Effect: See text

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Reflex half

Spell Resistance: No

When the spellcaster creates the *earthgrinder*, he causes chasms to rip open in the ground beneath the feet of his enemies. Since the amount of mass this spell can move is limited, the caster can only entrap one Large creature, three Medium creatures, five Small creatures or 10 Tiny

creatures. The new chasms are two feet deep per level of the caster. The target(s) of the spell must be standing on the ground to be affected by *earthgrinder*. Anyone flying, on the deck of a ship, or even standing on a wooden platform is immune to the spell's effects.

After the target(s) of the spell falls in, taking regular falling damage, the chasms slam shut and grind the fallen victim, inflicting 10d8 points of damage. After the spell's completion, the ground is so mangled and soft that any survivors can easily dig themselves out in 1d4 rounds.

Characters who succeed in making a Reflex save are considered to have grabbed the lip of the chasm before falling, avoiding all falling damage and taking only half grinding damage.

Though devastating, *earthgrinder* is an extremely dangerous spell to cast in the Underdeep. At the Games Masters' discretion, *earthgrinder* might cause a cave-in or collapse if cast underground (see *DMG*).

Arcane Material Component: One badly-flawed gem worth at least 100 gp, which bursts into powder when the spell is cast.

Endure the Light

Transmutation

Level: Clr 1, Rgr 2, Sor/Wiz 1

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Creatures touched

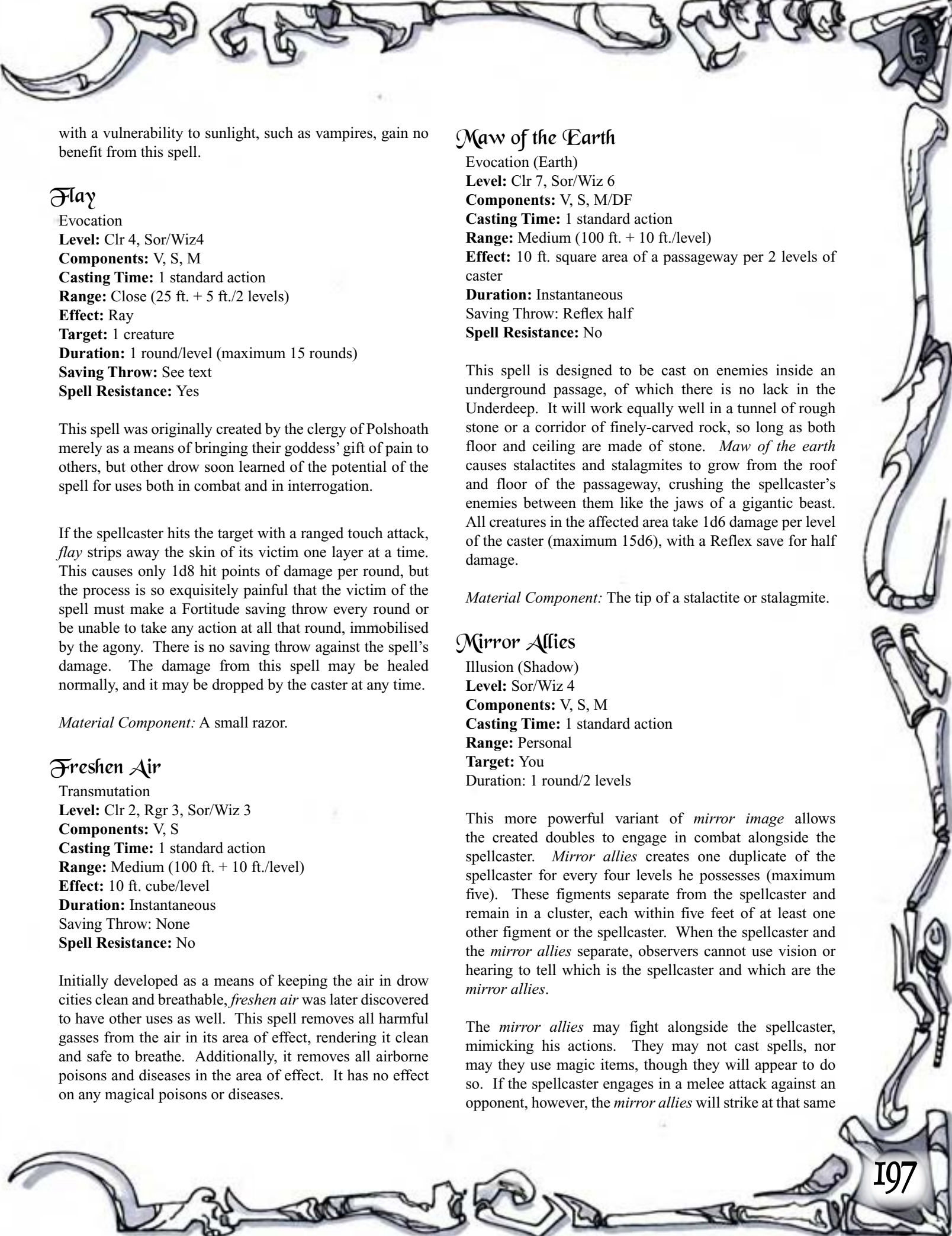
Target: 1 creature/4 levels

Duration: 10 minutes/level

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

This spell allows a creature with a special vulnerability to bright light to withstand light as bright as sunshine without suffering any penalties. A drow under the effects of *endure the light*, for example, would not be blinded or dazzled when exposed to bright light. This does not eliminate any effects that exceptionally bright light would have on creatures without a vulnerability to bright light (for example, any light that would adversely affect a human will also affect a creature under the effects of *endure the light*), nor does it eliminate any damage from a light-based attack. Undead



with a vulnerability to sunlight, such as vampires, gain no benefit from this spell.

Flay

Evocation

Level: Clr 4, Sor/Wiz 4

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Effect: Ray

Target: 1 creature

Duration: 1 round/level (maximum 15 rounds)

Saving Throw: See text

Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell was originally created by the clergy of Polshoath merely as a means of bringing their goddess' gift of pain to others, but other drow soon learned of the potential of the spell for uses both in combat and in interrogation.

If the spellcaster hits the target with a ranged touch attack, *flay* strips away the skin of its victim one layer at a time. This causes only 1d8 hit points of damage per round, but the process is so exquisitely painful that the victim of the spell must make a Fortitude saving throw every round or be unable to take any action at all that round, immobilised by the agony. There is no saving throw against the spell's damage. The damage from this spell may be healed normally, and it may be dropped by the caster at any time.

Material Component: A small razor.

Freshen Air

Transmutation

Level: Clr 2, Rgr 3, Sor/Wiz 3

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Effect: 10 ft. cube/level

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

Initially developed as a means of keeping the air in drow cities clean and breathable, *freshen air* was later discovered to have other uses as well. This spell removes all harmful gasses from the air in its area of effect, rendering it clean and safe to breathe. Additionally, it removes all airborne poisons and diseases in the area of effect. It has no effect on any magical poisons or diseases.

Maw of the Earth

Evocation (Earth)

Level: Clr 7, Sor/Wiz 6

Components: V, S, M/DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Effect: 10 ft. square area of a passageway per 2 levels of caster

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Reflex half

Spell Resistance: No

This spell is designed to be cast on enemies inside an underground passage, of which there is no lack in the Underdeep. It will work equally well in a tunnel of rough stone or a corridor of finely-carved rock, so long as both floor and ceiling are made of stone. *Maw of the earth* causes stalactites and stalagmites to grow from the roof and floor of the passageway, crushing the spellcaster's enemies between them like the jaws of a gigantic beast. All creatures in the affected area take 1d6 damage per level of the caster (maximum 15d6), with a Reflex save for half damage.

Material Component: The tip of a stalactite or stalagmite.

Mirror Allies

Illusion (Shadow)

Level: Sor/Wiz 4

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 1 round/2 levels

This more powerful variant of *mirror image* allows the created doubles to engage in combat alongside the spellcaster. *Mirror allies* creates one duplicate of the spellcaster for every four levels he possesses (maximum five). These figments separate from the spellcaster and remain in a cluster, each within five feet of at least one other figment or the spellcaster. When the spellcaster and the *mirror allies* separate, observers cannot use vision or hearing to tell which is the spellcaster and which are the *mirror allies*.

The *mirror allies* may fight alongside the spellcaster, mimicking his actions. They may not cast spells, nor may they use magic items, though they will appear to do so. If the spellcaster engages in a melee attack against an opponent, however, the *mirror allies* will strike at that same

opponent, and are quite capable of hitting and inflicting damage. The *mirror allies* strike with half the base attack bonus as the spellcaster. Their weapons are simply the stuff of shadow, however, and do not possess any special or magical properties the weapon of the spellcaster may have. Their weapons are treated as magical for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction, but otherwise inflict only base weapon damage. The *mirror allies* have the same ability scores as the spellcaster.

Enemies attempting to attack the spellcaster or cast spells at him must select from among indistinguishable targets. Generally, roll randomly to see whether the selected target is real or a figment. Any successful attack against an image destroys it. An image's AC is 10 + the spellcaster's size modifier + the spellcaster's Dex modifier. An attacker must be able to see the images to be fooled.

Material Component: A small mirror set with jewels, of at least 100 gp total value. The mirror is destroyed when the last *mirror ally* is dispersed or when the spell duration ends.

Mist

Evocation (Water)

Level: Sor/Wiz 1

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: Creature touched (size large or smaller)

Duration: 1 hour/level

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

This spell was developed by the aquatic drow to allow them to travel more comfortably on dry land. It surrounds the subject of the spell with a fine mist of water, which travels with him and keeps him moist for the duration of the spell. Its area of effect is limited to the square(s) actually occupied by the creature.

Aside from ruining paper and extinguishing small flames (like candles), *mist* has few effects other than keeping the subject of the spell wet. However, the subject will leave behind a clear trail of dampness and puddles, granting a +5 bonus to Track checks against him until the water dries up or the character enters an already wet or damp area.

Material Component: A drop of water.

Power Word Pain

Enchantment (Compulsion) (Mind-Affecting)

Level: Clr 5, Sor/Wiz 5

Components: V

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One creature with 150 hp or less

Duration: See text

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: Yes

You utter a single word of power that causes one target creature within range of the spell to feel terrible, agonising pain, whether the creature can hear the word or not. The duration of the spell depends on the target's current hit point total. Any creature that currently has 151 or more hit points is unaffected by *power word pain*.

Any creature affected by *power word pain* suffers excruciating torment, wracking agony that imposes a -4 penalty on all attack rolls, ability checks and skill checks. Further, if a creature is affected for more than one day, he is unable to sleep or rest in any way while under the influence of *power word pain*.



Hit Points	Duration
50 or less	1d3 days
51-100	1d4 minutes
101-150	1d4 rounds

Power Word Rage

Enchantment (Compulsion) (Mind-Affecting)

Level: Sor/Wiz 8, War 8

Components: V

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One creature with 100 hp or less

Duration: See text

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: Yes

You utter a single word of power that causes one target creature within range of the spell to fly into a blind, murderous rage, whether the creature can hear the word or not. The duration of the spell depends on the target's current hit point total. Any creature that currently has 101 or more hit points is unaffected by *power word rage*.

Any creature affected by *power word rage* immediately flies into a murderous frenzy, attacking the closest creature to him with little regard for his own safety. This rage approximates that of a barbarian (see *The Player's Handbook*), except the target of the spell does not distinguish friend from foe. He does, however, gain all ability bonuses and the Will saving throw bonus. He may not use any skills based on Charisma, Dexterity or Intelligence (even those normally useable by raging barbarians), nor may he cast spells or activate magic items that require a command word, spell trigger or spell completion to function. At the end of the spell, the target is fatigued as a barbarian would be after raging.

Hit Points	Duration
50 or less	1d4 hours
51-75	1d4 minutes
76-100	1d4 rounds

Quicken Poison

Necromancy

Level: Clr 3, Sor/Wiz 3

Components: S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Area of Effect: 5 ft. radius/level

Duration: 1 round per level

Saving Throw: Fortitude negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell causes poisons to become more virulent and more immediately lethal. For the duration of the spell effect, all beings within the radius of effect when the spell is cast are weakened against the effects of poison. Whenever they are subject to a poison attack of any sort, they suffer both the initial and secondary damage effect from the poison immediately. The victim must attempt first his save against the initial effect, and then immediately roll to save against the secondary effect. Should the initial effect of the poison reduce the victim's applicable save, the reduction is applied before the save against the secondary effect is rolled.

A successful Fortitude save negates the effects of the spell, but of course has no effect on the victim's later saves against further poison attacks.

Quicken poison dispels and counters *slow poison*.

Material Component: A phial of spider venom.

Rotting Wound

Necromancy (Evil)

Level: Clr 2, Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: Self, or weapon touched

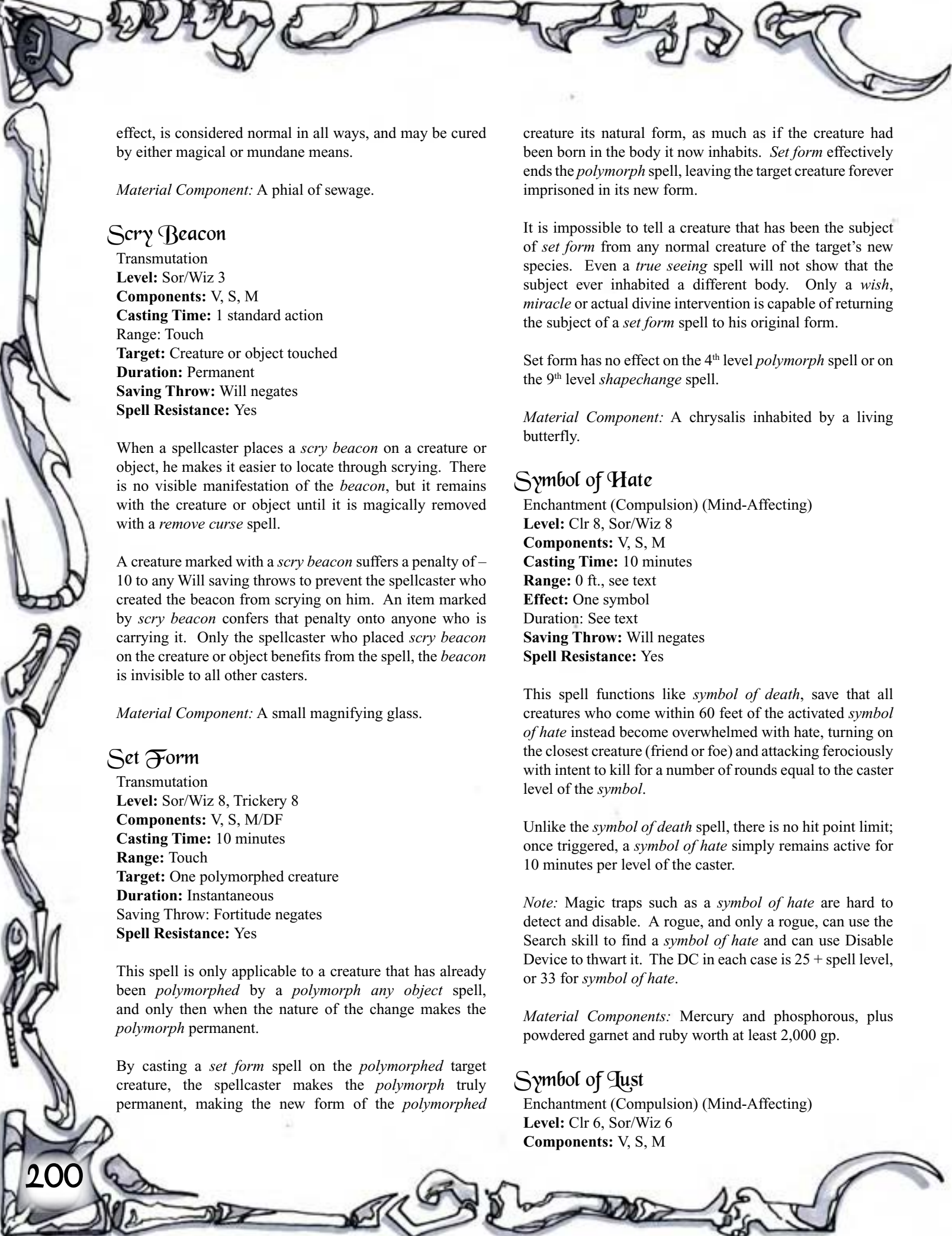
Duration: 1 min./level

Saving Throw: See text

Spell Resistance: No

Casting this spell infects a weapon of the caster's choice with filth fever. Any successful attack roll made with the weapon which causes damage while the spell is active has the chance to infect the target with a magically-enhanced case of filth fever. In the case of filth fever inflicted by this spell, the disease has no incubation period; its effects are immediate.

Anyone struck by a weapon enhanced by *rotting wound* must make a Fortitude save (DC 12) or be infected, immediately losing 1d3 Dexterity and 1d3 Constitution. Once infected, the character cannot be infected again for additional loss of ability scores. The disease, once it takes



effect, is considered normal in all ways, and may be cured by either magical or mundane means.

Material Component: A phial of sewage.

Scry Beacon

Transmutation

Level: Sor/Wiz 3

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: Creature or object touched

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

When a spellcaster places a *scry beacon* on a creature or object, he makes it easier to locate through scrying. There is no visible manifestation of the *beacon*, but it remains with the creature or object until it is magically removed with a *remove curse* spell.

A creature marked with a *scry beacon* suffers a penalty of –10 to any Will saving throws to prevent the spellcaster who created the beacon from scrying on him. An item marked by *scry beacon* confers that penalty onto anyone who is carrying it. Only the spellcaster who placed *scry beacon* on the creature or object benefits from the spell, the *beacon* is invisible to all other casters.

Material Component: A small magnifying glass.

Set Form

Transmutation

Level: Sor/Wiz 8, Trickery 8

Components: V, S, M/DF

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: Touch

Target: One polymorphed creature

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Fortitude negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell is only applicable to a creature that has already been *polymorphed* by a *polymorph any object* spell, and only then when the nature of the change makes the *polymorph* permanent.

By casting a *set form* spell on the *polymorphed* target creature, the spellcaster makes the *polymorph* truly permanent, making the new form of the *polymorphed*

creature its natural form, as much as if the creature had been born in the body it now inhabits. *Set form* effectively ends the *polymorph* spell, leaving the target creature forever imprisoned in its new form.

It is impossible to tell a creature that has been the subject of *set form* from any normal creature of the target's new species. Even a *true seeing* spell will not show that the subject ever inhabited a different body. Only a *wish*, *miracle* or actual divine intervention is capable of returning the subject of a *set form* spell to his original form.

Set form has no effect on the 4th level *polymorph* spell or on the 9th level *shapechange* spell.

Material Component: A chrysalis inhabited by a living butterfly.

Symbol of Hate

Enchantment (Compulsion) (Mind-Affecting)

Level: Clr 8, Sor/Wiz 8

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: 0 ft., see text

Effect: One symbol

Duration: See text

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell functions like *symbol of death*, save that all creatures who come within 60 feet of the activated *symbol of hate* instead become overwhelmed with hate, turning on the closest creature (friend or foe) and attacking ferociously with intent to kill for a number of rounds equal to the caster level of the *symbol*.

Unlike the *symbol of death* spell, there is no hit point limit; once triggered, a *symbol of hate* simply remains active for 10 minutes per level of the caster.

Note: Magic traps such as a *symbol of hate* are hard to detect and disable. A rogue, and only a rogue, can use the Search skill to find a *symbol of hate* and can use Disable Device to thwart it. The DC in each case is 25 + spell level, or 33 for *symbol of hate*.

Material Components: Mercury and phosphorous, plus powdered garnet and ruby worth at least 2,000 gp.

Symbol of Lust

Enchantment (Compulsion) (Mind-Affecting)

Level: Clr 6, Sor/Wiz 6

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: 0 ft., see text
Effect: One symbol
Duration: See text
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell functions like *symbol of death*, save that all creatures who come within 60 feet of the activated *symbol of lust* instead become overwhelmed with lust, consumed with carnal urges and an undeniable need to act upon them. Individuals affected by the *symbol of lust* can still defend themselves if directly attacked, but suffer a -4 penalty to all attack rolls, damage rolls, ability checks, skill checks and saving throws, as they are far too distracted to fight effectively. Individuals affected by the *symbol* who are not directly attacked must make a Will saving throw (at the same DC as the symbol) to engage in combat. Otherwise, they will seek to fulfil the urges the *symbol* has given them.

Unlike the *symbol of death* spell, there is no hit point limit; once triggered, a *symbol of lust* simply remains active for 10 minutes per level of the caster. The clergy of Belishtim the Dark Seducer use these *symbols* as part of their rituals.

Note: Magic traps such as a *symbol of lust* are hard to detect and disable. A rogue, and only a rogue, can use the Search skill to find a *symbol of lust* and can use Disable Device to thwart it. The DC in each case is 25 + spell level, or 31 for *symbol of lust*.

Material Components: Mercury and phosphorous, plus powdered diamond and sapphire worth at least 2,500 gp.

Thousand Feet

Illusion
Level: Clr 3, Sor/Wiz 3
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Personal
Effect: 20 ft. radius spread
Duration: 5 rounds/level
Saving Throw: Will disbelief
Spell Resistance: No

Thousand feet is all but useless to a spellcaster of the surface world, but in the Underdeep it can mean the

difference between life and death. When cast, *thousand feet* creates a drumming impact on the ground in a 20-foot radius around the caster. This has no effect on most people, who will only hear what sounds like dozens of running and jumping footsteps. To a creature that navigates and hunts by tremorsense, however, it renders the caster effectively invisible, as the creature cannot distinguish between the caster's footsteps and those created by the spell. The caster and anyone else within the area of effect for *thousand feet* are treated as having total concealment from any creature that relies on tremorsense.

Vile Infestation (Greater)

Conjuration (Summoning)
Level: Clr 9

Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One corporeal creature
Duration: 10 rounds (see text)
Saving Throw: Fortitude partial (see text)
Spell Resistance: Yes

Greater vile infestation infects the subject with a swarm of tiny vermin (in the case of priestesses of the Dark Mother, the infestation is of spiders, other deities of the drow have different vermin). The vermin manifest inside the target's body and immediately begin eating. The pain of this ordeal is so intense the subject of the spell is effectively paralysed and helpless for its duration. At the end of the spell, the vermin have eaten their fill, essentially hollowing the victim out from the inside and leaving him a dead and empty husk.

Each round this spell is in effect, the victim loses 10 percent of his total hit points to the feeding creatures. Applying magical healing to the target during this time will prolong the length of time it takes for the vermin to eat him from the inside out but is unlikely to save him from eventual death, as the vermin keep eating until there is nothing left. The only way to save a victim of *greater vile infestation* is by means of a *limited wish*, *wish* or *miracle*. Damage reduction is ineffective against the vermin created by *greater vile infestation*, although they can be driven away by a *repel vermin* spell.

A successful saving throw against *greater vile infestation* expels the vermin from the target's body after one round of feeding, costing him 10 percent of his current hit points.



Vile Infestation (Lesser)

Conjuration (Summoning)

Level: Clr 5

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One corporeal creature

Duration: 1 round

Saving Throw: Fortitude half

Spell Resistance: Yes

Lesser vile infestation infects the subject with a swarm of tiny vermin (in the case of priestesses of the Dark Mother, the infestation is of spiders, other deities of the drow have different vermin). The vermin manifest inside the target's body, just below the skin and immediately begin eating their way out. The spell inflicts 1d4 points of damage per level of the caster (maximum 10d4), and living creatures with a circulatory system take an additional point of damage per d4 in blood loss as the vermin burst through their skin. Creatures without a circulatory system, such as undead or plant-based creatures do not take this additional damage. Damage reduction is ineffective against the vermin created by *lesser vile infestation*.

Viper Bite

Transmutation

Level: Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting viper bite causes two of the caster's teeth to grow into fangs, which he can use to deliver a deadly poisonous bite. One of the caster's normal unarmed attacks each round becomes a bite attack, dealing a base d4 damage. The caster's fangs inject venom into the foe on any successful bite attack. This venom is enhanced by the power of the spell and may be resisted by successful Fortitude saves (DC 11 + caster level) for both initial and secondary damage (initial and secondary damage are both 1d6 Constitution).

Material Component: A drop of poison from any venomous snake.

New Magic Items

Armour Enhancements

Invisibility

By simply willing the magic to activate, the wearer of this armour can become *invisible*, as per the spell. The wearer may still be heard if he moves about in armour.

Faint Illusion; CL 5th; Craft Magic Arms and Armour; *invisibility*; Price +20,000 gp

Nimble

This armour is created with extra flexibility in all joints, and is enchanted to aid the wearer in performing several Dexterity-based skills. Armour with the nimble enchantment provides a +6 bonus to Balance, Escape Artist and Tumble checks. Any skill check penalties to armour still apply, according to armour type.

Faint Transmutation; CL 3rd; Craft Magic Arms and Armour; cat's grace; Price +18,000 gp

Specific Armour


Trollskin armour

This armour is made from the skin of a troll. The magic expended in its creation enables the armour to retain a portion of its regenerative capabilities and pass that ability on to its wearer. Though not as impressive as the regeneration of a living troll, this ability alone makes trollskin armour highly valued among the drow. Trollskin armour protects and encumbers exactly like *studded leather* +1 and it imbues its wearer with Regeneration 1, taking normal damage from fire and acid like a troll.

Strong Conjuration; CL 13th; Craft Magic Arms and Armour; *animate dead*, *regenerate*; 90,000 gp; Weight 20 lb.

Boneforged armour

Boneforged armour derives its primary magical abilities from the undead creature whose bones were used to create the armour. Any powers of the armour which depend upon the abilities of the undead are set at the time of the armour's creation, and may never be modified or added to in any way. However, it is still possible to add other armour enhancements (such as *nimble*) to the *boneforged* armour after the time of its creation. Magical *boneforged* armour must be enchanted to at least a +1 as part of the creation process; otherwise the bones will not retain any of the undead abilities. Further, the bones must be in large, contiguous pieces for the *boneforged* item to retain undead abilities, meaning that only armours such as the breastplate and half-plate can be made from the undead bones. Note that although armours such as half-plate and full plate consist of multiple plates of bone, the suit of armour is



considered a single whole, and thus cannot surpass a maximum bonus of +10.

Listed below are some of the armour abilities that can be created from the bones of the undead through *boneforging*.

Stench

Forged of the bones of a ghost, this armour gives off a powerful stench of death and corruption. All living creatures within 10 feet of the armour (except the wearer, who is immune), must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save or be sickened for 1d6+4 minutes. Any creature that successfully saves will not be affected by this ability again for 24 hours.

Faint Necromancy; CL 5th; Craft Magic Arms and Armour, Boneforging; *animate dead*; Price +1 bonus

Despair

Crafted from the bones of a mummy, this armour gives off an aura of despair. Any living creature who sets eyes upon the armour must succeed at a DC 16 Will save or be paralysed with fear for 1d4 rounds. Any creature that successfully saves will not be affected by this ability again for 24 hours.

Faint Necromancy; CL 6th; Craft Magic Arms and Armour, Boneforging; *animate dead*; Price +2 bonus

Damage Reduction

Forged from the bones of a vampire, this armour retains the creature's damage reduction abilities, passing them on to the wearer of the armour. The creature that wears this armour gains damage reduction 10/silver and magic as a constant effect so long as the armour is worn.

Moderate Necromancy; CL 9th; Craft Magic Arms and Armour, Boneforging; *animate dead*; Price +3 bonus

Resistance

Forged from the bones of a vampire, this armour retains the creature's elemental resistance abilities, passing them on to the wearer of the armour. The creature that wears this armour gains cold resistance 10 and electrical resistance 10 as a constant effect so long as the armour is worn.

Faint Necromancy; CL 5th; Craft Magic Arms and Armour, Boneforging; *animate dead*; Price +2 bonus

Weapons

Boneforged Weapons

Boneforged weapons derive their primary magical abilities from the undead creature whose bones were used to create

the weapon. Any powers of the weapon which depend upon the abilities of the undead are set at the time of the weapon's creation, and may never be modified or added to in any way. However, it is still possible to add other weapon enhancements (such as *anarchic*) to the *boneforged* weapon after the time of its creation. Magical *boneforged* weapons must be enchanted to at least a +1 as part of the creation process; otherwise the bones will not retain any of the undead abilities.

Listed below are some of the weapon abilities that can be created from the bones of the undead through *boneforging*.

Paralysis, Lesser

Forged of the bones of a ghoulish creature, anyone hit by this weapon must succeed on a DC 12 Fortitude save or be paralysed for 1d4+1 rounds.

Faint Necromancy; CL 5th; Craft Magic Arms and Armour, Boneforging; *animate dead*; Price +1 bonus

Paralysis, Greater

Forged of the bones of a ghost, anyone hit by this weapon must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save or be paralysed for 1d4+1 rounds.

Faint Necromancy; CL 6th; Craft Magic Arms and Armour, Boneforging; *animate dead*; Price +2 bonus

Rotting

Crafted of the desiccated bones of a mummy, the weapon is able to inflict the magical disease mummy rot upon any creature struck by it. The victim must succeed in a DC 16 Fortitude save or be infected. The disease progresses exactly like mummy rot (see *MM*) and may be cured in the same way.

Moderate Necromancy; CL 9th; Craft Magic Arms and Armour, Boneforging; *animate dead*; Price +3 bonus

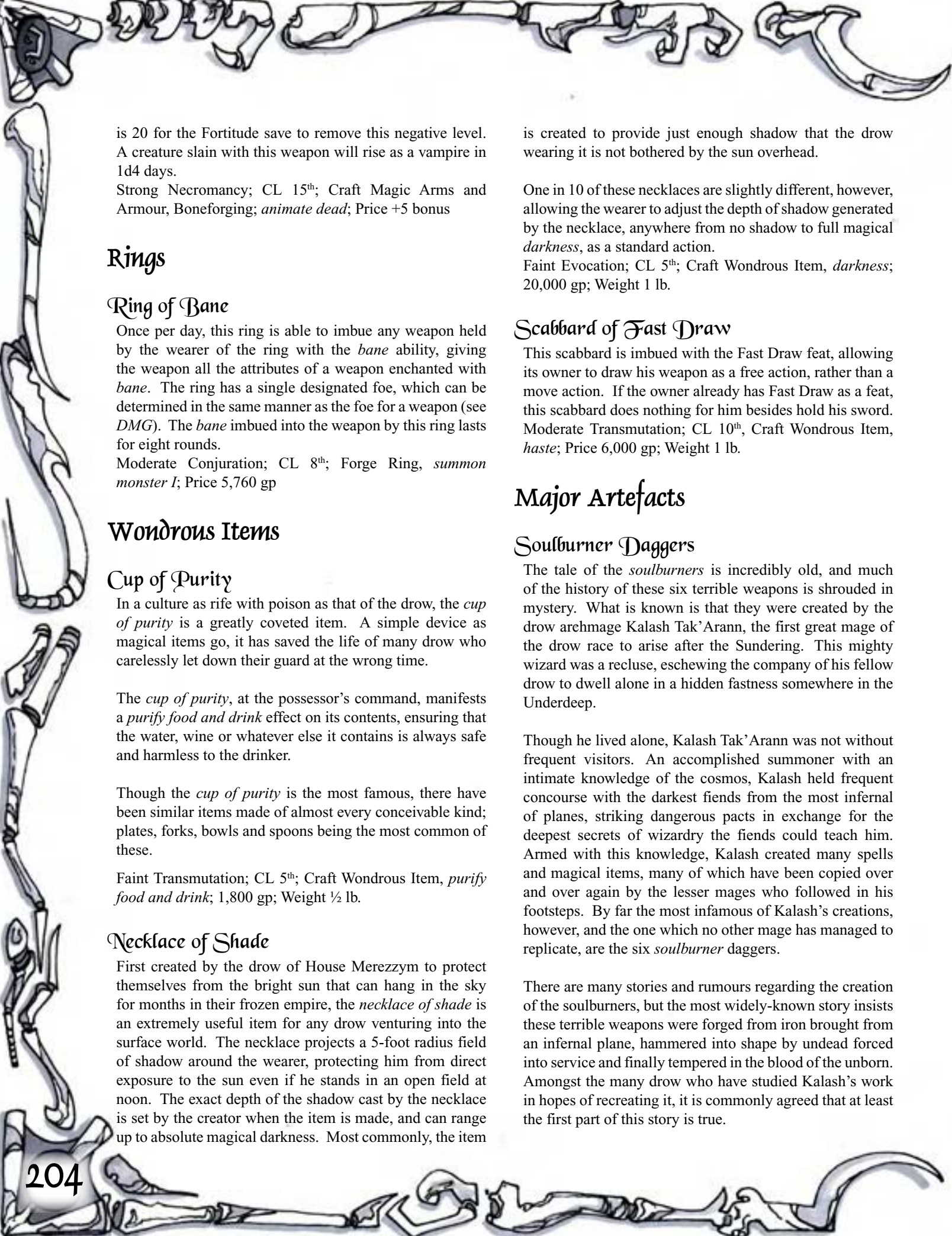
Energy Drain, Lesser

Moulded from the bones of a wight, this item drips with unlife. On a critical hit with this weapon, the target of the blow gains one negative level. The DC is 14 for the Fortitude save to remove this negative level. A creature slain with this weapon will rise as a wight in 1d4 days.

Strong Necromancy; CL 12th; Craft Magic Arms and Armour, Boneforging; *animate dead*; Price +4 bonus

Energy Drain, Greater

Moulded from the bones of a vampire, this item all but shimmers with undeath. On a critical hit with this weapon, the target of the blow gains two negative levels. The DC



is 20 for the Fortitude save to remove this negative level. A creature slain with this weapon will rise as a vampire in 1d4 days.

Strong Necromancy; CL 15th; Craft Magic Arms and Armour, Boneforging; *animate dead*; Price +5 bonus

Rings

Ring of Bane

Once per day, this ring is able to imbue any weapon held by the wearer of the ring with the *bane* ability, giving the weapon all the attributes of a weapon enchanted with *bane*. The ring has a single designated foe, which can be determined in the same manner as the foe for a weapon (see *DMG*). The *bane* imbued into the weapon by this ring lasts for eight rounds.

Moderate Conjunction; CL 8th; Forge Ring, *summon monster I*; Price 5,760 gp

Wondrous Items

Cup of Purity

In a culture as rife with poison as that of the drow, the *cup of purity* is a greatly coveted item. A simple device as magical items go, it has saved the life of many drow who carelessly let down their guard at the wrong time.

The *cup of purity*, at the possessor's command, manifests a *purify food and drink* effect on its contents, ensuring that the water, wine or whatever else it contains is always safe and harmless to the drinker.

Though the *cup of purity* is the most famous, there have been similar items made of almost every conceivable kind; plates, forks, bowls and spoons being the most common of these.

Faint Transmutation; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *purify food and drink*; 1,800 gp; Weight ½ lb.

Necklace of Shade

First created by the drow of House Merezzym to protect themselves from the bright sun that can hang in the sky for months in their frozen empire, the *necklace of shade* is an extremely useful item for any drow venturing into the surface world. The necklace projects a 5-foot radius field of shadow around the wearer, protecting him from direct exposure to the sun even if he stands in an open field at noon. The exact depth of the shadow cast by the necklace is set by the creator when the item is made, and can range up to absolute magical darkness. Most commonly, the item

is created to provide just enough shadow that the drow wearing it is not bothered by the sun overhead.

One in 10 of these necklaces are slightly different, however, allowing the wearer to adjust the depth of shadow generated by the necklace, anywhere from no shadow to full magical *darkness*, as a standard action.

Faint Evocation; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *darkness*; 20,000 gp; Weight 1 lb.

Scabbard of Fast Draw

This scabbard is imbued with the Fast Draw feat, allowing its owner to draw his weapon as a free action, rather than a move action. If the owner already has Fast Draw as a feat, this scabbard does nothing for him besides hold his sword. Moderate Transmutation; CL 10th, Craft Wondrous Item, *haste*; Price 6,000 gp; Weight 1 lb.


Major Artefacts

Soulburner Daggers

The tale of the *soulburners* is incredibly old, and much of the history of these six terrible weapons is shrouded in mystery. What is known is that they were created by the drow archmage Kalash Tak'Arann, the first great mage of the drow race to arise after the Sundering. This mighty wizard was a recluse, eschewing the company of his fellow drow to dwell alone in a hidden fastness somewhere in the Underdeep.

Though he lived alone, Kalash Tak'Arann was not without frequent visitors. An accomplished summoner with an intimate knowledge of the cosmos, Kalash held frequent discourse with the darkest fiends from the most infernal of planes, striking dangerous pacts in exchange for the deepest secrets of wizardry the fiends could teach him. Armed with this knowledge, Kalash created many spells and magical items, many of which have been copied over and over again by the lesser mages who followed in his footsteps. By far the most infamous of Kalash's creations, however, and the one which no other mage has managed to replicate, are the six *soulburner* daggers.

There are many stories and rumours regarding the creation of the soulburners, but the most widely-known story insists these terrible weapons were forged from iron brought from an infernal plane, hammered into shape by undead forced into service and finally tempered in the blood of the unborn. Amongst the many drow who have studied Kalash's work in hopes of recreating it, it is commonly agreed that at least the first part of this story is true.



The human wizard's eyes lit up as she scanned the text, and Lyrgern studied her face carefully to assess her reaction.

'Something of interest?' he asked blandly.

'Yes,' she mumbled distractedly, her eyes flashing across the page before her. 'The soulburners. I had heard of them ... there are rumours ... but I never knew if there was any truth to them at all.'

'There is,' Lyrgern nodded. 'A good deal of truth. As with all such things, there are a number of useless myths surrounding the daggers, but the core of the story is true. They do exist.'

The wizard shifted her weight on the cold, rough lump of stone serving as her chair. 'This tells me one of the daggers is destroyed, another is forever lost, and three others are thought to be under the control of different factions.'

'Correct,' Lyrgern said, all but certain he knew exactly where the human was headed. With a bit of concentration, he kept the smile off of his face.

'That leaves one more,' she continued. 'There is no indication in this text of its whereabouts. Is there anyone who knows what has become of it?'

Still fighting off his smile, Lyrgern spread his hands and shrugged. 'Who can say?'

Once created, the *soulburners* were entrusted to Kalash's demonic servants. The wizard's power and isolation had drawn the attention of many potential rivals over the years, mages from the drow and other Underdeep races who sought to claim Kalash's knowledge and treasures for their own. The great wizard sent his servants to find these enemies and to slay them utterly with the power of the soulburners.

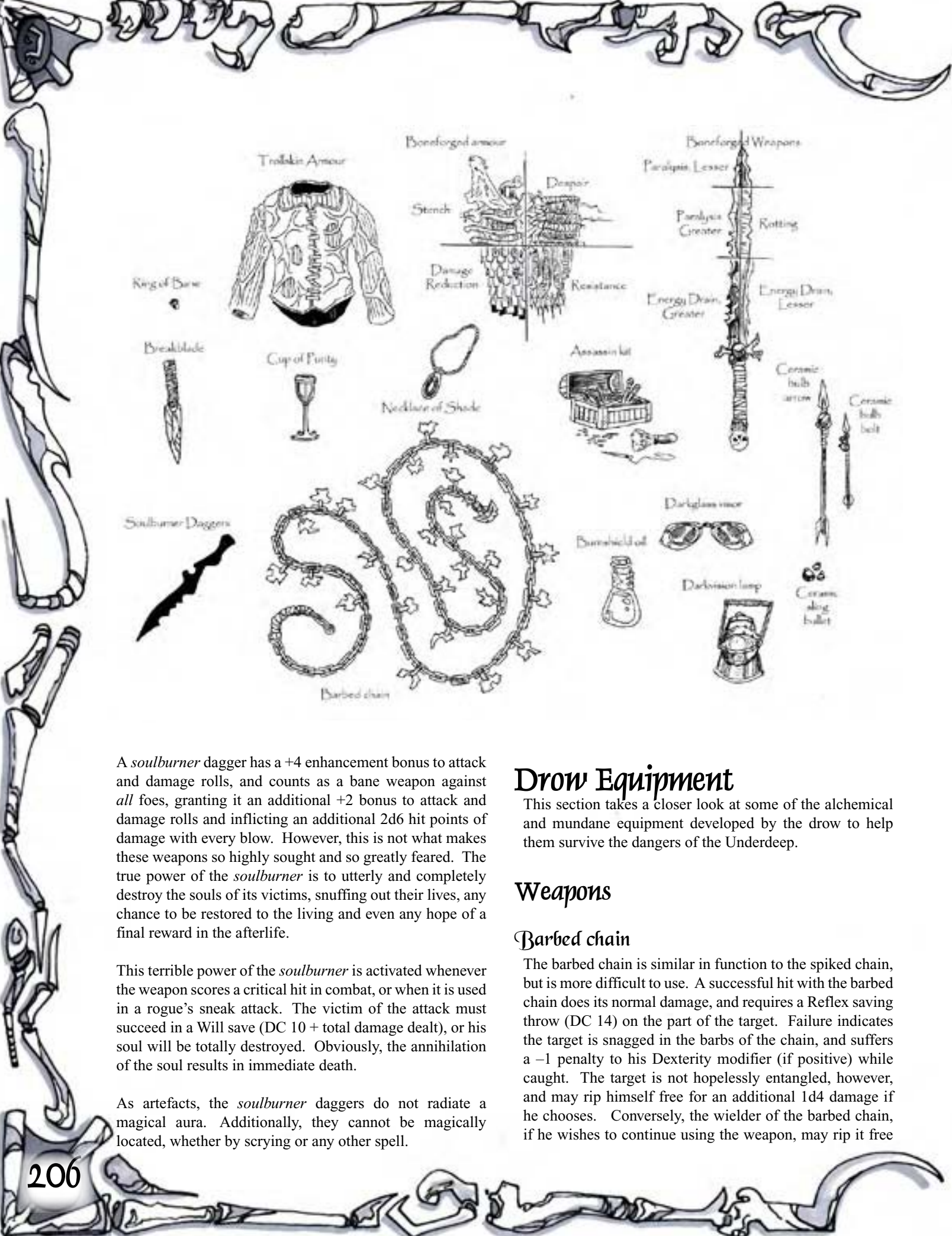
What eventually became of Kalash is unknown. After more than a century of slaying all who opposed him, the mighty wizard vanished. His demonic slaves appeared in the cities of the drow one final time, gifting the six *soulburners* to six drow apparently chosen at random, before departing for the last time to their infernal homes.

In the time since, two of the *soulburners* have been irretrievably lost or destroyed. The first of these was in the possession of Morlosh Gasshan, a famed assassin who was slain by the vengeful family of his last victim. Unfortunately, the battle took place in the lowest levels of the city of Thak Rulush, where a spider web of narrow bridges is suspended over a massive pool of magma, and the final blow against Morlosh drove him over the edge of a bridge into the molten rock below, forever entombing the *soulburner* he carried. The second *soulburner* was

destroyed in a mighty battle pitting House Arras'zur and House Narrishtah against a host of shangu. A spell intended to undo any magical advantage the drow might have had succeeded dramatically, destroying even the power of the *soulburner* carried by the captain of House Arras'zur. The destruction of the *soulburner* ripped a hole through the planes, effectively ending the battle when a horde of demons began vomiting forth from the rift.

What has become of the other four *soulburners* is unknown, as the owners of these weapons go to great lengths to conceal them. It is widely suspected, however, that at least one of them is in the hands of the followers of Mu'Ushket, that another is under the control of the Circle of Five, the rulers of the Cabal and that still another is possessed by House na'Khotan. The fate of the fourth, much like the location of Kalash Tak'Arann's hidden home, remains a mystery.

The *soulburner* daggers are simple, unembellished weapons in appearance. The colour of the blade is a grey so deep it borders on black, and the metal reflects no light. The dagger is formed of a single piece of metal, from point to pommel. When created, the *soulburners'* hilts were wrapped in the scaly hide of shangu, but this would certainly have been replaced by now.



A *soulburner* dagger has a +4 enhancement bonus to attack and damage rolls, and counts as a bane weapon against *all* foes, granting it an additional +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls and inflicting an additional 2d6 hit points of damage with every blow. However, this is not what makes these weapons so highly sought and so greatly feared. The true power of the *soulburner* is to utterly and completely destroy the souls of its victims, snuffing out their lives, any chance to be restored to the living and even any hope of a final reward in the afterlife.

This terrible power of the *soulburner* is activated whenever the weapon scores a critical hit in combat, or when it is used in a rogue's sneak attack. The victim of the attack must succeed in a Will save (DC 10 + total damage dealt), or his soul will be totally destroyed. Obviously, the annihilation of the soul results in immediate death.

As artefacts, the *soulburner* daggers do not radiate a magical aura. Additionally, they cannot be magically located, whether by scrying or any other spell.

Drow Equipment

This section takes a closer look at some of the alchemical and mundane equipment developed by the drow to help them survive the dangers of the Underdeep.

Weapons

Barbed chain

The barbed chain is similar in function to the spiked chain, but is more difficult to use. A successful hit with the barbed chain does its normal damage, and requires a Reflex saving throw (DC 14) on the part of the target. Failure indicates the target is snagged in the barbs of the chain, and suffers a -1 penalty to his Dexterity modifier (if positive) while caught. The target is not hopelessly entangled, however, and may rip himself free for an additional 1d4 damage if he chooses. Conversely, the wielder of the barbed chain, if he wishes to continue using the weapon, may rip it free

Drow Weapons

Weapon	Cost	Dmg (S)	Dmg (M)	Critical	Range Increment	Weight	Type
<i>Simple Weapons</i>							
Breakblade	4 gp	1d3	1d4	19-20/x2*	-	1 lb.	Piercing
<i>Exotic Weapons</i>							
Chain, barbed	30 gp	1d6**	2d4**	x2	-	10 lb.	Piercing
<i>Ranged Weapons</i>							
Ceramic bulb arrow (20)	5 gp	As bow	As bow	As bow	As bow	4 lb.	Piercing
Ceramic bulb bolt (10)	5 gp	As crossbow	As crossbow	As crossbow	As crossbow	2 lb.	Piercing
Ceramic sling bullet (10)	4 gp	As sling	As sling	As sling	As sling	4 lb.	Bludgeoning

* This weapon's properties allow it to do increased damage on any hit that inflicts full damage, or on a critical hit. See description for details.

** This weapon may entangle a foe and cause additional damage. See description for details.

himself as part of the attack action, causing 1d4 damage to the target (in addition to the weapon damage already imposed). If the attacker rolls a natural 1 on his attack roll with a barbed chain, the cruel hooks of the weapon snag on one another, and the attacker must spend 1d3 rounds untangling the chain before it can be effectively used as a weapon again.

Breakblade

These daggers seem on inspection to be the epitome of shoddy craftsmanship, as, indeed, they are meant to be. Generally used as an off-hand weapon, the breakblade will shatter inside the wound on any strike that does maximum damage or scores a critical hit. The jagged shards of metal will continue to cause damage as long as the target engages in strenuous activity (like combat), inflicting 1d2 points of damage every round until magical healing or the Heal skill is applied to the subject. Breakblades often have a hollow core, containing a reservoir of poison to be dumped into the wound alongside the broken shards of metal. The intentionally poor construction of a breakblade gives it half the hardness and hit points of a normal weapon of its type.

Ceramic bulb arrow

The ceramic bulb arrow is made by the drow of House Pelshothe. Behind the razor-sharp ceramic tip of the arrow is a hollow ceramic bulb, intended to burst when it enters the target's body. House Pelshothe is nothing if not resourceful, and over the years have filled the hollow bulbs of their arrows with all manner of things. Most commonly, the bulbs are filled with poison, or with a pebble on which a spell of some kind has been cast (such as *darkness*, which,

confined by the bulb, now plunges the target of the arrow into pitch dark). Most famous, however, are the bulb arrows filled with black pudding, grey ooze or ochre jelly. For more information about ceramic items, see the entry in this chapter.

Ceramic bulb bolt

As a ceramic bulb arrow, but made for crossbows.

Ceramic sling bullet

Ceramic sling bullets mimic the ceramic bulb ammunition in many ways, but are, if anything, more versatile. Though often simply a hurled version of the bulb ammunition, some ceramic sling bullets actually come in two hemispheres, held together by a bit of adhesive. This makes it easier to add something such as poison to the ammunition at the last minute. A side effect of this split construction of the ceramic sling bullets has been capitalised on recently by House Pelshothe with the addition of *fire trap* spells to the ammunition.

Armour

The drow commonly wear armour of steel for protection, and armour composed of mithral and adamantite is more frequently seen in the lands of the dark elves than in any nation of the surface world. However, the drow have also adopted materials for armour that are rarely, if ever, seen outside the Underdeep. From the grotesquery of boneforged armour to the bright colours of ceramic to the hides of strange beasts, the drow have learned to use every

tool and resource at their disposal to protect themselves from the perils of the Underdeep.

Aboleth hide

Aboleth hide is the preferred armour of the aquatic drow, not only because of its superb properties as armour, but because it is made from the flensed skin of their most hated enemy, the aboleth. The aquatic drow alone possess the specific alchemical knowledge of how to flay and prepare the aboleth skin to create this exceptional armour, a secret few other races are terribly interested in knowing because of the one tremendous drawback to aboleth hide. The armour must be kept wet at all times and if removed from water (or other suitable liquid) for as much as an hour, it will begin

to irreversibly degrade. Within one day, the armour will become useless, as thin and brittle as paper.

Morgoshe hide

Aquatic drow who cannot have aboleth hide turn instead to morgoshe hide, a slightly less effective armour made from the skin of a slightly less hated foe. Unlike aboleth hide, however, this armour will not degrade when it dries out, making it an attractive purchase for land-bound creatures.

Lorgreln cold armour

Though the iron drow have few wizards among their number, the alchemical skills of the race have led to the

Drow Armour

Armour	Cost	Armour Bonus	Max Dex Bonus	Armour Check Penalty	Arcane Spell Failure	Speed 30 ft.	Speed 20 ft.	Weight
<i>Light Armour</i>								
Aboleth hide	500 gp*	+6**	+5	0	10%	30 ft.	20 ft.	15 lb.
Boneforged studded leather	100 gp	+3	+5	0	10%	30 ft.	20 ft.	20 lb.
Ceramic studded leather	20 gp	+3	+5	-1	12%	30 ft.	20 ft.	16 lb.
Morgoshe hide	250 gp	+4	+4	-2	20%	30 ft.	20 ft.	15 lb.
<i>Medium Armour</i>								
Boneforged breastplate	300 gp	+5	+3	-4	25%	30 ft.	20 ft.	20 lb.
Ceramic breastplate	150 gp	+5	+3	-4	20%	30 ft.	20 ft.	25 lb.
Spidersilk armour	300 gp	+5	+5	-4	30%	25 ft.	15 ft.	30 lb.
Worm armour	5,000 gp*	+9	+3	-3	30%	25 ft.	15 ft.	30 lb.
<i>Heavy armour</i>								
Boneforged half-plate	1,000 gp	+7	+0	-7	40%	20 ft.	15 ft.	35 lb.
Boneforged full plate	2,500 gp	+8	+1	-6	35%	20 ft.	15 ft.	35 lb.
Ceramic banded mail	225 gp	+6	+1	-6	30%	20 ft.	15 ft.	30 lb.
Ceramic full plate	1,400 gp	+8	+1	-6	35%	20 ft.	15 ft.	40 lb.
Lorgreln cold armour	2,500 gp	+6	+0	-6	75%	20 ft.	15 ft.	60 lb.

* These armours are not made available for purchase by the race that constructs them. The listed price indicates the average price for purchasing such a set from another party. Games Masters should feel free to deny Player Characters the option to purchase these armours.


** This armour retains its bonus only so long as it remains wet.



Aboleth hide



Morgoshe hide



Lorgreln cold armour



Spidersilk armour



Worm armour



Wetgarls



Storage garment

creation of Lorgreln cold armour, forged entirely of cold iron and treated with alchemical processes to make it particularly baleful to mages of all stripes. The cold armour enhances the natural spell resistance of the wearer, granting him an additional +5 to his spell resistance. A creature without spell resistance will gain it while wearing the armour, though at SR 5, it is unlikely to be of much help. Cold armour is heavy and ugly, formed of thick, hammered plates and difficult to move about in.

Spidersilk armour

This lightweight, resilient armour is crafted from the silk of enormous spiders. Though heavier than the gossamer threads of a smaller spider, the cords of silk are perfect for protecting the wearer from injury.

Worm armour

This truly exceptional armour is made from the hide of a purple worm. Only the deep drow know the proper means of preparation, a secret they share with no one. Owning worm armour is a mark of great importance in deep drow society, and they will surely attack any outsider they find

wearing it without mercy. The deep drow are enormously protective of their purple worms and do not slaughter them for their hide. Only after the worm has died of some other cause will the deep drow harvest what they need to make worm armour. The average purple worm is large enough to provide enough hide for 10 suits of worm armour.

Boneforged Armour and Weapons

The feral drow are the only dark elves with the necessary knowledge to create true *boneforged* armour. This armour is almost as strong and resilient as steel (it has 90 percent of the hardness and hit points of a comparable steel item), but at only two-thirds the weight. With the exception of boneforged studded leather, the feral drow only create *boneforged* armours that involve large, contiguous pieces of bone, such as the breastplate. *Boneforged* armour is not sold or traded by the feral drow, and may only be purchased as salvage.

Boneforged weapons have the same properties as *boneforged* armour when compared to steel; it is very nearly as strong, but at only two-thirds the weight. As like the armour, *boneforged* weapons are only available as salvage. It is exceptionally rare to find any *boneforged* weapon aside from the following: falchion, rapier, scimitar, shortspear and short bow.

Ceramic items

The drow of House Pelshothe are famous amongst the cultures of the dark elves for their complete refusal to use any manner of metal armour, weapons or tools. During the long years after the Sundering, House Pelshothe dwelt in an area of the Underdeep where there was little or no metal to be had, and thus were forced to develop their signature ceramic devices to compensate. They now view the use of metal (beyond simple adornments) as a betrayal of their past, and despite the ease with which they could acquire any metal they desired, they eschew it all in favour of continued use of their ceramics.

The ceramic items created by House Pelshothe are uncommonly strong, durable and light. Armour made from these ceramics protects as well as armour forged of steel, but the arcane spell failure chance and weight are approximately 75 to 80 percent of that of steel armour. Weapons made of ceramic are also as effective as their steel counterparts but have the same reduction percentage in weight as does ceramic armour. However, ceramic does not have the same durability and flexibility as steel. The hardness and hit points of ceramic items are only 75 percent of that of the same item when made of steel. Further, ceramic items that have been damaged cannot be conventionally repaired, as steel can. To repair a damaged ceramic item, one must use either *make whole* or *mending*.

Armour made of ceramic offers fewer options than steel. The drow of House Pelshothe have been practicing the

creation of these ceramics for thousands of years, but have never managed to produce an effective ceramic version of chain mail. This makes such armours as chain shirt, chain mail and half-plate unavailable in a ceramic version. Obviously, ceramics cannot be used to create soft and pliable armours (the ceramic studded leather listed above is for hard leather covered with ceramic studs).

It is possible for House Pelshothe to produce a ceramic version of almost any weapon, unless the weapon's function demands a great deal of flexibility (as in a rapier) or the weapon is jointed (as in a spiked chain).

Ceramic items are widely available throughout the Underdeep. House Pelshothe keeps the secrets of their manufacture closely guarded, but the drow of that House are extremely active in trading with other drow and even other races, and have found that their ceramic items are in consistent demand, lending to their easy availability and slightly lower price. House Pelshothe will create items to order, at roughly double the listed price for the non-ceramic version of the item. Ceramic items come in a riot of colours, and a special order item will be whatever colour the buyer desires.

Adventuring Gear

Assassin kit

This small kit is designed to help the assassin in his task. It contains room for five poisons and their antidotes, as well as various small pouches for additional ingredients, should the owner need to fabricate more poison. It also includes various means of delivering poison, such as a brush to apply poison to a blade, a needle and a long, slender thread of silk. The purchase price does not include poison.

Drow Adventuring Gear, Special Substances & Items

Item	Cost	Weight
<i>Adventuring Gear</i>		
Assassin kit	10 gp	1 ½ lb.
Darkglass visor	70 gp	3 lb.
Storage garment	*	**
<i>Special Substances and Items</i>		
Burnshield oil	600 gp	½ lb.
Darkvision lamp	1,000 gp	2 lb.
Wetgarb	200 gp	10 lb.

* Base cost of the item of clothing, plus 50 percent

** This adds no weight to the clothing, though obviously any items stored in it might



Darkglass visor

This item is considered indispensable to drow venturing into the sunlit lands, or to any drow intending to use or be near bright light of any kind. It is a somewhat bulky set of goggles of darkened glass set into a leather or *na'orsuin* headset. Any race that suffers sensitivity to bright light (such as the drow) can wear the darkglass visor without fear of suffering any penalties if exposed to such light. However, the glass does limit the range of vision, restricting drow to a 90 feet. darkvision limit.

Storage garment

A storage garment may be created as any of a number of different styles of clothing, but all have one thing in common -- the sleeves of a storage garment are long and wide. Inside these sleeves are various pouches and loops for holding small items, from spell components to a small blade. A character who packs the storage garment himself and practices withdrawing items from it can remove an item from one of the sleeves as a free action.

Special Substances and Items

Burnshield oil

This oil is as dangerous as it is useful. When spread over the skin and possessions, it creates a thick, greasy coat, providing protection from acid by granting the wearer resistance to acid equal to 20 points per round. This protection lasts for one hour, at which time the oil denatures into a contact poison (initial damage 1d6 Con, secondary damage 1d6 Dex), which will require the wearer of the oil to make a Fortitude save (DC 12).

Darkvision lamp

This alchemical lamp glows with a soft light that is only visible to darkvision. It does nothing to extend the range of darkvision, but is visible to a creature with darkvision out to twice the range of the creature's darkvision. It is often used by drow to coordinate attacks on creatures to which the light of the lamp is invisible.

Wetgarb

Wetgarb is a bulky set of clothing made by the aquatic drow. Using the fibres of underwater plants in its construction, wetgarb is able to retain more water than any normal cloth. By wearing wetgarb, an aquatic drow can remain out of the water for as much as three days before suffering any ill effects. The wetgarb does make a slight squishing noise

when the wearer walks, however, imposing a -2 penalty on any Move Silently skill checks.

Slaves

The drow have been keeping slaves since their descent into the Underdeep. After all, as the drow consider themselves superior to all other races on or below the surface of the world, it is only right these other races be made to serve them.

Slaves perform a multitude of functions in drow society, from fighting in gladiatorial matches to cleaning the streets, labour, war and pleasure. Over the years, the drow have learned which races are most adept at any given function. For example, ogres are excellent for heavy labour while kobolds, properly motivated, do an admirable job of keeping the streets of drow cities clean.

Those slaves which are simply intended for heavy, tedious work until death takes them are rarely trained any more than is required, and the drow slavers can count on the lash and hunger to keep them in line. However, for slaves destined for a more complex role or one which involves serving their drow master more closely, such as slaves needed for pleasure, as servants or as bodyguards, slave training may be in order. There are several drow Noble Houses that specialise in training slaves to be sincerely obedient servants. As every race has different motivations and weaknesses, drow slave trainers usually concentrate in only one or two different species, though those Noble Houses with a large interest in slave training will have easy access to multiple trainers for almost any race.

Below is a list of the races drow most commonly keep as slaves, and the uses to which those slaves are most commonly put. The drow will rarely, if at all, attempt to enslave a member of one of the 'dangerous' races, nor will they enslave a creature that cannot survive in the environment of the Underdeep. For example, the drow would never try to keep a shangu bound in servitude, as those abominations are simply too dangerous. Likewise, they would never keep an aboleth in bondage, for not only is the creature innately dangerous, it could not survive in the environment of a drow city without special care.

Bugbear

Moderately intelligent and quite strong, bugbears have a variety of uses as slaves for the drow. Those who have been well-trained may be used as foremen or overseers for a group of slaves from a weaker species, such as goblins or halflings or even humans. Many bugbears are also used in gladiatorial contests, often pitted against a smaller number



of drow warriors that the dark elves may practice fighting against a more numerous foe. Lastly, bugbear slaves are used for war, where they serve as shock troops.

Drow

Drow are not often enslaved by other drow. When it does happen, it is a truly terrible fate for the drow in question. Drow slaves are never used as mere manual labour. Rather, they are subjected to the most intense training available, thereafter serving their new masters faithfully as bodyguards, personal servants or pleasure slaves. More often than not, the slave's new master is a drow who was his sworn enemy while he was free.

Dwarf, Duergar

The grey dwarves of the Underdeep are difficult to control, though not quite as stubborn and wilful as their hill and mountain cousins. Though all dwarf societies tend to be exceptionally lawful and concerned with tradition, the duergar culture has a way of stamping out individuality which makes the grey dwarves slightly more pliable than their kin. Duergar slaves are used for engineering and mining work, where their natural ability with stone proves very useful.

Dwarf, Hill or Mountain

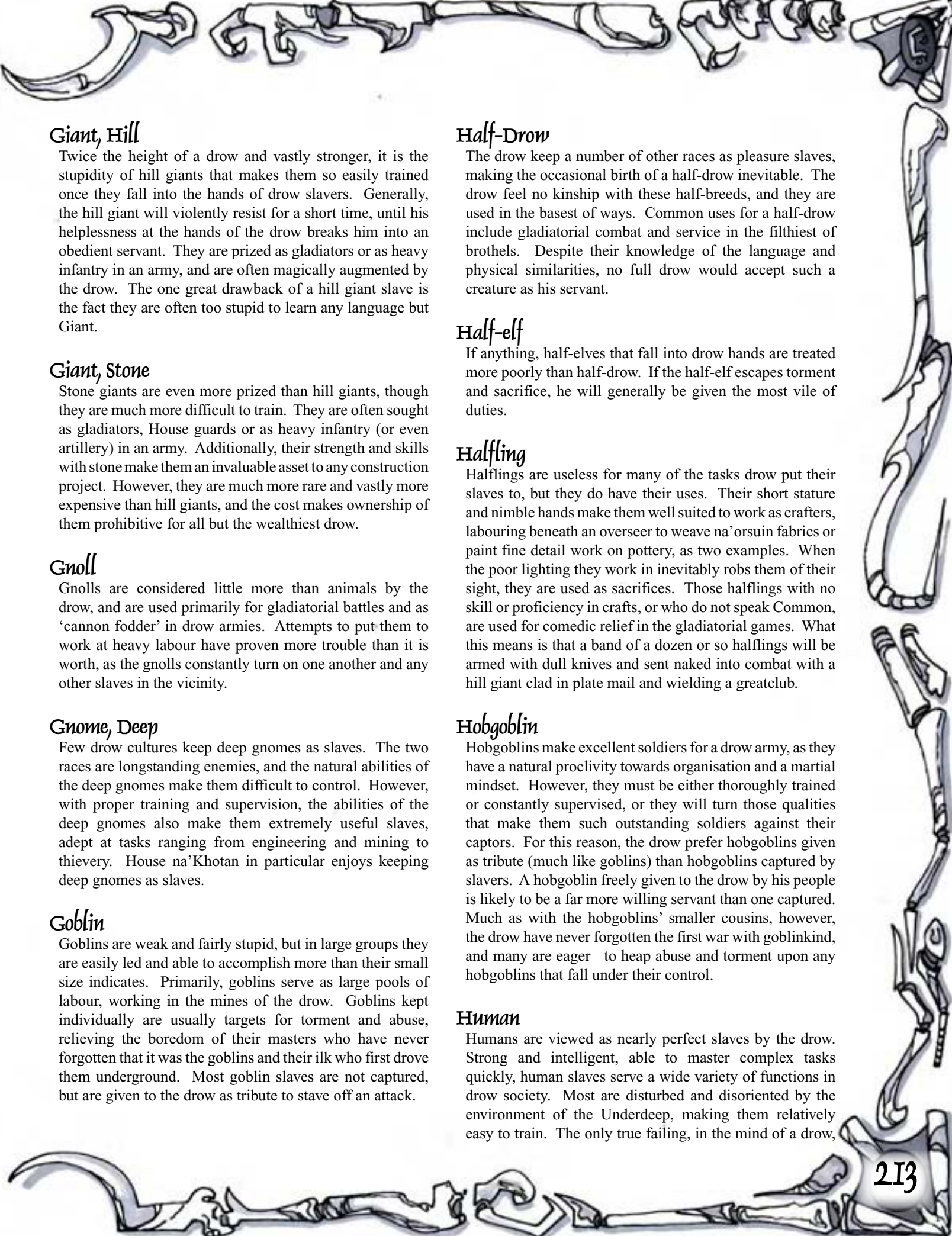
Dwarves are almost never kept as slaves by the drow, as they are, quite simply, almost impossible to break. Further, dwarven nations will not permit one of their own to remain a prisoner of the drow; wars have literally been started over the enslavement of a single dwarf. Still, the dwarves have such skill and talent in working with stone that some drow are willing to risk the consequences.

Elf

Elves of the surface are almost never kept as slaves of the drow. The unfortunate elf that falls into the clutches of his vengeful underground cousins is almost certainly doomed to a short life of agony and humiliation of every kind imaginable, until he ends his last miserable days on the altar of one of the drow gods.

Ettin

Despite their great strength, ettins are unpopular as slaves. Having two heads to contend with and neither one possessing much intelligence can also make training an ettin a long and exasperating affair. Ettins generally are used in gladiatorial contests, and sometimes as heavy infantry in a drow army.



Giant, Hill

Twice the height of a drow and vastly stronger, it is the stupidity of hill giants that makes them so easily trained once they fall into the hands of drow slavers. Generally, the hill giant will violently resist for a short time, until his helplessness at the hands of the drow breaks him into an obedient servant. They are prized as gladiators or as heavy infantry in an army, and are often magically augmented by the drow. The one great drawback of a hill giant slave is the fact they are often too stupid to learn any language but Giant.

Giant, Stone

Stone giants are even more prized than hill giants, though they are much more difficult to train. They are often sought as gladiators, House guards or as heavy infantry (or even artillery) in an army. Additionally, their strength and skills with stone make them an invaluable asset to any construction project. However, they are much more rare and vastly more expensive than hill giants, and the cost makes ownership of them prohibitive for all but the wealthiest drow.

Gnoll

Gnolls are considered little more than animals by the drow, and are used primarily for gladiatorial battles and as 'cannon fodder' in drow armies. Attempts to put them to work at heavy labour have proven more trouble than it is worth, as the gnolls constantly turn on one another and any other slaves in the vicinity.

Gnome, Deep

Few drow cultures keep deep gnomes as slaves. The two races are longstanding enemies, and the natural abilities of the deep gnomes make them difficult to control. However, with proper training and supervision, the abilities of the deep gnomes also make them extremely useful slaves, adept at tasks ranging from engineering and mining to thievery. House na'Khotan in particular enjoys keeping deep gnomes as slaves.

Goblin

Goblins are weak and fairly stupid, but in large groups they are easily led and able to accomplish more than their small size indicates. Primarily, goblins serve as large pools of labour, working in the mines of the drow. Goblins kept individually are usually targets for torment and abuse, relieving the boredom of their masters who have never forgotten that it was the goblins and their ilk who first drove them underground. Most goblin slaves are not captured, but are given to the drow as tribute to stave off an attack.

Half-Drow

The drow keep a number of other races as pleasure slaves, making the occasional birth of a half-drow inevitable. The drow feel no kinship with these half-breeds, and they are used in the basest of ways. Common uses for a half-drow include gladiatorial combat and service in the filthiest of brothels. Despite their knowledge of the language and physical similarities, no full drow would accept such a creature as his servant.

Half-elf

If anything, half-elves that fall into drow hands are treated more poorly than half-drow. If the half-elf escapes torment and sacrifice, he will generally be given the most vile of duties.

Halfling

Halflings are useless for many of the tasks drow put their slaves to, but they do have their uses. Their short stature and nimble hands make them well suited to work as crafters, labouring beneath an overseer to weave na'orsuin fabrics or paint fine detail work on pottery, as two examples. When the poor lighting they work in inevitably robs them of their sight, they are used as sacrifices. Those halflings with no skill or proficiency in crafts, or who do not speak Common, are used for comedic relief in the gladiatorial games. What this means is that a band of a dozen or so halflings will be armed with dull knives and sent naked into combat with a hill giant clad in plate mail and wielding a greatclub.

Hobgoblin

Hobgoblins make excellent soldiers for a drow army, as they have a natural proclivity towards organisation and a martial mindset. However, they must be either thoroughly trained or constantly supervised, or they will turn those qualities that make them such outstanding soldiers against their captors. For this reason, the drow prefer hobgoblins given as tribute (much like goblins) than hobgoblins captured by slavers. A hobgoblin freely given to the drow by his people is likely to be a far more willing servant than one captured. Much as with the hobgoblins' smaller cousins, however, the drow have never forgotten the first war with goblinkind, and many are eager to heap abuse and torment upon any hobgoblins that fall under their control.

Human

Humans are viewed as nearly perfect slaves by the drow. Strong and intelligent, able to master complex tasks quickly, human slaves serve a wide variety of functions in drow society. Most are disturbed and disoriented by the environment of the Underdeep, making them relatively easy to train. The only true failing, in the mind of a drow,



Price List for Slaves

Race	Base Cost	Skilled	Trained
Bugbear	100 gp	+25%	+50%
Drow	500 gp	+50%	+125%
Dwarf, Duergar	125 gp	+50%	+50%
Dwarf, Hill or Mountain	200 gp	+150%	+200%
Elf	150 gp	N/A	N/A
Ettin	550 gp	+10%	+100%
Giant, Hill	800 gp	+20%	+125%
Giant, Stone	1250 gp	+25%	+150%
Gnoll	90 gp	+25%	+50%
Gnome, Deep	50 gp	+100%	+200%
Goblin	20 gp	+50%	+50%
Half-drow	150 gp	+50%	+100%
Half-elf	150 gp	+50%	+100%
Halfling	40 gp	+75%	+25%
Hobgoblin	125 gp	+50%	+50%
Human	75 gp	+75%	+50%
Kobold	5 gp	+10%	+10%
Minotaur	750 gp	+50%	+150%
Morgoshe	45 gp	+10%	+25%
Ogre	350 gp	+20%	+75%
Orc	80 gp	+50%	+50%
Troll	600 gp	+10%	+125%
Troll, Deep	750 gp	+25%	+150%

is the inability of humans to see in darkness. Still, that is a minor inconvenience, and humans serve drow as soldiers, gladiators, farmers, pleasure slaves and labourers.

Kobold

Cowardly and stupid, kobolds are considered useless as slaves in any meaningful way. Though some are put to work at the most simple and menial of tasks, most drow buy kobolds only to offer them as sacrifices, or to act as a sparring partner for the drow to hone his skill with weapons or spells. Kobolds are so cheaply priced that drow consider them more expendable than a simple practice dummy, and find them far more entertaining.

Minotaur

The exceptional strength and size of a minotaur would make it a useful labourer, but minotaur slaves are seldom used in that capacity. The natural abilities of these creatures make them more valuable elsewhere. Minotaurs, in fact, are so highly sought they are one of the few races the drow

will breed. Noble Houses use them as trackers and scouts, perfectly comfortable sending them out alone into the Underdeep to chase down a thief or scout a caravan path, knowing that a well-trained minotaur can be trusted to return on its own. They are sometimes used as gladiators, another task to which they are naturally suited.

Morgoshe

Armed conflict, even open war, between drow and morgoshe has been common since the time of the Sundering, and many drow enjoy keeping morgoshe as slaves simply for revenge. Able to survive indefinitely on dry land, the morgoshe still find the ordeal quite uncomfortable, as their skin itches maddeningly when it begins to dry out. The drow know this all too well, and enjoy watching the aquatic creatures squirm. A morgoshe slave in drow society rarely has anything to look forward to except a short and painful life as a gladiator, or an even shorter life as a sacrificial offering.



Ogre

The ogre is one of the backbones of the drow slave trade. Strong and bloodthirsty, they make excellent gladiators and soldiers. Hard labour is another major task of ogre slaves, though proper training and supervision are required to keep them working.

Orc

For the drow who cannot afford a giant or ogre, there is the orc. Slightly more intelligent but significantly less strong than either a hill giant or ogre, the violent and warlike temperament of orcs nonetheless makes them entertaining gladiators. In large numbers, they may be used as shock troops or cannon fodder in drow armies, but those tasks more commonly fall to bugbears and gnolls. The violent and bloodthirsty nature of orcs is a source of amusement for some drow, who enjoy the prospect of breaking the orc entirely of such behaviour. With enough training and punishment, some drow have turned their orcs into whimpering, submissive servants, eager to attend to the domestic needs of their masters and terrified of the mere sight of weapons.

Troll

Strong, tough, blessed with natural weapons and virtually impossible to kill, trolls have all the makings of devastating soldiers. Unfortunately, while breaking a troll's spirit is relatively simple, it is much more difficult to break the troll's natural instinct to quit fighting and start devouring the dead while the battle is still going on. For this reason, groups of trolls in a drow army are often held in reserve to mop up at the end of a fight, or, if the drow are forced to retreat, unleashed upon the enemy as a rear guard. Trolls are sometimes used as gladiators, but their regeneration abilities make them boring combatants. Some Noble Houses keep extremely well-trained trolls as House guards, though always under the supervision of slaves from some other race, as no noble would willingly trust his life to a pack of trolls.

Troll, Deep

Deep trolls are even more dangerous than their simpler counterparts, and are more intelligent to boot. These qualities combine to make them either shunned as slaves in some drow cultures, or sought as highly as any other race in others. Their greater intelligence makes them more useful as slaves, but also more capable of finding a way to escape and wreak vengeance upon those who enslaved them. Those Noble Houses wealthy enough to afford a number of trained deep trolls commonly use them as guards and soldiers, positions for which the deep trolls are very well suited.

Slave Prices

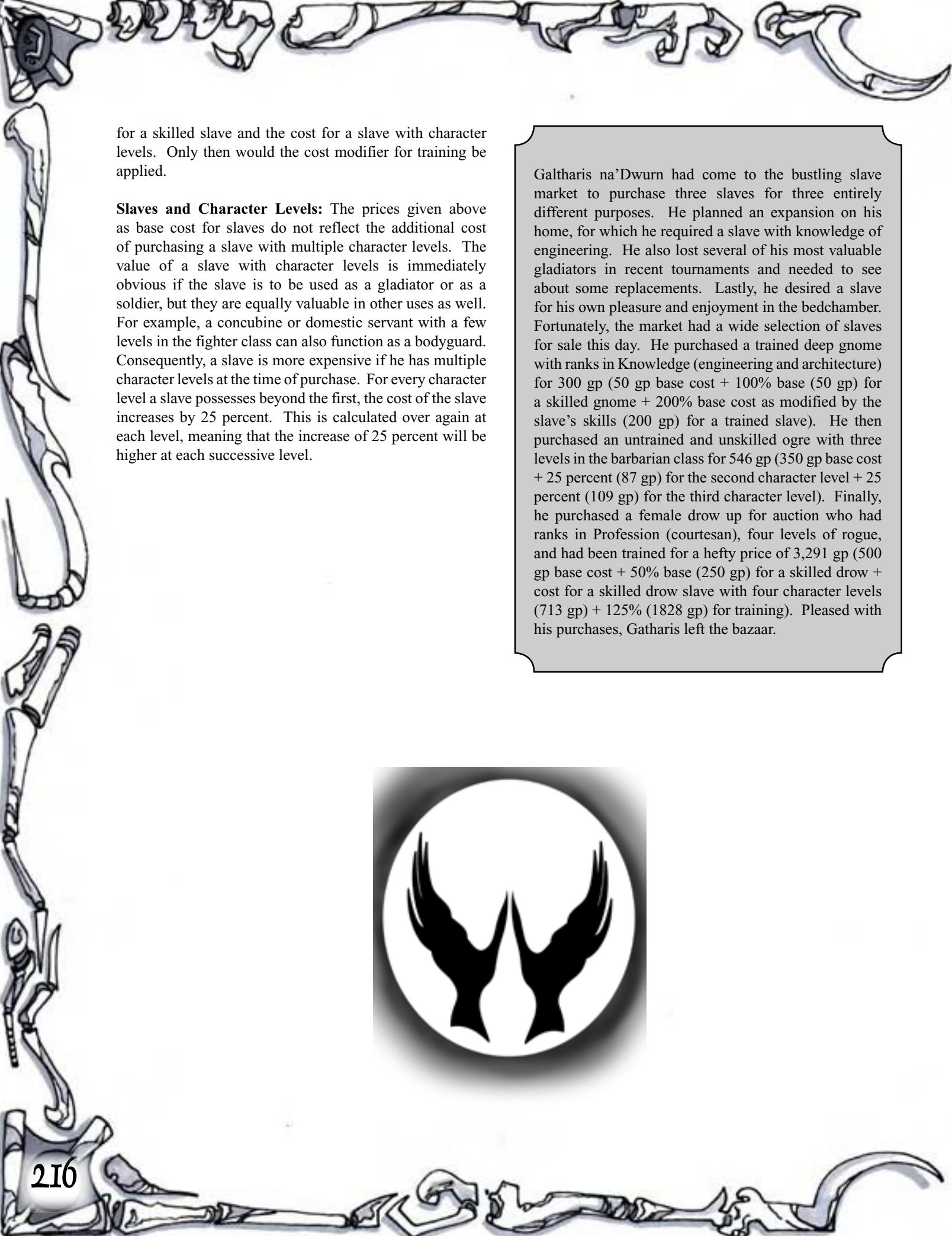
Base Cost: The cost for purchasing an untrained and unskilled slave from the auction block. The slave at this point is beaten, exhausted and confused, but otherwise has not yet been broken to the collar. Obviously, this base price can fluctuate due to a variety of factors, from the number of bidders at an auction to scarcity of one creature or another in different parts of the Underdeep. Likewise, not every manner of slave listed here will always be available. A drow who desires a slave of a race that is not available may place an order with one of the guilds of slavers, but the price paid upon delivery of this special order will be higher than the base cost listed in the table above.

Skilled: Slaves who are skilled naturally cost more than those who are not. The modifier in this column should be applied to the base cost for any purchase of a skilled slave. For the purposes of this modifier, a skilled slave is considered to have at least three ranks in a skill the drow would find useful. For example, a deep gnome with three or more ranks in Craft (gemcutting) or Knowledge (architecture and engineering) would be considered quite valuable, while a gnome who only had ranks in skills such as Jump or Swimming would not be considered skilled.

Trained: The drow do not consider a slave trained merely because he obeys out of fear of the lash; that is a lesson every drow slave learns quickly. Most slaves are never technically trained as those whose sole purposes will involve heavy labour and menial chores are not worth the expense. However other slaves often receive training, such as those intended for use in war, in gladiatorial matches, as personal servants or as concubines. Slave training is expensive and time consuming, relying on brainwashing, drugs and sometimes even spells to accomplish its goal, but the drow consider a well-trained slave worth the wait and expense. A professionally-trained slave serves his drow master willingly and enthusiastically, and is often loyal to the drow unto death.

Training a slave takes at least one week per character level or Hit Dice, during which time the trainer must spend at least four hours every day with the slave. A 4th level character, for example, would require four weeks to train. At the end of that time, the slave trainer must make a Handle Animal check (DC 20+1 for every level or Hit Dice of the slave). If successful, the slave has been trained and is ready to begin his life of servitude. If the skill check is not successful, the process must begin all over again.

The modifier for training cost is always the last modifier applied to the price of a slave. For example, to determine the cost for a skilled slave with multiple character levels (see below), the base cost would be modified by the cost



for a skilled slave and the cost for a slave with character levels. Only then would the cost modifier for training be applied.

Slaves and Character Levels: The prices given above as base cost for slaves do not reflect the additional cost of purchasing a slave with multiple character levels. The value of a slave with character levels is immediately obvious if the slave is to be used as a gladiator or as a soldier, but they are equally valuable in other uses as well. For example, a concubine or domestic servant with a few levels in the fighter class can also function as a bodyguard. Consequently, a slave is more expensive if he has multiple character levels at the time of purchase. For every character level a slave possesses beyond the first, the cost of the slave increases by 25 percent. This is calculated over again at each level, meaning that the increase of 25 percent will be higher at each successive level.

Galtharis na'Dwurn had come to the bustling slave market to purchase three slaves for three entirely different purposes. He planned an expansion on his home, for which he required a slave with knowledge of engineering. He also lost several of his most valuable gladiators in recent tournaments and needed to see about some replacements. Lastly, he desired a slave for his own pleasure and enjoyment in the bedchamber. Fortunately, the market had a wide selection of slaves for sale this day. He purchased a trained deep gnome with ranks in Knowledge (engineering and architecture) for 300 gp (50 gp base cost + 100% base (50 gp) for a skilled gnome + 200% base cost as modified by the slave's skills (200 gp) for a trained slave). He then purchased an untrained and unskilled ogre with three levels in the barbarian class for 546 gp (350 gp base cost + 25 percent (87 gp) for the second character level + 25 percent (109 gp) for the third character level). Finally, he purchased a female drow up for auction who had ranks in Profession (courtesan), four levels of rogue, and had been trained for a hefty price of 3,291 gp (500 gp base cost + 50% base (250 gp) for a skilled drow + cost for a skilled drow slave with four character levels (713 gp) + 125% (1828 gp) for training). Pleased with his purchases, Gatharis left the bazaar.



Creatures of the Underdeep

Bloodridge Eel

Medium Magical Beast (Aquatic)

Hit Dice: 3d10+12 (28 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: Swim 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 15 (+3 Dex, +2 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 12

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+5

Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d3+3)

Full Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d3+3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Improved grab, slashing constriction (1d3+4 and 1d6+3)

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +2

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10

Skills: Listen +6, Spot +6

Feats: Alertness, Lightning Reflexes

Climate/Terrain: Underground aquatic

Organisation: Solitary, pair or school (3-10)

Challenge Rating: 3

Advancement: N/A

Level Adjustment: N/A

A sudden flash of movement is all the warning you are given. Striking like a serpent, the long, grey eel sinks its teeth into your flesh and wraps its muscular body around your chest. After that, it becomes unpleasant.

The bloodridge eel is a nasty predator native to the waters of the Underdeep which has been domesticated and is kept as a guardian animal by the Sulzthul, the aquatic drow. Approximately six feet in length, the bloodridge eel has a long snout with a large, saucer-shaped red eye on either side. It is pale grey in colour, allowing it to almost disappear in the dim waters of the Underdeep. Its mouth is filled with small, hooked teeth. Its most distinctive feature, the physical aspect that gives it its name, are the ridges of protruding bone along its dorsal and ventral sides, which run the entire length of the eel and are razor-sharp.

Combat

The bite of a bloodridge eel is not terribly dangerous in and of itself, but the bite is the prelude to the eel's far more dangerous slashing constriction attack.

Slashing Constriction (Ex): On a successful grapple check, the bloodridge eel can execute a slashing constriction attack. This attack deals 1d3+4 points of damage from the



constriction of the eel. As part of this attack, the eel slashes the constricted creature with its bony ridges, inflicting an additional 1d6+3 points of damage.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the bloodridge eel must hit with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can use its slashing constriction attack.

Deep Troll

Large Giant

Hit Dice: 8d8+56 (92 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 18 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +7 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+18

Attack: Claw +13 melee (1d8+8)

Full Attack: 2 claws +13 melee (1d8+8) and bite +8 melee (1d6+4)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Rend 2d8+12

Special Qualities: Camouflage, darkvision 120 ft., regeneration 8

Saves: Fort +13, Ref +4, Will +2

Abilities: Str 26, Dex 14, Con 25, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 6

Skills: Hide +11*, Jump +10, Listen +4, Move Silently +5, Spot +4

Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Stealthy

Climate/Terrain: Underground

Organisation: Tribal

Challenge Rating: 6

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Advancement: By character class

Level Adjustment: +6

The tall, grey giant leaps back to its feet and rushes to rejoin the battle. Its appearance is markedly different from its surface cousins, but the speed at which its wounds heal leaves little doubt this creature is some manner of troll.

The deep troll is both stronger and smarter than its surface cousins, but lacks none of the terrible ferocity that makes the trolls of the surface world so feared.

A deep troll has gnarled hide which is plain grey in colour, allowing it to blend in easily with the stone of the Underdeep. It stands about 10 feet tall and weighs in excess of 700 pounds. Its feet and hands each have four digits. It is stockier than surface trolls, but has the same long arms and legs.

These terrible carnivores are found throughout the Underdeep, but there are some areas that have unusually high concentrations of them, and rumours persist of weird cities gouged crudely from the rock and inhabited entirely by deep trolls. Very few people are particularly anxious to determine the truth of these rumours.

Deep trolls speak Giant and Undercommon.

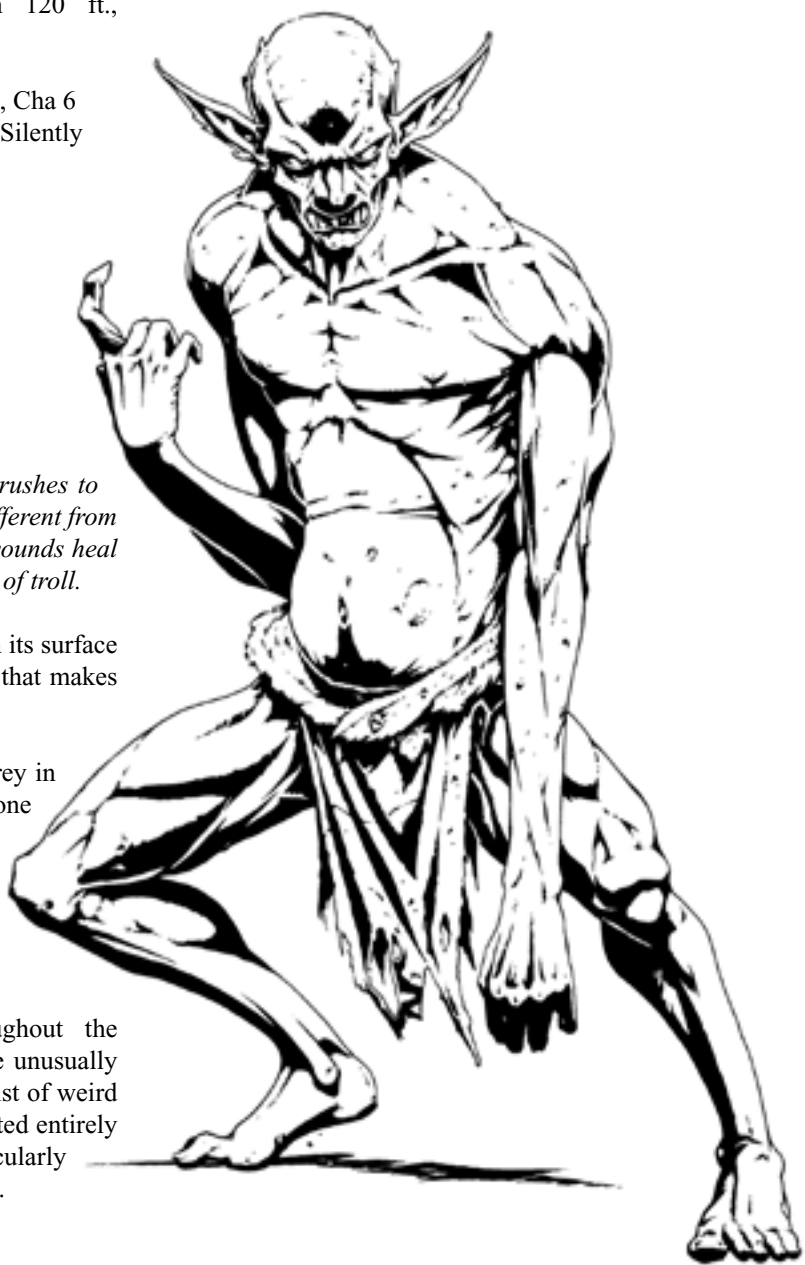
Combat

Deep trolls are not quite as eager as are the surface trolls to leap into combat, and will fall back before a truly overwhelming force. However, they are not cautious warriors, and if they believe there is any chance for victory over a potential foe, they will strike. Deep trolls are intelligent enough to understand the different levels of danger posed by various attackers, and will attempt to kill any obvious spellcasters who might menace them with magical fire before turning their attention on the remainder of their enemies.

Rend (Ex): If a deep troll hits with both claw attacks, it latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. This attack automatically deals an additional 2d8+12 points of damage.

Camouflage (Ex): The colour of the deep troll's skin is a nondescript grey which is difficult to distinguish from the rough stone of its environment, granting the troll a +8 to its Hide skill, more than offsetting the penalties for its size.

Regeneration (Ex): Fire and acid deal normal damage to a deep troll. If a deep troll 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.

Deep Trolls as Characters

Deep troll characters possess the following traits.

- ☞ +15 Strength, +4 Dexterity, +14 Constitution, -1 Intelligence (minimum 3), -1 Wisdom, -4 Charisma
- ☞ Large size. -1 penalty to Armour Class, -1 penalty on attack rolls, -4 penalty on Hide checks, +4 bonus on grapple checks, lifting and carrying limits double those of Medium characters.
- ☞ Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
- ☞ A deep troll's base land speed is 30 ft.
- ☞ Darkvision out to 120 ft.
- ☞ Racial Hit Dice: A deep troll begins with eight levels of giant, which provide 8d8 Hit Dice, a base attack bonus of +6 and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +5, Ref +2 and Will +2
- ☞ Racial Skills: A deep troll's giant levels give it skill points equal to 11 x (2 + Int modifier, minimum 1). Its class skills are Hide, Jump, Listen and Spot.
- ☞ Racial Feats: A deep troll's giant levels give it three feats.
- ☞ +7 natural armour bonus
- ☞ Natural Weapons: Claw (1d8) and Bite (1d6)
- ☞ Special Attacks (see above): Rend, damage 2d8 + 1 and ½ times Str modifier.
- ☞ Special Qualities: Regeneration 8
- ☞ Automatic Languages: Giant, Undercommon. Bonus Languages: Common, Drow
- ☞ Favoured Class: Fighter
- ☞ Level Adjustment: +6

Druuge (Wallwalker)

Medium Magical Beast

Hit Dice: 3d10+3 (19 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 40 ft. (6 squares), climb 20 ft

Armour Class: 15 (+2 Dex, +3 natural),

touch 12, flat-footed 13

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+5

Attack: Beak +5 melee (1d6+3)

Full Attack: Beak +5 melee (1d6+3)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Drop from above

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., spider climb

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +2

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 8

Skills: Balance +4, Hide +6, Listen +4,

Move Silently +4, Spot +4

Feats: Alertness, Stealthy

Climate/Terrain: Underground

Organisation: Solitary or pack (2-24)

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: None

Advancement: N/A

Level Adjustment: N/A

As your companions venture down the rough passageway in front of you, you think for a moment that one of the lumps of lichen on the roof is moving. Just as you dismiss the thought, it drops from the ceiling, its six limbs and snapping beak flailing at your comrades.

The druuge is a low-order predator of the Underdeep, a carnivorous beast that travels in packs. Though mammalian, it is a hexapod, meaning it has six limbs instead of the usual four found in mammals. It also has a sharp, hooked beak like a bird of prey, which it uses to rend its foes and its food. It has a long, stringy coat that assists the creature in hiding; when motionless with its legs tucked beneath it, the druuge can easily pass for a lichen-covered rock or a large bump in the ceiling. Most remarkably, the six legs of the druuge end in long, slender claws, which enable it to climb on rough walls and even ceilings almost as easily as it walks on the ground.

Its primary association with the drow is not predator and prey, however. These beasts are kept by the drow as livestock. The dark elves harvest the druuge for meat, milk and fur which can be woven into coarse fibres and hides.



Combat

The drudge prefers to attack by dropping on its prey from above, grappling with its six legs and rending the prey with its beak. It is not a particularly dangerous beast by Underdeep standards, nor is it any more intelligent than an animal, but in large packs it can prove to be an intimidating foe.

Drop from Above (Ex): The drudge's primary method on engaging enemies or prey is to fall on it from above. This brings all six of the drudge's legs into play, allowing it to make two separate grapple checks when attacking a single foe.

Spider Climb (Ex): The narrow claws at the end of the each of the drudge's feet allow it to traverse walls and even ceilings as though it were under the constant influence of a *spider climb* spell, although at a slightly slower rate of speed.

Gursk

Large Animal

Hit Dice: 4d8+19 (37 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)

Armour Class: 14 (+1 Dex, -1 size, +4 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 13

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+13

Attack: Gore +8 melee (1d6+9)

Full Attack: Gore +8 melee (1d6+9)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Stampede

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., scent

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +0

Abilities: Str 22, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 2, Wis 8, Cha 3

Skills: Listen +5, Spot +4

Feats: Alertness, Toughness

Climate/Terrain: Underground

Organisation: Solitary or herd (6-36)

Challenge Rating: 3

Advancement: N/A

Level Adjustment: N/A

This simple herbivore is not terribly dissimilar from the ox of the surface world, save that its horns are larger relative to its body, its belly is swollen and its hooves are flat and wide.

The gursk are used by the drow and other races throughout the Underdeep as a food source, a clothing source and a pack animal. It has a pair of horns protruding straight out from the sides of

its head. The distance from the tip of one horn to the tip of the next is slightly more than the width of the gursk's body, a virtue the animal uses to determine whether or not it will be able to fit through one of the winding corridors of the Underdeep. Its belly seems to be swollen, almost to the point of dragging the ground. In fact, the gursk has several additional stomachs and organs in its belly which are used to store food and water while it travels through the Underdeep. Lastly, its hooves are flat and extremely wide, enabling the gursk to readily dig through soft earth or broken stone.

Combat

The gursk is a capable but not impressive fighter, which would generally prefer to flee rather than fight. It is when a large number of gursks try to flee, however, that they become truly dangerous.

Stampede (Ex): A frightened herd of gursks flees in a random direction, so long as it is away from the source of the perceived danger. They will run over and trample anything of Large size or smaller that gets in their way,



dealing 1d12 points of damage for each five gursks in the herd. It is possible to avoid taking all of this damage by making a successful saving throw (Reflex DC 25 half), but it is difficult, as the confining nature of most of the Underdeep makes it all but impossible to get out of the way of the stampede.

Half-Drow

Half-Drow, 1st Level Warrior

Medium Humanoid (Elf)

Hit Dice: 1d8 (4 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 14 (+1 Dex, +2 leather armour, +1 buckler), touch 11, flat-footed 13

Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+2

Attack: Rapier +3 melee (1d6+1/18-20) or hand crossbow +2 ranged (1d4/19-20)

Full Attack: Rapier +3 melee (1d6+1/18-20) or hand crossbow +2 ranged (1d4/19-20)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: -

Special Qualities: Half-drow traits

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -1

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8

Skills: Listen +2, Search +2, Spot +2

Feats: Weapon Focus (rapier)

Climate/Terrain: Underground

Organisation: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually neutral evil

Advancement: By character class

Level Adjustment: +1

This humanoid has grey skin, white hair and grey eyes. Though shorter and more slender than a human, it is larger and taller than is normal for an elf.

Reviled and belittled throughout drow society, the half-drow comprise the outcasts and lowest rungs of dark elf society, barely ranking above slaves (and often, they literally are slaves). Only in House Merezzym are they at all tolerated. Usually bitter loners, unaccepted in either the surface world or the Underdeep, half-drow scrape and struggle to survive as best they can in a terribly cruel world.

Half-drow Traits (Ex): Most half-drow are the offspring of a drow and a human slave, and that is the basis for the half-

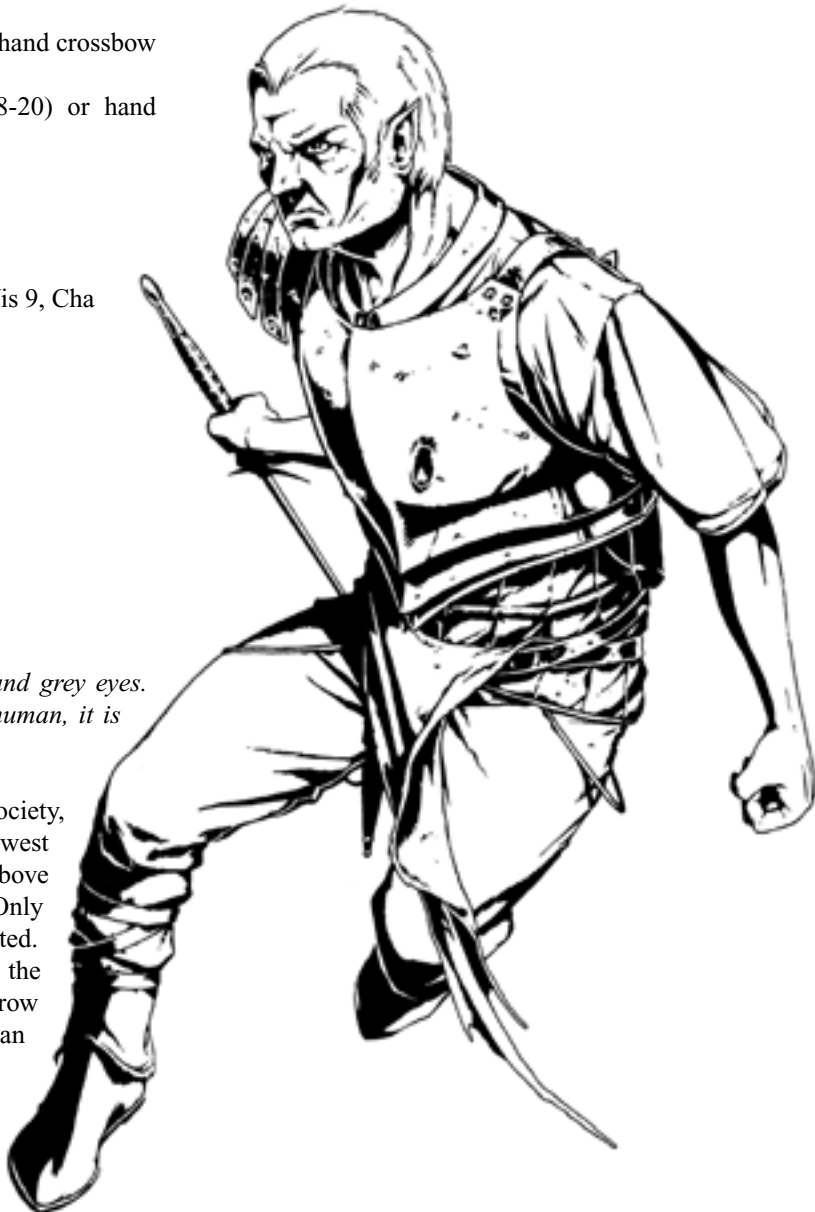
drow presented here. The drow are a promiscuous race, however, and are given to concourse with all manner of creatures, which could produce some interesting genetic combinations. Like all elves, drow are unable to cross-breed with orcs or goblinoids.

☛ Darkvision out to 60 ft.

☛ Spell resistance equal to 5 + class levels

☛ Immunity to *sleep* spells and effects, and a +2 racial saving throw bonus against enchantment spells or effects..

☛ Favoured Class: Any. When determining whether a multiclass half-drow takes an experience point penalty for multiclassing, his highest level class does not count.



Hulurn

Medium Animal

Hit Dice: 2d8+7 (16 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)

Armour Class: 15 (+1 Dex, +4 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+4

Attack: Gore +4 melee (1d6+4)

Full Attack: Gore +4 melee (1d6+4)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: -

Special Qualities: Tremorsense 60ft.

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +0

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 5

Skills: Listen +5

Feats: Toughness

Climate/Terrain: Underground

Organisation: Solitary, pair or herd (3-24)

Challenge Rating: 1

Advancement: N/A

Level Adjustment: N/A

Slow and stupid, these fungus-eating quadrupeds roam the dark, mist-filled caverns in the lowest reaches of the Underdeep in large herds. They have endured primary because they have few predators and breed prodigiously.

The hulurn is a quadruped with thick, grey and nearly hairless skin, standing about three feet high at the shoulder. It has a broad, stubby neck capped with a head that is nearly round. It has no eyes, as they are useless in its environment, but it makes up for the handicap with a keen tremorsense and a pair of wide nostrils that allow provide it with an impressive sense of smell. The hulurn's head is capped with four sharp horns, each about six inches in length. Its legs end in hooves.

Ill-tempered and stupid, the hulurn is the primary herd beast of the Pol'Tah, and one of the only food sources available to the deep drow aside from the ubiquitous mushrooms of the Underdeep. The Pol'Tah use the beast for a variety of needs, letting few, if any, parts of the beast go to waste. In addition to food, the hide of the hulurn is the most common armour for the deep drow. As much as to the purple worms, the Pol'Tah owe their survival in the depths of the world to this simple beast.



Combat

The hulurn is not very effective in combat. When threatened, it will attempt to flee. Failing that, it will charge, attempting to gore its enemy with its four stubby horns.

Kanahraun (The Feral Drow) (Lower Class)

Lower Class Kanahraun, 1st Level Barbarian

Medium Humanoid (Elf)

Hit Dice: 1d12 (12 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)

Armour Class: 15 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 buckler), touch 11, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+2

Attack: Scimitar +2 melee (1d6+1/18-20) or falchion +2 melee (2d4+1/18-20) or short bow +2 ranged (1d6)

Full Attack: Scimitar +2 melee (1d6+1/18-20) or falchion +2 melee (2d4+1/18-20) or short bow +2 ranged (1d6)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities

Special Qualities: Fast movement, illiteracy, Kanahraun traits, rage 1/day

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -1

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 10

Skills: Climb +4, Craft (tanning) +3, Intimidate +3, Jump +4, Listen +2, Search +3, Spot +1 Survival +2

Feats: Rend the Throat

Climate/Terrain: Underground

Organisation: Claw (2-4), hunt (5-8 plus two 2nd level sergeants and one leader of 3rd to 6th level), or band (20-50 plus 10% noncombatants plus one 2nd level sergeant per five adults, 1d4 6th level lieutenants and 1d4 9th level captains). A hunt has a 50% chance of having one member of the ruling class (4th level sorcerer or cleric) with it. A band will have 1d4 members of the ruling class in accompaniment.

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Advancement: By character class

Level Adjustment: +2

This humanoid is almost bestial in appearance. Though it retains the basic qualities of a drow, its skin is pierced and scarred with runes and signs. It is garbed in armour that seems pieced together from a dozen different sources, much of which is covered by the flayed and tanned skins of sentient creatures. As it moves toward you, its mouth opens to reveal teeth filed into fangs.

The Kanahraun are the feral drow, a race feared throughout the Underdeep for its savagery. The lower class of the Kanahraun are almost all barbarians, which is why the statistics given here reflect a barbarian.

Under the influence of a demon lord they worship as their god, the Kanahraun have become a brutal, cannibalistic race. The race itself is divided into two groups, the ruling class and the lower class. The lower class, which comprises about 90 percent of the total population, are the Kanahraun which are still more or less pure drow, unlike the ruling class, which is descended from the offspring of Azzanoth.

The lower class of the feral drow are the warriors and soldiers of the ruling class, ruled over with an iron hand, which they rarely, if ever, question.

Combat

The lower class of the feral drow are deadly warriors who love the thrill of combat. Their appearance and reputation often strikes fear into the hearts of their enemies, a fact the feral drow do not rely on but will gladly capitalise on. They prefer to strike from ambush, first with a flight of



arrows, then charging in to take advantage of the confusion and sudden panic caused by their attack.

The feral drow of the lower class tend to use scimitars, falchions and short bows in combat, and their armour is commonly what they have scavenged from past victims. The armour is commonly decorated with bones and pieces of the tanned hide of sentient beings.

Kanahraun Traits – Lower Class (Ex): The lower class of the Kanahraun are, for the most part, only slightly deviated from their drow ancestors.

- ☛ +2 Dexterity, -2 Constitution, +2 Intelligence, +2 Charisma
- ☛ Darkvision out to 120 ft.
- ☛ Spell resistance equal to 11 + class levels
- ☛ Spell-Like Abilities: Kanahraun can use the following spell-like abilities once per day: *dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*. Caster level equals the Kanahraun's class levels.
- ☛ Immunity to *sleep* spells and effects, and a +2 racial saving throw bonus against enchantment spells or effects.
- ☛ +2 racial bonus on Listen, Search and Spot checks. A Kanahraun who merely passes within five feet of a secret or concealed door is entitled to a Search check to notice it as if he were actively looking for it.
- ☛ Weapon Proficiency: A Kanahraun is automatically proficient with the short bow, the kukri, the scimitar and the falchion. This trait replaces the drow's weapon proficiencies.
- ☛ Light Blindness: Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a daylight spell) blinds Kanahraun for one round. On subsequent rounds, they are dazzled as long as they remain in the affected area.
- ☛ Favoured Class: Barbarian. This trait replaces the drow's favoured class.
- ☛ Level Adjustment: +2

Kanahraun (The Feral Drow) (Ruling Class)

Ruling Class Kanahraun, 1st Level Cleric

Medium Outsider (Augmented Humanoid) (Native)

Hit Dice: 1d8-1 (7 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 19 (+3 Dex, +5 boneforged breastplate, +1 buckler), touch 13, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +0/+3

Attack: Boneforged scimitar +3 melee (1d6+3/18-20) or short bow +3 ranged (1d6)

Full Attack: Boneforged scimitar +3 melee (1d6+3/18-20) or short bow +3 ranged (1d6)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Smite good, spells, spell-like abilities

Special Qualities: Kanahraun ruling class traits, spell resistance 12

Saves: Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +4

Abilities: Str 17, Dex 17, Con 9, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 12

Skills: Concentration +3, Heal +6, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +7, Listen +4, Search +5, Spellcraft +7, Spot +4

Feats: Combat Casting

Climate/Terrain: Underground

Organisation: Ruling class Kanahraun never travel abroad in the Underdeep without a large number of lower class barbarians as protection. See the entry for lower class Kanahraun. A large group of ruling class Kanahraun travelling abroad may well have a band of Reavers (see separate entry) with them for protection as well.

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Always chaotic evil

Advancement: By character class

Level Adjustment: +4

The drow clad in armour composed completely of bone stands behind the squad of scarred, terrifying warriors, directing them as they attack. Though he seems to be simply another drow, there is something about his bearing and appearance that seems alien, as though the bloodline that begat him was not merely mortal in origin.

The ruling class of Kanahraun far more sophisticated than the lower class. It is from this class that the priests, sorcerers and wizards of the feral drow come. They rule over the lower class with an iron fist, controlling all aspects of life among the feral drow.

The members of the ruling class are descended from those drow with whom Azzanoth the Glutton mated when he lived among the drow. Though they have lost many of the



obvious physical indicators of their demonic heritage, the strength of Azzanoth's bloodline is undiminished.

Combat

The ruling class of the Kanahraun prefer to let the lower class do their fighting for them, but they are still terrible foes when they do engage an enemy. They will let the barbarians of the lower class charge into melee, remaining safely behind their subjects to pepper the enemy with spells or ranged weapons. Kanahraun of the ruling class almost always carry *boneforged* items (see page 188).

Smite Good (Su): Once per day the ruling class Kanahraun can make a normal melee attack to deal extra damage equal to its level (maximum of +20) against a good foe.

Kanahraun Traits – Upper Class (Ex): The upper class of the Kanahraun are the descendants of the dark elves with whom Azzanoth the Glutton mated when he lived with the Kanahraun. Though many generations have passed since that time, such is the infernal power of the Glutton's bloodline that the upper class of the Kanahraun are still considered to be half-fiends (see *MM*, *Half-Fiend*). They have, however, lost many of the external physical attributes commonly associated with half-fiends, making it more difficult to tell them apart from the lower class of Kanahraun with a casual glance. For example, do not have wings, claws or scales, though their natural attacks with fist and bite still count as magical attacks. The most common physical signs of the demonic heritage of the Kanahraun upper class are small horns, fangs and glowing eyes. The traits of the Kanahraun ruling class reflect a mix of drow and half-fiend traits.

- ☛ +4 Strength, +6 Dexterity, +6 Intelligence, +4 Charisma
- ☛ Darkvision out to 120 ft.
- ☛ Immunity to poison
- ☛ Resistance to acid 10, cold 10, electrical 10 and fire 10
- ☛ Damage reduction: 5/magic (if HD 11 or less) or 10/magic (if HD 12 or more)

- ☞ Natural attacks by a member of the Kanahraun ruling class are treated as magical weapons for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction. Those of the Kanahraun ruling class born without fangs usually file their teeth into an acceptable substitute.
- ☞ Spell resistance equal to 11 + class levels.
- ☞ Spell-Like Abilities: Kanahraun can use the following spell-like abilities once per day: *dancing lights*, *faerie fire*. Ruling class Kanahraun may also cast *darkness* three times per day. Caster level equals the Kanahraun's class levels.
- ☞ Immunity to *sleep* spells and effects, and a +2 racial saving throw bonus against enchantment spells or effects.
- ☞ +2 racial bonus on Listen, Search and Spot checks. A Kanahraun who merely passes within five feet of a secret or concealed door is entitled to a Search check to notice it as if he were actively looking for it.
- ☞ Weapon Proficiency: A Kanahraun is automatically proficient with the short bow, the kukri, the scimitar and the falchion. This trait replaces the drow's weapon proficiencies.
- ☞ Light Blindness: Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a daylight spell) blinds Kanahraun for one round. On subsequent rounds, they are dazzled as long as they remain in the affected area.
- ☞ Favoured Class: Cleric or wizard. This trait replaces the drow's favoured class.
- ☞ Level Adjustment: +4

Lorgreln (The Iron Drow)

Lorgreln, 1st Level Fighter

Medium Humanoid (Elf)

Hit Dice: 1d10 (10 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 17 (+5 chain mail, +2 heavy steel shield), touch 10, flat-footed 17

Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+3

Attack: Short sword +4 melee (1d6+2/19-20) or long spear +3 melee (1d8+2) or heavy crossbow +1 ranged (1d10)

Full Attack: Short sword +4 melee (1d6+2/19-20) or long spear +3 melee (1d8+2) or heavy crossbow +1 ranged (1d10)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Qualities: Lorgreln traits, spell resistance 16

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 10

Skills: Craft (weaponsmithing) +4, Intimidate +3, Handle Animal +3, Jump -2, Listen +1, Search +3, Spot +1

Feats: Power Attack, Weapon Focus (short sword)

Climate/Terrain: Underground

Organisation: Squad (2-4), patrol (5-8 plus two 2nd level sergeants and one leader of 3rd to 6th level), or band (20-50 plus 10% noncombatants plus one 2nd level sergeant per five adults, 1d4 6th level lieutenants and 1d4 9th level captains)

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually lawful evil

Advancement: By character class

Level Adjustment: +2

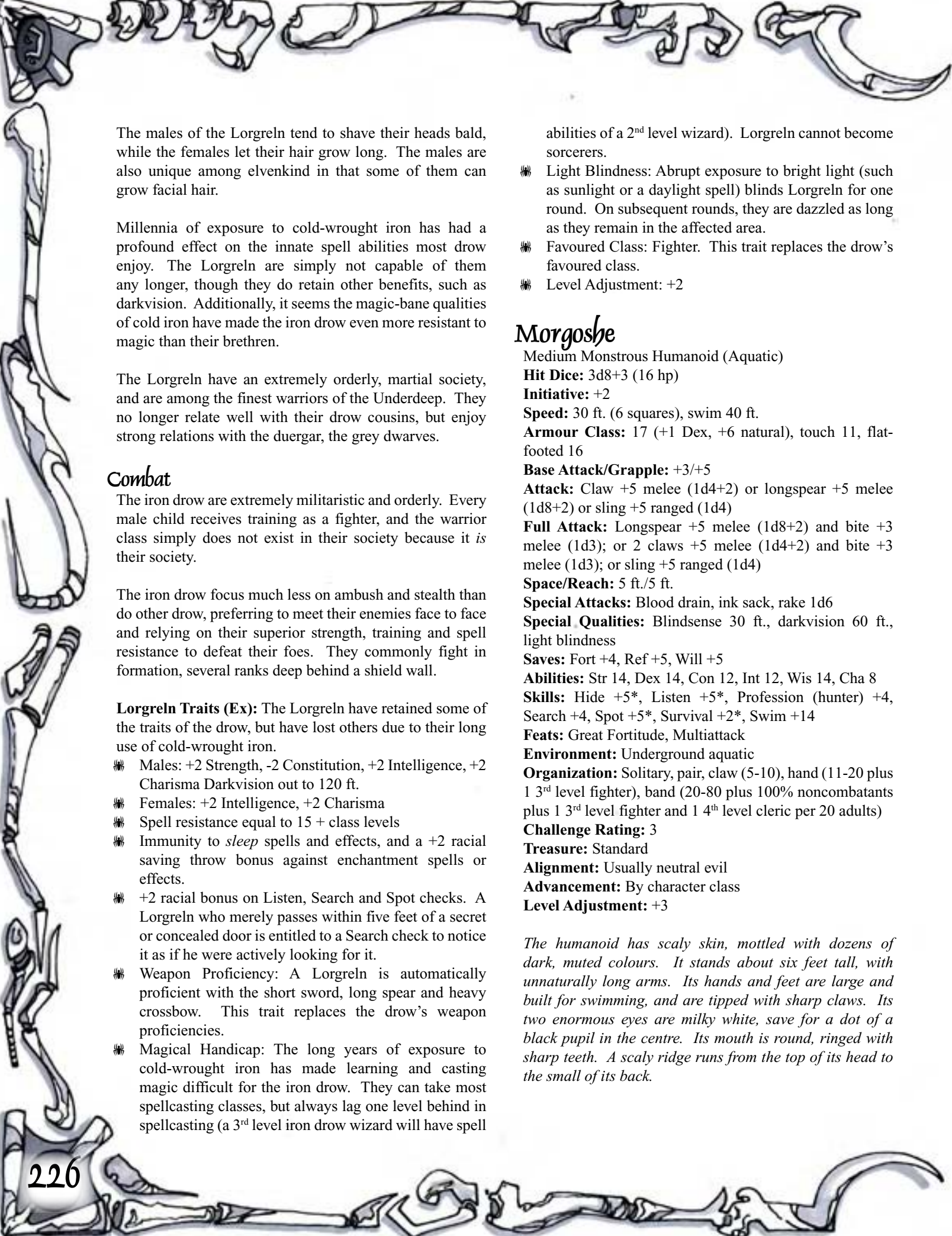
This humanoid is larger and stronger than other drow, with eyes of cold grey rather than burning red. The males often have no hair and are stronger than the females, who in turn are more resilient than the males.

Lorgreln, also known as iron drow, were separated from the rest of the drow during the Sundering and trapped in an area of the Underdeep where air itself was a precious resource. Unable to use a furnace to forge metal, the drow were forced to use cold-wrought iron as their sole means of defence, a substance which is inimical to the fey nature of elves.

The constant exposure to cold-wrought iron has changed the Lorgreln physically and mentally. They are more dimorphic than other drow, with the males of the iron drow significantly larger and stronger than the females, at least by comparison to other drow races.

As a race, the Lorgreln are larger and stronger than any of their drow cousins, almost as tall as a human and more broadly built than an elf. The skin of the Lorgreln is still jet black like that of other drow, but the iron that is now such a part of them has passed its cold grey colour on to the eyes of the drow.





The males of the Lorgreln tend to shave their heads bald, while the females let their hair grow long. The males are also unique among elvenkind in that some of them can grow facial hair.

Millennia of exposure to cold-wrought iron has had a profound effect on the innate spell abilities most drow enjoy. The Lorgreln are simply not capable of them any longer, though they do retain other benefits, such as darkvision. Additionally, it seems the magic-bane qualities of cold iron have made the iron drow even more resistant to magic than their brethren.

The Lorgreln have an extremely orderly, martial society, and are among the finest warriors of the Underdeep. They no longer relate well with their drow cousins, but enjoy strong relations with the duergar, the grey dwarves.

Combat

The iron drow are extremely militaristic and orderly. Every male child receives training as a fighter, and the warrior class simply does not exist in their society because it is their society.

The iron drow focus much less on ambush and stealth than do other drow, preferring to meet their enemies face to face and relying on their superior strength, training and spell resistance to defeat their foes. They commonly fight in formation, several ranks deep behind a shield wall.

Lorgreln Traits (Ex): The Lorgreln have retained some of the traits of the drow, but have lost others due to their long use of cold-wrought iron.

- ♣ Males: +2 Strength, -2 Constitution, +2 Intelligence, +2 Charisma Darkvision out to 120 ft.
- ♣ Females: +2 Intelligence, +2 Charisma
- ♣ Spell resistance equal to 15 + class levels
- ♣ Immunity to *sleep* spells and effects, and a +2 racial saving throw bonus against enchantment spells or effects.
- ♣ +2 racial bonus on Listen, Search and Spot checks. A Lorgreln who merely passes within five feet of a secret or concealed door is entitled to a Search check to notice it as if he were actively looking for it.
- ♣ Weapon Proficiency: A Lorgreln is automatically proficient with the short sword, long spear and heavy crossbow. This trait replaces the drow's weapon proficiencies.
- ♣ Magical Handicap: The long years of exposure to cold-wrought iron has made learning and casting magic difficult for the iron drow. They can take most spellcasting classes, but always lag one level behind in spellcasting (a 3rd level iron drow wizard will have spell

abilities of a 2nd level wizard). Lorgreln cannot become sorcerers.

- ♣ Light Blindness: Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a daylight spell) blinds Lorgreln for one round. On subsequent rounds, they are dazzled as long as they remain in the affected area.
- ♣ Favoured Class: Fighter. This trait replaces the drow's favoured class.
- ♣ Level Adjustment: +2

Morgoshe

Medium Monstrous Humanoid (Aquatic)

Hit Dice: 3d8+3 (16 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), swim 40 ft.

Armour Class: 17 (+1 Dex, +6 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 16

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+5

Attack: Claw +5 melee (1d4+2) or longspear +5 melee (1d8+2) or sling +5 ranged (1d4)

Full Attack: Longspear +5 melee (1d8+2) and bite +3 melee (1d3); or 2 claws +5 melee (1d4+2) and bite +3 melee (1d3); or sling +5 ranged (1d4)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Blood drain, ink sack, rake 1d6

Special Qualities: Blindsense 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., light blindness

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +5

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 8

Skills: Hide +5*, Listen +5*, Profession (hunter) +4, Search +4, Spot +5*, Survival +2*, Swim +14

Feats: Great Fortitude, Multiattack

Environment: Underground aquatic

Organization: Solitary, pair, claw (5-10), hand (11-20 plus 1 3rd level fighter), band (20-80 plus 100% noncombatants plus 1 3rd level fighter and 1 4th level cleric per 20 adults)

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually neutral evil

Advancement: By character class

Level Adjustment: +3

The humanoid has scaly skin, mottled with dozens of dark, muted colours. It stands about six feet tall, with unnaturally long arms. Its hands and feet are large and built for swimming, and are tipped with sharp claws. Its two enormous eyes are milky white, save for a dot of a black pupil in the centre. Its mouth is round, ringed with sharp teeth. A scaly ridge runs from the top of its head to the small of its back.

The morgoshe are thought by some to be an offshoot of the sahuagin race, trapped long ago in the waterways of the Underdeep, while others maintain the morgoshe are in fact the parent race. Most likely, the two races share a common ancestor, but as neither of them is fond of communicating with other peoples, it is likely to remain a mystery.

Morgoshe are brutal warriors of the Underdeep, dwelling in its lakes, rivers and seas and consistently raiding the homes of the landbound races, carrying away goods and captives. They are ancient enemies of the aquatic drow, only slightly less hated than the aboleth. They are gifted sorcerers, and have a powerful religious caste.

Morgoshe have their own language and usually speak Undercommon as well.

Combat

Morgoshe are savage warriors, whether in the water or on land, but they vastly prefer to remain submerged, as many of their abilities are dependent upon it. A morgoshe may either attack with his claws or with the ubiquitous longspear they all carry. A morgoshe who grapples an enemy may bite him and latch on, his strange and cruel round mouth sucking blood from the wound.

Morgoshe only venture out of the water for specific reasons, such as to raid a caravan or small community of landbound creatures. Only then will they use the sling as a ranged weapon.

Every morgoshe commonly carries a small vial of ink with him. When he enters combat underwater, he will loose the vial, creating a cloud of obscuring ink approximately the size of a 20-foot cube. The morgoshe count on their blindsense to fight within this cloud.

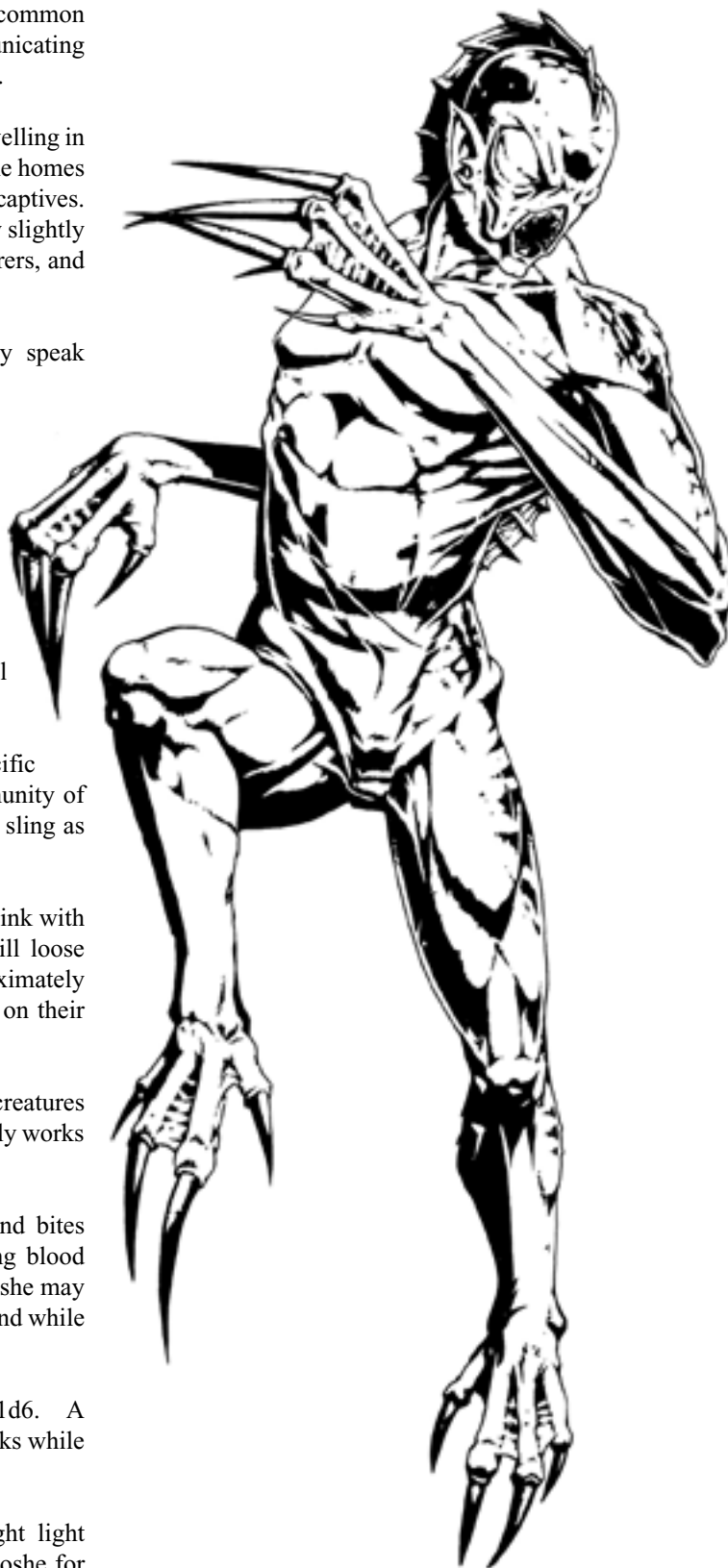
Blindsense (Ex): A morgoshe can locate creatures underwater within a 30-foot radius. This ability only works underwater.

Blood Drain (Ex): A morgoshe that grapples and bites an opponent may latch on with his teeth, sucking blood from the wound at an astounding rate. The morgoshe may drain 1d3 points of Constitution in blood every round while attached to its foe.

Rake (Ex): Attack bonus +2 melee, damage 1d6. A morgoshe also gains two rake attacks when it attacks while swimming.

Light Blindness (Ex): Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a daylight spell) blinds morgoshe for

one round. On subsequent rounds, they are dazzled as long as they remain in the affected area.



Skills: A morgoshe has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. He can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. He can use the run action while swimming, provided he swims in a straight line. *Morgoshe also have a +4 racial bonus to Hide, Listen and Spot while in the water. They have a +4 bonus to Survival while within 25 miles of their home.

Morgoshe Society

The morgoshe live in a theocratic society, governed by priest-kings. The rule of law is suffocatingly strict, and rebellions are not infrequent (though they are almost never successful). Morgoshe live in villages and communities of differing sizes, but rarely more than a few thousand individuals. They prefer networks of caves at the bottom of a deep body of water, but are more than capable of building structures for themselves when no suitable cave network exists.

The unifying aspect of all morgoshe clans and tribes is the worship of Jelvreak Hundredarms, an octopus deity who, according to morgoshian lore, lives at the bottom of the deepest body of water in the Underdeep.

Morgoshe Characters

The favoured class of morgoshe is cleric, though there are many rangers and sorcerers in their society as well. A cleric of Jelvreak Hundredarms has access to two of the following domains: Evil, Strength, War or Water. The favoured weapon of the War domain is the longspear.

Pol'Tah (The Deep Drow)

Pol'Tah, 1st Level Warrior

Medium Humanoid (Elf)

Hit Dice: 1d8 (4 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)

Armour Class: 14 (+1 Dex, +2 leather armour, +1 buckler), touch 11, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+2

Attack: Scimitar +3 melee (1d6+1/18-20) or light pick +2 melee (1d4+1/x4) or spiked chain +2 melee (2d4+1)

Full Attack: Scimitar +3 melee (1d6+1/18-20) or light pick +2 melee (1d4+1/x4) or spiked chain +2 melee (2d4+1)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities

Special Qualities: Blindsight 30ft, immunity to gaze attacks, Pol'Tah traits, tremorsense 120ft.

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -1

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 10

Skills: Handle Animal +3, Hide +3, Listen +8, Move Silently +3

Feats: Weapon Focus (scimitar)

Climate/Terrain: Underground

Organisation: Squad (2-4), patrol (5-8 plus two 2nd level sergeants and one leader of 3rd to 6th level), or band (20-50 plus 10% noncombatants plus one 2nd level sergeant per five adults, 1d4 6th level lieutenants and 1d4 9th level captains). There is a 10 percent chance a patrol will include a wormrider mounted on a purple worm, and a 50 percent chance a band will have 1d3 wormriders escorting it.

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually neutral evil

Advancement: By character class

Level Adjustment: +2

This humanoid appears to be like any other drow, until one takes a closer look at its eyes. The bright red seen in the eyes of other drow is gone; instead, the pupil is a blotch of pink. The deep drow are almost completely blind, but, as their fighting abilities make clear, they have more than compensated for the loss of their sight.

Millennia spent in the misty tunnels of Drez Khelim have had a profound influence on the Pol'Tah. They are all but completely blind now, their sight atrophied by its uselessness here. Their eyes appear as milky-white orbs, with a faded blotch of pink where the pupil would be. Only the brightest of lights can still register on their failed vision, a sensation they find uncomfortable but fascinating. Vermthizzl, the aspect of Kez'Skul they still worship, is known as the Light in the Deep for that very reason.

The Pol'Tah have more than compensated for their blindness, however. Their hearing is uncommonly sharp, even for elves. More importantly, they have developed tremorsense and blindsight as innate abilities. The Pol'Tah



are completely at home in the dark, and their new abilities make them the equal of any sighted foe.

Combat

In the eternally dark, mist-choked caverns of their homeland, the deep drow enjoy a significant advantage over any creature relying on ordinary vision. They prefer to ambush their enemies, attacking then swiftly withdrawing, only to attack again before the enemy has had the opportunity to regroup. If a foe is particularly dogged in pursuing them, the deep drow will attempt to lead him into an ambush of wormriders.

The deep drow wear light armour, as the heat in the lower reaches of the Underdeep makes anything more than a breastplate unbearable. They prefer light, quick weapons, with scimitars, spiked chains and light picks as the most dominant weapons.

The deep drow have been raising and breeding purple worms since they first arrived in the bottom of the Underdeep, and make liberal use of these loyal and well-trained creatures when they make war.

Pol'Tah Traits (Ex): The Pol'Tah have retained many of the traits of the drow, but have acquired some new abilities during the long years spent in the bottom of the Underdeep.

- ☞ +2 Dexterity, -2 Constitution, +2 Intelligence, +2 Charisma Females: +2 Intelligence, +2 Charisma
- ☞ Tremorsense out to 120 ft. Immunity to *sleep* spells and effects, and a +2 racial saving throw bonus against enchantment spells or effects.
- ☞ Blindsight out to 30 ft., based on sound
- ☞ Spell resistance equal to 11 + class levels
- ☞ Immunity to *sleep* spells and effects, and a +2 racial saving throw bonus against enchantment spells or effects.
- ☞ +6 racial bonus on Listen checks. A Pol'Tah does not possess the elven ability to make a Search check when passing within 5 ft. of a secret or concealed door.
- ☞ Spell-Like Abilities: Pol'Tah can use the following spell-like abilities once per day: *dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*. Caster level equals the Pol'Tah's class levels. The Pol'Tah almost never use these abilities, as they are meaningless to the blind drow.
- ☞ Weapon Proficiency: A Pol'Tah is automatically proficient with the scimitar, light pick and spiked chain. This trait replaces the drow's weapon proficiencies.
- ☞ Light Vulnerability: Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a daylight spell) causes the Pol'Tah extreme pain. Every round of exposure to such light causes the Pol'Tah to take a penalty of -2 on all rolls.

- ☞ Favoured Class: Fighter or sorcerer. This trait replaces the drow's favoured class.
- ☞ Level Adjustment: +2

Sulzthul (The Aquatic Drow)

Sulzthul, 1st Level Warrior

Medium Humanoid (Elf)

Hit Dice: 1d8 (4 hp)

Initiative: +1

Speed: 30ft. (6 squares), swim 20 ft.

Armour Class: 11 (+1 Dex), touch 11, flat-footed 10

Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+2

Attack: Trident +3 melee (1d8+1) or sling +2 ranged (1d4+1)

Full Attack: Trident +3 melee (1d8+1) or sling +2 ranged (1d4+1)

Space/Reach: 5ft./5ft.

Special Attacks: Poison, spell-like abilities

Special Qualities: Damage reduction 1/-, Sulzthul traits, spell resistance 12

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -1

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 10

Skills: Hide +3*, Listen +5*, Search +5, Spot +5*, Swim +9

Feats: Weapon Focus (trident)

Climate/Terrain: Underground aquatic

Organisation: Squad (2-4), patrol (5-8 plus two 2nd level sergeants and one leader of 3rd to 6th level), or band (20-50 plus 10% noncombatants plus one 2nd level sergeant per five adults, 1d4 6th level lieutenants and 1d4 9th level captains)

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually neutral evil

Advancement: By character class

Level Adjustment: +2

Emerging from the water, the Sulzthul seem at first glance like wet drow, but an observer will quickly note some important differences. The aquatic drow have green-tinted hair growing not just from their heads, but also in a ridge along the spine. The fingers and toes are webbed at the first knuckle, and the skin of these strange elves gleams as if coated in some slippery substance.

The Sulzthul did not diverge from the dark elves naturally. Rather, they are the descendants of a group of drow that were captured and enslaved by the aboleth (see *MM*, *Aboleth*) in the time after the Sundering. The drow were used as servants by the aboleth for an unknown number of years, before the aboleth, growing weary of the limitations of the drow, began experimenting on them to create for efficient and effective servants.

The Sulzthul, also known as the aquatic drow, still strongly resemble other drow, though there are enough differences that the two races can be easily distinguished from one another. Their skin, while black, gleams with mucus, and has an almost translucent quality to it. Their ears are less pronounced than those of other drow, and are flattened against the head on either side. Their hair remains white, often with a subtle tint of green, growing not just from the head of the drow but also in a ridge along the spine. Lastly, their fingers and toes are webbed at the first knuckle, giving them a slight benefit for swimming.

The Sulzthul are not water breathing, still relying on air for their survival. However, the changes the aboleth wrought on them allow the aquatic drow to remain underwater for as long as 12 hours before they are forced to return to the surface to breathe. In recent generations, some Sulzthul have been born with nascent gills, a sign that the changes begun by the aboleth are continuing and that the Sulzthul are steadily becoming a more and more alien species from their origins. These gills do not make the Sulzthul a truly aquatic creature, as they are too underdeveloped to fully support breathing, but they double the amount of time a Sulzthul can spend underwater to 24 hours.

The Sulzthul are extremely paranoid and xenophobic. Their long years of enslavement by the aboleth have made them intensely distrustful of outsiders, even other drow. They do not accept authority well, making governance exceptionally difficult, and would never submit to any non-Sulzthul. The Sulzthul reject all gods and all religions, believing that any entity which allowed them to suffer the fate they did is unworthy of worship.

It is commonly thought that the aboleth used the lessons learned in creating the Sulzthul to go on to create the race of skum.

Combat

In combat, the Sulzthul use their aquatic nature to its best advantage against land-based enemies. They prefer weapons with reach in such encounters, using them to pull their enemies into the water and drown them there. The Sulzthul are at a disadvantage against most aquatic creatures, and prefer to fight them with overwhelming numbers.


Damage Reduction (Ex): The skin of the Sulzthul is thicker and tougher than the skin of their land-based cousins, granting them damage reduction of 1/-.

Poison (Ex): The Sulzthul have learned to create a number of deadly poisons from the creatures that share their aquatic environment, and use them frequently against their foes.



Sulzthul Traits (Ex): The Sulzthul have retained many of the traits of the drow, but have some additional abilities gained from their transformation by the aboleth.

- ☛ +2 Dexterity, -2 Constitution, +2 Intelligence, +2 Charisma
- ☛ Darkvision out to 120 ft.
- ☛ Spell resistance equal to 11 + class levels
- ☛ Spell-Like Abilities: Sulzthul can use the following spell-like abilities once per day: *dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*, *water breathing* (self only). Caster level equals the Sulzthul's class levels.
- ☛ Immunity to *sleep* spells and effects, and a +2 racial saving throw bonus against enchantment spells or effects.
- ☛ +2 racial bonus on Listen, Search and Spot checks. A Sulzthul does not possess the elven ability to make a Search check when passing within 5 ft. of a secret or concealed door. A Sulzthul has a +8 racial bonus on any swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. He can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. He can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line. *Sulzthul also have a +4 racial bonus to Hide, Listen and Spot while in the water, which works in addition to their base elven bonus to Listen and Spot.
- ☛ Weapon Proficiency: A Sulzthul is automatically proficient with the short spear, the sling and the trident. This trait replaces the drow's weapon proficiencies.
- ☛ Light Blindness: Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a daylight spell) blinds Sulzthul for one round. On subsequent rounds, they are dazzled as long as they remain in the affected area.
- ☛ Water Dependence: Sulzthul cannot remain outside the water for long before their skin begins to dry, causing first irritation, then pain. After one hour, the skin begins



to dry. At the end of the second hour, irritation from the dryness causes the Sulzthul to take a -1 penalty on all rolls. At the end of the third hour, the Sulzthul begins to take 1 hp of damage for every hour he remains outside the water.

☞ Favoured Class: Ranger. This trait replaces the drow's favoured class.

☞ Level Adjustment: +2

Shangu

Medium Aberration

Hit Dice: 8d8 + 16 (52 hp)

Initiative: +6

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)

Armour Class: 17 (+2 Dex, +5 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 15

Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+9

Attack: Claw +9 melee (1d8+3) or glaive +10 melee (1d10+4)

Full Attack: Claw +9 melee (1d8+3) and bite +4 melee (1d6+1) or glaive +10 melee (1d10+4)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Paralyze, terrify

Special Qualities: Spell resistance 12

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +7

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 12*, Wis 12, Cha 17

Skills: Hide +7, Intimidate +7, Jump +5, Listen +5, Move Silently +7, Search +5, Spot +5 and Survival +5

Feats: Improved Initiative, Run, Weapon Focus (glaive)

Climate/Terrain: Underground

Organisation: Solitary, pair, clutch (5 to 8 individuals) or hunters (10 to 20 individuals)

Challenge Rating: 6

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually lawful evil

Advancement: By character class

Level Adjustment: +7

* A shangu has no natural intelligence beyond the level of an animal, but rather gains all his intelligence from the creature that hosted him while he was in the worm stage of his development.

This creature stands about seven feet tall and, though humanoid, has a vaguely saurian appearance. Its head is elongated and scaly. Its jaws are filled with serrated teeth and the jaw itself can unhinge to swallow larger prey. Its eyes seem to have no discernible pupils or irises, instead appearing as a mottled swirl of colours. The digits of its hands have three joints.

These terrible creatures of the Underdeep are often simply called Devourers. Once little more than animal predators,

they have become a highly intelligent, rigidly ordered society. They prefer to work flesh and bone rather than stone and metal, and much of their war gear and structures are living organisms forged from the meat of slaves taken from other Underdeep races.

The life cycle of the shangu is divided into three stages, the egg, the worm and the adult. Of the three, the adult stage is the only one in which the shangu is intrinsically dangerous, having access to its powerful physical attacks and supernatural abilities, but it is the worm stage that makes these creature so infamous.

The egg of a shangu is a soft-shelled thing about the size of a human fist. After it is laid by a female shangu, it must be kept in liquid until it matures and hatches; a process that takes about a month. From the egg, the worm emerges. In its worm stage, a shangu is a sightless worm about a foot in length, with soft, slimy skin. At this stage of its life, the shangu is an unintelligent parasite, incapable of defending itself. In order to mature into an adult, the worm must be introduced to a host creature, which must be mammalian.

The worm enters the host creature through the mouth or any other large orifice. Once inside, it attaches itself to the victim's nervous system and begins to feed. This process awakens the worm's intelligence, and from this point forward, it directs the actions of the host creature. The worm remains in the host for three months, growing quickly as it matures into the humanoid form of an adult. The body of the host begins to waste away during this time, as the worm consumes it from within, and by the second month, the body is usually distended and twisted by the increasing size of the parasite within it. The species of the host has no effect on the development of the physical form of the shangu; however the shangu's intelligence as an adult will be identical to that of the host creature it inhabited as a worm.

At the end of the three months, the adult shangu emerges from the ravaged body of its host and, as its first act, consumes the creature that harboured it. Upon emerging, the shangu is usually no more than two or three feet tall, but over the course of the next six months, the creature will grow to its full stature.

Combat

Shangu are deadly foes in combat, whether attacking armed or merely with their natural weapons. Furthermore, adult shangu have the power to paralyze opponents with a thought or terrify them with merely a glance. Shangu prefer to attack using surprise, leaping upon their foes in a well-coordinated assault from at least two sides. They use their supernatural abilities to incapacitate all the foes they

can before slaying those who resist. Incapacitated foes are taken by the shangu to their homes, where they are used as food and hosts for shangu in their worm stage.

Paralyze (Su): Three times per day, a shangu can attempt to paralyze any one living creature within 30 feet. The target must succeed on a DC 17 Will save or be affected by this ability. A paralyzed target remains conscious but unable to act physically in any way. This effect lasts for 1d10+10 rounds and may be removed with a remove curse or freedom of movement spell. The save DC is Charisma-based.

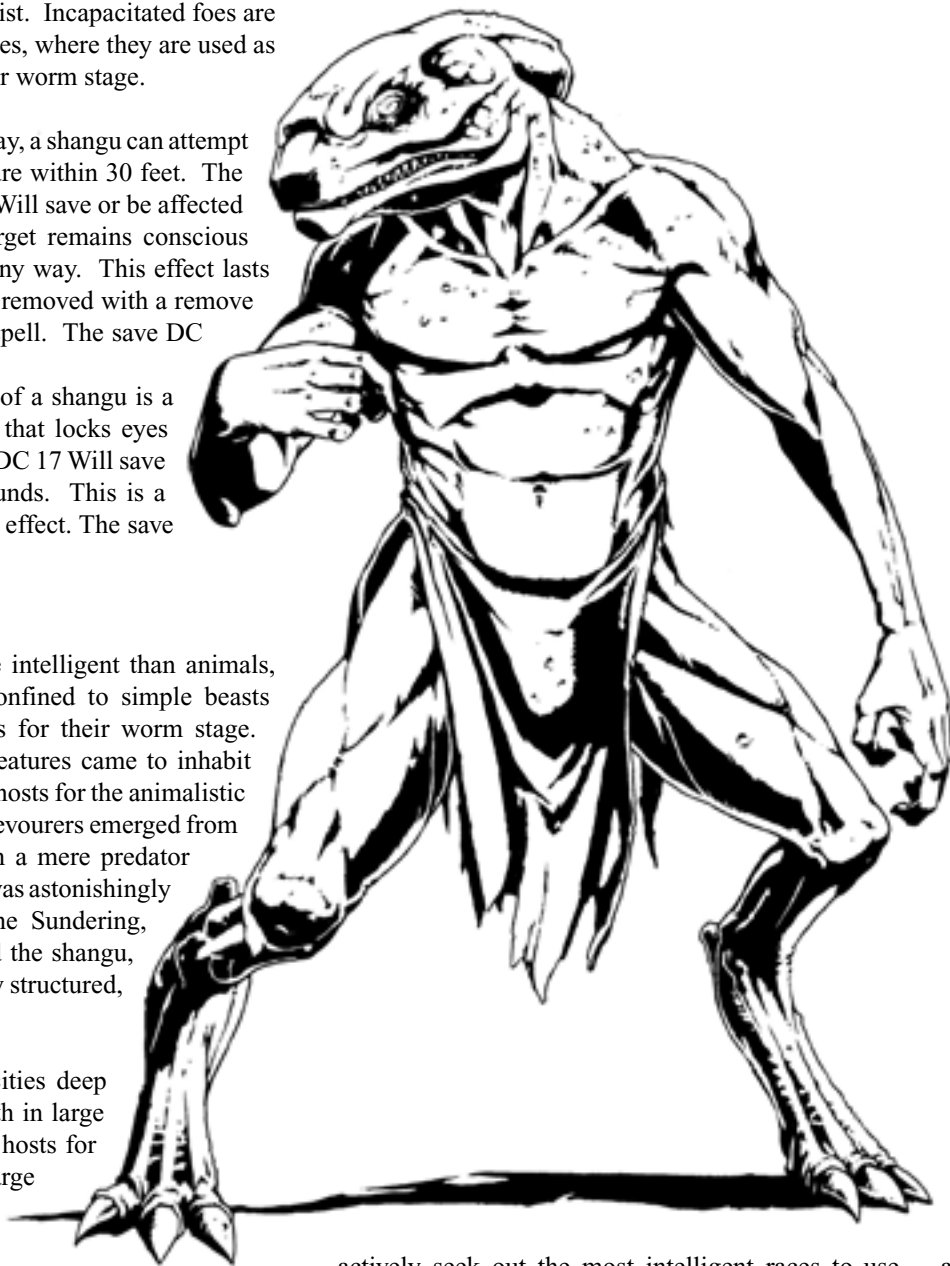
Terrify (Su): Meeting the gaze of a shangu is a terrifying ordeal. Any creature that locks eyes with a shangu must succeed at a DC 17 Will save or become panicked for 1d6 rounds. This is a vision-based mind-affecting fear effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Society

The shangu were once no more intelligent than animals, living in the Underdeep and confined to simple beasts like the hulurn for use as hosts for their worm stage. However, as more intelligent creatures came to inhabit the Underdeep, they too became hosts for the animalistic shangu, and the first intelligent devourers emerged from their hosts. The transition from a mere predator race to a race of empire builders was astonishingly swift, so that at the time of the Sundering, when the drow first encountered the shangu, they had already become a highly structured, strictly ordered society.


The shangu now live in large cities deep in the Underdeep, venturing forth in large bands to capture more potential hosts for their young. They maintain large stocks of slaves and captives to act as potential hosts and raw material for their flesh crafting, and force aggressive breeding programmes on these captives to produce the most intelligent vessels for their offspring. Shangu eggs are commonly kept in well-protected gestation tanks in the centre of the city.

The fact that their intelligence is not an innate trait of their race is something they have never forgotten, and the thought of returning to an animal-like existence is anathema to the shangu. Maintaining the acquired intellect they now possess is central to the shangu mindset, a goal that informs every action taken by the race. They can certainly still use animals as the hosts for their young, but most shangu would rather see the worm die than force the stupidity of an animal upon one of their own. Therefore, the shangu



actively seek out the most intelligent races to use as hosts. The drow, with their innate intellect, are considered a nearly perfect host for shangu worms, and the devourers hunt the dark elves endlessly for this reason, though the innate spell resistance and other traits of the drow make them exceedingly difficult and dangerous quarry. For their part, the drow return the enmity of the shangu in full measure, and hunt them just as mercilessly, though never for capture.

The shangu have a natural gift for sorcery, and many members of the race have embraced the arcane arts to supplement their innate supernatural gifts. The great strength of shangu also makes them excellent warriors, and fighter is one of the most common classes to be found



among the devourers. Rising up as they did from animals, the shangu have no god, and no clerics are to be found in their society.

Shangu are fond of keeping ogres as servants, either trained from birth to serve the devourers, or kept loyal through magical control. Shangu is correct for referring to either an individual or the race as a whole.

Removing a Worm


A shangu in its worm phase can only enter a host body if that host is completely helpless (for example, a potential host must be bound, sleeping or paralysed). It takes the worm 1d4+2 rounds to work its way completely into the body, and an additional 2d10 rounds to find its way to the host's nervous system and attach itself, a process which causes one hit point of damage every round to the potential host. Once it is in position, it is extremely difficult to remove a shangu worm.

It is only possible to remove the worm without killing the host during the first week of the worm's residence in the host body. After that, the worm has subsumed too many of the body's basic functions, and replaced too much of the body's nervous system, for the host to survive without the worm. Spells such as *cure disease*, *remove curse* and even *heal* have no effect on an imbedded worm, though *limited wish* or similar more powerful spells will certainly get rid of it. It is, however, possible to remove a worm through mundane means. Again, this must be done within the first week after the worm has entered the body, and requires a Heal check (DC 25) to remove the worm without killing the host. Even so, the host will take 3d8 damage from the process.

Shangu as Characters

Most shangu with character levels are either sorcerers or fighters.

- +6 Strength, +4 Dexterity, +4 Constitution, +6 Charisma
- A shangu's base land speed is 40 feet
- Darkvision out to 120 feet
- Racial Hit Dice: A shangu begins with eight levels of aberration, giving it a 8d8 Hit Dice, a base attack of +6 and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +2, Ref +2 and Will +6
- Racial Skills: A shangu's aberration levels give it skill points equal to 11 x (2 + Int modifier). Its class skills are Hide, Intimidate, Jump, Listen, Move Silently, Search, Spot and Survival.
- Racial Feats: A shangu's aberration levels give it three feats.
- +5 natural armour bonus

- Natural weapons: Claws (1d8) and bite (1d6)
 - Weapon Proficiencies: A shangu is automatically proficient in the glaive, greataxe and sling.
 - Special Attacks: Paralyse, terrify (see above for details)
 - Special Qualities: Spell resistance equal to 12 + class levels
 - Automatic Languages: Shangu, Undercommon. Bonus Languages: Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Gnome
 - Favoured Class: Fighter or sorcerer.
 - Level adjustment: +7
- 

The Kanahraun Reavers

Medium Humanoid (Elf)

	1 st Level Barbarian	4 th Level Barbarian	8 th Level Barbarian
Hit Dice	1d12+2 (14 hp)	4d12+8 (40hp)	8d12+16 (74hp)
Initiative	+2	+2	+2
Speed	40 ft. (8 squares)	40 ft. (8 squares)	40 ft. (8 squares)
Armour Class	16 (+2 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 buckler)	16 (+2 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 buckler)	16 (+2 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 buckler)
Base Attack/Grapple	+1/+4	+4/+7	+8/+12
Attack	Scimitar +4 melee (1d6+3/18-20) or short bow +3 ranged (1d6)	Scimitar +8 melee (1d6+3/18-20) or short bow +6 ranged (1d6)	Scimitar +13 melee (1d6+4/18-20) or short bow +10 ranged (1d6)
Full Attack	Scimitar +4 melee (1d6+3/18-20) or short bow +3 ranged (1d6)	Scimitar +8 melee (1d6+3/18-20) or short bow +7 ranged (1d6)	Scimitar +13/+8 melee (1d6+4/18-20) or short bow +10/+5 ranged (1d6)
Face/Reach	5 ft./5 ft.	5 ft./5 ft.	5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks	Infernal howl, rage 1/day	Infernal howl, rage 2/day	Infernal howl, rage 3/day
Special Qualities	Kanahraun traits, spell resistance 12, strength of the pact	Kanahraun traits, spell resistance 15, strength of the pact, uncanny dodge, trap sense +1	Damage reduction 1/-, improved uncanny dodge, Kanahraun traits, spell resistance 19, strength of the pact, trap sense +2
Saves	Fort +4, Ref +2, Will -1	Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +0	Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +1
Abilities	Str 16, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 10	Str 17, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 10	Str 18, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 10
Skills	Climb +7, Intimidate +4, Listen +3, Survival +3	Climb +7, Intimidate +6, Jump +5, Listen +6, Survival +6, Swim +5	Climb +10, Intimidate +8, Jump +10, Listen +7, Survival +7, Swim +12
Feats	Rend the Throat	Rend the Throat, Weapon Focus (scimitar)	Power Attack, Rend the Throat, Weapon Focus (scimitar)
Climate/Terrain	Underground	Underground	Underground
Organisation	Pact (Eight individuals)	Pact (Eight individuals)	Pact (Eight individuals)
Challenge Rating	4	8	16
Treasure	Half standard	Half standard	Half standard
Alignment	Chaotic Evil	Chaotic Evil	Chaotic Evil
Advancement	By character class (barbarian)	By character class (barbarian)	By character class (barbarian)
Level Adjustment	+2	+2	+2

Into every generation of Kanahraun, the feral drow, are born eight male children destined to become Reavers. In childhood, the destiny is hidden; even the mightiest priests of the ruling class are unable to determine which children will one day be Reavers. Upon the advent of puberty, however, the destiny is made plain. Following the first kill made by the Kanahraun child after the onset of adolescence, a mark, like a white fang, appears on his

forehead, and he begins to slip quickly into utter madness, plagued by dreams and visions of horror too intense for even the Kanahraun to bear. The feral drow consider this a gift from Azzanoth the Glutton.

The child is quickly taken to Gauth Sheol, to the great temple of Azzanoth, where he is kept caged until the other seven destined children of his generation can be gathered

there. Once they have all eight in hand, the priests of the Glutton perform a ritual known as *Dul Merzim, the Joining*. The eight children marked with the white fang are joined together into a single group of Reavers, known as a Pact. They remain individuals, but now also share a link of their thoughts, sensations and impulses, allowing them to act as a perfectly coordinated unit in battle. Maddened by bloodlust and visions of horror beyond mortal understanding, but made absolutely and utterly obedient to the ruling class by the ritual of *Joining*, the Reavers exist only to kill and slaughter.

The Reavers are the greatest weapon in the Kanahraun arsenal, violent and deadly creatures under the control of the fiendish Kanahraun ruling class, used to maintain control over the violent lower class in the rare event of insurrection and to slaughter any enemy foolish enough to attack the Kanahraun.

The Reavers are kept in pits beneath the temples of Azzanoth the Glutton when not deployed for battle or hunting. They are fed only enough to keep them hungry, making them that much more deadly when they are loosed. As there are only a limited number of Reaver Pacts in existence at any given time, generally no more than 30, only the largest of the stationary groups of Kanahraun are likely to have one to draw upon. The number of Reavers in the Kanahraun race remains fairly consistent, however. When one or more members of a Pact are slain, an equal number of other Kanahraun from the same generation receive the White Fang mark and begin their new destiny as a Reaver.

Though bound together in a Pact, the Reavers can continue to accrue experience points and advance in level. Most often, they advance together, as Reavers are usually 1st level barbarians at the time of their *Joining*. In the pits beneath Gauth Sheol, the ruling class of the Kanahraun keep six Pacts of Reavers, one of which is of epic level. This Pact is rarely unleashed, and is an all but unstoppable force when the ruling Kanahraun let slip its reins.

The statistics given above represent a single individual from three different Pacts of Reavers, one of 1st level, one of 4th and one of 8th. Though every Reaver is a different individual, for the sake of simplicity, it is easiest to assume all Reavers of a single Pact have identical statistics, feats and skills. Games Masters who enjoy the prospect of a great deal of additional math may feel free to individualise the Reavers in a given Pact. As a general rule, Reavers are above average physically.



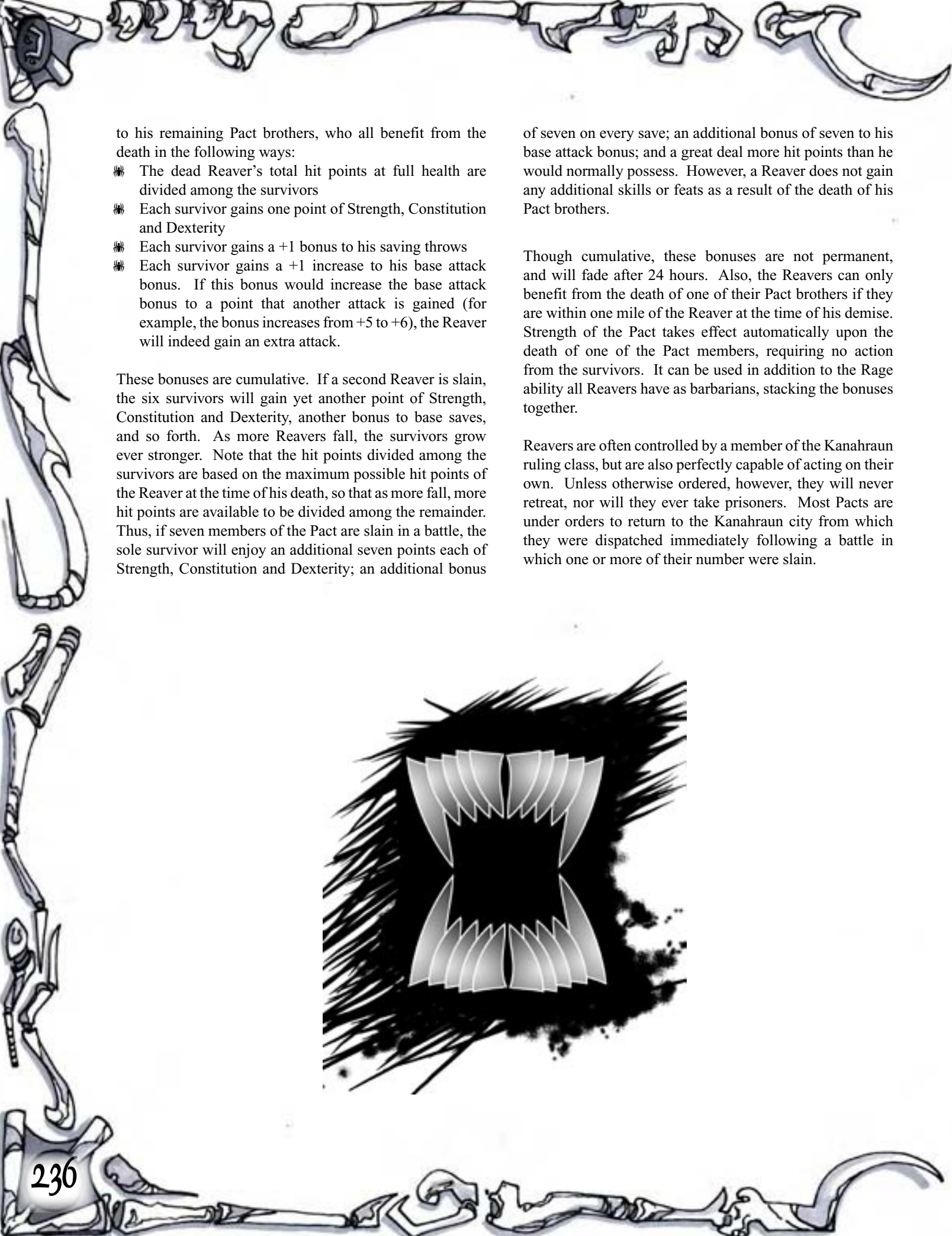
Combat

Reavers can stalk their prey for days until they believe the time is right to strike. The initial assault will come from at least two sides, either in a volley of arrows, if the area of the battle is large enough, or in a sudden onslaught of bared teeth and swinging swords.

Reavers leap into combat with a wild ferocity that, at first glance, seems reckless and foolhardy. With the link forged by the *Joining*, however, this ferocity is anything but reckless, for though the Reavers give little thought to defence, they strike together as a single unit. They attack on multiple fronts, confusing and disorienting their enemy.

Infernal Howl (Su): Reavers enter battle with shrieks and howls of such unnatural sound and ferocity that any person hearing them must make a Will save (DC 10 + $\frac{1}{2}$ Reaver's HD + Reaver's Charisma modifier) or flee before the onslaught. This is a sound-based, mind-affecting fear effect.

Strength of the Pact (Su): A single Reaver is little more dangerous than any other barbarian of his level, but encountering a Reaver without the rest of his Pact is all but impossible, and it is in conjunction with his seven fellow Reavers that the true danger of these beings is revealed. Whenever a Reaver is slain in battle, his strength is passed



to his remaining Pact brothers, who all benefit from the death in the following ways:

- ☛ The dead Reaver's total hit points at full health are divided among the survivors
- ☛ Each survivor gains one point of Strength, Constitution and Dexterity
- ☛ Each survivor gains a +1 bonus to his saving throws
- ☛ Each survivor gains a +1 increase to his base attack bonus. If this bonus would increase the base attack bonus to a point that another attack is gained (for example, the bonus increases from +5 to +6), the Reaver will indeed gain an extra attack.

These bonuses are cumulative. If a second Reaver is slain, the six survivors will gain yet another point of Strength, Constitution and Dexterity, another bonus to base saves, and so forth. As more Reavers fall, the survivors grow ever stronger. Note that the hit points divided among the survivors are based on the maximum possible hit points of the Reaver at the time of his death, so that as more fall, more hit points are available to be divided among the remainder. Thus, if seven members of the Pact are slain in a battle, the sole survivor will enjoy an additional seven points each of Strength, Constitution and Dexterity; an additional bonus

of seven on every save; an additional bonus of seven to his base attack bonus; and a great deal more hit points than he would normally possess. However, a Reaver does not gain any additional skills or feats as a result of the death of his Pact brothers.

Though cumulative, these bonuses are not permanent, and will fade after 24 hours. Also, the Reavers can only benefit from the death of one of their Pact brothers if they are within one mile of the Reaver at the time of his demise. Strength of the Pact takes effect automatically upon the death of one of the Pact members, requiring no action from the survivors. It can be used in addition to the Rage ability all Reavers have as barbarians, stacking the bonuses together.

Reavers are often controlled by a member of the Kanahraun ruling class, but are also perfectly capable of acting on their own. Unless otherwise ordered, however, they will never retreat, nor will they ever take prisoners. Most Pacts are under orders to return to the Kanahraun city from which they were dispatched immediately following a battle in which one or more of their number were slain.





Encounters in the Underdeep

This chapter provides Games Masters with an assortment of drow Non-Player Characters to be used as encounters, allies, enemies, employers or even hirelings of the Player Characters. Some of the individuals detailed below may be used as a single encounter, while others should have a retinue of followers or retainers. The encounters are presented in ascending order of difficulty and danger, from Challenge Rating 2 to 20.

Terek na'Serquol

Drow male (House Merezzym), Ranger 1

Terek is out abroad in the surface world, under the blanket of night that cloaks the northern empire of House Merezzym for months at a time. He is charged with fulfilling his rite of passage, proving himself to be a worthy member of House Merezzym. This rite involves hunting and killing a dangerous foe or beast, and bringing a token of his victory back as proof. The exact foe or beast is left to Terek's discretion, and is indeed part of the rite itself; if the foe is not judged worthy, he will have failed.

However, Terek has had little luck finding dangerous quarry, and is beginning to worry that he is a bit lost. For all that, he retains the haughty superiority of House Merezzym, and is likely to view the appearance of a group of adventurers as an opportunity to fulfil his obligation.

Terek Na'Serquol, Male drow Rgr 1: CR 2; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 1d10; hp 10; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +1; Grp +4; Atk +5 melee (1d8+3/19-20, longsword) or +4 ranged (1d8/x3, longbow); Full Atk +5 melee (1d8+3/19-20, longsword) or +4 ranged (1d8/x3, longbow); SQ drow traits, House Merezzym traits, favoured enemy (goblinoids) +2, wild empathy; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +1; AL NE; Str 16, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 9

Languages Spoken: Common, Elven, Undercommon

Skills and Feats: Hide +7, Knowledge (nature) +5, Listen +7, Move Silently +7, Search +5, Spot +7, Survival +7; Improved Initiative, Track

Equipment: Backpack, bedroll, buckler, climber's kit, cold weather outfit, flint and steel, longbow (plus 40 arrows), longsword, rations (1 week), studded leather armour

Berella

Half-drow female, Rogue 2

Berella's life has been a miserable one, but she is luckier than most half-drow in that she is still alive. Still, the torment and abuse she has suffered all her life finally grew too much for her to tolerate any longer. Using the meagre skills as a rogue she has acquired over the years, she managed to escape the drow city in which she lived and is attempting to make her way to the surface, in hopes that life there might be marginally better.

She is being pursued by a small group of drow, not to bring her back, but to kill her. Bedraggled and hungry, she is clad in rags and has only an old dagger for protection. The scars in her grey skin tell the tale of her tortured life.

Berella, Female half-drow Rog 2: CR 2; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 2d6+2; hp 10; Init +4 Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +1; Grp +1; Atk +1 melee (1d4/19-20, dagger); Full Atk +1 melee (1d4/19-20, dagger); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ evasion, half-drow traits; SV Fort +1, Ref +7, Will +0; AL CN; Str 10, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 15

Languages Spoken: Common, Undercommon

Skills and Feats: Balance +7, Bluff +7, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +7, Escape Artist +9, Hide +9, Move Silently +9, Open Lock +9, Search +5, Tumble +9; Dodge

Equipment: Dagger, peasant's outfit

Sithil Hwerzel

Sulzthul male, Sorcerer 3

Sithil is a fledgling sorcerer of the aquatic drow who has ventured away from his home city in search of some rare but vital spell components. He is terrified to be out in the Underdeep on his own, and has little faith in his slight spell abilities to save him from some of the monsters he fears may be around every turn. He will avoid the Player Characters if at all possible, using the waterways of the Underdeep to escape. If he is caught, he will attempt to strike a deal, even going so far as to reveal the location of his home city if he must do so in order to save his life.

Sithil Hwerzel, Male Sulzthul Sor 3: CR 4; Medium humanoid (aquatic, elf); HD 3d4; hp 9; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +1; Grp +1; Atk +1 melee (1d4/19-20, dagger); Full Atk +1 melee (1d4/19-20, dagger); SA spells; SQ Sulzthul traits; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +1; AL NE; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 16, Wis 7, Cha 18

Languages Spoken: Aquan, Common, Elven, Undercommon

Skills and Feats: Concentration +6, Craft (alchemy) +8, Hide +7, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Listen +4, Perform +6, Search +6, Spellcraft +9, Spot +4, Swim +10 (these bonuses include Sithil's racial bonus for being in water); Brew Potion, Spell Penetration

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/5, save DC 14 + spell level): 0th – *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *ray of frost*; 1st – *expeditious retreat*, *mage armour*, *magic missile*

Equipment: Backpack, dagger, sling (plus 15 bullets), spell components, thryssal clothing, wetgarb (not worn)

Jallia Nerreloth

Drow female (House Kolnahos), Cleric 4

As a cleric of Polshoath in House Kolnahos, Jallia is charged with bringing her goddess' gift of pain to newly captured slaves. She takes great pride in the faith placed in her by the church, considering her rather low level of experience, and is extremely thorough in her work.

She has been dispatched to meet a passing caravan of slaves as it travels through the Underdeep on its way to market, and her responsibility is to keep them in line. She is travelling alone, having left her slaves at home to take care of some various tasks in her absence.

Jallia Nerreloth, Female drow (House Kolnahos) Clr 4: CR 5; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 4d8+8; hp 28; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +3; Grp +6; Atk +6 melee (2d4+4, spiked chain); Full Atk +6 melee (2d4+4, spiked chain); SA spells, turn undead; SQ drow traits, House Kolnahos traits; SV Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +7; AL CE; Str 16, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 18

Languages Spoken: Common, Elven, Undercommon

Skills and Feats: Concentration +9, Diplomacy +8, Handle Animal +10, Heal +6, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (religion) +8, Listen +5, Search +4, Spellcraft +8, Spot +5; Combat Casting, Scribe Scroll

Cleric Domains: Evil, Water

Cleric Spells per Day: 5/3+1/2+1 (save DC 13 + spell level)

Equipment: Backpack, chainmail, holy symbol, spiked chain, traveller's outfit, 73 gp



Eroth Ghaun

Kanahraun male, Barbarian 5

Eroth is the only survivor of a raiding party of 20 feral drow. He was scouting to the flank of the group, and when he returned, he discovered the rest of his raiding party dead at the hands of dwarves. Most of them had been slain in what was obviously a carefully-laid trap, and those who survived appeared to have been finished off with axe and crossbow.

Eroth is enraged by what has happened, but is not so foolish as to seek out an entire warband of dwarves on his own. Instead, he is returning to his home, to tell the ruling class of the actions of the 'hairy ones with tough meat.' Though pressed for time, he may feel compelled to take out his anger on a set of likely targets should he encounter some in the Underdeep.

Eroth Ghaun, Male Kanahraun

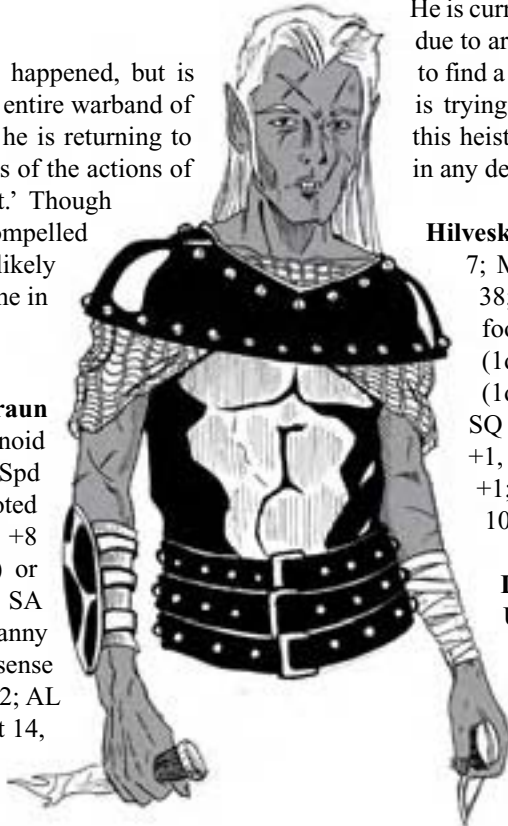
Bbn 5: CR 6; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 5d12; hp 48; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +5; Grp +7; Atk +8 melee (1d6+2/18-20, scimitar) or +7 ranged (1d6/x3, short bow); SA rage 2/day; SQ improved uncanny dodge, Kanahraun traits, trap sense +1; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2; AL CE; Str 15, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 10

Languages Spoken:

Abyssal, Common, Undercommon

Skills and Feats: Climb +10, Craft (bone) +4, Handle Animal +4, Jump +8, Listen +11, Search +4, Spot +7, Survival +9, Swim +6; Great Fortitude, Weapon Focus (scimitar)

Equipment: Backpack, bedroll, buckler, rations (1 week), scimitar, short bow (plus 40 arrows), studded leather armour



Hilvesk Bradunar

Drow male, Fighter 2/Rogue 4

Hilvesk is a drow of the lower classes, belonging to no House. He is a petty criminal, who haunts the dark alleys and tunnels in and near the city of his birth, picking on lone travellers. Little more than a thug, Hilvesk entertains notions of thieving his way to wealth and prestige.

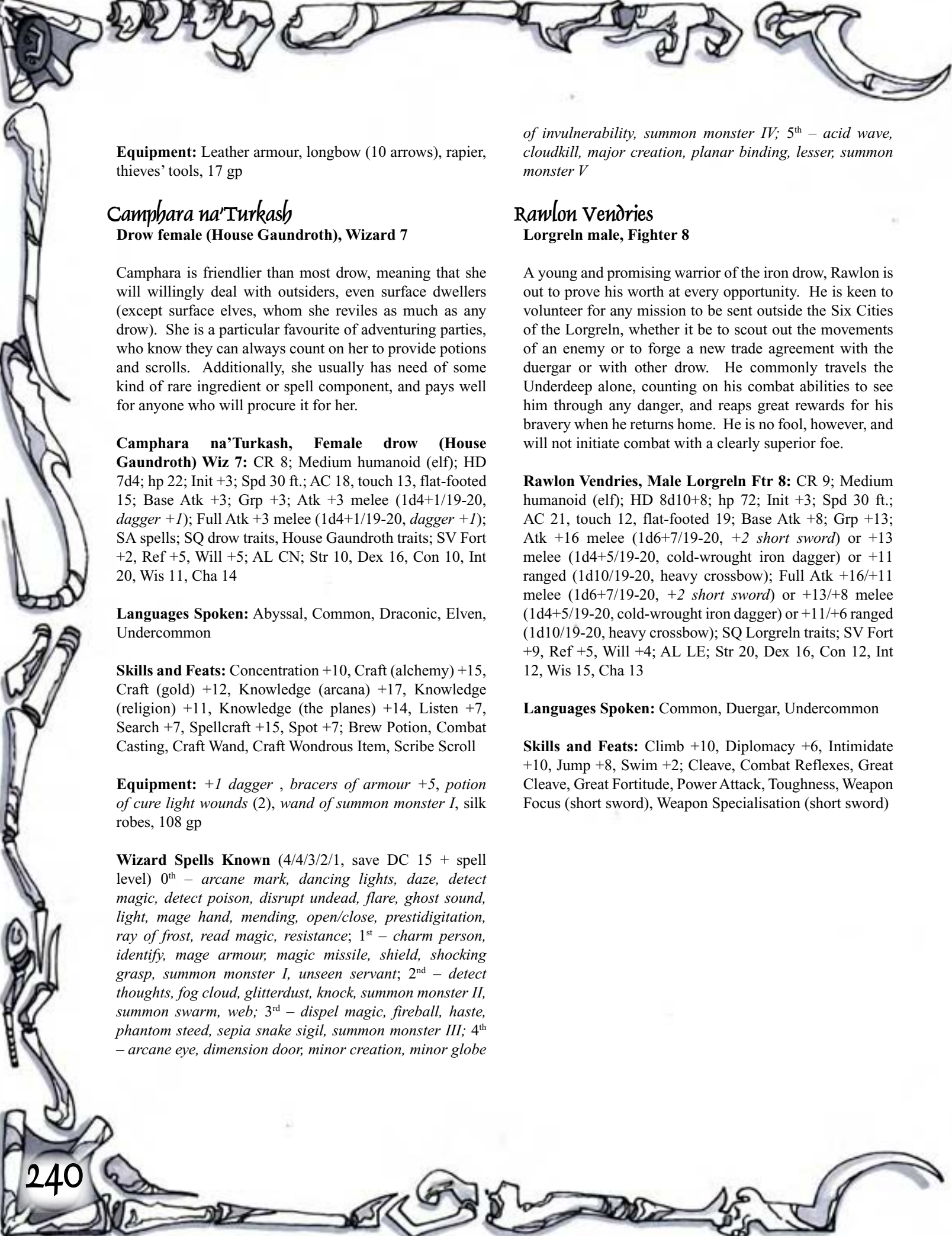
He is currently pursuing rumours of a caravan of gems due to arrive soon from another drow city, and hopes to find a way to ambush or ransack the shipment. He is trying to find capable and reliable comrades for this heist, which he has not yet bothered to plan for in any detail.

Hilvesk Bradunar, Male drow Ftr 4/Rog 2:

CR 7; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 4d10+2d6; hp 38; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +5; Grp +7; Atk +7 melee (1d6+2/18-20, rapier); Full Atk +7 melee (1d6+2/18-20, rapier); SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ drow traits, evasion, trapfinding, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; SV Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +1; AL NE; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 15

Languages Spoken: Common, Undercommon

Skills and Feats: Balance +5, Bluff +6, Climb +8, Disable Device +4, Gather Information +6, Hide +7, Intimidate +10, Jump +8, Listen +8, Open Lock +7, Search +4, Tumble +7; Alertness, Close Combat, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Power Attack, Toughness



Equipment: Leather armour, longbow (10 arrows), rapier, thieves' tools, 17 gp

Camphara na'Turkash

Drow female (House Gaundroth), Wizard 7

Camphara is friendlier than most drow, meaning that she will willingly deal with outsiders, even surface dwellers (except surface elves, whom she reviles as much as any drow). She is a particular favourite of adventuring parties, who know they can always count on her to provide potions and scrolls. Additionally, she usually has need of some kind of rare ingredient or spell component, and pays well for anyone who will procure it for her.

Camphara na'Turkash, Female drow (House Gaundroth) Wiz 7: CR 8; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 7d4; hp 22; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +3; Grp +3; Atk +3 melee (1d4+1/19-20, *dagger* +1); Full Atk +3 melee (1d4+1/19-20, *dagger* +1); SA spells; SQ drow traits, House Gaundroth traits; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +5; AL CN; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 20, Wis 11, Cha 14

Languages Spoken: Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Elven, Undercommon

Skills and Feats: Concentration +10, Craft (alchemy) +15, Craft (gold) +12, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Knowledge (religion) +11, Knowledge (the planes) +14, Listen +7, Search +7, Spellcraft +15, Spot +7; Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Scribe Scroll

Equipment: +1 *dagger*, *bracers of armour* +5, *potion of cure light wounds* (2), *wand of summon monster I*, silk robes, 108 gp

Wizard Spells Known (4/4/3/2/1, save DC 15 + spell level) 0th – *arcane mark, dancing lights, daze, detect magic, detect poison, disrupt undead, flare, ghost sound, light, mage hand, mending, open/close, prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic, resistance*; 1st – *charm person, identify, mage armour, magic missile, shield, shocking grasp, summon monster I, unseen servant*; 2nd – *detect thoughts, fog cloud, glitterdust, knock, summon monster II, summon swarm, web*; 3rd – *dispel magic, fireball, haste, phantom steed, sepia snake sigil, summon monster III*; 4th – *arcane eye, dimension door, minor creation, minor globe*

of invulnerability, summon monster IV; 5th – acid wave, cloudkill, major creation, planar binding, lesser, summon monster V

Rawlon Vendries

Lorgreln male, Fighter 8

A young and promising warrior of the iron drow, Rawlon is out to prove his worth at every opportunity. He is keen to volunteer for any mission to be sent outside the Six Cities of the Lorgreln, whether it be to scout out the movements of an enemy or to forge a new trade agreement with the duergar or with other drow. He commonly travels the Underdeep alone, counting on his combat abilities to see him through any danger, and reaps great rewards for his bravery when he returns home. He is no fool, however, and will not initiate combat with a clearly superior foe.

Rawlon Vendries, Male Lorgreln Ftr 8: CR 9; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 8d10+8; hp 72; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 21, touch 12, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +8; Grp +13; Atk +16 melee (1d6+7/19-20, +2 *short sword*) or +13 melee (1d4+5/19-20, cold-wrought iron dagger) or +11 ranged (1d10/19-20, heavy crossbow); Full Atk +16/+11 melee (1d6+7/19-20, +2 *short sword*) or +13/+8 melee (1d4+5/19-20, cold-wrought iron dagger) or +11/+6 ranged (1d10/19-20, heavy crossbow); SQ Lorgreln traits; SV Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +4; AL LE; Str 20, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 13

Languages Spoken: Common, Duergar, Undercommon

Skills and Feats: Climb +10, Diplomacy +6, Intimidate +10, Jump +8, Swim +2; Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (short sword), Weapon Specialisation (short sword)

Equipment: +1 chainmail, +1 large steel shield, +2 short sword, explorer's clothing, backpack, bedroll, heavy crossbow, iron dagger, rations (1 week), waterskin, 241 gp

Altheria Pillawel

Drow female (House Narrishtah), Assassin 1/Fighter 3/Rogue 4/Wizard 1

One of the least religious members of her House, Altheria spends little time in the company of her family members, and has only lately come to express any interest in the traditional practice of wizardry which she learned in her youth. Her interest, however, is less in carrying on the House's tradition and more in providing herself with yet another tool in her arsenal as an assassin.

Altheria is one of the most successful assassins amongst the drow today, rivalling even some of the Shadows of Mu'Ushket. She works under the name of Onyx, revealing her true identity to no one, except, perhaps, her victims. Her signature is the means by which she disposes of the bodies; after killing her target, she uses the wands she has acquired to turn the body to stone (with *flesh to stone*), then to mud (with *transmute rock to mud*), then dilutes the mud with water (with *create water*) and finally leaves nothing behind but pure water (with *purify food and drink*). No one has yet managed to restore to life anyone Altheria has killed and disposed of in this manner. However, this signature of hers has given her a nickname she despises: The Liquidator.

Altheria Pillawel, Female drow (House Narrishtah) Asn 1/Ftr 3/Rog 4/Wiz 1: CR 10; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 3d10 plus 4d6 plus 1d4 plus 1d6; hp 53; Init +9; Spd 30 ft.; AC 23, touch 18, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +6; Grp +8; Atk +14 melee (1d4+5/19-20, +3 dagger) or +12 melee (1d6+2/19-20, masterwork short sword) or +11 melee (1d3+2, unarmed strike) or +12 ranged (1d4+1/19-20, +1 hand crossbow); Full Atk +14/+9 melee (1d4+5/19-20, +3 dagger) or +12/+7 melee (1d6+2/19-20, masterwork short sword) or +11/+6 melee (1d3+2, unarmed strike) or +12/+7 ranged (1d4+1/19-20, +1 hand crossbow); SA death attack, poison use, sneak attack +3d6, spells; SQ drow traits, evasion, House Narrishtah traits, trapfinding, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; SV Fort +4 (+5 against poison), Ref +14, Will +5; AL CE; Str 15, Dex 20, Con 10, Int 18, Wis 12, Cha 20

Languages Spoken: Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Elven, Undercommon

Skills and Feats: Appraise +8, Balance +13, Bluff +13, Climb +13, Concentration +2, Craft (alchemy) +3, Diplomacy +13, Disable Device +10, Disguise +13, Escape

Artist +9, Gather Information +9, Hide +23, Intimidate +11, Jump +6, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Listen +9, Move Silently +13, Open Lock +9, Search +10, Sense Motive +5, Spellcraft +6, Swim +6, Tumble +17; Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Lightning Reflexes, Scribe Scroll, Weapon Finesse

Equipment: +3 dagger, +1 hand crossbow, ring of mind shielding, ring of protection +3, +2 studded leather armour of improved shadow, wand of create water (34 charges), wand of flesh to stone (9 charges), wand of purify food and drink (48 charges), wand of transmute rock to mud (17 charges), assassin kit, courtier's outfit, adamantite signet ring, two gems (50 gp and 300 gp), 59 gp

Assassin Spells Known (1, save DC 14 + spell level): Use Wizard spells for spells known

Wizard Spells Known (3/2, save DC 14 + spell level): 0th – arcane mark, dancing lights, daze, detect magic, detect poison, disrupt undead, flare, ghost sound, light, mage



hand, mending, open/close, prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic, resistance. 1st – disguise self, expeditious retreat, feather fall, hold portal, true strike, ventriloquism

Jarax Yethren

Drow male (House Merezzym), Cleric 3/Fist of Nazrakoath 3/Ranger 4

In his youth, Jarax was part of a large group of drow hunters, patrolling the frozen mountains of the northern surface lands of House Merezzym. A handful of trolls set upon them in the night, ravaging their ranks and scattering the drow into the wilderness. Badly wounded, Jarax fled through the ice and snow, pursued for days by ravenous trolls until he finally stumbled back to the city of Siplawth. He was the only survivor.

His rage and hatred have never abated; he loathes trolls as deeply today as he did when he fled through the wilderness. He has dedicated himself to their extermination, and when he is not out in the bitter cold hunting them, he is seeking new and better means of killing them.

Jarax Yethren, Male drow (House Merezzym) Clr 3/Fist of Nazrakoath 3/Rgr 4: CR 11; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 3d8+6 plus 3d8+6 plus 4d10+8; hp 75; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +8; Grp +12; Atk +14 melee (1d8+4/19-20, +2 *longsword*) or +10 ranged (1d8/x3, masterwork longbow); Full Atk +14/+14/+9 melee (1d8+4/19-20, +2 *longsword*) or +10/+5 ranged (1d8/x3, masterwork longbow); SA foebane, spells, turn undead; SQ drow traits, favoured enemy (trolls) +2, find foe I, hated foe (trolls), House Merezzym traits, wild empathy; SV Fort +14, Ref +7, Will +10; AL LE; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 12

Languages Spoken: Common, Elven, Giant, Undercommon

Skills and Feats: Bluff +3, Heal +10, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (religion) +10, Listen +14, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +8, Spot +14, Survival +14; Combat Casting, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Rapid Shot, Track

Cleric Domains: Law, Strength

Cleric Spells per Day: 5/3+1/3+1/2+1, save DC 13 + spell level

Equipment: +1 chain shirt, +2 flaming burst longsword of speed, alchemist's fire (5), darkglass visor, backpack, bedroll, cold weather outfit, flint and steel, small shield, winter blanket

Turvor na'Kallash

Drow male (House na'Khotan albino) Assassin 1/Rogue 5/Fighter 5

Turvor is one of the albino offspring of House na'Khotan, sent into the surface world as a spy and assassin for his House. Unlike some of these albinos, Turvor has never succumbed to the temptation to remain slough off his drow heritage and attempt a better life in the surface world. Despite the abuse heaped upon him since birth for his pale skin and black hair, he remains loyal to House na'Khotan.


Turvor's time in the surface world has been spent in the company of humans. Now, however, he has orders to try to infiltrate a community of surface elves for the first time. He is anxious to find a group of adventurers he might join briefly, a group that includes at least one surface elf, that he might test his abilities to blend in and go unnoticed as what he is, even under the very nose of a surface elf. Whether successful or not, he intends to kill the group of adventurers after a time, to avoid leaving any trace of his presence.

Turvor na'Kallash, Male drow (House na'Khotan) Assn 1/Rog 5/Ftr 5: CR 12; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 1d6-1 plus 5d6-5 plus 5d10-5; hp 47; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 22, touch 15, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +8; Grp +9; Atk +12 melee (1d8+5/19-20, *longsword* +2) or +13 ranged (1d8/x3, longbow); Full Atk +12/+7 melee (1d8+5/19-20, *longsword* +2) or +13/+8 ranged (1d8/x3, longbow); SA death attack, poison use, sneak attack +4d6, spells; SQ drow traits, evasion, House na'Khotan traits, trapfinding, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; SV Fort +4, Ref +14, Will +3; AL CE; Str 12, Dex 20, Con 9, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 14

Languages Spoken: Common, Elven, Goblin, Undercommon

Skills and Feats: Bluff +8, Climb +7, Diplomacy +10, Disable Device +6, Disguise +6, Escape Artist +11, Forgery +4, Gather Information +10, Handle Animal +4, Hide +13, Intimidate +10, Jump +7, Listen +9, Move Silently +13, Open Lock +9, Perform +6, Ride +9, Search +6, Sense Motive +7, Spot +9, Swim +5, Tumble +11; Alertness, Ambidexterity, Lightning Reflexes, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (*longsword*), Weapon Specialisation (*longsword*)

Assassin Spells Known (2, save DC 12 + spell level): 1st – *charm person, feather fall, sleep*



Equipment: +2 *ghost touch longsword of defending*, +3 *mithral chain shirt*, backpack, bedroll, dagger, explorer's outfit, longbow (plus 40 arrows), thieves' tools, 63 gp

Karas na'Rallian

Drow male (House Draz'Kuri) Fighter 12

Karas is the epitome of what a warrior of House Draz'Kuri should be. He is merciless to his foes and unquestioningly loyal to his rulers, whether he is leading a warband of drow or travelling alone through the Underdeep on an errand of his superiors. A coldly careful warrior, he will size up any potential enemy before engaging in combat, provided he has the opportunity. If he is on an errand of importance, he will avoid combat unless it is thrust upon him; but if it is, he will teach his enemy why the Draz'Kuri are so feared.

Karas na'Rallian, Male drow (House Draz'Kuri) Ftr 12: CR 13; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 12d10+12; hp 98; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 23, touch 13, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +12; Grp +16; Atk +20 melee (1d8+9/17-20, +3 *flaming longsword of speed*) or +15 ranged (1d4/19-20, hand crossbow); Full Atk +20/+20/+15/+10 melee (1d8+9/17-20, +3 *flaming longsword of speed*) or +15/+10/+5 ranged (1d4/19-20, hand crossbow); SQ drow traits, House Draz'Kuri traits; SV Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +5; AL LE; Str 18, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 15

Languages Spoken: Common, Elven, Undercommon

Skills and Feats: Climb +11, Diplomacy +7, Jump +11, Swim +11, Tumble +11; Arise, Ascending Blow, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Drawn Strike, Great Cleave, Improved Critical (longsword), Power Attack, Quick Draw, Relentless, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialisation (longsword)

Equipment: +3 *flaming longsword of speed*, +4 *studded leather armour of moderate fortification*, +2 *buckler of blinding*, explorer's outfit, dagger (2), hand crossbow (plus 10 bolts)

Derasha na'Baren

Drow female (House Devoren), Ranger 4/Rogue 3/Explorer 6

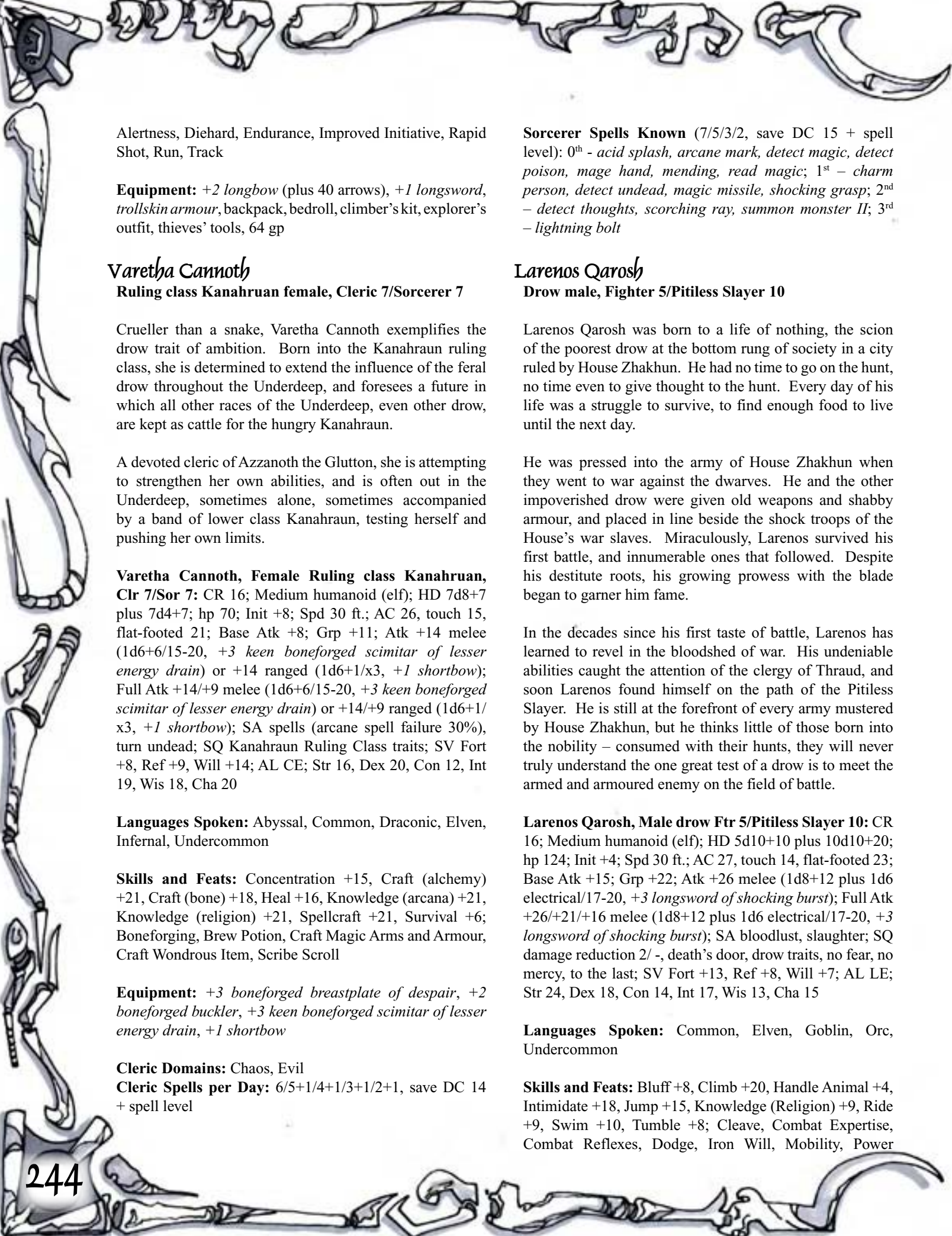
Derasha has rarely slept in the same place two nights in a row. Born to the Explorer class of House Devoren, she has seen more of the Underdeep, more of its wonders and terrors, than most drow three times her age.

Like most of her people, Derasha is happiest when she is on the move, and she views those drow who lurk in dank caverns, hidden behind stone walls, as cowards and fools, too afraid to face the Underdeep. She fears the Underdeep, and has a healthy respect for the perils it holds, but she does not revere it. Derasha makes most of her living by blazing new trails in the Underdeep, or by guarding and guiding caravans as they pass through the labyrinthine passageways she knows so well (a task she despises). She is certainly not above stealing something that catches her fancy, a habit which has cost her some lucrative contracts in the past.

Derasha na'Baren, Female drow (House Devoren) Rgr 4/Rog 3/Explorer 6: CR 14; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 4d8+4 plus 3d6+3 plus 6d8+6; hp 82; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +12; Grp +13; Atk +14 melee (1d8+2/19-20, +1 *longsword*) or +18 ranged (1d8+2/x3, +2 *longbow*); Full Atk +14/+9/+4 melee (1d8+2/19-20, +1 *longsword*) or +18/+13/+8 ranged (1d8+2/x3, +2 *longbow*); SA sneak attack +2d6, spells; SQ armoured grace, certain stride, drow traits, elusive, evasion, favoured enemy (shangu) +2, House Devoren traits, uncanny dodge, stonecunning; SV Fort +11, Ref +13, Will +5; AL CN; Str 13, Dex 19, Con 13, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 14

Languages Spoken: Common, Elven, Giant, Goblin, Orc, Undercommon

Skills and Feats: Appraise +9, Balance +7, Climb +9, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +9, Heal +3, Hide +7, Jump +9, Knowledge (geography) +14, Listen +7, Move Silently +12, Open Lock +7, Sleight of Hand +11, Search +19, Sense Motive +8, Spot +19, Survival +17, Swim +9, Tumble +12;



Alertness, Diehard, Endurance, Improved Initiative, Rapid Shot, Run, Track

Equipment: +2 *longbow* (plus 40 arrows), +1 *longsword*, *trollskin armour*, backpack, bedroll, climber's kit, explorer's outfit, thieves' tools, 64 gp

Varetha Cannoth

Ruling class Kanahraun female, Cleric 7/Sorcerer 7

Crueller than a snake, Varetha Cannoth exemplifies the drow trait of ambition. Born into the Kanahraun ruling class, she is determined to extend the influence of the feral drow throughout the Underdeep, and foresees a future in which all other races of the Underdeep, even other drow, are kept as cattle for the hungry Kanahraun.

A devoted cleric of Azzanoth the Glutton, she is attempting to strengthen her own abilities, and is often out in the Underdeep, sometimes alone, sometimes accompanied by a band of lower class Kanahraun, testing herself and pushing her own limits.

Varetha Cannoth, Female Ruling class Kanahraun, Clr 7/Sor 7: CR 16; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 7d8+7 plus 7d4+7; hp 70; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 26, touch 15, flat-footed 21; Base Atk +8; Grp +11; Atk +14 melee (1d6+6/15-20, +3 *keen boneforged scimitar of lesser energy drain*) or +14 ranged (1d6+1/x3, +1 *shortbow*); Full Atk +14/+9 melee (1d6+6/15-20, +3 *keen boneforged scimitar of lesser energy drain*) or +14/+9 ranged (1d6+1/x3, +1 *shortbow*); SA spells (arcane spell failure 30%), turn undead; SQ Kanahraun Ruling Class traits; SV Fort +8, Ref +9, Will +14; AL CE; Str 16, Dex 20, Con 12, Int 19, Wis 18, Cha 20

Languages Spoken: Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Elven, Infernal, Undercommon

Skills and Feats: Concentration +15, Craft (alchemy) +21, Craft (bone) +18, Heal +16, Knowledge (arcana) +21, Knowledge (religion) +21, Spellcraft +21, Survival +6; Boneforging, Brew Potion, Craft Magic Arms and Armour, Craft Wondrous Item, Scribe Scroll

Equipment: +3 *boneforged breastplate of despair*, +2 *boneforged buckler*, +3 *keen boneforged scimitar of lesser energy drain*, +1 *shortbow*

Cleric Domains: Chaos, Evil

Cleric Spells per Day: 6/5+1/4+1/3+1/2+1, save DC 14 + spell level

Sorcerer Spells Known (7/5/3/2, save DC 15 + spell level): 0th - *acid splash*, *arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *read magic*; 1st - *charm person*, *detect undead*, *magic missile*, *shocking grasp*; 2nd - *detect thoughts*, *scorching ray*, *summon monster II*; 3rd - *lightning bolt*

Larenos Qarosh

Drow male, Fighter 5/Pitiless Slayer 10

Larenos Qarosh was born to a life of nothing, the scion of the poorest drow at the bottom rung of society in a city ruled by House Zhakhun. He had no time to go on the hunt, no time even to give thought to the hunt. Every day of his life was a struggle to survive, to find enough food to live until the next day.

He was pressed into the army of House Zhakhun when they went to war against the dwarves. He and the other impoverished drow were given old weapons and shabby armour, and placed in line beside the shock troops of the House's war slaves. Miraculously, Larenos survived his first battle, and innumerable ones that followed. Despite his destitute roots, his growing prowess with the blade began to garner him fame.

In the decades since his first taste of battle, Larenos has learned to revel in the bloodshed of war. His undeniable abilities caught the attention of the clergy of Thraud, and soon Larenos found himself on the path of the Pitiless Slayer. He is still at the forefront of every army mustered by House Zhakhun, but he thinks little of those born into the nobility - consumed with their hunts, they will never truly understand the one great test of a drow is to meet the armed and armoured enemy on the field of battle.

Larenos Qarosh, Male drow Ftr 5/Pitiless Slayer 10: CR 16; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 5d10+10 plus 10d10+20; hp 124; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 27, touch 14, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +15; Grp +22; Atk +26 melee (1d8+12 plus 1d6 electrical/17-20, +3 *longsword of shocking burst*); Full Atk +26/+21/+16 melee (1d8+12 plus 1d6 electrical/17-20, +3 *longsword of shocking burst*); SA bloodlust, slaughter; SQ damage reduction 2/-, death's door, drow traits, no fear, no mercy, to the last; SV Fort +13, Ref +8, Will +7; AL LE; Str 24, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 17, Wis 13, Cha 15

Languages Spoken: Common, Elven, Goblin, Orc, Undercommon

Skills and Feats: Bluff +8, Climb +20, Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +18, Jump +15, Knowledge (Religion) +9, Ride +9, Swim +10, Tumble +8; Cleave, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Iron Will, Mobility, Power

Attack, Press the Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialisation (longsword)

Equipment: +4 chainmail of heavy fortification, +3 keen longsword of shocking burst, +2 large steel shield, belt of giant strength +6

Madreaina Davoresh

Drow Female (House Pelshothe) Cleric 4/Wizard 7/Lady of the Veil 5

Madreaina Davoresh is an anomaly in House Pelshothe. Few drow of the House are at all religious, and those who are tend to be dedicated to Olyet’Naru. Madreaina, on the other hand, heard the call of Ydrillia, She of the Veil, and has risen to become one of that goddess’ most honoured servants, and certainly the highest of her servants to come from House Pelshothe.

Madreaina seldom ventures outside the temple of Ydrillia where she lives, and then only on matters of the greatest importance. She views such time spent away from her books and her laboratory as a quintessential waste of time, and has agents actively searching for reliable and aspiring proxies who might carry out these errands in her stead.

Madreaina Davoresh, Female drow (House Pelshothe) Clr 4/Wiz 7/Lady of the Veil 5: CR 17; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 4d8 plus 7d4 plus 5d4; hp 54; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 23, touch 19, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +8; Grp +7; Atk +9 melee (1d6+1, *staff of power*) or +12 ranged (1d6+1/x3, +1 *shortbow*); Full Atk +9/+4 melee (1d6+1, *staff of power*) or +12/+7 ranged (1d6+1/x3, +1 *shortbow*); SA *additional innate spell (summon monster I, detect thoughts)*, spells, turn undead; SQ channel innate magic, drow traits, House Pelshothe traits, *mage hand*; SV Fort +9, Ref +9, Will +18; AL NE; Str 9, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 20, Wis 16, Cha 11

Languages Spoken: Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Elven, Infernal, Undercommon

Skills and Feats: Concentration +13, Craft (alchemy) +24, Craft (wood) +16, Diplomacy +5, Heal +7, Knowledge (arcana) +24, Knowledge (nature) +11, Knowledge (religion) +24, Listen +12,

Search +7, Spellcraft +24, Spot +12; Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Craft Lifebinding Item, Craft Wondrous Item, Empower Spell, Eschew Materials, Scribe Scroll

Equipment: *Boots of speed, bracers of armour +4, ring of protection +4, robe of useful items, staff of power*

Cleric Domains: Knowledge, Magic

Cleric Spells per Day: 5/4+1/4+1/3+1, save DC 13 + spell level

Wizard Spells Known (4/4/4/3/3/2, save DC 15 + spell level): 0th – *arcane mark, dancing lights, daze, detect magic, detect poison, disrupt undead, flare, ghost sound, light, mage hand, mending, open/close, prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic, resistance*; 1st – *animate rope, disguise self, expeditious retreat, feather fall, hold portal, identify, mage armour, magic missile, true strike, ventriloquism*; 2nd – *alter self, blindness/deafness, blur, invisibility, knock, acid arrow, mirror image, see invisibility, web*; 3rd – *dispel*



magic, haste, lightning bolt, secret page, shrink item; 4th – charm monster, dimension door, fire trap, improved invisibility, phantasmal killer, thousand feet; 5th – cone of cold, feblemind, hold monster, faithful hound, permanency, summon monster V, teleport, wall of iron, wall of stone

Nightfall

Drow male; Rogue 7/Shadow of Mu'Ushket 10

Little is known of the drow assassin called Nightfall, certainly not his real name or his origins. It is known he is a shadow of Mu'ushket, but that is almost the sum total of common knowledge about the man, other than that he is the highest-priced assassin in the lands of the drow, and is worth every copper of it.

Nightfall, Male drow, Rog 7/Shadow of Mu'Ushket 10:

CR 18; Medium outsider (augmented humanoid (elf)); HD 7d6+14 plus 10d6+20; hp 94; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 23, touch 15, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +12; Grp +15; Atk +19 melee (1d6+7/19-20, +4 *vorpal short sword*) or +20 ranged (1d4+3/19-20, +3 *hand crossbow*); Full Atk +19/+14/+9 melee (1d6+7/19-20, +4 *vorpal short sword*) or +20/+15/+10 ranged (1d4+3/19-20, +3 *hand crossbow*); SA sneak attack +7d6; SQ bring darkness, deepsight, drow traits, enshadowment, evasion, fast healing 1, *new truth*, shadow ally, shadow jump, shadowspeed, stalking shadow, trapfinding, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge; SV Fort +7, Ref +17, Will +6; AL CE; Str 16, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 20, Wis 12, Cha 16

Languages Spoken: Common, Draconic, Elven, Goblin, Orc, Undercommon

Skills and Feats: Appraise +17, Balance +19, Bluff +15, Climb +17, Decipher Script +12, Diplomacy +15, Disable Device +13, Disguise +11, Escape Artist +24, Forgery +9, Gather Information +10, Hide +32, Intimidate +9, Jump +9, Listen +17, Move Silently +22, Open Lock +18, Search +23, Sense Motive +17, Sleight of Hand +18, Spot +20,

Tumble +25; Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack, Total Recall

Equipment: +3 *hand crossbow*, +4 *vorpal short sword*, +5 *greater slick studded leather of greater shadow and heavy fortification*

Eloraz na'Odreln

Drow male (House Gaundroth), Wizard 18

Widely respected in House Gaundroth for his immense magical prowess, Eloraz na'Odreln is not the loyal wizard of the House he pretends to be. He is a member of the Cabal, ranking in the First Tier.

Should his secret ever become widely known, even Eloraz's power would probably not be enough to save him from the wrath of the cult of Ydrillia. Though he is arrogant even for a drow, Eloraz realises this, and keeps it firmly in mind when executing the orders of the Circle. He prefers to work through third and fourth parties, channelling funds to greedy adventurers unwise enough not to ask too many questions.

Eloraz na'Odreln, Male drow (House Gaundroth) Wiz 18:

CR 19; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 18d4; hp 43; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 22, touch 16, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +9; Grp +8; Atk +12 melee (1d6+3/18-20, +4 *rapier*); Full Atk +12/+7 melee (1d6+3/18-20, +4 *rapier*); SA spells; SQ drow traits, House Gaundroth traits; SV Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +14; AL NE; Str 9, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 22, Wis 16, Cha 14

Languages Spoken: Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Elven, Giant, Goblin, Infernal, Undercommon

Skills and Feats: Bluff +12, Concentration +21, Craft (alchemy) +27, Craft (metal) +25, Diplomacy +4, Knowledge (arcana) +27, Knowledge (history) +18, Knowledge (local) +18, Knowledge (religion) +23, Knowledge (the planes) +18, Spellcraft +29; Brew Potion, Craft Lifebinding Item, Craft Magic Arms and Armour, Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Forge Ring, Enlarge Spell, Hold the Charge, Maximise Spell, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll

Equipment: +4 *rapier of defending*, *bracers of armour* +6, *ring of protection* +4. These are the items Eloraz commonly carries, but he has access to a great deal more. Games Masters may feel free to equip Eloraz with most any standard magical item.

Wizard Spells Known (4/6/6/5/5/5/3/3/2, save DC 16 + spell level): 0th – *arcane mark, dancing lights, daze, detect*

magic, detect poison, disrupt undead, flare, ghost sound, light, mage hand, mending, open/close, prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic, resistance; 1st – animate rope, disguise self, expeditious retreat, feather fall, hold portal, identify, mage armour, magic missile, true strike, ventriloquism; 2nd – alter self, blindness/deafness, blur, invisibility, knock, acid arrow, mirror image, see invisibility, web; 3rd – dispel magic, haste, lightning bolt, secret page, shrink item; 4th – charm monster, dimension door, fire trap, improved invisibility, phantasmal killer, thousand feet; 5th – cloudkill, compression, cone of cold, feblemind, hold monster, faithful hound, permanency, shadow evocation, summon monster V, teleport, wall of iron, wall of stone; 6th – acid fog, chain lightning, contingency, disease burst, disintegrate, eyebite, flesh to stone, summon monster VI; 7th

– control undead, delayed blast fireball, limited wish, mass invisibility, power word stun, summon monster VII; 8th – binding, earthgrinder, horrid wilting, incendiary cloud, polymorph any object, power word rage, summon monster VIII; 9th – energy drain, meteor swarm, disjunction, summon monster IX, time stop.

Ilvari Poshwan

Drow female (House Arras'zur); Cleric 9/Webmistress of the Dark Mother 10

Ilvari Poshwan is the high priestess of the church of the Dark Mother in the drow city of Cartuon. She is among the youngest drow to ever achieve her rank, and is cruelly arrogant in her position. Eternally devoted to the Dark Mother, she has a tendency to doubt the faith of others and engages the church in occasional purges of unbelievers. Whether there are any disbelievers or not, these purges serve well to remind the rest of the priestesses that it is Ilvari who commands them.

Ilvari Poshwan, Female drow (House Arras'zur) Clr 9/Webmistress of the Dark Mother 10: CR 20; Medium outsider (augmented humanoid (elf)); HD 9d8+9 plus 10d8+10; hp 123; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 31, touch 11, flat-footed 30; Base Atk +13; Grp +15; Atk +20 melee (1d10+8/19-20, +5 *unholy anarchic heavy flail*); Full Atk +20/+15/+10 melee (1d10+8/19-20, +5 *unholy anarchic heavy flail*); SA spells, rebuke undead, spider horde I, II, *web*; SQ drow traits, House Arras'zur traits, poison immunity, spider climb, spider speech, web friend, webwalker; SV Fort +14, Ref +7, Will +16; AL CE; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 17, Wis 20, Cha 18

Languages Spoken: Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Elven, Undercommon

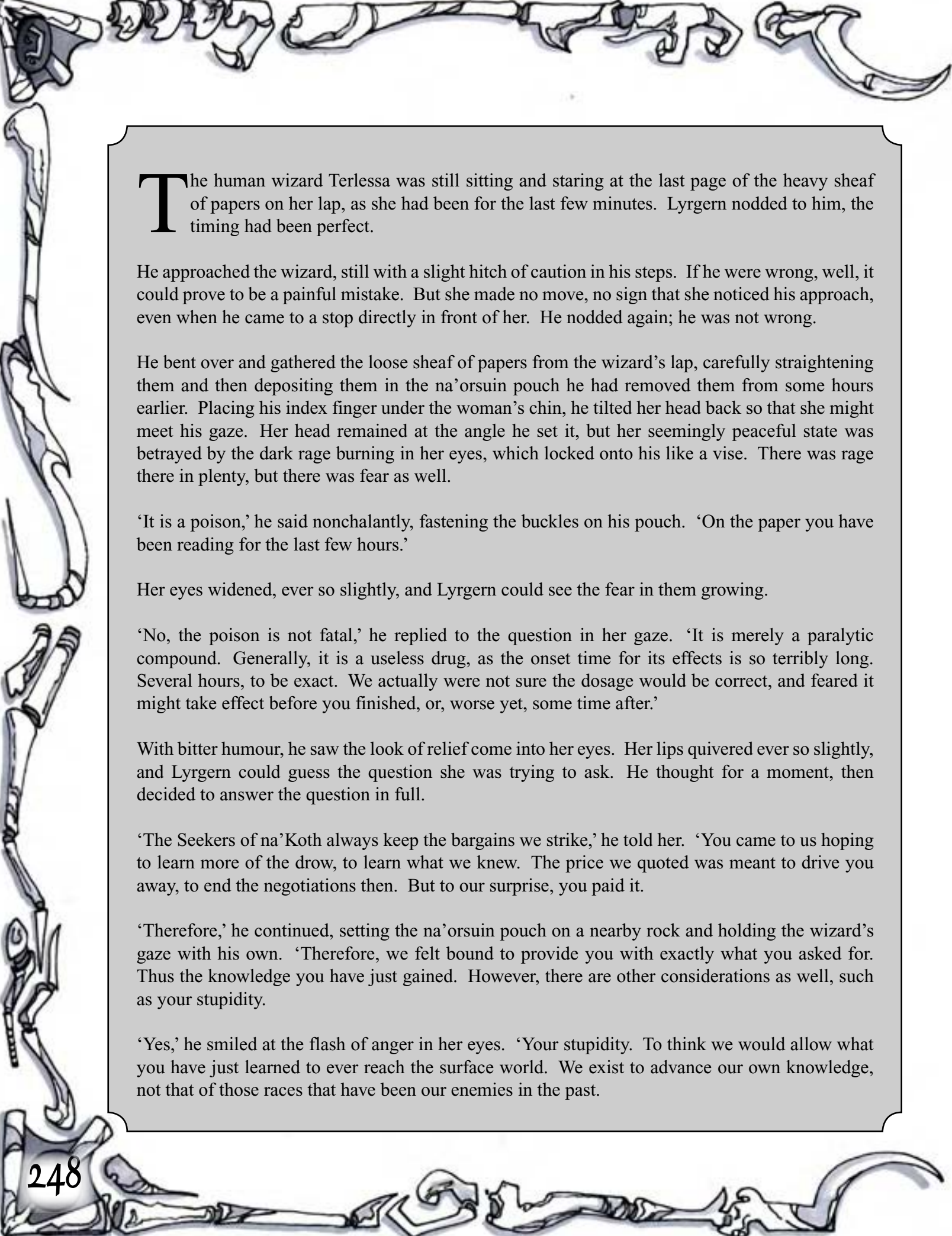
Skills and Feats: Concentration +23, Craft (silk) +13, Diplomacy +14, Heal +19, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (religion) +25, Knowledge (the planes) +14, Spellcraft +23; Brew Potion, Craft Magic Arms and Armour, Craft Wondrous Item, Great Fortitude, Leadership, Maximise Spell, Still Spell

Equipment: +5 *unholy anarchic heavy flail*, +5 *large mithral shield*, +5 *ethereal mithral full plate of heavy fortification*. These are the items Ilvari commonly carries, but she has access to a great deal more. Games Masters may feel free to equip Ilvari with most any standard magical item.

Cleric Domains: Death, Protection

Cleric Spells per Day: 6/7+1/6+1/6+1/6+1/4+1/4+1/3+1/3+1, save DC 15 + spell level



A decorative border of skeletal remains, including various bones and a skull, frames the text. The bones are arranged in a somewhat chaotic but artistic pattern, with some larger bones like a femur and humerus, and smaller bones like a skull and vertebrae.

The human wizard Terlessa was still sitting and staring at the last page of the heavy sheaf of papers on her lap, as she had been for the last few minutes. Lyrgern nodded to him, the timing had been perfect.

He approached the wizard, still with a slight hitch of caution in his steps. If he were wrong, well, it could prove to be a painful mistake. But she made no move, no sign that she noticed his approach, even when he came to a stop directly in front of her. He nodded again; he was not wrong.

He bent over and gathered the loose sheaf of papers from the wizard's lap, carefully straightening them and then depositing them in the na'orsuin pouch he had removed them from some hours earlier. Placing his index finger under the woman's chin, he tilted her head back so that she might meet his gaze. Her head remained at the angle he set it, but her seemingly peaceful state was betrayed by the dark rage burning in her eyes, which locked onto his like a vise. There was rage there in plenty, but there was fear as well.

'It is a poison,' he said nonchalantly, fastening the buckles on his pouch. 'On the paper you have been reading for the last few hours.'

Her eyes widened, ever so slightly, and Lyrgern could see the fear in them growing.


'No, the poison is not fatal,' he replied to the question in her gaze. 'It is merely a paralytic compound. Generally, it is a useless drug, as the onset time for its effects is so terribly long. Several hours, to be exact. We actually were not sure the dosage would be correct, and feared it might take effect before you finished, or, worse yet, some time after.'

With bitter humour, he saw the look of relief come into her eyes. Her lips quivered ever so slightly, and Lyrgern could guess the question she was trying to ask. He thought for a moment, then decided to answer the question in full.

'The Seekers of na'Koth always keep the bargains we strike,' he told her. 'You came to us hoping to learn more of the drow, to learn what we knew. The price we quoted was meant to drive you away, to end the negotiations then. But to our surprise, you paid it.'

'Therefore,' he continued, setting the na'orsuin pouch on a nearby rock and holding the wizard's gaze with his own. 'Therefore, we felt bound to provide you with exactly what you asked for. Thus the knowledge you have just gained. However, there are other considerations as well, such as your stupidity.'

'Yes,' he smiled at the flash of anger in her eyes. 'Your stupidity. To think we would allow what you have just learned to ever reach the surface world. We exist to advance our own knowledge, not that of those races that have been our enemies in the past.'



‘So, no, the poison is not fatal. It will not kill you. I will. With this.’ Slipping one hand to the small of his back, he withdrew a dagger with a blade of metal so darkly grey it bordered on black. The wizard’s eyes instantly latched onto it.

‘I noticed your great interest in the soulburner daggers, particularly the gleam in your eye at the thought there was one of them out there somewhere, unaccounted for. Sadly for you, it is not lost at all. It is here.’

Tears began to pour from her eyes and her lips trembled slightly as she struggled to speak, whether to scream or cast a spell Lyrgern did not know. He no longer bothered to suppress his laughter.

‘As I said, we cannot allow what you now know to reach the surface, human. You are not inexperienced, you likely have some measure prepared to restore you to life should I merely kill you. But you must understand this one last thing about the drow before you go to the void. We are thorough.’

With a swift stroke, he plunged the soulburner into the human wizard’s neck, stepping back to avoid the stream of blood that followed the blade out. Her eyes glazed over, and she slumped forward to fall from the rock. A faint smell hung in the still air, like that of a candle just extinguished. Lyrgern slipped the dagger back into its sheath and bent down to strip the body. Perhaps some of the foolish wizard’s possessions could be made to serve the Seekers.

Gathering up the na’orsuin pack and a bundle of the wizard’s belongings, Lyrgern na’Rarnel, Hidden Blade of the Seekers of na’Koth, calmly made his way out of the cavern. He paid no more attention to the corpse he left behind, the scavengers would deal with that soon enough.

CHARACTER _____ PLAYER _____
 CLASS _____ LEVEL _____
 HOUSE (IF ANY) _____
 SUBRACE (IF ANY) _____ ALIGNMENT _____
 PATRON DEITY / RELIGION _____
 PLACE OF ORIGIN _____ FIGHTING STYLE _____



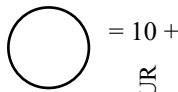
ABILITY SCORES

	SCORE	MODIFIER	TEMP SCORE	TEMP MODIFIER
STRENGTH				
DEXTERITY				
CONSTITUTION				
INTELLIGENCE				
WISDOM				
CHARISMA				

HIT POINTS

SUB DMG
 HIT DIE
 DAMAGE REDUCTION

ARMOUR



= 10 +

CLASS

ARMOUR WORN

ARMOUR

ARMOUR SHIELD DEX WIS SIZE NATURAL MISC

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

MAX RANKS = LVL +3 (2)
 CROSS CLASS KEY MODIFIERS
 CLASS ABILITY TOTAL ABILITY RANKS MISC

ANIMAL EMPATHY	Y / N	CHA				
APPRAISE ✓	Y / N	INT				
BALANCE ✓	Y / N	DEX *				
BLUFF ✓	Y / N	CHA				
CLIMB ✓	Y / N	STR *				
CONCENTRATION ✓	Y / N	CON				
CRAFT ✓ ()	Y / N	INT				
CRAFT ✓ ()	Y / N	INT				
CRAFT ✓ ()	Y / N	INT				
CRAFT ✓ ()	Y / N	INT				
DECIPHER SCRIPT	Y / N	INT				
DIPLOMACY ✓	Y / N	CHA				
DISABLE DEVICE	Y / N	INT				
DISGUISE ✓	Y / N	CHA				
ESCAPE ARTIST ✓	Y / N	DEX *				
FORGERY ✓	Y / N	INT				
GATHER INFORMATION ✓	Y / N	CHA				
HANDLE ANIMAL	Y / N	CHA				
HEAL ✓	Y / N	WIS				
HIDE ✓	Y / N	DEX *				
INNUENDO	Y / N	WIS				
INTIMIDATE ✓	Y / N	CHA				
INTUIT DIRECTION	Y / N	WIS				
JUMP ✓	Y / N	STR *				
KNOWLEDGE ()	Y / N	INT				
KNOWLEDGE ()	Y / N	INT				
KNOWLEDGE ()	Y / N	INT				
KNOWLEDGE ()	Y / N	INT				
KNOWLEDGE ()	Y / N	INT				
LISTEN ✓	Y / N	WIS				
MOVE SILENTLY	Y / N	DEX *				
OPEN LOCK	Y / N	DEX				
PERFORM ()	Y / N	CHA				
PROFESSION ()	Y / N	WIS				
PROFESSION ()	Y / N	WIS				
READ LIPS	Y / N	INT				
RIDE ✓	Y / N	DEX				
SEARCH ✓	Y / N	INT				
SENSE MOTIVE ✓	Y / N	WIS				
SLEIGHT OF HAND	Y / N	DEX				
SPELLCRAFT	Y / N	INT				
SPOT ✓	Y / N	WIS				
SWIM ✓	Y / N	STR ★				
SURVIVAL ✓	Y / N	WIS				
TUMBLE	Y / N	DEX *				
USE MAGIC DEVICE	Y / N	CHA				
USE ROPE ✓	Y / N	DEX				
	Y / N					

SAVING THROWS

	TOTAL	BASE	ABILITY	MAGIC	MISC	TEMP	MODIFIERS
FORTITUDE (CON)							
REFLEX (DEX)							
WILL (WIS)							

COMBAT BONUSES

	TOTAL	BASE	ABILITY	SIZE	MISC	TEMP	MODIFIERS
INITIATIVE (DEX)							
MELEE (STR)							
RANGED (DEX)							

WEAPON AND ARMOUR PROFICIENCIES

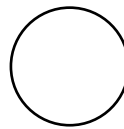
WEAPONS

WEAPON	ATK BONUS	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	RANGE	TYPE	SIZE	HARD	HPS
NOTES								
WEAPON	ATK BONUS	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	RANGE	TYPE	SIZE	HARD	HPS
NOTES								
WEAPON	ATK BONUS	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	RANGE	TYPE	SIZE	HARD	HPS
NOTES								
WEAPON	ATK BONUS	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	RANGE	TYPE	SIZE	HARD	HPS
NOTES								
WEAPON	ATK BONUS	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	RANGE	TYPE	SIZE	HARD	HPS
NOTES								

✓ CAN BE USED WITH 0 RANKS, * ARMOUR CHECK PENALTY APPLIES, ★ -1 PER 5 LBS OF EQUIPMENT

HEAL RATE PER DAY

TURNING/REBUKING
ATTEMPTS PER DAY =



= 10 + CHA MODIFIER + EXTRA TURNING

SPELLS

SPELL SAVE DC	LEVEL	SPELLS PER DAY	BONUS SPELLS	# SPELLS KNOWN
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<input type="text"/>	2ND	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	3RD	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	4TH	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	5TH	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	6TH	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	7TH	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	8TH	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	9TH	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

SPELL SAVE DC MOD

MAGIC ITEMS

MOUNT

NAME	RACE	NUMBER	HD / LVL	HP	INIT	SPD	AC	BAB	STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
NOTES														

HENCHMEN AND MERCENARIES


NAME	RACE	NUMBER	HD / LVL	HP	INIT	SPD	AC	BAB	STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
NOTES														
NAME	RACE	NUMBER	HD / LVL	HP	INIT	SPD	AC	BAB	STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
NOTES														



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