

*The Dark Maiden beckons:
On the drow goddess Eilistraee and her faith*



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Eilistraee, the Dark Maiden¹

Also known as the *Dark Maiden*, the *Dark Dancer*, or *Lady Silverhair* (among her many titles), Eilistraee is the drow goddess of beauty, dance and song; of the hunt, moonlight, and swordwork. Daughter of Lolth and Corellon, she took the role of a nurturing and loving mother to the drow people, helping her "children"—whose beauty was lost to darkness and cruelty—to flourish once again and forge their own place in their lost home: the surface world. When, during her youth, a host of evil deities led by Araushnee (Lolth's original name) assaulted Arvandor in an attempt to overthrow Corellon, Eilistraee was manipulated by her mother into unwillingly participating in the mutiny. One of her arrows—meant to save her father—was instead magically drawn to his chest, nearly killing him. After the battle, although cleared from any wrongdoing, Eilistraee chose to share her mother's punishment and exile. She knew that a time would come when the drow would be alone and surrounded by strife and cruelty, and she was scared of the future that she had foreseen for her people, and for herself. Despite her fear—a girl full of compassion—she sacrificed the comfort, luxury, and safety of Arvandor and chose to love and be a mother to her people: she would be by their side and care for them in the times of deepest need, and make the world a more beautiful place for them and for all. Eilistraee knew that she would pay for her decision, that she was walking a path of suffering and grief, but she did it nonetheless, out of love.

The Dark Maiden would indeed pay dearly for her choice: an underdog, alone in her battle against forces far greater than her, she bled, suffered countless defeats, struggled through hardships and pain, and was broken by grief and loss. Yet, despite all that, and her acknowledgment of the near hopeless reality that she was facing, not only she never walked away from her path, nor she ever abandoned her people, but she never let her light fade. Eilistraee turned the "scars" of her battles into flowers—the deeper the darkness besieging her, the brighter she shone; the harder the adversities tried to crush her, the more beautiful she grew: both for all those who needed her, and for herself. She's a woman who, despite all her wounds, never stopped seeing and healing the beauty in all things and souls—including what was broken or corrupted—who never stopped dreaming and smiling to life, loving unconditionally and with intensity. The Dark Maiden can still find hope, and the strength to create and nurture, even in the deepest abyss, where most would only see hatred and despair. She gives all herself to bring her warmth to all those trapped in the cold of their night.

Mortals grow all emotional and awed to tears in her presence, as Eilistraee has grown to embody the beauty that gives purpose to life when all seems lost: a star that, alone, casts her light to paint vibrant colors in the darkness that besieges her, for all those who have forgotten them to see once again.

Eilistraee's kind-hearted, gentle, and delicate, but warm and deeply caring in all her interactions. She is compassionate and merciful: she knows far too well what it is to suffer, so she cherishes and cares about all beings simply for what they are and makes them unique (including the scars of the demons and evils that every individual faces and that made them what they are now). The goddess offers her warm embrace to everyone who needs it—even the darkest souls—because no one deserves to be alone in their pain, and even those who have fallen to cruelty still hold good within them, that could flourish once again. She also finds happiness in providing practical help to all creatures in need, even non-followers.

That said, the Dark Maiden is also free like the wind, a lover of life and nature, and a creature of intense emotion (with an impish, playful streak and a wild side to her personality). Her suffering taught her to find her happiness in the small things, and in bringing happiness to other people. An act of kindness towards a stranger, learning a new song, or the splendor of a sunrise will be enough to make her smile. Despite what she's gone through, she fully embraces that sheer, free, untarnished joy of existence—she lives, loves, smiles, and creates with a contagious and vibrant passion that only a woman who has remained attached to life even after centuries of hardships can show. She knows far too well that the world isn't all bright and happy, but the possibility for joy exists even at the height of suffering, and she wants all—especially the drow—to see and find it.

Eilistraee brings out this side of her through art and kindness. She loves all arts and forms of creativity (especially dance and song), and delights not only in performing herself (she is a sublime dancer and musician), but also in filling artists with bursts of explosive inspiration. To her, awakening the hidden beauty in all things and people, defeating pain and spreading joy, is one of the worthiest goals in existence. Art and compassion are the most powerful forces for that, against fear and resignation, to nurture and keep alive the spark that exists in all people. For that reason, life should be lived and celebrated as art, to bring passion and a sense of wonder to everyone, and make the world a better place for all.

Introduction

In the world of Toril, there are some drow who choose to walk a different path than the Way of Lolth. Many are the reasons that could lead to such a choice.

To follow the teachings of the Spider Queen is to give up on much of the joy that life has to offer, to accept a life of conflict and (although her followers will fiercely deny that) fear and paranoia, never trusting anyone and being always wary of betrayal. The society built around her faith is tyrannical and stagnant in its ideals, ultimately revolving around self-denial to gain the favor of this goddess. Most drow don't have the freedom to choose their life or fulfill themselves, are brainwashed with a dogma of hate and spite, and blinded to the alternatives to such an existence. While nobles and powerful drow gain benefits from this system, the commoners are little more than slaves, in addition to having to deal with the poisonous ways of Lolth. They have all the reasons to want to abandon that kind of existence. In short, the Spider Queen forces the drow into a mold, but some feel the desire to break free from it and from the strife that dominates the lives of most of their kin.

For all such individuals, it is not easy to leave the mindset of their former culture behind, and the hunts for those who defy the dogma of their society make the situation even more difficult. Lolth's daughter, **Eilistraee**, is the protectress of such rare individuals, and (not unlike her brother Vhaeraun) stands against her own mother so that all drow can be free to find their own path. She works for her people to take back their place in the surface world, in harmony with the elves and all other races. Her role is that of a mother, who calls her children to rediscover all that is beautiful in life and all that they have forgotten.

The clerics of Eilistraee are known as *Sword Dancers*², a name that originates from their skill in dance and acrobatics, their unique fencing style based on their art, and their remarkable technique with the *Dancing Swords*.

Beliefs and goals

The beliefs and mindset of the *Sword Dancers*--and of the followers of the Dark Maiden in general—is naturally shaped by their strongly believing in, and identifying with, Eilistraee. However, it's also deeply influenced by their own experience, especially for those dark elves who come from a Lolthite background.

About Drow

The *Sword Dancers* represent an extension of the Dark Maiden's mothering over the drow--as such, one of their main duties is to help them to break free from Lolth's grasp. As Eilistraee sings to the souls of all her people, so her priests and priestesses try to reach for all drow: whether they are fugitives trying to escape from the evil of Lolth, wounded raiders on the surface, or simply individuals who are unhappy with their life under the Spider Queen's thumb, all of them are given the Message of Eilistraee and the practical and emotional help to embrace it

"A rightful place awaits you in the Realms Above, in the Land of the Great Light. Come in peace, and live beneath the sun again, where trees and flowers grow."

Eilistraee believes that redemption is a choice that can be embraced even by the darkest souls, if given the chance. There is strength in sparing a life, letting it bloom and rise from their past evil, because untold beauty can stem from an awakened soul. The *Sword Dancers* are

- 1 This is mostly canon, but many "ribbons" to her personality, while in line with Eilistraee's character and lore, have been added by me.
- 2 Clerics of Eilistraee are almost always (90% of the cases) *Sword Dancers*

Relationship with the Drow

The connection between Eilistraee and the drow is deep. It can be seen in some of [her rituals](#), but there's more than that. She's an artist that shows them the world like they have never seen them, but also a mother and a protectress who guides them in building their place in the world.

As the dark elves were poisoned by Lolth and forced to live an existence when even affection was taboo, Eilistraee shared their battles, their struggle, and desire for a better life—she learned to know a side of them that no one else sees.

While the world sees the drow as monsters, Eilistraee knows that all of them are sufferers of abuse, neglect, and lack of affection from those that should love them the most. They abuse each other, they abuse their children, but—most of all—each of them is abused by Lolth, and the innocent tortured until their innocence is swallowed by cruelty. However, no matter how dark their souls can become, Eilistraee [still sees them for their hidden beauty](#), their broken hopes, the part of them that was silenced by hatred: she treasures and nurtures it, to make it flourish again. And in those moments when the weight of all this becomes too much to carry, when they feel defeated, hopeless, or when they "scream" their suffering, she is there to listen, to call to them to her. The Dark Maiden wants little more than to scoop all drow living in such a situation into her arms, and give them the pure, warm, and vibrant love that they were denied their whole lives. One that the goddess herself longed for but never received: the love of a mother.

Moved by such emotions, Eilistraee sings to the souls of all her people, making them *feel* the free, vivid joy of life that has been taken from them, and sending feelings and visions to draw them into her embrace. She embodies their rebirth, she breathes new life into their shattered dreams, and helps them rediscover the happiness in casting off their chains and following their hearts after centuries of living blind to the greater world.

Eilistraee sets their spark alight once again: she lures them out of their prison (and comfort zone), to embark on a journey to see and marvel at what life actually is, to open their hearts and make them understand that a different existence is not only possible, but that it leads to actual happiness and liberation (and that's her main concept of redemption for her people: it's more about leading them to understand, breaking their prison, than "atoning for one's sins"—the former will lead to the latter).

As a mother and a protectress, she's there in all the important moments of this journey. She can't guarantee acceptance and safety on the surface, but she does her best to help her "children" in various practical ways (especially to thrive on the surface) nurturing, protecting and teaching them about this new world that is their forgotten (but rightful) home. For example, she often scares off aggressors, sends visions warning of danger, or leads a stag within the reach of a hungry drow. She provides dancing beams of moonlight that move about guiding those who are lost in the dark and leading them to safety, or to lighten childbirths. She is also known to often appear when her children need comfort and her visible support in difficult moments (or to welcome a new drow to "join her dance"). It usually happens through her own Moonlight, or as a protecting, shadowy, tall female dark elf that dances with the drow.

However, she is subtle and delicate when offering her help, and careful to never impose anything on her people, or to forcefully intervene in their choices, as she wishes for her children to find their own path, and to see with their own eyes what life has to offer (even tho she is known to lash out in burning anger if they are harmed).

Most drow know nothing of Eilistraee, and her existence is kept secret by the matron mothers of Lolth. However, at some point in their life, all drow come to unconsciously feel the call of the Dark Maiden and her caring for them. Many fail to understand her message or find it troubling at first. However, many drow also secretly (or even unknowingly) yearn for Eilistraee and all that she symbolizes.

Worship

Eilistraee is mainly [worshiped](#) through song and dance, preferably unclad and in forest glades lit by the radiance of Selune—or by any source of light, for her followers in the Underdark. Non-evil drow who choose to not submit to Lolth's tyranny hear Eilistraee's call, and many seek her protection and guidance in their new life. Not all drow outcasts or non-evil drow are her followers, but she watches over and calls to the *whole* race. In line with her goal of promoting harmony among all people, the Dark Maiden is worshiped by members of all races (particularly half-elves). She is also besought by bards, dancers and musicians, who can call upon her favor for inspiration when performing their art; by hunters who seek her aid to catch their prey; and blacksmiths who can receive her blessing to create gorgeous blades.

firmly convinced of this ideal (many of them are the living proof of that, after all), and work to open the eyes of their people to the lie that they are made to live, and to show them that there is a different path. However, when someone lives in a cage for a long enough time, they often find it hard to leave, even if they deep inside feel the need to escape (and many drow do). A dark elf wishing to change life has nowhere to go, no friend or ally (the concept itself is alien to them). They are hunted in their former home, and seen as monsters on the surface. The journey itself is filled with lethal dangers. For that reason, Eilistraee and her Sword Dancers closely assist the dark elves in making this long step.

They infiltrate in the outskirts of drow settlements, and—through careful observation—they look for those dark elves who are in need of their help and that can be brought to abandon the Way of Lolth (mostly slaves, commoners, fallen and hunted nobles, or drow who are generally unsatisfied). The priestesses then work to gain their trust: they never force or press their view (the drow must find their own path), but rescue them, hide them from their enemies, look after them and generally offer sincere acceptance, kindness, healing. They provide the drow an opportunity: a goddess who loves them, an escape to a new home (often in small [communities](#) built around [shrines](#) to the goddess), and a better existence. To a people who have been taught that they have no value except for their "status/power" (or except as "meat of Lolth"), who grew up amidst strife and hatred, without knowing genuine affection, Eilistraee and her Sword Dancers show the strength in protecting caring for each other, in sisterhood/brotherhood, in unity. They give the dark elves value—appreciating them for what they simply are—and a kind of understanding that can be found nowhere else. The "moondancers" know the struggle of their kin, and not only offer an alternative, but accept each drow who wants to take it as a whole—including the evil and battles that they have to face every day, that they have to defeat to take back their life. The victory over such pain is a part of their identity, the proof that they have survived many hardships, so is the strength that was always in them, and that has awakened to make them thrive, leave the cruelty of the old ways behind, and flourish despite all the abuse. Eilistraee knows that it is a part of the identity of her children, and the very reason why she chose to share all of that.

Over the centuries, the followers of the Dark Maiden have built a net of secret safe passages and [portals](#) for this purpose (most converge in the temple of the [Promenade](#), now being rebuilt after its fall), connecting areas of the Underdark with shrines to provide sanctuary to the converts. Certain Sword Dancers even choose to live within Underdark cities or settlements where the priestesses of Lolth rule supreme, constantly putting their life at risk so that those drow that other priestesses wouldn't be able to reach can receive the Message of Eilistraee. These clerics and their converts are called [Secret Moondancers](#) by other followers of the Dark Maiden.

Some followers of the Dark Maiden, known as *Silverhair Knights*, adhere very closely to the teachings of the goddess, and make vow to never willingly end a drow life. They always show mercy—especially when forced to fight other drow (they have developed a wide variety of spells and techniques with the blade for this purpose)—aiming to teach their people the strength to be found in compassion, in the hope that their actions can make the drow feel safe about abandoning Lolth and joining them in the embrace of Eilistraee.

About other races

While Eilistraee and her clergy are focused on the drow, their goal is broader. The Dark Maiden teaches harmony and acceptance among all people; to aid, defend, and bring hope to anyone in need, regardless of their race, strength, or manners.

Appearance

At times, Eilistraee can manifest personally. She is mostly seen from afar, or dancing wildly amidst the flames of a bonfire, but her appearance is always accompanied by her song: a sweet and profoundly moving melody, at times resembling a mother's lullaby. Eilistraee appears as a 9-foot tall drow maiden of enchanting beauty, possessing a natural grace to her every movement and expression. Her skin is glossy, of the color of the night sky; her body is lithe, with long, tapered legs, and her frame is surrounded by glowing, ankle-long, silvery-white hair that is ever moving around her form. Her face has a soft and warm grace, with delicate features and dark lips that are quick to curve into a spontaneous (and often impish) smile. Her eyes—larger than in most drow, of a silvery color with shifting hints of blue—are deeply expressive, and reflective of her mood and feelings.

As a goddess of beauty, Eilistraee's only presence is capable of moving and soothing hearts. Those who gaze upon her are said to be caught by the most powerful emotions: they feel to have found all that they have ever ached for, and most intensely sought, in their lives, all in the embrace of this goddess. Suffering and sadness dissolve, as even the most hopeless night turns into a moment of beauty and solace, and they are filled with joy so pure to move to tears. However, a feeling of loss—even desolation—can take them upon her leaving, perhaps one of the reasons why she rarely joins the celebrations of her followers.

When the Dark Maiden performs, she is completely carried away by her emotion, as if belonging to a different world. Music and dance are the only ways for Eilistraee to truly express herself, to cast off the weight of centuries of struggle and suffering, and blossom free from it. She breaks all chains and barriers, feeling alive like in no other moment, and shares herself with love and spontaneity. Her dance and song are the voice of her soul, the form taken by her divine magic, and even her way to protect her "children" (as she dances with her sword). Through it, she is capable of healing, soothing, creating, and of carrying her people to places far away, by resonating with the song that each land and creature "sings" when touched by moonlight. Such is the beauty of her art, that it can move even creatures who are normally incapable of feeling emotions.

A brief history

After Eilistraee chose to follow her mother in exile, the goddess wandered Toril (home to her people, the dark elves) to bring them her guidance. In Ilythiir, she fought to protect the drow from the influence of Ghaunadaur and Vhaeraun, but her power wasn't enough and she and her followers were chased away and hunted. Eilistraee would later become a patroness of the flourishing dark elven kingdom of Miyeritar, that grew into perhaps the most important hub of magic and arts of its age, but it wasn't destined to last. During the [Crown Wars](#), the elves of Aryvandaar unleashed the Dark Disaster on Miyeritar, causing the Killing Storms to lay waste on the dark elven realm and decimate most of the Dark Maiden's followers. It was a tough blow—both materially and emotionally—that greatly weakened the goddess and her faith, from which they wouldn't fully recover for millennia. Such was her state, the drow were indiscriminately condemned and exiled in the Underdark at the end of fourth Crown War, leaving only deities like Lolth for this forsaken race in seek of new guidance.

Even then, Eilistraee wasn't willing to give up on her people: she became one of them, she shared their struggle, and since then she has been fighting to bring the hope of a new life to all drow, and guide them in building their own place in the lands of light, at peace with other races. Many were the hardships that she would face in the following centuries (and that still faces), and little was her power. However, despite all the obstacles, the Dark Maiden would keep *"forging her own path, one that welcomes beings of all races who revel in life and the free form expression of all that entails."*

During 1370s DR Eilistraee was involved in a battle with her mother and the whole Dark Seldarine for the future of the drow race, putting her own life at risk for her cause. During that time Vhaeraun attempted to assassinate the Dark Maiden in order to gain her power, but the plan backfired and Eilistraee managed to defeat her brother with the indirect help of Mystra (the goddess of magic and one of her precious allies). Although many drow will say otherwise, Eilistraee chose to spare her brother's life. She temporarily took his portfolio, becoming the Masked Lady, while his sentience was trapped in the Weave and enfolded by Mystra in a dream, as part of a plan to ensure that they all could survive the incoming cataclysm that she had foreseen: the Sundering, in which the Weave would be renewed (causing magic to go wild), and Abeir and Toril would pass through each other for a whole century, only to become separate again.

The goddess also teaches to help all those who fight for good, and to *"repay violence with swift violence, that the fewest may be hurt, and danger fast removed from the land"*. The Sword Dancers do their best to follow these principles, fighting not only to set the drow free from Lolth, but also to build a rightful place in the world for their people, at peace with all the other races (and to earn the support of the other forces of good for their quest, although this often proves to be a difficult [task](#)).

These clerics are in fact known to lend their sword to fight threats that endanger not only themselves, but also other races, especially on the surface. The drow of the Promenade, located beneath Waterdeep, are a remarkable example of this, as (among their other duties) they [work](#)³ to protect the city from the dangers lurking beneath it (in the past, they were led by [Qilué Veladorn](#), High Priestess of Eilistraee). The *Darksong Knights* are another example: these warriors, paladins and clerics devoted to the Dark Dancer choose to actively fight Lolth and her pawns, working to thwart their plans and to hunt down the Spider Queen's demonic minions. In those areas where the followers of Eilistraee manage to gain a foothold, or where the presence of surface drow is higher, the Sword Dancers tirelessly work to help the dark elves integrate with, and become part of, other races' communities.

The [paths](#) that they take to achieve such a goal are many, but they all focus on showing that the drow can create and be a positive presence. In fact, Eilistraee teaches to *"be always kind, save in battle against evil"*, and to *"repay rudeness with kindness"* (although the pride of most drow clashes with this idea), and the Sword Dancers are indeed known to lend a helping hand in all kinds of matters. They not only offer help and protection against dangers (like wandering monsters, or evil drow), but—in the limits of their capabilities—they also provide shelter and food to the homeless, travelers, and communities in need (they even try to carry food with them at all times for this purpose), healing to the wounded, practical help and succor to those met along the way (like people caught in bitter cold). They lift hearts with their arts and the beauty that they can create, trade exotic drow goods and crafts, and offer unique skills (like knowledge of the Underdark). All of this is part of their way to build their own place in the surface world.

The Sword Dancers usually take nothing in return for their help, but might ask a small favor or a tool useful for their cause (Qilué was known to do this when she rescued capable adventurers lost in the Undermountain). It's also not unusual for them to be adventurers.

However, this is not easy, given the reputation of the drow as a race, so the Sword Dancers must be good diplomats and emissaries in order to prevent bloody conflicts and hopefully build new friendships. For example, the clerics of Eilistraee of Elventree (near the Cormanthor forest) have established a good relationship between the inhabitants of the village and the followers of the Dark Maiden that live nearby. They have a small shrine close to the settlement, and provide healing magic to those who need it (in the past, Seyll Auzkovyn—a priestess—was even advisor to Lord Dessaer of Elventree).

The acceptance and hope that can be found in teachings of Eilistraee speak to individuals of many races. While most Sword Dancers are drow, they also include humans, half-elves, half-orcs—and even shapeshifters like werewolves and lythari—who share the Dark Maiden's goal of uniting all races. Even some elves, who want to put an end to the hatred and conflict that divide their people, choose to become Sword Dancers, and the goddess gladly welcomes any being that wishes to dance along her path. As an example, during the 1360s DR the guardians of the Promenade included more humans than drow, nine dwarves (known for their grudge against drow), and a variety of people from any race.

³ The Promenade fell in the past, but is currently being restored, as [confirmed](#) by Ed Greenwood.

In 1379 DR [Qilué Veladorn](#), High Priestess of the Dark Maiden and Chosen of Mystra, was killed while the drow goddess was inhabiting her body. This caused great part of her power to be dragged in the Weave along with the priestess' soul, ultimately leading to Lolth's uncontrasted supremacy for about a century. Eilistraee was in fact severely weakened, thought gone by many (even among her own followers), able to manifest herself only as a floating black mask surrounded by moonlight, capable of silently communicating with mortals, but not of answering prayers or granting spells (except by direct touch). However, the Dark Maiden's battle was not over.

In fact, during the 1480s DR the remaining Weave strands were made whole again with the return of Mystra, and both siblings could finally recover their power. Eilistraee and Vhaeraun fully returned to life and to their followers at the end of the Second Sundering, often personally appearing to them to make their return known. Despite their contrasting ways, both brother and sister currently have a new understanding and even friendship for each other. They have reached a truce, even friendship, knowing that freeing the drow from their mother requires that no effort is wasted in fighting each other.



About joy, arts and beauty

Eilistraee is a goddess of joy and beauty, of free-form expression. She teaches to "*encourage happiness everywhere*", and to lift hearts with acts of kindness, song, jests, revelry and good food. The goddess wishes for all beauty in life to be protected by the evil that seeks to destroy it, and celebrated and nurtured through arts, music and dance (which are to be spread and taught at any adequate opportunity). This focus on beauty, arts, spreading joy, is not merely hollow optimism or frivolity, because there's only one way that Eilistraee has to speak to that part of every drow that was silenced by hatred and abuse—their shattered dreams and hopes—and to let it awaken: the sheer joy of existence and the vibrant love of a mother that she can still give amidst all the pain, but they were denied. Kindness, and fully, freely embracing the beauty that the world has to offer, are things that can still **resonate** with them (despite being absent or corrupted in their society). Many unconsciously feel the need to rediscover such joys, are drawn to them, and they are a way to lure the drow to a life that they have forgotten, away from the cruelty of Lolth.

For example, there are many Lolthite drow who would rather stop to watch the Eilistraeen ritual of dancing under the moonlight than disrupt it (if they can without repercussions), or who would choose to not report Eilistraeen activity (if they know to get away with it).

The Sword Dancers are therefore very capable in the art of dance, and must be good singers and musicians as well. They try to learn, create, and teach songs and all kinds of musical knowledge whenever they can (many become bards too for this reason). They use their art to bring merriment and lighten up the day of friends and strangers alike, and to bring hope and light in dark times and places. Freedom of self-expression, something that is denied to most drow, is also an ideal held dear by the Dark Maiden and her faithful, for similar reasons.

About food and survival

To most drow, the surface is an alien and hostile environment when they first come to live there, and they often need to relearn how to survive and find their sustenance, while watching themselves from their many enemies. For this reason, if the drow are to prosper once again in the Land of the Great Light, Eilistraee and her Sword Dancers must aid them in practical matters, like gathering and hunting for food, and teach them about the surface and all they need to survive there. Therefore, the priestesses and priests must also learn to feed themselves and the drow that they lead by their own hunting and gardening skills, reflecting the huntress aspect of the Dark Maiden. The goddess teaches that food has to be shared, taking only what's needed for sustenance, and giving the remainder to the hungry. It has also to be enjoyed: meals and feasts should be joyful events, accompanied by music, plays and laughter, and the Sword Dancers enjoy to collect and experiment with new or exotic recipes and spices, when they have the chance. As protectors of the drow, they also practice how to craft and wield swords, constantly honing their skill with the blade and learning how to blend it with their dance. They do so both as an art, in honor to the goddess, and for necessity.

In order to adapt to the surface environment, the drow must also deal with their sunlight sensitivity. For those drow that are new to the Lands of Light, sunlight can be quite an impairment. For this reason (among others), Eilistraeen **communities** are usually located within wooded areas, where the drow can spend the day repaired by direct sunlight, and protected by eventual enemies that may abuse their weakness to strike them down. New converts also act mostly during the night, for the same reason. However, the drow eyes can gradually adapt to the

sunlight, and this process takes about 10 years to *fully* complete (a really short time, from the elven perspective), so--all things considered--their sensitivity is only a problem during the first years spent in the surface world.

Challenges

While the faithful of the Eilistraee work to follow her ideals, it can be difficult in practice. Not all drow are equal: each of them may feel called to a particular aspect of the Dark Maiden while not truly feeling aligned with the rest, which leads to varied (and at times even conflicting) opinions among them. Some also come from centuries of Lolthite background, and some former Lolthites among the Sword Dancers themselves may find it difficult to shake this off. Furthermore, some former Lolthites also struggle with dealing with their sense of guilt, and the evil that they have inflicted in the past is a heavy burden for them to carry. Those converts strive to do good, to make the world a better place, and risk their life for that goal as a form of redemption, but the knowledge of their past actions can very well weigh their hearts down, and some converts feel the need to look for those who have lost beloved ones (or who have generally suffered) due to their actions, in order to directly confront them and provide whatever aid possible. The comforting presence and guidance provided by Eilistraee and by her priestesses is key in this struggle.

The general distrust and hostility that surface dwellers hold towards the drow (although they are not without allies: the *Harpers* are an example) presents another challenge to overcome. Many surface dwellers are not even aware of the existence of the Eilistraean drow, or believe that they are but followers of Lolth trying to work deception (which sometimes actually happens). Clergy of other good deities acknowledge Eilistraee's kind-heartedness, but they are still wary of the ways that she and her followers might use to achieve their goals.⁴ Elves generally find Eilistraee troubling, since she conflicts with their belief that the drow are to be blamed for all the tragedies of their past.

As a consequence of all that, the trust of the Sword Dancers can be hard to gain in certain situations, and mindsets and attitudes from their previous life could be carried on in a few cases. For example, some priestesses that come from a Lolthite society may act *harshly* towards males; other priestesses (or priests) can be aggressive--or even quick to raise a sword--if a threat is perceived, or if their ritual dances are interrupted. Suspicious (in the Eilistraeans' eyes) individuals who have acquired too much knowledge (like the position of an Eilistraean community), can be caught and held for some time to make sure that such knowledge isn't used against the drow (although no violence is inflicted on the "prisoners", and they are still given shelter and food, although they might be made to work for it).

Similarly, when fighting (and winning) against drow followers of Lolth or of other enemy faiths, the Sword Dancers find themselves confronted with a hard choice. Their enemies represent a threat for themselves and other converts: if they were to escape (and the Sword Dancers know all too well the treachery of their kin) their whole community would be in great danger. On the other hand Eilistraee teaches mercy and redemption, and such things are necessary for the Sword Dancers' goal to free their people from Lolth.

So, in those situations the clerics of the Dark Maiden often choose to incapacitate their enemy via various spells (*Daylight* and *Hold Person*, for example). Once captured, the drow are usually held prisoners to prevent them from endangering the Dark Dancer's surface community, but not killed or otherwise harmed, unless they force the Eilistraeans to. The hope is that, by understanding and experiencing first hand a new

life and the embrace of the goddess, they will too make this choice. They are therefore not treated as slaves or commanded around --the followers of Eilistraee are forbidden to do that and abhor slavery. They are also usually provided cures (when needed), food, and a refuge, but are closely guarded (the moondancers take no risks) and made to work for the hospitality. If even after those precautions they still represent a concrete danger to the clerics and the drow under their protection, more lethal methods are used.

Daily life and society

As already [explained](#), followers of Eilistraee and Sword Dancers can be of any race and are spread throughout Faerun. They don't necessarily live within drow Eilistraean-dominated communities: if they don't, they usually follow the ideals of the goddess (trying to bring harmony among all races, for example), and the laws and costumes of their society. However, many (though not most) Eilistraean drow are converts or exiles from the Underdark, and they find home in the shelter offered to them by the Sword Dancers, generally in the shrines dedicated to the goddess (often in wooded areas). For this reason, most followers of the Dark Maiden form small communities⁵ tied by the common faith and goals, built around the [places of worship](#) of Eilistraee, and--differently from their Lolthite counterpart--they learn to care for each other. Their society is a consequence of this necessity of mutual protection, and of their striving to build their own place in the surface world. However, they are still drow, and some traits that characterize the race can still be found in them (especially considering that many come from a Lolthite society). For example, they are still religious, and--as said-- their goddess plays a big role in their lives. They may also use gestures and costumes from their background, like letting fall any weapon and dropping to a knee to surrender. However their take on things like the [relationship](#) with other races, [prisoners](#) and slavery, love, or social rankings is wildly different.

Organization

Being many Eilistraean communities formed around shrines, they are usually led by the Sword Dancers. Clerics of the Dark Maiden generally take the most important decisions for the community, trying to make the best choices to make the drow under their protection prosper. They are meant to be an extension of Eilistraee's own motherhood, to work as teachers, nurturers, protectors, diplomats, and artists. They empower the drow to find their own path in a world that's their rightful home, but has grown hostile to them; they care after their people and provide the material and emotional support they need, not to mention the necessary education. In the past they were almost completely female, as the divine dance of Eilistraee could only be fully felt as such, due to her nature being tied to female fertility and motherhood (and males had to spend some time transformed into females through a ritual known as the *Changdance* in order to fully cleave to the goddess. Said ritual could also be used to turn women into men, for those who so wanted. It went beyond its original function, and also acted as a tool of self-expression). However, the number of male priests is increasing in the current times, because of how Eilistraee has changed with her return and with the time she held Vhaeraun's portfolio of drow males, removing the necessity of the *Changdance*. The "hierarchy" among the ~~followers of the Dark Maiden~~ is loose, and while the the word of

5 It should be noticed that only purely clerical communities observe devotion to a single deity. In the Forgotten Realms, people worship many gods at once. For this reason, while in an Eilistraean community the faith of the goddess is dominant, and most members choose her as a primary deity, other faiths are practiced too (and some members may actually choose a different primary deity). Converts from the Underdark may be an exception, given that, due to their isolation, they only know about Lolth, Eilistraee and the other drow gods. However, as they expand their knowledge of the world, they could start praying to other entities alongside Eilistraee.

4 As explained by Ed Greenwood in these statements: [1](#); [2](#)

the priestesses carry importance, it is not absolute (this is even more evident within the clergy, where the word of a higher ranked priestess is seen more as advice from an elder sibling, than as an order). In fact, the Sword Dancers don't take decisions alone: they listen to the opinions and suggestions of their fellow drow before acting, and when a decision related to a specific field has to be taken, they ask for advice to those who have experience in it (males often act as "spot-experts" of this kind). Differently from Lolthite societies, males can expect to be respected and valued as equals. As said, they tend to be lay-worshippers and work as experts, guards, hunters (and so on) rather than clerics and decision-makers. However, that's not to say that males can't take those roles: a notable example was Elkantar Iluim, a former drow slave who had been discarded because of his rebellious nature, and then rescued by Qilué (to later become her consort, and father of their daughter Ysolde). He earned the position of leader of the [Protectors of the Song](#) in the [Promenade](#), because of his wisdom and abilities. A few female followers of Eilistraee may be wary and skeptical of males that wish to train as Sword Dancers (those who do usually fear that the reason behind this choice may be mere lust for power), until trust on a personal level is achieved. However these behaviors are not to be over-emphasized: no priestess would renounce to Eilistraee's vision, or come anywhere close to proving hostile or violent—in any way—towards males, or to refusing to accept and aid them (and assist those who want to become part of the priesthood). On the contrary, taken as a whole, female Sword Dancers are happy to welcome the fellowship of more and more followers of the Dark Maiden, regardless of gender or race (and the above-mentioned gender differences are disappearing in the current era, after Eilistraee's return to full power).

Titles: Clerics of Eilistraee have the right to choose one personal title once they complete their training as novices. This is done during a personal [Evensong](#) as they commune with the goddess, and examples are "Unsheathed Blade", "Ghost of the Moonstruck Night", "Bright Edge of Darkness", "Dark Huntress", "Moon Dancer", "Moon Singer", "Living Blade" and so on. The titles used to indicate full priests and novices as whole change from shrine to shrine (Dark Ladies and Maids are examples, although that may change now that more male priests are joining their ranks).

Love unions

Among the worshippers of Lolth love is almost a taboo, and the Spider Queen's dogma declares it a weakness. However, Eilistraee teaches to the drow the strength that there is in love, and they learn to embrace this sentiment in its entirety (not only in its physicality). Like for their Lolthite kind, or even for the elves, many relationships are but temporary. However—differently from the societies of the Spider Queen, where noble females can freely take and discard male partners, or where marriage is always transient and a matter of business—the followers of the Dark Maiden do have the concept of stable marriage, called [Love-binding](#), in which they call the goddess to bless their love and union.

There are no barriers limiting marriage or relationship between any followers of the goddess (including race or gender), or between the Sword Dancers and lay worshippers (and Eilistraee hasn't expressed any preference for her clergy to take a steady companion, or not). However, there is a large number of clerics who prefer to not be bound to a steady partner, and that may be for personal reasons, because their missions would make it difficult, or because they might see married life as time-consuming and a distraction from their devotion to the Dark Maiden and her cause.

Children⁶ _____

⁶ This section (save for the information about children being free to choose

Not unlike in Lolthite houses and merchant families, children are raised as a community effort among the Eilistraeans. While there can be families composed by a married couple and their offspring, that's not the standard situation, and in either case the concept of family is broader than that intended in our modern society.

A child will of course be more attached to their parents (or mother, when the father is unknown⁷), who will tend to their necessities. However, the family extends to all the members of the community⁸, who provide training to the children in their different areas of proficiency, and also look after them (for example, priests and priestesses may teach magic, swordplay, or how to play instruments, etc.). Little drow can therefore grow up in a warm and nurturing environment, learning the value of mutual protection and of working together. Nonetheless, they are also taught caution (especially in trusting others), to guard, fend off for, and feed themselves, given the threats that the surface world can pose to a drow.

Children are taught about Eilistraee and all that she stands for, and they too partake in the joyful rituals in her honor. However, if they wish so, they are completely free to choose to be primarily devoted to another deity (or to none), once they are old enough to think for themselves and express their opinion.

Leisure

Like the rest of their kin, Eilistraean drow enjoy magic: they are fascinated by its power and what it can create, and are always curious about and entertained by new spells and effects. Small illusions, light plays (such as that of the [Moonfire](#) or [Dancing Lights](#)), musical spells and other fun effects almost always accompany their revelries and rituals. Like most drow, the followers of the Dark Maiden love beauty, be it that of art, of a masterfully crafted sword, or of their bodies (which they can show without inhibition—a sculpted body is also a symbol of power in the drow culture).

Song and dance play a unique role in their society. As already explained, they represent one of the main points of Eilistraee's teachings, and are important even for her mission. Among the followers of Eilistraee, dance and music serve both as the main form of worship of the goddess, and as precious opportunities to freely express themselves, unwind and enjoy life. It can be done alone under the moonlight, as a group ritual, or as part of wild celebrations—in all cases, the drow experience a unique joy, healing, and even power, as they give in to the dance and [commune](#) with Eilistraee, who listens to their messages and emotions. These passionate moments, and the intimate connection with the goddess, are precious to her followers, and they try to find ways to perform their dances wherever they are. The Sword Dancers are also known to nurture and teach these arts.

Aside from reasons of necessity, hunts are also practiced as a ceremonial [offering](#) to Eilistraee, and as moments of celebrations. The drow enjoy the thrill and warm feeling of energy that fills them as they chase their prey (which can also be a monster), and appreciate the adrenaline rush of an eventual fight as well. Such activities are often led by a Sword Dancer, and swords, bows and bladed weapons are the preferred tools. A successful hunt is generally celebrated with a feast, dance, and song.

their deity) is mere speculation on my part, based on the drow idea of family and on the Eilistraean mindset.

⁷ As one would expect, there's absolutely no prejudice in these cases.

⁸ This is possible, given that Eilistraean communities are small. On a side note, a similar model of child-raising is used in some regions of our world: among the Na people of the Yunnan region of China, for example.

Long, relaxing massages (especially with oils, steam, or hot water) are greatly appreciated by *all* drow, including the Eilistraeens, but—given their lifestyle—they don't have many opportunities to enjoy such a luxury. Good (and exotic) food and merry feasts are also pleasures sought after by these drow.

Day to day activities

Within most Eilistraean communities, the Sword Dancers spell the rhythm of the day for the followers of the goddess (although the often-changing necessity of the moment takes precedence over a routine). The day usually begins with a meeting for chattering, bathing and other routine activities, while the priests and priestesses intone a song in honor to Eilistraee (known as the *Charge* in the *Promenade*), as they summon globes of *Moonfire*. That's the signal for the members of the community to join a formal meeting, led by the clerics, where everyone can (and is expected to) express their opinions with honesty and openness. This was known as the *Council* in the *Promenade*, and concludes with a prayer to Eilistraee, asking for her guidance, and with the beginning of the daily work activities.

These vary depending on the necessities, but usually include routine food-growing and gathering, hunting, preparation of cures, reparations, maintenance and crafting of weapons and equipment, and so on. Food and curative herbs are often stored for future necessity, to be distributed both to the community and, if possible, to travelers, refugees, or neighbors who may be in need. The Eilistraeens need to be ever watchful of dangers, so their shrines and temples must be protected by guards, and patrols in the nearby area are very common (especially during winter), both to find and rescue the lost or wounded, and to spot and quickly remove threats for both the Eilistraeens and any other nearby community. Sometimes the drow are guided by the sound of Eilistraee's hunting horn, the goddess' signal that someone in need of help is nearby. Sword Dancers who are not busy in missions of priority also help in (and give advice about) hunting, herb gathering and all survival skills needed on the surface. Guests of the temple may be asked to help out.

The priests and priestesses perform various tasks for the faith. They have the duty to bring at least one drow per moon to the light of Eilistraee, and to find and help any dark elf seeking to (or that can be brought to) abandon Lolth. So they are often busy in regions with intense drow activity, or even perform missions in the Underdark. Their magic is needed to tend to the wounded and the ill sheltered in their shrine, and they also practice diplomacy in the nearby area (where they provide a helping hand if needed), trying to promote peaceful relationships and exchanges with the drow.

After the daily tasks have been performed, the followers of Eilistraee dedicate themselves to personal leisure, and the Sword Dancers usually practice and teach dance and song, until they are called to eat their evening meal (in the *Promenade*, the *Call of Eilistraee*, a haunting tune sung by the priestesses, would draw the faithful to the Cavern of Song for this purpose). A second prayer to the goddess and free-speak gathering may be held; then the meal is consumed and—if possible—made a joyful event, accompanied by music or plays. Finally, the evening is usually dedicated to dances and/or revelries in honor to the Dark Maiden, both personal and collective, or to a personal time of work and play.

Shrines and places of worship

Be it in the Underdark or on the surface, while not without friends, the

followers of Eilistraee are usually forced to deal with the hostility of their neighbor surface dwellers, or with the persecution of the priestesses of Lolth. They need to adapt to the situation in order to find the possibility to express their faith. Considering this, it is difficult to find traits that are common to all temples of the Dark Maiden.

Eilistraean temples are very rare. When the goddess was one of the main patrons of the dark elves of ancient Miyeritar, her temples could be found in their cities, and represented sites of great importance (like the *Tower of the Dark Moon*, now known as the *Twisted Tower of Ashaba*, once the greatest temple of Eilistraee, where her magic still lingers). However, since after the fall of Miyeritar and up to the current time, the places of worship of the Dark Maiden have mostly consisted of few, scattered, small shrines, located wherever needed and possible. They are preferably established in spots that allow the faithful to act both on the surface and in the Underdark, and in many cases can be found near elven or human settlements.

As already explained, shrines are often of central importance to the followers of Eilistraee: their shared faith is a very strong bond, and they tend to form communities⁹ based on that. A shrine of Eilistraee requires very little: a glade illuminated by the moon and music to dance are all that is needed. Many followers of the goddess prefer to live in harmony with their surroundings, rarely applying heavy modifications (and using adapted caverns, or tree-houses, as living quarters). Natural areas are usually chosen for this purpose, often near the mouth of caverns and within forest glades in which to dance and from where the moon is visible. Ideally, the environs near a shrine or temple of the Dark Maiden also include a water course, a thick tree canopy, and a vein of metal and a forge to craft swords and armors. Tunnels and secret passages connecting the shrine to the Underdark can often be found near the shrines, serving both as a ways to reach for potential converts, and to help drow escape to the surface. If needed, magical glyphs are usually used as a defense.

One important shrine, dating back to ancient Miyeritar (and still active) can be found in the Misty Forest, just west of the High Moor. It lies in the ruins of an ancient building, and is a circular, flat white stone platform, where twelve sword-shaped obsidian columns are planted point-down. The flattened hilts of the swords support a moon-shaped roof of white stone. Near the shrine is a gargantuan ancient tree, sustained and rendered evergreen by magical means, and enveloped by a soft green-colored faerie fire by night. On the branches of the tree, huge bulges of lumber have been carved and made into homes for the followers of the Dark Maiden, accessible via ladders of magically floating twigs, protected by glyphs. It fell in ruins during the *Wailing Years*, only kept viable by Rowann Vrinn (daughter of *Leliana Vrinn*, and high priestess of the shrine) and her fellow Sword Dancers. It is currently being renewed by Laenalene Myrr, Faeryl Illiathor and their fellow followers of Eilistraee. Among its many functions, it has become the *gateway* to Rhymanthiin for the drow who wish to reach the City of Hope¹⁰

Another (larger) shrine, the *Shadowtop Glade*, can be found in northern Velarswood, near Harrowdale. It consists of two series of caves that serve as homes for the faithful, located on both sides of a steep gully, which is surrounded by a groove of Shadowtop trees¹¹. The faithful of this shrine are known to join moon-worshipping lycanthropes from the near Howling Hills in sacred hunts dedicated to both the Dark Maiden and the goddess Selune. They have also established good relationships

⁹ See note 3

¹⁰ Credits to Eric Menge for his work about the Misty Forest shrine.

¹¹ Up to 90 ft tall, with leaves growing irregularly and only at the top of tree

with the local humans, by aiding them and providing cures when needed.

Dancing Places

Not every shrine is linked to a community nearby: some of them are just dancing or gathering places, and there are many examples. The *Dancing Dell*, within the Ardeep forest, contains the sacred *Ladystone*, where Qilué used to periodically lead dances in honor to the Dark Maiden (now Leliana Vrinn has taken that role), and where the goddess herself manifested more than once to dance with the priestesses. The *Mouth of Song*, a shrine located in a cavern at the base of a tree-less hill in the Moonwood, is the gathering place for the followers of the goddess from Silverymoon, that come there to dance together atop the hill. *Darkmaiden's Leap* is yet another example, a seldom visited sacred site within the High Forest, where—during the *Avatar Crisis*—Eilistraee, in her physical form, personally led one of her priestesses to her **Last Dance**, only to find and rescue a group of drow refugees, dancing with them and taking them under her protecting wing. The place became a site of pilgrimage for those drow, eventually leading them to save the lives of a band of wood elves who had been ambushed by orcs. This event was the beginning of a friendship between the two groups, and—to this day—the wood elves still guard the sacred site out of gratitude.

The Moonspring and portal networks

Shrines of Eilistraee (and the drow that gather around them) are usually scattered, and the drow of a community may not even be aware of the presence of other moondancers nearby. This is to be expected, given the caution that they need to observe, and that reliable and fast means of communication (like spells) are accessible only to few. However, with the help of Eilistraee, the Sword Dancers have created means to connect key places. Important shrines, as well as key locations in the Underdark, can be linked through a net of portals.

An example are the Moonspring portals, which take the form of pools of water that activate their magic when hit by moonlight. The Moonspring portals used to converge upon the Promenade, connecting it with other shrines (like the Misty Forest shrine); other portals in the temple (and elsewhere too) lead to locations in the Underdark, even within drow cities, to help in bringing drow refugees and converts to safety. While the Moonspring only requires moonlight to activate, the other portals are keyed so that only followers of the Dark Maiden can use them. For example, by speaking the *Message of Eilistraee*, or intoning a specific song. They are usually protected with non-detection magic (so that *Detect Magic* can't reveal their presence), and further keyed so that only good-aligned elves or drow can activate them, and that, once activated, the portal remains open for a few seconds¹², sealing itself again afterward. Sometimes, these portals can be enchanted to only teleport creatures while leaving their items behind (as a safety measure), and their destination on the surface is always well guarded. If a follower of Lolth uses the portal, for instance by tagging along behind a refugee, they are incapacitated and the Sword Dancers decide the best **course of action**, based on the threat that the intruder represents for their community.

After Eilistraee **temporarily** lost much of her power, these portals stopped working. Now that goddess has fully returned, her followers are working to **activate** them once again.¹³

One notable Eilistraean portal can be found in the drow city of Menzoberranzan, next to an abandoned storage facility near the outer

wall. It was created by a Sword Dancer whose soul has long joined the Dark Maiden; it is unidirectional (from the city to the surface), activated through the *Message of Eilistraee*, and has all the qualities described above.

Shrines in the Underdark

Shrines larger than personal, small places of worship (often within houses) are rare in the Underdark, and (before its fall) the Promenade of the Dark Maiden is unique in this regard. At the height of its splendor, it was the main temple to the goddess, built in the Underdark (3rd level of **Halaster's Undermountain**) by Qilué Veladorn at the **behest** of Eilistraee herself. Its position was chosen because it was best suited for the Sword Dancers that would dwell there (called Dark Ladies) to fulfill their duty, which saw them very active in the Underdark, and only rarely on the surface. Led by Qilué, they worked to protect the city from Ghaunadaur (god of slimes and abominations, who could creep into Toril through an intermittent portal—the Pit of Ghaunadaur—that they had sealed near the temple), stood against the slavers of the near Skullport (freeing and sheltering many of their victims), kept an eye on the activities of evil drow, and maintained peace between the drow and the humans and elves of the region.

Atypically, the caverns were heavily modified and refined in order to provide shelter and protection from the abundant dangers of the region. The Promenade was composed by four caverns that hosted the clerics' and faithful's rooms, an armory, and an amphitheater for the dances and choirs (the Cavern of Song). The ruins of a temple of Tyr were used to build the Hall of Healing, where wounded guests and residents were cured and sheltered; and a side cavern led to Eilistraee's mound, an elevated place containing a statue to the goddess, the Moonspring, and a descending staircase to the Pit of Ghaunadaur. The temple fell in the 1370s DR, after a (successful) **last stand** against the cultists of Ghaunadaur, but Leliana Vrinn is currently leading the operations to **rebuild** it, as Eilistraee asked her¹⁴.

Shrines within settlements

While the Dark Maiden's places of worship are often found near other races' communities, they are almost absent within settlements, but there are remarkable exceptions. As said, the Sword Dancers work to help the drow integrate with other races' communities, and they take various approaches to reach their goal.

In many cases, the followers of Eilistraee first carefully observe the settlement, to learn about its people and their ways. They look for particular individuals, people that are more open-minded, and able to help the drow become part of that community. The Eilistraeens work to gain their sponsorship, by explaining their cause and goal, by offering their art, their magic, or exotic items to trade, or profitable deals. Once such support is gained, they try to settle and integrate within the community.

In other cases, the coexistence between the Eilistraeens and other races can be a simple consequence of what they usually do. For example, healing and sheltering a wounded stranger, or protecting a village from a band of drow raiders, can be the start of a friendship between the various races (that seems to be the case of their settlement of Shadowtop Glade, where the drow are friends of a nearby human community). The same can happen were a stranger to happen upon one of the sacred dances of the Eilistraeens and become fascinated by their art (like it happened with the wood elves that regularly come to patrol and protect Darkmaiden's leap).

¹⁴ As said, the restoration of the temple was **confirmed** by Ed Greenwood. However, the details are speculation on my side.

¹² About 1 round

¹³ Note that this is only speculation on my side.

The shrine of the *Dancing Stone* near Elventree, mentioned [before](#), is well integrated with the village and part of its community, thanks to the work of the Sword Dancers.

The *Dark Dancer* shrine, within the city of Raven's Bluff, in the Vast, is also a notable example. It was built from an abandoned warehouse by Rebekkah Darklyte and other Sword Dancers, who were pursuing their goddess' goal to bring peace between the drow and other races. Rebekkah used the story of her people, their beauty and arts to move the Yarvandar noble family and gain their support. In exchange of traditional drow-made goods (like their black and green wines), the Sword Dancers were provided with wagons and assistance to carry people and materials to build their shrine (through a net of secret passages connecting an Eilistraee-controlled region of the Underdark to the area near one of the family's houses). They were also given hospitality in the family's mansion, from where they observed the human society, planning how to act; and in the family's estate outside the city, where the drow could dance for Eilistraee.

Once the shrine was complete, it was publicly open, and the Sword Dancers started to give away food, clothing and general help to the Ravenian poors, in line with their original goal. However, the drow presence within the city was not taken well by many, and shortly after its opening the shrine was attacked by an anti-drow mob. The riot was stopped by the city guards, with a few wounded on both sides, but Rebekkah and the other clerics were not discouraged by the hostility: they healed all the wounded and kept pursuing their goal nonetheless. While not without support by some citizens and merchants, they were however met with other obstacles on their path. Many citizens remained adverse to the drow presence, and even lashed out against the Yarvandar, whose involvement with the Eilistraeans had been made public (some wanted them to be exiled from Raven's Bluff, albeit without success). Furthermore the hostility of the Clerical Circle --a collective of representatives of the various faiths in the city, with the authority to authorize or deny new shrines--forced the worshipers of Eilistraee to take their dances elsewhere.

While the *Dark Dancer* still housed their shrine, they chose an open field just north of the city to perform their rituals (they still do), but those Ravenians who were bent on completely driving the drow away, led angry mobs even there. Rebekkah and the other Eilistraeans of the *Dark Dancer* would finally find a welcoming place only after being struck with the idea of bringing their dances to the *Cliff's Bard & Swill* (a popular nightclub), with the intention to lure people and make them understand that the drow of the Dark Maiden truly meant no harm. After they performed their ritual as a demonstration, they were welcomed with unexpected success and acceptance (one patron even commented to have experienced "the ultimate thrill of my life"), and they still sometimes perform their dances there, as one of the entertainments offered by the nightclub.

Another, recent example is the new [temple](#) that the followers of Eilistraee are building in Waterdeep in the 1490s DR. After her return, Eilistraee has been nudging the drow to build more relationships, moving them to action. In the City of Splendors, the Sword Dancers saw the harper Remallia Haventree as an open-minded individual, likely to support them, and thanks to her help they are now integrating within the city.

Eilistraeans also actively promote drow trade on the surface when they can. They offer guides and their [Moonsong](#) spell allow them to provide fast travel between the Underdark and the surface. They do that because they know that trade is key to help their people integrate with

other races, and to make it clear that the drow presence in a region can be profitable. It is also positive, because a more lively trade encourages more drow to travel to the surface, therefore far from Lolth's influence and closer to Eilistraee's (as they are way more likely to hear Eilistraee's song when near the surface). The drow of the Promenade are a prime example of this *modus operandi*.

Adventurers are travelers are of vital importance for this as well. The followers of the Dark Maiden do help them because they feel that it is the right thing to do, but they can also spread knowledge and understanding that the drow can be good friends to have (and having a friend in an adventurer can always help, especially if you can provide some reward to gain their help).

Rituals, manifestations, holy events

The main form of worship of Eilistraee consists of free form dancing and singing, preferably unclad and under the moonlight, either alone or in group. Venerating the Dark Maiden requires nothing else: any individual, no matter what race or gender, can find a glade lit by the moon and pray for Eilistraee to notice them, and then disrobe and dance as they sing a deeper prayer, and as the goddess smiles upon them. She may also decide to answer in various ways (even to those who honor her but are not her followers), like sending a flutter of silvery moths to show her favor and join the dance, or manifesting a radiance that turns the hair of a mortal into a mane of silver flames for a time (the duration is decided by her). However, her most common manifestation is a silvery radiance accompanied by a few harp notes or a snatch of song. Sometimes, she may choose to envelop a being with it, boosting their reflexes and precision¹⁵, and allowing them to harm creatures that normally would not be wounded without the use of magic. Swords blessed by her light can't be broken and always strike with maximum force¹⁶. The Dark Maiden is also known to sometimes gift to a creature the ability to temporarily manifest her [Moonfire](#), as a sign of her support and favor.

There's a reason to the nude dances. In Lolth's society, the drow are always forced to wear a mask. It's a life based on constructs, on falsehood, deceit, where conflict is constant and trust and spontaneity are taboos. They give up on things like kindness and love, and even if they desire or would enjoy such things, they are forced to hide that. A nude dance in which the drow let out all their emotions is an act of spontaneity and freedom—"lay down the mask, lay down everything, and feel free to just be you and embrace life as you want". Furthermore, in a society of perpetual conflict, where trust is taboo, vulnerability must be hidden. To be free to dance in the nude with others, is to be free to show one own's vulnerability—it means that vulnerability is sometimes acceptable, it means forming a bond of trust, being accepted as a whole. Eilistraee's own nudity can be easily seen as she showing herself as she simply is, with spontaneity, without masks and in her vulnerability. She makes the first step towards forming that bond.

Finding silver, moonstones, moonbars and mithral is often considered a gift from Eilistraee (and such events can indeed be a sign of her favor). The same is true for sudden surges of inspiration to create songs and plays, or to craft excellent blades (for those who have the proficiency to do it). On the contrary, a sudden cold breeze, a feeling of chill in the hands or feet, the lack of inspiration or of the ability to catch anything while hunting, are interpreted as a sign of the goddess' displeasure.

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- ¹⁵ In game, it can be represented as advantage on attack rolls, and disadvantage on attack rolls to hit the blessed creature. It usually lasts for 4 rounds.
 - ¹⁶ Damage rolls made with the blessed weapon always output the maximum result. It usually lasts for 6 rounds.

Eilistraee's worshipers--or creatures that she favors--often experience her **manifestations** in the form of help that she provides in immediately useful ways, and sometimes she may even choose to appear personally. The goddess calls to all drow: they all hear her **song** and are "tempted" by her through emotions, visions and dreams, drawing them into her embrace.

Eilistraee is also sought after by bards and dancers for inspiration and by hunters for guidance (as said, she is known to grant both, as a blessing and sign of her favor). Those who do are not necessarily drow or elves: for example, many are the human hunters who, after having learned about the Dark Maiden, choose to invoke her benevolent guidance in their craft (they often do so by dancing around a sword planted into the ground, or by sacrificing a small edible animal--with a silvered sword if possible--when the Moon is full).

Within the Eilistraeans communities, the customary worship is a hunt, followed by a feast, and then by dance and song in honor to the goddess. These rituals may also involve spells of various kinds being cast on the participants, and everyone can take part in them. There are also longer and more passionate dances, in which the drow commune more closely with the Dark Maiden. These rituals are often reserved to the clergy (and are therefore mostly celebrated by females--although, as **explained**, the number of male Sword Dancers is increasing after the **return** of Eilistraee in the 1480s DR).

There is also a number of ceremonies or holy events observed, described below.

The Circle of Song

The Circle of Song is a particular game-ritual in which the worshipers sit in a circle and dance and sing by turns, leading a song. If possible, this is done in a wooded area, by night and under the moonlight.

The Grand Chorus

The Sword Dancers of Eilistraee have the ability to create magical effects through their song and dance, an art called *Spellsong*. Their voices can call upon the divine power of their goddess and shape it in a variety of spells. It is often used to heal and protect, but it can actually duplicate any spell that the Dark Maiden can grant, and even conjure a unique kind of moon-magic. The Grand Chorus, as it is called in the **Promenade**, is an example of this, and one of the greatest rituals of worship of Eilistraee.

Priestesses, priests, and lay worshipers alike sing with emotion, joining voices in an ever-changing song of celebration that constantly grows around a main melody led by a senior Sword Dancer. The music can conjure beams of magical moonlight that radiate in all directions, and whose intensity depends on the emotions of the singers. All resonate with a unique song when touched by moonlight. This song reflects the very nature and essence of the place, its history and the souls of the people who live there. When the magical light meets with real moonlight, the priestesses can hear the songs of such distant places, and Eilistraee makes it so that all beings and items that her clerics are touching or carrying can be transported along an uninterrupted path of moonlight to any place lit by the moon.

The drow of the Promenade celebrate this ritual daily, usually after their work, in the Cavern of Song. It also was one of their means to travel to the surface (the other was the Moonspring).

The Evensong

The Evensong is a solitary ritual celebrated at the end of the day. When they feel moved to do so, all followers of Eilistraee find their own space and call for the Dark Maiden to smile upon them. Afterwards, they freely let out all the emotions and reflections that they have experienced during the day. It is a (generally) wordless message, which can be anything the drow feel best suited to express themselves, like a personal song that is in tune with what they feel. For the Eilistraeans, this is a moment of insight and of personal communication with the goddess, as she personally listens to them and lets them unwind, and eventual interruptions are regarded as extremely rude.

In the Promenade, the Evensong was called *Flamesong*--and still is, by those Sword Dancers who are working to **rebuild** the temple¹⁷. When the time is right, they sing freely for their goddess and dance around a lit candle, following the rhythm of the music as it comes, until the flame is extinguished. While they do, the Promenade is filled with the *"eerily beautiful echoes of half a dozen or more of these solos at once, drifting down the passages"*.

The High Hunt

Once each season, the followers of the Dark Maiden engage in a ceremonial night time hunt as an offering to their goddess. The High Hunts are led by the priests and priestesses of Eilistraee, who traditionally wear as little as possible (as they tend to do in most rituals) and choose to use swords as their weapon (although lay worshipers can use any weapon or armor). The quarry can be a dangerous monster known to lurk the area or an edible animal: in either case, the drow revel in celebrating the huntress nature of Eilistraee. If the quarry is slain, the ritual continues as a revelry and a collective dance in honor to the Dark Maiden (and a feast if the quarry is edible).

A High Hunt can be mustered for reasons of necessity. Eilistraee is in fact known to send visions to her Sword Dancers, urging them to organize the event. It isn't exactly known what leads the goddess to act in such a way, but her visions often come when marauding monsters, or powerful enemies of the Eilistraeans are approaching or threatening a community and/or other followers engaged in the work of the goddess. In these cases the High Hunt assumes a more practical tone, being its purpose that of removing a danger, rather than that of celebration. At times, the hunting horn of Eilistraee may be heard as a warning that there are people nearby (both other followers or strangers) who need the help of the faithful--in these cases the Sword Dancers can decide to organize a hunt to rescue the endangered.

The Run

At least once per year, the followers of Eilistraee take part to a great (and challenging) ritual known as the Run. All those who don't naturally have silvery hair use particular boiled leaves and berries to paint their hair of that color; and those who are not drow use natural colors to paint their bodies black. They then travel on the surface world, going where they are strangers, reaching to elven and other races' communities to bring them food, joy (through music and dance), kindness, and help of various kind. They take a great risk, given that drow may be attacked on sight in many regions of Faerûn, and rely on their kindness, song, and (in the worst cases) magic and skill with the sword to not be slain. The Eilistraeans don't preach their faith during these travels: they embark on these journeys to show that drow can be rightful, non-evil inhabitants of Faerûn, and because they think that it is the right thing to do. A Run usually lasts a month (or somewhat more), but they can also go on for a whole season or year (very rarely more than that, unless complications arise). The faithful often use this time to also learn the typical songs and recipes of the places and settlements

¹⁷ See [here](#)

that they visit.

The Last Dance and funeral rites

Upon the departure of a friend, ally or beloved one, the priestesses and priests of Eilistraee must provide adequate burial, and comfort the mourning. The funeral rite is very simple, and consists of a soothing song to let out the pain, and even bring hope. When evil creatures or enemies of the Eilistraeens are slain, their bodies are instead burned as an offering to the goddess (unless they are edible, and hungry people are near).

When a Sword Dancer doesn't die in battle and lives long enough to reach her old age, Eilistraee sings to her at night, calling the faithful to her embrace. When the song feels right, the cleric simply goes out and starts dancing unclad under the moonlit sky, waiting for the goddess to come. Eilistraee appears to sing and dance with her, and as they dance, she starts to look younger and younger, gradually gaining back all the energy and strength lost with the years. Her hair acquire the same glow of the Dark Maiden's, and her form slowly becomes ghostly and translucent, fading away as the dance goes on. In the end, only a silvery radiance can be seen, but two voices can be heard: that of the goddess and her child, singing together a melancholy, tender song. One that mourns the end of a life, but celebrates the beginning of another.

The Sword Dance

The Sword Dance is performed when a new sword is forged or acquired by a worshiper of Eilistraee. Her priestesses and priests can call down the Dark Maiden's blessing to protect a sword from rusting or breaking, and to grant it the ability to harm creatures that can only be wounded by magical weapons¹⁸. The ritual is done outdoors and by night, by planting the sword in the ground and dancing around it, drawing a drop of blood from each limb as part of the performance. A cleric can only attempt to invoke Eilistraee's blessing once per night.

The Love-Binding

Any two lovers who are worshipers of Eilistraee (regardless of race and gender) have the possibility to ask a Sword Dancer to celebrate their union and to call the Dark Maiden's blessing upon it. The cleric can't refuse this request, unless one (or both) of the two individuals to be wed (called supplicants) is trying to work treachery on their partner or on the Eilistraeens.

Before the celebration, the Sword Dancer meets with both supplicants separately. She first asks them to reveal their true nature, casting a spell to let Eilistraee verify their honesty, and then proceeds to question them about their love for their partner, and their will to remain faithful to the Dark Maiden's ideals "in truth".

If satisfied, the priestess prays for Eilistraee to smile upon the couple. The goddess' answer always comes in the form of moon magic that permeates her cleric, making her eyes glow silver ("moon eyes")--when that happens, the priestess and the supplicants disrobe, embrace (not in sexual way) and dance together for the Dark Maiden. The priestess leads the dance and keeps praying to Eilistraee, who will happily blesses the union (unless she unveils any deception that wasn't previously recognized).

A place to celebrate the wedding and at least two attendants (to act as witnesses) are then chosen. The place of the celebration must be a natural site lit by the moon, preferably a sacred site where Eilistraee

appeared in the past. When moonlight touches the chosen spot, the ritual begins. Barring harsh weather or climate, the priestess and both supplicants undress and wear an ankle-long white over-robe, barefooted, before the ceremony begins.

Once all participants are gathered, the witnesses and eventual audience (who can wear anything) form a ring surrounding the place of celebration, spreading out if their number is too little. All guards and clerics of Eilistraee (and other deities)--except the presiding Sword Dancer--form a circle around the place of the ceremony, facing outwards and with their weapons unsheathed, to protect all the celebrants from eventual aggressors.

The priestess disrobes, surrounds her form with moonglow and prays Eilistraee to "*watch this binding, to make it firm*", and any attendants to "*witness this union of love*". She then prepares a large "loving cup" full of black, sweet wine consecrated to the goddess, and directs the two lovers to drink from it at the same time, facing each other. After that, the couple kisses and the priestesses removes their robes, dressing them too in moonglow. Finally, she bids the supplicants to join their hands and ask Eilistraee for her blessing "*with all their hearts*", after which they are declared "*bound before the Goddess*" and the festivities begin.

These vary, and depend on the wish of the lovers (and on other factors, like weather), but always include song and dance. The presiding priestess intones a haunting, rhythmic (easily leading into a dance) chant to the Dark Maiden (echoed by the other followers of the goddess), and casts a spell to keep it going while she keeps a harmony above it. She then opens the dances, leading the Bound (the joined lovers) into it, and praying for Eilistraee's boon upon them. Afterwards, all the celebrants join the revelry, while the priestess dances by turn with each of them, embracing them to surround their bodies with her own moonglow.

The dance is free-form (as in most Eilistraeen rituals), so the younger dancers generally give in to wild leaps and moves, while the elder ones can move more comfortably. Food and drinks may or not be present, and the celebrants can choose to disrobe for the celebration or not. There's no rule regarding sex during the revelry: it may happen that the Bound consume their union in the euphoria of the dances (and the wedding may even turn into a general orgy), but the festivity may as well be devoid of such activities.

The celebration lasts until the moonglow fades from the bodies of the celebrants, or until dawn. The musical spell is then ended by the priestess (some like to leave it in place, until it spontaneously fades about half a day later), and the participants are led to a place prepared for this purpose, like an inn or a shrine--although at times (especially during Summer) the night can be spent in the same place of the ceremony.

¹⁸ Swords blessed like this bypass immunity and resistance to nonmagical weapons.

Equipment, artifacts, and holy symbols

The Sword Dancers of Eilistraee don't have particular ceremonial vestments. They use the most practical garb in a given situation (haprons for cooking, armor—usually light; preferably enchanted and of drow make—in battle, etc...), and usually wear as little as they can in their ritual dances. They also wear their hair long, in honor of Eilistraee, and often paint it silver using natural pigments.

Their holy symbols can come in the form of a sword-pendant as large as a drow hand, or of the symbols of Eilistraee: a silver bastard sword outlined against a silver moon with silvery filaments, or a nude, long-haired female drow dancing with a silver sword in front of a full moon. These are often pins, or pendants attached to slender mithral or silver necklaces.

The followers of Eilistraee, especially her clerics, learn to play, craft, and repair one or more musical instrument. They favor the harp and the flute, and often carry the instrument with them in their travels (for the harp, they carry a portable version). Magical musical instruments are treasured and appreciated by the worshipers of the Dark Maiden.

In battle, the clerics of Eilistraee prefer to wield a sword, but they can also use other weapons (preferring bladed ones over the rest). They are also known to use the longbow and silver-tipped arrows as a secondary weapon. Sword Dancers have a reputation for their skill with the Dancing Sword, the weapon wielded by Eilistraee herself.

Mithral, silver, and moonstones are considered a gift from Eilistraee.

Singing Swords

Weapon (longword), legendary (requires attunement)

*These weapons are rare artifacts and relics of the faith of the Dark Maiden. They are twenty silvered bastard swords, gifted by Eilistraee herself to **Qilué Veladorn** and her friends in Buiyrandyn, a small settlement of drow who had refused Lolth for Eilistraee, found north of the Sword Mountains. The goddess had seen potential in the young drow, and had plans for her. When the time was right, in her form of a 9-ft tall, achingly beautiful drow maiden, she appeared to Qilué, asking her to help nearby drow in need, and granting her and her friends the magical Singing Blades to aid them in their quest.*

Later, Eilistraee would ask these drow to accomplish a greater mission: to seal the Pit of Ghaunadaur, a deep gorge connected to the third level of Halaster's Undermountain, magically linked to the divine realm of the Elder Eye, from where he was planning to creep into the surface world. With the guidance and protection of both Eilistraee and Mystra (who had chosen Qilué as the seventh of the Seven Sisters) and wielding the Singing Swords, Qilué and her friends defeated the avatar of Ghaunadaur and sealed the pit. However, the god had only been driven away, far from defeated, and the Dark Maiden appeared once more, warning Qilué and her friends of the danger:

"You must make a stand here close to the surface world, and you must be ever vigilant against the return of Ghaunadaur. For a mighty city of humans shall rise above this place, and if you are to make peace with humankind and your elven kin of the surface world, this place is best suited for you."

*The temple of the **Promenade** was then founded beneath the city of Waterdeep, quickly becoming the greatest bastion of Eilistraee's strength in Faerun. Its guardians (originally drow, but then also joined by*

The Dark Sister

Qilué Veladorn was the seventh and youngest of the Seven Sisters, Chosen of both Mystra and Eilistraee. The history of how she was chosen by Mystra is a singular one.

Having foreseen the a future time of deep crisis, the Lady of Mysteries took steps to avoid utter disaster, were one of her enemies to defeat or take control over her during that time of conflict. Centuries before the Times of Troubles, she started to choose a number of mortals to guard shards of her essence. Realizing that too few were the existing individuals capable of carrying her power, Mystra decided to give birth to a group of seven women suitable for her goal. She chose the human that she best saw fit for that purpose: Dornal Silverhand.

Mystra possessed Elué Shundar (who became aware and even enthusiast to be part of her goddess' plan), a half-elf sorceress that Dornal fancied, and seduced him. Six children, all female, were born from their union. However, with time, Mystra's power consumed Elué's body, and by the time she was bearing the seventh child, the woman was almost reduced to a husk. Believing his wife to be the victim of an evil spirit, Dornal regretfully killed her, leaving the unborn child in an extremely dangerous situation. The pregnancy had to be completed, else the seventh sister would have been completely destroyed by the divine power coursing through her.

Mystra quickly sought another pregnant female strong enough to give birth to the child, and her attention was caught by a drow who had forsaken Lolth for Eilistraee, Illyrtara Veladorn, intent in leading a group of like-minded drow to found a community on the surface, near the spot where Dornal killed Elué. Illyrtara's unborn daughter had died because of the stress of the journey, and she would have too, if nothing had been done to save her. As Eilistraee herself was watching over her follower, trying to find a way to save her, Mystra offered to replace the dead baby with the soul of the seventh sister, Qilué, to save both. Extraordinarily, Eilistraee agreed to allow the exchange, and with that pact Qilué Veladorn came to life, and so did a friendship between the Dark Maiden and Mystra that still lasts after more than seven centuries.

Nature and personality

Qilué sees the ways of things in Faerun clearly, and can reveal how anyone may forge a life of importance in steering the way of the world into peace and prosperity for all races. -- Albither of Athkatla

Qilué's appearance reminded of that of Eilistraee herself. She was a wildly beautiful woman, with ankle-long hair and large eyes of silvery hue, capable of inspiring awe in those that she met. She was a generally warm and kind drow—although she had a strong character, and could be firm and commanding (even imperious at times) when it was needed. Qilué inspired immediate trust and comfortableness in all those that she met, who often didn't hesitate to direct others to see her for advice and guidance. That Dark Sister had an understanding nature, and could accept all people simply for who they were: friendship with her was in fact quick to form, spontaneous and intense.

Qilué hated violence and always tried to avoid it, but she could be cold and merciless if the drow under her protection were endangered, or when facing those that she despised the most: slavers, tyrants, and any creatures whose cruelty oppressed the people of Faerun, and struck fear in their hearts. In truth, she found particular satisfaction in teaching memorable lessons to such individuals, and to those who came to the Promenade full of prejudices, thinking to remove "the drow problem".

At times, Qilué could be impish and irreverent. Being a chosen of two goddesses, she had great responsibilities weighing on her shoulders, which led her to take any rare chance to unwind with extreme inhibition. Qilué truly enjoyed (and had a singular talent for) mischief, and one of her favorite pastimes was to take the appearance of her sister Laeral (whom she was very close to) and sneak into the parties of the Waterdhavian nobility pretending to be her. She would enjoy herself without any restraint or control, for example by dancing and frolicking with wild abandon, or by playing wicked pranks to the human nobles—or seducing and then scaring them into submission if they happened to be slavers. She was a lover of dance and music, and was known to sometimes dance completely nude, lit by the Underdark fungi, in a cavern of the Promenade visible from Skullport—she did this mostly to lure individuals that she wished to talk to.

humans, dwarves and halflings), known as Protectors of the Song, were the keepers of the relic swords. They pursued and worked towards all the goals of the Dark Maiden, (for example, opposing the slavers of the near Skullport), but their main duty--which they referred to as "the Great Mission"--, was making sure that the Pit of Ghaunadaur would stay sealed, and that the god could never again threaten Faerun from there.

Towards the end of the 1370s DR, the Promenade was almost fully destroyed, by cultists of Ghaunadaur who, by tracking the (formerly Vhaerunite) Nightshadows of the [Masked Lady](#) that were sent to spy on them, managed to find portals leading to the temple. The priests of the Elder Eye led an army of his minions in a long siege against the Promenade, aiming to set the trapped avatar of their god free. Many Sword Dancers and Nightshadows gave their lives in a (successful) last stand against their enemies, preventing the worst from happening.

After that event, many Singing Swords were lost (or looted by scavengers), with only a few of them remaining in Eilistraean hands. Some time later, when the Dark Maiden temporarily lost most of her power after Qilué was killed, the sacred weapons became silent and lost their magic, making them easily mistaken for mundane swords, albeit of incredible quality. Currently, now that Eilistraee has returned to full power, her Singing Swords are once again infused with her divine magic, and some Sword Dancers have undertaken the mission to [recover](#) the precious relics.

You gain +3 to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

A Singing Sword "sings" loudly when unsheathed, and loses all bonuses when silenced. Its melody makes the wielder immune to all Charm and Fear effects, to the *Confusion* spell, and to all effects that can cause a creature to give in to despair or afflict her with insanity. Any attempt to apply these effects to the wielder by magical means grants her the benefits of a Barbarian's *Rage*, but only directed towards the caster. This works exactly like the Barbarian's feature, as if the wielder had a number of Barbarian levels equal to their overall level.

The song of the sword is capable of stirring the hearts of its wielder and their allies: Once per round, as a reaction, the dancer can grant advantage to an attack roll or to a wisdom or charisma saving throw made by herself or another creature within 30 feet from her. The dancer can make this choice after the roll is made but before it hits or misses.

Eilistraean Orders

Sword Dancers

The Sword Dancers, an order of specialized clerics of Eilistraee, are artists, diplomats, leaders and protectors of the followers of the Dark Dancer. They are an extension of the goddess' own motherhood of the drow people; they aid the drow in the activities necessary to survive and thrive in the surface world (such as hunting for food), teach them the skills to flourish on their own, and actively reach for the dark elves still trapped under Lolth's thumb, to offer them a better future (they must free at least one drow from Lolth per moon). They often take the role of emissaries among other races, to build friendships between the drow followers of Eilistraee and the surface communities, which leads many of them to train as proficient diplomats. As part of their duties, the Sword Dancers regularly patrol the lands where they live, to provide help and kindness to the lost and needy, and offer assistance to those facing hardships met along the way while adventuring.

The Sword Dancers nurture and create beauty whenever possible, and practice and teach arts, dance, and song to all those who want to learn. They must be graceful dancers, good singers and musicians, and have to know how to play, craft and repair musical instruments. These priests also train in swordplay, particularly in the use of Eilistraee's favorite weapon--the bastard sword-- and prefer to eschew the burden of a heavy armor and shields, trusting their agility and mobility to protect them in battle. Sword Dancers cherish Dancing Swords for their symbolic resonance with Eilistraee's portfolio; many aspire to own one, either by crafting it themselves or recovering one once lost to malice or misfortune.

Aside from the magic commonly known to clerics, Eilistraee grants to her Sword Dancers a few particular selected spells. They are tailored for the goal to assist and offer shelter to the drow who seek to embrace a different life, or reflect the nature of the goddess. The Sword Dancers can use their magic to directly commune with the Dark Maiden when in need of guidance for their mission, locate nearby drow and potential threats, create food and water in order to feed the hungry, and create paths of moonlight to lead allies and converts unharmed to safety. In rough situations, they can charm and calm eventual aggressors or alarmed people and, in the worst cases, conjure beams of moonlight and silvery magical missiles to fight their enemies. The Spiritual Weapon spell is also particularly popular among the Sword Dancers, and manifests itself as a dancing sword of moonlight.

Darksong Knights

The Darksong Knights are an order of elite warriors who serve as a bulwark between the followers of Eilistraee and the persecution of the zealot crusaders and the fiendish servants of Lolth. They employ a graceful, agile style of swordplay in battle, and receive training aimed to prepare them to face the horrific creatures of the lower planes. The Darksong Knights make a sacred oath, swearing to uphold the teachings of the Dark Maiden, and to tirelessly hunt the Spider Queen's handmaidens—the hideous yochlol—as well as all demons. Fiends caused the downfall of the drow in the ancient times, and no matter what tricks they use to hide their presence or corrupt mortals, the Darksong Knights will find them and give them no quarter. This order is particularly active in the southern regions of Faerun, the area once occupied by the dark elven empire of Ilythiir, where the remnants of the fiendish magic used by the ancient Sethomiir ruling clan still linger.¹⁹ While the order includes clerics, fighters, rangers and paladins of various Oaths, many paladins who join the Darksong Knight follow these tenets:

Tenets of the Darksong

Kindle the light: *Even in the deepest despair, when all seems lost, hope can still be found in all that is beautiful in life. Fight to protect that light, and bring it to all those who are lost in the dark.*

Break the chains: *Everyone should be free to choose what to be, their faith, to express themselves and forge their own path in life. Relentlessly oppose all those who would deny this right, tyrants and fearmongers alike.*

Nurture all beauty: *Life is meant to be celebrated and enjoyed; live yours as art, and spark wonder and passion wherever you go. Music and dance are to be spread, bringing joy and laughter to people, so that no moment is lost in the greyness of bore and melancholy. Remember that beauty can be found in the broken: treasure and nurture it, to make it bloom once again.*

¹⁹ After the Second Sundering, the Darksong Knights are still active, but they are currently rather thin on the ground.

Offer kindness: Aid all folks in need, of any race, strong and weak, kind and rude alike, no matter the personal cost. Only through empathy and compassion suffering can be defeated.

A rebirth for the Drow: All drow must be freed by the poison of the Spider Queen. Reach for the dark elves who suffer in her web and offer them a new beginning.

Banish the fiends: Fiends are the embodiment of all evil and suffering in the world. They are the responsible for the fall of the drow people. Seek and hunt them wherever they hide, and banish them with sword and light.

Silverhair Knights

The Silverhair Knights are an order of faithful of Eilistraee entirely dedicated to saving and redeeming the drow. Like the Darksong Knights, they embrace all Eilistraee's teachings, but focus on those regarding mercy and compassion. They take an oath to never willingly kill those who can be redeemed (all free-willed creatures), especially the drow, and regularly embark on missions to reach to their kin in the Underdark, and bring them to the light. The Silverhair Knights infiltrate in Lolthite settlements, and spend time carefully studying and observing, in order to find dark elves who need their help, who are growing resented or dissatisfied, or that are in life-or-death situations. These paladins approach the potential converts with caution, by taking many careful steps to make them feel as safe and comfortable as possible, and offer them the path to a life free of the endless strife and paranoia imposed by Lolth. The Silverhair Knights personally escort the drow to safety, and constantly offer their protection to all followers of Eilistraee, especially the new converts, in order to show that the life that the goddess wishes for her children is not a fairy tale, but a concrete possibility. Silverhair Knights can use lethal means in specific situations, but only if doing so means saving more lives. Even then, a quest for atonement is needed, given by clerics of Eilistraee. After the Second Sundering, Eilistraee herself often chooses to personally provide direct guidance to the Silverhair Knight.²⁰ This order is home to paladins who take the Oath of Redemption, or a variation tailored to reflect Eilistraee's teachings:

Tenets of the Silverhair Knights

Kindle the light: Even in the deepest despair, when all seems lost, hope can still be found in all that is beautiful in life. Fight to protect that light, and bring it to all those who are lost in the dark.

Break the chains: Everyone should be free to choose what to be, their faith, to express themselves and forge their own path in life. Relentlessly oppose all those who would deny this right, tyrants and fearmongers alike.

Nurture all beauty: Life is meant to be celebrated and enjoyed; live yours as art, and spark wonder and passion wherever you go. Music and dance are to be spread, bringing joy and laughter to people, so that no moment is lost in the greyness of bore and melancholy. Remember that beauty can be found in the broken: treasure and nurture it, to make it bloom once again.

Offer kindness: Aid all folks in need, of any race, strong and weak, kind and rude alike, no matter the personal cost. Only through empathy and compassion suffering can be defeated.

A rebirth for the Drow: All drow must be freed by the poison of the

Spider Queen. Reach for the dark elves who suffer in her web and offer them a new beginning.

Mercy: Evil isn't a monster that can be slain with the simple blade. The sword provides a needed protection, but evil is often the consequence of the pain harbored in the hearts of the people; the only way to truly defeat it passes through understanding, and healing. Never kill those who can be redeemed. There's strength in letting a life bloom and rise from their evil, because untold beauty can stem from an awakened soul.

The Silverhair Knight are also known as "Sin Eaters" because of a particular ritual that is known only to them, aimed to redeem an evil creature. The paladin must keep physical contact with the being that they want to redeem for several minutes, engaging in a battle of willpower. If the Silverhair Knight is successful, the creature feels the weight of all the suffering that they have inflicted in their life; the shock of the realization is so powerful that the creature will hardly go back to their cruel ways, while all the evil inflicted is cleansed by the faith of the Sin Eater. If the Silverhair Knight is not successful, the weight of all that pain is inflicted on their own being, draining their vitality and making them fall into a coma for one day. This ritual can be attempted once per week, can only be performed on the same creature once per year, and can prove fatal if unsuccessful. If the paladin dies during the ritual, they rise as a ghost with the same behavior as the recipient.

Eilistraeen Characters

While the specialized Sword Dancers are Eilistraee's own priestesses and her trusted agents, and clerics of the Life, Nature, and Light domain embrace different aspects of the goddess' identity, gaining powers related to them, the cause of the Dark Maiden is supported by a wide variety of heroes.

The goddess is a patroness of artists—especially dancers and musicians—so it's only natural that bards often worship her, seek her inspiration, and put their skills at her service. No matter what their specialization is, all bards will find the smile of Eilistraee, but those from the College of Swords feel especially drawn to the goddess (given that she is *the* dancer, and given her liking of swordplay).

The *teachings* of Eilistraee are a beautiful ideal, one that can easily light up a spark in the people's hearts, and strongly inspire brave souls. Paladins make oaths inspired by the Dark Maiden's ideals, centering their conviction on her ability to find and nurture beauty and light even in the deepest darkness, or on her compassion and faith that good can be found in everyone, and that there's strength in letting a life bloom and rise from their evil, because untold beauty can stem from an awakened soul. Oath of the Ancient paladins (whose tenets coincide with the teachings of Eilistraee herself) and Oath of Redemption paladins can often be found working for her cause. A paladin of Vengeance would find themselves at home among the Darksong Knights: relentless hunters of all things demonic--and especially Lolth's handmaidens-- exacting vengeance for the darkness that they brought upon the drow.

The followers of the Dark Maiden are known to constantly patrol the lands close to their settlements, in order to swiftly eradicate any threat, and save and provide succor to people who are lost, hungry, in danger, or caught in the bite of cold winters. Rangers are common among the adventurers who follow the Dark Maiden, both for the above-mentioned reason, and because their knowledge of the surface world is of great help to drow converts who need to learn how to survive and thrive in this new home. Monster Slayers and Hunters eagerly take part to *High Hunts* to protect the land from dangerous monsters, while Horizon Walkers can at times be seen within the ranks of the Darksong Knights, using their experience in fighting outsiders to help eradicate

²⁰ See: answer by Ed Greenwood

demons (and especially yochlol). Gloom Stalkers are treasured allies, given that their knowledge of places like the Underdark is invaluable in maintaining and expanding the tunnel network that the followers of the Dark Dancer use to lead drow converts to the surface. Of course, protection from Underdark monsters and the ability to find the right path in uncharted regions is also appreciated.

Given Eilistraee's closeness to nature, Druids can also feel her call. Members of the Circle of Dreams are bringers of joy and enchanted, magical beauty—they fit flawlessly among the faithful of Eilistraee. The fiercer druids of the Circle of the Moon can be stalwart protectors of the Dark Maiden's people, sharing the goddess' connection with the moon. They would be at home with other shapeshifters who choose to serve her.

Among sorcerers, some are blessed and touched by Eilistraee herself: these Divine Souls are powerful champions of all that she stands for. Warlocks can also be found in service to Eilistraee, blessed through pacts with Celestial servitors of the goddess, or—in rare cases—drawing from the fey magic that Eilistraee encloses within her as an elven goddess.

Wizards are not out of place among the ranks of the Moondancers. Drow wizards who abandon Lolth tend to be mostly disenfranchised drow males, who are aware of their potential and are tired to see it wasted in a society that did nothing but keep them down. Those among them who are power-hungry and want to gain status and positions of powers will likely seek Vhaeraun. However, those who are tired of the constant strife and intrigue, and simply seek to live far away from all that will likely find Eilistraee. Among her followers, they are free and encouraged to research and develop their magic to their heart's content. Wizards who specialize in schools of magic that give particular room to creativity, like Illusion or Transmutation are more common than others. Bladesingers are a perfect fit for the Dark Maiden's style, blending graceful dance, and lethal magic and swordplay. They are the arcane counterpart of the Sword Dancers, but it is difficult for a drow to learn such a style, given that it is a mainly elven style, and teaching it to a non-elf is a strict taboo. Nothing prevents an elven Bladesinger who has faith in Eilistraee from spreading it among their fellow wizards, even tho they would likely become a target for orthodox elves who would see it as a grave crime.

The unique skillset that Rogues bring to the table is especially useful to the followers of Eilistraee. The goddess isn't overly keen on using such methods, but neither she is adverse to it. Scouting, discerning threats and deceptions, gathering vital info, acting to anticipate the moves of the enemies—all of that is of extreme importance to communities and agents loyal to the Dark Maiden, as they have to watch their back both from Lolthite zealots and from the surface dwellers, and as every single step must be made with calculated awareness, to avoid danger for the Eilistraean people. For that reason, Masterminds, Scouts and Inquisitives are valuable additions, while Swashbucklers share the elegance, finesse, and flair of Eilistraee.

The Dark Maiden is about free-form expression more than rigid discipline, but even Monks can find their place in communities dedicated to her. Kensei monks see weapon-fighting as an art, and for that reason they easily find the guidance of Eilistraee—especially those among them who specialize in the sword and the bow.

Fighters are the backbone of the defense of most communities, and the followers of Eilistraee are no exception. Fighters make for excellent protectors, bodyguard for priestesses and priests, guardians of shrines

and temples, and—of course—great leaders when it comes to battle. Eilistraean fighters tend to specialize in the use of the sword, given that the Dark Maiden is the goddess of swordplay (among the other things), and tend to eschew heavy armor in favor of a more agile and graceful defense.

Barbarians who fight in service to Eilistraee usually draw their strength and rage from the connection with the spirits of the many heroes who gave their life to advance the cause of the Dark Maiden. They often follow the path of the Ancestral Guardian, but—in very rare cases— some Barbarians manage to channel the anger that burns in Eilistraee when her followers are harmed, or when she thinks about the evil inflicted to (and by) her people. They embrace the path of the Zealot, and turn such rage into wild displays of divine power.

Background: Secret Moondancer

The vast majority of drow were born and live in the depth of the Underdark, where the priestesses of the Spider Queen rule uncontrasted. Within their reach, the dogma of Lolth is the only way of life: every divergent or innovative idea, every other belief or faith is labeled as heretical, and drowned in the blood of those who dare to support or spread it. These persecutions lead to stagnation, and make very difficult for the drow to become aware of different faiths (let alone embrace them), but this doesn't stop the Dark Maiden from singing [her call](#) to all of them.

Some drow feel her loving touch, learning that there is a goddess of hope out there, one who cares about them and that will answer to their prayers. Choosing to live hidden in the very heart of Lolth's strength, some Sword Dancers strive to reach to these dark elves, to help them embrace Eilistraee, and find their way to a better place in the Lands of Light.

You are one of these drow, a Secret Moondancer. You felt the call of the Dark Dancer and chose to embrace what she stands for. You may have already fled to the surface, or be still living underground in a drow city²¹. Perhaps you are a noble or priestess who fell out of Lolth's favor, only to be saved from your rivals by a Sword Dancer, finding the opportunity of a new beginning. Or you could be a commoner who grew weary of his or her life, and found solace and hope in the embrace of Eilistraee; or yet a slave or prisoner rescued by the followers of the goddess. Alternatively, you can choose to be one of her clerics²², brave enough to risk your life to bring her light where few would dare. In either case, you live (or used to) in a drow city, dominated by Lolth, forced to act in utter secrecy and to hide your faith, in order to let it flourish.

Your safety is constantly on the line, endangering yourself and all you love, as to be caught is to be sentenced to death. You have to choose with extreme care when, where, and to whom you can bring knowledge of the Dark Maiden; and to be ever watchful of every detail around you and of those who might suspect of your heresy--a single misstep could bring to the worst. Despite all that, you still work to bring the hope that you have found to those who have not, and to teach children about Eilistraee, so that they may not have to grow without knowing what it is to be loved. Through your effort, the light of the Dark Maiden can shine even amidst the darkness of the Underdark.

However, the more you cleave to the goddess, the more the burden of the cruelty that permeates the life under the thumb of Lolth becomes heavier to carry. This may lead you to grow weary, scarred, somewhat cold in front of death and danger, or bitter with vengeance towards the priestesses of Lolth. Nonetheless, to face these hardships is a valuable lesson about the value of working together, of protecting each other, and of having someone that you can count on.

Your hope is to flee to a safe place along with all those you care for--or to bring the faith of Eilistraee to as many drow as possible and lead them to safety, if you are a Sword Dancer, or if this simply is your wish (not all drow who refuse Lolth want to leave the Underdark). You are not alone in this task, as the followers of Eilistraee offer their aid to refugees and outcasts. Over time, they have built networks of secret passages and (with the help of the magic of the goddess) [portals](#) leading to safe shrines. As a Secret Moondancer, you have been trusted with the knowledge of these passages, and with a tiny sword-pin or pendant to

²¹ I'm assuming the latter for simplicity in writing.

²² Drow clerics of Eilistraee are the most likely to choose the life of a Secret Moondancer.

be used as an identification token.

- **Skill proficiencies:** Insight and one between Athletics, Acrobatics, Persuasion, Deception, and Survival.
- **Tool proficiencies:** one musical instrument or one set of artisan tools of your choice.
- **Language:** Undercommon.
- **Equipment:** a musical instrument or one set of artisan tools of your choice, a set of common clothes, a symbol of Eilistraee, a sword-token, a pouch containing 10 gp.

Feature: Safe haven

As a Secret Moondancer, you can expect fellow followers and Sword Dancers of Eilistraee to help you in your adventures. You can receive free healing, food and shelter at shrines of the Dark Maiden²³ (you must provide the material components needed for the spells). Your companions may also be sheltered, but at the price of a small task assigned by the priestesses (it is usually labor, but can be another kind of service, if the DM wishes so). Sword Dancers will come to your help if you are near a shrine and call for support, but they will also try to preserve their own life. You have access to the knowledge of secret passages or portals that connect the area of the Underdark that you come from with shrines of Eilistraee. You may access to them through a tiny sword pin or pendant used as an identification token. Sword Dancers active near a given area will instruct you about secret passages or portals that can be found there, and will provide you with any information in their possess that is useful for the Dark Maiden's cause. You are allowed to use the [Moonspring](#).

Suggested characteristics

Below is a list of traits, bonds and flaws that Secret Moondancers are likely to have, and of ideals that many of them follow. Of course, they can also be replaced with characteristics of your own making.

Personality traits

Your personality was shaped and heavily influenced by all that you experienced, faced and endured. Your struggle as a Secret Moondancers has taught you much, but you find value in some habits from your former life.

d8 Personality Trait

1. I always try to accept the others simply for what they are, and to respect their choices (as long as they are not intended to bring harm).
2. I make treasure of all the bright moments that life brings me, and always try to bring a smile to people's faces, be they my friends or strangers.
3. My experience taught me to always help and care for those around me. No matter how dire the situation may be, no one that is counting on me will be left behind.
4. No matter how grim the situation may seem, I don't give up and nothing can shake my optimism.
5. I firmly believe that my actions are guided by the will of Eilistraee, and that even the most unlikely event can be a message from her.
6. I am ever watchful of my surroundings, and I never do anything without a plan. I always prepare a back-plan for when things go wrong.
7. I would never betray my friends, or reveal anything that could endanger them, not even under torture.
8. The time spent in the Underdark has filled me with a burning desire to see the world and make new experiences.

²³ Such shrines are however [rare](#)

Ideals

As a Secret Moondancer, your ideals are inspired by the teachings of Eilistraee (already described [here](#), and summarized below), and by the desire of bringing a positive change to your people.

d8 Ideal

1. **Freedom:** Everyone should be free to choose what to be, their faith, to express themselves and forge their own path in life. I will firmly oppose anyone who seeks to deny this right. (Chaotic)
 2. **Hope:** Even in the deepest despair, when all seems lost, one can still find hope in all that is beautiful in life. We must fight to protect that light, and bring it those who are lost in the dark. (Good)
 3. **Kindness:** We must try to help those in need, be it by offering food, shelter or protection, no matter what the personal cost. (Good)
 4. **Compassion:** There is strength in showing mercy and compassion, rather than ending a life. Even the darkest souls can find the strength to embrace redemption. (Good)
 5. **Beauty and Joy:** Life is meant to be celebrated and enjoyed. Song, dance and beauty are to be spread and nurtured, bringing joy and laughter to people, so that no moment is lost in the greyness of bore and melancholy. (Good)
 6. **Tolerance:** We must strive so that all races may live in harmony and peace, united against evil and suffering, and that all people may be accepted for what they are. (Good)
-
7. **Change:** We must work so that the old, bloody traditions are lost and forgotten. Only then the drow may build their place in the world, and Dark Maiden's dream come true. (Chaotic)
 8. **Faith:** I trust that Eilistraee will guide my actions. If I work hard, things will go well. (Lawful)

Bonds

You may feel particularly close to a priest or priestesses that rescued you and brought you the faith of the Dark Maiden (or, as a Sword Dancer, to your converts). You may have a family or children that you would protect at any cost, or perhaps someone you love was killed or captured by the followers of Lolth, and you have sworn to yourself that you will avenge (or rescue) them. The faith of Eilistraee is important to all Secret Moondancer, but you may feel particularly close to the goddess, finding strength in her presence.

d8 Bond

1. My family (or children, or loved ones) is the most precious thing to me.
2. My family or loved ones had to remain behind when I fled my city, but I will return to lead them to a better place.
3. I owe everything to a priestess that helped me when I needed it the most.
4. A deep bond has formed between me and one (or a group) of my converts. (Sword Dancers only)
5. Eilistraee has sung to me, giving me hope in my darkest time. I find strength in her love, and solace in knowing that she watches over all her people.
6. Someone I love was killed (or enslaved) by a priestess of Lolth (or a noble drow). I will do anything it takes to avenge (or rescue) them.
7. Everything I do is for the good of my people.
8. The faith of Lolth can only bring the drow to wither and self-destroy. I am sworn to eradicate the influence of the Spider Queen wherever it rears its ugly head.

Flaws

Your most glaring flaws are likely to be the effects of living for a long time in a Lolthite drow environment.

d8 Flaw

1. I can't help but be suspicious of everyone's actions. I am very slow to trust others.
2. Whenever doing something major, I worry too much about what could go wrong.
3. I work to follow the teachings of my goddess, but old habits and mindset are hard to shake off.
4. All that I have experienced has made me weary. Although I try to help those who are suffering, I often react coldly to their pain.
5. I can act recklessly when I think that I and my friends are danger.
6. I react aggressively to offense or threats, especially to those directed at my faith.
7. During my former life I was responsible of atrocious actions. I try to hide that from all whom I know.
8. I can hardly resist the temptation to join revelries and pleasurable events when the opportunity arises.



Art by: trungbui42

Current activities

²⁴During the late 1370s DR, Eilistraee and her followers took part in a battle against the rest of the Dark Seldarine for the future of the drow, and their church underwent a period of transformation. In 1375 the goddess became the [Masked Lady](#), taking Vhaeraun's (her brother) portfolio, and a number of his former Nightshadows and followers decided to join her cause. This led to a great change within her clergy, as former enemies had become allies (albeit uneasily) under the banner of a common cause, and united against the common enemy represented by Lolth. The collaboration also helped to bring a positive change in the [mindset](#) regarding gender roles, one that still has repercussions in the current, post-Second Sundering era.

In 1379 DR, [Qilué Veladorn](#)--the High Priestess of Eilistraee--was killed while the goddess was inhabiting her body. Great part of the divine power was dragged into the Weave with the priestess' soul (since she also was a Chosen of Mystra), and while this wasn't enough to slay the Masked Lady, it severely weakened her, preventing her from providing her magic to her followers for about a century. Eilistraee could only appear as a floating black mask surrounded by moonlight, and could only communicate and grant spell to priests and priestesses near her. This--together with the [fall](#) of the temple of the [Promenade](#) at the hand of Ghaunadan cultists--led to tragedy and upheaval among her followers, as many thought that she was no more, and as her state prevented her from significantly opposing her mother. *However, following the murder of Qilué, Eilistraee manifested to her priestesses to rekindle their hope, showing them that not all was lost and that their battle wasn't over yet. The information spread, and while the Sword Dancers worked to keep it secret from non-Eilistraeens (as they were vulnerable, being only able to sparsely count on their spells), many priests and priestesses became aware of it. Most of them chose to not abandon Eilistraee in this dark time, and kept working with her to bring more and more drow into her light. A number of Sword Dancers, encouraged by the goddess herself, received their spells by allied deities: mostly by Sehanine Moonbow, who could provide moon magic not unlike that received from the Dark Maiden (it was, in fact, her to teach moon magic to Eilistraee), but also by Corellon and Selune.*

Meanwhile (also in 1379 DR, shortly before Qilué's murder), the Eilistraean drow wizard Q'arlynd Melarn and a circle of other drow mages performed (with the blessing of the Dark Maiden, even though she would withdraw her guidance after the beginning of the spell) a High Magic²⁵ ritual to remove Corellon's curse from the followers of Eilistraee and from those (very rare) drow of "pure" Miyeritari lineage, reverting them to their former "dark elven" form (dusky skin and dark hair²⁶). Hundred (of the few thousand followers of Eilistraee) were transformed (and those souls who so wished were granted by Corellon a place in Arvandor--he also helped his then powerless daughter to maintain her divine realm), but most drow of the Dark Maiden kept their traits. It is not known what caused that*: as history shows, High Magic rituals often have unintended side effects--the very spell that led to the creation of the drow condemned the whole race, without making

²⁴ Any text marked between two asterisks contains lore "made up" by me, or speculations. So are all the sections regarding the current goals, although based on official events and characters (Leliana and Rowaan, Laeral, Jhelnae Horlbar, Karsel'lyn...)

²⁵ Q'arlynd and his coven could cast High Magic as drow, because they were guided by a dark elven Selu'kiira, an intelligent lore gem, capable of imparting knowledge to those who interact with it.

²⁶ Given the great affinity to (and mastery with) the Art that characterized this race (called "dark elves") during the time of Ilythiir and Miyeritar (before their curse at the hands of the Elven Court and the Seldarine), it could be represented in game by using the High elven stats, but replacing the racial bonus to INT with a bonus to CHA, and by making CHA (instead of INT) the casting stats for the racial cantrips. In this section, "drow" and "dark elves" won't be used as synonyms.

distinction between those who were innocent and those who committed atrocities during the Crown Wars.

Many moondancers who didn't undergo the transformation are sure that it was their will to stay as a drow to cause that. After all, while the lifting of a curse surely is a boon to many, undoing a ten thousand years-old spell has never been their or the Dark Maiden's goal (or the reason why the joined Eilistraee's dance), but to forge a path in the world for themselves and their people, accepted for what they are, as *drow* (in fact, the goddess herself chose to be drow, one of them, and in over ten thousand years, she never acted towards, or spoke about, changing the race of her people). To an individual who was born as such, "drow" isn't a curse, but simply their identity (and one that many are proud of). The followers of the Dark Maiden don't fight get rid of it (or to give to other drow the possibility to do so): they work to build their own place in the surface world that is their rightful home, to show that the drow can create, rather than only destroy. They want to bring a change and forge an actual future for their people. *To them, it is just natural that, if a magic of this kind has been blessed by Eilistraee, then the goddess' intent was to offer a choice to her people, an opportunity, rather than to force such a change.*

The Wailing Years: *After these events, a few followers of the Dark Maiden--especially those who underwent the transformation and that were unaware that the goddess had in fact survived--chose to move on with their lives. Other followers (and most Sword Dancers), as said, remained close to Eilistraee and endured the hardships of the fifteenth century with her.*

After the events of the 1370s DR, having seen the manifestation of her goddess, Leliana Vrinn--one of the few survivors of the Promenade, transformed drow, and former Protector of the--led the remaining priestesses of the temple to the Dancing Dell shrine in Ardeep (formerly only a dancing place, where Qilué used to lead the rituals in honor of Eilistraee), to set there a new home and base of operations. Leliana, a former Menzoberranyr who was brought into light of the Dark Dancer by Qilué herself, is a sweet and kind-hearted woman. Two are the things that move her in life: her goddess--in whom she has a deep and unshakeable faith--and her daughter Rowaan. Her wish to create a better life for Rowaan was one of the main motivations that led her to embrace the Dark Maiden, and with time she chose to fully dedicate herself to the goddess' cause. Leliana was grief-stricken as she saw Qilué being murdered, even more so because it was her belief that the goddess shared that fate. She was the first Sword Dancer to whom Eilistraee manifested after the tragic event, as her qualities convinced the goddess that she could be trusted to be one of the individuals that would lead her people through hard times.

Leliana magically contacted as many faithful as she could, including her daughter (high priestess of the [Misty Forest](#) shrine), and the Sword Dancers of the Wildwinds Coven in the High Forest, to let them know that Eilistraee had survived (helping her goddess to spread this knowledge), and to coordinate their efforts. They operated locally (especially with the [Moonspring portals](#) gone inactive, and with the Spellplague rendering magical travel harder), but kept in contact with each other, trying to lend help where it was needed. Some of the Nightshadows faithful to the Masked Lady also kept working alongside them, upon knowing what had actually happened.

*One of the tasks that those Sword Dancers who had remained drow had to perform--given to them by Eilistraee in her (then) only possible manifestation--was to find and rescue the dark elves in the Underdark, those drow and [Secret Moondancers](#) who were transformed while

underground. They were in great danger, both because of their lessened senses, and because they were now elves in the eyes of the Lolthite. The drow priestesses of the Dark Maiden used spells crafted to locate specific creatures to find as many of those elves as they could, and bring them to safety.*

The Sundering: During the 1480s DR and the [Second Sundering](#), when the Weave was made whole (with Mystra's return), and Eilistraee could take back the lost part of her divine essence, the goddess finally returned to her full power (and so did her brother Vhaeraun). During this time, she chose to personally manifest, in avatar form, to many of her people, joining their dances to let them know of her return, and to prepare them to the missions that needed to be undertaken in the years to come. Her Sword Dancers received spells from her once again, and all her followers, elated by the goddess' return to her full glory, spread (and are still spreading) the news, in order to rally as many as they could and make a new beginning possible.

So, the present times are a period of rebuilding and re-strengthening for the followers of the Dark Maiden (who is gaining new drow worshipers), but also one of new alliances and opportunities. As the temporary collaboration of the 1370s DR has taught, both worshipers of Eilistraee and Vhaeraun don't need to fight each other, and can cooperate to muster a greater strength in their battle for the drow. Both deities have embraced this lesson, and many of their followers have too. However, both sides remain very different in their ways and beliefs (their only shared goals are to bring the drow on the surface, stop their infighting, and make the coexistence with the other races possible), and this is a source of tensions--even conflicts--between the most vehement groups. That said, Vhaeraun has begun advocating his followers to behave as "good citizens" when it is profitable, and when it benefits their goal of establishing a drow presence on the surface, making the cooperation with the Eilistraeens easier to achieve.

Nonetheless, most Nightshadows who served the Masked Lady and have now returned to fight under Vhaeraun's banner, have a newfound respect of Eilistraee. Likewise, those Sword Dancers who cooperated with the Vhaeraunites currently acknowledge that his followers can be precious allies. Furthermore, those followers of Eilistraee who were changed into their non-cursed form and stayed loyal to the goddess, can now become emissaries, diplomats and spies for the Dark Dancer, as their new appearance allows them to freely move within other races' settlements. They also don't hesitate to remind people that they too were drow, and work to dispel prejudices and mistruths on the Dark Maiden (this likely was the goddess' intent when she blessed Q'arlynd's ritual).

Restoring the Promenade and the portal-network²⁷

Shortly before the end of the Sundering, Eilistraee personally appeared to Leliana Vrinn and the Sword Dancers of Ardeep with a new task of vital importance: the restoration of the Moonspring portals connecting the shrines of the Dark Maiden, of the fallen temple of the Promenade where they converge, and of the Eilistraeean-controlled portals leading to the Underdark. The magic to restore such portals would be provided by the goddess, by various means. One of them was a powerful artifact that she created as a gift to her children: a gorgeous harp imbued with her magic, named *Moon Maiden's Song*.

The magic of Eilistraee transported Leliana and the other Sword Dancers near the ruined caverns of the Promenade (through a web of ethereal moonlight leading to its location). There they set a camp, and started to

clean the place from the rubble formed during the siege of the temple and during the Spellplague. Some Nightshadows of Vhaeraun, seeing value in the portals converging on the temple, decided to offer their cooperation to the Eilistraeens.

The Promenade, Skullport and Waterdeep

Upon reaching the Promenade, the followers of Eilistraee were met with an unpleasant surprise. They weren't the only group re-settling in that area of the [Undermountain](#), as the near (south-west) [Skullport](#) was far from being abandoned. After the explorer Miriam Sequora had brought news of mithral veins and Netherese artifacts buried in the ruins of the city²⁸, many merchants, organizations and even people desperate for riches enough to seek them down there (now called "skuldiggers") found a new home in the fallen Port of Shadow. When the drow started their work at the Promenade, power groups had already formed within the city, mostly criminal bands and slavers obeying to no law except that of the Skulls²⁹, and more were coming to make use of this free zone for their trade.

New Skullport: Those groups represented a threat to the followers of Eilistraee, as the Promenade no longer had its former defenses, and slavers or other enemies of the Dark Maiden could use that weakness against the drow (as it had happened in the past, when the constant attacks on the Eilistraeens led Qilué to order the edification of the temple complex and of permanent defenses). During the 1480s DR, while the Weave was being restored, upon learning of the "new" Skullport, the [Zhentarim](#) seized the opportunity to control a big share of the black market that was (re)forming there. The organization, led by the last [Manshooon](#) clone, was working to gain back the influence that they had lost after their conflict with the Shadovar and the infighting between the Cyricist and Banite factions of the group. Seeking to expand the Black Network, they brought their influence to Skullport by reactivating the magical locks that allowed ships from the surface to easily access to the South Seacaves of the Port of Shadow--and vice versa (locks dating to the Sargauth enclave of Netheril, that the Spellplague had shut down, but not destroyed, much like Karsus' Folly did). They assumed the control of a vital resource, that had been the reason for the prosperity of Skullport in the past. While this did (and does) not sit well with the slavers of the Reforged Iron Ring consortium and with the merchants (and pirates) of the Mandible, the presence of the Skulls and their endorsing the reactivation of the locks, is enough to keep all-out conflicts from happening. Within a couple years, the trade was picking up pace in Skullport, as slavers and smugglers could once again find there the ideal free area to maximize their profit. Among these there were the Lolthite drow of the merchant clans, organizations (like [Bregan d'Aerthe](#)), and noble houses from the cities of Karsoluthiyl and Menzoberranzan, attracted both by the perspective of trade and by the mineral resources supposedly buried in the Port of Shadow. The [Xanathar's](#) guild had also re-established a presence in Skullport. The dragonborn Draak--the guild slavemaster--was their representative

28 The cavern that hosted Skullport is supported by an old, Mythal-like [Netherese](#) dweomer called "the Mantle". The [Spellplague](#) apparently destroyed the delicate magic (and part of Skullport with it), but some of it has survived, infused in the fabric of the cavern.

29 The Mantle was born as an experiment devised by the mages of the Sargauth enclave of Netheril, to create magic capable of imitating an elven [Mythal](#). When [Karsus' Folly](#) struck and caused the fall of Netheril, most of the netherese inhabiting the cavern were killed, except 13 of the archmages involved in the project, who were instead absorbed into the Mantle and turned into disembodied Skulls bound to it. The Skulls' main goal (that they keep secret) is that to find a way to free themselves from such bonds, and they have found that it can be done by feeding powerful magic and spellcasters to the Mantle, or by turning powerful spellcasters into creatures capable of turning other beings into sustenance for it. For this reason the Skulls welcome and encourage influx of new people into Skullport, and act against any "disturbance" (like conflicts between gangs) that could drive them away.

27 See [here](#)

there, tasked with the overseeing of the slave pens, stipulating contracts, and making sure that no interference would disrupt the guild's trade.

This was the situation found by the priestesses and priests of Eilistraee when they reached the Promenade. While working to restore their temple, they kept a low profile, to avoid becoming target of aggressions. They observed Skullport from the shadows, to understand any danger that the city could represent for them and for the above Waterdeep.

Upon learning that [Laeral Silverhand](#), sister of Qilué and friend of the Eilistraeens, had reappeared and become Open Lord of Waterdeep, Leliana decided to contact her to renew their friendship and explain the new situation. Laeral accepted the offer of the dark elf, both in honor of her sister and of the friendship between Mystra and Eilistraee (one born because of Qilué herself, shared chosen of the two, and because of Mystra's goal to nurture magic wherever it is found, including creatures of magic like the drow). The Chosen of Mystra would provide her with support and resources to rebuild (and protect) the Promenade. In return, the drow would act as Laeral's eyes and ears in Skullport (since, as Open Lord, it would be hard for her to maintain her second identity of Irusyl Enareth, which she had used to spy on the city in the past). Laeral also sponsored a renewed alliance between the reformed Harpers and the followers of Eilistraee (at least near Waterdeep).

Current activities: The Sword Dancers (and, as said, some Nightshadows with them) are currently resettling in the Promenade, uncovering parts the temple as the rubble is removed. The drow have freed the tunnels leading to the entrance from the Sargauth river, the central cavern (including the life-size statue of Eilistraee and the Moonspring), and most of the remaining [structure](#).

Following up on their pact with Laeral, the drow are establishing regular patrols and defenses, while warily watching over Skullport. They have a particular interest in the slavers that trade in the city and--as their purpose also is to maintain peace between the drow and other races--in the followers of Lolth that are trying to gain a presence there. When possible, they also take action by freeing slaves, and leading them to the surface through active portals, or through the magic of the [Grand Chorus](#) (although they currently lack the strength to sponsor full raids against the slavers like they did in the past). Gathering info on the slavers' activities is not an easy task either, as they take various measures to prevent their enemies from getting a hold of vital intelligence (for example, by investigating on potential buyers to avoid problems, so working undercover may prove very risky for the Eilistraeens).

The followers of the Dark Maiden closely spy on the drow caravans that come to Skullport, always watchful of any activity that might prove a threat to the Promenade and the surface dwellers (acting to thwart it if needed), or of news and relevant rumors coming from the drow cities, to plan the actions that need to be taken in the other regions of Faerun (for example, the survivors of a fallen noble house are refugees that may be saved from extermination and brought away from Lolth. Voices of an impending surface raid could help the moondancers to intercept it).

While the Eilistraeens watch over the activities of the drow merchants coming to Skullport, they also try to forge alliances with those among them who are pragmatic enough to see the benefits of it (and that don't deal in slavery or related activities). With the help of the allied Nightshadows, the followers of Eilistraee offer extra protection, safe warehouses within the caverns of their domain, quick travel to the surface (through their moon magic, or through the Moonspring), and

sponsorship to the drow merchants who deal with them, also encouraging them (and offering the possibility) to trade with the surface. Like they did in the past, they also use these opportunities of contact with their kin to try to lure them into the embrace of the Dark Maiden (although they know better than pressing their ideals, preferring to let the drow understand by themselves the joy—and advantages—of choosing a new life).

The drow of the temple often try to find ways to act in the city without any chance for their enemies to see their hand behind the happenings. So, some skulldiggers who come near the temple looking for buried treasures, are proposed to inform the Eilistraeens of any remarkable news in Skullport, in exchange of a solid reward (usually in the form of gems that Qilué used as payment in the past, and that have been retrieved during the restoration of the temple). Likewise, adventurers or explorers of the Undermountain who find their way to the Promenade (or who are rescued by the drow during their patrols) are treated like they were in the past: they are healed if needed and provided with shelter (or with transport to the surface), and are often offered tasks by the Sword Dancers in exchange of proper payment. The Eilistraeens are very cautious in trusting them with important tasks, but with time a friendly relationship may form between the drow and some adventurers, who might become steady agents. Those who do are given tiny magical sword pins or pendants that they can use to contact the Eilistraeens in case of necessity, to identify themselves as allies in shrines, or call for help (which usually comes at the price of a further task for the followers of the Dark Maiden, either in Skullport or where needed).

Other dangers: A number of followers of Lolth have been drawn to Skullport not only by the promise of riches, but also on behalf of their goddess. The Spider Queen has in fact "spoken" to some priestesses, making known that the drow (and dark elven) followers of her two children must be hunted and stopped ruthlessly, to prevent their heresy from spreading. Some of such priestesses and their lackeys in the Port of Shadow are preparing to strike at the Promenade. The drow of Eilistraee suspect of such a threat and are ever alert, but they don't know the entity of the danger yet.

On the other hand, some Nightshadows are also interested in establishing a presence in Skullport, to make use of the trade opportunities offered by the city, and grab a share of the mithral that has recently been found in the area. This is a source of tensions with the followers of Eilistraee, who--like said--also work to promote drow trade, but are going to closely observe the Vhaeraunites, as they have a reputation of trading in slavery and assassination (among the other things).

Agents and contacts: Currently, the most active agents of the Promenade in Skullport are Phaere and Nym Yauntyrr, two young drow, sister and brother, born in the first half of the fourteenth century DR. They became orphans after the destruction of House Yauntyrr in Eryndlyn (1362 DR), forced to fend off for themselves until they were found by a Secret Moondancer, who brought them to the near shrine in the Misty Forest. There, Phaere and Nym were raised and trained by the Sword Dancers (when Leliana was still the high priestess of the shrine). The Eilistraeens showed them kindness and tried their best to make them feel part of a family, but the two siblings (while grateful and attached to the drow of the shrine) have always preferred to be somewhat set apart from the others. They could only count on each other in the time that they spent as orphans in Eryndlyn, and as a consequence they have become very close (and would go any length to protect each other). The two have learned to work as a team, and have

developed personal gestures, body language and a very keen reciprocal understanding that allow them to achieve near perfect coordination. Both siblings have a very agile body, and are competent scouts and spies.

They are loyal to the other Eilistraean drow, and would never betray them, or reveal anything that could endanger them, not even under torture. They are also empathetic towards those who have suffered (or are suffering), and will lend a helping hand to people in need, when and how they can. Brother and sister share a consuming hatred towards tyrants, oppressors—including Lolth and her fanatics—and slavers (as the childhood memories and fear of drow hunters looking for slaves to sell, or simply to inflict misery on the remaining Yautnyrr, are still vivid in their minds).

Phaere and Nym have a strong faith in Eilistraee and her cause, although they truly embraced her only after she (briefly) took Vhaeraun's portfolio and became the Masked Lady. While they hold the hope and light of the Dark Dancer close to their hearts, both siblings can find valuable teachings in Vhaeraun's *modus operandi*, as they think that without a violent rebellion within the drow society, the change that Eilistraee is trying to bring will never happen. When she became the Masked Lady, they were convinced that the goddess and her brother had chosen to join forces, and both see the recent events as the confirmation of their belief. Currently, Phaere and Nym (both still drow) are devoted to Eilistraee and Vhaeraun, trying to balance the goals of peace and harmony of the Dark Maiden, with the pragmatism (and sometimes ruthlessness) that—as the Masked Lord teaches—is needed to achieve a just goal and to protect the drow people. When asked, they didn't hesitate to answer Leliana's call and to join her quest to restore the Promenade.

Phaere is a daredevil, exuberant and fun-loving drow lady, with a dark and rather twisted sense of humor. She is charismatic, and has no qualms about using every tool at her disposal—including her looks and charm—to accomplish her task or achieve a goal (although she wouldn't come to the point of hurting innocents). She is a kind person, but can be vindictive, even somewhat sadistic, towards those who have harmed her or someone that she holds dear. The drow greatly enjoys hunting, and is really good at it: she delights in the chase, or in turning an eventual hunter into her prey, and rarely holds back when pursuing a target—especially if it is for revenge. In combat, Phaere relies on her speed as a defense (having received training as a Sword Dancer, she is a good dancer and acrobat, with quick reflexes), and her main weapons are the longsword and the throwing knives. She has received a solid training in divine magic, and has an innate affinity to the arcane: her favorite spells are those that allow her to teleport short distances, enthrall other people (or probe their minds), conceal herself and her traces, and enhance her speed and perception.

Nym is a friendly (but distrusting), clever and witty-tongued drow. He shares a bit of his sister's vivacity and love for fun, and finds particular enjoyment in acting and wordplay. Nym is also efficient and calculating. Carefully crafted plans are of the essence for him—he never takes risks, as he always tries to foresee the possible ramifications of a plan, and how his enemies could react to it. He constantly observes his surroundings and the people around him, and has a natural talent for reading their intentions. Nym is merciful, and avoids lethal methods unless absolutely needed, or unless those must be employed to not compromise the safety of the followers of Eilistraee. In battle, he can fight very well in melee, but prefers to strike from the dark or from afar, if possible. His favorite weapons are the spear and the glaive, but both are rather unwieldy and draw too much attention for his current task. In

Skullport he prefers to rely on a combination of rapier and main-gauche that allows him to strike and parry very quickly and with great precision. He always carries a concealed hand crossbow and a few poisoned quarrels (drow sleep poison), for when the situation turns badly. Recently, Nym has started to train as a Sword Dancer.

When in Skullport, Nym and Phaere can often be found in *Crookspar Parlor*³⁰ or in *The High Tide*³¹. They have contacts with, and regularly report to Laeral's Harpers.

The followers of Eilistraee are not without allies within Skullport. Moriana Duskwalker, a former moon elf pirate, has settled in the Port of Shadow with the intention of making the city a better place. While this may seem rather naïve, the elf has already made her name known (and respected, at least among the people of the Dredge³² and among the former slaves) through bold actions against the slavers of the Iron Ring, and even raids to steal goods from mercantile ships, to be distributed to those who need them the most. Leliana Vrinn and other dark elves of the Promenade have contacted Moriana, to establish an alliance with her and her supporters. After having decided to cautiously accept the offer (allies were useful to her, given the influx of new power groups in Skullport), Moriana was surprised to learn that the dark elves worked with the drow, had used to be drow themselves, and served a drow goddess. She was skeptical at first, but has learned much about the Eilistraeans, and now acknowledges their ways. Currently, Moriana is in good relationships with the Promenade, and her band is known to exchange favors and information—and sometimes cooperate—with the followers of the Dark Maiden (and she is a welcome guest to the temple).

Waterdeep and Ardeep: After Leliana and a number of Eilistraeans and Nightshadows moved to the Promenade, the shrine in Ardeep (the *Dancing Dell*) hasn't been abandoned. Some Sword Dancers still continue the work of the Dark Maiden there, on the surface. It is also a place of gathering for their dances, and a refuge for the drow of the Promenade that have to work on the surface for prolonged times. A number of dark elves and drow followers of Eilistraee that live in the Ardeep area have found a home in Waterdeep, blending in with the inhabitants and merchants of the city, but always seeking useful intelligence for the work of the Dark Maiden and to help out their fellow drow. Many also act as agents for Laeral and for the Harpers in the area of Waterdeep (and in other regions with Eilistraean presence, it is not unusual for the Sword Dancers to be in contact—or sometimes work—with the Harpers too).

Recently³³, Eilistraee has personally appeared near Waterdeep, dancing in the moonlight just a bowshot from the walls of the city (up to the road to Amphail), witnessed by many Waterdhavians. Many of her drow followers are aware of that, and see such a manifestation as a sign of the will of their goddess. In fact, following that event, Waterdeep has become the destination of the travels of many devout worshipers of Dark Dancer, a large numbers of which can be now found in the city. In part due to Eilistraee's personal appearance, in part due to the cosmopolitan nature of the City of Splendors, the drow weren't driven away, and some business are even treating the unusual influx of dark elves as a chance to make some extra coin (for example, some festhalls are organizing shows aimed to meet the tastes of the Eilistraean, with courtesans painting their skin black, and wearing false pointed ears and

30 A gambling house that also serves as a "relax", no-conflict zone

31 The brewery of the city

32 The lowest level of Skullport, inhabited by the city's poorest.

33 During 1491 DR, the "current year". Note that this paragraph and the one that follows are canon, info taken from Ed Greenwood's novel *Death Masks*

silver wigs, to make themselves look as drow).

The followers of Eilistraee in Waterdeep are working to build a temple to the goddess there. They are seeking the patronage and sponsorship of noble families, and of the Harpers, with the intention of buying a block of buildings (in the Field Ward), and then demolish it. In place of the rubble, they want to sculpt a hill, and then create a small forest on top of it, to be used as a dancing glade by the moondancers in the City of Splendor (whatever their race happens to be). Most Waterdhavians are aware of those events, and many of them are surprised, to say the least, by what they have learned, but the followers of Eilistraee have already gained relevant support. For example, Remallia Haventree—noble moon elf, and Harper councilor in Waterdeep—was happy to grant her sponsorship to the drow.

This endeavour is of great importance to Eilistraee and her followers, as a temple in a city like Waterdeep could lead to a renaissance for the faith and its goals. It could grant more visibility to the Eilistraeens (even attract more people to faith, and its life-celebrating nature), and dispel the misconceptions about the moondancers, making the surface dwellers understand what they actually stand for, and work to achieve.

The Portals

During the restoration of the temple, the followers of Eilistraee (with the cooperation of the Sword Dancers of the various shrines) have reactivated the [Moonspring](#) within the Promenade, in order to be able to offer safe transport to the surface for drow converts and refugees, and to have a base of operations that allows to easily reach different areas of Faerun. They are also working to restore other portals created through the magic of the Dark Maiden by the Sword Dancers of the ages past, and that became part of the Eilistraeen network connecting their shrines with the Underdark. The restored portals are also newly keyed, so that non-evil Vhaerunites who serve the cause shared by the Dark Maiden and the Masked Lord can use them. The portals connecting the Promenade with the active shrines of Eilistraee through the Moonspring (like that linked with the Misty Forest shrine) have been their main focus for the first months, to ease the cooperation between the various covens of Sword Dancers. The other portals, leading to the Underdark, can be found through the magic of *Moon Maiden's Song* and divination dweomers that rely on the help of the goddess, but they can only be restored if the magic of the Dark Maiden (either through her artifact, or channeled through a priestess or priest) touches both their ends. For this reason, their position makes many portals difficult to reach and maintain (some are even located within drow cities).

The portal in Menzoberranzan: Groups of Secret Moondancers and Nightshadows are working towards said goal, but it's proving to be a hard task. An example is the [portal](#) in Menzoberranzan, located near an abandoned warehouse in proximity to the outer wall, leading to a glade within the High Forest (currently guarded by a few Eilistraeens affiliated with the Sword Dancers of the Wildwinds Coven).

The portal has been recently restored by Jhelnae Horlbar, a priestess of the Dark Maiden. Before the Spellplague, she used to hold the position of First Priestess of house Horlbar. In truth, she worked as a [Secret Moondancer](#) for Eilistraee, using her position and resources (including food and other necessary goods, since House Horlbar had a prosperous agricultural activity) to lead as many drow as she could to embrace the faith of the Dark Maiden. In the 1370s DR, Jhelnae's real allegiance was unveiled, but when her hunters made their move, she had already become aware of the danger. As an apostate within a drow house, she took many measures to ensure that such a situation, a very concrete possibility, wouldn't lead to the end (such as secret means of

communication, other Secret Moondancers or converts who blended in the "free drow" population and acted as spies, or even mercenaries, like Bregan d'Aerthe, payed to do so). Jhelnae acted swiftly, gathering any converts that were waiting to be led to the Lands of Light and using the portal to escape Menzoberranzan³⁴.

Once arrived in the High Forest, the former First Priestess and her converts were retrieved and sheltered by the Sword Dancers of the Wildwinds Coven, whom they then joined. After the 1379 DR and the Spellplague, Jhelnae didn't accept the transformation into dark elf, and—after receiving knowledge of the state of Eilistraee—she and the Coven kept working for the cause of the goddess. After Eilistraee's return, Jhelnae and the Sword Dancers were informed by Leliana Vrinn of the new will of the Dark Maiden, and of the task of restoring the portal network vital for their work. Although reluctant of being surrounded once again by the cruelty and hate of most Menzoberranyr, Jhelnae has decided that it is her duty to return to the city to bring a way to safety to all the drow who need it. The priestess and a group of six drow Sword Dancers (4 females and 2 males) have volunteered to become Secret Moondancers within the City of Spiders, and restore the Eilistraeen portal there.

All the drow are converts from various Lolthite cities, as knowing the etiquette, how to behave in such a context, and how to pose as a follower of the Spider Queen, is of the essence for the mission that they have undertaken. Posing as a band of actors, dancers and musicians (and relying on their actual skill in such arts), Jhelnae and her group traveled to Menzoberranzan, bringing along a caravan loaded with some goods from the surface (mostly food, preserved by magical means) both for eventual trade and for their own needs. For the first few days, they offered entertainment at the Bazaar, both in the form of customary drow plays (which Jhelnae knows very well), and hypnotic acrobatic dances, with remarkable success. During that time, they located the abandoned, ruined warehouse (in the Eastmyr³⁵) that contained the inactive portal, and set out to renovate it and turn it into a theater.

"The Spider and the Moon": Their plan is to use the activity as a cover for their real purpose, observing the drow and learning who among them can be led away from Lolth, or is in a dire situation and in need of the Sword Dancers' help (like drow orphans). The theater, named "*The Spider and the Moon*" has not been fully restored yet, but it is currently active, and offers a wide variety of entertainment: they range from the traditional drow plays based on slapstick comedy and on the use of striking masks and costumes, to exotic and wild dances (sometimes inspired by Eilistraeen rituals), to acrobatic shows, to concerts, or unique plays written by the Sword Dancers themselves. The theater follows the same rules of the Drinking Pits: the drow can enjoy themselves as they wish, but no weapons are allowed inside.

The place is gaining popularity within the city, and the Eilistraeens have already started to bring some drow to the surface (and to expand their activity, offering wines and alcoholic beverages—like in a drinking pit—in the hope of gathering intelligence useful to their mission), but they have

34 After Jhelnae's heresy was made public, house Horlbar was subject of great suspicion and shame, as all houses with an apostate First Priestess would be. Shortly after that episode, House Tuin Tarl tried to wipe the Horlbar, but the latter ultimately emerged victorious with the help of house Kenafin (a close ally), and managed to extinguish the Tuin Tarl instead. The two houses then joined forces and took the name of Melarn, in honor of (the now slain) Halisstra Melarn (the murderer of Qilué), who became Lolth's champion and was tasked with the duty of eradicating heresy wherever it emerged. Both houses were in fact determined to show a zealous (even for drow standards) adherence to the way of Lolth, and hunt apostates in Menzoberranzan. In the present time they are vehement inquisitors, convinced that many heretics hide within Menzoberranzan and other drow cities, and are on a crusade to eradicate them all.

35 The slums of Menzoberranzan

to be extremely careful. As said, with the return of Eilistraee and Vhaeraun (and of the other drow gods), Lolth has made known to her priestesses that they must actively work to destroy all those who defy her and practice heresy. The inquisitors of the Arach Tnilith and of House Melarn are currently acting with unprecedented zeal, and a single mistake could be fatal. In particular, Zhindia Melarn--matron mother of the house--has never forgiven her cousin Jhelnae (whom she used to admire) for the heresy, and is still bent on hunting and executing her. Jhelnae always observes extra caution—she has learned to use magical disguises to alter her facial features and make them hardly identifiable, and often wears masks both while performing and as a distinguishing trait of the persona that she is building. When they have the possibility, the drow of *"The Spider and the Moon"* also save and set free prisoners or slaves (like those that are let go in the city, only to be hunted and slain by the nobles, or by students of the academy, in their "Dark Hunts").

The Sword Dancers are currently cooperating with some followers of Vhaeraun in the City of Spiders. In fact, some Nightshadows have directed their attention towards Menzoberranzan, and in particular towards the Jaezred Chaulssin (a group of assassins affiliated with the church of the Masked Lord), sharing their goal of freeing the drow from Lolth by shattering the cage-society that she has built for them. The Nightshadows and the Jaezred Chaulssin are currently working together, but the former also pass vital information and warnings to Jhelnae and the Sword Dancers of Eilistraee (sometimes they may also attempt to "silence" a priestess of Lolth, if they come too close to find the truth about the Eilistraean theater), in honor of the recent friendship between their two deities. In exchange, the followers of the Dark Maiden let some trusted Vhaerunites use their portal to easily travel to the surface, and provide healing and food (and, in certain situations, shelter and support).

The Singing Swords

During the restoration of the Promenade, the drow uncovered some of the lost *Singing Swords*, now resonating again with the song of the Dark Maiden. Many of these 20 precious holy relics, crafted by the goddess herself, were lost after the siege of the Promenade, kept intact and keen by their enchantment. While a number is still within the ruins of the temple, many were looted by the skulkers of near Skullport (before the Spellplague hit) and smuggled within the city, or sold outside it. So, some swords may be lying in the ruins of old Skullport, beneath the buildings of the new city, and others may have been sold in other places of Faerun. Now that the swords have gained back their magic, Leliana (who still owns one of the relics) has decided to found the order of the *Protectors of the Song* once again, a group of Eilistraeans dedicated (among their other duties as followers of the Dark Maiden) to tracking and reacquiring the lost blades. They will try to purchase (through riches or services) any enchanted sword that is currently owned by collectors, merchants, nobles (and so on), but they see the blades as something sacred and rightfully belonging to their faith. Some of them can be very zealous when it comes to that, and are not above theft to recover the relics for their rightful use (if negotiations fail).

In Skullport, the Protectors of the Song are particularly wary of the activities of a group of mad spellcasters that call themselves "the Fray". They serve the Fourteenth Skull³⁶, and wander Skullport looking for

36 The fourteenth Skull is the result of the Spellplague's influence on the Rag Mage. In the past, working to find a way to regain their freedom from the mantle, the Skulls turned some powerful spellcasters into beings capable of drawing the life force of other creatures and feed it to the mantle. Among these there was a powerful drow archmage, who was driven insane by the magic of the Skulls that transformed him. The Spellplague acted on him not unlike Karsus' Folly did on the mages of Sargauth, as he too was absorbed into the Mantle, becoming one of the Skulls.

magic items (and sometimes living creature of magical power) to feed to the Mantle. The Eilistraeans work both to avoid that any Singing Sword lost in Skullport is destroyed in such a way, and that innocents are ruthlessly sacrificed.

Rhymanthiin

In 1374 DR, a large coven formed by some of the most capable spellcasters of Faerun, performed a High Magic ritual of immense power, to bring into life a reconstruction of the ancient Miyeritari dark elven city of Faer'tel'miir, named the City of Hope. The spell required a tremendous amount of magical energy, included that generated by the willing sacrifice of *Khelben Blackstaff Arunsun* and of Ualair the Silent, and that provided by the Miyeritari sharns³⁷ (who included three former grand mages--T'karon, Hamra and Alunor--and about eighty other citizens of the dark elven realm). Through the power of the spell, the High Moor (what remained of Miyeritar) was purified by the magic that contaminated its lands, and the oily, black "skins" of many of the Sharns were molded to recreate the city. Those who shed their skin returned to their original elven form (although they were affected by Corellon's curse and became drow—and accepted to be turned back into dark elves in 1379 DR); other sharns preferred to remain as such, both in order to not be cursed and because they intended to protect the city, for those with malice in their hearts would not find their way there. The purpose of Rhymanthiin was that to become a flourishing center of magic and knowledge of the Realms, where people of any race would be welcome to learn and find shelter.

The Dark Maiden's dream: Currently, Eilistraee and her moondancers have a very ambitious plan for the City of Hope. It is the legacy of a kingdom whose people the Dark Maiden used to cherish and protect, but she wants it to become much more. In her eyes, Rhymanthiin is the first stone of a restored Miyeritar: a new beginning for all drow and dark elves, a safe haven where they could finally be free to build a future of prosperity--and where all those that share her ideal of harmony and cooperation among all races would be welcomed and accepted. It is her people's place in the world that she has been working to forge for millennia.

After the ritual that lifted Corellon's curse from many of her followers, Eilistraee--in her mask form--appeared (separately) to both Rowaan Vrinn, high priestess of the *Misty Forest* shrine³⁸, and Q'arlynd Melarn, talking to them of a place that would shelter her faithful in the dark century that was to come. Following the guidance of the goddess (whose instructions steered them away from danger), Q'arlynd--along with the other mages who had taken part to the spell--, and Rowaan--accompanied by some priestesses of her shrine--traveled through the High Moor, until the moorland became more and more verdant, and they finally saw the tall, dwarven-like sentinel towers and walls delimiting Rhymanthiin itself. As they drew closer, they marveled at the sight of many other dark-hued buildings, of all sizes and styles, in perfect harmony: dwarven, human, elven, and even duplicates of the residences of the mages who had participated to the ritual (like a

37 The Sharn, or Phaorn'Quessir ("transformed people"), were originally dark elves of Miyeritar. When the *Dark Disaster* was unleashed on their kingdom, as the situation seemed hopeless, three of their grand mages devised a way to transform themselves (and some willing citizens) into "Sharn" to endure the disaster and work to preserve and restore their culture. With time, more and more souls of great mages of fallen civilizations (including the humans of Netheril) joined the sharn for the same purpose. They formed a unique mind of many individuals (each could feel the thoughts of the others) capable of fragmenting back in its components. The Sharns are huge, amorphous and have oily black skin. Their trunks connect three eel-like, eyeless heads. The sharns are able to meld into pools of black liquid: the described individual bodies originate from those, and meld back into them once their duty is completed.

38 Located on the western border of the High Moor

duplicate of the Blackstaff tower of Waterdeep). The city itself was a symbol of the unity of all people, the same that Eilistraee sought.

The followers of the Dark Maiden were welcomed by the three grand mages, and by the Miyeritari sharns turned dark elves, who explained the origin and purpose of Rhymanthiin (and who were in turn briefed on the recent happenings and the state of the goddess). Q'arlynd and the other wizards settled in the city, where they were granted full access to immense magical knowledge of Miyeritar stored there. Under the guidance of the high mages of the past, they became pioneers in rediscovering an ancient art, one that flourished and reached its peak in Miyeritar (and Aryvandaar). With their work, High Magic--a defining and essential trait of *all* elven cultures--is slowly returning to the followers of the Dark Maiden, drow and dark elves alike, as more and more of them find a home in Rhymanthiin (currently led there by the work of Rowaan, after the return of the Dark Maiden--see below).

Rowaan's plan: On the other hand, Rowaan and her fellow Sword Dancers immediately understood why Eilistraee wanted them to find the City of Hope. They made her dream their own, and started working to make Rhymanthiin a welcoming place for all drow seeking to leave the evil of Lolth behind, for the dark elves, and for anyone willing to join them.

Their main concern was (and is) finding a way to allow safe travels to Rhymanthiin. The city is deep in the High Moor, a monster-infested land littered with ruins, which makes traveling there a hard and dangerous feat. Rowaan's initial thought was to establish a portal between the city and her shrine in the Misty Forest, but the Sharns refused to allow that. Given the powerful enemies of the dark elves and of the Eilistraeen drow, a portal could represent a way for them to find out about the secret location of Rhymanthiin and assault it, rendering the work and sacrifice of those who had created it vane (even more so because the city's best defense was--and is--secrecy, as it had--and has--a very small population. It wouldn't be able to withstand a massive siege). Rowaan and the Sword Dancers accepted this decision, but they didn't give up on their goal. In the Spellplague era they learned to travel through the Moor, escorting refugees to the city, but it was difficult to forge safe paths in such a dangerous land, and the travels became soon impractical and too risky.

For that reason, before the beginning of the Sundering, the Sword Dancers of the Misty Forest and some dark elven mages began to work on a safe, secret net of tunnels in the Underdark, connecting the shrine to the City of Hope. Their work is still continuing, and it is a hard task, as they have to make sure that no enemy of the dark elves could casually follow the path to the city, but the magic of the Sharns and of the Miyeritari mages has proven to be of great help in that regard.

The Path of Light: As the marauding Underdark monsters are driven away, and as the tunnel network is created, powerful illusions and abjurations are weaved to shield it from any unwanted intruders, and some Sharns themselves patrol the galleries (as pools of sharnstuff).

Furthermore the "path" is being modeled as a huge labyrinthine complex, with a large number of joints leading to dead-ends or to completely different regions of the Underdark, (making it very difficult for random travelers to find the "right" way), and is further protected with layers of illusion leading to one of the dead-ends. Only a few Sword Dancers are trained as guides to lead drow and dark elves to the safe destination of Rhymanthiin, from the Misty Forest shrine. As of recent, with Eilistraee returning to her full power, the Sword Dancers can finally access their magic again, and the work on the tunnel network is intensifying.

In addition to that, a new base is being established in the near ruins of Eryndlyn, a drow city that was destroyed during the Spellplague. The place was chosen for its strategic value, and because it is believed to be the location where Mystra defeated Lolth when the latter tried to claim the Weave, and the Lady of Mysteries brought Eilistraee [back](#) to Abeir-Toril. Receiving supplies from the Misty Forest Shrine, connected to the Path of Light, this refuge is becoming a haven of hope in the Underdark.

It is currently usable: with the restoration of the [Moonspring](#), willing drow refugees from other shrines in Faerun can be teleported to the Promenade, and to the Misty Forest from there, where the Sword Dancers finally lead them to Rhymanthiin. However, the tunnels are far from being completely safe as the Sharn and the Eilistraeens would like. The threat is still high, not only because the clerics have to fend off eventual monsters, but because caravans or explorers from other drow cities (like Sshamath, not so far from the moors) could easily pass near the network and draw dangerous attention on it. Due to Lolth's order to look for and hunt any heretics, the risk is more concrete than it has ever been. Some of her agents are in fact actively looking for Eilistraeen communities, and if rumors of big (or frequent) movements of drow were to reach the Lolthites' ears, they would be very likely to act.

Rowaan is planning to connect the network to others secret passages controlled by the moondancers, mostly through portals leading to regions of the tunnel. Recently, by the will of Eilistraee, the illusions are being altered so that anyone who manifests the goddess' [Moonfire](#) can see through them, and be led along the right path to Rhymanthiin (the Sword Dancers have chosen the name "Path of Light" for the tunnels because of this). The Dark Maiden has made such a decision, because she wants able to lead any lost drow refugee to safety, by blessing them with the ability to conjure her light (and to avoid that any eventual error of the Sword Dancers guides would lead to a dangerous or warded area, endangering both the clerics and the converts).

The priests and priestesses of the Dark Maiden have built a temple and delimited a dancing place in the verdant area surrounding Rhymanthiin, as [customary](#) for the worshipers of the goddess (instead, the temples to the pentad, the five deities worshiped by the Sharns--Corellon, Mystra, Oghma, Sehanine and Dumathoin--can be found within the city). Rowaan has moved her home to Rhymanthiin, and is continuing her work from there. She trusts her fellow, wisely cautious priestess, Laenalene Myrr, to lead the Misty Forest shrine, and coordinate the efforts of Faeryl Illiathor and the five other sword dancers led by her. Rowaan hopes that Laenalene's experience will reign in Faeryl's eagerness to lend her help to anyone who needs it and whom she learns about: her good heart and fiery, free spirit--while perfectly in line with Eilistraee's own personality--could expose the small shrine to large threats. Even then, Faeryl usually finds all sorts of tricks to reach her goals, often luring adventurers into carefully planned quests that will benefit the needing people that she learns about.³⁹

Conclusions: In short, the last Miyeritari dark elves and the followers of Eilistraee have finally found a potential home for their people on the surface, and are trying to restore the lost Miyeritari culture. They are working to ensure that each convert can be led there safely, but that is only the beginning. Their forces are small, and maintaining a low profile is of the essence, in order to avoid being noticed by their enemies (the Lolthite first among them)--if that were to happen, Rhymanthiin would likely be lost, not having the forces to withstand a massive siege.

³⁹ Faeryl, Laenalene, the Misty Forest shrine, and the haven being built amidst the ruins of Eryndlyn are Eric Menge's work. I will add a link to his work once it is complete and released through the Dungeon Masters Guild.

All of this is but a dream yet, one that Eilistraee shares with her priests and priestesses (and that could be easily crushed), but she knows that dreams are a powerful force that moves individuals to accomplish extraordinary feats, and trusts that her people will find the strength to flourish once again.

Relationships with the elves

The transformation of some drow followers of Eilistraee into dark elves represents a great opportunity for the faith of the Dark Maiden to establish better relationships with other races. The dark elves have the possibility to act more freely, and to help the drow who choose their own path to find their place in the world. Their work is especially of vital importance in building a better relationships with their elven kin.

Evermeet

In the 1360s DR, Karsel'lyn Lylyl Lytherraias was sent to the elven island of Evermeet as an ambassador of the followers of the Dark Maiden, with the goal of finally granting her fellow Eilistraean drow a place in the land that was supposed to be a safe haven for all elven people. Karsel'lyn is a priestesses of Eilistraee and former agent of Queen [Amlaruil Moonflower](#) of Evermeet. She is a graceful drow lady, with an impulsive, fickle and rather flirtatious personality, but loyal to Eilistraee and her cause. Her presence in Evermeet was a secret shared only by her and the queen. Before the Spellplague Karsel'lyn didn't have much success in her task, as Amlaruil couldn't allow for the cult of Eilistraee to spread in the island, knowing that the conservative elves would never accept a drow in Evermeet, and that even the more open minded elves would be suspicious. However, the drow, determined to continue the work of the Dark Maiden, managed to make herself and her goddess known to a few people trusted by Amlaruil, like her daughter Ilyrana--a wise and kind woman, priestess favored by Angharradh--and Laeroth Runemaster, the master high mage (at the time) of the island.

The Wailing Years: After the events of 1379 DR, Karsel'lyn wasn't transformed into a dark elf. Eilistraee manifested to the priestess in the only [form](#) that she could assume at the time, to impart Karsel'lyn with the knowledge that a great cataclysm would soon come to Faerun (as Mystra had foreseen), and it would be her duty to remain on Evermeet and garner the trust of the moon elves of the temple of Angharradh⁴⁰, for a plan that would not unfold until about a century later. After the Spellplague hit, Evermeet shifted to the Feywild, and with Amlaruil's disappearance⁴¹ and Laeroth's death, Karsel'lyn had to seek shelter elsewhere. Following the will of Eilistraee, she sought refuge among the priests and priestesses of Angharradh, in her temple in the depths of the Evermeet woods (the one who had been led by Princess Ilyrana⁴², because--as said--the priests already knew of her). Karsel'lyn found a home there, while the island's connection with Toril was severed.

Eilistraee's return: With the restoration of the Weave, Evermeet touching Toril once again, and Eilistraee returning to her full power, the situation is currently changing. In fact, since after the first ships from Faerun managed to reach the island, the Dark Maiden has appeared in vivid and intense visions both to Karsel'lyn and to a number of her followers who had accepted the transformation into dark elves. The priestess was warned by her goddess that many dark elves would soon

⁴⁰ Angharradh is an elven goddess worshiped mostly by Moon elves. She is told to be a triune deity, born after Sehanine Moonbow, Hanali Celanil and Aerdrie Faenya fused into a single entity to save Corellon after Araushnee's betrayal. Other elves either believe her to be a Moon elven misinterpretation of Sehanine, and yet others believe that she is but a minor deity that protects the Moon elves.

⁴¹ Since after her disappearance, a temporary Royal Council governs the island, to last until a suitable heir is found.

⁴² Before her disappearance, when she gated the [Elf-Eater](#) into Arvandor, hoping to defeat it there.

reach the coast of Evermeet, and that her duty would be to found a new shrine there, to dispel misconceptions about her faith and bring harmony between the elves and the non-evil drow. On the other hand, the visions of the goddess filled the dark elves with strong emotions, urging them to reach Evermeet. Many of them at first didn't understand the reason behind the goddess' will, but trusted her guidance nonetheless, and embarked on the ships sailing towards the elven island from Faerun. As various groups of dark elves arrived to Evermeet, they finally understood Eilistraee's intent. They were all met by Karsel'lyn, who explained that they needed to build a new home there, one that would hopefully welcome drow and dark elves alike in a near future.

Karsel'lyn and the other followers of Eilistraee have founded a shrine of their goddess in the woods of Evermeet, near the temple of Angharradh that has been the priestess' refuge for a century. The Eilistraeens were met without hostility by the priests and priestesses of the temple (they had already learned about the Dark Maiden through her ambassador). Some of them decided to support the cause of these dark elves, while others even claimed to have received dreams from their goddess and that it is the Seldarine's will that the followers of the Dark Maiden are to be helped.

The Moonstruck Night: Recently, Karsel'lyn (whose presence in Evermeet was still a secret known to few) has taken a further step and publicly revealed herself and the shrine of Eilistraee to the people of Leuthilspar (Evermeet capital). One night, the priestess (magically disguised as a dark elf) and her fellow moondancers--accompanied by a few moon elves of the temple of Angharradh--walked to the city following the Diamond Road. They then simply started to run through the streets, dancing and singing loudly for Eilistraee until they reached the Sunstone Commons⁴³, trying to draw the attention and curiosity of as many people as possible. There, dressed in the Dark Maiden's moonglow, all the Sword Dancers staged a dancing play about the story of their goddess--the daughter of Corellon Larethian--and her people. Many elves were attracted by the exotic show, but while some (especially the young who were drawn by curiosity from their late-night celebrations at the Green Sword tavern) enjoyed it and cheered at the dancers, others weren't comfortable with the story represented in the play. When Karsel'lyn revealed herself as a drow at the end of the show, the crowd of Leuthilspar was shocked. The moondancers weren't harmed, also thanks to the supports of the moon elves of Angharradh, but they were driven out of the city, at least until the priests of the Seldarine and the Royal Council would take a decision about the matter.

The clerics prayed to their gods for answers, but none of the signs that they received from Corellon and the rest of the elven pantheon spoke against the followers of the Dark Maiden or Karsel'lyn: as Tel'Quessir, they had all rights to settle down in Evermeet and express their faith. When the Royal Council received Karsel'lyn, their decision was to allow the worship of Eilistraee in their island, but they didn't go as far as allowing more drow to settle in Evermeet, no matter their allegiance.

Current relationships: The reactions of the elves were varied: none of them would dare to deny the dark elves their rightful place in Evermeet, but not many took well the presence of a drow and the worship of a drow goddess in their island. The support of the priesthood of Angharradh from Ilyrana's temple has proven valuable to the Eilistraeens. Their granting for the followers of the Dark Maiden has led some elves, especially moon elves⁴⁴, to give Karsel'lyn and the faith of Eilistraee a chance. For example, the latter is gaining some popularity

⁴³ The main square of the city, where the latest news are usually announced.

⁴⁴ Who, as said, form most of the faithful of Angharradh, and are more outgoing and accepting than the rest of their kin.

among the elves of House Hawksong—known for its hunters and bards—, as some of them identify in the Dark Maiden's huntress aspect, or in her love for song, dance and beauty, and have started to worship her alongside the Seldarine. The magical creatures of the island (like the centaurs led by Gwyon Ironhoof) hold nothing against the Eilistraeans either, since they do not represent a threat to their land. However, too many times Evermeet has been target of the enemies of the Tel'Quessir in the past—including the drow—and those tragedies are still vivid in the minds of the elves. Many vehemently (although never violently) oppose the cult of Eilistraee and the presence of a drow, and are firmly against more drow being allowed into their home. Elves of harsher views are even skeptical of the dark elves, and constantly remind to their people that those used to be drow a mere century before. Karsel'lyn and the Eilistraeans enjoy to turn this statement upside down: the transformation is just a proof that those drow who choose the Dark Dancer, or that reject the path of Lolth, are indeed to be considered Tel'Quessir and accepted for what they are. After all, their physical change is completely unrelated to their choices—the same that granted them a place in Evermeet—, which would have obviously not changed, if they had chosen to keep their drow form.

Conclusions: Overall, Karsel'lyn considers this to be a remarkable success. She and the dark elves have gained the possibility to make Eilistraee known to the elves, dispel all mistruths about her, and promote harmony among *all* the Tel'Quessir. As said, no drow (save for her) is allowed in Evermeet yet, but the priestess is confident that her work (and that of the dark elves) will soon change this.

*The refugees of Myth Drannor*⁴⁵

During the second half of the 1370s DR, as part of their effort to restore the elven realm of [Cormanthyr](#), Coronal [Ilsevele Miritar](#), [Fflar Starbrow](#), and the elves under their lead, drove most of the Cormanthor drow back in the Underdark, freeing the forest from their hated dark kin. Most of those drow were Vhaerunite of the Auzkovyn and Jaerle clans, but many drow of the Dark Maiden were also forced to move away (a number of them joined the Eilistraeans of the near Elventree). However, understandably, they were resented by the action of the elves, and that their crusade to purify Cormanthor by the monsters that infested it was also targeting those drow who had built a new home in the woods. The followers of Eilistraee weren't intentioned to give up on their homes, and many of them defended their right to live there. The situation was very tense: while some tried the way of diplomacy, and even worked to help the elves to clear the ruins of Myth Drannor, conflicts started to become more and more frequent (especially because the Jearle and Auzkovyn clans were also putting up a fierce resistance against the elves, leading to deep distrust towards the Eilistraean drow as well).

A time of coexistence: The situation started to change in 1379 DR, when a number of followers of Eilistraee were transformed into dark elves. The moondancers of Cormanthor saw that as an opportunity to finally stop the hostilities, and tried to make their voices heard. The change didn't put an end to all the enmities, but gave the (shocked) elves pause: if a curse crafted as a punishment was lifted, that could only mean that these drow had somehow earned the forgiveness of the Seldarine, and for that reason the transformed dark elves were allowed into Cormanthor. At the beginning, this permission wasn't extended to those who remained drow, but this too would change in a few years.

Echoes of the past: A peaceful coexistence between the drow of

⁴⁵ [Many of the ideas](#) in this section have been provided by Valerie Erzählerin, whom I thank again for her Eclipsed Empire project.

Eilistraee and the elves of Myth Drannor was not something unheard of, as it had already happened in the history of the elven kingdom. The help of the moondancers had in fact proven vital for the armies of Cormanthyr and [Rystall Wood](#) in putting an end to the Shadow Wars against the drow slavers of the [Twisted Tower](#). Especially in the culminating battle that, in -331 DR, saw the combined forces of coronal [Tannivh Irithyl](#), coronal Connak (of Rystall Wood), and the followers of the Dark Maiden, free the tower from the worshipers of Lolth. As a sign of gratitude, the elves forged an alliance with the Eilistraean drow, granting them the Twisted Tower, which would then become known as the *Tower of the Dark Moon*, one of the greatest temples of Eilistraee in Faerun (her magic still lingers there in the present day, post-Sundering, even if the tower was retaken by the Lolthite in 194 DR, and then by the humans of Shadowdale in 906 DR, who renamed it *Twisted Tower of Ashaba*).⁴⁶

The alliance with the drow hadn't been an easy affair, however, and had only been possible thanks to the efforts of Tannivh's sixth child, Maeral Irithyl (who had been chosen for the future coronalship), and of [Narelia Olrythii](#), a powerful priestess of Eilistraee, and one of the [sharn](#) of ancient Miyeritar. In fact, pursuing her goal to make the Dark Dancer's dream a reality and grant her people a place in the world (reunited with their fair kin), Narelia had been watching the growth of Myth Drannor and the events of the Shadow Wars very closely. She saw Maeral's open-mindedness and progressive views as an opportunity to achieve something meaningful for the drow of Eilistraee, and (magically assuming her pre-sharn drow appearance) contacted her in the hope that she, as an Irithyl, could promote an alliance between their people. The two women worked together to that end, and were ultimately successful. Even though Maeral mysteriously disappeared (thought dead) in -339 DR, she had already managed to convince her father that the Eilistraeans' aid and knowledge of their kin would save many elven lives, and prove very valuable (which led to the creation of the alliance, and to the final success of the Cormanthyrian elves in -331 DR).

However, not all the Irithyl approved of the alliance with the drow, or of a generally more open approach with the N'Tel'Quessir (non-elves). Dhregis Irithil—the fourth child of Tannivh, and a spellcasting prodigy—in fact didn't care for such ideas, thinking that they would become the downfall of his people, but he wouldn't be able to take any action to dissuade the Cormanthyrian from embracing them (at least not for many centuries). In fact, around that time, he had to leave Cormanthor (accompanied by his retinue) to act as an ambassador in the Netherese enclave of [Thultanthar](#). Telamont Tanthul had invited Cormanthyr to witness one of their experiments with the magic of the Shadowfell, as a way to open the trade of magical knowledge and the possibility of an alliances with the elves, and—being one of the best Art wielders in Cormanthyr—Dhregis had been chosen for the task. However, as Thultanthar departed for the Shadow plane, following the events of Karsus' folly and the subsequent fall of Netheril in -339 DR, Dhregis and the elves who had come with him remained trapped in the Shadowfell with the enclave. During the centuries of entrapment in such a grim place, the grief for their loss (or ambition, in the case of Dhregis) led many to embrace Shar as their goddess⁴⁷. Later—after learning of the fall of Myth Drannor during the Weeping Wars, in 714 DR—with the support of the Shadovar, Dhregis involved all the elves who had accompanied them in the creation of an organization called “the *Penumbral Court*”, with the goal to restore Myth Drannor under a rightful Irithyl coronal, under the faith of Shar, and without any of the other races—including drow of any culture or faith—to pollute the elven purity (therefore undoing the inclusiveness that the decisions of the last

⁴⁶ This alliance is actually canonical

⁴⁷ Dhregis chose to become a Shade, taking the essence of the Shadowfell within his being, in order to increase his lifespan

coronal, *Eltargrim* Irithyl, had brought). In their mind, this was the only way for the elves to gain back the greatness of the past.

After the enclave returned to Toril, the Reclamation of Myth Drannor (mid 1370s DR) was the perfect opportunity for the Court to infiltrate the Crusade. Nyhlendra, one of Dhregis' agents (an elf Darkcloak of Shar, particularly knowledgeable in matters of politics and rulership) joined the elven forces in the battle, and became part of the people of the restored Myth Drannor. Many members of the Penumbra Court followed her, blending in among the elves—including Dhregis, who secretly managed to replace the Grand Mage succeeding Aerevin Teshurr (unbeknownst even to his agents). Nyhlendra worked to gain Ilsevele's trust, and her counsel, experience, and understanding of Miritar's position, brought them closer to each other. However, as she worked as an infiltrator and spy to get rid of the new coronal (while also trying to turn her against the drow of Eilistraee that were struggling in Cormanthor), finding a new friendship ended up shaking the Darkcloak's loyalty to the Penumbra Court, as she genuinely wanted Cormanthor to flourish, and was glad to see her people united around Ilsevele's figure. Before Nyhlendra could take steps to change her allegiance, the work that she had done for the Shadovar was exposed. She was punished with banishment for her crime, but had a chance to show that her friendship towards Ilsevele was genuine, when she fought to protect the coronal from Zhentarim assassins attempting at her life. This redeemed Nyhlendra in Ilsevele's eyes, and the new beginning for their relationship was sealed by a sacred oath that they sworn together. She was then trusted to work for Cormanthor against its enemies, which eventually included the Penumbra Court (whose influence was starting to spread among the more conservative nobles. Although the new Penumbra supporters weren't aware of the connection with Shar and the Shadovar, joining the organization mostly because of their isolationist views).

Narelia, on the other hand, continued to work for her goddess and people, including her participation to the restoration of Rhymanthiin. In 1374 DR, she shed her sharn skin, becoming drow again (later, in 1379 DR, she refused the transformation into dark elf, despite her originally being a Ssri'Tel'Quessir, as a sign of solidarity towards all those drow who wanted to build their place in the world *as drow*). Upon hearing of what was happening in Myth Drannor, Narelia immediately decided to lend her help to her fellow followers of the Dark Dancer (although, with Eilistraee no longer being able to grant spells and reduced to non-relevance, her magical prowess was greatly diminished). There, she and Elendar Jaerle (a proud and tempered—but wise and caring—dark elf, one of the then rare male Sword Dancers) were among those drow who most resolutely defended their people's place in the forest. Both of them quickly became targets of groups like Black Archers of Shevarash⁴⁸, but also of the Penumbra, who—following Dhregis' orders—were using the Dark Avengers⁴⁹ as a cover to act against the moondancers without drawing unwanted attention. However, their facade fell when, while using mind reading spells on a group of prisoners to gather info on their plans, Eilistraean wizards found out about the organization. Not much knowledge about it was gathered by the followers of the Dark Maiden, so Narelia, Elendar, and groups of drow scouts and spellcasters started to investigate the matter. For months, both the Dark Dancers and the Penumbra agents played an invisible, dangerous game of espionage, assassinations and misdirection, until Narelia finally managed to learn that one of the coronal's counselors, Nyhlendra⁵⁰, was part of the Penumbra Court.

Believing her to be the leader of the new group, Elendar organized an ambush to finally take her out. The Darkcloak wasn't caught

48 The elven deity of loss, vengeance and hatred for the drow

49 Priests of Shevarash

50 This happened shortly before her “redemption”

The last coronal of Miyeritar⁵¹

Narelia is the last surviving member of the coronal line of (the now fallen) Miyeritar, clan Olrythii (although she never presents herself as such, and tries to hide her true identity, as she feels guilty for the dire consequences of some of her errors as a coronal). She was born in Faer'Tel'Miir, towards the end of the first Crown War, and amidst the resistance that the dark elves of Miyeritar were putting up against the Aryvandaari invaders. When the gold elven forces conquered the city, Narelia—already a trained priestess of Eilistraee by that time—and her family (including her father, the coronal Alton Olrythii) barely managed to escape the city, along with part of the population. The fleeing dark elves of Faer'Tel'Miir and of northern Miyeritar, fled to the southern part of their realm, where they continued their rebellion. Narelia chose to support her people as a Dark Dancer would: by taking care of the wounded and the needy, and bringing hope and some joy to them. However, it wouldn't last much.

Her father was in fact murdered by Vyshaan assassins trying to end the resistance, leaving Narelia, his only heir, still shocked and grief-stricken, with the duty to lead the dark elves in such difficult times. She was inexperienced, but the aid of many counselors, and the anger that she felt, led her to keep fighting. With the Aryvandaari still trying to conquer her land, knowing that many dark elves were still in need to be freed from the new tyrants, she could only choose to not give up. She fought fiercely and indomitably, refusing to bow to tyrants, but the Miyeritari were scattered and their forces proven by the long years of war. Even as some Ilythiiri clans (Aelryth) came to support them, the Aryvandaari eventually managed to corner the remaining Miyeritari forces in the Misty Vale (western borders of the High Moor). In a desperate last attempt to turn the tables, feeling that surrendering would have been like betraying her people, with the support of allies from the Shantel Othreier and Ardeep (which were already fighting alongside Miyeritar) Narelia tried another counterattack. However, it too failed, and the Sun elves retaliated by putting a tragically high number of dark elves to the sword, permanently putting an end to the rebellion.

Following that event, Narelia was struck by a deep sense of guilt (which she still feels), realizing that her mistakes and recklessness had led to the death of many of her people. Even as she was crushed and purposeless, her faith in Eilistraee led her to try to redeem herself by wandering Miyeritar for the rest of her life (hiding her identity), to serve and help the weary dark elves of what had once been her realm. After the Dark Disaster struck, with the total destruction of her nation, and the death of so many Ssri'Tel'Quessir, she chose to become a *sharn*, to continue serving her people and her goddess. However, the series of tragedies that she was forced to witness made her grow bitter towards the elves, and her bitterness deepened even more when the Elven Court and the Seldarine chose to curse and exile every dark elf. During that period of her life, she only felt hatred towards the elves and their gods. She considered them nothing but murderers and hypocrites, even more so because many innocents—including the dark elves of Miyeritar, the followers of Eilistraee, and the goddess herself—were hurt by this choice. They had already been severely weakened because of all the deaths caused by the Dark Disaster, and those who had survived were also shunned by the Seldarine and the other elves on top of that.

Currently, Narelia still feels that it is her duty to continue serving her people (that she now identifies as all the drow who want to claim their home on the surface), as part of her role as a priestess of Eilistraee, and because of her responsibility (however, despite that, she's every bit as imperious and strong willed as one would expect from a ruler). She feels somewhat hesitant, when it comes to restoring unity between elves and drow (although she can put her feelings aside, and still works to achieve it, as she understands that it is the only way to build a future that isn't red of elven blood). In fact, she is firmly convinced that that the Tel'Quessir and the Seldarine share the guilt of the current state of her people: she appreciates and is grateful to open minded elves, but will never manage to forgive or forget history. At least, not until the People as a whole finally accept the drow who wish to live at peace in the surface world, and start to help them (and Eilistraee) to achieve this goal. In fact, in 1374 DR she was one of the few sharn who had no problem shedding their skin, despite Corellon's curse, and in 1379 DR she chose to maintain her drow appearance, because it is her belief that no drow should change what they are just to be able to live a decent life.

51 This character is non-canonical.

52 Narelia and the surviving rebels had to hide for a long time, hunted by the Aryvandaari

unprepared, and managed to escape her hunters, but before losing sight of her, Elendar took notice of a particularly striking enchanted blade that she was wearing, which he—proficient in the history of Cormanthor—recognized as the *Lifblade* that used to belong to the Irithyl family, and to be carried exclusively by its members.

When they reported to Narelia, the woman seemed very surprised by the revelation, and unexpectedly took the decision to personally meet Nyhlendra. The priestess of Eilistraee heavily insisted that, if her new plan had succeeded, their chances of helping the drow of the Dark Dancer to keep their home in Cormanthor would have drastically improved. So, armed with info that would have allowed her to blackmail the Darkcloak, she used up most of her remaining magic in order to make this meeting happen, cloaking herself in protective spells and contingencies (also with the help of allied wizards, to allow her to escape if things had gone wrong) and using powerful illusions to infiltrate Nyhlendra's claimed house (an abandoned villa formerly known as *Khaalvandar*). There the two finally met, and oddly enough, Narelia emerged from their meeting almost as if they were two old friends. After that, the priestess calmly told her fellow (then dumbfounded) moonancers that they had just found precious ally in their battle.

Ilsevele's choice: After her redemption, Nyhlendra was in fact the best candidate to persuade Ilsevele. Their friendship would take many decades to become a solid bond, but Nyhlendra was quickly gaining back the coronal's trust, both with her work for Cormanthyr, and by helping her friend with the finer points of rulership, counseling her on leading the elven people (even without relying on tools like the *Crownblade*⁵³). During the 1380s DR, thanks to Nyhlendra's interceding for the drow, the followers of Eilistraee were finally received by the coronal. They were given the possibility to explain what had happened to them and their goddess (who had already made her survival known to many Sword Dancers at the time), and Ilsevele proved to be understanding and compassionate: at last, the dark elves and the Eilistraeen drow who hadn't been changed were allowed to form a small community near Myth Drannor. In exchange, they helped their fair kin in the restoration of their realm. The followers of the Dark Maiden acted like sentinels, patrolling the woods and using their knowledge of the drow to foresee and avert possible strikes from the Underdark against any of the elven communities. Furthermore, following Nyhlendra's (whose work had gained her the position of spymaster) decision to include the drow in her recruiting program to build up the intelligence of Cormanthyr, a good number of Eilistraeans became agents working for Myth Drannor.

However, many elves—especially the Black Archers of Shevarash, or the covertly working Penumbra Court—didn't take Ilsevele's decision kindly, even more so because some drow had been allowed into Cormanthor alongside the dark elves. They claimed that, since the Seldarine had apparently blessed a few drow and reverted them back to their original form as a recognition of their good heart, those who weren't transformed hadn't redeemed themselves in the eyes of the gods yet, and therefore weren't to be given a place among the Tel'Quessir. As a result, the people of the Dark Maiden were object of distrust, and never managed to build a strong relationship with the people of Myth Drannor (while any elf--fair or dark--affiliated with them was negatively labeled as a drow supporter). Those drow who tried to explain their **viewpoint** were mostly ignored or shut down, albeit some elves listened to their motivations.

53 A sentient sword capable of choosing a worthy individual as the coronal of Myth Drannor. It kills anyone who is not worthy and tries to claim it. It was Nyhlendra's belief that it would kill Ilsevele, given that a member of the Irithyl family (the previous line of rulers of Cormanthor) was still alive.

Despite the difficulties, under the leadership of the Sword Dancers of the goddess (especially of charismatic individuals, like Narelia and Elendar), the Eilistraeens continued their work, and to bring in new drow converts (although that was source of great tension, and led to occasional skirmishes with the most vehement elves—promptly stopped by the agents of the Coronal). The dark elven (and drow) scouts reported to Elendar (who, in turn, referred to Nyhlendra), and he would often lead missions in the Underdark tunnels beneath Cormanthor, both to spy on the enemy drow, and to lead any drow that he could to embrace the faith of the Dark Maiden. Narelia, along with other priestesses, acted as a diplomat and representative of the Eilistraeen drow and dark elves at Ilsevele's court.

The coronal never altered her first decision, or withdrew her support to the followers of the Dark Maiden, and this choice made her particularly unpopular among some noble circles. Towards the 1470s DR, the elves affiliated with the Penumbra Court, whose influence had been expanding over the years (and who wanted the drow out of Myth Drannor) made their first major move, and used the Eilistraeen presence as an excuse to attempt to depose Ilsevele, trying to gather a high enough number dissatisfied nobles and followers to either force her to step down, or violently remove her. Their conspiracy quickly drew the attention of Nyhlendra and her spies, including the followers of the Dark Dancer. Through espionage, divination spells, and clever ambushes, they eventually managed to expose some of the conspirators and silence them through various means (including Nyhlendra's posing as Ilsevele, to trick suspected Penumbrals into attacking her, and then let her drow agents counterattack by surprise, only to make the happening pass as a Lolthite drow ambush). The remaining dissenters preferred to recede in the shadows, waiting for a better time to strike.

The Second Fall: In 1487 DR the restored Myth Drannor was theater of a fierce battle that saw the elves, the Chosen of Mystra, the Shades of the flying Netherese enclave of *Thultanthar*, and *Larloch*, all make a play to either protect the Weave, the city, and its Mythal⁵⁴, or to take over them. The higher ranks of Penumbrals (unbeknownst even to the majority of their followers) also played a role in the battle, secretly supporting the Shadovar attackers. The Netherese would have taken over the Mythal, while Ilsevele would have been deposed, allowing Dhregis and his followers to assume control of city and fulfill their original goal: under the guidance of Shar, an empire would have emerged, greater than Netheril had ever been.

When the Shadovar attacked, the followers of Eilistraee joined the defense, suffering substantial losses. The battle ended with the defeat of the Shades, with the *Srinshee* sacrificing herself to protect the Mythal from *Larloch*, and with *Thultanthar* crashing on Myth Drannor. Despite the efforts of the defenders, much (but not all) of the city was reduced to rubble. In the aftermath of the battle, the dark elves and drow of Eilistraee helped to rescue and heal as many elves as they could (also thanks to their recently returned priestly magic), and to organize the exodus from the ruined City of Song.

The nearby forest is currently littered with corpses of humans and elves, and infested by scavengers and looters. The *Tree of Souls*⁵⁵ has however survived, saved by the many *baelnorn*⁵⁶ who were commanded

54 Mythals are powerful magical effects, created by a circle of spellcasters through Elven High Magic, to protect a large area (like a city) from a variety of effects or creatures chosen by the creators.

55 The tree of souls was crafted by Corellon Larethian and Angharradh when the island of Evermeet was created. It is vital and sacred to all elves, and it holds the spirits of many of them within it. Its purpose is to help rebuild the elven civilization whenever it is planted, and can fuel High Magic spells cast within miles of it.

56 Baelnorns are elven spellcasters who chose to become lichens. They are often born when

by the Srinshree to form a magical barrier around the tree and protect it from the imminent disaster. Most of the elves are now refugees led by the Coronal Ilsevele and Fflar (who gave their best to defend their people), and many of them have found shelter in the near elven community of Semberholme (where seeds of the Tree have been planted, in case it needs to be moved away from Myth Drannor in the future). Some of them still live in what remains of the City of Song, clustered around tomb-tunnels and protected by the remaining baelnorn (and protecting the surviving Tree of Souls), other groups want to retake the city (see below), but most elves are moving away.

Threats: Currently, Ilsevele and Fflar are still in the process of leading refugees to safety, which is not a task without dangers. The forest is once again filled with monsters brought by the Shadovar, and by mercenaries and looters attracted by the combined wealth and magic of Myth Drannor and Thultanthar that is left to plunder. Although Ilsevele and Fflar are currently trying to keep a low profile, in order to avoid being targeted by opportunists, the drow of near Sschindyrlyn (who are known to have access to a wide network of portals for their raids) and some groups belonging to clan Jaerle and Auzkovyn (especially those still seeking vengeance for the past events) have also been attracted by the recent events, and see the vulnerable elves as an easy prey.

The hidden threat of Dhregis Irithyl and his Penumbra Court still lurks among the elves' own ranks, and (although their plan didn't go as expected) a time of such instability and discontent is the perfect opportunity for them to try to remove Ilsevele, and expand their reach and find new like minded supporters, or allies. Amidst the chaos caused by the second fall, xenophobic and isolationist views are starting to spread among many elves. After all, in their eyes, corrupted humans have caused this disaster, humans have always tried to hamper their growth, and the drow are now preying on them. It's only natural for those elves to grow more distrusting of outsiders, or entirely hostile, as old grudges and hatred re-awaken. In such a context, groups like the followers of Shevarash, the Eldreth Veluuthra⁵⁷, and the Penumbra themselves, are gaining large numbers of followers: elves who are in deep mourning for having lost much (or all) of what they hold dear, that now see human brigands and drow raiders looting and pillaging one of their most sacred sites (due to the presence of the Tree of Souls), and that feel a burning desire to claim back their city and drive all the outsiders away.

Due to their similar purpose, the Penumbra are tentatively joining forces with the Eldreth Veluuthra, leading the unsatisfied elves in patrols and raids to cleanse the forest from monsters and outsiders alike, and prevent the latter from enter the Cormanthor area--even to the point of sometimes attacking human merchants and caravans that come to trade with the elven communities. If such activities are not stopped, and quickly, they will become source of tensions and conflicts with the near human nations (Dales, Sembia, Cormyr), something that the elves cannot afford.

The Penumbra are also actively spreading rumors to blame Ilsevele (and Eltargrim's foolish vision) for this disaster. They aim to turn as many elves as possible against Ilsevele, hoping to lead some of them to attempt to assassinate the coronal (and organizing such attempts themselves). They claim that leaders need legitimacy, but Myth Drannor was lost and defiled on Ilsevele's watch, and she has allowed drow and outsiders to step into Myth Drannor, leading to terrible consequences

for her people. She has proven an incompetent ruler in times of need, and it is therefore time for her to be replaced, and for Myth Drannor to be claimed once again, ruled with different ideas.

Rising many of the dead bodies near the ruins of the city as undead, and strategically pressing the remaining defenders of the elves (while also putting the blame on the drow), is also one more tool that the conspirators have at their disposal to increase tensions and discontent, and further discredit the coronal.

Were all this to fail, Dhregis himself has taken many steps to ensure his success. As the Grand Mage of Cormathyr, he has acquired knowledge of the position of the phylacteries of a number of baelnorns, and is planning to turn them against Ilsevele. He is also playing the *long* game, and his plan is to use his position to secretly corrupt the Crownblade. Ilsevele's desire to find allies in fact means that Cormanthyr will never be as strong as it once was, since their so called "friends" would only try to turn Myth Drannor and the elves into some kind of vassal kingdom, or—in the case of the drow of the Dark Maiden—live off the results of elven lives being sacrificed to reclaim and rebuild the City of Song. Dhregis is trying to find a way to attune the Crownblade's sentience to this way of thinking, to indirectly influence Ilsevele and lead the coronal to her fall. Were he to succeed, once Miritar would be seen as a tyrant, it would be his time to then step in as savior and leader of Cormanthyr.

A time of cooperation: It's then no surprise that, with a similar prospect, the support offered by the followers of Eilistraee has been accepted by Ilsevele and many elven refugees. The latter are currently taking all the help they can, and the moondancers' experience in dealing with the drow is of value in protecting the refugees from drow raids (or even in preventing those from happening, as the Eilistraeens sometimes manage to come to agreements with the Vhaerunite drow of Jaerle and Auzkovyn and stop possible hostilities). The dark elves and drow of the Dark Maiden currently help by escorting elven refugees to Semberholme, by providing food and healing, and by acting as scouts and sentinels (especially near the secret elven community in the ruins of Myth Drannor). However, they too are subject of attacks from the various extremist groups, and with the constant risk of being assaulted, there is a concrete possibility that the drow themselves will soon start to actively hunt elves belonging to such groups.

While xenophobic and hateful views find a fertile soil to spread, Ilsevele is in a very difficult position: forcefully stopping the Penumbra, the Eldreth Veluuthra, or the Shevareshans, would likely mean turning them into martyrs in the eyes of many unsatisfied elves; her inactivity would instead raise alarms among the humans of the Dales and other bordering nations. The coronal is doing her best to promote cooperation among all elves, trying to create bonds between families, and to convince rivaling groups to put aside their grudges. Likewise, Fflar is reorganizing and training the militia, while making sure to establish personal connections and a strong "team spirit", to ensure the cooperation that the elves really need after the recent tragedy. In this context, the dark elves are being helped to integrate themselves into the reforming community, and the drow who are lending their help to be at least re-evaluated and accepted.

an elven settlement has need of exceptional guardians, or to protect ancient elven ruins or tombs. The magic to fuel such a transformation can be sometimes provided by the Seldarine, but it is rare, and baelnorns usually use phylacteries like other lichens.

57 An anti-human elven faction, dedicated to removing the N'Tel'Quessir from Faerun.

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