

THE STRIVOG, THE BONE DROW

DROW OF PORPHYRA





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STRIVOG - THE BONE DROW

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INTRODUCTION

All beings who love the light learn to dread the realms below their feet, and since the earliest times the Underdeep has repaid all fears in kind. Insectile horrors and stranger things boil up from wounds in the earth without warning anywhere they are least expected. Prisoners are taken so far beyond the reach of the sun that they might as well have never known it at all. And most who venture down in search of glory or revenge meet their childhood nightmares - and then, if they are very lucky, they die.

Because more than anything else, the Underdeep is a place for death.

But these are merely the truths about the Underdeep that surface dwellers believe. Beyond the natural caverns explored by the brave is a world that's been carefully crafted by the bizarre creatures that dwell in it. Miles of winding tunnels have been left behind by ancient empires; magic and slaves have hewn the rest. Flora and fauna from above provide light, defenses, and food, and what should have perished has found ways to flourish. So for every deserted corridor there are caverns teeming with mouths that must be fed.

It's no wonder, then, that the swarms from below seem savage and mindless, even when they are not. They tear away what they can grab before retreating like seasonal storms. Most attacks from the Underdeep are about necessity, not daytime horrors like wars of succession. Survivors hate to lose their loved ones to the endless dark, but at least they can understand why they were taken. They begrudge the lost supplies but have to admire the inventiveness of the desperate. But even the masterful slave raids of the duergar are child's play compared to the machinations of the drow.

The drow inspire a new level of awe in the dark because they bring elven elegance to every empire they forge. Anything the drow pursue becomes an art, from politics to poison brewing, and whatever they master becomes an obsession. Yet no matter how crazed or brutal they seem, they always move with a purpose and their designs are rarely simple. It might take decades for a goal to be reached, but drow nurture intrigues like surface elves tend forests. Unlike their woodsy cousins, however, the drow hold no special reverence for nature. They take their desires to the next level - whatever those desires may be, and whatever it takes to obtain them.

But these truths about dark elves, like all legends of the Underdeep, are only partly true.

Assuming that all drow are alike is usually a dangerous error, but it's an even worse mistake to make in the lands of Porphyra. Up until a thousand years ago, stories about dark-skinned elves were few and far between. They could have been rare births or botched experiments, but nobody feared them or paid much attention to the rumors. Some sages believe that Porphyra had no genuine drow until The Calling. They are right about one thing: When the elves and orcs cried out for new gods and opened their reality to others, they got a lot more than they bargained for.

Why Drow?

Since "ancient times" when a dark subterranean race incited giants to attack the lands of men, the evil breed of elves known as drow has been a favorite adversary of tabletop adventurers, seen with a mix of fear at their eldritch power and the temptation of their myriad treasures and magical secrets. One is always seen as virtuous against the drow, and the necessity of opposing them gives a sense of heroism to many stalwart players. The scale of their society and machinations ensures that they will be a solid challenge that will never lack for twists and turns.

On Porphyra...

The drow are as much a Landed (not native to Porphyra) race as dwarves or málites. The restrictions of past scenarios do not apply, and each sect of drow, though somewhat physically and psychologically similar, come with different loyalties and *raison d'être*, unchained to one another. Drow serve many, wildly different masters on the Patchwork Planet of Porphyra, and struggle to survive after being dragged from their worlds of origin- anything goes now, with the drow... so make sure you don't miss out.

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The Beginning is the End

“Elves,” “drow,” “night wardens,” “Duskhellen” - whatever they were called, they were never spoken of without the dread of death itself. But these bogeymen relished their reputation since oblivion was the one of the few things they still respected.

In the beginning on that far-flung planet, elves were banished from the light of day for offending the gods, but what their crime was, the surface races never knew. The legends disagreed about everything. Was it the cold or the long nights that summoned the Duskhellen from the realms below to carry away the foolish? Stripped of their vivid colors, grown gaunt from living on scraps, the twisted elves certainly never revealed their secret. But on winter nights they drifted in with the frost, and anything they claimed before the sun rose was theirs to keep. Only those who obeyed the elders aboveground would remain safe.

Or so the sun-kissed races desperately wanted to believe.

The ice elves let their prey think whatever they wished; they even played into the superstitions to keep the surface dwellers complacent. But in truth, no one was safe from their ravaging and the only punishment they cared about was their own. The drow suffered unbearably in the sun and were mystically compelled to return to their dark, barren home below. No matter what they made or grew, they were always desperate scavengers by the time snow covered the ground again. And nothing could break their bitter cycle while the gods still reigned.

The rumors were true in a few vital respects, you see: the Duskhellen had been condemned. It was bad enough when a few mighty elves dared to infiltrate the divine realms to seize immortality - but the rest remained silent, and that was even worse. For their trespass, all elves were exiled from their beloved forests to the planet's underbelly except for the coldest, darkest season. For their lack of faith, they were cursed to fear sunlight and to never again know warmth. For their pride, they would never be able to tame the desolate soil or rely on their new home for growth. They would

have no choice but to watch for signs of winter and hope to scrape by.

Tracking the waning light so carefully allowed the drow to realize something was amiss before the kingdoms overhead were prepared to admit it. The seasons shifted until the worst heat of summer and the worst chill of winter swallowed the other seasons. At first the ice elves rejoiced at more freedom, but as crops burnt or froze the other races defended their granaries more savagely than ever. Eventually the people of the planet adapted and the harvests improved. The survivors believed that they had survived a test of their gods, who had been silent all the while. Many of the sun-worshippers claimed to see signs that the old way of life was returning.

But the Duskhellen saw the secret: The global imbalance remained, and with each year, winter stole one more day from summer. When their doomsday calendar ended and the last of the light died out of the world, the frost elves finally began to fear their fate. At last, they could roam whenever they wished, but all they found was chaos and ruin. Societies decimated one another over the last supplies and then fell on the bodies that remained. The magical barrier that had sealed the underworld during the warm months vanished and for the first time, war parties from above hunted the drow in their own territory.

Inveniam Viam

That was the moment Baethara, a young Duskhellen queen, drew her people together. She believed the gods had abandoned their posts permanently and left every living thing behind to perish - and that was simply unacceptable. Her people had already suffered enough because of the petty gods. There had to be another deity who would hear their call. There had to be a sacrifice grand enough to draw attention from across the planes. Using the planet's ley lines and their most powerful spellcasters, the drow offered all of the deaths taking place on their world to whichever god would give them a chance at a new life.

Perhaps by chance but likely by design, the power known as Rajuk Amon-Gore heeded their call. This unknown lord of death extended an invitation they could not afford to refuse. His messengers offered to open a gateway that would lead through his realm to another world on the material plane. But there were two rules. First, the drow could not turn around while

they traveled to the next portal; a single backward glance would extinguish life at once. They also had to rely on what they could carry or risk being permanently warped by the food of the dead. But if the elves took too long to decide, the Dark Maw's demons promised to withdraw and relish their grisly end from afar.

The Duskhellen knew better than to try a god's patience and understood that they were not being rescued. They were being ruthlessly tested, and life would be the reward for any who survived. Rather than making a last raid for supplies, Queen Baethara ordered her kin to lure their enemies to the portal. They tricked as many pawns over the threshold as they dared and then followed their walking herd into the unknown. And while most drow balked at the idea of being forced to eat humanoids, they knew their chances were greatly improved by an emergency larder they could keep in chains.

Or so they desperately wanted to believe.

Their pride was tarnished when the food ran out before any sign of an exit appeared. Their poise wavered when they had to slaughter their slaves - but only the most stubborn refused their portion. Some drow lost their minds when the last captives were killed, but before they could turn to run, their siblings took them down. What followed became known as the Bitter Feast and the Last Meal of the Duskhellen. With elven gristle on their lips they pledged their lives to one another and christened themselves the Strivog, or 'bone drow,' to honor the walking dead they had become. The lives they had lived before had been lies; they accepted that death was the truth.

Across the Fields of Gore, the drow took turns giving up their waterskins and sipping from the rivers of blood. In the Skeletal Peaks, they drew lots for who would gnaw the mountain of bones while the rest ate what was left of their brothers. By the time they faced the vaulted viscera of the Sinew Cathedral, their horror was spent. They observed their changed bodies with awe, but without fear or shame. Rajuk had won, but so had the drow. And as their new Rajuki clerics led the bone drow's first religious rites in millennia, the portal to a new home opened before them.

Soft Light

Where the Strivog expected to see open fields and sky, there was stone encrusted in ice. Where they hoped for a welcoming darkness, there was a glowing light unlike any they had seen - not the burning glare of a sun, but a

cold illumination within the permafrost that did not eat at their flesh. This last fact did not register before panic set in, sending half-mad, half-undead elves bolting in all directions, but they were not unarmed. Their corrupted bodies shrugged off blows that would have once brought them low and their milky, unnatural glares froze enemies in their tracks.

These new gifts and their remote location saved the Strivog from swift annihilation in the Underdeep. They would eventually discover that they had been left at the foot of the Icekrypt, a sprawling wasteland of magically frozen caverns claimed by few and avoided by most. Trapped, haunted, cursed - whatever the stories were, they were never good. Even creatures that could withstand the chill were nervous when sleeping within its reach, and its constant glow kept many invaders at bay. But these drow had known moonlight on snow and were not completely blinded, and they were superior foes in fields of snow.

And they did not remain separated for long; Baethara had not led them so far for nothing. Her body and mind were corrupted far more than rest, and she had learned how to create victory from sudden defeat. Her first act was to organize her kin and establish a chain of command. She elevated the drow who had sacrificed the most in the land of the dead to the heads of five new Orders, which were named and defined by what their leaders prized most. The other survivors were free to march under the banner of their choice, and as they gathered their people beneath Porphyra the Lich Queen's alien calm spread among their ranks.

Together, the Strivog regained their sanity by marking their borders with totems of ice and bone. The Queen kept most of her new empire on the move for several years, sending out squads in well-practiced formations but relying on the landscape to provide weapons and other advantages. The leaders of the Orders - collectively called Regmyn - took turns randomizing camps and movements to confuse pursuers and cover more ground. Eventually they were forced to settle down. They had not found all of their lost brethren or mapped the entire Krypt, but with their low numbers, they had to avoid spreading themselves too thin.

Instead of leaving holes in their defenses, the Strivog fortified three camps that stood out for natural benefits and how much they had advanced. Ghoronar, Osstra, and Xintral were each named to honor the first Regmyn that led their operations, as the Lich Queen continued to reward merit over every other consideration. A number of smaller camps were maintained as outposts with rotat-

ing numbers of defenders (a practice which remains in place). Finally, three different routes to the surface were marked for future exploration, with small open shafts that allowed for tracking light on the new world.

But before they could strike outward, they had to build within. At the capital of Osstra, the Orders delivered suggestions for laws and customs and the Lich Queen accepted the lion's share. Little else was needed to stabilize their vision of life on Porphyra. The fresh and eager clergy of Rajuk were ready to guide the Strivog to their ultimate purpose: earning their gifts in the material world and their place in the afterlife by claiming Rajuk's due. To do that, they turned their vanquished foes into components, weapons, armor, and mortar, and raised the rest as undead foot soldiers - all of which became easier with each victory they dedicated to Rajuk.

In the Watches of the Night

In a few short centuries the Strivog doubled their territory and settlements by seizing every resource the area provided. Jagged sheets of ice and scattered stalagmites became quick fortifications. Some settlements expanded from naturally occurring caves and burrows. A few took over impressive vaults that were uncovered after melting through curtains of permafrost. Imminently defensible but unmarked, these halls had been abandoned for so long that the drow felt no qualms in claiming them. The Strivog avoided creating major dwellings from the ground up, seeing the work as a waste of resources.

And they have never been able to afford wasting resources. Water was plentiful in icicles and reservoirs beneath the frozen crust, but that didn't mean it was squandered. Such a precious commodity was a powerful bargaining chip for trade. The soil they cleared grew rich with blood and other byproducts of Strivog living, and the plants they cultivated were used down to the smallest piece. Meat from hunting, scavenging, and bartering was routinely preserved and rationed carefully since the Strivog had little luck with rearing herds of their own (and they would go without rather than eat their own kind).

Quickly, the drow used the denizens of the wastes to their advantage. Rather than trying to tame or befriend most beings, they maneuvered creatures like ice oozes, glacier toads, and frost men into acting as natural guardians of assets and travel routes. They developed symbiotic relationships with devil dog packs, skum, and vampiric dragons, and an outright alliance with the barbaric

ith'n ya'roo. In a few locations, the Strivog modified gelatinous flowers to produce acid that harmed metal but not organic material. Placed along darkened paths close to Strivog interests, they emitted blinding pulses of light and acid as terrible warnings to interlopers.

Once entrenched, the Strivog never relied on the cold or magical light too heavily for their defenses. They remembered how desperate enemies used to wield fire against their raids, so they made sure slippery ice was undergirded with stone. Throughout, the drow devised traps that would use refraction or darkness to blinding effect; others turned ice to mush or flung icicles as projectiles. Early on, any undead that could be spared went to mining and construction operations and summoned elementals handled the rest. Later, living vassals took over much of the heavy labor as they did elsewhere in Strivog holdings. All the while, the Strivog cemented their reputation above and below in horror and blood.

Bring Out Your Dead

Everywhere they traveled, the bone drow sang a haunting and tempting refrain to any who would listen. The bodies of the dead were already theirs by right of the god they served; handing over corpses, fresh or otherwise, meant not having to deal with them further. The sick and elderly were just a step away from the grave so the Strivog were happy to claim them, as well. They would take the suicidal, the ill-conceived, the mad and the crippled, nearly any undesirable a society could want to be rid of. For this service, the drow would barter for necessities but sometimes refused further compensation as a way to encourage future ties.

In the cold, cruel, and desperate members of all races the bone drow secured allies. Economics and bad fortune made for strange bedfellows. When there were too many mouths to feed - a common occurrence in the Underdeep - the Strivog there were to lighten the load. Other times, local power struggles were resolved by the Strivog, who claimed a target and left the scene. Often, the chance for profit was enough. Few kingdoms dealt with the Strivog openly but many groups and citizens fed the Dark Maw's agents privately. And Rajuki clerics were always ready to help customers learn how to embrace their choices.

In the hot-blooded and bold opposition they encountered, the Strivog found practice and prey. They saw no shame in withdrawing to a more secure position, raising the dead, allying with others, and rigging environ-

mental disturbances like localized cave-ins. The drow reserved the worst of their experiments for their enemies and freely used their body parts as decorations. They challenged their most hated slaves to survive exploring dangerous terrain and earn their freedom. Not many claimed to have won the Strivog's games, and even fewer were believed.

By the time they met other dark elves, the Strivog were more than ready (and it took several hundred years, given the Icekrypt's remote location). They had limited contact with the isolationist Zuthus, but it was better than any other drow tribe had managed. Still, infrequent trading and permission to pass near Zuthus territory was the best they could do. The bone drow made strong ties with the Nalbrezu after they discovered their spies (as well as their resistance to and appreciation for torture). The Courts of Corruption could be dealt with reliably, so the Strivog called on them to sow discord and provide distractions wherever they were needed.

But enmity arose with the Karza and Xelusine based on one key difference between them. The Strivog learned that their sluggish elven fertility was even worse after being changed in Rajuk's realm. Cycles were sporadic, miscarriages frequent, and stillbirths common. Since the Karza bred easily and the Xelusine were never shy about intermixing, the bone drow tried to negotiate for marriages. When the Xelusine laughed at the idea, the Strivog simply claimed them and never asked for permission again. The Karza were so rabid that diplomacy was not even an option. The bone drow simply made it their policy to take the most fertile foes as prisoners whenever possible.

Illimitable Dominion Over All

Eventually, the Strivog began to seize any wealth buried with bodies they found to be improperly defended. Forgotten burial grounds, hidden vaults, hastily covered remains - all were equal in their sight, and grave goods were equally the property of the bone drow, as far as they were concerned. Any riches that trading failed to bring in were supplied this way, often before anyone else realized it. The drow would never disturb cemeteries in the cities they traded with so long as they were well-kempt. And when confronted with enough force, they would return everything from the site and withdraw, setting right any damage they caused.

After all, it's not as though the Strivog created no goods of their own. Hunted creatures were broken

down for every usable part as soon as possible. Lesser byproducts were rendered into items for trade like candles, waterskins, glue, and all manner of bone crafts, from dice to knife handles embellished with fine carvings. Extra pelts were set aside and leather was offered to anyone brave enough to buy it. Their fortune telling decks, each unique and painted in the blood of sentient beings, were prized for their accuracy. Their specialty inks, parchment, and spellbooks were rumored to take magic an extra step forward, but few have been able to obtain them.

Everywhere they went, the Strivog forged better lives than they had ever had before. They bolstered their limited numbers with undead shock troops, powerful spellcasting, and discipline that too many other races lacked. When bribery or bartering for information didn't work, the bone drow had no qualms with torturing information out of stragglers they found (often merchants, outcasts, or spies). If feasible, they would present their offers to the right ears and even accept dismissal, for the time being; if not, they would marshal their forces and stop at nothing until they had something to offer Rajuk.

Once they chose targets on the surface, the Strivog quickly regained their old reputation as bogeymen, and earned even more terror than the Karza's frequent and unpredictable raids. The bone drow weren't blinded by bright lights, didn't rely on poisons, and didn't make hasty mistakes. They knew how to use fear against their foes and they would do much worse than murder their captives. By the time the light-dwellers changed tactics to combat the undead, it did them no good. They discovered that the Strivog had living, breathing allies who served loyally, viciously, and ceaselessly - and worse yet, of their own free will.

No matter how far they roamed, the bone drow chose to maintain their cities well below the ground, this time by choice. There were too many natural and unnatural defenses in the Underdeep to leave behind. They maintained caves as outposts and shrines, however. Their shrines presented the gospel of the Dark Maw in carvings, permanent *magic mouth* spells, and other inventive ways. These also served as meeting places with parties who wanted to make deals with the drow out of sight. Those who wished to serve as vassals could stay to defend the shrines until the Strivog deemed them worthy to be taken home.

But the more things change for the bone drow, the more they stay the same. Their schemes for dominating life and death continue, just on a grander scale with each century. Although they strike out in different directions,

seeking new lands and cultures, they carry their ways and goals with them. The Strivog have the most rigid traditions of any drow on Porphyra and despise being forced into sweeping changes. This known flaw has nearly led to their defeat, but in the end, brief focused shifts, blind luck, or superior results have saved their skins. At least, so far.

Cities of the Dead

Since their cities have many needs, segments of Strivog are always on the move. It is unusual for these drow to go more than a handful of years without making a significant journey. They travel in caravans of custom-made vehicles that are narrower and lighter than normal (made with reinforced bones or whole skeletons of various creatures). Those not on watch will craft or study, though some fraternize with vassals or torment captives along the way. The bone drow are known to be cordial to other travelers until threatened, sparing them from raids and even offering hospitality to those who will accept it.

The Strivog adjust their architecture and defenses based on how long they intend to stay in an area. Temporary camps are marked with makeshift totems and magical wards. They are divided into subsections with their own patrols and fortifications, with the heaviest ones arranged against the outside perimeter of the entire bivouac. Supplies remain packed in case they need to be moved at once. Since most foreigners are not allowed inside Strivog cities, they are kept at a distance in these trade camps until their business is concluded. Visitors are treated respectfully whether they decide to trade with the bone drow or not, so long as they cause no trouble.

There are a few notable exceptions like the Nalbrezu, sentient undead, and followers of Rajuk from other lands. Upon agreeing to a truce, these honored guests are given special accommodations in most Strivog cities, except the capital and Xintral. They are surrounded by security measures and ushered to specific locations, but can stay for months, if they wish. The Nalbrezu rarely tarry long but celebrate after completing major services. Delegations from the Empire of the Dead are common sights. Guests wear highly visible, glowing golden symbols of Rajuk at all times and can expect worse than death for treachery.

In their permanent settlements, the bone drow incorporate natural structures into their buildings and borrow styles from bygone cultures. They create imposing edi-

fices for temples, Guilds, Orders, and other important public matters. They embellish these monuments less out of an appreciation for beauty and more to showcase their history and craftsmanship. Their bone-lined vaults and hollow ziggurats are covered in art that teaches, impresses, and defends. Public art is overseen by Strivog who compete for the privilege; thus, vandalism is a serious private offense as well as a crime against a larger group.

Usually, only the most recent structures are undecorated but personal dwellings might also be plain, at least on the outside. Since Strivog crave secrecy and space to practice their arts, many live alone or keep private suites after marriage. Homes are made with defense in mind first, with hidden and well-controlled methods favored most. The drow then decorate to please those who live inside and might bother with the exterior later. Some domiciles illustrate the achievements of inhabitants or their forebears. Destroying the works of deceased Strivog is only allowed by judgment of the Regmyn or the Lich Queen herself.

Slaves are held in the middle of Strivog holdings in tents made of skins or rickety barracks shaped from wood or ice. The point is to keep them together, warm, visible, and able to be attacked from all sides if they rebel. Undead guards are commonly employed because they are impossible to bribe. Livestock is herded with the slaves or held in pens around their quarters since they have better luck rearing the creatures, anyway. The quarters of vassals who have pledged their service form a buffer zone between the drow and their slaves. Tradition holds that vassals may never rest under the roofs of their masters but their loyalty serves as another layer of security.

The bone drow surround and intersperse their settlements with offal pits where they systematically store components. Plants, creatures, stones, and other resources are rendered, preserved, and doled out according to need. Guilds and Orders have priority at all pits, with private Strivog coming in next and vassals last (and only vassals have to explain their purpose before being approved). Strivog are expected to tithe the least valuable pieces of anything they get their hands on, either at the first city they reach or their home base. In this way, the drow usually have what they need and those with delicate stomachs stay away.

The Passion of a Withered Heart

Delicate hearts have no place in Strivog families and are crushed early. Infants are uncomfortable burdens to drow parents, getting in the way of other plans and demanding too much attention, especially when many are born sickly. Children also threaten to derail parents' devotion to Guilds and Orders. Since they can't expect vassals to raise elves properly, the bone drow have developed a custom of fostering each other's offspring for profit and social status. Arrangements are made privately, gifts are exchanged publicly, and foster parents are accorded respect for their sacrifice.

But when so much in the material world is fleeting and messy, attachments are difficult to form. Foster parents are generally formal, remaining distant authority figures and strict teachers, though some will show their pride after a ward reaches adulthood. Birth parents might never acknowledge their children or might hound them mercilessly to excel. Young Strivog often struggle to relate to each other outside of competition, but those who find common interests (or enemies) can develop disturbingly intense friendships. Yet even these relationships wither easily as years pass, ambitions change, and flaws become unbearable.

Fully grown Strivog have many more opportunities to make connections, since their birth and foster families start to take them seriously and provide introductions. Adult siblings reunite and are often willing to defend each other even though they were raised apart (or perhaps because they are new to one another). Guilds and Orders encourage the most camaraderie because they are so rigorous and a number of projects force drow to spend long days or weeks together. The trouble is that by the time they can socialize widely and are better received, many Strivog don't care anymore and find social obligations burdensome.

Physical attraction and affection are probably the most awkward aspects of life for the bone drow. Sensuality is not willingly discussed and the Strivog are taught to ignore their base needs for as long as they can. They do not trust the urges of the flesh to do them much good. This leads them to treat sex like a necessary evil and breeding as a duty. Upon reaching maturity, most drow ask an elder to arrange the best match. Once wed, that elder holds the couple accountable for regular attempts to conceive or for divorce, if it isn't working. Unions commonly end after a firstborn's fifth birthday without much discord, in any case.

It isn't that the bone drow can't feel positive emotions;

they just view everything from a distance, as though everyone is already dead. Instead of encouraging nihilism, the drow highlight the value of what lasts the longest and matters most. Family lines and personal ties, no matter how successful, do not endure as long as objects and ideas. Fear and despair get in the way of one's goals. Temporary discomforts and slights pass, as do most bodily urges, so it seems like a waste of time to indulge them. Death is inevitable, but a legacy is not.

The reason for this emotional remove is a subject of debate amongst other drow tribes and Strivog who have fled. Some, like the Nalbrezu, insist that it's a matter of culture since the Strivog are punished for emotional extremes and rewarded for careful decisions since birth. This is also true in their social institutions, where elders show the young the benefits of being calculating and precise. Some of the bone drow speculate that their tours through Rajuk's domain have altered their souls as well as their flesh. Whatever the case, Strivog temperaments run colder from infancy and retreating from emotions is easier for them.

This means that the pace of Strivog life is maddeningly slow by Karza and Xelusine standards and suspiciously restrained compared to the Nalbrezu. While they gather in larger numbers to learn, create, and defend, the bone drow prefer solitary pleasures or fewer faces for leisure time. Games of mental skill - notably portable distractions like draughts and cards - are popular, though memory sports and puzzles also lead to friendly rivalries. Physically inclined drow compete at private events arranged by their teachers. Music is languid and dances are based on measured poses and steps. In short, enthusiasm is saved for work rather than wasted on play.

The Red and the Black

The Strivog have no use for noble houses; they track lineages for breeding and historical purposes alone. Leaders are given the respect they earn and their descendants labor under higher expectations, but their families are granted few favors. Instead, bone drow are esteemed by their standing in their Order and Guild, and they commonly participate in both associations throughout their lives. These groups are considered higher callings, honorable pastimes, and essential to society but are firmly based in hard work and the real world. Consequently, families remain second best or must fight for importance in a bone drow's adult life.

This is no mistake. Both memberships encourage

drow to explore beyond their families and make decisions based on their own talents. Any bone drow can make their fortune in these groups and none are turned away lightly. Guilds and Orders are designed to be voluntary and merit-based, with laws that prohibit relatives from ruling over or favoring one another. Interference is punished harshly, if discovered. This is because Orders represent what drow value most and will die to defend. Guilds encompass their finest crafts, which are never trifling matters. To wear their allegiances with pride they must be able to choose, at least eventually.

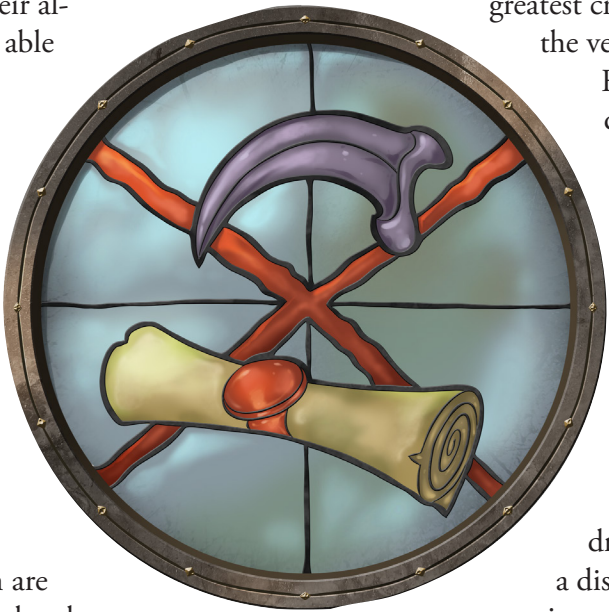
Strivog are tested as small children and placed in a Guild according to the crafts in which they show the most promise. Along with foster parents and the temple, a bone drow's first Guild molds their early experiences. Visits to the guildhall are welcome escapes for primary students (known by the title 'Annulus'). Lessons become dreaded ordeals as training intensifies, however. Annulyn are drilled mercilessly on everything related to their art and tested more often each year. Teachers are rotated to prevent the worst abuses but students surrender their creations to their current instructor in payment. They are allowed to keep only their most flawed pieces until they show enough mastery for their final exam, a blow to any drow's ego.

Once an Annulus completes their first decade, they submit their best work for judgment. Acceptance allows

them to become an apprentice (or 'Gallus') to a journeyman (or 'Choalus') who takes them on with up to ten others. Gallyn continue their studies, follow their Choalus' orders, and instruct the incoming Annulyn. Choa-lyn serve the masters (known as 'Regmus') and train the Gallyn but also report the Guild's needs to those above them. Regmyn test the Guild as a whole, starting with their underlings, and rule over the Choalyn and Annulyn below them. Regymn are ranked by their greatest creations, with the most skilled at the very top.

For all the rigor and ritual, bone drow become deeply involved in their Guilds once they're full members. Masters remain strict but can develop close bonds with their students, and some acquire private patrons and fans. Even Gallyn enjoy more respect in Strivog settlements because their output supplies the nation. Guild products are offered within drow holdings first, sometimes at a discount, and all bear their makers' registered marks. Thus, Guilds provide peace, brotherhood, and purpose - a real sense of home. Since they can dominate their members' time when they are in Strivog territory, this is for the best.

Each Guild in a city has its own unique crest based on the three tools of the trade favored in the area and era. Any time a majority of the Regmyn agree, a guild's symbol can be changed. Colors, tools, and additional emblems are suggested by the Annulyn, voted on by the



Guilds and their Crafts

Name	Crafts	Reputation
Anconin	Woodwork	Wise but indulgent
Bracnei	Jewelry and gem-cutting	Stylish but egocentric
Droqai	Metalwork	Shrewd but rowdy
Gholeous	Traps, forgeries, and other rogue crafts	Inquisitive but disrespectful
Izorus	Stonework	Painstaking but unrestrained
Kydraum	Textiles and needlework	Steadfast but forgetful
Phargeal	Alchemy, culinary, brewing, potions, and oils	Intuitive but careless
Silermis	Leatherwork	Forthright but desperate
Vornaris	Ink, painting, bookbinding	Profound but paranoid
Zerteres	Ceramics and glasswork	Imaginative but distractible

Gallyn, arranged into designs and then judged by the Choalyn, with the Regmyn having the final vote. This crest is often used on Guild documents, cargo, and tools, as well as holdings. While those in the know can easily determine the Guild represented, a Knowledge (local) check for the place of origin usually requires a DC of 15 or higher (depending on the reputation of the location).

Membership in a Guild is mandatory early on but not permanent. It's possible to change Guilds once a decade if two obligations are met. First, an appropriate submission must be approved by three Regmyn in the new Guild. Secondly, three gifts must be created and given to honor the prior Guild's investment. Many reassignments are accepted without resentment, but a few spark terrible feuds. Underlings add to a teacher's power and wealth, after all, and top students are guarded jealously. Trying to break free can lead to extended campaigns of humiliation, sabotage, and assassination attempts. And jilted masters can have long memories.

Drow who are fighting with their guildmates have a way to escape. Orders, along with the temple of Rajuk, can preempt Guilds and send members abroad at any time. Although they preside over major matters within Strivog territory, Orders are expected to explore and seize resources for themselves and the Guilds they depend on. Permanent Strivog settlements maintain headquarters for each Order, knowing that they are necessary and will be filled without notice. A Choalus can petition their Order to forego a Guild entirely, but only once they have shown some mastery.

Drow can't join an Order in any capacity, however, until they are accepted into a Guild. At that point, they can ask to do a service for one Order of their choice. An applicant is briefly tested to determine their strengths, assigned a task, and sent on a quest with a group of members. While Orders must offer a chance to anyone who requests it, in practice the deck can be stacked against a drow the leaders don't support. An applicant who doesn't succeed can try another Order after they take a month to determine how they failed and how

to improve in the future. If a drow fails to enter three Orders in a row, the fourth is monitored closely to stop any tampering.

Once taken in as an apprentice (and given the title of 'Calcan'), an initiate begins to serve as they are able. Orders are open to all classes and ages but posts are assigned according to ability and reputation. By serving a journeyman (known as a 'Phalan') who specializes in the same area of interest, a Calcan receives hands-on training in that profession. Everything is learned on the go, without the formal schooling of the Guilds. The Phalyn run businesses, offices, and groups dedicated to their specialties, and oversee recruits. The top level masters, known by the title 'Sesan', track development, decide on when to start new ventures and move members.

In Orders and Guilds alike, most deeds of the lowest ranks are credited to their superiors. These Strivog struggle for years to claim their greatest works in ways that cannot be denied. Usually this means arranging public spectacles or revealing their influence in front of the right observers. Once they secure a middle rank, however, bone drow have triumphs attached to their personal names as impressive and descriptive titles. Particularly wondrous breakthroughs are recognized by Regmyn and Sesyn in high ceremonies. The grandest officials are granted titles very close to those earned by legendary Sesyn.

In their first nights on Porphyra, the Sesyn chose creatures they admired to be the symbols of their Orders. These beings were not only sacred prey but had aspects worthy of emulation, and they remain special to the Orders to this day. They are studied thoroughly, sought on grand hunts, and brought into alliances (if sentient and amenable). Order members mimic their tactics and traits and use their body parts whenever possible. This reverence also flavors the way the Orders operate, with Vicyx members moving in larger groups and Scavex organizing in small numbers with fearsome hierarchies.

The Strivog have more patience than some taskmasters in the Underdeep, but it is not limitless. Rejecting one's

Orders and their Responsible

Name	Symbols	Specialties and Responsibilities
Fossus	Aberrations and Oozes	Academic, record-keeping, and magical
Iliomos	Humanoids and Monstrous Humanoids	Entertainment, diplomatic, and criminal
Scavex	Dragons and Outsiders	Industrial, tactical, and governmental
Talenus	Animals, Fey, and Magical Beasts	Martial, protective, and transportation
Vicyx	Plants and Vermin	Agrarian, preservation, and curative

place, work, or lessons leads to immediate and harsh correction, as well as opportunities to improve. But if a bone drow refuses to be taught and goes on to make the same mistakes in their duties, it is noted. If no amends are made, the marks remain. Having three failures on the record is grounds for censure by the decree of the Regmyn or Sesyn. Titles from their role are rescinded and access to the group's advantages ends for a year and a day. Furthermore, word is sent through all Guilds, Orders, and major holdings about a censured drow.

This is not a death sentence. Unless a capital crime was committed, the offender is not banished from their city, caravan, or from another group. The social stigma that follows, however, is persistent and ruthless. A censured bone drow's failings can be used against them in any context, without recourse. Most will exile themselves to the far edges of Strivog territory or outside of it altogether. Yet many Strivog return to prove their worth. Joining another group after being expelled is a daunting experience but allows an exile to start over. It is all but impossible to rejoin an organization after being cast out - but some are willing to die trying.

Despite setbacks, the Guilds and Orders have bolstered the Strivog empire considerably. Their focus on the here and now counter-balances the temple's obsession with dying and the land of the dead. But they have another, truly surprising benefit. Their emphasis on creation and preservation has kept the Strivog from war with the Lethaeans. Whenever the bone drow encounter this distant tribe, they cannot help but admire their bizarre contraptions. The Lethaeans, likewise, are loathe to destroy fine crafts of any kind. So far, this has led to parleys and withdrawals on both sides, but all Strivog efforts at diplomacy have been firmly denied.

Great would be the Guild or Order that secured the Lethaeans' trade secrets...

La Petite Mort

The Strivog rely on the fervent offerings and loyalty of their vassals more than slave labor. These petitioners come from outside of bone drow culture but pledge their lives to the drow and their souls to Rajuk. In exchange, they get more respect than slaves and are given worthy work, accommodations, and a chance to prepare for the afterlife. Some seek Rajuk in order to escape their former lives, gods, or fears; others do so after near-death experiences and visions; and more than a few swear oaths once they feel themselves growing old or infirm. But

they are never discounted due to race, gender, or other mortal concerns.

Not all of those who choose to serve are the desperate or insane, the duped or the damaged. It would be far less disturbing to enemies of the Strivog if they were. Instead, the Dark Maw calls to a wide swath of beings, inspiring unhealthy fixations and desires for oblivion. He then guides them to shrines, burial grounds, or trade routes used by the bone drow. From there, the Strivog divide the wheat from the chaff. Duties at above-ground sites or battles are only the first steps, and less zealous vassals might never advance. Once they promise their lives, escape attempts or shows of insubordination are fast routes to humiliating deaths.

Those who prove worthy of venturing below go on a detour before they are trusted in bone drow territory. They do not know this until it is too late, of course. The Strivog believe that vassals must witness what they are working for and taste the wine of death. There is only one way to do that and it cannot happen on the mortal plane, so petitioners are sent to visit Rajuk's realm. They go alone, knowing that dying on their journey will prove their weakness and earn Rajuk's wrath. But those who follow the same rules the Strivog faced and return from their short jaunt are on their way to Rajuk's eternal favor.

Vassals who make it back are forever changed. Though few show signs of lasting, physical alterations, nearly all display a fervor that gleams in their eyes. They tend to be unswervingly devoted to the bone drow from that moment on, and peculiarly resistant to magical and mundane attempts to change their minds. Rather than pledging their lives to individual Strivog, however, they follow the race as a whole, with Rajuki clerics at the top of their chain of command. They are allowed some mingling amongst themselves, including marriage and childbirth, but are sporadically tested to ensure they will forsake all other bonds when called to do so.

Vassals are also tested to determine which Guilds and Orders they would serve best, an honor granted to no other foreigners. Whether they arrive with many skills or few, petitioners start at the bottom and follow the basic Strivog model of learning. They begin in a Guild but can be claimed by an Order after three years in good standing. Once they have tended an Order for another three years, the Temple might see fit to put them to use, which draws them even closer to Rajuk. Although they cannot advance above apprentice ranks, many vassals acquire crafts and trades that were forbidden or disregarded in their homelands, as well as steady employment.

The vassal caste includes any drow who come from

other tribes. While many are abducted and held as brood mares, some dark elves stay willingly or seek out the Strivog in the first place. A few embrace Rajuk openly. But no matter how long they stay or how much they do, other drow are trusted no closer than this. Even breeding partners sleep in vassal quarters and must defer to the Strivog in all things. It is frowned upon to trifle with any vassal over petty matters or to shower them with favoritism or abuse. Still, few drow can swallow their pride long enough to live this way. Those who do usually have nowhere else to go, above or below.

The Laws of the Dead

The Strivog concept of justice upholds four pillars: caste, ownership, wastefulness, and the type of victim involved. Slaves, as the lowest of the low, have no rights and can never gain them. They are community property doled out by the temple and shuffled to various projects, never to be kept for long by one drow. Those with valued skills are marked for all to see, and damaging them means dealing with the clergy. If they are proven to be working against Strivog interests, however, any bone drow can try and convict them. On the road or in times of crisis, disobedient slaves are simply slain. Otherwise, their torture and death is drawn out where other slaves are forced to see and hear, but they are displayed beyond the ability to be soothed or saved.

Vassals earn a limited citizenship that sets them well apart from slaves. New petitioners cannot be killed without just cause and can prove their worth without fearing sabotage. Once three mid-ranking drow approve it, a vassal can serve the rest of their life below and cannot be maimed without good reason. If a vassal can find a drow to represent them, they can even file grievances. It is unlikely that vassals will receive much compensation, but healing and forbidding further injury are not out of the question. These basic rights are precious because they are monitored and guaranteed by the clergy. Violators face Rajuki clerics and their unpredictable discipline.

Vassals are not the only foreigners who enjoy some protections. Travelers benefit from a passage in the Laws of the Lich Queen which states: "As we journeyed unmolested through the lands of the dead, so shall we refrain from harming those who wander. Unless they show fight, hospitality shall be offered and a truce maintained until camp is broken." Refusing to withdraw from defended burial places is also forbidden. "Should

the claws of Rajuk be scorched, their worth is proven, and we shall belay our course." First offenses and those against travelers call for surrendering valuable property. Repeat offenses against individuals or a refusal to retreat will result in loss of one's best possession and title.

Strivog crimes against each other are always given serious consideration, but not all problems are worthy of court attention. Minor infractions are handled by family elders or superiors in one's Guild or Order, depending on what has occurred and where. Crimes of lust and wrath, for example, are trifling matters as long as they leave no long-term crippling effects. The same goes for crimes of deception, like forgery. Damage to objects that can be fixed with low-level magic is forgivable, but only just. Fines and services are the prescribed penalties at this stage and increase for offenders of advanced age and power, since they should have known better.

Misdeeds with limited reach are kept in-house. Breaches of Guild methods - including stealing, destroying or sabotaging minor works, and failing in one's duties - are addressed by the Guild in question. Members who do not honor their word with their fellows are castigated by their superiors. Bungling minor contracts is punished by the masters of everyone involved. Repaying debts (three or more times over), rededicating one's works or possessions to a victim, and being given dangerous or underfunded projects are common penalties for these low-level crimes. Censure for significant, repeated failures is the harshest judgment, but at least it comes from familiar faces.

When a problem crosses boundaries or reveals major weaknesses, the accused's Order or Guild is not allowed to preside over them. Order members who sell, trade, or lose items that can be used against the Strivog to devastating effect have obviously not been taught properly. In such cases, another Order is chosen to deal with the matter. Accusations that a drow has been forced into a group are given to the temple, while favoritism cases are handled by another Order or Guild; whenever needed, the local temple will choose a group to hold court. Losing one's rank is the least one can expect; curses, maiming, and geases are likely to follow.

Cases that call for extended court hearings are held for all Strivog to see and are routinely punished. They involve the worst and most lasting destruction and outstanding levels of treachery. Most of the time, the harm was done to mighty objects rather than people, since masterworks are harder to replace than individuals. Demolishing buildings or camps, annihilating historic artifacts, and breaking multiple magical items beyond

mid-level repairs are examples. That does not mean that capital offenses never involve breathing victims. Destroying a drow fetus (or its pregnant mother) or allowing a Strivog child to die of neglect will bring the harshest treatment. Cannibalism of bone drow living or dead, “except in as dire a condition as the Last Meal of the Duskhellen,” is outlawed at this level.

Three violations are enshrined in the Laws of the Lich Queen as unforgivable. First and foremost: “All Strivog must walk Rajuk’s realm and return upon reaching adulthood and every major phase thereafter. To refuse this rite is to refuse our blood.” It is believed that after experiencing this journey, a bone drow’s faith will be re-affirmed and any weaknesses will be washed away. Thus: “To reject Rajuk and worship another power is to forfeit everything Strivog society offers.” This also breaches the last major law, which is: “Fear Rajuk as no other, for death is certain but His favor is not.”

Master-level members of a Guild, an Order, and the temple must agree to form a three member panel for capital crimes. Providing false evidence to a high court is a top tier offense in and of itself, and anyone called before the panel must do everything in their power to appear or they will be tried for as many charges as possible immediately. A majority is needed to determine guilt or innocence - but if they cannot reach a conclusion, the Lich Queen herself can be petitioned to decide. This has only happened less than a handful of times, and on each occasion, at least one of the judges was sentenced along with the accused.

There are few dooms the bone drow dread, and they are all brought to bear on their worst criminals with The Undoing. The condemned can have no credit in Strivog sight in the past, present, or future. Any works they have made are destroyed or reattributed; all deals and signatures are reworked. Their children are officially tied to another parent (and while offspring may petition to choose which one, they cannot refuse). Their name is struck and speaking of them is punished. And then, once this has been done, the accused is slowly murdered in a manner of the court’s invention, often by the hands of those they offended most.

If the soul of the damned has been pledged to another god, they are not killed; their soul is captured by magical means and kept in torment. Only if they are freed by accident is it acceptable to kill them and release them to their god. If they belong to Rajuk, they are sent to him before their time and deserve what awaits. As the final insult, the remains of the convicted are mixed with those of slaves and other prey, unmarked and anonymous.

While Strivog have their bones carved with their names, titles, and symbols and are given places of honor in any project, the guilty support the empire as though they had never been bone drow.

The Dance of Death

The makeshift shrines of sinew and bone in every Strivog camp are left behind as reminders that the children of Rajuk have passed - but they are nothing compared to the grand edifices found in their strongholds. While guildhalls and Order offices showcase their finest works and trophies, temples of Rajuk are memorials to death. They are created out of the finest corpses the bone drow have to offer, starting with their greatest enemies and fiercest prey. Preserved dragon wings form vaulted ceilings; other pieces are used for pews, display bases, and decorations. No two temples are alike, and each one is a work in progress, reflecting local tastes and victories.

It is a great honor for Strivog to be displayed in a house of Rajuk after their demise. Bodies of younger drow are rendered down - their bones painted and carved with their names and any titles or symbols they earned - and then arranged in artful displays. Particularly powerful drow are carefully preserved, decked in finery, and set up in cases or hung from above. Surrounded by signs of their triumphs, illuminated with colored magical effects and backed by mirrors, these are the closest things to saints or heroes the Strivog possess. It is not unusual for visiting drow to pray as they pass, in hopes that ancestors will intercede with Rajuk on their behalf.

It is for this reason that the Strivog will go to great lengths to obtain the body of one of their own kind, in the event that someone has fallen. Even disgraced drow are rarely left in foreign hands; it is better for them to be disintegrated than disrespected by others. It is also for this reason that bone drow strive to live as long as possible. No matter how hale or strong they are, drow hide supplies and set up measures to ensure their escape from bad situations. They can be denied their place in the temple if their death is deemed unacceptable - but they will face far worse if they have failed to serve Rajuk long and well enough.

Clerics of the Dark Maw do more than spread their faith in services and songs. They serve their people as judges and record-keepers, tracking the deeds of vassals and drow alike. Instead of confessing sins, Strivog go to clergy to confirm their worth. They take proof of ways

they have served Rajuk, often in forms that can be used as tithes, and request recognition. Three clerics must agree that an act deserves commendation, at which point it is added to the local archive for that drow and included in daily prayers. But Rajuk is a demanding deity who is fully aware of how long-lived his drow servants can be. No one knows how much it will take to please him.

Temple officials are common sights among the Strivog, setting out to obtain grave goods and servants for their lord. They serve as tie breakers and advisors if they are summoned to preside over Guild or Order matters, but their suggestions are routinely agonizing, so they are only called in as a last resort. Low level representatives are known as Cruciates. Drawn from all specialties, they are the most mobile of the hierarchy. Mid-level members are called Eminences, and they sit in judgments over most other bone drow. Each temple is led by a Grand Vicerator or Viceratrix who plans and oversees rituals and large scale undead operations. They alone must be clerics to hold their positions; otherwise, Rajuk's temple accept all who prove their dedication to his word. But only a few Strivog ask to leave their other memberships for the temple alone.

Officials also are on the lookout for failures and heretics, ready to report weaknesses to those above. Drow who fear death and show distaste for it are pitiful wretches but the least of their worries. They are sent to Rajuk's realm more often and assigned to tasks to inure them to the great and terrible mystery. Heretics, however, are far more troublesome. There has been a steady pulse of dissent beneath the skin of Strivog society since they first settled on Porphyra. Once they were safe, some drow began to whisper that they had been tricked. Maybe the Dark Maw had engineered the death of their former planet to begin with, or he was just an opportunistic underling - a petulant child god who should earn nothing but their disdain.

In any case, heretics quietly refuse to worship him, plot to sabotage temples, and seek ways to escape. Any drow who appears to have been gone too long without permission becomes suspect, even if they have excuses. This is because some heretics operate on their own, unable to trust anyone around them with such a secret, and they can cause great collateral damage. Others manage to form small, insular cults replete with disguises, codes, and constant tests of loyalty. No heretic can afford to stay in Strivog territory for long once they have rejected Rajuk, however. Even if they are not unmasked, tried, and tortured by the clergy, it is only a matter of time before heretics are called to walk his realm again.

Thus, the dance of death continues. At the head of Strivog life is the Lich Queen, Baethara Belarayne herself. Over time bone drow take on marks of their time in the land of death, but none have advanced as far as she. The Queen alone has been given the gift of lichdom "naturally," without any ritual being cast or any phylactery being seen. Whether other servants of Rajuk can expect the same is uncertain but unlikely. It is thought that lichdom is a symbol of divinely-approved leadership that might pass to another if Baethara should fail or fall. In the meantime, the Lich Queen is the unspoken head of all Orders, Guilds, and clergy; though she steps into matters sporadically, her word supercedes all others.

Strivog Character Creation

Strivog are bird-boned and retain the surefooted grace of their forest roots throughout their lives. They are born with an attractive range in their coloring from head to foot, as well. Flesh tones undergirded by brown are linked to their early forebears; stony grays and blacks are tied to the curses and deprivation they endured. Green, brown, and gold are common eye colors, but blues, reds, silvers, and purples occur often. Whether this is due to magical experiments or Rajuk's influence is anyone's guess, but they are not stigmatized in any case. While their hair isn't as vibrant as the Xelusine, bone drow usually begin with colored locks rather than white. This does not make them the peacocks one might expect, however.

Strivog youth are often sickly and sullen, and they are taught that beauty is worthless in any case. This prepares them for the way they will age. Of all drow on Porphyra, only the Zuthus experience more dramatic changes to their appearance. Upon returning from visiting Rajuk's realm, many find their hair bleached, their skin recast with sickly green undertones, or their limbs marked with bruises that will never heal. As they obtain more power, their bodies take on more signs of undeath, which nothing short of magic can hide. These shifts can occur at any point, causing even hale children to appear as though they have one foot in the grave. But they are praised by elders (and noted by rivals) whenever they occur.

The Elven spoken by the Strivog is the most formal of any of the tribes on Porphyra. Honorific forms of address vary depending on age, caste, status, Guild, Order, and so on. Learning how to switch between these forms properly takes time and practice. Thus, anyone

who tries to impersonate Strivog suffers a -4 penalty to communicate appropriately with other native speakers. Despite this, their dialect has much in common with other elven strains and has been more resistant to change. Loan words from draconic and Abyssal have been accepted into the carefully recorded tongue over time. Informal modes of speaking, with any borrowed terms from lesser languages, are used with foreigners or as an insult to other Strivog. There is an especially cutting mode of address used only with official enemies; each word is appended with curses, in case it is the last they hear.

The curses levied by their former gods did not follow the Strivog across the planes, however. They remain unsuited to heat after spending so long in the cold, but most have no trouble with bright light or sowing seeds in Porphyra's soil. They kept their previous genetic gifts and manifested spells and a rapport with the undead after their great journey. Clergy see all of this as the favor of Rajuk, without question. Some believe their old deities have lost all of their power, but others tie the curses to the planet on which they were laid. It is dangerous to argue about whether or not Rajuk intended their transformation, but some heretics believe that their new state is a curse and a way to keep them dependent on one evil god. Regardless, the bone drow are now a very different tribe of elves than they were before.

- **+2 Dexterity, +2 Intelligence, -2 Charisma:** Strivog are deft and astute.
- **Elf:** Drow are humanoids with the elf subtype.
- **Medium:** Drow are Medium creatures and receive no bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- **Normal Speed:** Drow have a base speed of 30 feet.
- **Carrion Sense:** Bone drow have a natural ability to sniff out carrion. This functions like the scent ability, but only for corpses and badly wounded creatures (creatures with 25% or fewer hit points).
- **Darkvision:** Strivog can see in the dark up to 60 feet.
- **Drow Immunities:** Drow are immune to magic *sleep* effects and gain a +2 racial bonus on saving throws against enchantment spells and effects.
- **Chill Affinity:** Strivog have resistance 5 to cold energy and can move normally in icy terrain.
- **Fell Magic:** Strivog gain +1 to the DC of any saving throws against necromancy spells that they cast. Those with a Wisdom score of 11 or higher also gain the following spell-like abilities: 1/day—*chill touch*,

command undead, *touch of fatigue*. The caster level for these effects is equal to the user's character level. The DC for these spell-like abilities is equal to 10 + the spell's level + the user's Wisdom modifier.

- **Night Warden's Blessing:** Non-intelligent undead creatures will not attack Strivog unless directly provoked or magically commanded by an enemy. Intelligent undead begin with a starting attitude of indifferent and will only attack if the Strivog fails their social roll to convince them to stand down. Bone drow enjoy a +2 racial bonus when interacting with undead creatures, and any undead they command or raise are bolstered by a +2 turn resistance to the turn undead ability of non-Strivog clerics.
- **Spell Resistance:** Drow possess spell resistance equal to 6 plus their class levels.
- **Heat Vulnerability:** Strivog wilt quickly in the heat. They always suffer a -4 penalty when making Fortitude checks to resist hot temperatures, regardless of what they are wearing. (Heavy armor or heavy clothing doubles the penalty.) A -2 penalty also applies to any saving throws they make to resist fire-based effects.
- **Languages:** Drow begin play speaking Elven and Undercommon. Strivog with high Intelligence scores can choose from the following languages: Abyssal, Aklo, Aquan, Common, Draconic, Infernal (via ties to the Empire of the Dead), Necril, or Terran.

Additional Racial Characteristics

A Strivog character can manifest additional racial abilities upon returning from Rajuk's realm, gaining a level, entering a new age category, or at another dramatically appropriate point (as approved by the GM). Every time a new power is gained, the character's physical form changes to further resemble the undead. Minor abilities lead to slight shifts while major abilities are likely to warp the body in ways that cannot be missed. Very young bone drow are unlikely to develop these gifts but it is not unheard of. Strivog do not gain special social advantages for these benefits without a reputation to back them up. Unless otherwise stated, alternate racial traits add racial bonuses to skills or saving throws and cannot be purchased multiple times. Consult your GM before selecting any of these options.

Each ability must be paid for either with a feat or with a number of skill points, as indicated the descriptions below. A Strivog cannot have more points of abilities

than their total character level + 5. For every 10 points of abilities acquired (rounded up), the Strivog also suffers a new weakness from the list below (or another thematic weakness, with GM approval). Upon acquiring 20 or more points' worth of these powers, the character becomes a half-undead creature, with the following adjustments:

- Gain a +2 racial on saving throws against disease and mind-affecting effects
- Take no penalties from energy-draining effects, though they can still be killed if they accrue more negative levels than they have Hit Dice (after 24 hours, any negative levels they've gained are removed without any additional saving throws)
- Start to be harmed by positive energy and healed by negative energy

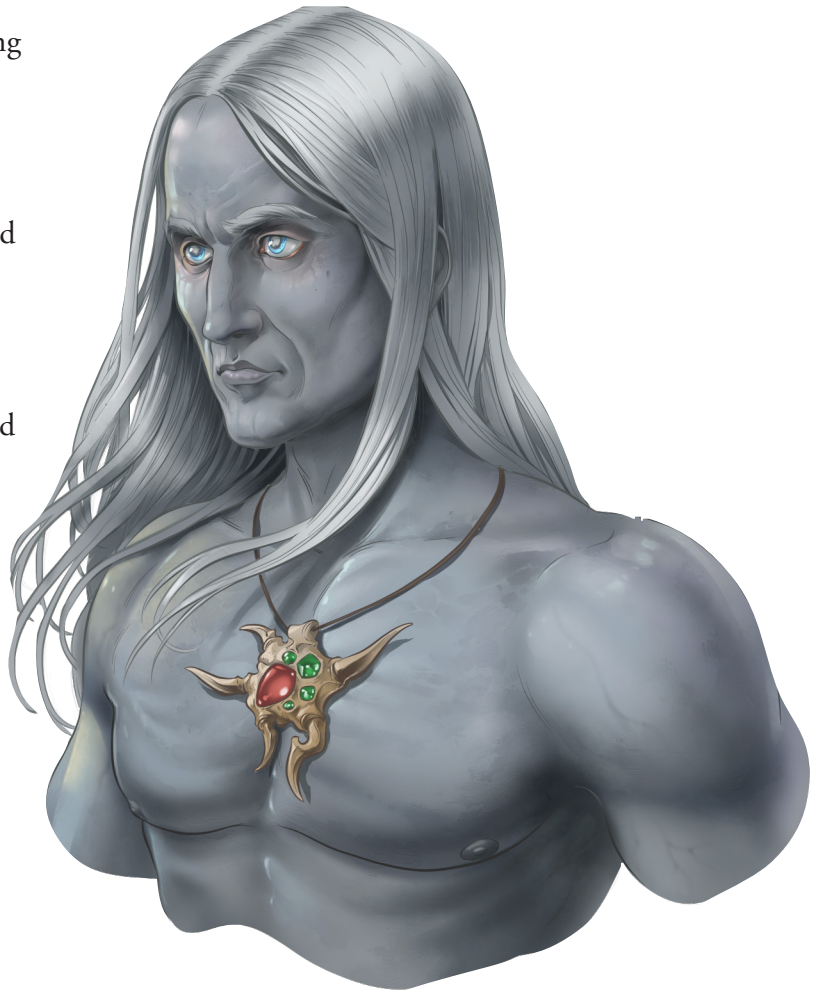
From then on, the character can be targeted with spells as if they are undead or living, and will register to a *detect undead* spell. They are subject to turn/rebuke undead but have +4 turn resistance and receive a new saving throw each round. Rumors exist which claim that those with the most blessings (25 or more points) become fully undead without any outside interference.

No sane Strivog would rely on hearsay when it comes to signs of Rajuk's grace, however. While some of the bone drow's greatest clerics, Regmyn, and Sesyn have morphed into potent undead, they have been unique, few in number, and legendary before their final changes. Stories about the melting, screaming horrors that occur when Rajuk condemns a soul are far more prevalent.

Two of these abilities can be bought with one feat, or by spending the skill points required:

Craftsman (1): You gain a +2 racial on all Craft or Profession checks to create objects from bone or other materials drawn from carcasses.

Death's Deputy (1): You gain a +2 bonus on the attack and damage roll for any attack that could reduce your target to negative hit points without this trait. At the start of your turn as a swift action, you can attempt an appropriate skill check to determine the target's hit points (or the GM can choose to announce the bonus without a roll).



Fearless (1): You gain a +2 bonus on all saving throws against fear effects.

Undead Resistance (1): You gain a +2 bonus on saving throws against disease and mind-affecting effects.

One of these abilities can be bought with one feat, or by spending the skill points indicated:

Frigid Touch (Su, 2): By using a standard action, you can call upon an affinity to ice and deal cold damage by touch as per the spell of the same name. You may do this once per day for every level you possess.

Inexhaustible (2): You receive a +4 bonus on Constitution checks and Fortitude saves to avoid fatigue and exhaustion, as well as any other ill effects from running, forced marches, starvation, thirst, and cold environments.

Skeletal Damage Reduction (2): You gain DR 5/bludgeoning as your skeleton toughens.

Unnatural Armor (2): You gain a +1 natural armor bonus to your Armor Class.

From this point forward, abilities can only be purchased with skill points:

Deathless Spirit (3): You gain resistance 5 against negative energy damage. You do not lose hit points when you gain a negative level, and you gain a +2 bonus on saving throws against death effects, energy drain, negative energy, and spells or spell-like abilities of the necromancy school.

Pain Touch (Su, 3): By using a standard action, you can channel pain through your body to another's. A successful touch attack causes painful spasms throughout the target's body, as per the *howling agony* spell. Creatures that are immune to pain take no damage from this touch.

Steal Breath (Su, 3): Once per day per character level, a creature you damage must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + 1/2 your character level + your Charisma modifier) or suffer the effects of *steal breath*.

Bone-Spike Defense (Ex, 4): You develop a number of sharp bones protruding out at odd locations on your body. A creature that grapples you or is grappled by you takes 1d3+3 points of piercing damage each round the grapple persists.

Fear Aura (Su, 4): Once per hour as a standard action, you can activate an aura of fear that radiates from you up to 30 feet. Living creatures that fail a Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 your character level + your Charisma modifier) are frightened for 1d6 rounds. A successful save grants a target immunity to your fear aura for 24 hours. The aura will last for one round for each level you possess.

Unearthly Cold (Su, 5): Your body generates intense cold, dealing 1d6 points of cold damage with its touch or when creatures attack you with unarmed strikes and natural attacks. Furthermore, half the cold damage caused by cold spells and spell-like abilities cast by you is not subject to cold resistance or immunity. You can voluntarily suppress this ability as per lowering spell

resistance.

Nausea (Su, 5): A living creature that you damage must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 your character level + your Charisma modifier) or be nauseated for 1 round. This ability can be used once per day for each level you possess. If the target saves, it cannot be affected by this effect for 24 hours.

Constitution Drain (Su, 6): Once per day per character level, you can force a living creature that you damage to make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 your character level + your Charisma modifier) or take 1d4 Constitution drain. The drain lasts for one round per your total level. If the target fails, you gain 5 temporary hit points. If the target saves, it cannot be affected by your drain for 24 hours.

Frightful Gaze (Su, 6): Creatures within 30 feet of you that meet your gaze must succeed at a Will saving throw (DC 10 + 1/2 your character level + your Charisma modifier) or stand paralyzed in fear for 1 round. This is a mind-affecting fear effect. A target that successfully saves cannot be affected by your frightful gaze for 24 hours. You can voluntarily suppress this ability as per lowering spell resistance.

Weaknesses

Brutal Brusqueness: Your manners are so alien and abrasive that a non-Strivog NPC's base attitude toward you is always one step lower than it would otherwise be. Successful attitude shifts last half as long, as well.

Delicate Bones: Your carrying capacity is always determined as if your Strength were 2 less points than it is, and if you become encumbered, you take 1d6 nonlethal damage each round until the extra weight is removed. You cannot take this weakness if you also possess Skeletal Damage Reduction.

Light Sensitivity: You are dazzled as long as you remain in an area of bright light.

Marked and Marred: You suffer –6 penalty on non-magical Disguise checks to alter your appearance.

Unnerving Presence: You take a –4 penalty on all Charisma-based skill checks to affect creatures of the animal type. Animals' starting attitude toward you is one

step worse than normal.

Weight of Death: Your base speed is slowed to 20 ft.

Favored Class Options

The following favored class options are available to all Strivog who have the listed favored class, and unless otherwise stated, the bonus applies each time you select the favored class reward.

Alchemist: Add +½ to the alchemist's frost bomb damage.

Bard: Add one spell known to the bard spell list. This spell must be at least one level below the highest spell level the bard can cast.

Cleric: Components for spells to *animate undead* cost 5% less. Add +½ to negative energy spell damage, including inflict spells.

Fighter: Choose the disarm or sunder combat maneuver. Add +1/3 to the fighter's CMB when attempting this maneuver (maximum bonus of +4).

Inquisitor: Add a +½ on Intimidate checks and Knowledge checks to identify creatures.

Monk: Add +¼ to the number of times per day the monk can use Stunning Fist.

Ranger: Gain the ability to choose a skeleton or zombie version of an animal companion or a mummified animal. These animals manifest the most beneficial changes whenever conflicts in statistics from being a companion or having a template arise. If the companion is destroyed, this option must be chosen again to bond with such a creature.

Rogue: Remove 2 from the final DC of a Craft (trap) check or 5% from the total cost when using mainly organic elements taken from corpses in its construction.

Sorcerer: Add +½ to the number of times per day a sorcerer can use the grave touch undead bloodline power, or +1 to the total number of rounds per day the sorcerer can use the claws abyssal bloodline power. The sorcerer must possess the applicable power to select these bonuses.

Wizard: Gain the ability to choose a taxidermic creature as a familiar (using the template in Bestiary 5). These animals manifest the most beneficial changes whenever conflicts between being a familiar and having a template arise. If the familiar is destroyed, this option must be chosen again to bond with such a creature.

Faction Traits

Strivog usually belong to a Guild and an Order upon achieving adulthood, though some opt for one of the two and temple service. Entrance into a Guild is an early rite of passage, and Orders will not even consider drow who are not apprenticed in a Guild. The temple is inscrutable in its methods, accepting some charges from birth but denying capable candidates for no apparent reason. It will not admit anyone with more than one other allegiance, however, and many who serve Rajuk forego everything else. Fully grown bone drow without membership in at least one organization are known as the Unworthy and remain destitute and despised until they gain a position, expire, or flee. After everything that has been invested in their education, there can be no other response.

Perks of membership are dependent on one's rank first and foremost, since it represents a drow's skill, output, and reputation. Members are expected to possess at least the following base ranks in an appropriate Craft (for Guild), Profession (for Order), or Knowledge (for temple): Annulus one rank, Gallus/Calcan five, Choalus/Phalan ten, and Regmus/Sesan fifteen. Bone drow only benefit from the highest lifestyle they earn between their memberships. Additionally, social benefits pertain to only one organization and don't influence the others. Unless otherwise specified, faction traits confer trait bonuses to skills or other checks.

- **Annulus:** An initiate earns a poor lifestyle and endures a -1 penalty to social checks with Guild members who are of higher rank. Once per day, however, an Annulus can call upon a sense of camaraderie to gain a +1 bonus to one Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate or Sense Motive check with a member of the same rank.
- **Gallus/Calcan/Cruciate:** An apprentice earns an average lifestyle and a +1 bonus to one social check per day that relies on their reputation within their organization.
- **Choalus/Phalan/Eminence:** A journeyman earns a wealthy lifestyle and a +2 bonus to one social check per day that relies on their reputation within their organization.
- **Regmus/Sesan/Vicerator:** A master earns an extravagant lifestyle and a +3 bonus to one social check per day that relies on their reputation within their organization.

Choose two of the traits listed below, designating one for each organization. The goals and specialties of those groups and your roles within them should guide your choices in each case. If you begin play with membership in only one organization for whatever reason, choose only one trait. If you begin play without either membership, you are considered destitute and gain no trait bonuses (unless you choose from the heretic abilities below in order to cover your tracks). All selections are subject to GM approval.

Guilds and Orders

Fatal Trapper: You gain a +1 bonus on Craft (traps) checks and a +1 trait bonus on Disable Device checks made to disable traps.

Focused Creator: You gain a +2 bonus on a single Craft, Perform, or Profession skill (your choice).

Mentored: Choose a single Craft, Perform, or Profession skill. You gain a +1 bonus on checks with that skill. You also gain a +1 bonus when you aid another's skill check with any skill.

Relic Hunter: You gain a +1 bonus on Appraise and Knowledge (history) checks made to examine ruined buildings more than 1,000 years old as well as any ruined objects found in them. If such an item is magical, you gain a +1 bonus on Spellcraft checks to identify its properties and Use Magical Device checks to activate it.

Sacred Prey: Choose one of the creature types associated with your Order. You gain a +1 trait bonus on all Knowledge checks related to that type of creature.

Spark of Creation: You gain a +1 bonus on Craft checks, and the cost of creating magic items is reduced by 5%.

Survivalist: You gain a +5 bonus on all Survival skill checks made to get along in the wild, travel in severe weather, keep from getting lost, or predict the weather.

Tracker of the Society: You gain a +1 bonus on Initiative checks and a +2 bonus on Survival skill checks made while traveling through any of your favored terrains. This is in addition to any bonuses you receive from your Favored Terrain class ability.

Trap Savvy: You gain a +1 bonus on Craft (traps) checks, and gain a +1 bonus to AC against attacks by traps or on saving throws against effects created by traps.

Traveling Merchant: You gain a +1 bonus on Appraise, Bluff, and Sense Motive checks made for business deals and transactions.

Vassalage: You gain a +2 profane bonus to resist non-magical manipulation and mind-affecting spells that try to turn you against the bone drow or their orders. You can choose this trait at any point after returning from your rite of passage. Vassalage is gained in addition to any original traits but vassals do not normally qualify for other Order or Guild traits.

Representatives of the temple may choose one of the following traits instead:

Beacon of Faith: Once per day as a free action, you may treat your caster level as if it were 2 levels higher when using one of the granted powers of your domain or inquisition, or when casting one of your domain spells.

Exalted of the Society: You may channel energy 1 additional time per day.

Necrotic Touch: As a standard action, you may automatically destabilize a creature at 0 or negative hit points merely by touching it, causing it to take damage per round until it makes a new check to stabilize.

Spirit Sense: You gain a +2 bonus on Perception checks to avoid being surprised and to detect invisible or incorporeal creatures.

Unnatural Presence: You can use your Intimidate skill to demoralize animals and vermin; Intimidate is always a class skill for you.

Heretics can trade one of their one of their previous traits for a selection below if they fall from grace later in life. Young heretics begin with one of the following, and will likely have difficulties in passing the scrutiny of any group they attempt to join:

History of Heresy: As long as you do not possess any levels in a class that grants divine spellcasting power, you gain a +1 bonus on all saving throws made against divine

spells.

Inspired: Once per day as a free action, roll twice and take the better result on a skill check or ability check.

Martial Manuscript: You gain a +2 bonus on rolls to confirm critical hits when you're using an unarmed strike or monk weapon.

Precision Hearing: Whenever you succeed at a Perception check to hear a creature you can't see and your check exceeds the DC by 10 or more, you can pinpoint the exact square where the sound originated.

Unabashed Gall: Whenever you commit an unexpected and outrageously unlawful act (such as knowingly destroying or stealing something) that would elicit a hostile response from another creature, you may attempt a Bluff check opposed by the opponent's Sense Motive check. If you're successful, you and any allies who were willfully expecting your unlawful deed may act in a surprise round. For each ally willfully expecting your unlawful deed, you take a cumulative -2 penalty on your Bluff check. If your Bluff check fails, there is no surprise round. Regardless of whether your Bluff check succeeds, you and any allies willfully taking advantage of your unlawful deed treat your initiative checks for the duration of combat as though you had each rolled a 1.

Advanced Crafts & Professions

Over thousands of years, the Strivog have perfected rigorous styles of teaching and learning. They invest more time and effort in early education, striving to make up for their lack of numbers with an army of capable experts. Their areas of study cover more ground than usual by testing students in related methods and materials. Rather than focusing on creating one type of item, bone drow learn how to master the materials they're made out of. Thus, a maker of metal goods can shape locks, weapons, and other objects, so long as they are primarily made of metal. This tradition began out of necessity on their home world but continues out of pride on Porphyra. All who receive training in this broadened teaching style for at least five years may choose from the following Craft specialties.

- Alchemy, potions, & oils
- Ceramics & glass

- Culinary
- Jewelry
- Leatherwork
- Metalwork
- Paper, ink, & paint
- Stonework
- Textiles & needlework
- Traps
- Woodwork

Most Guilds have mastered techniques to substitute alchemically preserved organic materials for normal components, creating versions called sinew items. Replacing over half of the material needed for an object with bone, flesh, and other remains increases the time to finish it by 25%. An item's base statistics reflect the original material or the sinew, whichever is higher (so a rope twined mostly from flesh instead of hemp would use the statistics for leather). Sinew cannot mimic materials stronger than stone, however. Thus, a half bone quarterstaff would not have the fragile quality and would use the statistics of wood. A sinew sword, on the other hand, would have the statistics of stone instead of iron, which is too strong to reproduce in this fashion.

A trained craftsman can try to render corpses or helpless bodies for usable parts with a Survival check DC 10 + CR, minimum 11. The target cannot be a construct, ooze, outsider, or undead, nor can it be in a continual incorporeal state or otherwise reduced to nothing upon its death. Each year that the carcass has been decaying adds 1 to the DC. A living target must be kept helpless for the duration; even then, add 1/2 to the DC for every character level they possess. Every 5 points of success beyond the DC produces raw materials worth up to 10% of the maximum treasure value of the creature or its XP value, if no treasure value is listed (GMs should adjust treasure for the encounter accordingly). These materials are only suitable for crafting purposes, however, and cannot exceed the maximum treasure or XP value for the creature. Failing the check by 5 or more points leads to inferior objects which suffer the fragility of normal bone weapons.

These techniques are not only used to create, but also to punish. Strivog have been known to flense prisoners while they are still alive, and not all of them are slaves. Those who have received a sentence of maiming might walk around with missing limbs - and see the items made from their pieces in other people's possession. This is incredibly demoralizing and levies a -5 penalty to any Will saving throws or Intimidate skill checks a target

makes versus the wielder of a sinew item created from their own body. This penalty expires once the item is covered, destroyed, or removed from the wielder's possession. For this reason, Strivog never give, trade, or sell objects created from the parts of one of their own to other races. They rarely offer sinew items in any case, preferring to keep them in the hands of those faithful to Rajuk.

Sinew items made from the dead always have a percentage chance to be haunted by a ghost equal to half the Crafting DC. If the ghost cannot be put to rest swiftly, a haunted item is either destroyed or traded, with full disclosure of the ghost given up front. Items created from victims that are left alive have the same percentage chance to impose a -2 penalty on the bearer instead, as they become paranoid about the original owner returning to claim their missing piece. When working in a major Strivog stronghold, access to the offal pits can reduce the costs of sinew items by 10% per rank in one's Guild. At a lesser outpost with fewer resources, this benefit is reduced to 5% per rank.

Compressed professions are also available to those who have been trained, so long as a student has spent a minimum of ten years working in their field:

- Academia (alchemists, cartographers, clergy, librarians, philosophers, scholars, scribes, soothsayers, teachers)
- Agrarian (animal rearing, farmers, fishermen, foresters)
- Art/Entertainment (courtesans, painters, performers, sculptors, writers)
- Criminal (bandit, burglar, conman, pickpocket, pimp, poacher, prostitute, quack)
- Government (bailiffs, courtiers, diplomats, heralds, judges, lawyers, seneschals, tax collectors)
- Industry (appraisers, architects, engineers, interpreters, lawyers, merchants, solicitors, surveyors, treasureurs)
- Medical (apothecaries, barber-surgeons, herbalists, midwives)
- Military (guardsmen, knights, officers, siege engineers, soldiers)
- Transport (air, land, sea)

Bone drow storytellers are expected to master oratory and acting, compiling the two specialties into one. They practice both together from the start and need no extra time to learn them.

Fetishes and Totems

Perhaps the most dreaded sight besides the Strivog themselves is their repertoire of imbued sinew items. Handheld versions are known as fetishes, which tend to be personal tokens created from the bones of enemies. They are often wearable but rarely permanent since their abilities fade with use. Totems are larger creations erected to guard Strivog sites of importance; sections of these towers are replaced as they wear out. No matter what form it takes, imbued sinew captures some of the essence of a dead creature and stores it for future use. This allows the wielder to access special powers they might otherwise never be able to possess, namely extraordinary abilities, senses, and defensive traits.

Prerequisites

In order to make a fetish or totem, the creator must possess the Craft Wondrous Item feat, have at least five years of training, and hold Rajuk Amon-Gore (or perhaps a similar entity dedicated to death, at the GM's discretion) as their patron deity. No other deity on Porphyra has been known to grant such expertise, but Rajuk has allowed both arcane and divine magic users to use this technique. Once imbued, however, anyone who knows the command word and holds the fetish can unleash its power. Fetishes take up magic item slots when worn on the body but once their effects are spent they become inert and do not interfere with wearing other magical gear. (The penalty against a living target whose parts have been used persists for the life of the item.)

A body used for creating a fetish or totem cannot be utilized for any other purpose, including being rendered for parts. Restrictions for the types of bodies that can be used are the same as those for rendering sinew items above, except that a carcass cannot be dead for longer than days equal to the creator's character level (unless *gentle repose* has been cast). The first prerequisite for all imbued items is that the creator must know any of the creature's abilities they hope to capture. The second is that the creator must have some familiarity with the creature's anatomy. These can be garnered through direct experience, an appropriate Knowledge check (or another skill check, with GM permission), or a tome with the necessary information.

The Process

First, the creator must subdue a target or gain access to the corpse of a foe and determine which abilities qualify to be imbued (extraordinary abilities, senses, and defensive traits), as well as which body parts will be used for the object. If a living target provides the raw materials, it does not have to be present for the entire imbuing process. The being must be helpless for the duration of the surgical procedure, however, either via restraints, drugs, magic, or some other means. A target that struggles significantly levies a -10 circumstance penalty to the surgical Heal check and may escape before the parts are acquired. With access to a lab or at least

a surgeon's kit, a skilled surgeon can remove the desired part(s) in an hour per piece without killing the patient. Failing the Heal check by 5 points means the desired piece has been damaged beyond repair. Rolling a natural 1 with a patient who already suffers from 50% or more of their hit points in lethal damage will slay them instantly.

The imbuing process relies on a Spellcraft check. The DC for the Spellcraft check is 5 + the CR of the deceased creature or the total character level of a living target. Even when helpless, a living target's Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma modifier (whichever is highest) is added to the DC. Furthermore, a creator cannot normally imbue abilities from foes that are of a higher CR than their own total character level. The DC increases by 5 for every point of CR or CL above the creator's own. Failing this check means the object does not work and the current materials are ruined. Unused portions of the body can be used for a new roll they if they are

available and fresh enough, up to the remaining XP or treasure value (as explained below). Failing the check by 5 or more points does not result in a cursed object but in a haunted one.

If the Spellcraft check is successful, the creator is able to imbue one use of one effect into the fetish and determine its command word. For every 5 points above the DC, the crafter can choose to imbue one use of another effect the target possesses, or imbue more charges of an effect. A fetish that is significantly damaged but not discharged can be repaired, but no fetish can be recharged or upgraded after its initial enchantment.

Fetishes and totems register to *detect magic* with auras from the Necromancy school and to *detect evil*

based on the caster level of the item's creator. They can be suppressed through *dispel magic* with a DC check of 11 + the CR of the target from which it was made. It takes as long to create a fetish as it does to make a normal wondrous object.



The Parameters

Each power that the creator steals will work differently than it did for the target that once possessed it. Unless otherwise stated, these restrictions apply to any ability that is imbued into a fetish:

- **Saving Throw:** Based on the creator's base Spellcraft rating (ranks + inherent bonuses, not including bonuses related to equipment or facilities) or the creature's DC, whichever is lower; a successful saving throw guards a target against that fetish's powers for 24 hours
- **Range:** Abilities which benefited the creature di-

rectly: Self or half the listed range; abilities which are used against or for others: Touch or half the listed range

- **Damage:** Half the listed amount in the creature's description
- **Duration:** 1 round for each character level the creator possesses or the creature's CR, whichever is lower; for effects which transform targets, the transformation takes 1.5 times the normal rate of time to be completed
- Bonuses and penalties are always temporary and cease at the end of the duration, except for hit point damage, which must be healed
- Once activated, benefits to the wielder will continue even if the fetish is taken away so long as the object is not destroyed
- Activated via a command word

Special considerations are as follows:

- **Attacks:** Abilities tied to direct attacks like Ability Damage, Attach, Bleed, Burn, Constrict, Strangle, or Trip require that a limb from the creature be used to store the effect. The limb has half the creature's normal reach or the crafter's reach, whichever is greater, and uses half the creature's grapple or touch attack score. A limb acts as a club of a size that is reasonable for the creature and can deliver additional damage from the chosen abilities. Grappling limbs can be released to tangle with a target; if they are held, the wielder is also considered grappled until the attack is finished (unless they are using a limb with Attach). Limbs with the Burn ability require a successful touch attack to initiate the chance of catching fire.
- **Emotion Aura:** The concentration check DC is based on the creature or the creator, whichever is lower.
- **Fortification, Freeze, or Natural Invisibility:** A significant portion of the creature's natural bodily defense (carapace, hide, etc.) must be utilized for this type of fetish to work.
- **Frightful Presence:** This ability lasts for half the listed duration and only affects opponents with fewer HD than the creature.
- **Jet:** This ability only works when the wielder is in water and at half the listed speed.
- **Movement:** Abilities like Burrow and Flight are granted at half the listed speed. Flight is gained at one less level of maneuverability and with half

the creature's Fly skill or the creator's own Fly skill, whichever is higher.

- **Scent:** Once activated, the wielder can use this ability for tracking purposes but must rely on their own skills.
- **Vision:** Any extraordinary ability which alters or improves vision will extend out to a range of feet equal to the creator's Spellcraft check result and last in hours rather than rounds.

These abilities are commonly imbued (and more can be made available with GM permission):

- Stench
- Tremorsense
- Water Breathing

The Costs

There are no additional raw materials because the carcass provides the necessary materials. Rather, the cost is 10% of the target's treasure or XP value for each ability or use. The creator can choose not to imbue an ability or charge and reduce the cost, but this must be decided directly after the Spellcraft check is tallied. Once the choice is made, the magic of the process drains treasure or XP value (or a combination of both, with GM's permission). This fee is subtracted from any rewards the party might partake in, so it must be determined after the Spellcraft check is made and before awards are granted. If the fee is decided in treasure, reduce the total value by the percentage and then generate treasure for the party accordingly. If the entire body is used and no value is left, then no other rewards are possible outside of the imbued objects.

A living target will lose access to some of their gear if it is chosen and used in the imbuing process. The target will not lose XP, however, even if XP chosen to cover the costs. Instead, it loses access to any abilities that are imbued as well as an appropriate body part for each ability taken, as determined by the GM. This loss cannot be healed magically by any spell short of *wish* or *miracle* while the object is still enchanted. Once all uses of all abilities are expended, the target regains their own inherent abilities and can seek magical healing for missing limbs or organs, but will likely need *regenerate* over lesser magics. In the meantime, penalties are accrued for each missing part but prosthetics may be available (see *Strategists and Tacticians* for full details). If smaller pieces are taken (like fingers) rather than larger portions (like an

entire hand), the following drawbacks are appropriate possible penalties:

Brain Piece

Oblivious: You take a –2 penalty on all Perception checks.

Slow Preparation: You take more time than usual to prepare your spells.

Slow Reflexes: You take a –2 penalty on all Reflex saving throws.

One Ear

Hard of Hearing: You take a –2 penalty on sound-based Perception checks and Stealth checks.

Both Ears

Deaf: You cannot learn the Linguistics skill. In addition, you have a 20% chance of spell failure when casting a spell with a verbal component.

One Eye

One Eye: You take an extra –1 penalty per range increment when using a ranged weapon.

Finger(s)

Bad shot: You take a –2 penalty on all ranged attacks.

Misc. Internal Organs

(Kidney, Lung, Spleen, Reproductive Organs, Etc.)

Bleeder: You cannot stabilize while dying.

Frail: You have 3 less hit points than normal.

Slow Healer: With a full night's rest, you only recover 1 hit point for every two character levels. Magical healing effects are also halved.

Weak Fortitude: You take a –2 penalty on all Fortitude saving throws.

Nose

Uncomely: You take a –2 penalty on any Bluff or Diplomacy checks when dealing with people who can see your disfigurement.

Toe(s)

Clumsy: You take a –2 penalty on all Acrobatics checks.

Lame: You only move two-thirds of what is normal for your race.

Tongue

Mute: You take a –4 penalty on any skill checks that

would normally require you to speak.

Vertebrae

Short: You move slower and may have reduced reach.

Totems are erected at strategic locations from a selection of fetishes that are rigged with specially prepared *alarm* spells. Once triggered, rather than a hand bell the command word is heard and the fetish will unleash its power on the next and nearest available target. Fetishes can be set to expend all of their charges or to retain some for future use as the *alarm* spells are cast on them. A crafter can bind together as many fetishes into a totem as their modifier in their key spellcasting class. Totems that have been fully used are harmless but horrifying, so they are often left behind as warnings and territory markers.

Sample Fetishes

Below are a number of sample fetishes.

Aboleth Eye Tiara

Standard Rules

Target CR 7, XP 3,200; **Treasure** double or 5,200 gp for a medium rate campaign

Prerequisites Must have previously seen an aboleth use these abilities, or succeed at a DC 22 Knowledge check, or have a tome about aboleths present during crafting

Desired Abilities (Primary) mucus cloud; (Secondary) slime; (Tertiary) darkvision

Spellcraft DC 12

Sample Result

Sample Roll 7th level wizard, 7 ranks in Spellcraft, +3 class skill, +3 Intelligence modifier + random roll of 13 = 26 (1 use of primary ability + 2 extra choices)

Chosen effects (based on the roll above)

Darkvision x1—range: 26 feet, duration: 7 hours

Mucus Cloud x1—Fortitude DC: 13, range: 7 feet, duration: 7 rounds, special: it is not an aura, and in a fetish it can be used above water

Slime x1—Fortitude DC: 13, range: touch, 1d6 rounds to transform, Constitution reduced by 2, duration: 7 rounds, special: can be undone by remove disease or similar effects (the duration is too short to allow for the hit point damage and so it cannot be included)

Cost 30% of 5,200 gp or 3,200 XP, taken from the rewards for defeating the aboleth

Assassin Vine Sash

Standard Rules

Target CR 3, XP 800; **Treasure** incidental (cost will be determined in its XP)

Prerequisites Must have previously seen an assassin vine use these abilities, or succeed at a DC 18 (constrict) or 28 (blindsight) Knowledge check, or have a suitable tome present during crafting

Desired Abilities (Primary) constrict; (Secondary) blindsight

Spellcraft DC 8 (5 + CR 3)

Note The camouflage ability relies on the plant-like appearance of the entire creature and grants a roll for a foe to notice the unusual vine instead of granting the assassin vine an inherent bonus to hide itself, so it cannot be harnessed effectively in a fetish.

Sample Results

Sample Roll 5th level wizard, 5 ranks in Spellcraft, +3 class skill, +2 Intelligence modifier + random roll of 20 = 30 (1 use of primary ability + 4 extra choices)

Chosen effects (based on the roll above)

Blindsight x1—30 feet for 3 hours

Constrict x4—grapple: +6, damage (1d4+3), reach 5 feet

Cost 50% of the 800 XP possible for the assassin vine

Lucky Halfling's Foot

Standard Rules

Target 8th level rogue, CR 8, XP 4,800, treasure: standard 3,350 gp

Prerequisites Must have previously seen a halfling use these abilities, or succeed at a DC 18 Knowledge check, or have a suitable tome present during crafting

Desired Abilities (Primary) halfling luck; (Secondary) keen senses; (Tertiary) fearless

Spellcraft DC 13

Note The sure-footed trait might also be able to be imbued, with the GM's permission, since it's an inherent bonus to the halfling based on its race.

Sample Results

Sample Roll 8th level wizard, 8 ranks in Spellcraft, +3 class skill, +3 Intelligence modifier + random roll of 16 = 30 (1 use of primary ability + 3 extra choices)

Chosen effects (based on the roll above)

Halfling Luck x3 — +1 racial bonus on all saving throws for 8 rounds.

Keen Senses x1 — +2 racial bonus on Perception checks for 8 rounds.

Cost 40% of 4,800 XP or 3,350 gp, drained from the awards for defeating the halfling

(Adult) Silver Dragon Eye and Tooth Necklace

Standard Rules

Target CR 14 XP 38,400, treasure: triple or 15,000 gp

Prerequisites Must have previously seen a silver dragon use these abilities, or succeed at a DC 24 Knowledge check, or have a tome about aboleths present during crafting

Desired Abilities (Primary) immunity (acid, cold, or paralysis); (Secondary) fog vision.

Spellcraft DC 19

Note Crafter must be 7th level+ or DC increases by 5 for every point of CR above the crafter's

Sample Result

Sample Roll 14th level wizard, 14 ranks in Spellcraft, +3 class skill, +4 Intelligence modifier + random roll of 17 = 38 (1 use of primary ability + 3 extra choices)

Chosen effects (based on the roll above)

Fog Vision x1—range: 38 feet, duration: 14 hours

Immunity to Acid x1—range: self, duration: 14 rounds

Immunity to Cold x1—range: self, duration: 14 rounds

Immunity to Paralysis x1—range: self, duration: 14 rounds

Cost 40% of 15,000 gp or 38,400 XP, sapped from the awards for defeating the dragon

Funerary Matters

Most bodies the Strivog collect are coated quickly in a mixture of saltpeter and other minerals in order to stave off the worst decay while in transit. Once within a stronghold, they are rendered as the bone drow see fit; if they are taken to the Icekrypt, they can be preserved in the mystic ice. The few corpses of higher value are treated with embalming fluid, *unguents of revivification*, or *gentle repose* spells, or are stored in *bags of holding*, depending on availability. With an appeal to Rajuk (represented by a successful caster level check), a cleric can convert a vial of holy water to a preservative like embalming fluid for one corpse but it will not function outside of the hands of the faithful and will not damage undead, as it normally would. A cleric can attempt to do this as many times per day as their character level. Further pleas end in immediate punishment.

Equipment

Bloodwrit Fortune Teller's Cards or Bone Bag

Price: 50-100; **Weight:** 1 lb.

The Strivog produce quality decks and bags of intricately carved bones used for divination. Their basic decks and bags add a +1 insight bonus on Profession (fortune-teller), Profession (medium), and similar Profession checks, in addition to the circumstance bonus. There is also a 5% chance that a reading will provoke a vision, whether the diviner is genuinely in tune with the spiritual world or not. These visions are never kind and will leave the diviner shaken for 1d4 rounds after the reading is completed. The insight bonus for masterwork decks and bags is raised to +2 and their chance of provoking a vision is raised to 10%. Their effects do not stack. All decks the Strivog make feature ingredients from creatures instead of wood or metal.

Spells

The following spells have been provided to the faithful by Rajuk and his agents.

Bones of Steel

School necromancy

Level cleric 2, wizard 2

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S, M (a small band of iron and a piece of coal)

Range 30 ft. radius

Targets 2 HD of skeletons/caster level

Duration instantaneous

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** no

This spell greatly strengthens the bones of animated skeletons, making them as hard as steel and able to resist far greater amounts of damage. Regardless of the amount of times this spell is cast, you may only strengthen the bones in 2 HD of skeletons per caster level. Casting bones of steel on a skeleton will grant a +2 enhancement bonus to its Armor Class and +2 CMD versus sunder attempts. The spell will stay in effect until the skeleton is destroyed.

Chill Blood

School necromancy

Level wizard 1

Components V, S, M (a drop of rubbing alcohol)

Casting Time 1 standard action

Range close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Targets one creature

Duration instantaneous

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** yes

A coruscating black ray of negative energy is created by this spell and it painfully freezes some of the blood in a target's veins upon impact. You must succeed on a ranged touch attack with the ray to deal damage to a target. A subject affected by this spell loses 1d4 + 1 hit points per caster level and is left stunned for one round. Only living, warm-blooded creatures are affected by this spell.

Ghoulish Curse

School necromancy [curse]

Level cleric 4, wizard 4

Components V, S, M (a ghoulish fingerbone)

Casting Time 1 standard action

Range touch

Targets one living creature

Duration instantaneous

Saving Throw Fortitude negates; **Spell Resistance** yes

Creating ghouls directly from the living is a dark secret few understand. A subject must be touched to receive this curse. After that point, they will transform into a ghoulish in a number of days equal to their character level. During these days, they will physically change and become ever more ghoulish-like as their skin begins to rot, their eyes sink, and their demeanor becomes more feral. At the end of the duration, they die and immediately rise as a ghoulish of chaotic evil alignment. At the moment of the touch and each day of the duration, the subject may make a Fortitude save. Success nullifies the spell and returns the subject to normal within one day. *Remove curse* will have the same effect.

Invigoration of Undeath

School necromancy

Level cleric 3, wizard 3

Components V, S, M (a piece of zombie flesh)

Casting Time 1 standard action

Range 30 ft. radius

Targets 2 HD of zombies/caster level

Duration instantaneous

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** no

This spell increases the flow of negative energy through zombies, causing them to move with far greater speed than normal. Regardless of the amount of times this spell is cast, you may only quicken the 2 HD of zombies per caster level. Affected zombies automatically gain the fast zombie template. These effects last indefinitely, until the zombies are destroyed.

Raise City

School necromancy

Level wizard 9

Components V, S, M (art objects worth 5,000 gp)

Casting Time 1 day

Range special

Targets ruined settlement

Duration instantaneous

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** no

From the ruins of an ancient town or city, you cause skeletons to claw their way out of the ground and rise in perfect servitude to your every demand. You must be upon the site of a ruined or deserted settlement to cast this spell successfully. Complete skeletons are not required (scattered dust and bones will do), but no sentient creature must have lived within the locality for at least 50 years.

Once cast, a number of skeletons animate in accordance with the size of the settlement as it was when it was inhabited. A small village will yield between 1d6x100 (or 100-600) skeletons, a town between 1d10x200 (200-2,000) skeletons, and a city 1d20x500 (500-10,000) skeletons. The skeletons will be under your complete control until destroyed. A destroyed skeleton cannot be reanimated further and once cast, this spell may never be cast again by any other wizard in the same location. The skeletons are unable to venture more than 25 miles from the settlement and any ordered to do so will instantly crumble to dust, irrevocably destroyed.

Sensory Link

School necromancy

Level cleric, wizard 2

Components V, S, M (an eye of an old man)

Casting Time 1 standard action

Range touch

Targets one undead creature

Duration 10 minutes/level

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** no

By casting this spell, you become able to see and hear through the senses of a controlled undead creature you have animated or raised. No other senses are permitted through the use of this spell, nor are special sight or hearing qualities, such as darkvision. Only one such sensory link may be maintained at any one time. The maximum range a sensory link may relay information between caster and undead is 1 mile.

Shrieking Missile

School necromancy

Level wizard 5

Components V, S, M (the tongue of a child)

Casting Time 1 standard action

Range touch

Targets missile touched

Duration instantaneous

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** no

You may cast this spell on any non-magical missile, be it sling stone, arrow, or trebuchet stone, binding it with nearby spirits who are drawn in by the flood of negative energy. When fired, the missile screams with the cries of tortured souls as it flies through the air. When it lands, it unleashes waves of fear that cause most enemies to break and flee. The missile does damage as normal but in addition also creates an area effect of 25 ft. + 5 ft./2 caster levels. Every creature in this area is affected as if by a *fear* spell.

Strike Barren

School necromancy [curse]

Level cleric 3, wizard 3

Components V, S, M (an egg which is broken or cord that is severed)

Casting Time 1 standard action

Range touch

Targets one living creature

Duration permanent

Saving Throw Will negates; **Spell Resistance** Yes

By guiding small amounts of negative energy to specific parts of the subject's body, you cause them to become infertile, utterly incapable of producing offspring for the rest of their lives. The use of *remove curse* will negate the effects of this spell. This spell has no effects on outsiders or creatures who do not reproduce anyway.

Undead Conduit

School necromancy

Level cleric 3, wizard 3

Components V, S, M (a handful of gravedust)

Casting Time 1 standard action

Range medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Targets one undead creature

Duration 1 minute/level

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** no

You may project your necromantic castings greater distances than normal by using the bond between yourself and an undead creature you control. For the duration, you may cast any necromantic spell you know and have prepared from a controlled undead creature rather than yourself. In terms of range, touch attacks and area of effect, the undead creature effectively becomes the caster of these spells, though all other variables, such as caster level, are yours.

Visage of the Dead

School necromancy

Level cleric 2, wizard 2

Components V, S, M

Casting Time 1 standard action

Range personal

Targets you

Duration 10 minutes/level

Saving Throw none (harmless); **Spell Resistance** no

You can alter your form to that of a corpse of the same size. Although the usual undead abilities and immunities are not granted by *visage of the undead*, you do gain a +2 resistance bonus to saves against cold, electricity, sleep, and poison attacks. In addition, you no longer need to breathe while the spell is in effect. If used to hide among undead, assume the caster has taken 20 with a Disguise check, adding the caster's level and ranks in Disguise as additional bonuses. Generally, such a test need only be made if the caster is being carefully examined. The caster may still move freely, however, and will appear much like an ordinary zombie.

A Drow Empire of the Dead

Strivog strongholds in or near the Icekrypt benefit from its conditions: the cold is a preservative, the ice is a water source, and the mystic light is a warning to enemies. Since the Krypt is vast, the bone drow have not invested much beyond its reaches. Only camps or outposts are maintained in other lands, at least for now. All major centers house portals to Rajuk's realm, along with temples, halls, offal pits, and the other major features of their culture. Camps rarely have much in the way of slaves, but camps and outposts have more vassals than others expect.

Ghoronar: The large cave was carved into terraced ziggurats by duergar centuries before the Strivog arrived. Evidence of bizarre structural experiments and a devastating collapse was found, but the bone drow salvaged the ruins and made them their own. The city hosts the second greatest temple to Rajuk, the heart of the inquisition, as well as the second greatest cleric in the empire, the Grand Vicerator Eoulnei. It is a center of industry for the Bracnei, Droqai, and Izorus Guilds and the Order of Talenus. The Order of Fossus has risen recently as it studies why some of the changes to the structures appear to be undoing themselves when no one is watching.

Osstra: The capital city is a crystalline wonder that was once frozen over entirely. Its spires hinted at the sprawling geodes below, where the Gemstone Ossuary was created for the most hallowed dead. A place of the highest luxury and reputation, only select Strivog live there, but many visit to pay and earn respect. Rumors claim the inhabitants have grown slothful, allowing the Zerteres Guild to unseat the power of Bracnei and Gholeous. The Order of Iliomos has overtaken Vicyx, so bribery and deals with demons are becoming common. Worst yet, the Lich Queen seems like she will remain in Xintral, a shame which would cost the city dearly.

Xintral: Closest to the center of the Icekrypt, the third original Strivog kingdom has bloomed. Its fields and pits are perfect for experiments, which the Phargeal and Vornaris Guilds have taken full advantage of. The Order of Scavex has started sending its leaders to the city furthest from the front lines so they can gain the necessary distance for hard decisions. The Lich Queen visited not long after strange noises from the heart of the Krypt were noted, and she has stayed since. Some say she has seen the tide turning in Xintral's favor, while others tell stories of something hidden in the Krypt - and the heretics that are working to wake it up.

Icewave Stations: A maze of tunnels, caches, and

waystations lies hidden beneath a vast frozen lake in the Icekrypt that fire cannot melt with ease. There, the Strivog rest or refuel unhindered. The number and locations of these compounds shift with time (particularly since the ice magically grows if it is not tended), but there are always a handful. Since they are used as supply lines and rotate crews often, no Guilds or Orders dominate; rather, the longest residents hold the greatest sway. With less oversight and less to do, these hideaways invite Strivog to indulge in debaucheries they rarely consider.

Wraithwater Outposts: Perched along a river rushing out of the Icekrypt, this string of rugged forts is under frequent assault. The bone drow control the area with an iron fist and demand tithes from anything in the waters, all the way down to the waterfall. One of the forts presides over the lone easy passage down the cliff. Many drow learn to fight as they serve at each stronghold down the line. Service in these tense circumstances often provokes treachery but thus far any lost forts have been retaken. Strivog monks in particular are tested in this chaos, and some have sacrificed their lives in the river in the hopes of rising as the ghosts for which it is named. And some have.

be suicide, but it might also be the only way to learn if this power can be roused to take on Rajuk. Because death is a truth - but it's not the only truth the Strivog can follow.

The End is the Beginning

Anyone in Strivog territory can encounter the following adventures and decide to interfere.

- Strivog scholars suspect that their former gods also answered The Calling on Porphyra, but are worshiped in far-flung lands. An expedition is planned with the aid of the Nalbrezu to search for signs. And for various reasons, the myths of Aleria, Ithreia, and Ul'Ul are highly suspicious. No doubt their worshippers will come to wonder why their histories are being plumbed.
- A Vicerator's small harem of compelling and fertile Xelusine prisoners has escaped, and one of them is already carrying a Strivog child. They must be recovered alive and healthy at all costs before they reach the nearest city where they can find aid and disappear. The rewards are great but the risks are also high, since none know who or what helped them slip away to begin with.
- A band of heretics has pieced together enough rumors about the hidden Lord of the Icekrypt to go searching. Traveling to the original tribes of the cold lands - frost giants, barbarians, and ith'n ya'roo - may

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