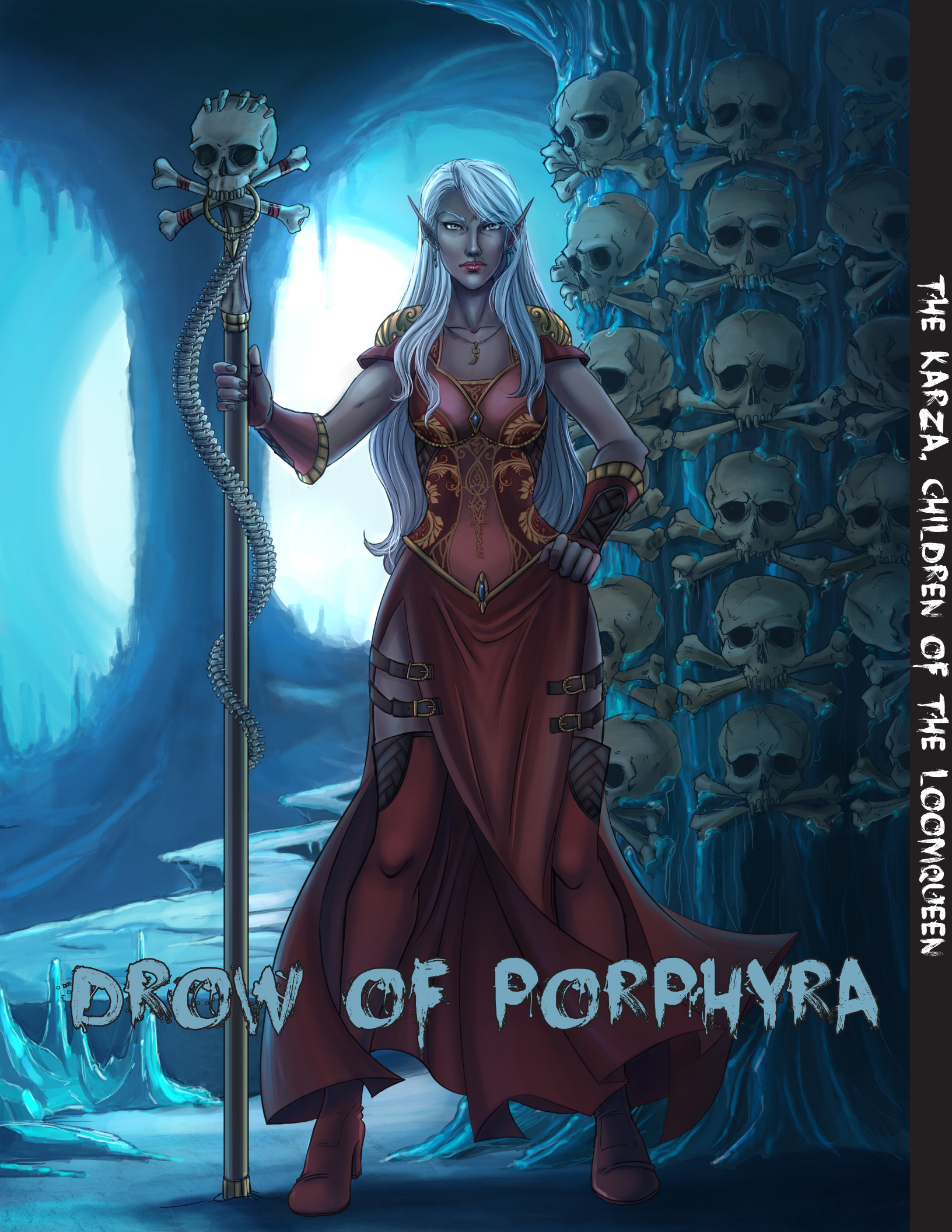


THE KARZA, CHILDREN OF THE LOOMQUEEN



DROW OF PORPHYRA



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KARZA - CHILDREN OF THE LOOMQUEEN

Credits

Author: Patricia Willenborg

Editing: Perry Fehr

Artist: Gary Dupuis

Cover Artist: Patricia Cavalieri

Porphyra Logo: Rick Hershey

Layout: Mark Gedak

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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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What They Have Always Been

The drow known as the karza are not named for a region or hero, but for the demon queen who created them. As her clerics tell it, a contingent of elves once sought out the Dark Mother's den to put an end to her plagues of vermin. They discovered a gate to her realm deep below-ground and sent only their brightest defenders to slay her. But they hadn't realized that some of their heroes were already claimed by the Empress of the Web. Those who weren't immediately slaughtered were offered a choice - death, or coupling with Karzerothrine's chosen. Those who survived gave birth to dark-skinned elves that were the first drow of their world.

It quickly became clear how different the karza were from their elven parents, and their coloring was only the beginning. They maneuvered their subterranean home with ease, using the environment to trick others and climbing up walls like the spiders that were reared with them. Their predatory instinct always went beyond what was strictly necessary to survive. Even in dangerous surroundings, they played with their food and tormented each other for fun. But whatever they built had the grace of a spider's web and soon enough they tamed all manner of vermin for their own ends.

It also became horribly apparent that the drow benefited from Karzerothrine's grace. Their birth rate exploded until double, triple, and even quadruple births were common. Some were born with fangs and spinnerets, while others developed poisonous bites later in life. These rare drow were deemed rewards to their parents and destined for the clergy, whether they wanted to serve or not. A few legendary leaders were gifted with the features of other crawling creatures, such as scorpion tails, antennae, or spines. Their sacrifices were great, however, and their gifts only set them apart from their jealous brethren.

But all drow held themselves superior to other races so they worked together to claim their birthright. They started by doing away with the elven forebears who raised them. This first blood eventually led to strikes

against anyone who had anything they wanted. The drow tore territory away from duergar and captured their finest smiths. They dominated the creeping masses and devastated humans upon first contact. By the time they reached the elves of the woods, the karza vastly outnumbered their parent race and were determined to devour it whole. And they did.

For many nights, the surface world screamed and burned. The drow dragged their spoils below and ruled the lesser races for over a thousand years. But before they could grow fat and lazy, the karza grew bored - which was infinitely worse. They fell to fighting each other, breeding more warriors than they could feed and ignoring slave uprisings until important cities were overwhelmed. So when Karzerothrine heard The Calling, she issued a challenge: The city that made the greatest gesture would lead the charge on a new world and become a legend. Anyone left behind would suffer the Dark Mother's bitter disappointment.

The frenzy that followed was epic in scope and scale, and the fallout continues to this day - in the depths of Porphyra, where the karza fight to obey their mother's mandate and rule an alien world.

What They Are Now

They might be Karzerothrine's favorites, but that doesn't mean the karza have it easy. Dropped into an unknown labyrinth, they were allowed to take a fraction of their people and the items they could carry. So much had to be left behind that it's taken a millenium to recreate half of their former glory (not that their demon queen has cared). The Dark Mother's only gift was to guide her people to a titanic cavern that offered everything they needed. Of course, they had to fight tooth and nail to win it from the creatures that already lived there. But win it they did, and the swarms nearby became the first servants of the drow on Porphyra.

Their first settlement, Nylnothra, became the launching pad for the spying, raiding, and warring that has continued ever since. Out of nearly all the Underdeep nations, the karza are the most expansionist and active, both under the surface and above it. They are known to drive vermin hordes ahead of slave and humanoid armies, saving the drow warriors for last. They empty nearby settlements so they can use all their strength and set up minimal defenses before sending out spies to new territory. As a result, while a handful of sprawling cities have held firm, twice as many have fallen to enemies and

the environment.

Noble houses suspect sabotage and swear revenge for every setback, but the wisest drow understand that the losses are absolutely necessary. No matter how it appears, the karza are not a stupid people, even if they are impulsive. But like the swarms they control, the drow become violently restless as their population grows. Their greatest blessing is also their greatest curse, and harsh laws and natural disasters aren't enough to contain their numbers. When the karza begin to move against each other in earnest, that's when the top houses know it's time to direct their efforts outward - and to let the bodies fall where they may.

After all, there will always be more.

How They Live

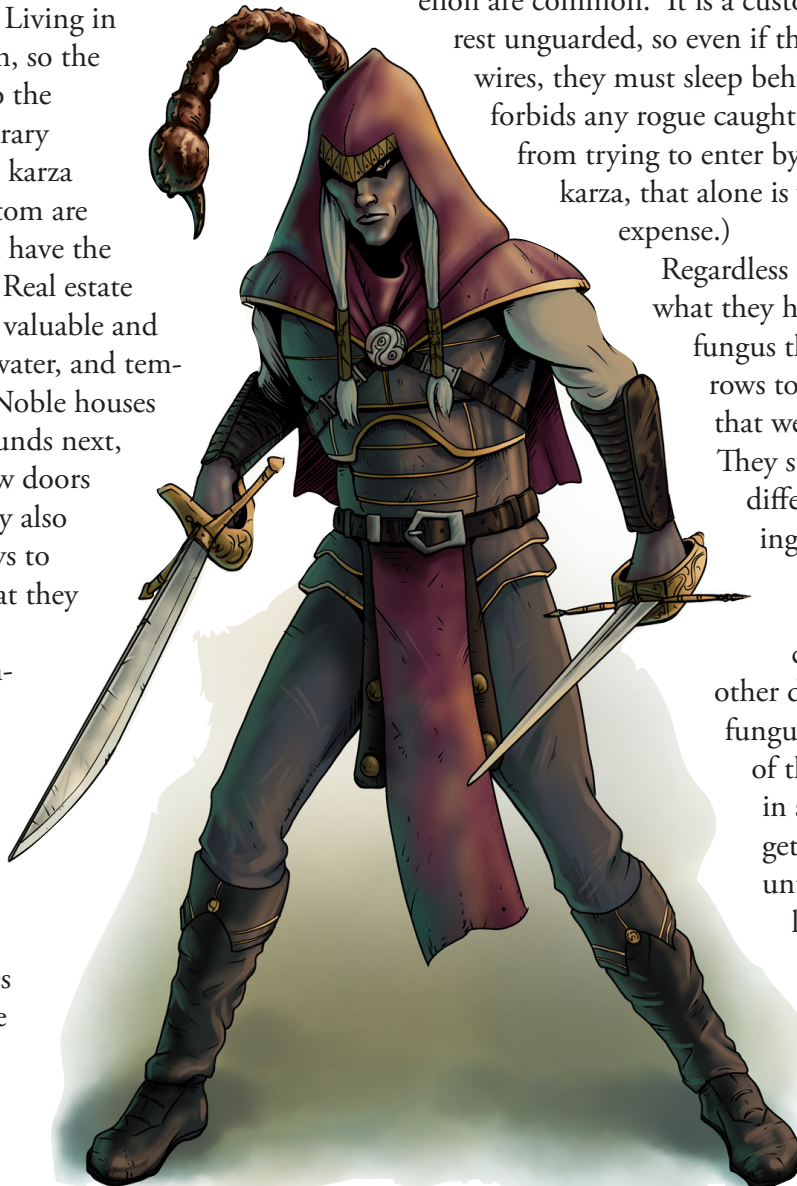
The drow have learned that it's dangerous to dwell in the open. Living in plain sight draws attention, so the drow carve their dens into the walls of large caves. Contrary to what others expect, the karza who live closer to the bottom are the greatest in station and have the largest accommodations. Real estate beneath a city is the most valuable and reserved for vermin pits, water, and temples to the Loomqueen. Noble houses take up sprawling compounds next, with secret layouts and few doors shown to the public. They also have the most reliable ways to reach the ground - not that they have far to go.

Guilds and favored commoners claim the middle layer of drow cities, where any drow can commission lairs of their own design. But slaves, visitors, and some unlucky karza have to take the cramped spaces they can get. Those in the top tiers are unlikely to have much magical ability, so they have to find other ways to get around.

Since the winding, rickety stairwells are notoriously treacherous, many rely on the lifts. The most secure platforms are drawn by giant insects, but those raised by slaves suffer from failures and sabotage. Rides on flying mounts depend on the good graces of the "driver" and flying spells have been dispelled before. Down and out drow who have the *spider climb* ability typically save it for the journey home.

And all drow invest in their homes, out of pride or simply paranoia. Any drow who can afford wards and traps are allowed to use them, inside and just outside their domains. As long as there is a safe and obvious way to approach and petition for an audience, almost anything goes. Noble houses are crusted in glowing, stylized wards, often based on caches of slave-mined porphyrite. Porphyrite tokens are used to infiltrate Landed regions, and to reinforce transient porphyrite borders found in erratic locations in the Underdeep, where such phenomenon are common. It is a custom that the karza never rest unguarded, so even if they can only afford trip wires, they must sleep behind defenses. And custom forbids any rogue caught in a clever house trap from trying to enter by stealth again. (For most karza, that alone is worth the trouble and expense.)

Regardless of rank, the karza use what they have on hand, from the fungus that grows in their burrows to the underground rivers that wend near their territory. They surround their lands with different creatures, maintaining a protective buffer zone and a ready supply of protein. Hunters might catch lizards, fish, and other delicacies, but vermin and fungus make up the better part of the drow diet. War brings in supplies that they cannot get or make for themselves, until even slaves begin to look forward to raids on surface towns. Any sun-ripened food left over from the karza's banquets makes its way into grateful, homesick bellies. Many slaves go out



of their way to earn food, wine, or other favors to cope with the duties they are forced to perform. All of the dirtiest and most back-breaking jobs are theirs, including the clearing out of a city's waste and its dead. Insects and beetles inside a city are fed on its garbage, with any extra debris carted to the vermin outside. Slaves often end up being attacked or killed on these errands and guards don't often go out of their way to save them. Carting the dead is one of the most disturbing jobs since the bodies are fed whole to crawling creatures, their bones remain unburied, and slaves get to see their own ultimate fate.

The karza might not have to do much of the lowly work that keeps a city going, but that doesn't mean they get to be lazy. To keep their captives in line, the drow are responsible for supervising all slave training, labor, movements, and breeding. Drow are required for any vital work such as scouting, setting up defenses, and overseeing shipments. They also have the easiest time dealing with the vermin that the karza rely on for defenses, hauling, and food. Even nobles are kept as busy as their superiors can manage and have to fight for personal time. So when the drow have the chance to enjoy themselves, they seize it by the throat.

Karza diversions might seem harsh, but they can happen anywhere and provide excitement for everyone. Their entertainments are fast-paced, hands-on, and flashy, from contests between masters or slaves to shows of magical might. Even games have added elements of danger by being performed with enchanted pieces or in dangerous places. Blood is to be expected and banter is almost required, at least with drow of similar station, and a rough sense of humor usually prevails. All drow want their chance in the spotlight of a revel, even if it means letting others witness their defeat, and those who take a loss too seriously invite more laughter.

Family Matters

Not every interaction between drow is a grudge match or a feud waiting to begin. The karza are surrounded by enemies and are superior to all of them, so the best company they have is each other. Their most interesting work and play happens in drow circles, and they share traits that excite one another. The karza are curious almost to a fault and build trust by exploring the unknown together (provided they survive attempts at treachery, of course). They're also spontaneous, given to feats of daring and surprises. Their practical jokes can

turn lethal, but when there is no permanent damage done they can launch intense and lasting partnerships.

And intensity is the key to all karza relationships. Emotional games start early and only get more complex as a drow ages and requires more stimulation in order to care about something. Instead of fairness and love, the drow are taught to expect struggle and satisfaction, often at someone else's expense. This is why everyone in a drow family has their favorites and can withdraw their affections at will. No one's place at home is ever secure, but family interactions are rarely boring or meaningless. Fighting for parental approval teaches young drow the skills they'll need to claim a mate, and shifting loyalties with siblings keeps them interesting.

Most drow go all out to get what they crave, but males have a harder time of it throughout their lives. Young males are known to cause the most trouble and take the most foolish risks, which means they have a higher death rate and earn more punishments. Some mothers don't give their sons proper names until they've survived until the age of twenty. Other sons have to wait even longer, since the highest value they can have is in fatherhood. Even then, they can be shunned at a mother's whim, especially if they produce weak offspring. This tension leads to ugly rivalries and deeper attachments for everyone in a house.

It also makes drow romance even more dangerous, since males have so much to gain. Many rely on shows of valor to win the right woman. After all, it can be difficult to turn down a man who has conquered a village in your name. Others rely on extravagant gifts, but a few resort to ambushing and kidnapping. Few females will admit to such attacks and no laws stand against them, but the risks are usually too great. Since the karza have no tradition of marriage, however, and females can move on to new mates at any time, competition is almost constant - and the stakes just keep rising.

This doesn't mean that the karza can't enjoy themselves as they wish. In their world, fun is the ultimate luxury and shared desire is beyond price. Karza society is more concerned about what a drow can get out of a pairing than what a suitor looks like, but flings for kicks will not get them far enough. This is because each of the drow knows that they must breed, by Karzerothrine's command as much as their own traditions. Status is gained through children, and every drow mother enjoys an extra layer of protection during pregnancy. The womb is a sacred space that must never be harmed while it carries the young.

The karza needn't nurture their children once they are

born, however. The fight for survival begins with the first breath and children in the Underdeep cannot be coddled. Drow can give offspring to others to raise, or even abandon them, for a fee. (Houses or guilds must provide for drow children if their parents refuse, but they don't have to do so for free.) Yet even if neglect ends in death, it's rarely punished since more children will come. Breeding customs are also lax. Drow nobles are usually restricted to other nobles or exotic races, but common drow can breed with anyone, including slaves. No matter what their station, all children are at the mercy of their parents, just as the drow are at the mercy of Karzerothrone.

Laws and Punishments

Karza laws are few and far between, but the ones they have are absolute. The first inviolate rule is that Karzerothrone is the creator of the drow race and the only power they will worship. It's perfectly acceptable to summon other demons, but no other religion is allowed among the drow. Evidence to the contrary can lead to the worst punishments, even (or especially) for nobles. This has caused constant clashes with the other dark elves they've encountered in the Underdeep, however. In the last 500 years, the karza have found five other nations of drow completely unrelated to their own. All of them have their own origin stories, and none of them follow the Empress of the Web.

Two ironclad decrees followed those discoveries: Heresies must be crushed, and all other drow must convert or die. The karza didn't have as much to worry about before they made contact with other drow. Doubts about the Loomqueen and the legend of the Betrayers didn't amount to much. But after finding Nalbrezu spies in their midst, new rumors spread that led to open defiance and conversions. Stories claim that the karza were decimated on their former world and exiled along with their demon queen to Porphyra. With the very basis of their authority in question, the clergy have fought back with the most vile torture carried out in generations.

Similar discipline is used to reinforce the rule of the drow above all. Any slave who disrespects a drow will suffer permanent damage, if their master doesn't kill them outright. Rebels and their allies will die slowly, and their agony is always made into a public spectacle. But slave uprisings are regarded as signs of weakness and invite other houses to see what they can grab. If their enemies are careful and get away before being caught,

slave issues could end up being the least of a house's worries. Thus, the drow punish small infractions with overwhelming force to prevent worse betrayals later - and noble houses do all they can to hide their labor problems.

A few penalties are common and dreaded by everyone in a drow city. Slaves are branded or have small digits removed, which is demoralizing but not debilitating, and anyone caught healing them suffers the same. Since the karza are possessive, their belongings are seized if they fail vital missions or blaspheme against the Loomqueen. Routinely disappointing one's parents or house can lead to being disowned and exiled, but even that's kinder than being fed to the vermin pits. This special punishment is reserved for the worst crimes, such as betraying a city's defenses or killing a pregnant drow. Regardless, retribution is permanent, public, and popular.

Noble Houses

There are always eight noble houses of the karza - one for each of the Loomqueen's legs - but they haven't always been the same houses that are in power now. Once in a while, an aspiring house gains enough influence to rise up and consume one of the eight, killing those who resist and claiming those who do not. As long as they complete the work, they are not punished. Less often, a guild or group of drow do something spectacular enough to earn the chance for ascension. At that point, the new house fights the weakest of the eight for the right to exist. Half of the noble houses have been vanquished at least once.

Every house is led by a matriarch (just as most drow enterprises are headed by women, whether they are clergy or not). Whether she rules due to age, raw power, or sheer fecundity, a smart matriarch sits in the middle of a web of gifts, favors, and desires. Those closest to her, including her own offspring, are the most tightly bound and have the most to lose if anything happens to her. Other family members vie for the perks of being made officers of the house and presiding over slaves, defenses, or businesses. A matriarch's favorite consort can act in any of the major roles, though few have ever survived failing in their duties.

The noble houses are the major political and economic forces in karza society. They back businesses and fund ventures, and each one provides resources for defense and expansion. They also own their own slaves and oversee different industries vital to each city. The titled

Table 1.1 - Noble Houses of the Karza

| House | Emblem | Interests & Specialties | Reputation |
|-------------|-----------|--|---------------------------------|
| Cheliszin* | Spider | Poisonmaking and selling | Most numerous but haughty |
| Endireth | Ant | Logistics and public building projects | Most reliable but tedious |
| Kindraun* | Leech | Magic experiments and development | Best educated, weakest bodies |
| Ormulan | Cockroach | Spying and stealing | Ingenious but debased |
| Ryluziir* | Mantis | Obtaining and training creatures | Most patient but feral |
| Slaeth | Centipede | Art, food, and luxuries | Most congenial but useless |
| Waerlochar* | Scorpion | Fighting, training, weapons | Bloodiest but most unstable |
| Xurn | Bee/Wasp | Exploration and communications | Always on the move but cowardly |

* These houses are the oldest and have never been deposed in their entirety.

nobles in every house are a minority of the total membership; common drow can claim protection, as well as guilds and mercenary companies. Additionally, the houses are responsible for the education of nobles and specialists and the necessities of children under their banner. Their competition spurs production; their cooperation settles major decisions.

The system that grants the noble houses so much influence isn't official, but it is the natural way the karza operate. The drow have never known equality and few have wanted it. Even though they all descend from the Betrayers, only some of the Betrayers were of noble blood, so there have always been commoners. Lesser drow struggle for elevation so they can enjoy the benefits but nobles keep complaints to themselves, since it doesn't take much for a drow parent to disown a child, making paupers out of princes. In the meantime, the houses struggle against each other to see which of them can come out on top.

Each house claims its birthright from the Betrayers, but only the strongest in a city join the high council. After brow-beating and scheming their way into dominance, the great three houses send their matriarchs (or representatives) to make sweeping decisions about the settlement. Major plans for war, exploration, and expansion fall to them. The council can also be petitioned for the right to take the life of any drow, including nobles. If a drow is shown to be a traitor or incompetent - or if enough favors are promised - one can receive permission to remove them. The council is never an easy alliance, but drow who want to keep their authority can learn to work together surprisingly well.

Karza Character Creation

The karza are elven in stature, with skin tones rang-

ing from onyx black to medium shades of gray, though darker skin is the most prized. White, gray, and blond hair are common, but shiny silver locks are rare and admired. The karza have eyes like their surface cousins, with irises in deep black, brown, and red, and occasionally purple. Variations are usually linked to breeding outside of karza stock, but that isn't always held in high regard. When all else fails, alchemical treatments for skin and hair are available, although they are painful, temporary, and easily sabotaged. Desperation makes them popular, however.

The Elven language that the karza speak is heavily accented in a way that's foreign to Porphyra and to the other drow nations that dwell beneath it. Karza often add clicks, hisses, and hums for extra inflection, but much of the underlying structure and vocabulary is the same - a coincidence that annoys the karza more than it should.

All karza possess the following racial characteristics.

- **+2 Strength, +2 Charisma, -2 Intelligence:** Karza are robust and imposing but emulate an insectile intellect.
- **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.
- **Darkvision:** Drow can see in the dark up to 120 feet.
- **Drow Immunities:** Drow are immune to magic sleep effects and gain a +2 racial bonus on saving throws against enchantment spells and effects.
- **Keen Senses:** Drow gain a +2 racial bonus on Perception checks.
- **Poison Use:** Drow are skilled in the use of poison

and never risk accidentally poisoning themselves.

- **Spell Resistance:** Drow possess spell resistance equal to 6 plus their class levels.
- **Spell-Like Abilities:** Karza can cast *ghost sound*, *blend*^{ARG}, and *spider climb*, once each per day, using her total character level as her caster level.
- **Light Blindness:** Abrupt exposure to bright light blinds drow for 1 round; on subsequent rounds, they are dazzled as long as they remain in the affected area.
- **Languages:** Drow begin play speaking Elven and Undercommon. Karza with high Intelligence scores can choose from the following languages: Abyssal, Aklo, Aquan, Common, Draconic, Gnome, Goblin, or Orc.

Alternate Racial Characteristics

A starting karza character can benefit from alternate racial abilities, but only from one of the categories below. Feats or blessings can allow for more traits to be taken later, but these options must be earned or developed over time and are beyond the ken of novice drow. And while it might seem like insect mutations would give the karza an edge over other drow, they are just as likely to elicit resentment. Without a reputation to precede them, a karza's differences confer no special social bonuses. Consult your GM before selecting any of these options.

In place of the keen senses racial characteristic, a karza can manifest one of the following traits :

Bite: A few karza gain fangs and a natural bite attack, dealing damage equivalent to that of a creature two size categories lower than normal for their size (or

1d3 for Medium). They also add 1-1/2 of their Strength bonus to damage rolls. The bite is a primary attack, or a secondary attack if the drow is wielding manufactured weapons. This trait can be taken up to two times. The second time it is taken, the bite damage increases by one size category, the enlarged teeth disfigure the mouth, imposing a -1 Charisma penalty.

Cave Dweller: Many karza gain a +1 bonus on Knowledge (dungeoneering) and Survival checks made underground.

Toxic: Rare karza gain the following extraordinary ability: A number of times per day equal to their Constitution modifier (minimum 1/day), a drow can envenom a weapon with toxic saliva or blood (using blood requires the creature to be injured when it uses this ability). Applying venom in this way is a swift action. When you take this trait, choose one of the following venoms.

- **Life-Stealing Venom:** Injury; *save* Fort DC 10 + 1/2 the user's Hit Dice + the user's Constitution modifier; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1 Con; *cure* 1 save.
- **Paralytic Venom:** Injury; *save* Fort DC 10 + the 1/2 user's Hit Dice + the user's Constitution modifier; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d2 Dex; *cure* 1 save.
- **Weakening Venom:** Injury; *save* Fort DC 10 + 1/2 the user's Hit Dice + the user's Constitution modifier; **frequency** 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d2 Str; *cure* 1 save.

In place of the drow immunities racial characteristic, a karza can manifest one of the following traits:

Burrow: A few karza have reinforced hands with webbed fingers and gain a burrow speed of 10 feet.

Natural Armor: Some karza develop a chitinous hide and gain a +1 natural armor bonus to their Armor Class.

Swarm Tactics: Many karza receive Swarm Strike as a bonus feat.

Instead of the spell-like abilities



racial characteristics, a karza can manifest one of the following traits:

Blindsense (30 Feet): Using nonvisual senses such as acute smell or hearing, some karza notice things they cannot see. They usually do not need to make Perception checks to pinpoint the location of a creature within 30 feet, provided they have line of effect to that creature. A creature that the drow cannot see still has total concealment against individuals with blindsense, and the drow still have the normal miss chance when attacking creatures that have concealment. Visibility still affects the movement of the drow, and they are still denied their Dexterity bonus to AC against attacks from creatures they cannot see.

Spider Legs: A few karza develop a set of two spider legs from their backs or sides. These legs cannot hold weapons or grasp objects, but they can deliver touch attacks, perform the somatic component of spells, be adorned with magical items (taking up shoulders, body, hands, wrists, or ring slots), and perform natural claw attacks (1d4 for Medium size). All spider legs gained through the racial ability have a +2 bonus to CMD versus any combat maneuvers aimed at them. Only one hand counts as the primary hand; all others make off-hand attacks.

Stinging Tail: Rare karza have a tail they can use to make attacks with a reach of 5 feet. The tail is a natural attack that deals 1d6 points of damage plus the user's Strength modifier if Small, 1d8 points of damage plus the user's Strength modifier if Medium, or 1d10 points of damage plus 1-1/2 times the user's Strength modifier if Large. The tail also confers the Toxic ability from above and can deliver poison, though its bulk imposes a -1 penalty to Reflex saves as a result.

Favored Class Options

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

Alchemist: Any poison the alchemist applies to a weapon remains potent for an extra +1/3 of a strike. (One additional round per poison application for every three times you select this option.)

Barbarian: Add +1/4 to the barbarian's total number of rage rounds per day. (One extra round for every four times you select this option.)

Cleric: Add +1/4 to the amount of damage dealt or

damage healed when the cleric uses channel energy. (+1 damage for every four times you select this option.)

Druid: Gain the ability to use wild empathy to improve the attitudes of vermin and swarms. Each additional time this is taken, add a +1/4 bonus on wild empathy checks made against vermin or swarms and gain a +1/4 bonus on Handle Animal checks. (+1 to both skill checks for every four times you select this option.)

Fighter: Add +1 to the fighter's CMD when resisting a grapple or steal attempt.

Inquisitor: Add +1/6 to the number of times per day the inquisitor can use the judgment class feature. (One extra time per day for every six times you select this option.)

Ranger: Gain the ability to use wild empathy to improve the attitudes of vermin. Each additional time this is taken, add a +1/3 bonus on wild empathy checks to influence animals and vermin that live underground. (+1 to both skill checks for every three times you select this option.)

Rogue: Add a +1/2 bonus on Escape Artist checks to escape ropes and tight spaces. (+1 to those checks for every two times you select this option.)

Sorcerer: Gain the ability to add metamagic to spells without increasing casting time 1/3 times/day. (One use of this ability per day for every three times you select this option.)

Faction Traits

The following traits are selectable by drow characters from a particular faction.

Cheliszin: You gain a +2 trait bonus on Craft (alchemy) or Bluff checks (your choice), and that skill becomes a class skill for you.

Endireth: You gain a +1 trait bonus on Knowledge (engineering) and Fortitude checks, and Knowledge (engineering) becomes a class skill for you.

Kindraun: Begin play with 150 gp worth of kits, tools, or non-damaging alchemical creations.

Ormulan: You gain a +1 bonus on Appraise and Stealth checks, and one of these skills (your choice) becomes a class skill for you.

Ryluziir: You gain a +1 trait bonus on Knowledge (nature) and Handle Animal checks, and one of these skills (your choice) becomes a class skill for you.

Slaeth: You begin play with 150 gp worth of luxuries. These items must be related to entertainment and excess, ranging from games and music to food, drugs, and/or clothing.

Waerlochar: You gain a +2 trait on Initiative checks.

Xurn: You gain a +1 trait bonus on Survival and Fly checks, and one of these skills (your choice) becomes a class skill for you.

Harvesting Poison

The drow have developed a special technique for collecting poison from other creatures. (Since they are usually surrounded by venomous beasts, this is to be expected.) They draw toxins out with an alchemy crafting kit and store them in vials of preservatives using Craft (alchemy). Since venom is already present, each dose only costs 1 gp for materials and the results are immediate. If the Craft check succeeds, one vial of poison is gathered and is ready to be used. The normal DC for a harvesting Craft (alchemy) check is 5 less than the listed Fortitude save DC. Rolling a natural 1 exposes you to the poison and ruins the serum.

Any creature that naturally produces its own venom through an extraordinary ability can be harvested, whether it is alive or dead. Fallen foes are the easiest to draw from, since they cannot put up a fight and their poison sacs can be reached without worrying about the rest of the body. Venom loses its potency one minute per hit die (rounded down, minimum of one) after a subject's death, however, so an alchemist has to work quickly. One additional vial can be extracted for each size category the creature possesses, though each dose requires a separate roll. Each attempt is a full-round action.

Living creatures require a successful Animal Handling DC $10 + 1/2$ creature's hit die (rounded down) to subdue, regardless of their disposition or any magical compulsion. Collecting poison is painful and disturbing, and it triggers automatic natural defenses. The DC of the harvesting check is raised to the listed Fortitude save DC to reflect this added difficulty. You can only attempt to milk the venom of a living subject once per day as a full-round action. Rolling a natural 1 exposes you to the poison and ruins the serum. Whether you succeed or fail, any further Handle Animal checks made against the target suffer a -5 penalty for the rest of the day.

Custom Poison Crafting

The karza do not just rely on gathering poisons or mimicking toxins found in nature, for they design venoms from scratch and create brews of horrific power. This

fine-tuned method must be taught by an expert in both alchemy and poison crafting, however, and is a fiercely guarded secret. Nevertheless, it seems to come naturally to all drow and sentient spider-kind, and such venoms are traded in markets throughout the Underdeep. And while the karza jealously hoard vials for their own use, the Nalbrezu and Xelusine regularly sell them to the realms above and even give them away to targets they aim to corrupt.

The process begins with a purely conceptual design phase. Every aspect of the desired toxin - delivery, onset, frequency, degree, effects, and number of cures required - adds to or subtracts from the Craft (alchemy) DC required to make it. The Fortitude DC to save against a custom poison is equal to $10 + 1/2$ the crafter's character level (rounded down) + Intelligence modifier. The Fortitude save DC can be permanently reduced during the design phase but can only be cut by as many points as the crafter's Intelligence modifier. For every point it is lowered, the Craft DC goes down by 1 (but must be at least a minimum of 5).

The market price for a custom venom is equal to the final Craft (alchemy) DC squared X 2 gp (see examples below); raw materials cost $1/3$ of that amount. The basic ingredients are available in most areas since toxins are drawn from a wide variety of plants, creatures, and unwholesome byproducts. Particularly potent poisons call for stronger and more costly ingredients, however. Once the parameters are decided and the brewing phase has begun, the mixture cannot usually be altered further. Rolling a natural 1 on any poison crafting check exposes you to the venom's potential effects but does not ruin the materials.

The first step in designing a poison is to choose how it can deliver its effects to a target. A poison can conceivably have more than one delivery method (such as contact and ingested) but each one adds its modifier to the final DC. Regardless, one dose of poison can only unleash its effects once. The next step is to decide one onset rate, which is the period of time after the poison has been delivered but before it first takes effect. The crafter must dilute the mixture to provide delays, so longer waits reduce the Craft DC. A toxin must also have one rate of frequency, which is the number of times the target must make a saving throw versus its effects.

Next, one must choose a degree, or how many dice of damage the poison can do, and an effect. Most poisons affect primary statistics (Strength, Dexterity, etc.), while extremely rare poisons unleash lesser spell-like effects. These spells do not do damage of any kind to a target

but can be from arcane or divine schools (though some gods will refuse to grant spells to poisoners). A potion, scroll, or caster with the desired spell is used during crafting in order to embed it into a custom poison. Any saving throw required for a spell effect is made against the DC for the caster's spell, not the Fortitude save DC.

A crafter must designate a primary effect, which is the first effect delivered when a target fails a saving throw against the poison. If desired, a separate secondary effect can come into play on any failed saving throws after the first. The secondary effect can have a completely different degree and effect than the primary effect. A crafter can also choose to deliver two effects at once. Additional effects add to the Craft DC, and all dice and types of damage add to the Craft DC, as well. Finally, one must choose a cure rate.

| Delivery | Adjustment | Onset | Adjustment | Frequency | Adjustment |
|----------|------------|---------|------------|-------------------|------------|
| Contact | +8 | None | +10 | 1/rd. for 2 rds. | +4 |
| Ingested | +4 | 1 rnd. | -2 | 1/rd. for 4 rds. | +6 |
| Inhaled | +6 | 1 min. | -4 | 1/rd. for 6 rds. | +8 |
| Injury | +10 | 10 min. | -6 | 1/min. for 2 min. | +1 |
| | | | | 1/min. for 4 min. | +2 |
| | | | | 1/min. for 6 min. | +3 |

| Degree | Adjustment | Effect | Adjustment | Cure | Adjustment |
|--------|------------|--------|------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | +1 | Str | +5 | 1 save | +1 |
| 1d2 | +2 | Dex | +5 | 2 saves | +5 |
| 1d3 | +3 | Con | +6 | | |
| 1d4 | +5 | Int | +4 | Additional Effects | Adjustment |
| 1d6 | +6 | Wis | +4 | Secondary | +1 |
| | | Cha | +4 | 2 Effects at Once | +5 |
| | | *Other | +8 | | |

* Other effects are possible (like sleep) but are no greater than 2nd level nondamaging spells cast at minimum caster level.

Below are three sample recipes at varying levels of expertise and cost:

Sip of Dullness

Delivery: Ingested (+4)
Onset: 10 min (-6)
Frequency: 1/min for 2 min. (+1)
Effects: 1 Wisdom (+5)
Cure: 1 save (+1)
Craft (alchemy) DC: 5
Market value: 50 gp; **Raw materials:** 16 gp 6 sp 7 cp
Fortitude save: 13

Enfeebling Fumes

Delivery: Inhaled (+6)
Onset: 1 rd. (-2)
Frequency: 1/rd. for 2 rds. (+4)
Degree & Effect: 1d3 Str (+8)
Cure: 2 saves (+5)
Craft (alchemy) DC: 21
Market value: 882 gp; **Raw materials:** 294 gp
Fortitude save: 18

Sting of Weakness

Delivery: Injury (+10)
Onset: 1 min. (-4)
Frequency: 1/rd. for 4 rds. (+6)
Additional Effects: 2 effects at once (+5)
Degree & Effect: 1d3 Dex (+8)
Degree & Effect: 1d3 Str (+8)
Cure: 1 save (+1)
Craft (alchemy) DC: 34
Market value: 2312 gp; **Raw materials:** 770 gp 6 sp 7 cp
Fortitude save: 24

Feats

Karza with the appropriate alternate racial traits (and ability scores) qualify for monster feats like Improved Natural Armor, Multiattack (which they qualify for upon gaining two natural attacks), and Warren Digger^{MC}. Creatures or characters that meet the prerequisites also qualify to choose one of the feats below.

Additional Racial Characteristics

You develop other features of your race later in life.
Prerequisites: At least two alternate racial characteristics.
Benefit: You may choose an alternate trait from the list for your character's race, provided that you don't already

possess it.

Special: This feat can be taken multiple times. Each time you take the feat, you gain another ability.

Alternate Venom

You develop another poison sac that manufactures a different type of poison.

Prerequisites: Toxic racial characteristic, Con 13.

Benefit: You can use one more poison from those available through the Toxic racial ability. Any time you use your ability, you can choose which type of poison you will use for the next attack. This does not grant the ability to use multiple Toxic poisons at once.

Special: You can gain this feat twice. Each time you take the feat, you gain another type of poison listed under the Toxic racial ability.

Epitome of the Karza

You know you are the pinnacle of your race - and others can't help but know it, too.

Prerequisites: At least one alternate racial ability for the karza that physically and visibly alters your character's body, Cha 15.

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus on any two of the following skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Sense Motive. Upon achieving 10 or more ranks in one of these skills, the bonus increases to +4 for that skill. You can always use those skills to influence vermin. Additionally, you gain a +1 Leadership modifier to attract drow followers upon obtaining the Leadership feat.

Special: You can take this feat one additional time, gaining a bonus in the two skills that were not chosen previously and another bonus to your Leadership modifier.

Extra Spider Legs

New arachnid legs sprout from your back or sides.

Prerequisites: Spider legs racial characteristic, Str 13.

Benefit: You gain another set of two spider legs as per the karza racial ability. This new set of legs can be equipped with magic items (taking up shoulders, body, hands, wrists, or ring slots).

Special: You can gain this feat up to three times, for a maximum of eight legs. Each time you take the feat, you gain another set of spider legs. The bonus to CMD does not increase or stack.

Improved Blindsense

You are able to sense more than ever before.

Prerequisites: Blindsense ability, Wis 13.

Benefit: Your blindsense radius increases by 10 feet.

Special: You can gain this feat multiple times. Each time you take the feat, your blindsense radius increases another 10 feet.

Journeyman Poisoner

You are a poison-making machine.

Prerequisites: Craft (alchemy) 5 ranks with the knowledge of creating custom poisons.

Benefit: You make progress in gold pieces instead of silver pieces per day when creating custom-made poisons and do not have to add 10 the DC for this acceleration.

Normal: You make progress in silver pieces per day and must add 10 to the DC to produce goods at an accelerated rate.

Master Poisoner

You can do things with poisons that apprentices only dream about.

Prerequisites: Craft (alchemy) 10 ranks, Journeyman Poisoner.

Benefit: You can increase the Fortitude DC of your custom poisons up to your Intelligence modifier, adding +1 to the Craft (alchemy) DC per point. You can also embed damaging spell effects up to 4th level into your poisons so long as you have a potion, scroll, or caster with that spell during the poison's creation. Adding a damaging spell of second or lower level adds 10 to the Craft DC. Adding any third level spell adds 11 to the DC, while adding any fourth level spell adds 12.

Normal: You cannot raise the Fortitude DC of your poisons or embed damaging spells or spells above 2nd level into them. Embedding spell-like effects usually adds 8 to the DC.

Swarm Strike (Teamwork)

You and your allies have trained to overwhelm foes like a swarm of rodents.

Benefit: Whenever a foe provokes an attack of opportunity from you, you gain a +1 bonus on your attack roll, plus an additional +1 bonus for each ally who also has this feat and currently threatens that foe.

Equipment

The karza make ready use of poisons and the goods below, but all civilizations of the Underdeep can gain access to them through trade, pilfering, and war.

Hair Dye

Price: 50 gp; **Weight:** 1/2 lb.

Alchemical hair dyes run the full spectrum of natural and artificial colors and hues. They are commonly used for personal enjoyment but can also help to complete disguises or to liven up a show. They are as risky as any other alchemical dye, however, and results are variable rather than assured. The process isn't comfortable and each application requires the character whose hair is being dyed to make a Fortitude save. Hair dye can be removed early by using a special soap that costs 5 gp or with a *prestidigitation* spell.

Rolling a natural 1 results in immediate hair loss that can't be healed but can be regrown. Failing by less than 5 means that the hair color shifts to a mid-way point for 1d6 days but doesn't reach the desired color and no other benefits are gained. Success allows for a flawless shift to the right color that will last for 1d10 days (minimum 2). It will also grant a +2 bonus to appropriate Disguise checks and Perform checks. Karza who dye their hair silver gain a +2 bonus on Diplomacy and Intimidate checks versus their own kind instead. If dyed silver hair is paired with darkened skin through use of liquid skin tone, the hair dye only gives half of its normal bonus to the karza.

Mild change: A change of shade within one's natural color requires a successful Fortitude save DC 10.

Medium change: Aiming for a color that is half-way across the spectrum from your natural shade requires a successful Fortitude save DC 15

Drastic change: Dying the hair to a vibrant hue (like hot pink) or from very dark to very light requires a successful Fortitude save DC 20.

Liquid Skin Tone

Price: 50 gp; **Weight:** 1/2 lb.

Alchemical skin pigments come in a wide variety of colors, although they tend to reflect the most common skin tones in the region where they're made. They are used to impress, to complete disguises, and for entertainment, but they are notoriously unstable. Buying a particular color doesn't mean that you will turn the exact shade you purchased; radical changes are more difficult to achieve. The process isn't pleasant and each application requires the character whose skin is being dyed to make a Fortitude save. Liquid skin tone can be removed early by using a special soap that costs 5 gp or with a *prestidigitation* spell.

Rolling a natural 1 results in blotches, superficial scalding, or other side-effects; a DC 15 Heal check will remove the damage. Failing by less than 5 means that the skin shifts to a mid-way point for 1d6 days but doesn't reach the desired color and the character gains no other benefit. Success allows for a flawless shift to the right color that will last for 1d10 days (minimum 2). It will also grant a +2 bonus to appropriate Disguise and Perform checks. Karza who manage to obtain the darkest skin tone gain a +2 bonus to Diplomacy and Intimidate checks.

Mild change: A change of tone within one to three shades of your own natural color requires a successful Fortitude save DC 10.

Medium change: Aiming for a color that is half-way across the spectrum from your natural shade requires a successful Fortitude save DC 15

Drastic change: Dying the skin to a vibrant hue (like hot pink) or from very dark to very light requires a successful Fortitude save DC 20.

Precious Metal Body Paint

Price: variable (see below); **Weight:** —

Within their own territory, drow often wear body paints to signify membership in a guild or a noble house. The designs also commemorate special victories and display style and wealth. These decorations are meant to be displayed and grant no social benefits if they're hidden, but enchanted emblems will work even if they are covered. The paints can be made from any metal but rare ones are held in higher esteem. Regardless, the process renders them non-reflective, so they don't draw attention from a great distance. Each tube contains enough material to trace lines on one Medium-sized limb, and the results are mostly smooth to the touch.

Although they come in liquid forms, the paints harden and adhere to flesh upon drying and cannot be smudged off (even during a grapple). Once the paints set, water and soap won't wash them away. An *erase* spell will undo lesser marks, however, and taking 50% of your total hit points in acid damage before being healed will blur the lines beyond recognition. A chemical remover costing 5 gp can cause the paint to safely peel off. An adhesive with the same cost can reattach the designs, but they never look as good the second time around. Reapplied designs bestow half their listed bonus, lose any unused spell stored within them, and cannot be re-enchanted.

The benefits granted by lesser body paints aren't magi-

cal in nature but are reinforced by centuries of cultural practice. They don't affect interactions with other races but they do cross the cultural boundaries between drow nations. This symbol-heavy language of power is one that all drow understand.

| Type | Cost | Details |
|--|----------|---|
| Copper | 50 gp | Purpose: Guild membership, rites of passage. |
| Iron | | |
| Silver | | |
| Note: Cannot be enchanted. | | |
| Benefit: +2 racial bonus to Diplomacy or Sense Motive vs. drow. | | |
| Cold Iron | 100 gp | Purpose: House membership, victories. |
| Gold | | |
| Note: Cannot be enchanted. | | |
| Benefit: +2 racial bonus to two of the following skills vs. drow: Any of the previously listed skills, as well as Bluff and/or Intimidate. | | |
| Adamantine | variable | Purpose: Holy symbol, house membership. |
| Mithral | | |
| Platinum | | |
| Note: Can be enchanted by a character with the Craft Wondrous Item feat, 3 ranks in Craft (body art), and a week of training with a character who already knows how to enchant body paint. | | |
| Benefit: Store magical effects as per magic item creation rules . Erase can affect spells of 3rd level or lower but allow a save vs. DC 15 or the wearer's Fortitude save, whichever is higher. Dispel magic will temporarily suppress spells of 4th level or higher. Each enchanted design takes up a magic item slot, which must be chosen at the time of creation and cannot be moved. While most spells continue to function even if the paint is covered up (as with clothing), a spell's specific details will take precedence. | | |

Silkening Treatment

Price: 25 gp; **Weight:** 1/2 lb.

This alchemical mixture softens major pieces of fabric clothing pieces that cover at least half the body and grant no bonus to AC), regardless of what they're made of. Items that are washed in this special solution and then dried grant the wearer a +2 bonus on Escape Artist checks or a +2 CMD bonus to resist Grapple for 1d4

days, or until they are drenched in some other liquid, whichever comes first. There are no visible changes to the material and multiple applications do not stack.

Spidersilk Hammock

Price: 50 gp; **Weight:** 2 lbs.

This net is woven from the silk of giant black widows and other spiders that attack with webs. The hammock is easy to climb into and out of as a move action, but a successful Strength check of DC 20 is required to pull anyone out of it. Deliberately rolling out of the hammock can be done with alarming speed, however (a DC 5 Dexterity check reduces it to a swift action). The hammock can be roped to anchor points or hang from pitons attached at either end. A spidersilk hammock that fits two sleepers or Large creatures costs twice as much.

Karza Cities

All karza settlements depend on their vermin guardians to "set the clock" for them, since they move and rest according to natural rhythms the drow do not possess. Bioluminescent insects are kept for this purpose and help the slaves see what they are doing. When the glow brightens, it's time to go to work. When it dims, it's time to see what kind of fun can be had.

Chasgoth: Set into the terraced walls of a yawning chasm; below Creeper's Rift called The Endless Deep, this is a city of flyers. Affluent inhabitants rely on spells and flying mounts, from bats to giant bees raised in the sunless depths. Lesser drow and visitors stick to the 'poor' side of the chasm, make use of gliders, or rent passage from others. Since they control the fastest way across the void, this is one of the few karza cities to have regular trade with other races and non-drow occupants. No one knows how far down the chasm goes, but invasions from below are not unheard of.

Eragnath: The town was carved into the peculiar ashy stone of Nor-Du-Mag and then abandoned by an unknown civilization long before the drow claimed it. Arranged around a large stepped pyramid and carved up the side of a cliff, it is the most visible karza settlement and still isn't completely mapped. Not only is the area riddled with secret doors and passageways, but there are also lost portals and doorways to pocket dimensions. These mysteries have drawn the most patient of the karza, becoming a den of rogues and wizards as well as the seat of karza scholarship.

Malagol: Under the Ghadabi desert sits the city of

ruined magic, this daring outpost shelters amid leftover spells from an ancient and epic battle. The area is beset by 'weather,' or sudden bursts of elemental spells (usually from above), which means that other creatures go out of their way to avoid it. Since they have not been able to dispel the problem, the karza have delved further into the stone and left the chaos outside for their enemies. Sorcerers are slightly more common when conceived and reared in Malagol's environs, however, and they have more influence because of it.

Nylnothra: The karza's first city remains their largest and most prosperous, and all of their other settlements are connected to it by tunnels and portals. Porphyrite crystals stud the titanic central cavern and reflect light from any source, an impressive and effective arrangement. The beauty and scale of the place doesn't quite make up for the earthquakes that happen regularly - but the easy access to nearby settlements (both above and below) almost does. The prestige of living in the legendary site means that karza from other places will do anything to stay.

Szardryn: The drow have a hardy colony fighting for control of the vast vault surrounding Mirrorseye Lake beneath the Coldbrook Glacier, but they have a long way to go before they can gain dominance. Other than the duergar entrenched on the opposite shore, the karza face revolving armies of creatures seeking the oasis. Alliances shift often, but the drow have successful fishing and piracy operations that give them real sway. When the still surface of the water roils from below, however, everyone on its shores retreats and prays the Serpent isn't about to reappear to wreak havoc as it has before.

Intrigues

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

- A karza settlement has been torn apart by a sudden release of superheated toxic gas from underneath it. Many died instantly, but survivors and valuables remain. Any escaped slaves can be claimed (or escorted to safety, depending on who finds them first), and any drow who are rescued will owe major favors or important information.
- The noble houses are trying to find or recreate legendary magic items the karza possessed before The Calling. Rumors of tomes and treasure vaults abound, and the first drow to bring back the right

ones will gain instant prestige, no matter how lowly or male they are. Other races who stumble across such things will have powerful bargaining chips with all drow they meet.

- A drow mining operation has been sending in an unknown metal that produces sentient magical items far more often than normal (30% instead of 1%). Messages from the camp became odd and recently ceased, with no further shipments or visitors sighted from that direction. The karza will do anything to re-establish control and keep the benefits quiet - but can they?

Karzerothrine



Karzerothrine (Demon Lord)

Empress of the Web, Loomqueen, The Dark Mother
Goddess of Darkness and Vermin

Worshippers: Drow, half-drow, driders, sentient vermin, and those who dwell below.

Alignment: Chaotic Evil

Domains: Chaos, Evil, Darkness, Verminkind

Subdomain: Demon, Fear, Loss, Spider

Favored Weapon: Heavy flail

Favored Animal: Giant spider

Karzerothrine embodies the hungry motherhood of the deep – possessive, domineering, and prolific. She fills the darkness with spawn of every shape and size so they can spread the fear of her name through their teeming masses. Those that get her closer to divinity, she feeds, and those that fail to meet her demands, she eats. Even her favorite children, the drow, are not safe from her

whims and appetites; if anything, they bleed more because of her careful scrutiny. She might give them toys to help them destroy their enemies, but like any hive queen, she will readily sacrifice her progeny. After all, as she reminds her clerics, there will always be more.

Appearance

Like her favored symbol - a swollen black spider on a silver web - Karzerothrine is ebony-skinned and always seems unwholesomely large. She spends most of her time in bloated insectile bodies, and all of her forms include long fangs. She also appears as a magnificent female drider with glowing red eyes. Sometimes she seems swollen with child, but no one has ever seen her give birth and lived to tell about it. She's been known to spawn horrors in the spider sacs scattered throughout her den, however - and to feed visitors to them.

Relations to Others

The Empress of the Web has no gift for maintaining alliances or tolerating other demon lords, and hasn't even tried. Her realm in the Abyss is the Darkest Den, which serves as a maze, a breeding ground, and an abattoir for any invaders.

Cult & Worshipers

Karzerothrine spoils her priestesses with gifts in public and looks the other way as they steal from each other in private. Her clerics then establish a pecking order by cowing each other into submission, leaving the Dark Mother no reason to declare a hierarchy. The most privileged servants are ritually transformed into driders, and regardless of their station, her demands of all her clergy remain extreme. After surviving ordination, priestesses serve for life and are threatened with being eaten alive on a fairly regular basis. Those who displease their superiors and live often have one of their limbs or organs devoured, never to be healed or replaced.

Males have far less value to the Loomqueen so they rarely serve Karzerothrine directly and willingly. Most of them are content with this arrangement, laying low in guilds and secret societies to avoid abuse and worse. The few males who earn the Dark Mother's blessings are usually her most vicious and ardent followers, putting her priestesses to shame to make up for the shortcoming of their sex. Male driders are nothing short of legendary - but they have existed. They've certainly been more frequent than commoners in the clergy. Strong standing in one of the noble houses is absolutely necessary to draw Karzerothrine's approval.

Lay worshipers take a cue from the clerics and make sure their prayers are public and showy; this insulates them from accusations of heresy. Temples close randomly for private rituals but shrines can be found throughout karza settlements, so offerings of blood, placentas, and riches are left for all to see. Drow of all castes call upon their patron before invasions, during childbirth, and after one of their own has died. Holidays vary by city but are often loud and ostentatious affairs, as are many sermons and rituals. Their death rites alone are solemn. Corpses of noble drow are offered to summoned outsiders as hallowed meat for Karzerothrine.

Verminkind Domain

Granted Powers: You have an innate understanding of vermin. You gain Handle Animal as a class skill and are able to use it to influence vermin and swarms.

- **Disgusting Touch (Sp):** You can cause a creature to become sickened as a melee touch attack. This ability lasts for a number of rounds equal to 1/2 your cleric level (minimum 1). You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Wisdom modifier.
- **Vermin Companion (Ex):** At 4th level, you gain the service of an animal companion. Your effective druid level for this animal companion is equal to your cleric level -2. You may choose any vermin on the druid animal companion list in *Ultimate Magic*.

Domain Spells: 1st—*ant haul*^{NC}, 2nd—*summon swarm*, 3rd—*vermin shape* ^{IUM}, 4th—*vermin shape* ^{IIUM}, 5th—*insect plague*, 6th—*swarm skin*^{APG}, 7th—*creeping doom*, 8th—*antipathy*, 9th—*foresight*.

Spider Subdomain

You have innate connection to spiders and their ilk.

Associated Domain: Verminkind.

Replacement Power: The following granted power replaces the vermin companion ability of the Verminkind domain.

- **Unseen Veil (Su):** As a swift action, you can activate an invisible, intangible web around yourself in a radius of 10 feet per cleric level, to a maximum of 60 feet. The web allows you to sense all creatures that are in contact with the ground as per tremorsense

and lasts for 10 minutes per cleric level. You can use the unseen veil ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Wisdom modifier.

Replacement Domain Spells: 2nd—*web*, 3rd—*poison*, 4th—*giant vermin*.

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