

IMPORTING THE DROW

For fantasy-gamers the Drow quickly became one of the most popular of the assorted fantasy races to appear in gaming publications. Popularized by the *Dungeons and Dragons* game, the “Low Elves” became the symbol of the sinister and seductive majesty that represents the darker elements of physical beauty.

It was only a matter of time, of course, before fans would request that Drow could appear in Bioware’s popular *Dragon Age* computer role-playing game. And, of course, once the convention role-playing game was released from Green Ronin, requests and fan-made designs would immediately flood the internet for a conversion to that game as well. This article is to attempt to fulfill that request and challenge.

One of the issues in converting the Drow over to the *Dragon Age* setting is that the world of Thedas is very unlike most of the settings found under *Dungeons and Dragons*. Magic is far more subdued and deities do not make personal appearances. The characterizations of Drow in other games simply do not mesh well with the more grounded approach found within the *Dragon Age* setting. As a result, simply dropping Drow into Thedas just as they appeared in, say, the *Forgotten Realms* would be an extremely substantial change to the overall setting.

This article takes a different approach, trying to make the Drow thematically fit within the existing lands of Ferelden without requiring much of a change to the world’s back story. Hints and connections are made to Lolth’s demonic nature, but much is left to interpretation within the setting’s lore.

Desire Mage, Drow Commoner, or Drow Outcasts.

DESIRE MAGE

It is not surprising that the Drow have embraced magic as their main power. From their founding sorceress, Lolth, the power of magic has been passed along the women of the clan via each generation. This has created a strong matriarchal society where the more powerful magic a Drow woman can wield, the greater political power they have overall. On the grim side of this society, Drow males which show aptitude towards magic are usually (but not always) killed by their female relatives upon discovering their talents, thus helping ensure the matriarchy.

Since Desire Magi vie for political power, and often in subtle and nefarious ways, most will seek out greater magical power in order to survive. As they

DROW OF FERELDEN

In the old stories it is told that the Tevinter Imperium conquered the Elven empire, splintering its people and forcing them into the wilds or into slavery. The eventual fate of most of the Elven peoples of Ferelden since that time then has become well known, split between the Dalish and the Urban elves. The fate of other Elves, however—those whose children did not fall into these camps— may be discovered from within tales told in hushed whispers. These dark Elves, lost to time and shrouded in mystery are the “Drow”, or, more literally, the “Elves of Below”.

The tales speak of an Elves group lead by a powerful sorceress. This sorceress, Lolth, did not accept Andraste’s words and turned instead to bloody revenge. The Imperium drove down these Elves, defeating them and then forcing them from the Empire. Lead by their sorceress, these Elves slipped through ancient ruins and forgotten caves until they fell upon the Deep Roads. Here, the lyrium veins of the underground and the ever-present taint of the Darkspawn corrupted these lost Elves. Slowly, over the generations, they would become the Drow. Their skin darkened, their hair whitened, their eyes betrayed the taint of their surroundings. To many, they would resemble the demons and Darkspawn which surround them.

While legends and myths about these Drow persist in some schools of thought, there has been little evidence to show that Drow do indeed exist, at least in any large numbers. The Chantry considers any Elves which match this description nothing more than an unusual form of Darkspawn to be destroyed. The Circle has occasionally taken up the study of the Drow with the belief that any large camps would be sequestered below the Dalish lands in the south-east of Ferelden, but no expedition to learn the truth has yet to return successfully, and the danger of seeking out potentially corrupted Elves in the depths of the Deep Roads is not a particularly pleasant-sounding pursuit for most scholars.

BACKGROUNDS

As with most citizens in Ferelden, Drow characters possess a background which emerges from their culture and upbringing. They are, however, more unique in their choices of background and do not fit the backgrounds of the dominant races of Ferelden. There are three Drow backgrounds to chose from:

DESIRE MAGE	
2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Cunning
3-4	Speak Elven
5	Focus: Perception (Seeing)
6	Focus: Communication (Persuasion)
7-8	+1 Magic
9	Focus: Dexterity (Stealth)
10-11	+1 Dexterity
12	Focus: Communication (Seduction)

do so, they tend to delve more greatly into the powers of Blood Magic, which corrupts their souls even farther. Eventually they will become consumed by this magic and become possessed by a desire demon outright. Even the original Desire Mage, Lolth, succumbed to this abomination as she controlled her people.

Note: If you choose to play a Desire Mage, you'll be at a tremendous disadvantage when compared to other backgrounds. While it is true that your character will gain benefits in magic power, the whole of Ferelden will not take kindly to your presence. To most, a Desire Mage is simply an abomination *already* (though possession has not yet occurred), to be destroyed. Neither the Circle of Magi nor the Chantry will tolerate a mage with obvious demonic influence who also looks physically tainted. This can create some interesting, and intense, stories, but it will make any sort of life difficult at best.

PLAYING A DESIRE MAGE

If you choose to play as a Desire Mage, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Magic ability. Drow Desire Mages are known for their powerful magical ability.
- You gain the Magic (Entropy) focus and one additional spell from the Entropy school.
- Your character is a Drow.
- You can speak the Drow (Ancient Elven) and Ancient Tevinter Tongues.
- Take the Mage class.

Roll twice on the table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the results together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

DROW COMMONER

For the majority of Drow in their camps, their life is set for them. They toil for their matrons, serving both as their laborers and their soldiers. While male commoners can advance in their own ranks and gain a modicum of respect, the female commoners are looked upon with derision and scorn. For females that become commoners are failures, unable to tap into the basic magic that drives Drow society forward. No such demand exists upon the males.

For most of their lives, a Drow commoner will serve his matron as she sees fit. Therefore a commoner does not enjoy much true freedom, though they are usually left to their own devices so long as their efforts please their matron. Unlike most commoners, Drow are *expected* to fight. Those that cannot become useless to the camp, and are sent into the Deep Roads to meet their final, unpleasant fate.

Note: The Drow Commoner fills out the rank and file of the encamped Drow. As with all Drow, most surfacers will confuse them with Darkspawn and consider them evil right off the bat (though, to be fair, this is generally a safer assumption than not). A Drow Commoner must not only contend with these racial issues, but also must contend with the whims of their matron. This can create issues within a campaign for this character that other characters may not experience.

PLAYING A DROW COMMONER

If you choose to play as a Drow Commoner, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Dexterity ability. Drow Commoner retain their race's natural agility.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: Dexterity (Stealth) or Perception (Seeing)
- Your character is a Drow.
- You can speak the Drow (Ancient Elven) and An-

DROW COMMONER	
2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Cunning
3-4	Speak Elven
5	Focus: Perception (Seeing)
6	Focus: Dexterity (Bow)
7-8	+1 Dexterity
9	Focus: Perception (Tracking)
10-11	+1 Willpower
12	Focus: Dexterity (Light Blades)

cient Tevinter Tongues.

- Choose a class. You can play either a warrior or a rogue.

DROW OUTCAST

The cruel, merciless life of the Drow camps often alienates those of a more noble, or at least less ignoble, disposition. These Drow brave both leaving their camps as well as the perils of the Deep Roads to try to escape the vices of their people. This seldom works out well, as life for a Drow can prove unforgiving due to their bloodlines. An outcast has much to prove when they reach the surface of Ferelden, and their bloodline will make them targets of the Circle and Chantry alike.

While what little Ferelden knows of the Drow come from its outcasts, they will always be regarded as outsiders. Even those that are more-or-less 'accepted' are usually treated as Dalish at best, and usually have to resort to mercenary work or living in the wilds in seclusion. The average citizen of Ferelden does not know of the Drow legends, and simply consider what few they see as a Dalish aberration, someone who has been exposed to the Taint for too long. With so much working against the outcast, acceptance is difficult, if not impossible for most to achieve.

Note: As with the Desire Mage, playing an Drow Outcast will put your character at a severe disadvantage while adventuring around Ferelden. Association with the Taint is a dangerous reality, as most uneducated men in the land will simply destroy the Drow Outcast as an act of, albeit mistaken, self-preservation. Beyond that, even those educated enough to have heard of the handful of Drow legends will know of their more vicious nature and be untrusting, at the least, of an Outcast. Worst of all,

DROW OUTCAST	
2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Cunning
3-4	Speak Elven
5	Focus: Perception (Seeing)
6	Focus: Perception (Hearing)
7-8	+1 Dexterity
9	Focus: Dexterity (Stealth)
10-11	+1 Willpower
12	Focus: Dexterity (Bows)

though, is that many consider any Drow to simply be another form of Darkspawn (which they are not), which has lethal implications. Again, stories with a Drow Outcast may be exciting, but the player should expect a lot of problems for his character that other characters simply will not have.

PLAYING A DROW OUTCAST

If you choose to play as a Drow Outcast, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Dexterity ability. Drow Outcasts retain their race's natural agility.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: Dexterity (Stealth) or Perception (Seeing)
- Your character is a Drow.
- You can speak the Drow (Ancient Elven) and Ancient Tevinter Tongues.
- Choose a class. You can play either a warrior or a rogue.

ADVERSARIES

More often than not, if anyone manages to find any Drow within Ferelden, it's often going to be at the point of a sword or from a hail of arrows. Drow are, by necessity, extremely reclusive figures and are prone to arrogance and violence. Battle can start simply because surface-peoples consider them as Tainted, or (more likely) because a group of Drow hunters are engaged in raiding.

For Game Masters, Drow adversaries should be kept fairly rare and in areas that are *extremely* hard to reach from Ferelden civilization. It's strongly recommended to tie the Drow to the Deep Roads long abandoned along the eastern coast of Ferelden, buried well beneath the Dalish lands. Keeping them far removed from the main campaign will enable a Game Master to bring in some Drow as desired without dramatically changing the scope and nature of a *Dragon Age* campaign.

DROW RAIDER

Though it is a rare occurrence, there are times when a matron commands a handful of her commoners out to the surface. In general this is done to secure some needed goods and supplies, as well as determine the threat the surface represents to the matron's camp. In these circumstances, these raiders think little of the surface races except as potentially prey. They will think nothing of murdering anyone who happens upon them, making them a fierce and dangerous threat.

Fortunately, the Drow's extremely limited numbers and relative distance from human settlements keep these raids to such a minimum that tales of them are treated almost as fantasies. (Most people assume these raids are from rogue Darkspawn elements.)

In combat, Drow Raiders tend to rely on their bows most (made in similar fashion to poorer-quality Dalish bows) and keep their distance from their opponents. If these harassment tactics fail, then they're more likely to use their lighter melee weapons (often simple daggers or swords) as a last-ditch effort to finish off their opponents.

DROW RAIDER			
Abilities (Focuses)			
2	Communication (Persuasion)		
0	Constitution		
1	Focus: Perception (Seeing)		
3	Focus: Communication (Persuasion)		
1	Magic		
2	Perception (Hearing, Tracking)		
1	Strength (Climbing)		
3	Willpower (Self-Discipline)		
Combat Ratings			
Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
13	16	13	5
Attacks			
Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage	
Long Bow	+5	1d6+5	
Short Sword	+5	1d6+3	
Powers			
Favored Stunts: Lighting Attack and Rapid Reload			
Talents: Archery Style (Journeyman), Armor Training (Novice), and Single Weapon Style (Novice).			
Weapon Groups: Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, and Staves			
Equipment			
Light Mail, Long Bow, and Short Sword			



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