

Those who find a way to survive in the painful world of sunlight either live as recluses or find a community where their heritage and upbringing give them an advantage, such as an assassins' guild or a company of adventurers. Even in such cases, these traitorous drow spend the rest of their lives looking over their shoulders, hoping to spy the black hood and flashing blade of a bounty-hunting drow assassin before it's too late.

THE RAVEN QUEEN AND THE SHADAR-KAI

THE RAVEN QUEEN IS TRAPPED BY HER FASCINATION with the past. She sits in her fortress, amidst all the memories of the world, looking at the ones that please her most as though they were glittering jewels. Many great wizards have attempted to understand her motives, but like a raven she has always remained cryptic, keeping her cache of secrets just out of their reach.

—High Lady Alustriel Silverhand

The Raven Queen is a being of dark mystery. Accomplished wizards talk about her in hushed tones, and with no small amount of fear, for even they can't say what power she wields in her realms, too subtle for mortal minds to sense. Rumors abound as to her current form, most coming from claims made by lunatics who have described an array of disturbing images: a terrible shadow that clawed at their innermost thoughts, a pale and regal elf who exploded into an untold number of ravens, a shambling tangle of slick roots and sticks that overwhelmed them with dread, or an unknown presence that pulled them screaming blindly into the gloom.

Despite all attempts to demystify her, the Raven Queen has remained enigmatic and aloof, immersed in a sea of questions. She rules from her Raven Throne within the Fortress of Memories, a mazelike castle deep within the bleakness of the Shadowfell. From there she sends out her ravens to find interesting souls she can pluck from various planes of existence. Once they are in the Shadowfell, she watches as these souls attempt to unravel the mystery of their being—and ultimately go mad in the process.

ORIGIN OF THE RAVEN QUEEN

For those who seek to unravel the enigma of the Raven Queen, the story of her origin comes from the ancient history of the elves. It is said that she was once an elf queen, whose people loved her more than they loved the gods. Her true name has been lost to time.

But from the fragments that have been found of her history, it was she who, when Corellon and Lolth were locked in conflict, tried to use the souls and magic of her people to elevate herself to godly status, thus salvaging the fractured pantheon of the elves. Afterward, the legends suggest, she would attempt to implore Corellon and Lolth to come to their senses. But the information in these fragments was woefully incomplete, and the queen's true motives were never fully understood.

I have heard tales of drow who have forsaken the evil ways of their kind. I give these stories no credit, though Elminster himself swears they have validity. Never trust a drow, or the word of an archmage.

DESCENT INTO SHADOW

As the queen rose in power, many elves became inspired by her, freely offering their souls and their magical abilities to help her achieve her goal. This group of devoted followers called themselves the shadar-kai, and they gathered others like themselves around their queen in hopes that, once she achieved divinity, she would unify all the elves. The queen's plan was to use the souls of the shadar-kai to forge a pathway through the Feywild to Arvandor, all the while increasing her influence.

As the numbers of shadar-kai grew, a consortium of evil wizards among her followers saw an opportunity to siphon off the energy of the shadar-kai for themselves by performing their own self-serving ritual, which would impart to them magical powers beyond those of the greatest elven wizards of legend. But as the queen approached the entrance to Arvandor, she realized what the wizards were doing and brought all her wrath down upon them as the ritual was under way. Because she was by now a quasi-divine entity, her supernatural rage corrupted the ritual into a phenomenon that took on a terrible strength of its own.

By the time the queen realized her error, she could feel the now-twisted magical energy grabbing hold of her, and she was powerless to stop it. In a panic, she reached out to the souls of the shadar-kai for more power, hoping to save herself, but the gravity of the spell had become irresistible. It pulled the queen, and all who were under her sway, into the Shadowfell, where she was instantly killed. From her ruined mind and body, the Raven Queen was born.

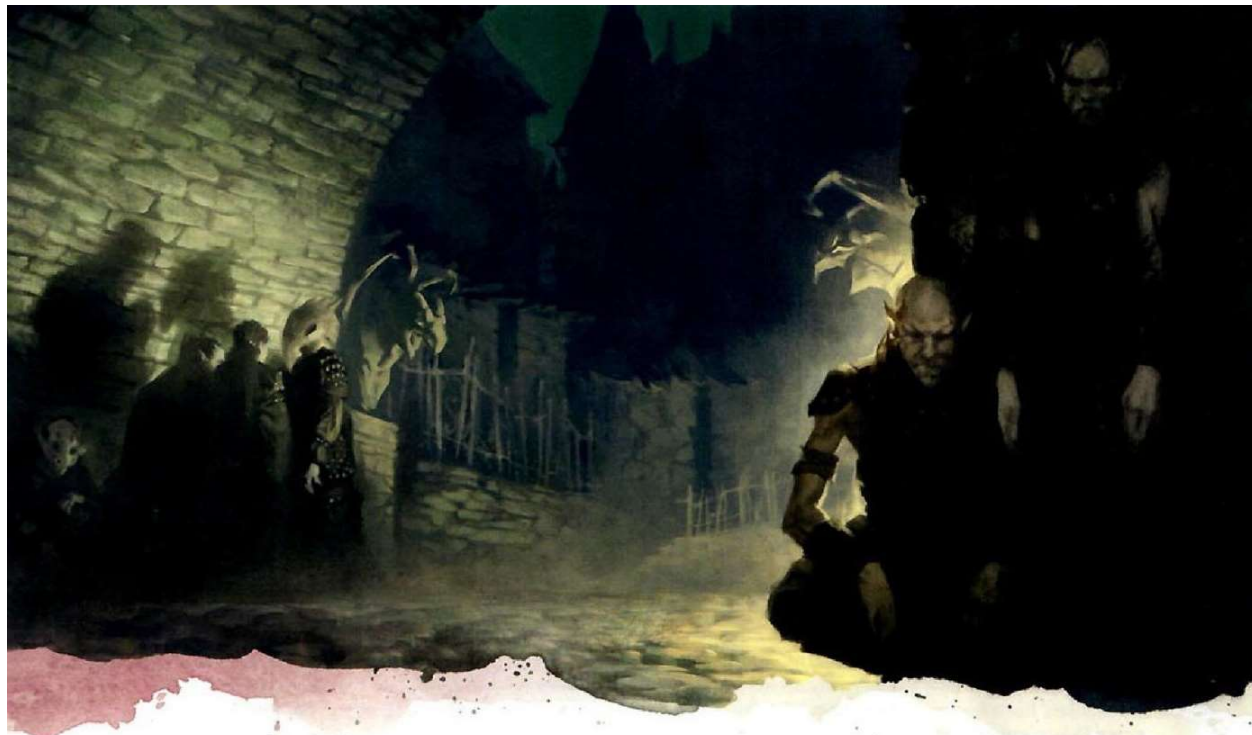
THE CREATION OF THE NAGPAS

When their ritual failed with catastrophic results, the wizards in the consortium were pulled into the Shadowfell along with the queen and the shadar-kai, but their misfortune didn't end there. Their former queen arose from the center of a maze of ash and let loose a scream of ebon smoke that penetrated the flesh and minds of the wizards, turning their bones black and lacerating their souls. Their cries of agony merged with her own, and when her scream faded, the wizards had been mutated and warped into the scabrous, vulturish creatures known as nagpas. Now they wander the planes as wretched monsters, marked forever by the Raven Queen's curse and banished from her presence.

AFTER THE FALL

After the nagpas were created and then banished by the Raven Queen, the shadar-kai watched as she fell deeper and deeper into a divine madness. Her pain and turmoil over the betrayal of her wizards, the destruction of her kingdom, and her failure at attaining godhood all con-





tributed to her descent into an unquenchable sorrow. At the same time, the energy of the corrupted ritual was still transforming her, breaking down her form from a physical one into an entity composed of symbols, images, and perceptions. To keep herself from dissipating entirely into nothingness, the queen used the last vestiges of her personal power to pull dead memories from the Shadowfell about her, creating a cloak of identities that sustained her. Over centuries, those dark memories accumulated and coalesced to give shape to the entity now known as the Raven Queen.

THE FORTRESS OF MEMORIES

Since achieving divinity, the Raven Queen has filled her realm with shadows and memories, obsessively collecting such essences from remnants of dead gods and mortals that were strewn throughout the Shadowfell. From these metaphysical fragments she formed her new home, a twisted castle that the shadar-kai call the Fortress of Memories. The fortress is a mournful place, filled with incessant echoes of the past. Flocks of ravens that act as her eyes and ears darken the skies around it when they emerge from within, bearing her cryptic messages and omens far and wide across the multiverse.

Bizarre Menagerie. Within the Fortress of Memories are trinkets and items that the Raven Queen finds irresistible, memories plucked from people's pasts that have been invested with deep feelings of pain, sorrow, longing, guilt, or remorse. These items are brought to her as gifts from the shadar-kai. These trinkets can include furniture, clocks, mirrors, jewels, and toys. Also appearing in the fortress are ghostly visions of people,

places, and pets. Any of these things can spontaneously appear about her lair, every object and apparition being a metaphoric representation of some story—great or small—that was saturated with raw emotion.

ENCOUNTERING THE RAVEN QUEEN

Mortals that enter the Raven Queen's realm are almost instantly confronted with a glimpse into their own internal landscape. Because she is fascinated with emotions, the Raven Queen worms into the unconscious minds and memories of her visitors, bringing forth visions from the deepest reaches of their psyches. Some of these visitors are the unwitting souls of departed people who have been pulled into the Raven Queen's clutches, others are astral travelers who are caught and trapped within the Shadowfell by her magic—but a rare few come of their own volition, seeking knowledge or freedom from a dark past.

A QUEST TO THE FORTRESS OF MEMORIES

Because the Raven Queen has godlike power, she can put an adventuring party inside a demiplane that is created from the psyche of one of the characters. On entering the Fortress of Memories, or encountering the Raven Queen, a character can find themselves transported to a strange fairy tale world pulled from their experiences, filled with metaphors, parables and allegories, all of which challenge that character's frailties, fears, and desires. Much can be learned from adventuring within the fortress and undergoing the Raven Queen's test, but much can also be lost. Many adventurers never return from the fortress, forever trapped within a world created from their own experience.

Many of these daring individuals are adventurers who know of the Raven Queen's terrifying power yet nevertheless travel to the Shadowfell to undergo her trial, letting the secrets of their souls be unfolded and revealed. The reasons why folk would subject themselves to this dangerous experience are numerous, including:

- To free themselves from a dark and terrible past. It is said that the Raven Queen can make you confront your fears; some find a way to move beyond them, but others can be driven mad.
- To discover a secret of someone who is dead. Adventurers might need to go to the Shadowfell to find a soul that has been claimed by the Raven Queen, hoping to unlock its memories.
- To seek answers that only the Raven Queen might know. The Raven Queen's realm contains innumerable memories from all over the multiverse. Desperate adventurers might seek her out as a last resort or be led to her realm by a series of tempting clues.

Method or Madness? Some wizards and other scholars have speculated that the Raven Queen is simply insane, that there is no method to her madness other than a nervous pecking apart of a psyche with no more motive than a curious child pulling the legs off an ant. Others have speculated that the Raven Queen needs the gravity of emotions to hold her eternally decaying identity together. But a few sages have postulated that the Raven Queen's purpose is of greater importance, that she serves as a filter of sorts, cleansing souls that cling to fear and pain, forcing them to confront their unfinished business so that they are freed of their mortal baggage and can rise to explore higher planes of existence.

THE RAVEN QUEEN'S INFLUENCE

The Raven Queen's desire to interfere with the affairs of the gods and her subsequent failure was taken as nothing less than treason by both Corellon and Lolth. As a result, the physical reality of her kingdom was shifted to the Shadowfell, and the memory of her existence was wiped from the minds of elves. Initially, no mortals knew of her, but over the centuries, those who have journeyed to the Shadowfell and those who have encoun-

VECNA'S OBSESSION

One evil mind is fixated on wresting away the Raven Queen's power: the archlich Vecna. Vecna has long coveted her ability over knowledge and souls; to steal souls would give him the ability to amass an army of the dead large enough to conquer the Shadowfell and turn it into his own kingdom of death. There he would rule from the Fortress of Memories, and through the Raven Queen's power have access to all the lost knowledge stored within the souls she has trapped over the millennia. But to this day, all his attempts to gain a foothold there have been thwarted.

Because of his obsession with usurping the Raven Queen, and claiming the Fortress of Memories, Vecna has embroiled himself in a terrible conflict, leading his armies into relentless battles against the Raven Queen and her shadar-kai fanatics and against the vampire lord Kas, Vecna's former lieutenant, whom Vecna wants to see destroyed over all other enemies. Some say this war is just another of the Raven Queen's beloved tragedies playing out for her amusement.

tered shadar-kai in the world have seen, or heard tales of, a dark fortress, a mysterious figure surrounded by gaunt servants, and scores of seemingly sentient ravens. Most folk who have heard of the Raven Queen view her through a lens of superstitious fear, attributing to her all kinds of strange occurrences, mishaps, and coincidences. But those who seriously study the arcane—warlocks, wizards, sorcerers, and the like—know that her effect on the world is farther-reaching than that.

Audience after Death. Some adventurers claim to have been visited by the Raven Queen after their deaths—before their stalwart friends paid to have them resurrected. While they were in the afterlife, the Raven Queen enlisted them for a quest to complete a task, acquire a particular item, or perhaps to travel to a location and simply wait. Most of those who have talked about these visitations say they felt compelled to do her bidding, because the visions imparted by the Raven Queen made it apparent that the quest was in some way part of their greater purpose.

The Raven Queen's reason for communing in this way is a matter of some dispute. Some sages posit that she is using people as pawns in an inscrutable game, the rules of which are known only to her and the Lady of Pain. Others suggest that she is balancing the multiverse by having mortals complete various tasks, and some say that it is in these moments of obeisance to her that the Raven Queen recalls a fragment of her former self.

SERVANTS OF THE QUEEN

The shadar-kai are bound to the Raven Queen, cursed to forever serve her in the Shadowfell. They dwell in places outside the Fortress of Memories, usually too terrified of the place to enter it willingly. In their communities they reenact their old rituals and ceremonies, in a pale imitation of the days when they dwelled in the life and light of their now-lost kingdom.

When shadar-kai are in the Shadowfell, their bodies and faces are old and withered, displaying the full effects of the terrible magic that stripped them of their former elven beauty. To hide their visages, they often wear masks made of metal or wood, but even these coverings are melancholic in appearance. When shadar-kai are sent away from the Shadowfell to do the Raven Queen's bidding, they take on youthful features similar to those of other elves, although their skin remains deathly pale.

Immortal Servants. The shadar-kai know that when they die, the Raven Queen captures their souls and returns them to the Shadowfell, where they are resurrected to serve her yet again. Thus, they consider death to be a temporary condition, and many shadar-kai care little for the physical shell they currently inhabit.

Shadar-kai know that those who come willingly to the Raven Queen's tower are there to beseech her for something, and thus they try to prepare such visitors for what they will face. The queen's servants talk to any inquiring adventurer about the gravity of emotion, how sorrow weighs on the soul as it travels through the Shadowfell, and how best to persevere in the Raven Queen's test.

Follow the Ravens. When the Raven Queen sees a soul or a piece of information she wants, she sends her ravens to alert the shadar-kai. Her minions then put



their trust in these cryptic, cawing guides to lead them to where the barriers are weakest so they can then slip across planes to their destination. Once at their destination, the shadar-kai watch and wait, looking for the tragedies their queen wishes them to collect. Sometimes they are small: a spurned lover, a lost item, a betrayal. But some tragedies are much graver: a murder, a war, a diabolical bargain. To bring back a trinket for their queen, the shadar-kai use their shadow magic. If a target is living, they magically infiltrate the person's mind and excise the desired bits of emotion, or if the target is close to death, the shadar-kai capture the whole soul to bring back to the Raven Queen.

Sediment of Memory. Shadar-kai are very interested in the magical silt at the bottom of the River Styx that holds the memories and identities of lost souls. Any adventurers who travel to the Nine Hells to procure a vial of this powder will likely draw the attention of the shadar-kai, who will attempt to steal or barter for it. Adventurers might also bring a bit of the sediment as a gift to the Raven Queen. What she would give in return is never known ahead of time, but her boons come in many wondrous forms: the restoration of a lost soul, the rediscovery of a missing memory, or a glimpse into the forgotten knowledge of the ancients.

ELF SUBRACES

At the DM's discretion, you have access to more subraces for elf characters, in addition to the subraces in the *Player's Handbook*. When you choose the subrace of your elf, you can choose one of the following options: eladrin, sea elf, or shadar-kai.

RANDOM HEIGHT AND WEIGHT

Subrace	Base Height	Base Weight	Height Modifier	Weight Modifier
Eladrin	4'6"	90 lb.	+2d12	× (1d4) lb.
Sea elf	4'6"	90 lb.	+2d8	× (1d4) lb.
Shadar-kai	4'8"	90 lb.	+2d8	× (1d4) lb.

Height = Base Height + Height Modifier (in inches)

Weight = Base Weight + Height Modifier (in pounds) × Weight Modifier

ELADRIN

Eladrin are elves native to the Feywild, a realm of beauty, unpredictable emotion, and boundless magic. An eladrin is associated with one of the four seasons and has coloration reminiscent of that season, which can also affect the eladrin's mood:

Autumn is the season of peace and goodwill, when summer's harvest is shared with all.

Winter is the season of contemplation and dolor, when the vibrant energy of the world slumbers.

Spring is the season of cheerfulness and celebration, marked by merriment as winter's sorrow passes.

Summer is the season of boldness and aggression, a time of unfettered energy.

Some eladrin remain associated with a particular season for their entire lives, whereas other eladrin transform, adopting characteristics of a new season.

When finishing a long rest, any eladrin can change their season. An eladrin might choose the season that is present in the world or perhaps the season that most closely matches the eladrin's current emotional state. For example, an eladrin might shift to autumn if filled with contentment, another eladrin could change to winter if plunged into sorrow, still another might be bursting with joy and become an eladrin of spring, and fury might cause an eladrin to change to summer.

The following tables offer personality suggestions for eladrin of each season. You can roll on the tables or use them as inspiration for characteristics of your own.

AUTUMN

d4 Autumn Personality Trait

- 1 If someone is in need, you never withhold aid.
- 2 You share what you have, with little regard for your own needs.
- 3 There are no simple meals, only lavish feasts.
- 4 You stock up on fine food and drink. You hate going without such comforts.

d4 Autumn Flaw

- 1 You trust others without a second thought.
- 2 You give to others, to the point that you leave yourself without necessary supplies.
- 3 Everyone is your friend, or a potential friend.
- 4 You spend excessively on creature comforts.



ELADRIN OF AUTUMN