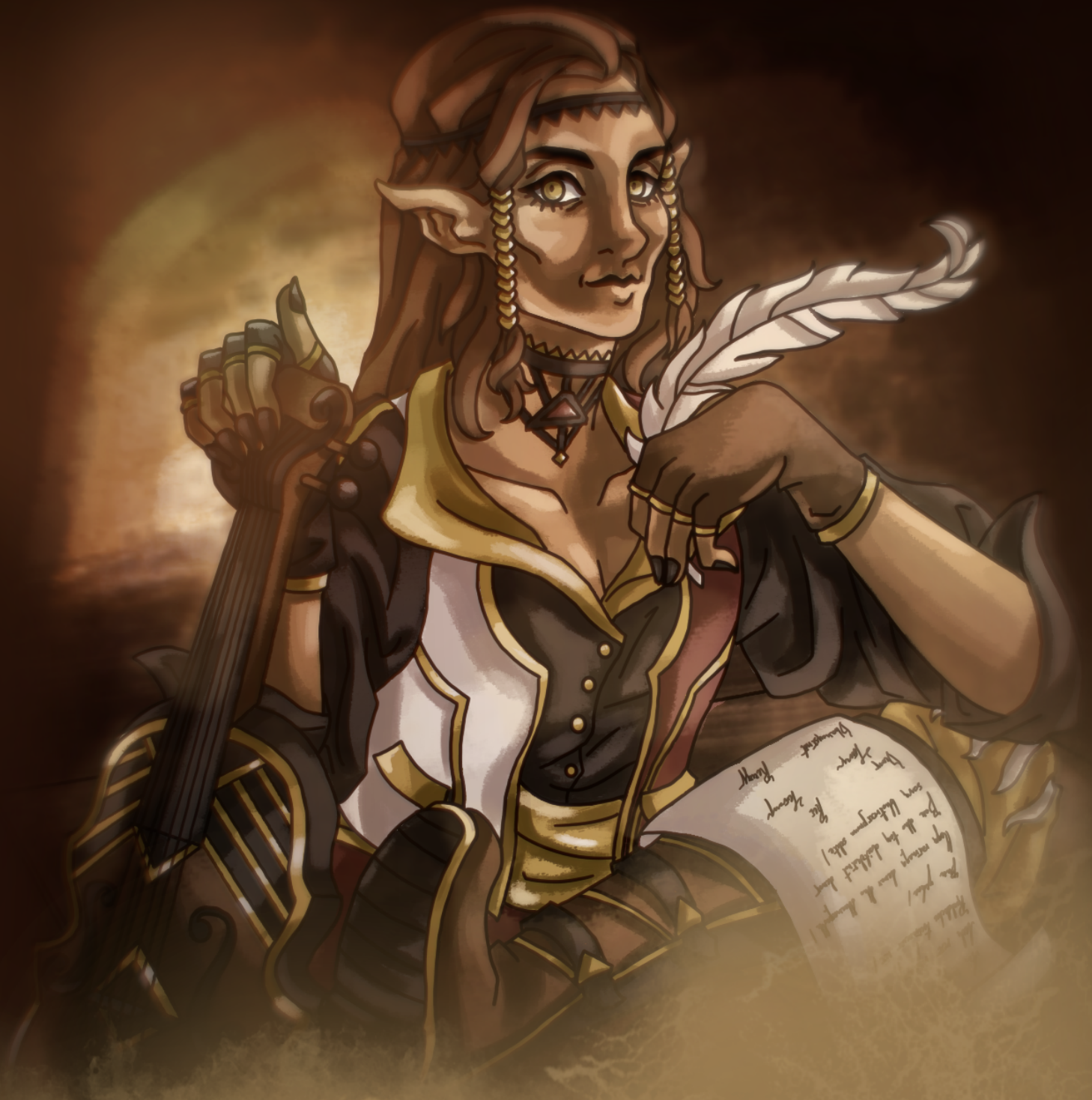


# HEART OF DARKNESS



## PLAYER OPTIONS

by Viktor "Navypink" Sych

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This is the fourth public version of the "Player Options" document for the Heart of Darkness campaign and its setting of Varris. The latest version is available for free at <https://navypink.itch.io/hod-player>.

## HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

This document is the official player primer for the homebrew *Heart of Darkness* campaign to help you create a character. If you are a player, your GM has likely sent this to you as a means of preparing you for the campaign. Don't be intimidated by the page count of this document—you have no obligation to read all of it in order to prepare your character. The campaign will introduce you to every bit of lore you'll need to know.

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This work includes material taken from the System Reference Document 5.1 ("SRD 5.1") by Wizards of the Coast LLC and available at <https://dnd.wizards.com/resources/systems-reference-document>. The SRD 5.1 is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>.

## THE GM COMPANION

This document is meant for players—a short, GM-facing companion to it is provided within the Introduction to the *Heart of Darkness* book to give guidance to GM's looking to expand on your character options and backstories. It does contain campaign spoilers, though, so make sure to only read the player options and ask your GM for any relevant additional information, for example about the settlement your character may have lived in, what beings they might worship and who might be your warlock patron, if you are interested in fleshing out your character even further.

**This document is not a character creation guide and assumes you are already familiar with the basic principles of the process or that your GM is helping you.**

# SETTING UP



arris is the continent on which the *Heart of Darkness* campaign takes place. It takes its name from the Varran Empire, an evil human state that conquered and ruled it for centuries before being defeated by a joining of its former slaves a thousand years ago. Due to the empire's years of rule, many modern people of the continent, called the Varszi, still unknowingly perpetuate the Varra's harmful biases towards others based on their race or occupation. Since the Varra subjugated others using arcane magic, most inhabitants of the continent still hold an irrational fear of the practice itself, regardless of its purpose.

## YOUR GAME, YOUR RULES

Many aspects of your character may lead to their unfair treatment throughout the campaign. If you would like to avoid it or change how it affects your character, make sure to bring up any concerns you may have to your GM—your character should not be forced to suffer bias wherever they go simply because you chose to, for instance, play as a wizard. Ultimately, the extent to which your GM leans into this particular aspect of Varris' worldbuilding should depend on the comfort and preferences of all players, so make sure to discuss it as a group, or in private if you prefer. Certain storylines in the *Heart of Darkness* campaign assume a set of biases from particular NPC's—your character is never forced to ally with or forgive anyone who treats them poorly because of their own bias.

## PAST AND PRESENT

Unless explicitly stated in a race or subrace's description, your character is assumed to be from the continent of Varris and therefore is likely to have been exposed to its particular prejudices and stereotypes from an early age, both in how they were raised and how they are treated now.

However, it's important to understand that these assumptions about, for example, the "typical" traits or preferences of your character's lineage are largely cultural. They are presented in descriptions of races for the purposes of informing your character's personality and backstory. For example, most copper elves are likely aware of being thought to be better bards, which leads to them being likely to pursue a career one due to the, often not fully realized, bias of those who might hire them as one. These assumptions form a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy that many Varszi are unaware of. It's completely up to you to conform to or subvert these tropes within your character.

There is another possibility for your character—you may choose that they are not native to Varris, hailing, for example, from the islands off its shore or remote mountains that the ancient Varran Empire never reached. You can read about the Islander and Highlander human subraces to learn more about their cultures, but characters of all races of Varris inhabit these parts of the world as well.

For example, as a dragonborn born in high mountains, your character would have likely never faced prejudice of any kind. They might still be exposed to certain assumptions while in Getari, the Varszi kingdom that *Heart of Darkness* takes place in, but would be quick to realize that whoever is making them is blinded by an irrational fear or hatred of something they don't understand.

Ultimately, remember that your character is yours to create, whether it's in accordance with, or in spite of, common assumptions that close-minded NPCs might make about them.

## CUSTOM ORIGIN

If you would like more customization options than simply choosing a predefined set of racial features, you can create a custom origin character that combines whichever physical and cultural characteristics you want for your character. Check page 13 for more details.

## HOW TO USE THIS PRIMER

As a player, you likely know which class and race you are interested in for your character already and maybe you even have some ideas about which spells or weapons you want to use.

A few of races have been rewritten for this setting, so you may want to skim the descriptions of Varszi elves, tieflings, dragonborn and humans to see if you're interested in any of them. **You do not, by no means, need to read the entirety of this document.** Another option is to combine the features of the aforementioned races to create a custom origin character (page 13).

Of course, you can still play the other basic races that are not altered for this setting: the dwarf, gnome, halfling or half-orc, with any subrace you choose. Any race your GM allows has its place in Varris.

Once you've selected your race, think about which class you would be interested in playing. If you are uncertain, look at the "New Subclasses" section for inspiration. Once you've decided on a class, you may want to read the "Class Changes". If you've chosen to play as a spellcaster, you may also be interested in the "Spell Changes" section and if there are magic items you are interested in having on your character, read through the "Item Changes" section.

May the Ladies watch over you in your journey through Varris, and have fun playing your great character!

# PLAYER RACES



he races of Varris are as varied and diverse as those of any fantasy world. **Elves, dragonborn, half-elves, humans and tieflings** have been given a complete overhaul, with new racial traits and subraces to match the lore of the setting. Everything you need to know about your next character's origins is given in the introductions to each of the races.

The race features below are only templates, ready to use for your character but far from your only option. If you wish to give your character different features or combine features of different races, go to page 13 for rules on how to create a custom origin character.

## LANGUAGES OF VARRIS

### Modern Speakers

Common	Humans Merchants
Dwarvish	Dwarves
Elvish	Elves
Getarian	Getarians (Humans)
Gnomish	Gnomes
Halfling	Halflings
Orcish	Orcs
Tisenyi	Tisenin (Humans)

### Rare Speakers

Abyssal	Fiends Tieflings
Draconic	Dragons Dragonborn Kobolds
Infernal	Archfiends Warlocks
Sylvan	Fey Goblins Clerics
Varran	Varra (Humans) Wizards

If you feel uncomfortable with the origins of dragonborn presented here, you may decide to play a character who was exposed to the same elemental energy responsible for granting chromatic dragons their breath weapons later in their life.

## DRAGONBORN

In ancient times, chromatic dragon tyrants ruled Varris. They were ultimately defeated by the Archfey and their elves, but some still remain. On occasion, a chromatic dragon has a half-dragon child with a minion of another race—over a few generations, a line like this morphs from half-dragons to dragonborn, typically once the character in question is no longer immune to the damage type associated with their chromatic ancestor.

Half-dragons still exist, though rare, and due to their direct ties to chromatic parents, they are not usually welcome in most settlements and tend to serve their draconic parent as minions, often along with their humanoid parent.

## TURBULENT HISTORY

During the reign of the Varran Empire, its human wizards bound most chromatic dragons of Varris to their will. They experimented on the captured creatures, going as far as to have their humanoid slaves bear their children, creating the first half-dragons. Over time, those half-dragons were brought into Varran society in hopes of creating powerful wizards. The dragonborn that resulted from these experiments were seen as a sign of the might of the empire, as through by defying the natural order the Varra achieved something that was, to them, greater than even humans. However, many dragonborn struggled with how different they were from regular humans, even back at a time when they were thought of as great, despite their terrible origin.

## CULTISTS AND BANDITS

After the empire was felled by rebels led by elven slaves, the dragonborn began being seen as worse than the remaining Varra—combining the traits of the hated chromatic dragons and an arcane origin, many humans and elves considered them unnatural, foul beasts—this was, of course, undeserved, as the dragonborn didn't have an inherent tendency towards evil like their draconic ancestors did. If anything, it was their poor treatment by the new human society that caused many of them to turn to where they were accepted—cults and bandit packs, both at the outskirts of humanoid civilization.

To say that dragonborn are vile, wicked creatures is a lie. However, to say that many of them have given up proving that belief false is the truth for many of these outcasts.

Not all is bleak for those with chromatic blood, though—some states and settlements have been attempting to break through their bias against them in recent years, whether it's out of the kindness of their hearts or for more pragmatic reasons. Change is slow and the future remains uncertain.

## CHROMATIC FEATURES

Dragonborn are easily recognized by their smooth, reptilian skin, typically of the color of their draconic ancestors, but sometimes of a more human-like shade. Their eyes are also brightly colored and reflective like the eyes of cats. Parts of their skin tend to be covered with scales, typically replacing body hair that other races might have. Rarely, dragonborn possess tails or small horns resembling those of chromatic dragons. Their faces are similar to those of elves—angular and noble, owing to their common ancestry.

## DRAGONBORN TRAITS

Both dragonborn and tieflings have a base race. Select a race that isn't a dragonborn, tiefling or half elf—it will grant you certain features. All dragonborn share the following traits:

### Age

Dragonborn mature at the same rate humans do but live a little longer on average, around 100 years.

### ABILITY SCORE INCREASE

Your Constitution score increases by 2, while your Strength score increases by 1. Alternatively, you may replace this with the Ability Score Increase of your base race.

### Size

Dragonborn are about the height of their base race, with a slightly more muscular build. Your size is **Medium** or **Small**.

If your size is Small, you can still use Heavy weapons with no drawbacks as long as you're proficient with them.

### Speed

Your base walking speed is that of your base race plus 5 ft.

### HEIGHTENED SENSES

You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray. Additionally, you gain blindsight out to a range of 10 feet, meaning that your vision cannot be impeded by darkness, the blinded condition or other means of obscuring your vision.

### BREATH WEAPON

You can use your action to exhale destructive energy. Your draconic ancestry determines its damage type.

When you use your breath weapon, each creature in a 15 ft. cone must make a Dexterity saving throw. The DC for this saving throw equals 12 + your proficiency bonus. A creature takes an amount of d6's of damage equal to half your level, rounded down, on a failed save, and half as much damage on a successful one.

After you use your breath weapon, you can't use it again until you complete a short or long rest or if you receive healing for more than half your maximum hit points.

When you reach 3rd level, you can choose to use your breath weapon on either a 20 ft. cone or a 5 by 60 ft. line.

### LANGUAGES

You can speak, read, and write Common and Draconic.

### DRAGONBORN SUBRACE TRAITS

Additionally, every dragonborn gains the traits of their subrace: a resistance to one damage type, which is also used for their breath weapon, a tendency towards a specific alignment, a +1 increase to an ability score, as well as not being affected by non-magical difficult terrain in a particular type of terrain and proficiency with a certain type of equipment.

The following table lists the features of each subrace:

#### Color Damage Alignment Ability Terrain Proficiency

Black	Acid	LE	Str	Swamp	Shields
Blue	Lightning	LE	Int	Desert	Light armor
Green	Poison	LE	Int	Forest	Longbows
Red	Fire	CE	Cha	Mountain	Longswords
White	Cold	CE	Str	Arctic	Battleaxes



Red  
dragonborn

Gold elf

## ELVES

Elves are the only humanoid race native to Varris, one with a long and complicated history than spans millennia. Some elves think themselves superior to other races of Varris, but most only mourn their past greatness, cut short by the tyranny of the humans they themselves once aided.

### ANCIENT HISTORY

When the Archfey fought to reclaim the world from chromatic dragon tyrants, one of them, known as She Who Sees, sent her angel to enchant the eggs of a few chromatic dragons. Her fey magic transformed the dragons into a new, more powerful kind of creature—a metallic dragon.

Chromatic dragons realized far too late that their own children were the Archfey's tool of destruction and were inevitably defeated. Over time, the metallic dragons, followers of their Archfey maker, lost their shapechanging capabilities and in their humanoid forms became known as elves. While their culture prospered undisturbed, the Archfey brought other humanoid races into the world from other, unknown planes. The elves taught them their arcane magic, which was soon turned against them as a human tribe known as the Varra rebelled against the other races and created their empire, which subjugated and enslaved other races.

## LIVING IN A HUMAN WORLD

After the collapse of the Varran Empire, the elves scattered. Some, called wild elves by humans, retreated to their ancient forests, like the magical Forest of Eyes in Getari, the sacred spring of their civilization, vowing to never live among humans again after the years of shame and enslavement they had endured. Others decided to put their race's past behind them and try to work with humans to create a world where they could live in peace among with them and other non-human races—they are often called city elves. One might think that out of all the non-human races, the elves would stand out as those who the human society of states like Getari would treat as their own, perhaps even revere them for their direct connection to the Archfey. It was also the elves who fought the most valiantly against the Varran Empire and the chromatic dragons before them, and while there is some degree of remembrance for those elven heroes, they are often forgotten about in favor of the humans who rose to power once the war was over due to their overwhelming numbers.

Many humans believe that the best role for an elf in a human-dominated society is that of a priest—their ancient ways are seen as more authentic to the teachings of the Ladies by some. Others argue that the elven and human ways of worshiping the Archfey have become so divergent that they should be treated as separate religions, with their own churches and priests—human churches for humans and elven churches for elves. This approach, however, is seen by many elves as an attempt to alienate them and they tend to oppose it. And while it is true that elves in general tend to be more devoted to their faith, having been created and, arguably, favored by the Ladies, many of them feel as though reducing them to the role of priests and scholars is little better than the Varran practice of sorting slaves into tasks based on race.

## ELF APPEARANCE

To most humans, the appearance of elves is striking—their imposing height, metallic-colored skin and eyes, as well as the sharpness of their androgynous features all inspire awe and sometimes even fear upon a first encounter. Elves whose draconic heritage runs deep, have ears resembling those of their metallic ancestors.

### A BLESSING AND A CURSE

Platinum elves are a rare subrace of Varszi elves, thought to have emerged from either platinum dragons or some unique divine intervention.

They are often marked by white skin and hair, with their eyes either being the color of platinum or, uniquely, one being silver and the other golden. This is thought of as a blessing from She Who Sees, the archfey responsible for creating elves, as the silver moon and golden sun are thought to be her two eyes, with which she watches the World. As such, platinum elves are sometimes revered as blessed with some special purpose or simply meant for leadership or guidance. Of course, many of them simply want to live their lives as everyone else does, but those who strive to climb the ranks of their communities find that their perceived blessing actually makes it much easier.

## ELVEN SUBRACES

The six distinct elven subraces are descended from the six varieties of metallic dragons. The traits of metallic dragons are often thought to be polar opposites of those of the chromatic dragons they are descended from, with elves taking after their metallic ancestors. This is largely a modern, human attempt to more easily label elves as one or another thing that they are often not. However, it's a common belief that elves are predestined by the Archfey who created them to have very particular strengths, weaknesses and preferences based on their subrace. Some elves treat them as divine talents, though most see it for what it is—stereotyping.

### STEREOTYPES ABOUT ELVES BY SUBRACE

#### Subrace Positive Negative Occupation

Brass	Friendly	Deceptive	Artists, craftsmen, officials
Bronze	Just	Strict	Guards, soldiers, sailors
Copper	Creative	Unreliable	Bards, merchants, travelers
Gold	Wise	Impractical	Teachers, scholars, priests
Platinum	Talented	Haughty	Leaders, priests, teachers
Silver	Devout	Inflexible	Priests, paladins, soldiers

Copper and brass elves, being the most numerous in Varris, are likely to be found in every corner of the continent, especially in larger settlements. As such, humans don't tend to think much of them or treat them much differently than they would treat their own kin. Similarly, copper and brass half-elves are the most common.

Many bronze elves have been employed as warriors for generations and, as such, many cities, especially coastal ones, entrust guard duties to them owing to their adaptability.

Gold and silver elves are less common than their copper, brass and bronze kin, but still far from a rare sight. Many find themselves encouraged to pursue priesthood due to their perceived close connection to the divine. While there is no evidence for that, it is a fact that many of them may face less bias while pursuing higher education, which they are likely to take advantage of, if they can afford it.

### Silver elf



## ELF TRAITS

All elves share the following traits:

### Age

Elves mature physically at the same rate humans do but their mental development never stops. They are considered adults around the age of 30 and live up to about 150 years.

### ABILITY SCORE INCREASE

Your Wisdom and Charisma scores both increase by 1.

### Size

Elves are generally taller than humans, owing to their draconic bloodline, ranging from the average copper elf being 5'11 to the average gold elf measuring 6'4 in height, while being generally slender. Your size is **Medium**.

### SPEED

Your base walking speed is 30 ft.

### DARKVISION

You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray.

### SKILLED

You gain proficiency in 1 additional skill of your choice.

### Fey ANCESTRY

You have advantage on Wisdom saving throws.

### METALLIC AFFINITY

Owing to your draconic origins, you are proficient with any armor and shield made of the metal corresponding to your subrace. Additionally, any attacks you make with weapons made of that same metal gain a +2 bonus to hit.

### LANGUAGES

You can speak, read, and write Common and Elvish.

### ELF SUBRACE TRAITS

Additionally, every elf gains the traits of their subrace: a resistance to one damage type, a tendency towards a specific alignment, a +1 increase to an ability score, as well as a unique trait gained at 3rd level.

The following table lists the features of each elf subrace:

Metal	Resistance	Alignment	Ability	Trait
Brass	Fire	CG	Cha	Pacify
Bronze	Lightning	LG	Con	Adaptable
Copper	Acid	CG	Cha	Mimicry
Gold	Fire	LG	Int	Arcane Talent
Platinum	Radiant	NG	Wis	Her Blessing
Silver	Cold	LG	Wis	Divine Talent

### PACIFY

You know the *friends* cantrip. Additionally, you you can cast the *sleep* spell as a 2nd-level spell with this trait; you regain the ability to cast it when you finish a long rest.

### ADAPTABLE

You gain a climbing or swimming speed of 30 ft. (your choice). If you choose a swimming speed, you can breathe in both air and water and if you choose a climbing speed, you gain resistance to damage from falling.

### MIMICRY

You can mimic any sounds you have heard, including voices. A creature that hears the sounds can tell they are imitations with a successful **Wisdom (Insight) check**, the DC for which equals 10 + your proficiency bonus.

### ARCANE TALENT

You learn the *prestidigitation* cantrip and one other wizard cantrip of your choice.

### HER BLESSING

Whenever you are in moonlight, you gain a +2 bonus to AC and all saving throws. Whenever you are in daylight, you have resistance to psychic damage and gain a +1 bonus to any spellcasting DC you have.

### DIVINE TALENT

You learn the *thaumaturgy* cantrip and can cast the *bless* spell as a 2nd-level spell with this trait; you regain the ability to cast it when you finish a long rest.

## DARK ELVES

Some think of dark elves as a race distinct from other elves, but they have more in common with their more ancient kin than most elves like to admit.

In times of Varran expansion, an angel of the Archfey known as Enkhebet enchanted some elven eggs to grant them more potent arcane magic. She felt as though the elves were too passive and reliant on visions sent to them by the favored angel of She Who Sees, Ireshau, her longtime rival, and sought to teach elves faithful to her divination magic of their own. A famed temple was established where the oracle of Enkhebet and the wizard-priests who served her studied arcane magic under the angel's guidance.

Many contemporary scholars claim that Enkhebet, seeking more power, eventually desired to become a deity. While her reasons are unknown, she opened a gate to the lower plane for herself and many of her elves, and, under the new name of Bethem, became the fiendish queen of a group of dark elves known as the maanen, recognizable by their stark white hair and gray skin.

Those dark elves who did not follow the fallen angel remained on Varris, but face much hatred and distrust from their fellow elves. Only six years after Enkhebet's fall, the elves of Varris were enslaved by the Varra due to their reduced numbers. The statistics on the next page represent dark elves of Varris, not the maanen of the lower plane.

## DARK ELF TRAITS

Dark elves gain all traits of an elf of their subrace save for Darkvision, their subrace's Ability Score Increase and their 3rd-level trait, which are replaced with the following:

### ALIGNMENT

Dark elves lean towards neutrality in alignment, rather than good, so the average silver dark elf might be Lawful Neutral instead of Lawful Good.

### ABILITY SCORE INCREASE

Your Wisdom, Intelligence, or Charisma score (your choice) increases by 1.

### SUPERIOR DARKVISION

Accustomed to the darkness of the Depths, you have superior vision in dark and dim conditions. You can see in dim light within 120 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray.

### SPELLWEAVER'S MAGIC

You know the *prestidigitation* cantrip and you can cast the *faerie fire* spell as a 1st-level spell with this trait; you regain the ability to cast it when you finish a long rest. Once you reach 3rd level, you can also cast the *darkness* spell with this trait; you regain the ability to cast it when you finish a long rest. Charisma is your spellcasting ability for these spells.

#### VARIANT RULE: ELEMENTAL MASTERY

If a character has a damage type resistance from their elf, half-elf, dragonborn or tiefling subrace and a spell, class feature, or a magical effect grants them resistance to that same damage type, they instead gain immunity to it for as long as both resistances are in effect.

## HALF-ELVES

Half elves are either the children of an elf and a non-elf, or of half-elves. Either way, they combine the traits of an elf with those of another race.

Most half-elves dwell in settlements where elves are not the majority, but not marginalized to the point of being afraid of non-elf contact, like the Getarian capital of Thesani or its coastal satellite town of Sirraen. Many find work as artists, poets, or officials working under local governments, especially in settlements with a large population of both elves and non-elves.

When creating a half-elf, you will have to choose the non-elf race you want represented in your features, such as a human or dwarf, as well as an elven subrace. If you select dragonborn or tiefling as your non-elf race, the base race for their features is that of an elf.

## HALF-ELF TRAITS

As a half-elf, you gain the following traits:

### Age

Half-elves mature at around the age that humans do, but they tend to live slightly longer, around 100 years.

### ABILITY SCORE INCREASE

You gain whatever ability score increase your non-elf race would get with no subrace. Additionally, your Wisdom and Charisma scores both increase by 1.

### Size

Half-elves are typically the size of their non-elf race, with a more slender build. Your size is **Small** or **Medium**.

### Speed

Your base walking speed is 30 ft.

### Fey Ancestry

You have advantage on Wisdom saving throws.

### Varied Origins

You gain one feature of your choice of your non-elf race or one of its subraces, like an islander's Versatile or a dragonborn's Heightened Senses.

### Languages

You can speak, read, and write Common, Elvish and any one additional language of your choice.

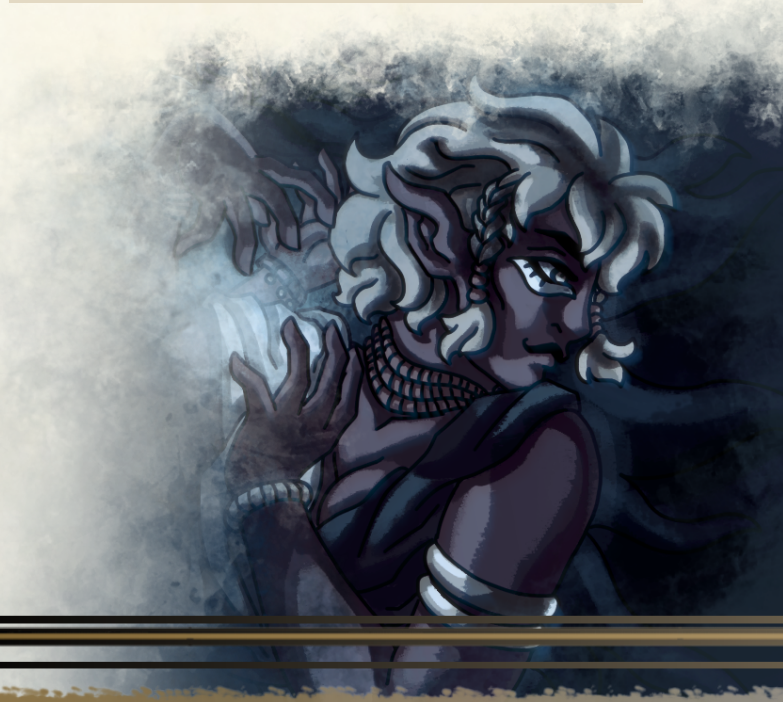
### HALF-ELF SUBRACE TRAITS

Additionally, every half-elf gains the traits of their subrace: a resistance to one damage type, a tendency towards a specific alignment and a +1 increase to an ability score.

The following table lists the features of each elf subrace:

Metal	Resistance	Alignment	Ability
Brass	Fire	CG	Cha
Bronze	Lightning	LG	Wis
Copper	Acid	CG	Cha
Gold	Fire	LG	Int
Platinum	Radiant	NG	Wis
Silver	Cold	LG	Str

Dark elf



## MORE VARIED CHARACTER OPTIONS

You may be interested in playing a character who is, for example, a half-human half-dwarf, or any other combination that is not accounted for in this document. Following the half-elf's example, you may choose two races: one of them grants you your size and one other race or subrace feature of your choice, while the rest of your features are those of the second race of your choice. If you do it, make sure to "trade" features of roughly equivalent value. In the case of the half-elf, the 3rd-level subrace feature is "traded" for whatever non-elf feature the player chooses. You are encouraged to customize your character's lineage however your GM allows. You can also check page 13 for the "custom origin".

## HUMANS

Humans have been the most common race in Varris since the Varran age, but they are not native to it, or the world as a whole. They were brought into it by the powerful Archfey along with several other humanoid races, all hailing from home worlds that they no longer remember. Some humans believe that they are, in fact, native to Varris and that the Archfey created them to rule over it. Other view the Ladies as favoring the elves and turn to dragon or fiend worship. Most, however, are not concerned with where they came from and focus on where they can yet go.

## HUMAN TRAITS

All modern humans have the following traits in common:

### Age

Humans mature at the age of 20 and live around 80 years.

### ABILITY SCORE INCREASE

Your Dexterity score increases by 1.

### Size

Your size is Medium.

### ALIGNMENT

Humans lean towards the Neutral alignment as a whole, with different subraces shifting the tendency a little.

### SOCIAL ANIMAL

You gain proficiency in one Charisma skill of your choice.

### BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

You gain proficiency with shortswords, maces, or shields.

### LANGUAGES

You know Common and one extra modern language of your choice.

### HUMAN SUBRACE TRAITS

Choose a subrace from the ones presented on this and the next two pages and add its traits to your character.

## GETARIANS

You hail from Getari, the coastal kingdom where trade is everything and the setting of the *Heart of Darkness* campaign. Getarians pride themselves on their great invention, the printing press, which has allowed their country to flourish in the last century. They value charisma as much as they do manual skills, since they know that a good craftsman is one who knows how to sell their product, not just how to make it.

The typical Getarians tend to be quite tall for humans, with fair skin, eyes ranging in color from grey to blueish-green and dark blonde, brown or red curly hair.

### ABILITY SCORE INCREASE

Your Charisma and Dexterity scores each increase by 1.

### ALIGNMENT

Getarians shun extremes—they believe that the best trade relationships are established by those with an open mind. They lean strongly towards the Neutral alignment.

### CRAFTSMAN'S HANDS

You gain proficiency in the Sleight of Hand skill as well as one set of tools of your choice.

### MERCHANT'S TONGUE

You gain advantage on Charisma ability checks made to bargain for better prices when selling and buying goods.

### CITYDWELLER'S EYES

You have proficiency in any Wisdom checks made to find someone or something in any modern settlement.

## HIGHLANDERS

The highlanders lead difficult lives in the tall mountains, at altitudes that most would have difficulty surviving. Some claim that their ancestors must have had the blood of white dragons running through their veins to survive in such conditions. The highlanders would likely scoff at this—to them, it's all a matter of hard work and grit.

### ABILITY SCORE INCREASE

Your Constitution score increases by 2.

### ALIGNMENT

The islanders value hard work and standing by what you believe in, regardless of what may come your way—they lean towards law in alignment.

### HARSH WINTERS

You are naturally adapted to high altitudes and cold climates. You can move across icy surfaces without needing to make an ability check. Additionally, difficult terrain composed of ice or snow doesn't cost you extra movement.

### MOUNTAIN HUNTER

You are proficient in Survival checks. Additionally, you make ability checks to track and identify humanoids, beasts and monstrosities in mountainous terrain with advantage.

### NOMADIC LIFESTYLE

Your base movement speed is 35 ft.

## ISLANDERS

To the east of the continent of Varris is a vast, largely uncharted sea. The majority of its inhabitable islands form two distinct archipelagos—the Aisone, or eastern islands, or the Madhdine, or southern islands. The Aisone islands are much closer to the coast of Varris and are subsequently better known than the more remote Madhdine islands. Getarian merchants have recently began making regular trips to the Aisone and even established a few ports and small settlements to facilitate their trade with the locals. Most islanders are unfavorable to the Varszi presence in their homeland, with many having taken up piracy as a means to profit off of the outsiders in return.

The people of the islands are as varied as those of the coast, but they have some traits in common due to their share environment—their adaptability, the fast pace of their lives and their unwillingness to take anything for granted while cherishing what they get. Many of them have part-elven ancestry, being descended from the bronze elf ship crews of the Varran age.

### ABILITY SCORE INCREASE

Your Constitution and Dexterity scores each increase by 1.

### ALIGNMENT

The islanders are constantly forced to adapt to shifting circumstances, never able to dwell anywhere for too long at a time—they lean towards chaos in alignment.

### FEELING GOOD

Whenever you finish a long rest, you gain temporary hit points equal to your proficiency bonus.

### OF THE DESERT

You are naturally adapted to hot climates. You are also immune to the effects of the *heat metal* spell, make Constitution saves against the effects of dehydration with advantage and can survive on half a pound of food a day.

### VERSATILE

You gain a swimming speed of 30 ft. and a climbing speed of 20 ft. You are proficient with waterborne vehicles.

## TISENIN

The remote, mountainous kingdom of Tisenya is not a place many outsiders dare to enter. This is mostly due to its rigorously enforced ban on arcane magic and the use of brutal physical punishments against those who break its strict laws. Those brave enough to trade with the Tisenin are usually interested in the unique anti-magic devices that Tisenyi knights use to contain imprisoned spellcasters.

The Tisenin were the first former slaves to break free of Varran oppression. They believe that a paladin named Ratignev, the first king of Tisenya, was chosen by the Archfey and that all subsequent kings of Tisenya carry this divine blessing. While non-humans exist in Tisenya, they are much rarer than in other parts of Varris.

### ABILITY SCORE INCREASE

Your Wisdom and Constitution scores each increase by 1.

### ALIGNMENT

The Tisenin have earned a reputation for their strict adherence to the law, something they are taught from a young age. They lean strongly towards law in alignment.

### INTIMIDATING PRESENCE

You have proficiency in the Intimidation skill. If a creature within 30 ft. of you is frightened of another creature, the frightened creature is also is frightened of you for the same duration.

### MENTAL DISCIPLINE

You have advantage on Wisdom saving throws made against spells. Whenever an allied creature that you can see and who can hear you fails a Wisdom saving throw against a spell, you can use your reaction to warn it, allowing it to roll again, possibly turning the failure into a success.

### PROFESSIONAL

You have proficiency with one type of tools of your choice. You can add your proficiency modifier to Intelligence ability checks connected to the usage of these tools.

Getarian merchant



Getarian noble



Varra



Getarian Half-elf



## VARRA

In ages past, the Varran Empire ruled the continent with an iron fist thanks to the immense power of its wizards, famed dragon riders included. However, the defeat of the empire did not mean the end of the Varra—their descendants scattered throughout the lands they once occupied, most still cultivating the arcane traditions of their people.

The Varra are a diminutive people with tan skin and black or dark brown hair and eyes. It is said that in times of the empire, a spell was used to change the colors of one's irises according to their social status, with only commoners having their natural eye color. Despite the prejudice they face, the Varra are considered by many to be the most attractive of the humans, though it does little to gain them the favor of elves. Certain aspects of traditional Varran fashion and appearance can draw negative attention in the lands they once ruled over—long, straight hair, earrings, elaborate golden jewelry, heavy eye makeup or robes in vibrant shades of red, purple or blue.

### ALIGNMENT

The Varra were a harsh society where one's worth was judged equally according to their skill, cunning and ambition—their descendants lean towards evil in alignment.

### ABILITY SCORE INCREASE

Your Intelligence or Charisma score (your choice) increases by 2.

### FORGOTTEN LORE

You know the Draconic or Varran language (your choice).

### VARRAN MAGIC

You know the *prestidigitation* cantrip and one other wizard cantrip of your choice. Additionally, you know one 1st-level wizard spell. You choose what your spellcasting ability for these spells is between Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma.

## TIEFLINGS

Archfiends are creatures who have committed an act of blasphemy so great that it offended the Archfey themselves and who possess such great power that they survived their retaliation and banishment to the lower plane known as the Depths, where they are trapped in an elemental chaos that has formed around them, spawning wicked fiendish minions who serve them. Many archfiends were once chromatic dragons who attempted to usurp more power for themselves through unnatural means and were punished for it, but some are fallen celestials, even angels.

## TIEFLING ORIGINS

Very little is known about archfiends and their minions, but most of those who follow them are outcasts, driven mad by some elemental power beyond their comprehension or control. Fiend cults are nothing new in Varris—they have existed for as long as the archfiends have. The origins of tieflings lie in the worship and summoning of fiends.

### TIEFLING ORIGINS

#### 1d6 Character's origin

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | The child of two tieflings.   |
| 2 | The result of a curse placed on their parents.  |
| 3 | The child of a humanoid and a fiend.  |
| 4 | The descendant of an unknown archfiend.   |
| 5 | The result of exposure to fiendish energy, for example through a planar portal or artifact. |
| 6 | The part (or side effect) of a pact with a fiend.   |

The archfiends are raw, elemental energy—those who were chromatic dragons are now the very elemental essence of the magic that keeps dragons alive. They have become the very forces of nature that the ancient chromatic dragons used to worship. They are said to not even command or control their minions—they spawn in an endless sea of chaos that is an archfiend's domain. At least, such are the accounts of captured cultists before they faced execution.

Some of their fiendish minions are fully sentient, especially those who were transformed into fiends or were born part-fiends. The infamous succubi, part-fey and part-fiend, have lured many a mortal into pacts, sometimes sealed with the birth of a tiefling child.

Many tieflings grow up orphaned, either due to their cultist parents having been executed or otherwise killed as a result of their worship, or because their parents, having faced the same prejudice as them, got involved in illegal and risky activities to survive. They rarely know their own origins.

If you would like to build a more detailed backstory for your tiefling, ask your GM about the "Known archfiends" table in the campaign book (page 13). Make sure not to read it yourself, though—you might glimpse some spoilers.

### SHUNNED AND REVILED

Tieflings are, and always have been, unfairly considered the lowest of the low. The Varra thought of them as echoes of an archfiend's failed attempt at godhood, using them only for the most menial and unpleasant of tasks—they did, however prove to be effective components for high-level magic.

Presently, tieflings still face vehement and unrestrained prejudice on the grounds of religion. They are commonly assumed to be fiends or, at the very least, active cultists.

## VARIED APPEARANCE

Many tieflings have few noticeably fiendish features and outwardly appear less reptilian than the dragonborn do. Their skin and hair are most commonly humanoid in color and texture. Often, their only fiendish features are clawed hands—which many of them hide under gloves—and the black sclerae of their eyes, typical of fiends. Rarely, tieflings might have more obviously draconic traits, such as horns or tails, but this is often the result of dragonborn blood.

Some tieflings have been known to have unusual, multi-colored skin or eyes, as if they were a mixture of two distinct elements—the origins of those tieflings are unknown. Your tiefling can look as fiendish or humanoid as you choose.

Because tieflings are under the direct influence of strong elemental magic, they may experience more uniform tendencies towards certain patterns of thought or behavior than other races do. However, this magic doesn't affect every tiefling in the same way and many live their lives ignoring it, or treat it as an affliction that must be managed.

## TIEFLING SUBRACES

The varieties of tieflings are not as strict as those of elves or dragonborn. They represent the element that the archfiend embodies and as such, in theory, every archfiend and their minions might spawn a different tiefling subrace. However, the following six subraces should be enough for now.

### FLAME TIEFLINGS

Hailing from the element of fire and, often, red dragons turned archfiends, the flame tieflings are fire incarnate and are what comes to mind when most common folk think of the tiefling race. Their skin is often dark or red and their eyes glow like flames. They are intimidating and fierce.

### AIR TIEFLINGS

When blue dragons searched for their elemental origins, they found a barren wasteland where only the unrestrained wind battered desert sand. Air tieflings commonly have depressive or nihilistic thoughts—the unease within them often causes them to be considered mad by common folk, but that is untrue for the most part.

### DEATH TIEFLINGS

A green dragon's poison breath accelerates the process of death and decay in their natural forest environment. Similarly, death tieflings house the force of decay within them which pushes them to believe that those who cannot survive should die—not all death tieflings succumb to this instinct, but those who do often work as assassins or poisoners.

## FORCE TIEFLINGS

A black dragon's acidic breath can be a deadly weapon, but what's even more deadly is the environment it dwells in. The dark swamps pull their victims in without mercy—such is the way of a force archfiend, to act without hesitation, pause or regret. Force tieflings are strong, brave and determined, sometimes to the point of recklessness.

## ICE TIEFLINGS

Whatever is frozen by a white dragon's breath stands still for all time. Ice tieflings, unlike their feral draconic counterparts, are terrifyingly calm and patient in executing their plans. They dislike the noise and distraction of settlements and often live outside of civilization as hermits.

## SHADOW TIEFLINGS

It is unclear if shadow tieflings are descended from any type of dragon that modern researchers are aware of, but they are said to be extremely secretive and deceptive. Their skin ranges from stark white to jet black, sometimes even metallic shades, seemingly reflecting their unclear origins.

## TIEFLING TRAITS

Tieflings have the following traits in common:

### Age

Tieflings mature at the same rate humans do, but tend to live shorter, 60 years on average.

### ALIGNMENT

Tieflings lean strongly towards a chaotic alignment. Sometimes, their harsh lives push them towards evil as well.

### ABILITY SCORE INCREASE

Your Charisma, Dexterity and Intelligence scores each increase by 1.

### Size

Tieflings, much like dragonborn, are typically the size of their base race, but with a more slender build. Your size is **Small** or **Medium**.

### CLAWS

Your claws are natural, finesse weapons that you are proficient with, which you can use to make melee weapon attacks. On a hit, you deal psychic damage equal to 2d6 + the ability modifier you used for the attack roll.

If you have resistance to a damage type other than psychic from your tiefling subrace, you can choose to have your claws deal damage of that type instead.

### SUPERIOR DARKVISION

Accustomed to the darkness of the Depths, you have superior vision in dark and dim conditions. You can see in dim light within 120 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray.

## TIEFLING SUBRACE TRAITS

Additionally, every tiefling gains the traits of their subrace: a resistance to one damage type (you can replace it with a resistance to psychic damage), a +1 increase to an ability score, as well as a unique trait gained at 3rd level.

The following table lists the features of each subrace:

Element	Damage	Ability Score	Trait
Flame	Fire	Cha	Burn
Air	Lightning	Int	Kinetic
Death	Poison	Int	Decompose
Force	Acid	Dex	Gravity Magic
Ice	Cold	Dex	Freeze
Shadow	Necrotic	Cha	Shadow Path

The amount of damage dice for these features doubles when you reach 6th level, then again at 9th level.

## BURN

If you hit an enemy who stands on a horizontal surface such as grass or stone with an attack on your turn, you can use your bonus action to set the surface in a 10 ft. radius from them (including the space they occupy) or fire with a non-magical flame for 1 minute, causing any creature who enters the area or starts their turn in it to take 1d4 fire damage. A casting of *thaumaturgy* or similar magic causes one 5 by 5 ft. square of the caster's choice to cease burning. If you use this feature again while another area is already burning, the previous fire disappears as soon as you light a new one.

## KINETIC

If you hit an enemy with an attack on your turn, you can use your bonus action to move them by 5 ft. in any direction into an unoccupied space, provided that the space offers stable footing, such as grass, stone or a floor.

When you reach 6th level, the maximum length of this movement increases to 10 ft. and at 9th level to 15 ft.

## DECOMPOSE

If you reduce an enemy to 0 hit points on your turn, you can use your bonus action to cause all hostile creatures within 10 ft. of the target to take 1d6 poison damage.

## GRAVITY MAGIC

As a reaction to taking damage from an attack, you can pull the attacker down with your magic, reducing their speed by 10 ft. until the start of your next turn and dealing 1d4 force damage to them.

## FREEZE

As a reaction to taking damage from a melee attack, you can freeze the air in a 10 ft. radius, dealing 1d6 cold damage to all hostile creatures in the area.

## SHADOW PATH

As a reaction to taking damage from a melee attack, you can teleport up to 20 ft. to an unoccupied space you can see that isn't in sunlight.

When you reach 6th level, the range of this teleportation increases to 30 ft. and at 9th level to 60 ft.

## OTHER RACES

Dwarves, gnomes, halflings and half-orcs remain unchanged from the basic rules.

If you wish to bring an uncommon race from another source or one you yourself created (pending GM approval) into Varris, there is nothing stopping you from using it—the Archfey brought all sorts of humanoids onto the world beyond the ones mentioned above. However, be prepared to disregard that race's original lore. Your character can still have all the traits of their race, but their connection to any extraplanar gods or other entities is irrelevant on Varris. As their people have lived under the Archfey's watch for two millennia now, unaware of the original place they inhabited in their world's culture, try to craft your character in reference to the reality of Varris. Tips on how to do so depending on their class can be found on the next page.

One type of uncommon race that may not be extraplanar like most humanoids is part-fey creatures, such as satyrs, half-dryads, half-hags, sirens, and such. If you wish to bring in a rare race and root it more in Varris' reality, you may consider making them part-fey without altering their features.

## OPTIONAL RULE: DRACONIC HERITAGE

Over the years, many elves and dragonborn have mixed with other races—today, nearly half of Varris' population has some traces of draconic blood. To represent that, you may create a character with a draconic heritage, while being of a race that doesn't normally have any elemental damage resistances.

If you decide that your character has a draconic heritage, they gain all features of their race and subrace normally. Additionally, they gain resistance to a damage type and a slight alignment leaning on the law-chaos axis:

### Metallic Damage Alignment Chromatic Damage Alignment

Gold	Fire	Law	Red	Fire	Chaos
Silver	Cold	Law	White	Cold	Chaos
Bronze	Lightning	Law	Blue	Lightning	Law
Copper	Acid	Chaos	Black	Acid	Law
Brass	Fire	Chaos	Green	Poison	Law

Characters with draconic heritages are often marked by eyes the color of their draconic ancestor's scales.

# CUSTOM ORIGIN



he diversity of the people of Varris goes beyond the discrete racial categories discussed above. Not every elf has a distinctly "elven" appearance, not every human bleeds red, and not every dragonborn has access to a breath weapon. This "custom origin" option was created to account for this wide spectrum of physical traits, as well as cultural backgrounds.

## FEATURE POINTS

If you choose to create a custom origin character, you have access to two pools of points at character creation: 5 points to use on your physical features and 3 points to use on your cultural features. Physical features describe your character's external appearance and internal anatomy, while cultural features are acquired while growing up in a certain environment and learning different things as a result.

Whenever you would gain access to an Ability Score Improvement or a Feat while leveling up, you can instead choose to gain 2 points (your choice of 1 point per pool or 2 points for either physical or cultural features).

## PHYSICAL FEATURES

**Ability Score Improvement.** Increase two different ability scores by 1 each, or one ability score by 2. Both improvements cost 1 point each. You can spend up to 2 points total on this feature in character creation.

**Elemental Blood.** Many people of Varris have been affected by planar and elemental energies. Traces of this magic can be found in their blood, affecting its color and properties. This feature costs 1 point and can normally only be acquired once, unless your GM agrees to let you have more.

DRACONIC	ELVEN	FIENDISH
Color Resistance	Metal Resistance	Element Resistance
Red Fire	Gold Fire	Flame Fire
White Cold	Silver Cold	Ice Cold
Blue Lightning	Bronze Lightning	Air Lightning
Black Acid	Copper Acid	Force Acid
Green Poison	Brass Fire	Death Poison
	Platinum Radiant	Shadow Psychic

Poison damage resistance comes with immunity to the poisoned condition.

**Blood Features.** If you have Elemental Blood, you can acquire a feature specific to it. Spend 1 point to gain one of the options, or 2 to gain both.

Blood type	Feature options
Draconic	Breath weapon (p. 4) Native terrain (p. 4)
Elven	Metallic Affinity (p. 6) Subrace trait (p. 6)
Fiendish	Claws (p. 11) Tiefling subrace trait (p. 12)

**Innate Spellcasting.** Spend 1 point to learn a single cantrip, or 2 points to be able to cast a 1st-level spell of your choice once per day. Your spellcasting ability for all innate spellcasting is Wisdom or Charisma (your choice).

**Senses.** Spend 1 point to gain darkvision (60 ft.) or increase its range by 60 ft., or 2 points to gain advantage on Perception checks using one sense of your choice.

**Conditions.** You can gain advantage on saving throws against a condition for 1 point, or become immune to it for 2 points. Choose one condition from the following:

- Blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, prone.
- Being put to sleep (as in Fey Ancestry).

## CULTURAL FEATURES

You can spend 1 point to gain a specific proficiency:

- **Language.** You can read, speak, and write in one language beyond Common.
- **Skills.** You gain proficiency with any 2 skills.
- **Weapons.** You gain proficiency with any 2 weapons.
- **Tools.** You gain proficiency with 2 types of tools.

**Setting-Specific Features.** You can spend 1 point to gain any of the following human subrace features (pages 8-10): Craftsman's Hands, Merchant's Tongue, Citydweller's Eyes, Harsh Winters, Mountain Hunter, Nomadic Lifestyle, Feeling Good, Of the Desert, Versatile, or Intimidating Presence. You can spend 2 points to gain either Mental Discipline or Varran Magic.

## LABELS

A label determines your "race" for the purposes of spells, class features, magic items, and social interactions.

At character creation, you choose one or two labels for your character. You can only choose a given label if at least one of the features you chose, whether cultural or physical, is a *specific feature* that can be found in that race's template, listed in the previous section. An Ability Score Improvement or Darkvision are not specific features, but languages are. If you have no specific features, you are human and choose your subrace (ethnicity) freely.

If you acquire any new features after character creation, you cannot select features associated with labels other than your own—for example, you cannot gain Elemental Blood or darkvision if you are a human—unless your character undergoes a physical transformation that your GM says allows for it.

The only exception is that you can acquire any new language for 2 points, but it does not change your labels.

# CLASS, SPELL AND ITEM CHANGES

This chapter lists different ways in which your GM may choose to alter pre-established rules or lore around certain aspects of the game.



## CLASS LORE

The following information is meant to help you build a character who feels like a real part of the setting. As such, this section contains no gameplay changes to the classes.

### BARBARIANS

Fierce highlander warriors, devout followers of the Archfey who have returned to nature to commune with their deities, guardians of priests and temples, or simply traveling bandits who have stumbled upon a source of supernatural—perhaps chromatic—might, barbarians come in many forms on Varris and none is seen as either particularly virtuous or immoral by its people.

### BARDS

Traveling artists and poets occupy a strange niche in Varrisian society—they are often seen as "harmless mages", as opposed to wizards and warlocks, and are sometimes even employed by noble courts to use their magic for utilitarian purposes. During the reign of the Varran empire, bards were thought of as functionally the same as wizards.

In truth, bards are no less powerful than other arcane casters, but are rarely devoted enough to perfecting their spellcasting to gain enough power to change the common opinion about their - they also know that the stereotype of harmless bardic magic works in their favor and prevents them from the harm that may come to wizards or warlocks.

### CLERICS

Unlike in many fantasy settings, in Varris divine magic is not directly given to worshipers and is more the effect of them growing closer to the underlying elemental energies of the entity they worship, drawing on them. There are, broadly speaking, two types of clerics on the continent: those who worship the Archfey or their angels and those who worship the archfiends or the forces of nature they represent.

Priests of the Archfey are respected in most modern humanoid societies and often, especially in the case of humans and elves, granted informal leadership positions in smaller settlements, like towns and villages. In fact, the church has consistently held an important political position in modern Varris, which some, especially those without metallic heritage, dislike. Archfey priests often double as researchers, judges or government officials.

Cultists of archfiends and chromatic dragons are also often wielders of divine magic. Unlike priests, they most commonly worship the elemental magic that granted dragons their powers in the first place, rather than the dragons or archfiends as individuals. Archfiend worship is strictly illegal in most humanoid settlements and warrants the penalty of death, so it's very rare for a cultist, even mad, to wander into a city or town.

### DRUIDS

The druids of Varris commonly worship the Archfey—they are most often hermits devoted to a particular Lady or angel, believing that the civilized worship inside cities and churches is not satisfactory or authentic to their faith. Those druids have no reservations regarding the use of metal armor, shields or weapons.

More rarely, druids may turn to the prehistoric worship of the elements that the chromatic dragon tyrants practiced.

### PALADINS

The holy warriors, or knights errant, who roam Varris come in all shapes and sizes, as on any other world. Most commonly, they follow a personal moral code - they may worship a powerful being such as an Archfey or archfiend, but it's typically not central to their quest.



## RANGERS

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Commonly, the fantasy ranger is seen as an elf. This is rarely true in Varris as most rangers are humans or half-humans who have chosen to explore the great unknown of either the ancient elven forests, the sea to the east and what may lay beyond it, or even the dingy depths of humanoid settlements. Most rangers are bounty hunters motivated by fame and profit on their travels, dreaming of returning to their city with tall tales of adventure, but some are researchers or settlers.

## SORCERERS

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In times of the Varran Empire, sorcerers were shunned and feared - a commoner, slave or woman who exhibited magical powers without formal training was a threat to the established hierarchy where only the rich and powerful could afford to have their children trained in the arcane arts. Especially during their war with the Archfey-backed slave rebellion that proved to be their downfall, the Varra were weary of sorcerers, as they could be champions of their enemies, imbued with unpredictable fey magic. Attitudes towards sorcerers changed drastically after the empire's fall, with Archfey champions and those with the blood of celestials being granted positions of the greatest authority in the church and seen as prophets.

However, in modern times, as the church controls an increasingly organized society, sorcerers are once again seen as inherently problematic —perhaps they are agents of fiends, some clerics argue, or, even if they have the blood of angels, who's to say they won't become corrupted? Despite their historical ties to the Archfey, sorcerers are slowly becoming equated to the wizards and warlocks that humans fear.

## WARLOCKS

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During the Varran age, sons of high-ranking wizards who lacked either the brilliance or the dedication of their accomplished fathers were often encouraged to enter pacts with fiends or ancient chromatic dragons to gain magical power. This was most often done in secret, as it was seen as shameful to not have "earned" one's spellcasting expertise.

In modern day Varris, warlocks, much like wizards, are reviled and seen as archfiend cultists—while this is certainly true in some cases, many different patrons can grant warlocks their power, including the angels of the Archfey.

## WIZARDS

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The words "arcanist", "enchanter" or sometimes "spellweaver" invoke fear in the common folk. Inevitably, a connection is drawn in the minds of most modern people between wizardry and the tyrannical Varran empire, ruled by an elite caste of powerful mages. While elves practiced arcane magic before the Varra did and still do, they also have a fear of high-level magic as it brings to their minds the now-fallen angel of magic Ekhebet and her fallen dark elves. Only the aforementioned dark elves, as well as people from outside what was once the Varran Empire's lands harbor no resentment towards arcane magic and wizards in particular.

Most Varszi wizards are forced to practice in secret or seclusion and as such, many suffer greatly under the stress and either abandon their studies to return to their previous lives or go mad, vowing to destroy those who sought to limit them before. This does little to improve their reputation.

## REFLAVORING SUBCLASSES

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You may be interested in playing a subclass that is not fully in-line with the lore laid out in this document. Here are a few tips on how to re flavor your character if that's the case:

- Any elemental-themed subclass can be tied to chromatic dragons or archfiends,
- Any divine-themed subclass can be tied to the Archfey, their angels, or possibly the metallic dragons,
- Any subclass that makes a martial character gain partial spellcasting can be tied to the Varran empire, with the Varra subrace working to boost the character's magic.

## SPELL CHANGES

The following changes to the lore and mechanics of certain spells are likely to be made in any Varris-based campaign. If you are planning to play a spellcaster, those changes may affect your choice of spells or even class.

## PLANAR TRAVEL

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The world that Varris sits on is part of the material plane. There are not records of travel between different worlds save for the migration of humanoids brought into Varris by the Archfey and even then it's not clear if it was an instance of planar travel, teleportation, time travel or creation.

## THE DEPTHS

What is known is that there are ways to enter the lower plane known as the Depths, the dark lair of the archfiends and their evil minions. The church teaches that those who wound the Archfey with acts of great cruelty or selfishness are dragged down by unknown forces to the Depths to be transformed into mindless, fiendish shadows of what they once were. Most inhabitants of Varris have never encountered a fiend and don't wish for that to change, but stories of their fearsome power are often told as proof of the Archfey's protection over their mortal children.

## THE WILDS

Very little is known about the upper plane or the Wilds, aside from it being the lair of the Archfey and the home of their angels, as well as, presumably, all fey creatures. Legends claim that the souls of faithful mortals are transformed into celestial servants of the Ladies upon death.

## THOSE WHO CROSS PLANES

Very few creatures are known to be able to travel between the planes. The only ones capable of moving freely between all three are the Archfey's angels, created specifically to carry out the bidding of the Ladies in places that they themselves cannot reach, even, rarely, the Depths.

The Archfey, for all their power, have never left the Wilds, which leads most scholars to suspect that they are, in some way, bound to it and cannot directly interfere in mortal affairs. The same is true of archfiends, who, as punishment for their evil deeds, were chained against their will to their dark prisons in the Depths.

Many common fiends, however, can travel into the material plane to wreak havoc, but rarely do—some suspect that they have means to disguise themselves as humanoids and that fiendish visits are actually much more common than what is commonly assumed, but it's impossible to tell if that is true.

## PLANAR PORTALS

Powerful, fiendish magic can create planar portals between the material plane and the Depths—many cultists of archfiends have opened them by drawing on the magic of their masters, but the church of the Archfey's efforts have led to such portals being extremely rare and quickly closed. It is very likely that your GM will ban the use of the *plane shift* spell by players and restrict it to creatures who can innately cross the barriers between planes, like angels.

## BANISHMENT

Spells and effects that banish creatures to their native plane cause celestials and fey to be teleported to the Wilds and fiends to the Depths. Your GM may choose to have chromatic dragons and elementals be banished to clusters of elemental energy within the material plane, for example teleporting a red dragon or magma mephits into a large volcano.

## ETHEREALNESS

Any spell or effect that causes a creature to go into the ethereal plane functions normally in Varris.

## FORBIDDEN MAGIC

Due to the Varszis' main source of exposure to arcane magic being the Varran Empire, many states fear that if they do not prevent spellcasters from rising to power, they will once again conquer and enslave others. As such, the laws of most Varszi states forbid or limit the use of arcane magic.

Casting or teaching a spell to another creature ranges from a minor offense to a crime worthy of a widespread panic, depending on the state. Using *harmful* magic, especially in public or on an important political or religious figure, is punishable by death in many places, even if the victim was not killed outright. Elves who wish to maintain their arcane traditions often resort to life outside of human settlements.

## FORGOTTEN LORE

In times of the Varran Empire, arcane magic was thriving, with new spells of great power being invented on a daily basis. Most of these spells were lost to time or are known only to those who dare venture into Varran ruins, such as the infamous ritual to bind a chromatic dragon to one's will, or more mundane spells like *arcanist's magic aura*.

It's not only the dead who keep their magical secrets - dark elves obscure knowledge of many spells taught to them by Enkhebet, such as *web*, *spider climb*, or *phantom steed*. Coveted spells such as *alter self*, *moonbeam* or *conjure woodland beings* are kept a secret by the church of the Archfey, which reserves the right to teach them to priests.

As with all restrictions, these exist to be overcome by your character and enable growth—if you want your human wizard to know the *web* spell, think about who or what they learned it from—maybe they were raised by dark elves or their studies of ancient elven texts revealed the spell's formula.

## ITEM CHANGES

What follows is a list of changes to the way items function in the world of Varris, most notably magic items.

## ILLEGAL TRAFFICKING

While common-tier magic items like *potions of healing* or scrolls of 1st level spells are freely available, even in smaller towns, as there tends to be at least one person in every settlement capable of crafting them, uncommon magic items, especially weapons and armor, often require to be registered to local authorities or will at the very least draw their attention.

Items of a rare and higher rarity are banned in most settlements and using, trafficking, or selling them there ranges from a minor offense to a serious crime.

Typically, the only group authorized to wield magic items or uncommon or rare rarity is the clergy. Some more affluent kingdoms arm their higher-ranking guards and warriors with magical equipment, but that is rare and seen as reckless. There is a widespread fear of magic items being cursed, turning against the user or transforming them into fiends. As such, the Church says, magic items should be contained to the only group who will use them responsibly and can repel their foul properties—that being, of course, themselves.

Getari is known for being more lax than most Varrisian kingdoms when it comes to monitoring the trade of magic items, as it's highly profitable to the local merchants, some of whom have their ways of either bypassing the local laws or dealing with local authorities in "unconventional" ways.

## AVAILABILITY

Fantasy worlds are full of villages and hamlets that offer a wide range of services, like an inn, tavern, a blacksmith and shops. This is not the case in Varris. Any settlement smaller than a town should not be expected to have these services, so be careful when choosing the starting gear of your character.

## METALWORK

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You may be wondering about the elves' Metallic Affinity trait. Along with it came a new system of crafting weapons from different metals, which your GM can read in full in the *Heart of Darkness* campaign book.

Here is what you need to know:

- While most weapons, armor and shields are made of steel, it's possible to buy or forge ones made of a different metal, as long as the blacksmith who is to forge it has access to the right kind of metal between copper, brass, bronze, silver, gold and platinum. The price and weight of a piece of equipment is multiplied by amounts specific to the metal it's forged from.
- Equipment made of copper is a little cheaper than that made of steel (70%), while all other types of metal are more expensive than steel and increase in price in the order given in the last point, up to 1800% for platinum.
- "Silvered" weapons don't exist on Varris and it's not possible to coat your weapons and ammunition in silver for the price given in the basic rules. Instead, any weapon or ammunition made of silver, gold or platinum counts as "silvered" for the purposes of determining damage types. Armor and shields made of those metals additionally protect the wearer from creatures who are immune or resistant to non-silvered damage, such as wraiths or werewolves.
- Some creatures may be vulnerable to attacks with weapons made of a specific metal, such as brass.
- Platinum equipment, while terribly expensive and heavy, is the most efficient in the hands of a cleric or paladin.

## ITEM ADJUSTMENTS

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Below are adjustments made to specific items. This section may not concern most players, but you can reference it later.

### MAGICAL GEAR

Unless explicitly made of a non-metal material like dragon scales or "pure radiance", all magical armors and weapons, like *mithral armors*, can be made of any metal.

### BAGS OF HOLDING

Placing two bags of holding next to each other or placing one in an extradimensional space does not open a planar portal in Varris, it simply destroys both items.

## NEW SUBCLASSES

The following new subclasses are meant to enhance the world of Varris with new, flavorful options that allow for deeper immersion into the factions in play.

### BARD COLLEGE: PACTS

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As a member of the bard college of pacts, you have a powerful patron who inspires your art. This patron can be an Archfey angel, a powerful succubus spellcaster, or even a mighty chromatic dragon from a faraway land. Perhaps your patron became enamored with your songs and offered you power, or maybe you were the one who reached out to them first. Either way, your patron demands to be praised in ballads and for their word to be spread throughout the lands thanks to your art in exchange for magical power.

### OTHERWORLDLY SPEECH

When you join the college of pacts at 3rd level, you learn to speak, read and write a language that your patron can speak. Additionally, you have advantage on **Charisma (Persuasion) checks** targeting creatures of the same type as your patron.

### PACT POINTS

Beginning at 3rd level, you gain the ability to gain pact points when you please your patron. You gain 1 pact point whenever you reduce a hostile creature of a CR above 0 to 0 hit points and whenever you use a spell slot of the highest level available to you.

You can expend 3 pact points to use bardic inspiration without expending any of your bardic inspiration dice. Your pact points reset to 0 upon completing a long rest.

### HURT AND HEAL

Starting at 6th level, as a free action, you can expend any number of pact points you have and either add it to the next damage roll you make or regain hit points equal to the number of pact points used.

Additionally, every time you expend one of your bardic inspiration dice, you gain 1 pact point.

### WISH FULFILLMENT

Beginning at 14th level, you use your action to grant a willing creature that you can see within 30 ft. of you the ability to cast any spell you know of up to 6th level one time. Once they do, their soul is bound to you, causing you to gain 1 pact point whenever they reduce a creature to 0 hit points and 3 pact points whenever they are reduced to 0 hit points.

You can use this action once per day, but the creature remains bound to you forever.

## CLERIC DOMAIN: METALLIC

Clerics who worship She Who Sees, the Archfey creator of the elves also known as Nebet, "the Lady", in Sylvan, say that she knows the past, present and the future. Her favored angel, Ireshau, known to humans as Lehani, sends visions into the dreams of the White-Eyed Lady's faithful to offer them guidance. While the Archfey herself has never communicated with mortals, it is said that her entire body is made of gleaming gold and silver and that if she were to travel to the material plane, her gargantuan form would tower over the tallest mountains of the west. Her alignment and long-term goals are a matter of debate among scholars, as so little is known about her.

The elven holy symbols of She Who Sees are often silver moons, golden suns or the two combined, with an eye symbol being prominent in the art of modern humans.

### METALLIC DOMAIN SPELLS

Cleric level	Spells
1st	faerie fire, sleep
3rd	detect thoughts, moonbeam
5th	hypnotic pattern, sending
7th	confusion, phantasmal killer
9th	dream, modify memory

### THE LADY'S ACOLYTE

When you choose this domain at 1st level, you gain the ability to speak Sylvan, the language of the Archfey. Additionally, you have advantage on saving throws against the effects of illusion magic.

### CHANNEL DIVINITY: SEE ALL

Starting at 2nd level, you can use your Channel Divinity to reveal any illusions that are trying to deceive you and your allies. An aura of dim light appears in a 30 ft. radius circle around you until the start of your next turn. Any illusion magic affecting items or creatures of CR or level 1 or less in that area is dispelled.

Additionally, any invisible or disguised creature of CR or level above 1 must make a Constitution saving throw against your spell DC or have their illusion magic be dispelled. If the creatures succeed on their save, you still know whether they are disguised or not and where the invisible creatures are. While the aura persists, all creatures allied with you automatically succeed on saving throws and ability checks made against illusion magic.

### NIGHT AND DAY

Beginning at 6th level, you gain a degree of control over the power of the sun and moon. You can use your action to cast the *daylight* spell if you are in dim light or darkness or the *darkness* spell if you are in bright or dim light without using a spell slot.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Wisdom modifier (minimum of once). You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

## GRANT ME SIGHT

Starting at 8th level, once per long rest, you can cast a divination spell from the wizard's spell list of any level up to your highest-level spell slot without expending a spell slot. If you don't use this feature for a whole day, you gain an additional spell slot once you finish your next long rest that disappears at the start of your next long rest.

### METALLIC SOUL

At 17th level, you are empowered with the soul of a metallic dragon. You gain resistance to acid, cold, fire, lightning and radiant damage.

Additionally, whenever you cast a spell of the school of divination, you gain immunity to one of the above damage types of your choice for 10 minutes. Whenever you use your Channel Divinity, up to 5 allied creatures in the aura, you included, gain that immunity until the start of your next turn.



## SORCEROUS ORIGIN: ARCHFEY CHAMPION

The cryptic Archfey have been known to sometimes decide to bestow magical power upon a mortal—such a mortal was often destined to achieve great things in the name of the Ladies, their destiny foreseen by the powers above, much like the destiny of the first metallic dragons. However, not all champions of the Archfey have chosen to follow their call to a holy quest—some carve out their own path, even becoming enemies of the ones who granted them their magic.

### Fey Magic

Starting at 1st level, you learn additional spells when you reach certain levels in this class, as shown on the Fey Spells table. Each of these spells counts as a sorcerer spell for you, but it doesn't count against the number of sorcerer spells you know.

#### Sorcerer level Spells

1st	faerie fire, goodberry
3rd	moonbeam, spike growth
5th	protection from energy, hallucinatory terrain
7th	conjure woodland beings, stone shape
9th	greater restoration, reincarnate

### THE FAITHFUL

Also at 1st level, you have advantage on saving throws against spells and magical effects used by good and neutral-aligned creatures. Additionally, fey creatures cannot target you with harmful magic, but can still include you in its area and target you with non-magical effects like attacks.

## THE LADIES' BLESSING

At 6th level, you are immune to the charmed and frightened conditions. As a reaction to an allied creature within 30 ft. that you can see failing a saving throw against a spell that causes charm or fear, you can use a number of your sorcery points equal to the level of the spell that caused the effect to negate it. If it was caused by a different magical effect, you must use a number of sorcery points equal to your level to negate it. You can only negate it for one creature at a time.

## UNDER HER EYE

Beginning at 14th level, the shining wings of a platinum dragon sprout from your back, granting you a flight speed equal to your walking speed. You can create these wings as a bonus action on your turn. They last until you dismiss them as a bonus action on your turn.

If you are wearing armor, it has no effect on the wings' usefulness, as, being made of metal, they rise as part of it.

## MAGICAL TRICKERY

At 18th level, the Archfey bestow their ultimate divine blessing upon you and allow you to learn one spell of any level, from any class' spell list. That spell does not count against your number of spells known.

As a bonus action after you cast that spell, you can use a number of sorcery points equal to its level to switch it out for a different spell from the sorcerer spell list of the same level until the end of your next long rest and regain the spell slot you cast the spell with.



## WARLOCK PATRON: SPIDER QUEEN

Fiendish powers and elusive Archfey alike might grant their worshipers strange, spider-like abilities. The most common spider queen patron is Bethem, the fallen angel and now fiendish leader of the dark elves, and, less commonly, her dead aspect, Enkhebet.

## EXPANDED SPELL LIST

The Spider Queen lets you choose from an expanded list of spells when you learn a warlock spell. The following spells are added to the warlock spell list for you.

## SPIDER QUEEN EXPANDED SPELLS

### Spell level Spells

1st	feather fall, sleep
2nd	locate object, web
3rd	animate dead, phantom steed (giant spider)
4th	fabricate, polymorph
5th	modify memory, wall of stone

## SPIDERLIKE

Starting at 1st level, you gain *blindsight* out to a range of 30 ft. You can also cast the *animal friendship* spell at-will, but only when it targets spiders. It counts as a warlock spell for you but doesn't count against the number of your spells known. Your spellcasting ability for this spell is Charisma.

## VENOMOUS

Beginning at 6th level, you learn to produce venom inside your teeth. You are immune to this venom. As an action, you can coat a weapon in it, granting it additional 2d6 poison damage on a hit for the next hour. You can do this a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus and regain all expended uses after completing a long rest.

Additionally, if you slay a humanoid with a weapon coated in your own venom, they rise as a **zombie** that obeys your telepathic commands and is destroyed at the start of your next long rest.

## SPIDER CLIMB

At 10th level you gain a climbing speed equal to your walking speed. In addition, you can move up, down, and across vertical surfaces and upside down along ceilings, while leaving your hands free.

## WEAVER

As a 14th-level warlock, you can now channel your patron's power to create an otherworldly web. As an action while under a ceiling, trees, or other environmental features that can be latched onto, choose a point within 120 ft. of you that you can see. Each creature that you choose in a 15 ft. radius sphere originating from that point becomes restrained by webbing and must make a Strength saving throw to avoid being pulled up by the web up to 20 ft. into an unoccupied space. Whether or not they succeeded on their saving throw, the affected creatures are restrained for an amount of turns equal to your charisma modifier before the web disappears.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

# APPENDIX: CHARACTER NAMES



This section provides example names for your character, sorted by which in-universe language they originate from. Varszi people don't tend to have last names unless they are nobles. For each language relevant to the races presented above, the primary users—meaning races or cultures that are likely to use names derived from the language, as well as the secondary users—races or cultures that sometimes use names derived from the language.

## ABYSSAL

**Primary users:** Fiends

**Secondary users:** Tieflings, Varra

**Names:** Akilu, Ashiptu, Bashmu, Dushu, Eribu, Ishtaru, Luimmu, Mushku, Nizirtu, Shikku, Shumru, Shungallu  
Abyssal names are not gendered.

## DRACONIC

**Primary users:** Dragons, Half-Dragons

**Secondary users:** Dragonborn, Elves

**Names:** Aranth, Aszihal, Fel, Eszan, Hrkai, Irhdikai, Jan, Jearan, Kahan, Karkai, Nunrei, Tirkai, Var, Vethn, Xoihal

Dragons tend to have two names separated by an apostrophe, pronounced as two words, i.e. Var'Eszan. "Sz" is pronounced as "sh", "x" is pronounced as "ks", and "h" marks a glottal stop.

## ELVISH

**Primary users:** Elves, Half-Elves

**Secondary users:** Getarian priests of the Archfey

**Names:** Aeri, Ashal, Ayran, Cian, Dayael, Dearan, Dhatani, Dhefel, Echeti, Elfelial, Hanari, Ilhyan, Mesiui, Nihan, Rean, Sekan, Taehal, Vaeuan, Uhyeti, Yrdetan

Elvish names are not gendered by default, but you can add "-a" or "-ye" to a name or erase an "n" at the end to make it explicitly feminine. "C" is pronounced as "ts", and "dh" is pronounced as "dz". The last syllable that isn't "ye" or "a" is stressed.

## GETARIAN

**Primary users:** Getarian humans

**Secondary users:** Getarian non-humans

**Male names:** Abar, Bert, Dan, Emiel, Getran, Huug, Jelet, Jodon, Kamin, Meten, Redran, Trenet, Tres

**Female names:** Anna, Brana, Fila, Gorna, Helga, Karla, Lara, Nenka, Ota, Raba, Sana, Talia, Ulla

Getarian names tend to be short and simple. Most commonly, the last but one syllable is stressed.

## SYLVAN

**Primary users:** Fey, Celestials

**Secondary users:** Elves, priests of the Archfey

**Names:** Abay, Bet, Djeser, Djet, Eham, Gamhasu, Hefen, Heka, Irrenef, Kabhu, Maani, Meri, Setu, Sin, Shau

To create a feminine name, add "-(e)t" at the end.

## TISENYI

**Primary users:** Tisenyi humans

**Secondary users:** Tisenyi non-humans

**Male names:** Bohun, Braslav, Dobromir, Grimslav, Kazimir, Sambor, Tesislav, Tsestogoi, Vitos, Yaromir

**Female names:** Bogutseha, Izbygneva, Dobromila, Ludmila, Miroslava, Repiha, Svetoslava, Teslava, Zhyvia

Many male Tisenyi names can be made feminine by adding "-a" at the end. "E" is often pronounced as "yeh".

## VARRAN

**Primary users:** Varra

**Secondary users:** Dragonborn, Tieflings

**Male names:** Amerna, Asvanor, Bhaira, Dhernar, Kresnar, Magbhav, Magtur, Melamal, Nermaisos, Parasva, Rath, Setpuras, Thesan, Yetrunos, Yevsenor, Zaktar

**Female names:** Agiosmati, Atstri, Baithi, Denivar, Dhanoz, Dhosari, Gaini, Kerige, Laubhi, Maari, Mazakti, Miri, Prasisekir, Raimegi, Tauipuris, Saivi, Zakmati

The "sz" in Varran is pronounced like "sh". Vowels are sometimes silent after the first syllable, which is stressed.

