

# The Complete Guide to DROW

## The House of Azrán

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*This web enhancement for the Complete Guide to Drow is an example of a detailed drow household, constructed according to the book's guidelines.*

House Azrán is a drow family with deep roots and shallow standing. The house symbol is a stylized spider crawling downward beneath a steep triangular mountain, a reference to the house's origins: it claims a direct descent from the high priestess of the ben'docian, the alpine elves whose defeat in the Kindred Wars ultimately spawned the drow. But the mighty have fallen. House Azrán's current status is quite low, thanks to the inept diplomacy of the present matriarch.

Firaril, the matriarch, is an ancient drow priestess whose powers are dwindling as she succumbs to the senility of old age. For her entire life, Firaril has suffered from two competing character traits, which have combined to drag her house's status ever lower. First, she is ambitious to a fault, desiring status and power over all things. But she is coarse, rude, and simple-minded. She lacks *all* the traits that could have helped her in the political struggles that comprise day-to-day drow life. Her ceaseless ambition has led her to repeat-

edly attempt diplomacy and chicanery that she can never pull off, and this constant bungling has cost her.

Vanya, eldest daughter of Firaril, has watched her mother's missteps with horror. Vanya, too, has the ambition of heritage within her breast. But, unlike her mother, she is endowed with more than a modicum of charisma and intelligence. For decades they have clashed, as Vanya asserts her growing power in an attempt to stifle her mother's inept maneuvers.

Unfortunately, Firaril favors her second daughter, Elca, over Vanya. Elca is like her mother: tactless and unperceptive. Although drow heritage dictates Vanya should rule the household when Firaril passes, Elca seems to have other ideas. What's worse for Vanya is that Elca's social deficiencies are more than made up by an innate talent for divine spellcasting. Despite their age difference, Elca has exceeded Vanya in personal power.

Were it not for Firaril's attempts to "keep peace," Elca would have challenged Vanya to a death match by now. Firaril's pride in her house's deep roots gives her a strong appreciation for tradition, and it is probable that on her deathbed she will hand over the housemother



position to Vanya, despite their differences. She certainly doesn't want her two daughters bickering. But in day-to-day life she still favors Elca, and no one can be sure of her true intent.

## Interaction With Others

House Azrán has its own walled compound, which you can place in any drow city in your campaign. The compound is quite large and once held more than 250 house members and half as many slaves. Sadly, it has become nearly empty in recent years as members desert to other houses. Now less than half of the compound is occupied.

At one time, the males of House Azrán trained as armorsmiths, and the house earned a steady income trading its masterwork armor. Now the best armorsmiths have left or died, and those that remain produce only mundane pieces.

The house's treasury has been draining steadily. This economic disadvantage has only compounded Firaril's bids for power. Firaril's most recent exploits include several especially bad decisions. Most notably, she was approached by a small drow house from a distant city seeking to share her half-empty keep. The other house, known as House Barzek, was known for the arcane research of its male wizards. But Firaril, from her self-important perspective, could only see the fact that they had no deep hereditary claims, nor any other great status. Disdaining even to ask why they needed to share her keep, she sent them away with the barest courtesies. Only later did she learn the basis for their request: they had captured a prestigious (and powerful) magical relic in combat with duergar, and wanted to form an alliance to make sure they held on to it.

Shortly thereafter, Firaril attempted several alliances of her own, only to mis-assess the situation and approach houses who, by the standard of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend," were most certainly *not* her friends. Then she ruined a promising agreement to secure access to a newly discovered vein of dwarven adamantine when she failed to pick up on a dwarf clansman's hints regarding a bribe.

Firaril has long considered the use of a force as a means of last resort, and in the past, she has used violence to her favor. But even though she herself is quite powerful, her troops are demoralized and outnumbered, and there is little chance of battlefield success.

## House Profile

House Azrán is a small house, per the guidelines given on page 7 of the Complete Guide to Drow. However, its makeup is rather atypical since it was once much larger and has dwindled to its current size. The house's army consists of:

Matriarch: Firaril, Clr13.

Priestesses: Vanya, Clr8; Elca, Clr9; one other daughter, Clr7; one captured priestess, Clr5.

Arcane: One male Wiz8.

Patriarch: None. He long ago deserted the house.

Elite soldiers: 15 adamantine warriors; 8 black guard; 1 dark blade.

Regular soldiers: 57 drow troops.

Fodder: 48 goblin slaves; 33 orc slaves.

## Prominent NPCs

### Firaril

Firaril is a very old drow priestess on the edge of senility. She has white hair, coarsened with age, that hangs limp and lusterless. She always wears ornate black tunics trimmed with precious stones and the long, red scales of certain underground beetles. In combat she dons magical chitin armor dyed black and adorned with the same vivid red scales.

Firaril's mind is governed by self-interest. She evaluates new acquaintances strictly by how useful they can be. If she determines them useful, she then decides how to act to best turn them to her uses. With some, she will be strong and commanding; with others, humble and modest.

Or so she thinks. In reality, Firaril isn't insightful enough to fully perceive all the subtleties of most situations, nor charismatic enough to convince others of her sincerity. Almost without fail, Firaril comes across as unctuous, insincere, and dishonest.

Nonetheless, Firaril is experienced enough to persuade lower-level characters with some measure of success, even if they end up not liking her. In the company of her peers, Firaril is a boor; but in the company of those weaker, she can still (sometimes) be compelling.

Firaril's deficiencies are all the more surprising given the usually intelligent, strong-willed nature of the drow. Were it not for the strong household she inherited



from her own mother, she would never have become a leader in drow society. Though the privilege of heritage sustained her for some time, those days ended long ago, and the household she will pass on to her own daughter is but a shadow of what it once was.

Deep down, Firaril is aware of her failures. She is strongly lawful for a drow, primarily because she has had to lean heavily on tradition and heritage in order to justify her status. She knows she has no hope of retaining her position without such claims.

Firaril is a cleric of Bárgul. Her social status is nobility in low standing (it was good standing at one time, but not anymore). The profile below indicates the treasure she carries on her person. The house treasury is located in a secret vault attached to her bedroom; it contains valuables worth additional 4,400 gp – the last of the house's once great fortunes. Half is in silver and copper, with the remainder in art, furniture, weapons, armor, and other objects, most inscribed with the house symbol.

**Firaril, Female Drow Clr13:** CR 14; Medium-size Humanoid (4 ft. 7 in. tall); HD 13d8; hp 67; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 20 (+2 Dex, +6 +2 *chitin armor*, +2 *bracers of armor* +2, +2 large wooden shield); Atk +11/+6 melee (1d8+2/crit 19-20, +2 longsword); SQ drow traits, spell resistance 24, *dancing lights* 1/day, *darkness* 1/day, *faerie fire* 1/day, darkvision, light blindness, senility; AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +11; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 8, Wis 17, Cha 7.

**Skills:** Concentration +4 (+8 on defensive), Diplomacy +3, Heal +7, Knowledge (religion) +0, Listen +5, Search +1, Spellcraft +3, Spot +5.  
**Feats:** Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Dual Spell, Heighten Spell, Maximize Spell.

**Spells Prepared (6/6/6/5/5/4/3/2):** 0 – *cure minor wounds* x2, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *guidance* x2; 1st – *bane*\*, *cause fear*, *command*, *divine favor*, *inflict light wounds*, *protection from chaos*\*; 2nd – *enthrall*, *hold person* x2, *silence*\*, *undetected alignment*, *zone of truth*; 3rd – *animate dead*, *cure serious wounds*, *inflict serious wounds* x2, *magic circle against chaos*\*; 4th – *commune*\*, *discern lies*, *divination*, *giant vermin*, *inflict critical wounds*; 5th – *circle of doom*\*, *flame strike*, *healing circle*, *slay living*; 6th – *forbiddance*, *geas/quest*, *harm*\*; 7th – *dictum*\*, *resurrection*.

\* Domain spell. **Domains:** Law (cast law spells at +1 caster level); Drow (cast drow spells at +1 caster level).

**Possessions:** +2 *chitin armor*, large wooden shield, *bracers of armor* +2, +2 *longsword*, wand of *cure light wounds*, wand of *summon monster III*, potion of *spider climb*, potion of *cure serious wounds* x3, gem-encrusted tunic (250 gp), pouch with 40 gp.

**SQ – Drow traits:** Firaril is immune to *sleep* spells and effects and receives a +2 racial saving throw bonus against enchantment spells or effects. This stacks with her +2 racial bonus to Will saves against all spells and spell-like abilities.

**SQ – Senility:** Firaril is getting on in her years. Each day there is a 5% chance that she will wake up in a senile state. For the rest of that day, she sporadically acts as if under the influence of a *confusion* spell – lucid for one minute, *confused* the next. Firaril is not aware of her senility and thinks she is perfectly lucid at all times. As a result of her weak mind, she suffers a –4 circumstance penalty to resist all *confusion*-like effects.

## Vanya

As Firaril's eldest daughter, rule of House Azrán is Vanya's by inheritance but not necessarily by fact, thanks to the rivalry of her younger sister Elca.

Vanya is a striking, healthy drow in the prime of her life. Her eyes are two different colors: the left yellow, the right red. This is immediately obvious upon meeting her. She accentuates this natural fact with red and yellow highlights in her otherwise dark clothing.

Vanya's inheritance includes not just a decaying house, but ambition. Unlike her mother, she is highly intelligent and quite charismatic. Were she in charge of the house, she would be on the way to restoring its lost glory.

In almost every situation, Vanya is at odds with her mother. In any interaction with PCs where both are present, it is highly likely that Vanya will disagree with her mother's actions. In most cases, Vanya will bite her tongue, or voice these disagreements tactfully, to little avail. In emotional or perilous situations, however, the tension will break through to the surface.

Despite her hatred of her mother, Vanya needs her.



She knows that Elca is rapidly exceeding her in power. Elca doesn't dare confront Vanya while Firaril still lives – or at least, while Firaril still has the power to reign in Elca – which gives *both* sisters an incentive to eliminate their mother. But Vanya will only do so *after* Elca is taken care of.

Vanya is very pragmatic. She does not put her ego in the way of her plans. She is acutely aware of her house's diminishing reputation, and will go to any lengths to repair it, regardless of her pride.

Vanya is a 8th level cleric of Bǫrgul with high Intelligence and Charisma. We leave it up to you to flesh out her stats.

## Elca

Younger than Vanya, Elca is nonetheless more powerful. She has an innate talent for spellcasting and has raced ahead of her sister's ability. It is clear that she will someday be far more powerful than the rightful heiress of House Azrán, a fact that is lost on no one.

Elca is heavily favored by Firaril. They share common goals and common deficiencies. Both are ambitious, and neither is particularly intelligent. Both are vain in relation to their house's once-proud name (the tarnish on which they refuse to acknowledge). Although Elca is smarter than her mother, she is not in the same league as Vanya, who routinely plots strategies that would be far more successful than Elca's. But Vanya rarely gets to enact her strategies, thanks to Firaril's favoritism toward Elca.

Elca bides her time, certain that she will rule House Azrán in the end. Although she has a strong incentive to kill her mother, whose reliance on tradition means there's a good chance she will bequeath housemother status to Vanya, their close relationship prevents her from attempting such a thing. Elca is certain that she will be able to engineer Vanya's death once her mother is gone.

Elca is a 9th level cleric of Bǫrgul with exceptionally high Wisdom and low Charisma. We leave it up to you to flesh out her stats.

## Adventure Hooks

Despite its problems, House Azrán is an interesting source of adventure hooks, because its rulers are desperate. Firaril's ambition leads her to make stupid decisions about unachievable goals. She is more than ready to recruit adventurers to her side, and clever characters may manage to take the upper hand. Vanya and Elca are both in the same situation, though their recruits will more likely be aimed at each other rather than outsiders.

Here are some means to get House Azrán into an ongoing campaign.

- The simplest hook: Vanya has recruited the adventurers to kill Elca. Alternatively, Elca may hire them to eliminate Vanya. Remember that Vanya won't attempt to eliminate Firaril until she has destroyed Elca, because if Firaril dies first, Elca will most certainly wrest power from Vanya. But if Vanya can arrange for Elca's death before Firaril's demise, her path to power is secure.
- If the characters are visibly wealthy, Firaril could arrange some excuse to entertain or hire them, then await an opportunity to murder them and steal their gold.
- The PCs encounter drow adventurers. Formerly of House Azrán, the adventurers are now destitute. They're willing to take a chance as mercenaries rather than watch their house go to ruin under Firaril's rule. The drow describe the house's situation, including what remains of the treasury and its rapidly diminishing ranks of defenders.
- Desperate for cash, Firaril has been selling her armor to the usual vendors – then hiring the characters to steal it back so she can resell it to someone else. The characters are given extremely helpful information about the best way to make the theft (e.g., Firaril's knowledge of ancient secret tunnels or hidden entrances to another house's compound). The PCs get to keep any valuables they find as long as they return the armor.
- Sensing the weak state of House Azrán, another house is preparing to attack. The PCs hear of the impending assault early and, due to a landslide on a major underdark route, are caught in the middle.



Who do they side with? Do they sell their knowledge to House Azrán, or try to remain neutral?

- Vanya is recruiting adventurers for some errand of Firaril's... but Vanya wants the errand to fail so that Firaril's current scheme (whatever it is) does not succeed. Vanya hires the characters then secretly does everything in her power to make sure they fail.
- As a variation on the previous ideas: The House has recruited the PCs for some task. When they return to claim their pay, Firaril informs them that she

won't have the money until her next shipment of armor has sold – and now the characters must accompany that shipment to keep it safe.

- Firaril has arranged a meeting with another house to discuss trade arrangements that Vanya is desperately opposed to. Vanya hires the characters to disrupt the meeting. Elca has also arranged to disrupt the meeting then pin the blame on Vanya, completely unaware that Vanya really is trying to disrupt the meeting.



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