

# Rise of the DROW

## CAMPAIGN PRIMER



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**W**ELCOME TRAVELER! This guide contains all the information a player needs to orient themselves to the Aventyr campaign setting and to the *Rise of the Drow* series of adventures, whether the game begins on the surface in Rybalka or in the Underworld. The adventure focuses on thwarting a drow war of aggression, but the book itself contains the tools to run a sandbox-style campaign in the Underworld, particularly focused around Embla Holoth, and the Fungi Forest. Exploring the Underworld – itself a dangerous prospect – allows the GM to introduce any number of unique locations. To get the most out of a campaign of this style, your GM may decide to include optional resources to accompany this guide: *Underworld Races & Classes*, and *Occult Secrets of the Underworld*, but these books are not required to enjoy the *Rise of the Drow*.

## RYBALKA, HEART OF THE FRONTIER

**R**YBALKA IS A LAKE-SIDE, FRONTIER VILLAGE. Even if your character is not from Rybalka or a nearby region, they have at least traveled here at the start of the adventure, and thus, whether through the local scuttlebutt or from careful observation, they have likely learned something of the village.

The Rybalkan Peninsula on Serpent Lake is an isolated place. Numerous tombs and barrows of Vikmordere origin can be found on the Rybalkan Peninsula and throughout the Vikmordere Valley, as well as ruined fortresses from the region's long history of conflict.

Rybalka itself sits in a sheltered cove on the peninsula's southern shore, protecting the village from the worst of the weather from both the lake and the mountains to the north. Two roads lead away from Rybalka, both in a northerly

direction: one toward the Dark Wood and the pass through the mountains, and the other to the nearby iron mine.

In the past, Vikmordere raiders used the strategic location of the fishing village as a launching point for attacks against the Klavek Kingdom. The Klavek monarchy moved troops into the valley and launched an arduous assault against the Vikmordere in hopes of securing the village and the lucrative iron mine. After many failed attempts and the deaths of hundreds, the Klavek Kingdom was finally able to oust the Vikmordere raiders and take control of the village.

Rybalka is on the far frontier of the Klavek Kingdom, but retains its traditional Vikmordere roots. Culturally, the villagers are birthing the first generation of what's becoming known as "Rybalkans" – those with both Klavek and Vikmordere lineage. While the influence of both cultures can still be felt, increasingly they are becoming more accepting and tolerant of each other, rather than clinging to a past that serves no one.

Mayor Igor Leonid is the Klavek-born trustee appointed to rule over Rybalka. He commands a small contingent of Klavek soldiers to this end. He has embraced frontier life, encouraging his fellow Klavek immigrants to do the same. For this reason he is well-liked by almost all Rybalka's citizens, Klavek and Vikmordere alike.

The dominant religion in the frontier village is a unique blend of traditional Vikmordere practices drawn from worship of the Ancestor Spirit and the rigorous doctrines of the Axiomatic General, a deity of note in the Klavek Kingdom. The Cathedral at Rybalka is a multi-faith temple, overseen by High Priest Juriendor, himself a follower of the Axiomatic General, though he incorporates numerous Vikmordere traditions into his ceremonies.

## Navigation

*Rybalka, Heart of the Frontier* 1  
*Upperworld Races* 3  
*Underworld Cities* 3  
*Underworld Races* 4  
*Deities of Aventyr* 6  
*Pregens* 8  
*Character Sheets* 16, 24

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# Village of RYBALKA

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1. Lookout Walk
  2. Thirsty Serpent Tavern
  3. Sulwotik's Spirits
  4. West Fold Lumber Mill
  5. Bugg Odds & Inn
  6. Shipwright's Guildhall
  7. Fishauler's Consortium
  8. Rybalkan Mine Guildhall
  9. Mastera Library
  10. Town Hall & Barracks
  11. Hopeful Signs
  12. Vickruck's Root Cellar
  13. Carolyn's Baked Goods
  14. Rybalka Lodge
  15. Quorron's Forge
  16. Rybalka Cathedral & The North Road

## UPPERWORLD RACES

Your GM will inform you of your game's specifics regarding the various races and cultures, as well as their societal habits and relationships with each other, but the following presents the defaults assumed by the Aventyr campaign setting.

### HUMANS

Humans are the overwhelming majority in Rybalka and the surrounding regions. Humans who hail from the Klavek Kingdom are the more recent emigrants. They often clash with the region's ancestral inhabitants, the Vikmordere.

The Klavek Kingdom is perhaps more accurately described as an empire, controlling vast lands and resources. The frontier of this empire extends into the Vikmordere Valley and the shores of Serpent Lake in the form of the recently conquered Rybalka. With this sole acquisition, the Klavek Kingdom nearly doubled its ability to produce iron, thanks to the village's nearby mine.

Once a Vikmordere settlement of fishermen and shipwrights, when the iron mine was discovered Rybalka was thrust into regional importance. Countless Vikmordere tribes vied for control of the village, using it as a staging ground for raids, against both other tribes and upriver Klavek settlements. After a generation of conflict, the village now sits firmly under Klavek control, though its future remains uncertain should the disparate Vikmordere tribes find common cause against the Klavek Kingdom.

### DWARVES

Dwarves are rare outside of their fortress cities beneath the earth, but they are known throughout the Upperworld as smiths and craftsmen of great skill. Those dwarves that have made their way to the surface speak longingly of crystal caverns and mushroom ale, and they'll be quick to remind any who will listen that "dweorg" is their race's true name, lest you

confuse them with their dark cousins. The dwarven settlement that is nearest Rybalka is the city of Embla, a hub of trade and a cultural melting pot in the Underworld.

### ELVES

Elves in human lands are generally considered spies, and looked upon with great suspicion. Most adopt simple disguises when interacting with humans, and rarely enter a human settlement without a clear plan of escape.

The majority of elves live within the protective confines of the Silent Forest to the south of the Klavek Kingdom.

### GNOMES

The country of Pradjna—leagues to the west of the Klavek Kingdom—is the only country on the continent which can be said to have a population of gnomes. Studious, inventive, and curious of all things technological, these gnomes are well-traveled in their search for inspiration for their next breakthrough.

Elsewhere, particularly in secluded forests that have never known a woodcutter's axe, one can find small gnomish villages. But these "gnomes," if they can be called that, are more elfish in appearance and behavior than their spanner-wielding cousins.

### HALFLING

Halflings bear scant trust for the other races of Aventyr, especially humans, whom they view as feckless and faithless. This is perhaps due to the race's long history of tragedy. Their once fertile and populous lands in the far Sothron Sea stand mostly empty in the wake of generational wars with alien invaders. Since then, the island nation has grown even more insular.

### HALF-ELVES

Half-elves, the rarest of all civilized races in the Klavek Kingdom, are treated as elves in nearly every regard. Like elves, a half-elf quickly learns to hide their appearance in order to avoid persecution,

though the disguise needed is often as simple as wearing a hood and growing a beard.

### HALF-ORC

Half-orcs are generally distrusted by humans and looked upon with a mixture of pity and fear. In the Vikmordere Valley, however, bravery, skill of the hunt, and combat prowess are prized more than they are elsewhere in human lands, and a half-orc who is able to prove themselves a capable warrior often finds human settlements tolerant of their presence.

## UNDERWORLD CITIES:

### EMBLA & STONEHOLME

**W**HETHER YOUR CHARACTER CALLS EMBLA HOME OR HAS TRAVELED FROM DEEP IN THE UNDERWORLD, ANYONE WHO HAS HEARD OF THE TRADE CITY AND ITS SURROUNDS KNOWS THESE TRUTHS THROUGH NAUGHT MORE THAN CONVERSATION AND AWARENESS. Stoneholme, too, is a place of storied reputation, even if few outsiders have a first-hand knowledge of the ancient city. Here follows an overview of these two cities that serves as an introduction to the Underworld of Aventyr.

All of the Underworld is full of dangers, not only from its denizens and more nefarious inhabitants, but from the terrain itself. Most travelers stick to known roadways and hire guides and guards to protect them on the way. A handful of settlements stand as bastions against the seemingly endless tide of darkness. Embla is the largest and most well-known of these. It was founded as an outpost of Stoneholme in the ancient past. Today, the sister cities are quite opposite in their approach to life in the Underworld.

Embla gets its moniker, the City of Lights, from its bright crystal gonjolas—hanging buildings interconnected with chain-suspended walkways—that dominate the city heights. From these gonjolas the dwarven merchant clans rule over the bustling trade city. The Merchant

Circle is the over-arching governmental power in Embla, comprised of the leaders of five great clans, as well as the mayor of Embla, as representative of the people, and the circle chair, responsible for ensuring the clans work together to serve the city. Outside of these seven, only a rare few invited guests have been allowed to attend a meeting of the Merchant Circle, save of course the fabled Notetaker, whom many suspect wields as much influence as the Circle itself.

Ostensibly Embla is a dwarven city, in that the largest population and the vast majority of its government officials are dweorg. However, Embla's citizenry is dedicated to embracing all races interested in serving Embla and conducting fair trade, though the definition of "fair" is a matter of constant debate in the tumultuous city.

Embla's central cavern is constantly excavated to accommodate the expanding city. Nearby mushroom farms are technically part of the same crystal cave network, as are the numerous ancillary settlements that surround Embla. The city itself sits along the only true road in the Underworld, called the Long Road. Travel far enough on the Long Road and you will come to the gates of Stoneholme itself.

Stoneholme is protected by a gatehouse known as the Gauntlet, a corridor of carvings and sculptures that are both beautiful and deadly. Guarding the Gauntlet are six masterfully crafted statues that line the road, known as the Eternals, each bearing the likeness of a stern and wizened dwarf. It is said they are the City of Ancient's first line of defense against invaders and would-be trespassers.

The dwarves of Stoneholme believe that settlements that engage in regional politics and subsist on trade—like their sister city Embla—do so foolishly, putting citizens in harm's way unnecessarily. Thus Stoneholme has resolved to remain independent, self-sustaining, and intact for all eternity, a final bastion of dwarfkind. Though travelers

can find solace and trade at Stoneholme, it is always temporary, and always carefully overseen.

Elsewhere in the Underworld can be found far-flung settlements and cities, like Vethin's Hold or the great drow city of Holoth, but much like the wilds of the Underworld, in these places you are either predator or prey. Though you may find a mug of ale or a meal, you will find no solace.

## UNDERWORLD RACES

Although the great cities are commanded by the dwarves and the drow, countless other settlements exist that are home to the myriad races of the Underworld. Insular by necessity, these cultures either closely ally themselves with a large city or do their utmost to keep them—and the natural dangers of the Underworld—at bay. Further details on these races can be found in *Underworld Races & Classes*.

### AHOOLING

Ahool are the feared winged nightmares of the Underworld. Ahooling are their young. The demanding life of ahool society irons out the failings and weaknesses of these youthful creatures quickly, but when one is led too far astray or abandoned by their tribe, they pursue whatever path life provides for them (sometimes never reaching their full primal potential). Small collectives of ahooling are said to live outside the incredibly fierce societies of the predatory ahool, eschewing the bestial traditions of their greater cousins.

### COLLIATUR

The colliatur came into being by accidental design, by a bizarre interaction from an undead virus created by the first lich Udødelig to resist the assimilative-preservationist entity known as the Colloid. Like their undead progenitor, they value freedom and self-determination. Like the crystalline Colloid, they loathe undeath in all its many forms. Thus the colliatur, despite their



origins, think of themselves as guardians of the sanctity of life and freedom, stark opposites of the impulses of their creators.

### DØDELIG

Sages tell that the dødelig were created during the tragedy that befell the halflings of Picollo Island and scattered that race to the four winds. Even today, centuries later, dødelig are exhumed from a mountainous subterranean expanse beneath the site of that cataclysm known as the Dracoprime.

These small stone skeletons caper about the Underworld, living immortal lives of abandon and casual investigation wherever they go. The only things they take seriously are the uncovering of more of their kin and avoiding the Colloid.

### DRAAKI

The draaki were once a proud race that ruled over the Underworld without peer, taming even the great dragons. Their empire came to a calamitous end in a series of disasters known only to historians

of esoterica. Today, the draaki are known to Underworlders as the failed race, considered weak and ripe for abuse. Draaki live a nomadic life, seldom settling in one place for more than a generation.

#### DROW

Drow are known and feared throughout Aventyr, despite the fact that they are rarely seen outside their Underworld domain. Most drow are cold, cunning, and manipulative. They live to attain power and control all they can. Drow society is matriarchal; few male drow rise to any level of power, yet their innate drive to seek it is no less than that of drow females. Though there are many deities the drow recognize, the Spider Goddess Naraneus holds tight control over the pantheon, granting her blessing to the greatest of her worshipers.

A rare few drow are born in each generation that do not lust after power and do not zealously worship the Spider Goddess, though these individuals seldom survive into adulthood. Those that do are often raised away from drow society, secluded away in dweorg or human cities.

#### FUNGLET

The mushroom men of the Underworld embrace the cycle of growth and decay that is omnipresent in the forests of fungi. Some funglets are hermits, spending their entire lives away from other humanoids, diligently tending their fungal groves. Others form communes toward the same purpose on a much

larger scale. And there are even a rare few who follow the whims of wanderlust, like a mushroom spore afloat on an unseen wind to all corners of the Underworld.

#### GITWERC

From the darkest depths of the Underworld, the dwarves known as the gitwerc are servants of Hel, bound by a devilish covenant forged in the ancient past. The gitwerc honor any pact they make, but in their own way and by their own measure. Generations of clever guile have taught them to wring the most from every deal. Gitwerc are able to appear as dweorg, thus they are both feared and hated by all of dwarfkind.

#### HOYRALL

The hoyrall are not of Aventyr, though what realm they hail from is lost to the centuries. They dwell unchallenged within the Woven Warrens and other honeycombed fortresses. Although no two hives can be considered allies, nearly all hoyrall worship their sundered alien deity Zagnexis. It is the rare hoyrall that breaks from the influence of the hive to cut their own destiny.

#### KRAIDYL

Kraidyl are a race of nomadic hunters, considered by many to be little more than instinctive predators. They are tribalistic and fiercely territorial, so such accusations are not far off. Regardless, merchants and nobles who want to send a certain message seek to hire kraidyl mercenaries over even giants or ahool.

#### SVIRFNEBLIN

Much like their surface-dwelling cousins, undergnomes are adept engineers and inventors. Their undeniable talent is matched only by their ambition. Most other races fail to understand their esoteric, extremely rational approach to problem solving and life. The pursuit of science and magic are penultimate, only in the shadow of loyalty to kin. They are often mischaracterized as calculating pessimists.

#### VESTRAADI

Vestraadi are a strange race of man-like aberrations that rule over the Forever Deep, the great ocean of the Underworld. Their lack of any visual senses is easily overcome by their retinue of tactile, auditory and olfactory organs, but it is this same bizarre appearance that makes them so mistrusted. The vestraadi are a race of poets and artisans, though their language and artistic sensibilities are as alien as their appearance.

#### ZWERC

Dwarven masters of magic, in the ancient past the zwerc created the Amber Roads: a fabled vein of orange stone that allows one to travel swiftly through the cosmos. The Roads has deteriorated over the centuries, rendering the many zwerc enclaves throughout the planes isolated, only able to reach each other by a physical trek through the Underworld. Zwerc are a superstitious lot whose specific beliefs and customs vary according to individual enclaves.

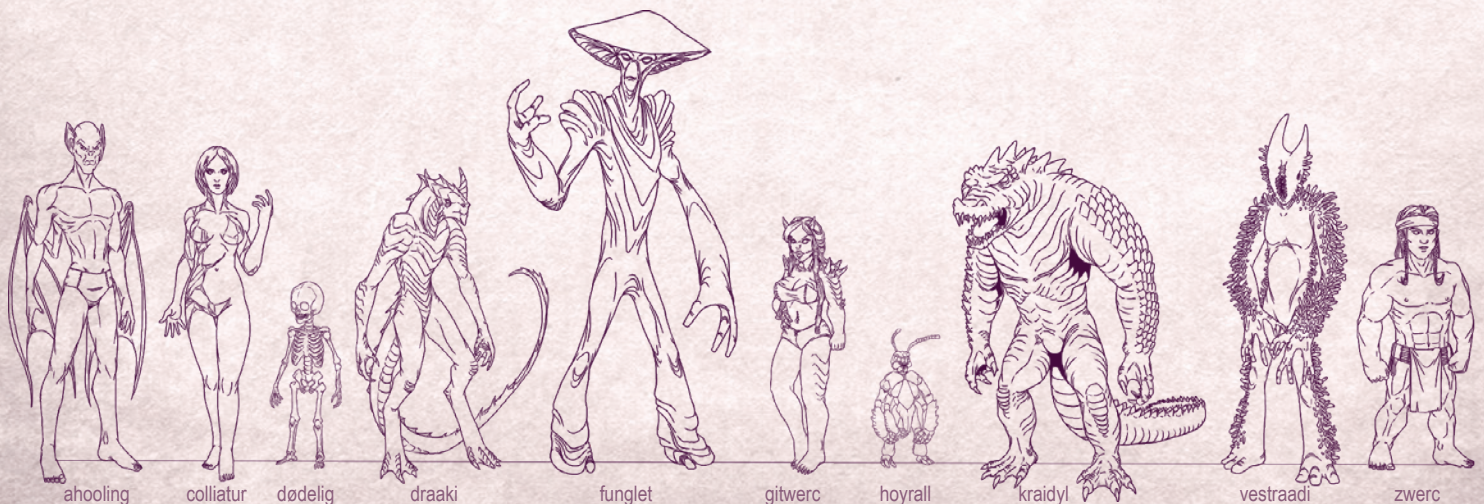


Table 1.1 Deities of Avenytir

| Name                  | Alignment | Portfolio                                                   | PF Domains                                                             | 5E Domains                   | Worshippers                                             |
|-----------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| The Ancestor Spirit   | NG        | ancestors, nature, wilderness, wisdom                       | Ancestors, Animal, Community, Plant, Seasons, Souls                    | Knowledge, Nature, Unity     | Vikmordere, tribal cultures                             |
| Arnut                 | LN        | cold, purity, judgment, winter                              | Ice, Protection, Purity, Seasons, Water, Weather                       | Nature, Protection, Tempest  | arctic cultures                                         |
| The Axiomatic General | LN        | battlefield tactics, foresight, leadership, war             | Inevitable, Law, Leadership, Nobility, Resolve, Strength, Tactics, War | Knowledge, Order, War        | commanders, monks, sages, philosophers                  |
| Balir                 | LN        | craftsmanship, honor                                        | Artifice, Construct, Glory, Honor, Law                                 | Forge, Light, Order          | craftsmen, dwarves, gnomes                              |
| The Current           | CN        | insanity, mysticism, seas, unknown waters, the unknown      | Arcane, Dark Tapestry, Madness, Magice, Nightmare, Oceans, Void, Water | Arcana, Knowledge, Twilight  | fortune tellers, philosophers, sailors                  |
| Eureum                | LN        | autumn, death, rebirth                                      | Death, Decay, Growth, Healing, Loss, Repose, Resurrection              | Death, Grave, Life           | druids, executioners, funglets, undertakers, vegepygmys |
| Flaesuros             | LG        | honesty, life, light, youth                                 | Good, Healing, Knowledge, Law, Sun                                     | Life, Light                  | elves, paladins, prophets                               |
| Hado                  | LN        | community, judgment, observance, summer                     | Ancestors, Community, Family, Law, Nobility, Resolve, Seasons          | Order, Protection, Unity     | desert cultures, community leaders, judges              |
| Hivaka                | CG        | freedom, justice                                            | Chaos, Darkness, Liberation, Travel                                    | Order, Trickery, Twilight    | drow, elves                                             |
| Ja Qua                | LN        | family, hunting, strength                                   | Animal, Ferocity, Fur, Law, Protection, Resolve, Strength              | Nature, Order, Unity         | jungle cultures, orcs                                   |
| Leacim                | CN        | chance, guile, illusion, misfortune, self-determination     | Chaos, Deception, Entropy, Luck, Trickery                              | Arcana, Trickery, Twilight   | entertainers, thieves                                   |
| Musta'Vohi            | NE        | birth, health, lust, motherhood, pregnancy                  | Charm, Darkness, Healing, Protection                                   | Death, Life                  | matrons, midwives                                       |
| Naneth                | N         | agriculture, combat                                         | Fireside, Healing, Knowledge, Provider, Protection, Sun, War           | Nature, War                  | farmers, militia                                        |
| Naraneus              | NE        | darkness, evil, forbidden knowledge, poison, spiders, venom | Destruction, Darkness, Drow, Evil, Knowledge, Shadow                   | Arcana, Twilight, Venomshade | driders, drow                                           |
| The Natural Force     | NG        | earth, growth, health, nature, prosperity                   | Caves, Earth, Good, Healing, Mushroom, Plant, Resurrection             | Life, Mushroom               | funglets                                                |
| Nearru                | CN        | darkness, death, madness, secrets, moon                     | Chaos, Darkness, Madness, Repose, Trickery                             | Arcana, Twilight             | dark folk                                               |
| Onael                 | LE        | evil, forest, order, tyranny, war                           | Evil, Law, Nobility, Strength, War                                     | Order, War                   | hobgoblins                                              |
| Perenna               | NG        | dance, fashion, flowers, rain, spring                       | Charm, Day Earth, Growth, Plants, Seasons                              | Life, Nature                 | bards, gardeners, nobles                                |
| Storjeger             | NG        | community, forest, hunting, survival                        | Ancestor, Animal, Community, Luck, Provider, Weather                   | Nature, Unity                | hunters, rangers                                        |
| Vasi                  | N         | freshwater, lakes, pools, oases, grottoes, springs, peace   | Healing, Life, Travel, Water                                           | Nature                       | vagabonds                                               |
| Zagnexis              | CE        | control, insects, poison, procreation, vermin               | Blood, Catastrophe, Community, Destruction, Exploration, Travel, War   | Unity, War                   | hoyrall                                                 |