

CHAPTER TWO: CORE CLASSES

Dezzavold: Fortress of the Drow presents two new core classes—the black heart and the netherstrider. These classes are especially attractive to the drey.

THE BLACK HEART

A black heart is an unholy barbarian who serves the ambitious demigod Nyarleth, the first drey. Nyarleth is known as the Princess of Rage, Mistress of War, and The Conqueror (see *Plot & Poison*, page 37). In her name, these dark barbarians wage endless wars and conquer the weak, including their drow and elven kin, whom they then subjugate as slaves. Sometimes they just kill their enemies outright, and other times, as they grow in power, they eat the freshly killed hearts of their more formidable foes, thereby gaining short-term abilities from them.

Though the drey black hearts occasionally deal with the drow, serving as mercenaries and war leaders, they revel in toppling drow enclaves. Of course, toppling elven enclaves are equally worthy endeavors.

ADVENTURES

The black heart seeks adventure to gain experience, wealth, magic items, slaves, and most of all, power. Conquest, of course, is always uppermost in a black heart's mind. A black heart occasionally hires out as a mercenary, but her paying master should never rest easy for a black heart can be a most unstable servant; she never really desires to play the servant's role to begin with.

CHARACTERISTICS

The black heart is an excellent warrior. Like the barbarian, the black heart's skill in combat comes from the class' ability to rage (an unholy rage, in this case). While in this state, the black heart is stronger and tougher. Because this rage emanates from an unholy place, the black heart is not winded afterward, which makes them formidable opponents. Black hearts enjoy intimidating and killing others.

ALIGNMENT

Black hearts must be neutral evil or chaotic evil. The majority is chaotic evil like their deity.

RELIGION

A black heart devotes herself to Nyarleth, giving over her soul to the deity in exchange for the powers she receives.

BACKGROUND

Those who follow Nyarleth often do so early in life; they answer a call to conquer through strength and killing the weak. Later, they learn to consume the hearts of prey and siphon its power. All those who do not follow Nyarleth are free to be hunted as prey.

RACES

Nyarleth's black hearts are generally drey. Occasionally, an individual of another race proves dark-hearted enough to join the ranks. Additionally, it is rare for a black heart to be male, for the drey view males with more contempt than do the drow.

OTHER CLASSES

Black hearts work with any non-good or lawful classes, and they especially get along with others who share their love for battle. Those who prove tough combatants gain their grudging respect. Of course, that does not mean the black heart will not kill them at some later point.

GAME RULE INFORMATION

Abilities: Charisma enhances some of the black heart's special abilities and Strength is important for black hearts because of their love of combat. Constitution and Dexterity are also useful to the black heart.

Alignment: Neutral evil or chaotic evil.

Hit Dice: d12.

Starting Gold: 5d4 x 10 gp.

CLASS SKILLS

The black heart's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Listen (Wis), Ride (Dex), Survival (Wis), and Swim (Str). See **Chapter 4: Skills** in the *PHB* for skill descriptions.

Skill Points at 1st Level: (2 + Int modifier) x 4

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 2 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the black heart class.

WEAPON AND ARMOR PROFICIENCY

Black hearts are proficient with all simple and martial weapons. They are also proficient with all armor and shields (except tower shields).

ILLITERACY

Like barbarians, black hearts do not automatically know how to read and write. A black heart may spend 2 skill points to gain the ability to read and write all languages she is able to speak. A black heart that gains a level in any other class automatically gains literacy.

SOULLESS (Su)

Black hearts give their souls to Nyarlath, and allow a malevolent force to occupy their bodies. Black hearts cannot take negative energy levels, nor can they be turned into undead spawn if slain by an undead creature with the create spawn ability. Any time they are raised from the dead, regardless of the spell, they lose 1 point of Constitution, but never a level. Undead see them as one of their own and do not attack black hearts unless they first attack them. Black hearts are also subject to turn and rebuke attempts as if they were undead.

UNHOLY RAGE (Su)

A black heart can summon Nyarlath's rage a certain number of times per day. During this unholy rage, a black heart temporarily gains a +4 bonus to Strength, a +4 bonus to Constitution, and a +2 morale bonus on Will saves, but she takes a -2 penalty to Armor Class. The increase in Constitution raises the black heart's hit points by 2 points per level, but these hit points go away at the end of the unholy rage when her Constitution score drops back to normal (these extra hit points are not lost first the way temporary hit points are). While raging, a black heart cannot use any Charisma-, Dexterity-, or Intelligence-based skills (except for Balance, Escape Artist, Intimidate, and Ride), the Concentration skill, or any abilities that require patience or concentration, nor can she cast spells or activate magic items that require a command



TABLE 2-1: THE BLACK HEART

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Illiteracy, soulless, unholy rage 1/day
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	Aura of evil, dark blessing
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	Aura of fear
4th	+4	+4	+1	+1	Uncanny dodge
5th	+5	+4	+1	+1	Unholy rage 2/day
6th	+6/+1	+5	+2	+2	Transference through consumption 1
7th	+7/+2	+5	+2	+2	Improved uncanny dodge
8th	+8/+3	+6	+2	+2	<i>Vampiric touch</i> 1/day
9th	+9/+4	+6	+3	+3	Transference through consumption 2
10th	+10/+5	+7	+3	+3	Unholy rage 3/day
11th	+11/+6/+1	+7	+3	+3	<i>Vampiric touch</i> 2/day
12th	+12/+7/+2	+8	+4	+4	Transference through consumption 3
13th	+13/+8/+3	+8	+4	+4	Greater unholy rage
14th	+14/+9/+4	+9	+4	+4	<i>Vampiric touch</i> 3/day
15th	+15/+10/+5	+9	+5	+5	Unholy rage 4/day
16th	+16/+11/+6/+1	+10	+5	+5	
17th	+17/+12/+7/+2	+10	+5	+5	<i>Vampiric touch</i> 4/day
18th	+18/+13/+8/+3	+11	+6	+6	
19th	+19/+14/+9/+4	+11	+6	+6	Mighty unholy rage
20th	+20/+15/+10/+5	+12	+6	+6	Unholy rage 5/day

word, a spell trigger (such as a wand), or spell completion (such as a scroll) to function. She can use any feat she has except Combat Expertise, item creation feats, and metamagic feats. A fit of unholy rage lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the character's Charisma modifier.

A black heart may prematurely end her rage. At the end of the rage, the black heart loses the rage modifiers and restrictions but is not fatigued. At 1st level, she can use her rage ability once per day. At 5th level and every five levels thereafter, she can use it one additional time per day (to a maximum of five times per day at 20th level). Entering a rage takes no time itself, but a black heart can do it only during her action and not in response to someone else's action.

AURA OF EVIL (Ex)

The power of a black heart's aura of evil (see the *detect evil* spell) is equal to her black heart level.

DARK BLESSING (Su)

Black hearts apply their Charisma modifier (if positive) as a bonus on all saving throws.

AURA OF FEAR (Su)

Starting at 3rd level, all enemies within 10 feet of a black heart must succeed a Will save against a DC 10 + one-half black heart's class levels + the black heart's Charisma modifier, or

become shaken for as long as they remain in the area. This is a mind-affecting fear effect. If opponents succeed at their saving throws, they cannot again be affected by this power for 24 hours.

UNCANNY DODGE (Ex)

At 4th level, a black heart retains her Dexterity bonus to AC (if any) even if caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker. However, she still loses her Dexterity bonus to AC if immobilized. If a black heart already has uncanny dodge from a different class, she automatically gains improved uncanny dodge (see below) instead.

TRANSFERENCE THROUGH CONSUMPTION (Su)

When a black heart devours the heart of a freshly killed enemy, one having a discernable anatomy, she may choose to gain one of the following benefits: temporary hit points equal to 2d8 + 1 per victim's HD, one of the victim's class abilities, or one of the victim's prepared spells. Determine randomly which class feature or prepared or known spell. If the black heart selects a spell, she may cast the spell once as the victim whose heart she devoured. Thus, a black heart who devoured a heart gained *magic missile*, and the victim was a 5th-level sorcerer, the spell creates three missiles.

Devouring a heart takes three rounds: one to remove the heart from the body and two to consume. Unless used (in the

case of temporary hit points and spells), the gained powers last for 12 hours. At 9th level, the black heart gains two benefits from the consumed victim. At 12th level, she gains three benefits.

IMPROVED UNCANNY DODGE (Ex)

At 7th level and higher, a black heart can no longer be flanked. This defense denies a rogue the ability to sneak attack the black heart by flanking her, unless the attacker has at least four more rogue levels than the target has black heart levels. If a character already has uncanny dodge (see above) from a second class, the levels from the classes granting uncanny dodge stack to determine the minimum level a rogue must be to flank the character.

VAMPIRIC TOUCH (Sp)

At 8th level, a black heart can cast *vampiric touch* once per day as a caster of equivalent level. This ability increases to twice a day at 11th level, three times a day at 14th level, and four times a day at 17th level.

GREATER UNHOLY RAGE (Ex)

At 13th level, a black heart's bonuses to Strength and Constitution during her rage each increase to +6, and her morale bonus on Will saves increases to +3. The penalty to AC remains at -2.

MIGHTY UNHOLY RAGE (Ex)

At 19th level, a black heart's bonuses to Strength and Constitution during her rage each increase to +8, and her morale bonus on Will saves increases to +4. The penalty to AC remains at -2.

EX-BLACK HEARTS

Like a member of any other class, a black heart may be a multiclass character, but multiclass black hearts face a special restriction. A black heart that gains a level in any class other than black heart may never again raise her black heart level, though she retains all her black heart abilities. The path of the black heart requires a constant heart. If a character adopts this class, she must pursue it to the exclusion of all other careers. Once she has turned off the path, she may never return.