THE GREATER TREASURE: A HEART OF DARKNESS AND YNLOETH'S LEGACY

By Erik Scott de Bie and Thomas M. Costa

What You Need to Play

Cythara and Yldar Nathalan appear in the short story, "The Greater Treasure," in *Realms of the Elves* by Erik Scott de Bie, Cythara and Yldar Nathalan make use of information in the *Player's Handbook, Dungeon Master's Guide, Monster Manual, Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting, Player's Handbook II*, and *Magic Item Compendium*. In addition, their write ups include references to material in *Book of Vile Darkness, Champions of Ruin, Complete Adventurer, Complete Divine, Complete Mage, Complete Scoundrel, Complete Warrior, Faiths and Pantheons, Fiendish Codex I: Hordes of the Abyss, Magic of Faerûn, Player's Guide to Faerûn, Races of the Wild, Spell Compendium* and the three Wizards of the Coast web articles, "Spellbook: Bladesong" (http://www.wizards.com/dnd/article.asp?x=dnd/sb/sb20010126a), "Class Chronicles: Duskblades and Knights" (http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=dnd/frcc/20070228)) and *Dragon* Magazine #360's "Demonomicon of Iggwilv: Graz'zt the Dark Prince" (http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=dnd/drfe/20071024&authentic=true). Although access to any or all of these supplements will enhance your use of these write ups, they are not strictly necessary. In particular, several spells mentioned below are found in the additional supplements; they are easily replaced with other spells listed under each character or spells chosen from the *Player's Handbook*.

Sample Encounter (CR 16)

A beautiful moon elf maid named Alais (see Yldar below) pleads with the heroes to talk her beloved, Yldar, a sun elf bladesinger, out of a particularly dangerous attempt to "rescue" his wicked sister Cythara, the thrall of a demon lord. The heroes must track Yldar down to a temple where Cythara is known to operate. Alais wants them to intercept him and talk him out of his crusade. Yldar, however, cannot be dissuaded, but will the PCs fight him or join him? If they choose to join him, they soon find themselves in the debauched temple of a demon lord, fighting against cultists, as well as rutterkin, succubi, and other demons, before encountering their mistress Cythara, who will try to kill the PCs as well as her brother and flee if that does not look likely to occur.

CYTHARA, CHOSEN OF GRAZ'ZT

Sharp of feature and lean of body, this striking sun elf has bronze skin and a golden mane of hair that cascades down her nearly naked body. Her very presence is one of sensuality, confidence, power, and something both subtle and insidious. She wears little but a black gown-like cloak.

CYTHARA CR 16

BV = *Book of Vile Darkness*, CD = *Complete Divine*, CM = *Complete Mage*, CR = *Champions of Ruin*, CS = *Complete Scoundrel*, D360 = *Dragon* Magazine #360 (http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=dnd/drfe/20071024&authentic=true), FC1 = *Fiendish Codex I: Hordes of the Abyss*, MC = *Magic Item Compendium*, PG = *Player's Guide to Faerûn*, PH2 = *Player's Handbook II*, SC = *Spell Compendium*

Female sun elf (Evermeet) "tougher" wizard 11/thrall of Graz'zt[D360] 5
CE Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +6, Spot +6
Languages Abyssal (Infernal alphabet), Celestial (Celestial alphabet), Chondathan (Thorass alphabet), Common (Thorass alphabet), Elven (Espruar alphabet), Illuskan (Thorass alphabet)

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 18 (+1 Dex, +6 armor, +2 deflection); +8 to checks to resist bull rush, overrun, and trip, 25% negate critical hits and sneak attacks, *ring of avoidance*[MC]
hp 58 (16 HD; 4+10d4+5d6-16+28 temporary)
Immune fear, magic sleep
Resist Thrall to Demon, fire 20, *scarab of protection* (6 charges); **SR** 20 (*scarab of protection*)
Fort +7 (+9 against good spells), **Ref** +9 (+11 against good spells), **Will** +17 (+19 against good spells, enchantments, and illusions, +21 against good illusion and good enchantment spells)

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)
Melee *mwk cold iron dagger* +8/+3 (1d4/19-20)
Ranged *mwk cold iron daggers* +9/+4 (1d4/19-20)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +7
Atk Options Thrall to Demon
Special Actions Dark Speech, spell betrayal +2d6
Combat Gear *ring of avoidance*[MC], *ruby bracelet of repulsion*[MC] (as bracers), *wand of melf's acid arrow* (CL 3rd, 10 charges)
Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 14th, Concentration +18)
7th—*phase door, violated disintegrate* (+8 ranged touch, DC 23)
6th—*chain lightning* (DC 22), *eyebite* (DC 23), *Rary's arcane conversion*[CM]
5th—*heart of fire*[CM, †], *stop heart*[BV] (DC 22), *violated wall of fire*
4th—*energy spheres*[SC] (DC 20), *enervation* (+8 ranged touch), *Evard's black tentacles, heart of earth*[CM, †], *violated fireball* (DC 20)
3rd—*clairaudience/clairvoyance, dispel magic, greater mage armor*[†], *phantasmal strangler*[CM] (DC 19), *violated scorching ray* (+8 ranged touch)
2nd—*darkbolt*[BD] (DC 19), *eagle's splendor, fox's cunning, levitate, vision of entropy*[FC1] (DC 18)
1st—*expeditious retreat, obscuring mist, shield, magic missile* (2)
0—*arcane mark, detect magic, message, read magic*
† Already cast
Spell-Like Abilities (Concentration +18)
At will—*charm person* (CL 5th; DC 14)
1/day—*summon demon* (CL 15th; see below)

Abilities Str 10 (+0), Dex 12 (+1), Con 8 (-1), Int 22 (+6; 18 without *headband*), Wis 14 (+2), Cha 16 (+3)
SQ ability to notice secret and concealed doors, dark charisma, familiar, share spells
Feats Abyss-Bound Soul[FC1], Alertness[B], Dark Speech[BV, FC1], Evil Brand[BV, CR, FC1], Improved Familiar, Malign Spell Focus[B; CR], , Martial Weapon Proficiency (longbow, longsword, rapier, shortbow), Scribe Scroll[B], Spellwise[PG], Thrall to Demon[BV, CR, FC1, D360], Violate Spell [B; BV, D360]
Skills Bluff +10 (+12 against evil creatures), Concentration +18, Decipher Script +25, Diplomacy +12 (+16 against evil creatures), Disguise +3 (+5 against evil creatures or to act in character), Gather Information +8 (+10 against evil creatures), Intimidate +5 (+9 against evil creatures), Knowledge (arcana) +27, Knowledge (the planes) +19, Listen +6, Perform +3 (+5 against evil creatures), Search +8, Spellcraft +29, Spot +6, Survival +2 (+4 on other planes)
Possessions combat gear plus *ring of protection +2, scarab of protection* (6 charges), *cloak of resistance +4,* 3 mwk cold iron daggers, *headband of intellect +4,* spell component pouch, ruby (1500 gp), silver mirror (1000 gp), gold dust (100 gp), 2 pearls (100 gp), ivory portal (5 gp), marble (5 gp), silver spoon (5 gp), 10 doses of baccaran[BV], 6 spellbooks (including a hidden duplicate set), 650+ gp of other gear such as potions, scrolls, utility items, jewelry, and coin
Spellbook spells prepared plus: 0—*acid splash, amanuensis*[SC], *caltrops*[SC],*dancing lights, daze, detect poison, disrupt undead, electric jolt*[SC], *flare, ghost sound, light, mage hand, mending, open/close, prestidigitation, ray of frost*, *resistance, slash tongue*[BD], *touch of fatigue, unnerving gaze*[BD]; 1st—*alarm, burning hands, disguise self, identify, mage armor, shocking grasp, stealth of elvenkind* (see below), *summon monster I, swift expeditious retreat*[SC], *Tenser's floating disk, true casting*[CM], *true strike*; 2nd—*arcane lock, darkvision, detect thoughts, invisibility, scorching ray*, *summon monster II, touch of idiocy*; 3rd—*arcane sight, displacement, fireball, major image, mass stealth of elvenkind* (see below), *nondetection, suggestion, summon monster III*; 4th—*arcane eye, charm monster, dimension door, lesser geas, lesser globe of invulnerability, phantasmal killer, scrying, wall of fire*; 5th—*break enchantment, contact other plane, dismissal, incite riot*[PH2], *nightmare, passwall, repulsion, sending*; 6th—*analyze dweomer, disintegrate, globe of invulnerability, greater dispel magic, mass suggestion, mislead, probe thoughts*[SC]; 7th—*greater scrying, insanity, limited wish, Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion, soul link*[FC1].

Dark Charisma (Ex) Cythara gains a +2 enhancement bonus on all Charisma-based checks when dealing with evil creatures (included above where appropriate).
Dark Speech[BV, FC1] This vile feat allows Cythara to do three things.
Dread: Whenever Cythara uses Dark Speech in this manner, she takes 1d4 points of Charisma damage, and every other creature in a 30-foot radius must attempt a Will save (DC 21). The result of a failed save by a listener depends on their level and alignment, as detailed below.

Level (alignment)	Result
1st-4th (non-evil)	Listener is shaken for 1d10 rounds and must flee from Cythara until Cythara is out of sight.
1st-4th (evil)	Listener cowers in fear for 1d10 rounds.
5th-10th (non-evil)	Listener is shaken for 1d10 rounds.
5th-10th (evil)	Listener is charmed by Cythara (as *charm monster*) for 1d10 rounds.
11th+ (non-evil)	Listener is filled with loathing for Cythara, but is not otherwise influenced.
11th+ (evil)	Listener is impressed, and Cythara gains a +2 competence bonus on attempts to change his attitude in the future.

Power: By incorporating the Dark Speech into the verbal component of a spell, Cythara increases its effective caster level by 1. Whenever Cythara uses Dark Speech in this manner, she takes 1d4 points of Charisma damage. Being partial to her charm and allure, Cythara uses this ability only when desperate.

Corruption: As a full-round action, Cythara can whisper vile words at an inanimate object and reduce its hardness by half. She cannot use the ability more than once on a single object.

Dark Unity: Cythara can establish a hive mind in any swarm of vermin or animals with an Intelligence score of 2 or lower. Thereafter, she can give the swarm one command as per the *suggestion* spell (CL 16). Whenever Cythara infuses a swarm in this manner, she takes 1d4 points of Constitution damage.

Improved Familiar Cythara has a quasit familiar named (mockingly) Yldar. Cythara's familiar is rarely used in combat, though she often sends him to spy or fetch things for her.

Yldar, Improved Quasit Familiar; CR —
CE Tiny outsider
Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +7, Spot +6
Languages Abyssal (Infernal alphabet), Common (Thorass alphabet), Elven (Espruar alphabet); empathic link
AC 24, touch 15, flat-footed 21 (+2 size, +3 Dex, +9 natural); **DR** 5/cold
hp 15 (16 HD; ½ master); fast healing 2
Immune poison
Resist fire 10, improved evasion; **SR** 16
Fort +4, **Ref** +7, **Will** +12
Speed 20 ft. (4 squares), fly 50 ft. (perfect)
Melee 2 claws +12 (1d3-1 plus poison) and bite +7 (1d-1)
Space 2-1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.
Base Atk +7; **Grp** -2
Atk Options deliver touch spells, poison (DC 20, 1d4 Dex/2d4 Dex)
Spell-like Abilities (CL 6th; Concentration +19)
At will—*detect good, detect magic, invisibility* (self only)
1/day—*cause fear* (as the spell, but 30-foot radius; DC 11)
1/week—*commune* (CL 12th; to ask 6 questions)
Abilities Str 8 (-1), Dex 17 (+3), Con 10 (+0), Int 11 (+0), Wis 12 (+1), Cha 10 (+0)
SQ alternate form
Feats Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse
Skills Bluff +7, Concentration +19, Decipher Script +19, Diplomacy +9, Disguise +0 (+2 to act in character), Gather Information +5, Hide +17, Intimidate +2, Knowledge (arcana) +19, Knowledge (the planes) +13, Listen +7, Move Silently +9, Search +6, Spellcraft +21, Spot +6 Survival +1 (+3 on other planes)
Alternate Form (Su) As *polymorph*, caster level 12th, except that Yldar the quasit does not regain hit points for changing form and can assume only two forms, that of a bat and wolf.

Malign Spell Focus[CR] This feat adds +1 to the DC for all saving throws against any of your spells that have the evil descriptor (such as those cast with the Violate Spell metamagic feat).

Spell Betrayal (Su) When Cythara casts a damage-dealing spell at a flat-footed target, she deals an additional +2d6 points of damage. Graz'zt grants this ability in the hope that his faithful will convince their enemies that they are friends, then betray them with a surprise magical attack, something in which Cythara is happy to indulge owing to her own love of treachery.

***Summon Demon* (Sp)** Cythara can summon a demon of 5 HD or less once per day—this ability functions like a *summon monster* spell at caster level 15th. While Cythara easily calls on one of her master's rutterkin[FC1] soldiers, she will call whatever demon is within her power and of most use to her, and she often has a use for juvenile nabassu[FC1].

Thrall to Demon[BV, CR, FC1, D360] This vile feat allows you to add a +1 luck bonus on any one attack roll, saving throw, ability check, skill check, or level check once per day while performing an evil act.

Violate Spell[BV, D360] This vile feat adds the evil descriptor to a spell. If the spell deals damage, half the damage is vile damage (and can be healed only in an area under the effect of a *consecrate* or *hallow* spell). A violated spell uses up a spell slot one level higher than the spell's actual level.

Hook "He smiled, and her spirit melted away. He touched her, and she felt with unholy rapture a mark burn itself into her skin. And Cythara knew an ecstasy she had never imagined: the ecstasy of darkness."

Cythara (KITH-a-ra) is the dark thrall of the demonic lord Graz'zt—cruel and beautiful, frail but sensuous. She takes joy in infiltrating "civilized" circles, especially human circles, preferring the company of corrupt politicians, merchants, and schemers

she can bend to her will with charm, suggestion, and foul magic. She once openly disdained human company, seeing them as little more than brutes that dress themselves like civilized creatures. Now she takes particular delight in manipulating and corrupting those of that lesser race, reaffirming her superiority with every life destroyed and every soul taken.

Cythara had the following ability scores before racial adjustments, Hit Dice ability score increases, and equipment bonuses: Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Physical Description

Cythara (kith-ira) is a thin, lovely sun elf of about 140 winters with bronze skin and hair seemingly spun of gold. She wears little—only daring black robes cut to hint and tease, and a suggestive (and cruel) smile. When she infiltrates "civilized" circles, she wears fashionable and daring styles that go well with her painfully skinny frame. She bears a demonic rune (tattoo) of Graz'zt's black six-fingered hand nestled at the base of her spine, and she usually dresses in a way that reveals this mark.

Background and Relevant History

Cythara was once the second child of House Nathalan (NATH-a-lan), a proud and noble family of Evermeet—destined to become a high mage of the elven people. She was a natural spellcaster, who took to the arcane arts as another child might take to breathing. But she swore off her name and heritage when, in 1362, she was kidnapped by the Dark Coven in Elversult—a cult sworn to the service of the demon lord Graz'zt. They might have sacrificed her to their dark master, but she seized control of the Coven and became its leader, voluntarily undergoing a substantive conversion into a thrall of Graz'zt, increasing and darkening her magical powers. (Note: Graz'zt's personal attention provided an alternative conversion ritual to the Hollow Feast[D360] rituals previously prescribed for thralls. The Hollow Feast ritual has since become standard practice in the Realms.) It is also said that Cythara bore Graz'zt a half-fiend, half-elf child as a result of the ritual, but if this is true, she has kept the babe hidden these last thirteen years.

She willingly accepted darkness in order to escape a stifling childhood and an adult life focused on caring for the petulant arrogance of her younger brother, Yldar (see below). Specifically, she'd grudgingly accepted his quest for elven artifacts to prove his worth to their father and their people, even though accompanying him on a pointless crusade kept her from achieving ever greater arcane power. She was done massaging his pride—from that moment on, Cythara chose to decide her own destiny. (For more on the events leading to Cythara's conversion, see Yldar below.)

As of 1375, Cythara has founded new cults of Graz'zt throughout Faerun, leaving a thrall she personally seduced and converted in charge, though she still checks on them (either in person or through proxy, see "Allies" below) from time to time. After some questioning of her faith, dedication, and worthiness to lead (which ended badly for the accuser), Cythara has instituted the Hollow Feast as a way of converting new thralls. It is said, though not too loudly, that Cythara made overtures to the feyri under Sarya Dlardrageth, but their negotiations proved unsuccessful owing to treachery on one side or both.

Unknown to all, in 1372, Cythara murdered her eldest sister Rhiannen (female CG sun elf wizard 14)—an apprentice high mage—and has been impersonating her ever since. When the high mages investigated their brilliant "student," Cythara truthfully told them that she was, indeed, the heir to the blood of Nathalan. In disguise, she has used the family's resources over the years to research lore and magicks seemingly lost to time, hidden in the dusty tomes within the libraries of the high mages, stealing elven lore to pass on to her master and lover. Rhiannen's demise technically puts Cythara next in line to inherit the Nathalan family estate, should her father die, but she is so busy with her own dark intrigues that she hardly cares.

Now, she divides her time between maintaining the cults she's left scattered on the mainland and researching arcane secrets Cythara contents herself hiding away, researching new spells and rituals for months at a time, emerging (with decreasing frequency as the years pass) to seduce corrupt wizards, stuffy priests, and greedy merchants to the cause of Graz'zt—or to their own graves. She plies her charms mostly on humans, and takes particular delight in corrupting priests of Waukeen and Mystra.

Notable Allies and Enemies

Cythara is served by three succubi, one from each of the three layers of Azzagrat: Raivren (CE female succubus assassin 5; Str 15, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 20, Wis 14, Cha 24), Fafliir (CE female succubus blackguard 5; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 17, Cha 32), and Antatolia (CE female favored soul[CD] [Graz'zt] 5; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 20, Cha 29). These creatures serve her as assassins, warriors, and seductresses—they often masquerade as her, wearing her form so as to watch over one of her cults. Many times, Yldar has seemingly defeated his sister only to find one of the succubi in her place. The three are constantly in contact with Cythara, however far removed, and a party of PCs that faces one may soon face all four.

Naturally, being demons, the three fiends constantly seduce and scheme against one another, seeking to curry favor with their mistress (and thus with Lord Graz'zt). Whenever Cythara is encountered alongside her servants, the succubi compete to produce the most attractive form for her pleasure. Cythara has forbidden her servants to take male forms around her, as the only man whose presence she can tolerate for long is Graz'zt.

Cythara has been known to duel and compete with a sly and charming man called Morgerin Dane—a powerful cultist of Malcanthet (NE male chondathan human cleric 3/enchanter 3/mystic theurge 9 [Malcanthet[FC1]]). The two have a love/hate relationship that finds its release in passion or in bloodshed, much like the seething feud between their demonic patrons.

Cythara's foil and nemesis is her brother Yldar (see below), who seeks at all times to "save" her from her dark destiny. Cythara has tried to make him understand that this is her choice, but he will not leave her be, and she has given up reasoning with him. When next they meet, she will not be merciful.

Her contempt for Yldar is matched and, indeed, exceeded only by her unbridled hatred for the Fox-at-Twilight (CN moon female elf rogue 3/swashbuckler 2/uncanny trickster[CS] 3/shadowdancer 4/divine seeker[PG] 4), who she blames for ruining her family. As much as she detests her spoiled, needy brother, she loathes the strumpet who sundered them far more.

Strategies and Tactics

Cythara is not a warrior. She prefers to fight—with an impressive display of magic—only in carefully controlled circumstances, on a battlefield of her choosing. Though she respects no one's power as much as her own, she is not stupid or arrogant. She prefers to waste minions on PCs, wearing down their defenses, and strike when they are weak. Her succubi servants make excellent shock troops, teleporting in to strike once, then vanishing just as quickly.

When pressed, Cythara focuses on defensive spells to keep her frail body out of harm's way (her repulsion bracelet in particular aids her in this), and takes a perverse delight in destroying her foes with her mighty and vile magicks. If she suffers even a quarter of her hit points in damage, she is likely to flee and come up with a new strategy. When weakened, she is apt to surrender (falsely or not) and wait for a chance to strike treacherously.

Cythara also particularly likes playing the damsel in distress, pretending to be a frail, fair wizard the heroes might "rescue" from darkness. She has no compunctions against slaying her own allies to win a party's trust, and will adventure alongside them for some time, even seeming to enjoy aiding the cause of good. Slowly she insinuates herself among such parties with promises of passion and favor, seducing one or more of her foes and playing jealousies against one another. Then, inevitably, she will strike when they are unguarded, particularly with her spell-betrayal ability.

New Spells

Cythara has mastered a few spells more commonly known among the elves than other races.

Stealth of Elvenkind

Transmutation
Level: Druid 1, ranger 1, sorcerer/wizard 1
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 10 minutes/level
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

Upon finishing the spell, your skin and clothing shift hues almost imperceptibly to better match your surroundings and your movements become as soft as a whisper.

Throughout the duration of the spell, your coloration changes ever so slightly (Spot DC 15 to notice) to better match the background of your environment and your movements are muted. This effect grants you a +5 circumstance bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks.

Stealth of Elvenkind, Mass

Transmutation
Level: Druid 2, ranger 2, sorcerer/wizard 3
Range: Medium
Target: Any number of creatures, not two of which are more than 60 ft. apart

Reaching out to your environment, you wrap your allies in a cloak of silence and the subtle hues of their surroundings.

This spell functions like *stealth of elvenkind*, except the effect is mobile with the group. The spell is broken for any individual who moves more than 60 feet from the nearest member of the group. (If only two individuals are affected, the one moving away from the other one loses its stealth benefits. If both are moving away from each other, they both lose their stealth bonuses when the distance between them exceeds 60 feet.)

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YLDAR NATHALAN

The handsome sun elf before you has golden hair, bronze skin and sharp features that give him an air of hauteur and authority. A longsword sheathed at his hip sways slightly with each carefully placed and graceful step.

YLDAR NATHALAN CR 16

CAd = *Complete Adventurer*, CCh = "Class Chronicles: Duskblades and Knights" (http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=dnd/frcc/20070228), CM = *Complete Mage*, CS = *Complete Scoundrel*, CW = *Complete Warrior*, FP = *Faiths and Pantheons*, Mag = *Magic of Faerûn*, MC = *Magic Item Compendium*, PG = *Player's Guide to Faerûn*, PH2 = *Player's Handbook II*, RW = *Races of the Wild*, SC = *Spell Compendium*, Sp:B = "Spellbook: Bladesong" (http://www.wizards.com/dnd/article.asp?x=dnd/sb/sb20010126a)

Male sun elf (Evermeet) "tougher"elven swashbuckler[CW] 3/bladesong duskblade[PH2] 13
CG Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +9; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +6, Spot +6
Languages Abyssal (Infernal alphabet), Chondathan (Thorass alphabet), Common (Thorass alphabet), Elven (Espruar alphabet), Illuskan (Thorass alphabet)

AC 29, touch 21, flat-footed 19 (+5 Dex, +8 armor, +1 deflection, +5 bladesong style)
hp 92 (16 HD; 8+14d8+1d10+16)
Immune sleep
Fort +10, **Ref** +20, **Will** +13 (+15 against enchantments)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares); skill tricks (Nimble Charge, Twisted Charge)
Melee *+1 blessed*[MC] *cold iron longsword* +22/+17/+12/+7 (1d8+4+5 insightful strike/19-20)
Melee *+1 blessed*[MC] *cold iron longsword* with bladesong flurry +20/+20/+15/+10/+5 (1d8+4+5 insightful strike/19-20)
Ranged cold iron daggers +18/+13/+8 (1d4+3/19-20)
Base Atk +16; **Grp** +19
Atk Options Arcane Strike, Battlecaster Offense, Combat Expertise, Power Attack, arcane channeling, insightful strike (+5 damage), quick cast 2/day
Special Actions Improved Counterspell, Reactive Counterspell, bladesong flurry
Combat gear *+1 blessed*[MC] *cold iron longsword*
Duskblade Spells Known (CL 13th; Concentration +14, +18 casting defensively, improved bladesong style, spell power +3):
4th (3/day)—*fire shield*
3rd (7/day)—*dispelling touch*[PH2] (+21 melee touch), *displacement, energy aegis*[PH2], *energy surge*[PH2]
2nd (9/day)—*bull's strength, cat's grace, dimension hop*[PH2] (+21 melee touch, DC 18), *touch of idiocy* (+21 melee touch)
1st (11/day)—*Bigby's tripping hand*[PH2] (+20 melee touch, Strength check +6), *burning hands* (DC 16), *shield, shocking grasp* (+21 melee touch), *true strike*
0 (6/day)—*acid splash* (+21 ranged touch), *electric jolt*[SC] (+21 ranged touch), *ray of frost* (+21 ranged touch), *resistance*
Spell-like Abilities (CL 13th; Concentration +14, +18 casting defensively, improved bladesong style, spell power +3)
8/day combined—*dancing lights, detect magic, flare* (DC 15), *ghost sound* (DC 15), *read magic*

Abilities Str 16 (+3), Dex 20 (+5; 16 without gloves), Con 12 (+1), Int 20 (+5; 16 without headband), Wis 10 (+0), Cha 10 (+0)
SQ ability to notice secret and concealed doors, armored mage, bladesong style, elven weapon finesse, improved bladesong style, spell power +3
Feats Arcane Strike[CW], Battlecaster Offense[CM], Combat Casting[B], Combat Expertise[B], Improved Counterspell, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Reactive Counterspell[Mag, PG], Weapon Finesse[B]
Skills Balance +13, Concentration +14 (+18 casting defensively), Jump +11, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Listen +6, Ride +10, Search +7, Spellcraft +20, Spot +6, Tumble +26
Skill Tricks[CS] Nimble Charge, Twisted Charge
Possessions combat gear plus *+4 mithral shirt, ring of protection +1, cape of resistance +4* (as cloak), 4 cold iron daggers, *gloves of dexterity +4, headband of intellect +4*, spell component pouch, and 400+ gp worth of other gear, such as *cure* potions, utility items, a mount, and coin

Arcane Attunement (Sp) Yldar can use the spell-like a powers *dancing lights, detect magic, flare, ghost sound*, and *read magic* a combined total of times per day equal to 3+ his Int modifier.
Arcane Channeling (Su) Yldar can cast any touch spell he knows as a standard action and deliver the spell through his weapon with a melee attack. Casting a spell in this manner does not provoke attacks of opportunity. The spell must have a casting

time of 1 standard action or less. If the melee attack is successful, the attack deals damage normally; then the effect of the spell is resolved.

Yldar also can cast any touch spell he knows as part of full attack action, and have the spell affect each target he hits in melee combat that round. Doing so discharges the spell at the end of the round, in the case of a touch spell that would otherwise last longer than 1 round.

Arcane Strike[CW] When Yldar activates this feat (a free action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity), he can channel arcane energy into a melee weapon or his unarmed strike. He must sacrifice one of his spells for the day (of 1st level or higher) to do this, but he gains a bonus on all his attack rolls for 1 round equal to the level of the spell sacrificed, as well as extra damage equal to 1d4 points the level of the spell sacrificed. The bonus you add to your attack rolls from this feat cannot be greater than Yldar's base attack bonus.

Armored Mage (Ex) Yldar can avoid arcane spell failure so long as he sticks to light armor.

Battlecaster Offense[CM] This feat allows the use of two tactical maneuvers.

Spell and Sword: If Yldar deals damage to a foe with a spell, he gains a +1 bonus on his first melee attack roll made against that foe in the next round.

Sword and Spell: If Yldar makes a melee attack against a foe, he gains a +1 bonus to the save DC of the first spell he uses against that foe in the next round. This bonus applies only against the foe or foes he attacked, not against any other creatures affected by the spell.

Bladesong Flurry (Ex) When Yldar makes a full attack with his longsword in one hand (and nothing in the other), he can make one extra attack a round at his highest base attack bonus; this attack and each other attack made that round take a -2 penalty. This penalty applies for 1 round, so it also affects attacks of opportunity Yldar might make before his next action.

Bladesong Style (Ex) When wielding a longsword (or a rapier) in one hand, Yldar gains a dodge bonus to AC equal to his class level, up to a maximum of his Intelligence bonus.

Elven Weapon Finesse (Ex) Yldar gains Weapon Finesse as a bonus feat and may apply the feat's benefits with a longsword.

Improved Bladesong Style (Ex) When wielding his longsword in one hand (and nothing in the other), Yldar can take 10 when making a Concentration check to cast defensively

Insightful Strike (Ex) Yldar applies his Intelligence bonus (if any) as a bonus on damage rolls with any light weapon, as well as any weapon that can be used with Weapon Finesse. Targets immune to sneak attacks or critical hits are immune to Yldar's insightful strike.

Quick Cast Yldar can cast two spells each day as a swift action, so long as the casting time of the spell is 1 standard action or less.

Reactive Counterspell[Mag, PG] This feat allows Yldar to counterspell an opponent's spell even if he has not readied an action to do so once per round. This counterspell action takes the place of Yldar's next turn.

Skill Tricks[CS] Yldar knows two skill tricks each of which can be used once per encounter without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Nimble Charge: Yldar can run or charge across difficult surfaces without needing to make a Balance check (PH 67).

Twisted Charge: When Yldar charges, he can make one turn of up to 90 degrees during his movement. He can't move more than his speed as part of this charge.

Spell Power If Yldar has injured an opponent with a melee attack, he gains a +3 bonus on his caster level check to overcome spell resistance for the remainder of the encounter.

Hook "Where is my sister, dastard? You are hiding her from me, but no matter. I shall cut the truth from your lips!"

Yldar Nathalan (ILL-dahr NATH-a-lan) in an elf lord of Evermeet, now obsessed with his sister's fall into darkness. And once he is set upon a task, he never relents—never deviates—until he has accomplished it

Yldar had the following ability scores before racial adjustments, Hit Dice ability score increases, and equipment bonuses: Str 14, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Physical Description

Yldar Nathalan (ILL-dahr NATH-a-lan) is a handsome elf lord of perhaps 120 or so winters, with gold-bronze skin, similarly rich hair, and gleaming green-blue eyes. His is a windswept, austere visage that speaks of centuries of pride and tradition. He moves with grace and determined focus.

Background and Relevant History

The Nathalan family (which is distantly related to that of the ruling queen of Evermeet, Amlaruil) has three children in the current generation (in order from oldest to youngest): Rhiannen, Cythara, Yldar. A fourth, the eldest (about fifty years older than Yldar), was a boy named Rylff, who was a great bladesinger and hero of the elven cause. In the early 1300s (when Yldar was not yet a man), he died under ignominious circumstances, and speculation abounds that he had become a traitor of some

kind. Rylff had been the highest achieving of the Nathalan children, and the family was dealt a severe blow by his death and ignominy. If the Nathalan clan had been able to prove his innocence or guilt, one way or another, it would have turned out well for them, but the matter was so ambiguous as to leave only lingering doubts and whispers among their Evermeet peers.

Rhiannen was ill suited to redeem the family honor and inherit the family name—she cared for little more than books and research and shut herself away, studying to be a high mage. Cythara (who took after her sister but had a more pragmatic view of the world) was a logical choice, but Lord Riem Nathalan passed over her as well in favor of a male heir, one of martial temperament. For Lord Nathalan had been a bladesinger in his time, while his wife had been a powerful wizard—the Nathalan men take up the sword and dabble in spells, while the women take up the spell and only occasionally dabble in the sword. To Lord Nathalan's mind, all the power and achievements of his wizard girls wouldn't make up for his eldest son's failings on the battlefield. Instead, the pressure to redeem the family honor fell upon Yldar—and a weaker, less worthy set of shoulders he could hardly have selected.

Lord Nathalan tried to apprentice Yldar to the most powerful bladesingers on Evermeet, but he was met with rejection by every one. In part, this was due to Lord Nathalan's own pride (in his skills, his heritage, and his connection to the Queen, making him [in his mind] related to Corellon Larethian himself), but in part it was because Yldar lacked the focus and discipline of mind and character to be a competent spellcaster or a warrior of passing skill. Lord Nathalan grew more and more frustrated with his son and took to abusing Yldar verbally and emotionally about his failings as a son and heir. A sensitive lad, Yldar took these attacks to heart but, instead of rising to the occasion, he grew to resent his father and his heritage. He retreated into himself, growing—if anything—more self-centered and unambitious. Yldar had envisioned a grand future for himself, as a king, a high mage, or a great bladesinger, but he lacked the focus and discipline to make it so. Though he was always a clever boy, he had little enough common sense, and expected success to come to him, rather than having to make it so.

Cythara, following in her sister Rhiannen's footsteps, applied with the high mages of Evermeet to enter training. Alas, due in no small part to Lord Nathalan's indifference to his second daughter and his tendency to boast and insult his "lessers" in public (offending a number of important high mages with his arrogance), she was rejected. The council of mages went so far as to tell Cyth, in no uncertain terms, that her frailty of body meant that she would amount to nothing more than a mediocre witch, peddling scrolls and potions. Grief-stricken, Cyth confronted her neglectful father, but he berated her and even struck her when she would not leave him be. She wept for a tenday or more, and when she did not perish of grief, she came to be filled with a dark coldness toward the world that had spurned her.

When she saw, around 1340, that her brother was suffering in the same way that she did—directionless, aimless, and indifferent—she hatched a plan with him to flee Evermeet and redeem the family honor on mainland Faerûn. Specifically, they would hunt down and recover elven artifacts from the unworthy humans (who Cyth saw as little better than orcs), in order to prove their worth to the masters who had snubbed them. At first Yldar refused to leave his comfortable home, but he had a harsh awakening awaiting him when he came of age in the early 1350s—no master on Evermeet would take the spoiled lordling from House Nathalan, a house seemingly doomed to diaspora and dishonor.

In 1353, at the age of 100, Yldar had a falling out with his father, and he and Cythara (always the one to watch over her foolish little brother) fled the island nation to become treasure hunters on mainland Faerun. If Yldar could not prove himself worthy on the basis of his blood, he would do it by deed. Presented with a quest—a single, focused purpose for the first time in his life—Yldar quickly made their quest entirely about him and his need to prove himself. Cythara had less time than she had hoped for her studies, and their adventurous lifestyle took a terrible toll on her weak constitution. She very quickly grew to regret having proposed their quest. She escaped one claustrophobic situation only to find another, on the open road with her obsessive brother. Cythara always felt Yldar was stifling her, keeping her back from her wizardly pursuits, but she hadn't the heart to tell him—after all, so much of his life and self-worth was invested in both the quest, and in her. While the siblings made a fine (if uncomfortable and rarely successful) team, Yldar's ego and obsession with proving himself led to their downfall. Ironically, Yldar is much like his father when it comes to pride.

The tension between the siblings built and built toward a breaking point. In 1362, when they came to the human city of Elversult seeking the legendary *Ynloeth's bracer*[PG] (a relic of one of the greatest Coronals of the Crown Wars of old), they met a scoundrel named Fox-at-Twilight (CN female moon elf rogue 3/swashbuckler 2/uncanny trickster[CS] 3/shadowdancer 4/divine seeker[PG] 4), with whom Yldar was immediately smitten. Cythara, feeling betrayed and neglected, grew angry and began to admire the arcane prowess of their foes: a cult of the demon lord Graz'zt called the Deep Coven. When an attempt to recover the Bracer from the Coven's haunts went wrong, Cythara remained behind and—instead of becoming a victim—turned herself willingly to the service of Graz'zt in exchange for great, evil power. Yldar and Cythara broke with one another then. Yldar returned Ynloeth's Bracer to Evermeet, then returned to the mainland, swearing to follow his sister to the ends of Faerûn, and the end of time if necessary.

Yldar eventually became a sort of bladesinger—self-taught, but not formally recognized by any of his fellow elves. This is not because the elves would refuse to acknowledge him, but simply because he cares nothing for their respect. He is obsessed now with his quest to find and redeem his sister. He realizes that his life was misguided before: that he sought self-aggrandizement for the sake of his pride. Now, for the sake of loyalty to his family and love for Cythara, he pursues the agents

of the demon lord Graz'zt wherever they might emerge in Faerun. In truth, though, it has become just another obsession to him, though one that is more insidious than his others, as it appears selfless.

Notable Allies and Enemies

Yldar has a complex relationship with his sister Cythara (see above), who he alternately loves for the blood they share, and hates for choosing the dark path. Coupled with this is his refusal to accept that Cythara chose to serve Graz'zt of her own free will—he stubbornly believes it was his fault, and thus it is his responsibility to save her. These days, he tracks the servants of Graz'zt like a hound, seeking them out, resorting to harsh tactics when necessary. It is unclear how much of his quest is for love of Cythara, how much is for hate, and how much is for his own pride and fervent need for a purpose in life. One thing, though, is clear: he cannot simply let Cythara go.

For all that, he is a loner by nature and cares little for romance, Yldar often finds himself surrounded by beautiful women, whose affections often go unrequited or only superficially realized. He has a "needy" personality, and without his sister to cling to, he naturally motivates companions to take care of him. It is not that he is irresponsible, but rather that he believes most responsibilities pale in comparison to his quest to save Cythara.

Since 1362, Yldar has occasionally sought out and dallied with Twilight (the woman of his dreams), but Twilight's general frustrations with her own race (and her unwavering love of teasing and infuriating Yldar, who she sees as a stuffy and witless plaything) have kept their relationship from blossoming beyond the occasional dalliance. They have not reunited in some time, and were Twilight to meet him now, she might even be impressed by the man he has become. In truth, though, Twilight sees full well Yldar's unshakable pride and single-minded devotion to "righting" his life and forcibly reforming his sister, so that may have factored into her decision to abandon him.

Also, Yldar has often fought beside the fiery Sylenne Atria (CG female half-drow fighter 2/cleric [Eillistrae] 3/sword dancer[FP] 10), a fellow adventurer and duelist with whom he is fairly evenly matched. He may be faster and better, but she has the advantage of absolute faith and divine power to bolster her abilities. The two have never been anything more than allies and friends for a number of reasons, among which is that both are too invested in their respective quests: Yldar's to save his sister from herself, Syl's to save her father's people from themselves.

Yldar has one true friend, even if he does not truly realize it—a moon elf woman who was his childhood sweetheart, who has now grown to become a priestess. Alais Telynna (NG female moon elf cleric [Sehanine Moonbow] 11) followed Yldar to Faerun in 1365 and has been attempting to persuade him of the futility of his quest for the last decade. Alais will never force her will on Yldar, and knows how important his quest is to him, but she has often offered her healing and support to him when he needs it most. Alais bitterly envies and resents Yldar's relationship with Twilight, to whom she bears some small resemblance (both being very lovely and having blue-black hair).

Strategies and Tactics

Yldar has become a defensive and canny, finesse fighter. He makes full use of his high armor class and Combat Expertise feat to enhance his defensive skills. When possible, he always enters combat fully prepared with defensive spells active and taking a full penalty on attacks to boost his AC, then gradually shifts to the appropriate level of offense as he weighs an opponent's skill and ability. He particularly targets spellcasters and has trained himself specially to counter their attacks.

Yldar is not a stupid foe, keeping his emotions tightly controlled. If, however, he comes face to face with his sister, he will—like as not—shift his style to total offense, hacking down her defenders heedlessly to get at her.

BLADESONG DUSKBLADE[PH2] Substitution Levels

Elves take to the duskblade class like a hawk to the sky. The class seamlessly combines their inclination for swordplay with magic—much like Corellon Larethian himself. In ages past, many elves took up the heavy armor and often more brutal style of the Nael'kerym[CCh]. More, however, pursued the duskblade class to master the elven martial art of the bladesong.

The bladesong emphasizes beauty and economy of movement over destruction and sheer power. (Most bladesong duskblades take the Combat Expertise feat early in their careers.) The movement of these elves makes them appear as if they are dancing when the fight. Nevertheless, the elven bladesong is deceptively dangerous, for all its apparent grace. The bladesong is so named for the whistling of the blade as it slices through the air and the haunting, wordless tune many of its practitioners appear to sing as they fight (when in truth, they are reciting the arcane syllables of the magic they so seamlessly weave into their swordplay). The most elite duskblades, those who have made their study of the bladesong their life's focus, are often known as bladesingers. While they often work alone discovering new forms within the bladesong, they will sometimes take another under their wing to train for a time. The concept of anything as formalized as a bladesinger school is an absurd notion to these masters of the bladesong. Nevertheless, many bladesingers do belong to loosely-organized fraternal societies known as guilds.

(Note: This represents an alternate path to the role of "bladesinger." It is perfectly acceptable for elves to come from many different class backgrounds, whether as single-classed duskblades or multi-classed adherents of the bladesinger prestige class presented in *Complete Warrior*.)

Hit Die: d8

Requirements
To take a bladesong duskblade substitution level, a character must be an elf about to take his 1st, 4th, or 7th level of duskblade.

Class Skills
Bladesong duskblades are often capable of working their way through the battlefield with ease, but spend less time in study than their fellow duskblades.

Bladesong duskblade substitution levels have the class skills of the standard duskblade class, minus Craft, Decipher Script, and all Knowledge skills except Knowledge (arcana), plus Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Perform (dance) (Cha), Perform (sing) (Cha), and Tumble (Dex). Once an elf takes a bladesong duskblade substitution level, these changes apply to each subsequent duskblade level.

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier (or four times this number as a 1st-level character).

Class Features
All the following are class features of the bladesong duskblade racial substitution levels.

Bladesinger Spells: A bladesong duskblade adds the following spells to his duskblade spell list (see page 24 of *Player's Handbook II*): 0—*electric jolt*[SC], *resistance*; 1st—*mage armor, shield*; 2nd—*bladesong*[Sp:B] (see below), *blur, burning sword*[SC], *heroism, mirror image, protection from arrows, swift haste*[SC]; 3rd—*blink, displacement, greater mage armor*[SC]; 4th—*haste, improved invisibility, stoneskin*; 5th—*greater blink*[SC].

A bladesong duskblades removes all necromancy and fear spells from his duskblades spell list, including: 0—*disrupt undead, touch of fatigue*; 1st—*blade of blood, cause fear, chill touch, ray of enfeeblement*; 2—*ghoul touch*; 3—*doom scarabs, ray of exhaustion, vampiric touch*; 4—*enervation, phantasmal killer*; 5—*waves of fatigue*.

Bladesong Style (Ex): When wielding a longsword, rapier, elven lightblade[RW], or elven thinblade[RW] in one hand (and nothing in the other), a bladesong duskblade gains a dodge bonus to Armor class equal to his class level, up to a maximum of his Intelligence bonus. If the elf wears medium or heavy armor, he loses all benefits of the bladesong style.

This substitution feature replaces the standard duskblade's proficiency with medium armor, heavy armor, and shields (as well as armored mage benefits with light shields).

Reflexive Grace (Ex): A bladesong duskblade uses the good base save bonus progression for Reflex save and poor base save bonus progression for Fortitude save. This change applies to every duskblade level the elf takes thereafter. (In effect, switch the Fortitude Save and Reflex Save bonuses listed at any and all duskblade levels the character takes.)

Improved Bladesong Style (Ex): When wielding a longsword, rapier, elven lightblade[RW], or elven thinblade[RW] in one hand (and nothing in the other), a bladesong duskblade can take 10 when making a Concentration check to cast defensively.

This substitution feature replaces the standard duskblade's armored mage (medium) class feature.

Bladesong Flurry (Ex): When a bladesong duskblade makes a full attack with a longsword, rapier, elven lightblade[RW], or elven thinblade[RW] in one hand (and nothing in the other), he can make one extra attack a round at his highest base attack bonus, but this attack and each other attack made that round take a -2 penalty. This penalty applies for 1 round, so it also affects attacks of opportunity the duskblade might make before his next action.

This substitution feature replaces the standard swashbuckler's armored mage (heavy shield) class feature.

Level	Fort	Ref	Special
1	+0	+2	Armored attunement, bladesinger spells, bladesong style, armored mage (light), reflexive grace
4	+1	+4	Improved bladesong style
7	+2	+5	Bladesong flurry

New Spell
Bladesong[Sp:B]
Transmutation
Level: Bard 2, bladesong duskblade 2, sorcerer/wizard 2
Components: V, S, F
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Targets: Weapon touched
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless, object)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless, object)

As you intone the final words of the spell, your blade begins to hum—the music quickly builds to a hymn of sharp, deadly beauty.

Bladesong makes a bladed weapon emit magical music in combat. Any round that the weapon is used in melee combat, this spell allows the wielder to make a single, additional touch attack with the sword as a free action. The attack uses the wielder's normal attack bonus with that weapon but inflicts no damage. Instead, anyone successfully touched by the weapon in this way is dazed for one round. Dazed characters cannot take actions but can defend themselves normally.

Focus: The weapon.

Credit: Bladesong was written by Monte Cook and first appeared on the Wizards of the Coast website (http://www.wizards.com/dnd/article.asp?x=dnd/sb/sb20010126a). The description has been added.

ELVEN SWASHBUCKLER[CW] Substitution Levels

Elven swashbucklers are the epitome of grace and as comfortable with a longsword as a rapier.

Hit Die: d8

Requirements

To take an elven swashbuckler substitution level, a character must be an elf about to take her 1st, 3rd, or 6th level of swashbuckler.

Class Skills

Elven swashbucklers often develop their natural observation abilities to better avoid surprise. Elven swashbuckler substitution levels have the class skills of the standard swashbuckler class, plus Listen (Wis) and Spot (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier (or four times this number as a beginning character).

Class Features

All the following are class features of the elven swashbuckler racial substitution levels.

Elven Weapon Finesse (Ex): An elven swashbuckler gains Weapon Finesse as a bonus feat at 1st level even if he does not qualify for the feat. In addition, an elven swashbuckler may apply the feat's benefits with a longsword.

This substitution feature replaces the standard swashbuckler's Weapon Finesse class feature.

Reflexive Grace (Ex): An elven swashbuckler uses the good base save bonus progression for Reflex save and poor base save bonus progression for Fortitude save. This change applies to every swashbuckler level the elf takes thereafter. (In effect, switch the Fortitude Save and Reflex Save bonuses listed at any and all swashbuckler levels the character takes.)

Combat Expertise (Ex): An elven swashbuckler gains Combat Expertise as a bonus feat at 2nd level even if he does not qualify for the feat.

This substitution feature replaces the standard swashbuckler's grace class feature at 2nd, 11th, and 20th levels.

Acrobatic Trickster (Ex): An elven swashbuckler gains a bonus movement skill trick for which he meets the prerequisites. This bonus trick does not cost skill points and does not count against his maximum number of skill tricks available. See page 82 of *Complete Scoundrel* for details on movement skill tricks.

Level	Fort	Ref	Special
1	+0	+2	Elven weapon finesse, reflexive grace
2	+0	+3	Combat Expertise
6	+2	+5	Acrobatic trickster