



A HISTORY OF ASHES

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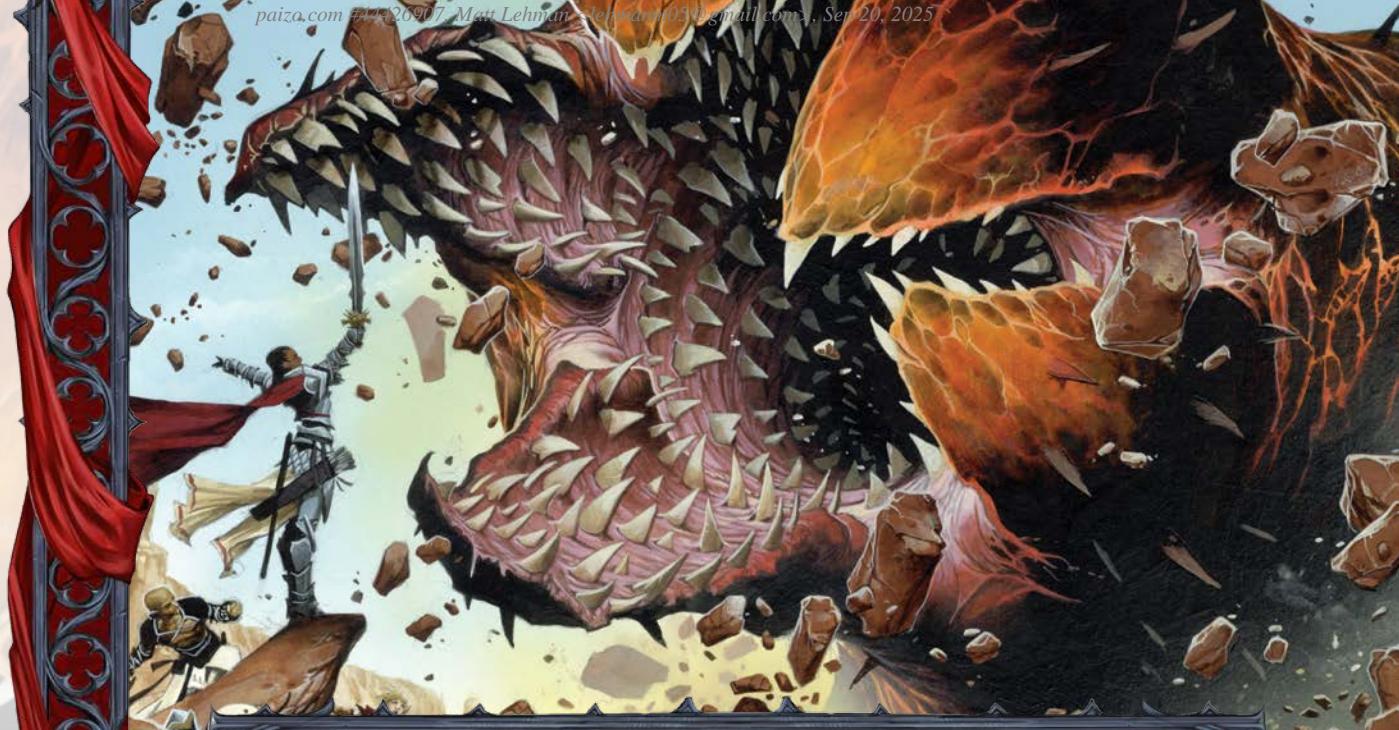


TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER BACKGROUND</u>	192
<u>PART 1: THE ROAD NORTH</u>	194
<u>PART 2: TRIALS OF RESPECT</u>	200
<u>PART 3: MANTIS AND MAIDEN</u>	234
<u>CHAPTER CONCLUSION</u>	254

MAPS

<u>THE ACROPOLIS OF THE THRALLKEEPERS</u>	213
<u>HOUSE OF THE MOON</u>	220
<u>CINDERMAW'S HUNTING GROUNDS</u>	220
<u>FLAMEFORD</u>	227
<u>DEATHHEAD VAULT</u>	237



CHAPTER BACKGROUND

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

The PCs should begin Chapter 4 at 10th level, and should be very close to reaching 11th level.

9

The PCs should reach 11th level early in the chapter, preferably before they begin undertaking any of the quests to gain the Shoanti's respect.

10

The PCs should reach 12th level once they have completed most of the quests, and should not assault Deathhead Vault until reaching 12th level.

The PCs should reach 13th level by the end of the chapter.

Several hundred years ago, a brutal warlord of Zon-Kuthon named Kazavon conquered much of the Hold of Belkzen. His violent expansion and assaults against the neighboring countries of Ustalav and Lastwall quickly became far deadlier and horrific than the petty skirmishes against orcs those nations' defenders expected. From his castle, Scarwall, Kazavon threatened to engulf all who dared rise against him. His tactical brilliance, combined with his savage armies of orcs and barbarians, continuously broke every army Lastwall and Ustalav could throw against him. With none able to withstand his power, it seemed as if his bloody and cruel reign would last forever.

Kazavon's defeat occurred not on the field of battle, but in his own fortress. There, a secret cabal of heroes and mercenaries from the Esoteric Order of the Palatine Eye managed to do what armies could not. Led by a hero of Lastwall named Mandraivus, these heroes infiltrated Scarwall. The atrocities they found there tested them to their limits, and when they reached Kazavon, a terrific



battle took place. During this battle, they stripped away Kazavon's human disguise, revealing the champion of Zon-Kuthon to be a blue dragon. In the end, Mandraivus laid Kazavon low with his legendary weapon, a magical bastard sword named *Serithtial* (see page 435). Yet even in death, Kazavon's body shuddered and gasped. Fire and acid destroyed much of the dragon's corpse, yet seven fragments proved impossible to destroy. These grisly relics were so suffused with evil and malignancy they refused to burn or melt—even as the heroes watched, the bones twitched and writhed as they tried to return to life.

Mandraivus ordered his surviving comrades to each take one of these seven relics out into the world and go into hiding. None would know where the other members went, least of all their leader, who would remain in Scarwall with *Serithtial* to guard against it ever being used by Kazavon or his minions again.

One of the heroes Mandraivus called to join his cabal was a powerful Shoanti shaman. When the surviving members of the band each took a piece of the dragon, this shaman chose the Kazavon's fangs as his responsibility. He returned to his homeland in Varisia, opting to hide the relic in an ancient Thassilonian monument on the shore of his people's ancestral lands. He spent the rest of his life guarding the monument, seeking to ensure that nothing dared enter the hidden chambers within, and before he died, he passed the task down to his son. And so, for hundreds of years, the descendants of this now-forgotten Shoanti shaman guarded and protected the fangs of Kazavon from discovery. Eventually, they forgot what exactly it was they guarded, knowing only that they were bound by tradition and honor to continue the task.

When Cheliax founded Korvosa and warred with the Shoanti, driving them north into the Cinderlands, many of the guardians of Kazavon's fangs perished. A few Shoanti shamans survived the decades of war, and watched with fear from afar as the invaders built a castle atop the hidden chambers. Yet as the years wore on, the world didn't end, and the Shoanti began to hope that the evil threat inside the pyramid was dormant. Recently, Shoanti ambassadors have attempted to entreat Korvosa for peace, but these reconciliations are little more than an excuse to get the line of guardian shamans nearer to the seat of their traditional charge, so they can watch and be on hand should the unthinkable occur.

But the unthinkable has already happened, and the initial change went all but unnoticed, overshadowed as it was by riots and disease. When Queen Ileosa discovered Kazavon's fangs, the ancient warlord's spirit infused her with incredible power. The scenario the ancient shamans feared has come to pass, with no guardians in place to notice or prevent it. Now, sensing weakness in the city as it reels from riots and plague and staggers

under the despotic rule of a new tyrant, the Shoanti are preparing for war. By driving out the invaders, they hope to return to their traditional role of guardians over the ancient evil—not yet knowing that the time for guarding is long gone. If they are allowed to march on Korvosa, the resulting slaughter on both sides of the conflict will surely be a crowning glory for Queen Ileosa and her newfound patron Kazavon.

NPC DEVELOPMENTS

Use the following notes to expand the roles of NPCs encountered in the previous chapter as you see fit if the PCs seek them out during "A History of Ashes."

Amin Jalento: If the PCs escorted Amin out of Old Korvosa, he is now among the growing group of Cressida's rebels hiding in the Gray District, and the PCs can perhaps meet him again during Part 3 of this chapter. If the PCs didn't escort him out and left him to his own devices, Amin is likely now dead, the victim of a band of murderous chokers or bandits.

Pilts Swastel: If Pilts still lives, he continues to rule Old Korvosa as long as the city remains under martial law. The Gray Maidens expend very little effort to bring peace to Old Korvosa, and if the PCs have crippled the Arkonas, Pilts sees that as an opportunity to strengthen his hold on the district. Agents of the Cerulean Society approach him during this adventure in an attempt to secure his servitude but Pilts has none of it and puts the thieves to a game of blood pig—these thieves aren't nearly as successful at the game as the PCs likely were, and do not survive the ordeal. When word of their execution via the Tall Knife gets back to Boule, the guildmaster of the Cerulean Society is livid and he may well ask the PCs to return to Old Korvosa to finish the job by taking out Pilts. Whether Pilts emerges to be the most powerful crime lord of Old Korvosa after the events of Curse of the Crimson Throne play out is left to you to determine, but unless the PCs take direct action, the Emperor of Old Korvosa isn't going anywhere.

Salvator Scream: Salvator's fate depends on if he was escorted out of Old Korvosa by the PCs (or perhaps Laori). If the PCs left the artist with Pilts, he won't last long in Old Korvosa. Perhaps emboldened by the PCs' actions or maybe just fed up with his lot in life, Salvator makes a foolish attempt to escape from under Pilts's thumb. How he dies in this attempt is left to you to determine—he might be murdered (and eaten) by the choker brutes, or he could well simply end up in the Tall Knife, the latest of Pilts's victims. On the other hand, if the PCs do engineer Salvator's escape from Old Korvosa, he is likely contacted by Laori Vaus before long. Soon thereafter, agents of the Brotherhood of Bones whisk him away to Nidal, where the group hopes to rekindle his muse.

PART 1

THE ROAD NORTH

The PCs have done much to protect the citizens of Korvosa and oppose the plots and machinations of the queen, but with martial law descending upon the city, they may not feel like they have made strides against Ileosa. This begins to change as the PCs learn more of the truth behind the queen's growing power, and finally have a chance to stand against her allies and agents directly. The most immediate goal now lies outside of Korvosa, in the Cinderlands to the north.

As this chapter begins, the assumption is that the PCs are accompanying Vencarlo Orisini and Neolandus Kaleopolis as they flee from the city of Korvosa, bound for the town of Harse and Orisini's allies there. If the PCs chose instead to send Vencarlo and Neolandus up to Harse alone while they remain in Korvosa, you can have Cressida Kroft urge the PCs to head on up to Harse to speak to the two men and learn what they know about Ileosa. If the PCs are nervous about leaving Korvosa behind, Cressida does her best to assuage their fears by pointing out that plenty of good folk remain to handle things in the PCs' absence; the best thing the PCs can do at this point is to head out to find an actual solution to the problem of Queen Ileosa. While the Korvosan Guard's resources are running thin, Cressida can supply the PCs with a few magic items that will help them stay in contact with her during their trip out of town: a *wand of sending* with 10 charges and two *scrolls of dream*. If no PC can use these items, she promises to have spellcasting allies (Bishop d'Bear of the church of Pharamsa) cast *sending* every few days to contact the PCs. Cressida can also supply the PCs with four *scrolls of teleport* (CL 12th) for emergency trips back to Korvosa if the PCs fear that they'll end up being out of the city for long. The first two parts of this chapter and all of the next chapter do take place outside of Korvosa's walls, but if the PCs wish to travel back to the city now and then to resupply or check in, that's fine!

Near the end of or immediately after the second part of this chapter, the PCs are called back to Korvosa to strike a blow against Ileosa's forces (see Part 3 on page 234).

THE FOURTH HARROWING

The best time to have Zellara perform her fourth harrowing (and thus generate the PCs' available Harrow Points for this chapter) is at some point during the PCs' journey from Korvosa to Harse. Whether or not this harrowing takes place where Vencarlo and Neolandus can witness it is up to you, but certainly neither man is overly shocked to find out the PCs have supernatural aid!

When this harrowing occurs, cards that come up representing the past should symbolize the early days of Korvosa's founding and the fact the Shoanti dwelt there before the place was colonized by the Chelaxians. Cards representing the present should be metaphors for the PCs now being fugitives or rebels; you can even draw parallels between the PCs' forced flight from Korvosa and the Shoanti's expulsion centuries ago, emphasizing that by following in the footsteps of those Shoanti and heading up to the Cinderlands, the route to resolution should be clear. Cards representing the future should paint Korvosa as a dangerous place, but one with elements that are ready to be toppled. You can also foreshadow certain events in this adventure, especially the encounter with Cinderjaw, the fight at the Moon Temple, the trials on Bolt Rock, and the assault on Deathhead Vault. Use these cards to imply to the PCs that strength will be important in their immediate future, but that they are not yet strong enough to face Queen Ileosa herself.

See Appendix 3 on page 416 for further information on how to perform a harrowing.

BLACKBIRD RANCH

A short 5-minute ride north from Harse along the Sarwin River, a moderately sized horse ranch sits comfortably in the cleft of two low hills topped with small copses of fir trees. This is Blackbird Ranch, owned by a barrel-chested man named Jasan Adriel. Living here with his wife, three sons, and two daughters, Jasan is one of the two surviving members of an adventuring party that made a small fortune exploring the Storval Rise and the Mindspin Mountains. That adventuring party was known as the Blackbirds, and the only other surviving member is Vencarlo Orisini.

Jasan and Vencarlo remained good friends after the Blackbirds broke up, periodically exchanging correspondence using a code they'd developed in their adventuring days, more out of novelty at first than any real desire to obscure their connection. But as their letters grew increasingly political and critical of Korvosa's



government, they grew more clandestine and conscious of keeping their code. The system paid off recently, for there are no obvious written records of Vencarlo and Jasan's friendship—no links agents of the queen could use to track down Jasan and use him against Vencarlo. So when Orisini needed a safe place for Trinia to hide, he wrote Jasan a brief coded letter and got an even briefer reply: "Yes."

When the PCs arrive at Blackbird Ranch with Neolandus and Vencarlo, Jasan greets them as if they were long-lost family members. Trinia Sabor is present as well. She has had her own adventures recently and is higher level than the last time the PCs saw her, and she's eager to reunite with the PCs and perhaps reward them a bit more with some new magic she's discovered (see her NPC entry on page 460 for more details).

Jasan invites everyone to join his family for dinner, after which he leads his guests into his basement so they can talk frankly without worrying his family. When Vencarlo introduces Neolandus by name, Jasan's eyes widen and he whistles in admiration at the audacity of his home becoming the refuge of Korvosa's seneschal.

Blackbird Ranch is a large place, but not large enough to accommodate a party of adventurers for long. Worse is the unspoken worry on Vencarlo's and Neolandus's minds—they are known fugitives, and Queen Ileosa will spare little expense in tracking them down. If the PCs recovered his Blackjack gear, Vencarlo requests the *amulet of proof against detection and location*, intending to have Neolandus wear it to help hide him.

During a late-night meeting in Jasan's basement, Neolandus outlines everything he knows (see The Kazavon Situation below). If Queen Ileosa is to be defeated, someone has to travel into the Cinderlands and contact the Shoanti to find out what they know of Kazavon's fangs, and how best to defeat the ancient evil. If the PCs don't suggest it themselves, Vencarlo points out that keeping Neolandus safe is important. He volunteers to stay with the seneschal to help Jasan keep things under wraps until the time to strike at Ileosa is nigh, then bluntly (but with a twinkle in his eye) asks the PCs if they're ready to leave for the Cinderlands in the morning.

THE KAZAVON SITUATION

Everything that Neolandus knows about Kazavon is summarized below.

- When Neolandus confronted Queen Ileosa about King Eodred II's death, her response was to send Red Mantis assassins after him—proof enough of guilt

to Neolandus. Through a combination of luck and knowledge of the castle's layout, Neolandus escaped and went into hiding with his friend Salvator Scream in Old Korvosa.

- After he recovered from the attack but before Salvator handed him over to the Arkonas, Neolandus spent much of his time conducting clandestine interviews, poring through records in Endrin Academy, and piecing together rumors to try to determine what caused Queen Ileosa's sudden personality change from a petulant queen to a scheming tyrant.

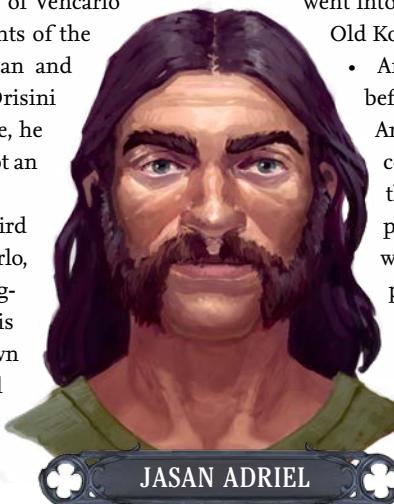
Neolandus knew that Queen Ileosa had been "borrowing" the treasury key to look through Korvosa's treasures. Neolandus was also familiar with several old and obscure legends about the rooms below Castle Korvosa—

chambers, it was whispered, used to hide something of great power or terrible evil. He's heard mention of something called "Midnight's Teeth," believed to be a sacred relic of great import to the Shoanti. Circumstantial evidence indicates that the Shoanti kept these teeth somewhere inside the pyramid that now serves as Castle Korvosa's foundation.

- Further research uncovered a chilling old legend. Several hundred years ago, a blue dragon agent of Zon-Kuthon named Kazavon brought the orcs of the Hold of Belkzen to their knees before attacking Ustalav and Lastwall, until he was finally defeated and his remains scattered. According to the legend, some of his body parts, including his fangs, contained fragments of the dragon's essence.
- Neolandus suspects that Midnight's Teeth and Kazavon's fangs are one and the same. The description of the queen's new crown sounds to Neolandus as if she now wears the teeth on her brow, the implications of which trouble him greatly.
- Hard facts about Midnight's Teeth remain sparse, since Korvosa's founders didn't think it important to preserve much in the way of Shoanti culture. Yet the Shoanti have very strong oral traditions, and if anyone knows the truth behind Midnight's Teeth, that truth is doubtless hidden among their historians up in the Cinderlands.

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

The next step should be clear: the PCs must travel to the Cinderlands and establish a rapport with Shoanti historians. Unfortunately, the Shoanti have long distrusted Korvosa, and many of them will doubtless view the PCs as enemies. However, Neolandus has advice on where to



start: the Skoan-Quah, the Tribe of the Skull. This tribe has been the most open to talks of peace with Korvosa, and Neolandus recalls one old shaman in particular as being level-headed and friendly, a man named Thousand Bones. One of the last things Neolandus tried before the Arkonas got hold of him was to arrange a midnight meeting with the old shaman, but by that time Thousand Bones had abandoned Korvosa and returned to the Cinderlands, to a place known as the Kallow Mounds.

The PCs encountered Thousand Bones themselves near the end of “Edge of Anarchy,” and assuming they returned the body of his grandson Gaekhen to the Shoanti, their relationship with the old shaman should remain strong. Neolandus believes the best course of action now is for someone to travel to this tribe, find Thousand Bones, and learn from him any information about what Midnight’s Teeth actually were—and see if the Shoanti know how to fight against a power that grants Queen Ileosa the ability to survive a mortal wound.

When it comes time for the PCs to leave, Vencarlo and Neolandus (and Trinia, unless the PCs would rather have her accompany them) see them off, wishing them luck and praying for their safety. Jasan can provide them with a few weeks’ worth of trail rations and enough light warhorses for them all (including a few pack horses if they need them) if they wish to ride. The actual journey north to the Cinderlands should pass relatively quickly. The easiest way to navigate the towering cliffs that separate Varisia from the Cinderlands is to pass through the anarchic city of Kaer Maga. Kaer Maga is fully detailed in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: City of Strangers*, but no events in this chapter take place there. Nonetheless, the City of Strangers can be an excellent place to sell magic items, buy gear, and otherwise resupply and prepare, especially since Korvosa is under martial law and returning to that city might not be immediately advisable. Apart from Kaer Maga, there aren’t many easy land routes available. Magic such as flight and teleportation allows for even swifter routes up and over the cliff to the lands above. Once the PCs surmount the Storval Rise and enter the Cinderlands themselves, the peril increases. Page 414 in Appendix 2 gives additional details on this rugged, hostile region, including a map on page 412 that shows the primary locations featured in this chapter. The random encounter table provided on page 464 presents several possible additional encounters the PCs can have as they travel through this perilous land.

THE SHOANTI

There are three tribes of Shoanti dwelling in the Cinderlands, each of which has distinct traditions and unique lifestyles.

Lyrune-Quah (Clan of the Moon): The Lyrune-Quah are nomadic worshipers of Desna. A large group of

Lyrune-Quah members are visiting an ancient shrine to Desna called the House of the Moon, but their traditional campsite has become the lair of a dangerous local predator.

Sklar-Quah (Clan of the Sun): The largest and most warlike of the Cinderlands Shoanti tribes, Sklar-Quah members endure dangerous trials before they become warriors. The only shamans who retain any lore about Kazavon’s fangs are Sklar-Quah shamans.

Skoan-Quah (Clan of the Skull): The Skoan-Quah dwell in the easternmost regions of the Cinderlands. Many of their shamans, including Thousand Bones, have worked with Korvosa to try to build peace between their peoples; as a result the Skoan-Quah have been increasingly shunned by the other Shoanti. Yet since the Shoanti believe that the Skoan-Quah have the closest connection to the land of the dead and guard Shoanti ancestors from evil spirits, the other clans have grudgingly refrained from truly ostracizing the tribe.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF BONES

The Brotherhood of Bones is a secret society of Kuthites from across Avistan, fanatics who seek a singular goal: gathering Kazavon’s relics so that they can make sure the ancient warlord is never reborn. Its existence hidden from other worshipers even in the nation of Nidal, the Brotherhood of Bones has long suspected that one of these relics was located in Varisia. With Kazavon’s recent awakening in Korvosa, the closest Brotherhood agent, Laori Vaus, came to investigate the signs and portents.

Taking Laori’s words under advisement, the Brotherhood’s leadership elected to send one of their shadowcounts (a sort of ambassador between the Brotherhood and the kytons who serve Zon-Kuthon) to aid Laori. Shadowcount Sial arrives with his kyton eidolon in the region as this chapter begins, meeting Laori Vaus in Kaer Maga, where the two of them can research without risking attracting Queen Ileosa’s attention. They also speak of how they intend to involve the PCs and try to determine how much aid the PCs can be to the Brotherhood in wrestling Kazavon’s fangs away from Queen Ileosa when the time comes. Laori seethes at the Brotherhood’s decision to send help, especially when she learns that the help is Shadowcount Sial (a man with whom she’s had arguments in the past). For his part, Sial considers Laori an immature child and hopes to salvage what he can from the situation; where Laori may value the PCs’ input, Sial considers her contact with nonbelievers (and worse, nonmembers of the Brotherhood) to have put their entire society at risk of exposure.

The two remain in Kaer Maga for the bulk of this chapter, watching from afar via scrying as the PCs progress, although being forced to learn this information



A
HISTORY
OF ASHES

CHAPTER
BACKGROUND

PART 1:
THE ROAD
NORTH

PART 2:
TRIALS OF
RESPECT

PART 3:
MANTIS AND
MAIDEN

CHAPTER
CONCLUSION

secondhand from Laori's spells grates on Sial's nerves. They won't approach the PCs in person until the heroes near Scarwall in Chapter 5. In the meantime, feel free to have the PC you've chosen as Laori's scrying target to periodically have an opportunity to notice the scrying.

If the PCs become concerned about it and get too distracted, Laori uses a charge from her *wand of sending* to contact them and apologize for spying, saying she was curious what they were up to. Whether or not this leads to an early contact between the Brotherhood and the PCs is up to you.

THE RED MANTIS

As Queen Ileosa becomes more concerned about the PCs, she begins to push harder for her Red Mantis allies to handle these rebellious upstarts before they can do her plans significant harm. At this time, she adjusts her standing orders with the assassin group. While she still hopes to see Neolandus assassinated, she's moved so far beyond the city charter at this point that the seneschal isn't much of a legitimate political threat to her anymore. The PCs, on the other hand, are a growing concern, and so she tasks Cinnabar, the current leader of the Red Mantis in the region, with taking out the PCs.

Working from the Mantis's secret hideout in Korvosa, Cinnabar takes several days to organize her assassins and refocus their pursuit from Neolandus to the PCs. Once she learns the PCs are traveling into the Cinderlands, she engages the services of a local legend: a Shoanti-hunting ranger known as the Cinderlander. Thanks to his intimate knowledge of the region, Cinnabar's agents can strike multiple times against the PCs during Part 2—two such attempts are detailed in the text, but you can have more assassination attempts occur. Cinnabar never leaves Korvosa, communicating with the assassins she sends into the field via *sending* cast by her cleric ally Koriantu, but the PCs will have a chance to confront her in Part 3.

THE ASHWING GARGOYLES

Numerous tribes of monstrous humanoids and other savage creatures dwell in the Cinderlands. While their numbers don't come close to those represented by the Shoanti, they are individually more dangerous and deadly than the average human. One such tribe of creatures that has long dwelt in the Cinderlands (and been in conflict with all three of the local Shoanti quahs) is the gargoyle

of the Ashwing tribe. These gargoyles are all advanced specimens of their kind. They appear more craggy and weathered than those of their ilk who dwell in more civilized environs, so that when they use their freeze ability they look more like eroded statues or sinister slabs of rock.

When the Red Mantis turns to the Cinderlands, the Ashwings make excellent allies, and Cinnabar swiftly negotiates a truce with the gargoyles (using a large payment of gold requisitioned from Mediogalti Island). The gargoyles accompany the Red Mantis when they eventually attack the Shoanti settlement of Flameford, but at your discretion, the PCs could encounter a group of these gargoyles well before then.

In any event, statistics for these powerful and unusual gargoyles are presented in full below.



CINNABAR

ASHWING GARGOYLE

CR 5

XP 1,600

Advanced gargoyle (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 288, 137)
CE Medium monstrous humanoid (earth)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 16 (+4 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 52 (5d10+25)

Fort +6, **Ref** +8, **Will** +6

DR 10/magic

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 60 ft. (average)

Melee bite +9 (1d4+4), 2 claws +9 (1d6+4), gore +9 (1d4+4)

TACTICS

During Combat Ashwing gargoyles hate humans—and among them, hate Shoanti the most. They favor these targets in combat over all others, and often take advantage of Flyby Attack to swoop in and bite at enemies while preventing full attacks in retaliation.

Morale An Ashwing flees once reduced to fewer than 5 hp.

STATISTICS

Str 19, **Dex** 18, **Con** 20, **Int** 10, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 23

Feats Combat Reflexes, Flyby Attack, Hover

Skills Acrobatics +4, Fly +12, Perception +10, Stealth +14 (+20 in stony areas), Survival +10

Languages Common, Terran

SQ freeze

4

THE CINDERLANDER

Sklar-Quah raiders have long descended the Storval Rise in raiding bands to strike at locations like Sarwin and Abken, but these marauders also target the smaller farming thorps that can be found in the verdant farmlands between Ashwood and the Yondabakari River. After one such thorp was wiped out by Sklar-Quah raiders, the man who would become the Cinderlander abandoned his name and took up hunting Shoanti full time to seek revenge. Now notorious among the quahs of the region, the Cinderlander is referred to by the Shoanti as the “devil tshamek,” and many Shoanti believe that the Cinderlander can’t be a living man, but rather is a spirit of wrath fueled by those slain during the raids into the southern lowlands.

After years of hunting and killing Shoanti, the Cinderlander gradually achieved two cynical epiphanies—first, no matter how many Shoanti he killed in his lifetime, there would always be more; and second, that the Shoanti were already a doomed culture, gradually being crushed between the growing cities and nations to the south and west and the more brutal orcs and giants to the north and east. His righteous fury largely exhausted, the Cinderlander now hires himself out as a guide for those who seek to cross the arid region in safety, facilitating the inland travel of southerners. He secretly resents the paradox that, over the years, he has gradually become far more like the Shoanti he hunts than the Chelish heritage he thought he was defending, yet he knows little else. Grisly trophies of his victims periodically appear in the landscape (typically the heads of Shoanti hunters who sought him out). These heads are left mounted on sticks with crossbow bolts lodged in the eyes, an implied threat that those slain by the Cinderlander are robbed of the ability to find their way to their afterlife.

As the journey through the Cinderlands progresses, the PCs should come upon at least one such display: the rotting head of a Shoanti man mounted on a sharp wooden pole, the other end of which has been jammed into a cleft between two rocks so that the head hangs out much like a flag on the side of a building. Bright red crossbow bolts have been driven into each of the head’s eyes. With a successful DC 30 Knowledge (local) check, a PC recognizes that the totem was left behind by the Cinderlander; if the PCs are traveling with a Shoanti NPC, the NPC gives them this information automatically. In such a case, their Shoanti companion goes on to explain that this mysterious figure has stalked the Cinderlands for many years. He never attacks large groups but targets only lone hunters, using a “strange screaming crossbow.” There are plenty of legends and tales about the Cinderlander, who he is, where he’s from, and why he hunts the Shoanti. The Skoan-Quah believe he is the unquiet ghost of a Korvosan general who stalks these lands and will continue

to slay Shoanti until the number of Shoanti he kills equals the number of friends and family members the Shoanti took from him. The two crossbow bolts in the eyes have become the Cinderlander’s calling card, but the aged condition of the head implies that the mysterious killer is long gone from the area. Of course, nothing is further from the truth.

When Cinnabar hires the Cinderlander as a guide, the embittered loner makes more money than he has in years leading a strange and sinister group of assassins through the region. In true cynical style, the Cinderlander doesn’t care that the ones the assassins hunt are probably descendants of Chelish settlers, just like him—he tells himself that the assassins’ payments might finally net him enough funds to return to the lowlands and build a new thorp to replace the one the Shoanti destroyed so long ago. Yet in his heart, the Cinderlander knows that these rugged lands are his home now and that he has become as much a product of this harsh realm as the Shoanti he despises.

The Cinderlander fights alongside the Red Mantis at the climax of Part 2, but the PCs can attempt to seek him out before then to earn respect among the Shoanti. If they do so, consider having the PCs encounter him with a few Red Mantis allies.

THE CINDERLANDER

CR 12

XP 19,200

Male human ranger 10/horizon walker 3 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player’s Guide* 265)

CN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +4; **Senses** Perception +17

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 16, flat-footed 20 (+6 armor, +1 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +3 natural)

hp 151 (13d10+75)

Fort +13, **Ref** +12, **Will** +5

Defensive Abilities evasion; **Immune** exhaustion, fatigue;

Resist fire 10

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk handaxe +15/+10/+5 (1d6+1/x3)

Ranged *Vindicator* +15/+10/+5 (1d10+1/17-20)

Special Attacks combat style (crossbow)^{APG}, favored enemies (giants +6, humans +2, magical beasts +2)

Ranger Spells Prepared (CL 7th; concentration +8)

2nd—*barkskin*

1st—*charm animal* (DC 12), *gravity bow*^{APG}, *pass without trace*

TACTICS

Before Combat The Cinderlander casts *pass without trace*

before going on any scouting missions. Before engaging in combat, the Cinderlander casts *barkskin* on himself.



During Combat The Cinderlander prefers to fight at range with *Vindicator*, casting *gravity bow* on the crossbow and then targeting Shoanti to the exclusion of all other foes if given a choice. A favorite tactic against mounted enemies is to cast *charm animal* on a mount to lessen its rider's mobility. He resorts to his masterwork handaxe only when forced to. His animal companion Neverfar remains at his side—the Cinderlander prefers to use the firepelt cougar as a guardian while he sleeps rather than as a bodyguard or assassin.

Morale Although far from cowardly, the Cinderlander doesn't particularly like the Red Mantis. He can be bought, and for a bribe of no less than 500 gp, he abandons Cinnabar and the assassins to their fate, even switching sides in the middle of combat. He's seen what they're capable of, though, and isn't particularly interested in picking a fight against them. In any event, he attempts to flee if brought to fewer than 20 hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 18, **Con** 18, **Int** 10, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +13; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 30

Feats Bleeding Critical, Critical Focus, Deadly Aim, Diehard, Dodge, Endurance, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (repeating heavy crossbow), Improved Critical (repeating heavy crossbow), Precise Shot, Shot On The Run, Toughness, Weapon Focus (repeating heavy crossbow)

Skills Handle Animal +15, Heal +17, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (geography) +14, Linguistics +5, Perception +17, Stealth +20, Survival +17

Languages Common, Giant, Shoanti

SQ favored terrains (desert +6, mountainous +2, plains +2, urban +2), hunter's bond (firepelt cougar named Neverfar), swift tracker, terrain dominance (desert), terrain mastery (desert), track +5, wild empathy +9, woodland stride

Combat Gear potion of haste, wand of cure moderate wounds (8 charges); **Other Gear** +2 mithral chain shirt, *Vindicator* (+1 human-bane repeating heavy crossbow) with 20 screaming bolts and 10 bolts, mwk handaxe, belt of incredible dexterity +2, ring of protection +1, survival kit

NEVERFAR

CR —

Male firepelt cougar (leopard) animal companion

N Medium animal

Init +5; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +7

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 16, flat-footed 15 (+5 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 natural)

hp 51 (6d8+24)

Fort +8, **Ref** +10, **Will** +3 (+4 morale bonus vs. enchantments)

Defensive Abilities evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft., sprint

Melee bite +9 (1d6+4), 2 claws +9 (1d3+4)

TACTICS

During Combat Neverfar has been trained to attack Shoanti in preference to all other targets, but if the Cinderlander is hurt by a foe, the firepelt focuses on that enemy instead.

Morale Neverfar fights to the death as long as the Cinderlander lives. If the Cinderlander is killed, the cougar defends the man's body to the death.

STATISTICS

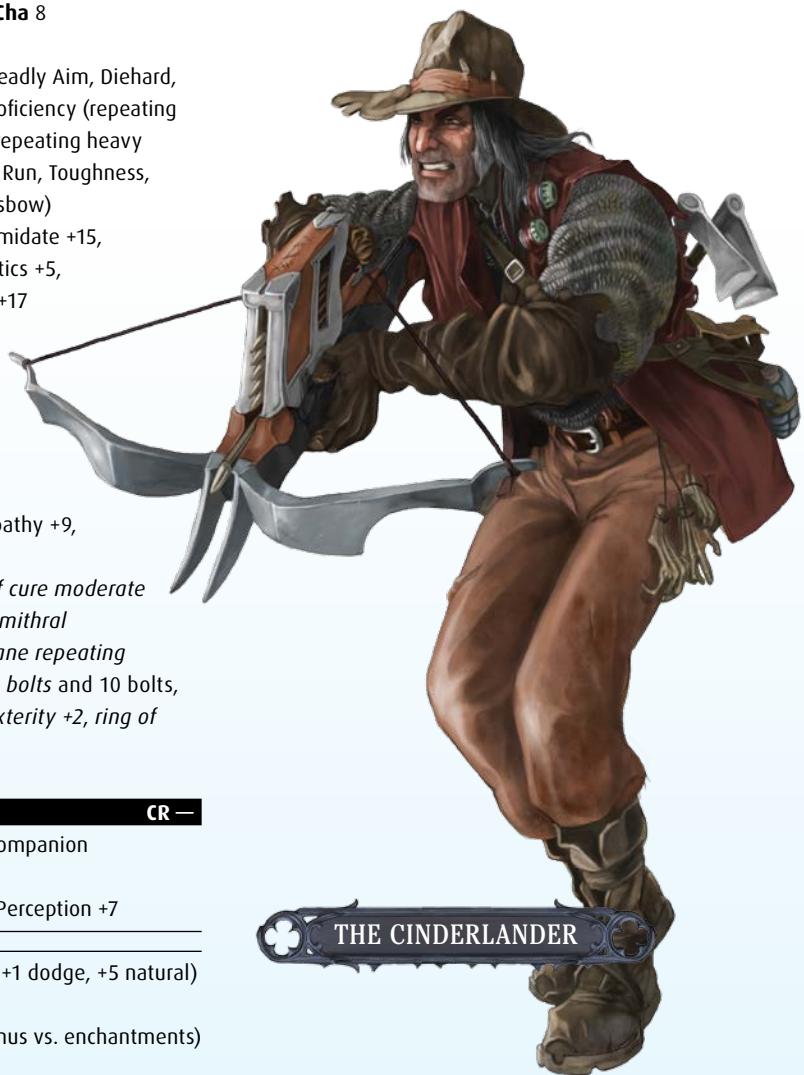
Str 18, **Dex** 21, **Con** 16, **Int** 2, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 24 (28 vs. trip)

Feats Dodge, Toughness, Weapon Finesse

Skills Perception +7, Stealth +11 (+15 in undergrowth)

SQ devotion



THE CINDERLANDER

PART 2

TRIALS OF RESPECT

The Shoanti have no love for Korvosa or its people, and the history of violence they share with the Chelish settlers has long tainted and strained the relationship between the quahs and Korvosa. Even if the PCs count Shoanti members in their party, they cannot be assured of safety among the quahs... at least, not until they earn the respect of the tribes. Little of what the PCs have done so far in this campaign matters to the Shoanti—if the PCs are to earn the Shoanti's respect, they must work for it.

By the time the PCs venture into the Cinderlands, they should know that Thousand Bones, the man Neolandus hopes can help the PCs learn more about Kazavon's fangs, lives at a place called the Kallow Mounds in the heart of Skoan-Quah territory. Neolandus knows that the Kallow Mounds are located about 50 miles east of Kaer Maga, as does any PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Knowledge (geography) check.

This adventure assumes that the PCs follow the path of least resistance as they attempt to earn the trust and gain the assistance of the Shoanti. When they first enter the Cinderlands, chances are good that they have limited knowledge about the territorial tribes, but their earlier interaction with Thousand Bones in Chapter 1 gives them an advantage, especially if they use magic like *dream* or *sending* to contact the shaman beforehand to let him know they wish to speak. Even if they arrive at the Kallow Mounds unannounced, Thousand Bones quickly learns of their arrival and welcomes the PCs into the camp with open arms—assuming the PCs helped recover Gaekhen's body in Chapter 1.

Attempting to contact the Lyrune-Quah or the Sklar-Quah before the PCs have made peaceful contact with the Skoan-Quah dramatically increases the difficulty of the adventure, since the Sklar-Quah react to intruders with violence and the Lyrune-Quah are quite adept at avoiding encounters entirely. In this event, divination spells and random encounters can be your friend. Use the results of spells like *commune* or *divination* to guide the PCs toward the Kallow Mounds. If they wander too long, they could encounter a band of Skoan-Quah boneslayers who can serve as guides to the Kallow Mounds—if it's not too heavy-handed for your taste, these boneslayers could even have been sent out to find the PCs after their shaman Thousand Bones received a vision of their coming.

Of course, if the PCs seem bent on remaining hostile with the Shoanti (or if they failed to deliver Gaekhen to Thousand Bones in Chapter 1 or manage to lose all respect with the Shoanti by dropping to -10 or fewer Respect

Points; see below), you can run this adventure in a more straightforward manner. Simply give the Sun Shaman (see page 226) an ancient stone tablet that contains the required information the PCs need to send them on to Scarwall to retrieve the sword *Serithtial*—a fair prize to be won after a long and bloody battle against the Shoanti tribes.

Possibly, some of the PCs could be Shoanti, maybe even members of one of the Cinderlands tribes. In this case, such PCs have spent so much time in the company of outlanders (like the other PCs or Korvosa's citizens) that the Sklar-Quah likely see them as *tshamek* (outlanders) as well. While being reaccepted back into a tribe could add an interesting layer to a Shoanti PC's quest, a Shoanti background shouldn't serve as a shortcut to avoid having to earn the Sklar-Quah's respect.

Nevertheless, for each Shoanti character in the party, the group gains a Respect Point (see below).

RESPECT POINTS

Central to this part of the adventure is the goal of earning the respect of the Shoanti people. Once the PCs earn enough respect, they'll be rewarded with the opportunity to learn some of the Shoanti's greatest secrets about the region's history as it pertains to Kazavon's fangs. Track the PCs' growing recognition via Respect Points. You shouldn't conceal the number of Respect Points the PCs have earned, but don't tell them how many they need to succeed! The method in which the PCs build their Respect Points and the order in which they do so is irrelevant, but the encounters and adventures presented in this chapter are organized in order of increasing danger.

Once the PCs earn 20 Respect Points, they are contacted by Thousand Bones and told that his people have decided the PCs are worthy of the lore the Shoanti have to share—see the Chapter Conclusion on page 254 for more details.

Shoanti PCs: When the PCs first interact with a Shoanti quah in a significant manner (likely upon their arrival at the Kallow Mounds), the party earns 1 Respect Point for every member who appears to be Shoanti. If a supposed



A
HISTORY
OF ASHES

CHAPTER
BACKGROUND

PART 1:
THE ROAD
NORTH

PART 2:
TRIALS OF
RESPECT

PART 3:
MANTIS AND
MAIDEN

CHAPTER
CONCLUSION



Shoanti PC is later revealed to be an impostor (such as a Chelaxian using *disguise self* to appear Shoanti), the PCs lose 3 Respect Points. Regardless of how many times the party interacts with different Shoanti quahs, a single PC can earn this Respect Point reward for the party only once.

Trophies: A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Knowledge (local) or asks any Shoanti about the subject learns that certain monsters and denizens of the Cinderlands are long-standing enemies of the Shoanti people, and the presentation of trophies in the form of severed heads harvested from these enemies is an excellent way to build respect. Such trophies must be harvested from creatures of CR of 9 or higher (less dangerous foes, while enemies of the Shoanti, are not deadly enough to earn their respect), and must be presented to a Shoanti elder or shaman in public within a week of the completed task. The PCs can earn 1 Respect Point per trophy presented in this manner, to a maximum of 10 Respect Points—trophies beyond this total are appreciated but earn the PCs no additional Respect Points. Appropriate creatures include powerful orcs, giants, dragons, magical beasts, and known criminals and enemies of the Shoanti (such as the Cinderlander).

Quests and Events: The PCs can also earn Respect Points during play by completing quests or comporting

themselves in particularly Shoanti ways in the numerous social encounters to follow; the amount of Respect Points they can earn in such cases is given in the Respect Points entry in those encounters.

Losing Respect Points: Failing at a quest does not cost the PCs any Respect Points they have already earned, since the Shoanti know that failure on a first attempt does not guarantee failure on a following attempt. Public disrespect of a Shoanti elder or unwarranted assault any Shoanti person can cost the PCs Respect Points as you see fit. Note that Respect Points can drop below 0 into negative numbers!

Losing All Respect: If the PCs ever accumulate a Respect Point total of -10 or lower, the Shoanti brand them enemies of the people. At this point, only battle will earn the PCs what they seek.

THE KALLOW MOUNDS

Although the Skoan-Quah are not as warlike as the Sklar-Quah, they remain distrustful of strangers, particularly tshamek who encroach upon the ancestral burial grounds at the Kallow Mounds. The Skoan-Quah mark their territories with large rock cairns topped with animal skulls—markers that serve as both signposts and warnings

4

to deter strangers, as a successful DC 15 Knowledge (local) check reveals. As the PCs approach the Kallow Mounds, these cairns appear more frequently.

As soon as the PCs get within half a mile of the Kallow Mounds, they are intercepted by a group of four Skoan-Quah boneslayers—women and men who patrol Shoanti burial mounds and are trained from an early age to be particularly effective against the undead. The four boneslayers are somewhat surprised to see tshamek, but greet them nonetheless. They demand to know why the PCs are approaching their campsite, but aren't completely rude or hostile. As long as the PCs state their desires plainly, the boneslayers agree to lead them into the quah's camp. Mentioning Thousand Bones or Gaekhen sets them at ease, for the old shaman has told his people of how the PCs retrieved the young warrior's body for him.

The Kallow Mounds are a collection of hundreds of cairns, the burial sites for all three Cinderlands Shoanti tribes for the past 300 years. The Skoan-Quah are the cairns' caretakers, and typically camp at a small dale on the westernmost edge of the mounds. At any one time, approximately 75 Skoan-Quah dwell in this camp, with a constant influx of new nomads maintaining this level as others move on. Most of these nomads are 1st-level warriors or barbarians, but there's always at least 12 boneslayers present as well.

The chieftain of the Kallow Mounds, and of all the Skoan-Quah, is a quiet and gaunt man named **One-Life** (CN male human ranger 9). He has lived in the Kallow Mounds for his entire adult life—unlike the others in his tribe, who remain nomadic, Chief One-Life dwells permanently in this small camp with his direct family. Another permanent resident of the camp is an elderly woman known as **Ash Dancer** (CN female old human ranger 2/shaman^{ACG} 9), the tribe's eldest, most experienced shaman and the leader of the boneslayers. The Kallow Mounds are further protected by a crippled dragonne named **Wicked-Claws** (an advanced dragonne who has no fly speed; *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 104). The dragonne lost his wings to a bulette some years ago, and Chief One-Life saved the proud creature from certain death. No longer able to soar the skies, Wicked-Claws now protects the Skoan-Quah and can often be seen sunning atop a cairn not far from Chief One-Life's tent. Finally, the Kallow Mounds are also the current home of Thousand Bones (see page 458), a Skoan-Quah shaman. Since he and his followers withdrew from Korvosa in the face of increasing hostility, Thousand Bones has become more and more concerned with the future. He knows that the trouble in Korvosa has poisoned the city, and fears what plans Queen Ileosa might develop for the Shoanti if she continues building power in Korvosa. Of course, his fellow Shoanti see the deteriorating situation in Korvosa as just desserts for a decadent people, and Thousand Bones's

warnings that Queen Ileosa might well be as bad, if not worse, for the Shoanti as she is for the city of Korvosa have thus far fallen on deaf ears.

Although the initial contact with the Skoan-Quah could be tense, these tensions fall away once Thousand Bones arrives on the scene. His ready smile and welcoming calls do much to set the other Shoanti at ease, and their initial hostility gives way to curiosity, as many of the Skoan-Quah have never actually seen an honest-to-goodness tshamek before. Thousand Bones waves aside any talk of Queen Ileosa or Kazavon for now, telling the PCs that he has similar worries of his own but that such a discussion should be held at the proper location and time—in this case, Thousand Bones suggests, during the evening's Bone Council Fire.

Thousand Bones arranges for a guest yurt for the PCs to rest in. He has plenty of food and water delivered to the tent and even visits with the PCs for some time, as he is eager to hear about their adventures since they recovered Gaekhen's body. If he learns that Rolth Lamm has been punished or killed, he nods in appreciation of the justice. If the PCs ask, Thousand Bones is willing to guide them to the cairn in which Gaekhen's ashes now rest.

KROJUN'S ARRIVAL

The PCs are not the only guests destined to visit the Kallow Mounds this day. At some point after the PCs have arrived and are at rest in their yurt, or perhaps as they are returning from Gaekhen's cairn, another visitor arrives: a brash young hero of the Sklar-Quah named Krojun Eats-What-He-Kills. Krojun, along with an honor guard of a half-dozen thundercallers, arrives at the Kallow Mounds for the same reason every other Shoanti visits—someone important has died. In this case, they bring the body of Berak, a Sklar-Quah hero known for leading many successful attacks against orc aggressors from Urglin. Krojun was no friend of Berak's, but Krojun's chieftain asked him to bring Berak's body south to the Kallow Mounds to join the other heroes. Krojun knew better than to speak ill of the dead at the time, but the journey has left him bitter and cranky.

When Krojun arrives at the Kallow Mounds, the Skoan-Quah silently accept Berak's body and begin preparing it for interment. Krojun has little interest in staying for the ceremony, but before he leaves, he notices that the Skoan-Quah have other visitors, either by seeing the PCs directly or simply noticing that the guest yurt is in use. He quickly seeks out Chief One-Life and demands to know who visits; when he discovers the visitors are the PCs, he seeks them out, his rage and indignation growing.

Thousand Bones is quick to come to the PCs' side before Krojun confronts them. He warns the PCs that Krojun is a hero to the Sklar-Quah, and that blood spilled



A HISTORY OF ASHES

CHAPTER BACKGROUND

PART 1:
THE ROAD NORTH

PART 2:
TRIALS OF RESPECT

PART 3:
MANTIS AND MAIDEN

CHAPTER CONCLUSION



here would undermine the already shaky relations between the tribes. Krojun spends a few moments sizing up the PCs with a sneer, and as he turns to the chief, read or paraphrase the following.

Krojun asks Chief One-Life, "Why do the Skoan-Quah harbor tshamek trespassers?"

As Chief One-Life struggles to find an explanation that won't further enrage the towering visitor, Thousand Bones inclines his head as though considering Krojun's words carefully, but then responds sharply. "Tell me, Krojun, when did the Sklar-Quah become judges of who trespasses upon the Kallow Mounds where the ashes of our fathers lie?"

"Your words change the question, Thousand Bones," answers the Shoanti hero with a snort. "These ones bring trouble to the Cinderlands, and you know it. The coming days shall reveal to us all who is right about them."

"Perhaps," says Thousand Bones. "But not today, and not here. Would you have word that Berak's burial was tainted by bloodshed get back to your Sun Shaman?"

Krojun pauses, the cords in his neck straining, but then he exhales and grins. "You misunderstand me, Thousand Bones. My grief has wounded my words. But see to it that no tshamek

defiles our memories here." His smile broadens as he pulls a thin leather loop from one of his packs. "Certainly, though, guests of the Skoan-Quah must be brave to come this far. You wouldn't mind if I tested the courage and strength of your guests, would you?"

A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Knowledge (local) check recognizes that the leather loop is a prop for a Shoanti game known as sredna. Thousand Bones looks to the PCs with a shrug, indicating that this choice is theirs. Only one PC need accept the challenge—if none do, Krojun laughs heartily and returns his loop to his pack. "It is a wonder they made it here at all, Thousand Bones," he says, and with one final glance at the PCs, he turns to join his fellow thundercallers while they see their brother off before they leave for Sklar-Quah lands.

Creature: Krojun is a symbol and hero of the Sklar-Quah. With a successful DC 30 Knowledge (local) check (or by asking Thousand Bones or another knowledgeable Shoanti), a PC can learn much of Krojun's tale. As a young warrior, Krojun sought the means to enact revenge upon an orc champion named Kyrust Chiefkiller, a Rotten Tongue marauder from Urglin who had long organized

4

brutal raids upon Krojun's tribe. Desperate, Krojun sought the aid of a reclusive Shoanti sorcerer who lived alone deep in the Mindspin Mountains. The hermit put Krojun through several punishing trials, promising him that if he succeeded, he would earn the power he needed to defeat Kyrust. The tests were harrowing indeed, designed in part to train Krojun in the ways of the Thunder and Fang fighting style, and it took Krojun many months to complete them. In the end, he stood before the sorcerer in triumph. When Krojun demanded his reward, however, the sorcerer responded that he had no reward to give and vanished. Krojun's rage was great, and when he returned to his people empty-handed, he found that his entire tribe had been enslaved by Kyrust. Krojun tracked the slave caravan for days, finally catching up to it a few miles from Urglin's gates. In a fantastic display of rage and power, he single-handedly defeated the orcs and their leader Kyrust. Only as Krojun claimed the orc's head as both a trophy and a symbol of the Sklar-Quah's power over their enemies did he finally realize the truth: that strange old sorcerer had indeed given him a gift. Without the skills and strength Krojun honed in completing the tasks the sorcerer had set him to, he would surely have fallen in combat against the orcs.

Today, Krojun is at the forefront of the Sun Clan's efforts to strike back at the orcs and tshamek who have hammered away at the Shoanti for centuries. When Krojun learns of the PCs' entry into the Cinderlands, he quickly becomes obsessed with them. In his interactions with the orcs of the north and the tshamek of the south, Krojun has noted that despite his tribe's teachings, the tshamek aren't as savage or cruel as the orcs. He has seen much of his own people reflected in tshamek bravery, tenacity, and strength, but he has not yet been fully convinced that they deserve his respect. With the PCs, he hopes to test them, learn more about their ways, and eventually prevent what he believes will be a disastrous war should his people march on Korvosa.

Whether or not one of the PCs accept Krojun's challenge, the barbarian returns a number of times throughout the chapter.

KROJUN EATS-WHAT-HE-KILLS

CR 12

XP 19,200

Male human barbarian 13

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; **Senses** scent; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 12, flat-footed 20 (+6 armor, +2 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 natural, -2 rage, +3 shield)

hp 181 (13d12+91)

Fort +14, **Ref** +6, **Will** +9

Defensive Abilities improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +4;

DR 4/—

OFFENSE

Speed 55 ft. (40 ft. in armor)

Melee +1 *thundering earth breaker* +19/+14/+9 (2d6+7/19-20/x3), +1 *klar* +19 (1d6+4), bite +14 (1d4+3)

Special Attacks greater rage (31 rounds/day), rage powers (animal fury, clear mind, increase damage reduction +1, rolling dodge +3, scent, swift foot +5 ft.)

TACTICS

Before Combat If Krojun knows he is about to face great opposition, he applies his *Shoanti war paint* and drinks a *potion of shield of faith* +2.

During Combat Krojun charges fearlessly into battle, preferring to fight toe-to-toe against foes to make full use of his Thunder and Fang fighting style. Krojun is fond of screaming his own name whenever he lands a critical hit against a foe.

Morale Headstrong, Krojun has courage to spare. He is not a fool, however, and withdraws if vastly outnumbered or overmatched, or upon being reduced to 20 hit points or fewer. Only when raging does he fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 15, **Con** 22, **Int** 8, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +13; **CMB** +19; **CMD** 31

Feats Improved Critical (earth breaker), Iron Will, Power Attack, Shield Focus, Thunder and Fang, Two-weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (earth breaker), Weapon Focus (klar)

Skills Acrobatics +16 (+20 to jump), Intimidate +17, Ride +16, Survival +16

Languages Common, Shoanti

SQ fast movement

Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds* (2), *potion of shield of faith* +2 (4); **Other Gear** +2 hide armor, +1 *klar* ^{UE}, +1 *thundering earth breaker* ^{UE}, amulet of natural armor +1, boots of striding and springing, *Shoanti war paint* (3, orange; see page 436), 3 garnets worth 50 gp each

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Thunder and Fang This feat (from page 10 of *Pathfinder Player Companion: Varisia, Birthplace of Legends*) allows Krojun to wield his earth breaker and klar simultaneously in combat, as if he were fighting with a double weapon. When he uses an earth breaker in one hand and a klar in his off hand, Krojun retains the shield bonus his klar grants even when he uses it to attack, and treats his earth breaker as a one-handed weapon and his klar as a light weapon for the purpose of determining his two-weapon fighting penalty.

Respect Points: The PCs lose 1 Respect Point if none of them accept Krojun's challenge.

A “FRIENDLY” GAME OF SREDNA

In sredna, two contestants face one another on their hands and knees with their foreheads spaced just over a foot



A
HISTORY
OF ASHES

CHAPTER
BACKGROUND

PART 1:
THE ROAD
NORTH

PART 2:
TRIALS OF
RESPECT

PART 3:
MANTIS AND
MAIDEN

CHAPTER
CONCLUSION

4

apart. A leather loop is placed around the competitor's heads, like a headband, so that the contestants are bound to one another. When the game begins, each contestant stares his opponent in the eye while slowly attempting to crawl backwards. The resulting tug-of-war results in extreme pain as the leather digs into the soft part of the back of the neck and skull. At some point, one of the competitors relents, acknowledging defeat by bowing his head, causing the strap to roll over the top. Games of sredna typically last for mere seconds, but two evenly matched opponents might duel much longer. In such cases, standoffs occur frequently.

When a sredna match begins, each contestant must spend three "breaths" (3 rounds) staring into the other's eyes before attempting to pull. Pulling before the 4th round is an immediate disqualification. Intimidation and patience are almost as important tools to win sredna matches as is strength. During these initial 3 rounds, the contestants attempt opposed Intimidate checks by growling, gnashing teeth, and spitting insults. Each time a contestant wins one of these checks, he gains 2 points. In the case of a tied Intimidate check, both players gain 1 point.

On the 4th round, each character rolls an initiative check to determine when he moves. On his turn, a character can opt to tug or dig in.

Tug: The characters attempt opposed Strength checks. A defending character who dug in on his previous turn receives a +4 bonus on this check. If the tugging character wins the check, he gains 2 points. If he fails (or if the results are tied), his opponent gains 2 points.

Dig In: The character strengthens his stance and gains a +4 bonus on his next Strength check to resist a tug.

At the end of each round after the 4th round, total up each contestant's points. Each contestant must attempt a Fortitude save to continue the match, with the DC being equal to his opposition's current point total. A contestant who fails this save collapses and loses the match. If both contestants fail their saving throw, the match is declared a draw. If both contestants succeed at their saving throws, the game proceeds into another round. A character who has the Endurance feat gains a +4 bonus on this Fortitude saving throw.

Respect Points: If the match against Krojun lasts longer than 6 rounds, he rages to give himself an additional edge over the PC; he also activates his rage in response to any PC doing the same. Forcing Krojun to rage earns the party 1 Respect Point.

Krojun respects bravery, and even if he beats his opponent, he good-naturedly claps the PC on the shoulder and proclaims, "Almost as good as an aurochs calf. Nothing to be ashamed about." With a hearty laugh, he reclaims his strap and returns to his kin to see to their brother's burial. The party earns 1 Respect Point.

If, on the other hand, the game is a draw, Krojun says nothing. He regards his competitor with narrowed eyes, nods curtly, and returns to the funeral. The party earns 2 Respect Points.

If the PC beats Krojun, he topples to the ground with a roar of rage and rolls about in the dust for a moment. By the time the barbarian has regained his feet, his roar has turned to laughter. "You pull like an aurochs dam in heat, little tshamek. Well done!" He finishes his compliment with a quick nod and another grin before rejoining his brothers. The party earns 3 Respect Points.

Story Award: If the PCs earn 2 or more Respect Points as a result of the game (even if they ended up losing), award them 6,400 XP.



KROJUN EATS-WHAT-HE-KILLS

A HISTORY OF ASHES

205

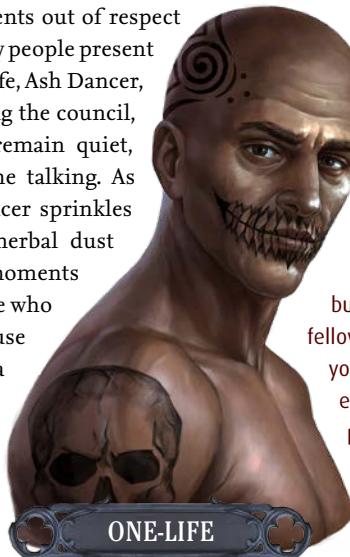
THE BONE COUNCIL FIRE

As night falls, Thousand Bones invites the PCs to join him at the center of the camp. The majority of the other Skoan-Quah retire early to their tents out of respect for the Bone Council Fire—the only people present are Thousand Bones, Chief One-Life, Ash Dancer, and the PCs and their allies. During the council, both One-Life and Ash Dancer remain quiet, letting Thousand Bones do all the talking. As Thousand Bones speaks, Ash Dancer sprinkles the fire with a greenish-brown herbal dust from a weathered pouch. A few moments later, the fumes encapsulate anyone who remains by the fire; the effects cause a slight blurring of the vision and a feeling of ease, but have no actual game effects. Read or paraphrase Thousand Bones's speech here to the players.

"You have already done my people a great favor by returning the body of one of our warriors. I sense now you come to me to ask something in return, yet know that by asking for this, you are helping us all. The Skoan-Quah are a peaceful people, yet we are also all but shunned by our kin. Our willingness to mix with tshamek shames many of my brothers and sisters in the other quahs. Only their respect for our tradition of guarding and protecting the dead of all Shoanti keeps them from open hostility against us. My words do not reach their ears when I warn them of Queen Ileosa and her rise in power. They hear tales of the city in flames, of its king dead, of disease ravaging its people, and they see this as a just punishment for a hated enemy. My people do not see that a greater threat is growing in this turmoil. And now, you come to me with concerns, seeking the aid of my people. Speak of what you wish of the Shoanti, and perhaps we may find our needs are the same."

Thousand Bones listens to the PCs' tale quietly and somberly, but grows visibly distraught when he hears from the PCs' lips tales of Ileosa's power, her apparent invulnerability, and in particular a description of her new crown. He's heard rumors from other travelers, of course, but hearing the news from people he's come to trust confirms his fears. Once the PCs reveal this information or ask him about "Midnight's Teeth" or Kazavon's fangs, his brow furrows a moment before he answers again.

"My people dwelt where your people live now, not so long ago. We remained there for many, many generations, but across the centuries my people have always kept the lore of our ancestors in mind, passing knowledge to the new generations. Yet when Cheliax came to us with war and



ONE-LIFE

drove us to the Cinderlands so many years ago, we fought. And died. And many of those who died took this lore to their graves. The name 'Midnight's Teeth' is unfamiliar to me, but the name 'Kazavon' is not entirely so—it is a name associated with a great and ancient evil, and many Shoanti believe to repeat such a name aloud is to preserve the evil. This, coupled with the deaths of so many lore keepers, has sequestered the knowledge I suspect you seek in the minds of a rare few: the Sun Shamans of the Sklar-Quah. They alone preserve the history of the Shoanti time in the lands you now call Korvosa, but they do not readily share this with tshamek... or fellow Shoanti, for that matter. Yet if you were to build your names among my people, to earn proper respect, even the eldest of the Sun Shamans would agree to provide the knowledge you desire."

If it is warranted, Thousand Bones pauses at this point to congratulate the PCs on how they comported themselves with Krojun and the game of sredna, revealing that such actions have already planted the seeds of respect among the Shoanti. Yet the PCs have much work to do if they hope to convince a Sun Shaman of the Sklar-Quah to reveal what he may know of Kazavon and his fangs.

There is no one way to earn respect, Thousand Bones advises, but he suspects it would be for the best if the PCs earn that respect quickly. Defeating enemies of the Shoanti and spending time among them learning their ways would eventually work, but not swiftly enough. Instead, Thousand Bones offers suggestions for less time-intensive tasks the PCs should attempt in order to earn the respect and fame they need to speak to a Sun Shaman of the Sklar-Quah.

Become an Enemy's Nalharest: It is one thing to defeat an enemy in battle, but another to earn that enemy's respect. Thousand Bones notes that the PCs may have already made an enemy, through no fault of their own, in Krojun. If they can convince Krojun to proclaim even one of the PCs as his *nalharest*—his honorary sibling—the Sun Shaman will be forced to admit that the PCs are people to be trusted. (If the PCs save Krojun during the assault on Flameford, he declares them his *nalharests*; see page 232.)

Recreate a Legendary Hero's Accomplishment: If the PCs can duplicate a legendary Shoanti hero's storied accomplishment in front of a Shoanti witness, they can earn respect. One potential stunt that comes to Thousand Bones' mind is the story of Skurak, which is presented on page 207 as Handout #4-1. Cindermaw still lives, and if the PCs were to travel to the great worm's killing grounds and replicate Skurak's deed, their legend will only grow. (The quest to be consumed by and then



A
HISTORY
OF ASHES

CHAPTER
BACKGROUND

PART 1:
THE ROAD
NORTH

PART 2:
TRIALS OF
RESPECT

PART 3:
MANTIS AND
MAIDEN

CHAPTER
CONCLUSION

SKURAK'S TALE

Skurak was a great warrior and greater traitor to the Sklar-Quah. He slew his brother, a man of even greater courage. To the Sklar-Quah, family is purity—crimes against family are the greatest one can commit. Although Skurak claimed the death was an accident that occurred while he and his brother were hunting, others spoke of murder spawned of jealous rage. Skurak was declared a tshamek by the Sun Shaman and cast out. But before Skurak left, he said he would be born again and return to his tribe. This he did.

He went to the killing grounds of great Cinderjaw the clan-eater. Skurak walked up to the beast carrying only his dagger. Without fear he dove into the beast's mouth and cut his way out. He returned to the clan and declared he had been reborn, and had left his misdeeds behind in the cleansing fire of Cinderjaw's belly. The legend says the Sun Shaman accepted this and Skurak's time as a tshamek was spoken of no more.

HANDOUT #4-1

escape from Cinderjaw is detailed in Belly of the Beast on page 224.)

Secure a Truthspeaker's Endorsement: Truthspeakers are born, not made, and sometimes generations pass without the Shoanti counting a truthspeaker among them. A truthspeaker, Thousand Bones explains, is “one who has lived many lives without lie, and who achieves the gift of speaking only truth after decades spent in chastity, self-control, and introspection.” Thousand Bones knows of only one living truthspeaker in the Cinderlands today, a man named Akram who lives among the Lyrune-Quah. He knows not if Akram still lives or if he would agree to endorse the PCs; however, if they can go before the Sklar-Quah Sun Shaman with a truthspeaker at their side, the shaman would know that the PCs are earnest and true. (In order to gain Akram’s aid, the PCs will need to help the Lyrune-Quah with a problem of their own, as detailed in House of the Moon on page 218.)

Seek the Thrallkeeper’s Mark: In ancient times, a caste of spellcasters the Shoanti remember as the “Thrallkeepers” kept them as slaves. The Thrallkeepers are now gone, but some of their buildings remain. One such building may be found in the Cinderlands, a dangerous acropolis many Shoanti voyage to, seeking to earn the Thrallkeeper’s Mark as a way to prove their bravery. Some never return. Those who do earn the Thrallkeeper’s Mark are known to be powerful, lucky, or both. Thousand Bones can tell the PCs where the Acropolis of the Thrallkeepers is, but has never dared enter the ruin himself. If asked about the mark, he describes it as a seven-pointed star that allows the one

who carries it the ability to wield strange magical powers. With a successful DC 30 Knowledge (arcana or history) check, a PC confirms that this mark is the Sihedron Rune, a potent symbol associated with ancient Thassilon. (Exploring this dangerous ruin is detailed in Acropolis of the Thrallkeepers on page 209.)

Survive the Trial of the Totem: Finally, if the PCs can earn permission from the Sklar-Quah to take the Trial of the Totem and survive it, even the most intolerant Shoanti of that tribe will be forced to admit that the PCs deserve respect. (This complex initiation into the Sklar-Quah is detailed on page 228.)

SKOAN-QUAH SUPPORT

Once the PCs have asked their questions and are sure of their goals, Thousand Bones tells them that he has no intention of sending them into the Cinderlands on their quest alone or unarmed. He calls forth four brave young Skoan-Quah boneslayers, introducing them as Ahalak, Hargev, Nalmid, and Shadfrar. These four are to be the PCs’ guides through the Cinderlands and shall lead them where they need to go. In addition, they will be the witnesses to the PCs’ deeds, and their word will aid in spreading respect for the PCs wherever they travel in the Cinderlands. Finally, the boneslayers’ survival at the PCs’ side despite many dangers will prove the PCs’ ability and interest in protecting Shoanti allies. When the time comes to speak to a Sun Shaman, if at least one boneslayer remains at the PCs’ side, they will find it easier to earn the shaman’s cooperation.

4

Further, Thousand Bones presents an array of helpful gifts to the PCs: five potions of cure serious wounds, a wand of *create water* (44 charges), a wand of *endure elements* (23 charges), and five pots of *Shoanti war paint* (three red and two silver; see page 436). If asked about these generous offerings, Thousand Bones smiles and says, “I had suspected for some time you would need my help. These items are nothing to me, but they may be everything to you.”

SKOAN-QUAH BONESLAYERS (4)**CR 4****XP 1,200 each**Human oracle 3/ranger 2 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 42)CN Medium humanoid (human) **Init +2; Senses**

Perception +8

**DEFENSE****AC** 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +2 Dex, +1 dodge)**hp** 46 each (5 HD; 3d8+2d10+18)**Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +3; +2 insight bonus vs. diseases, mind-affecting, poison****OFFENSE****Speed** 20 ft.**Melee** mwk earth breaker +7 (2d6+3/x3)**Ranged** mwk composite longbow +7 (1d8+2/x3)**Special Attacks** combat style (two-handed weapon)^{APG}, favored enemy (undead +2)**Oracle Spells Known** (CL 3rd; concentration +5)

1st (6/day)—*cause fear* (DC 13), *cure light wounds*, *detect undead*, *hide from undead* (DC 13), *sanctuary* (DC 13)
0 (at will)—*create water*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 12), *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *purify food and drink* (DC 12)

Mystery bones**TACTICS**

During Combat The boneslayers prefer to fire their bows from covered positions, but if one of them is attacked in melee, the others quickly come to her aid. Once the PCs earn at least 10 Respect Points, the boneslayers are willing to alter their tactics to whatever the PCs want.

Morale The boneslayers fight to the death.**STATISTICS****Str 14, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 15****Base Atk +4; CMB +6; CMD 19****Feats** Combat Casting, Dodge, Power Attack, Totem Spirit (Skoan-Quah)^{ISWG}, Toughness**Skills** Heal +10, Knowledge (religion) +6, Perception +8, Stealth +8, Survival +8**Languages** Common, Shoanti**SQ** oracle's curse (haunted), revelations (near death, voice of the grave), track +1, wild empathy +4

Combat Gear potion of *cure light wounds* (3), potion of lesser restoration; **Other Gear** mwk hide armor, mwk composite longbow (+2 Str), mwk earth breaker^{UE}, *Shoanti war paint* (white; see page 436), 95 gp

Respect Points: Each time a Boneslayer is slain and not restored to life, the PCs lose 1d4 Respect Points. If all four boneslayers are slain, the PCs can no longer gain Respect Points until at least one of the boneslayers is restored to life or they return to the Kallow Mounds to request more boneslayers from Thousand Bones. Thousand Bones can “resupply” the PCs with an additional four boneslayers up to three times before their reputation becomes too tarnished.

Story Award: For each of the original four boneslayers who survives to the chapter's end (or who die and are restored to life by the PCs), award the PCs 2,400 XP, to a maximum award of 9,600 XP.



INTO THE CINDERLANDS

Once the PCs begin to explore the Cinderlands, either to travel between quest locations or merely to scour the landscape for Shoanti enemies to kill and harvest trophies from, consult page 414 in Appendix 2 for additional information about this harsh environment. A map of the Cinderlands that includes the locations of all the sites of import for this adventure appears on page 412. You can either track the PCs' journey across the landscape in play, checking for random encounters as detailed on page 464, or you can skip this element, especially if the PCs have boneslayer guides to help direct them.

At times during the journey, feel free to have the PCs attempt Perception checks; whoever rolls the highest catches a glimpse of what seems to be another small group of riders on a distant outcropping. With a successful DC 40 Perception check, that PC confirms that the man at the head of this group is Krojun, who is keeping an eye on the PCs as they travel and waiting for an opportunity to test them further. If the PCs attempt to confront him, he easily avoids them unless the PCs teleport directly to his location, a display of power that spooks Krojun's warriors but simply makes Krojun smile. In such an event, he points out that the Cinderlands are a dangerous place, and if the PCs die, someone needs to carry their bodies back to the Kallow Mounds, lest they rise as undead. He insinuates that he also wouldn't pass up the opportunity to loot the PCs' dead bodies if the opportunity arose.

You can heighten the tension caused by the war party's presence by drawing out this distant game of cat and mouse, perhaps to the point of where it becomes unclear who is hunting whom. Until the PCs reach the Acropolis of the Thrallkeepers or the Sklar-Quah camp of Flameford, however, try to avoid having too many direct confrontations with Krojun and his band.

A THE ACROPOLIS OF THE THRALLKEEPERS

The Acropolis of the Thrallkeepers sits atop a raised area in the shadows of the Wyvern Mountains. The acropolis was built by an order of Thassilonian wizards known as the Thrallkeepers (a competing order of scholars that worked against the Therassic Monks who built the Black Tower and the Library under Jorgenfist—see pages 207–209 of *Pathfinder Adventure Path: Rise of the Runelords Anniversary Edition*), but its true grandeur lies hidden underground. Eager to prove their value and use to Runelord Karzoug, the Thrallkeepers turned increasingly to the teachings of the rune goddess Lissala, and through their meditations, they sought a method to duplicate the great works of Thassilon's most powerful conjurers. The acropolis was built as a place where they could perfect their conjurations and study the strange and horrific

monstrosities like scarlet walkers, shining children, and malignancies from beyond the stars, ever seeking ways to call down larger and more dangerous minions to present to Karzoug. The most arrogant of the order hoped one day to call upon a creature like the Oliphant of Jandelay, yet they never quite reached such a level of power before they overstepped their own ability.

Following forbidden methods stolen from dubious sources (strangely garbed merchants visiting from Leng), the Thrallkeepers set about the conjuration of a gigantic entity from a distant corner of the universe—a monster referred to as the havero, or the “Arms and Eyes of Forever.” The Thrallkeepers managed to locate a havero slumbering in orbit around a dead star using their strange magics, but when they attempted to draw it out of the Dark Tapestry and into a specially designed prison in their acropolis, the havero twitched in its slumber. It never quite woke, but its preconscious thrashings wiped out the Thrallkeepers and destroyed much of the above-ground structure of the acropolis in a matter of minutes. Once the Thrallkeepers were dead, the havero returned to its distant slumber. Yet the partially functioning portals between it and the chambers below remained active, and even today, long after Thassilon had crumbled, the tips of some of the monster’s tentacles twitch and writhe below. The Shoanti have learned to avoid the ruins, other than to view it as place for headstrong heroes to seek out and prove their bravery by gaining the Thrallkeeper’s Mark. To the Shoanti, the Thrallkeeper’s Mark is a sign of great bravery, and should the PCs gain it, their standing in Shoanti eyes will surely grow.

ACROPOLIS FEATURES

Aboveground, what remains of the acropolis is a partially collapsed tower bearing the mark of the seven-pointed star—the Sihedron. Just to the side of the mark, a pair of 20-foot-wide stone doors stand ajar, leading down to a dusty flight of stairs that descend to area A1. The doors have always stood open and sinisterly inviting in this manner. Even attempts to seal them shut by the Shoanti over the ages have eventually and mysteriously been defeated.

Unless otherwise specified, the chambers below the acropolis aren’t lighted. The walls are composed of black granite flecked with blood-red deposits of rock crystal. Intricate rune patterns of Thassilonian writing extolling the virtues of Runelord Karzoug and the power of the goddess Lissala decorate the walls at regular intervals, as does the ubiquitous seven-pointed Sihedron. Each stone door bears a bas relief of the Sihedron on its face as well. If the symbol is pressed, it clicks and the door slowly grinds up into the ceiling the following round, granting access beyond. The door descends 1 minute later. A PC who

A HISTORY OF ASHES

CHAPTER BACKGROUND

PART 1:
THE ROAD NORTH

PART 2:
TRIALS OF RESPECT

PART 3:
MANTIS AND MAIDEN

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

4

succeeds at a DC 15 Disable Device check can jam the door open (or shut) for 1 month, until the structure's energies restore the door's functionality. A similar check from either side restores the door to functionality. A creature that is unable to step out of a descending door's slow path is crushed, taking 3d6 points of damage, and becomes pinned in place until it can escape with a successful DC 25 Strength or Escape Artist check.

Use the map on page 213 for this location.

A CROWDED DUNGEON

While the PCs likely come to the acropolis to seek the Thrallkeeper's Mark, they aren't the only group exploring the ruins. Krojun and his thunderscallers may arrive in the region as well. Krojun has never sought the Thrallkeeper's Mark himself, and if he learns the PCs are doing so, he both wonders how these outlanders plan to gain the mark (or, indeed, if they're merely planning on faking it), and also can't abide the notion of outlanders gaining the Thrallkeeper's Mark when he has not. He and three loyal thunderscallers (Sklar-Quah skalds who use weapons called totem spears in battle) arrive at the acropolis shortly before the PCs and immediately enter, hoping to observe the PCs within.

In addition, four Red Mantis assassins arrive at the complex, guided to the region by the Cinderlander once word spreads that the PCs are seeking the acropolis to earn favor among the Shoanti. The Red Mantis assassins don't care if the PCs achieve this goal or not. They merely see the acropolis as a suitable battle ground wherein they can strike at the PCs, preferably after the PCs have expended some of their resources. Unlike Krojun and his band of thunderscallers, the Red Mantis assassins enter the dungeon after the PCs.

Red Mantis Assassins (CR 12): Cinnabar doesn't honestly expect these four to be able to slay all of the PCs. Their primary job is to engage the PCs so that Cinnabar's cleric ally Koriantu, who is scrying on one of the assassins from the safety of her Korvosa hideout, can observe the PCs in combat. The Cinderlander does not enter the acropolis with these assassins—once they step into the building, he retreats to rejoin the remaining Red Mantis assassins elsewhere in the Cinderlands, and will likely not interact with the PCs until the attack on Flameford (see page 230). Assume that these four assassins are on top of their game and enter the acropolis about 10 minutes after the PCs (or at about the time the PCs move on beyond area A2). Once the PCs have discovered the assassins, the Red Mantis attack immediately.

RED MANTIS ASSASSINS (4)

XP 4,800 each

hp 78 (see page 144)

CR 8

Sklar-Quah (CR 13): Krojun and his Sklar-Quah thunderscallers enter the acropolis about an hour before the PCs arrive. They quickly proceed down to area A3 to hide and observe. Once the PCs discover Krojun, his demeanor is brisk. He greets the PCs with a stoic nod, explaining that he and his thunderscallers were concerned that the PCs were not going to properly respect the ruins and would fake their quest to gain the Thrallkeeper's Mark. Even if the PCs explain that they have no intention to cheat, Krojun snorts derisively, saying that the PCs are no better than those "stargazing Lyrune-Quah." Yet he doesn't take action to prevent their exploration. He does, however, demand to know what the PCs are doing in the Cinderlands, curious in his own way as to what took place between the PCs and Thousand Bones during the Bone Council Fire. He meets most answers with noncommittal grunts, but if the PCs say that they seek an audience with a Sun Shaman, he laughs loudly (add 2 Noise Points in this case—see page 212 for further details) and says that such a thing will never happen, for the Sun Shamans of the Sklar-Quah have nothing to say to tshamek.

Once the PCs encounter him, Krojun accompanies them for a short time, explaining that he finds them entertaining, when in fact he's sizing them up and trying to understand their methods and motivations. He doesn't aid them in a fight against the unless the Red Mantis assassins harm him or one of his thunderscallers or the PCs persuade him to do so. The PCs can convince him to join a fight against the Red Mantis before such an event with a successful DC 31 Diplomacy check or a successful DC 23 Intimidate check. If the PCs use intimidation, he and his thunderscallers quit the acropolis after the fight to return to Flameford, in which case they speak ill of the PCs (see Respect Points on page 211). Krojun and his thunderscallers automatically step in to aid the PCs in any fight against the havero. Krojun wants to attain the Thrallkeeper's Mark, but his thunderscallers grow increasingly nervous about the strange assassins and monsters encountered within the dungeon.

At your discretion, if the PCs go out of their way to protect and save Krojun and his thunderscallers from certain death, he might well proclaim the PCs nalharests early, rather than holding back until the end of the assault on Flameford (see page 232).

KROJUN EATS-WHAT-HE-KILLS

CR 12

XP 19,200

hp 181 (see page 204)

SKLAR-QUAH THUNDERCALLERS (3)

CR 7

XP 3,200

Human skald 8 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Class Guide* 49)

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +7; **Senses** Perception +10

**DEFENSE**

AC 20, touch 15, flat-footed 17 (+5 armor, +3 deflection, +3 Dex, -1 rage)

hp 87 (8d8+48)

Fort +11, **Ref** +5, **Will** +10; +4 vs. bardic performance, language-dependent, and sonic

Defensive Abilities improved uncanny dodge

OFFENSE

Speed 25 ft.

Melee +1 *totem spear* +11/+6 (1d10+7/x3)

Ranged *totem spear* +9 (1d10+6/x3)

Special Attacks rage powers (guarded stance +2, swift foot +5 ft.), raging song 20 rounds/day (move action; inspired rage, song of marching, song of strength), spell kenning 1/day

Skald Spells Known (CL 8th; concentration +11)

3rd (3/day)—*charm monster* (DC 16), *cure serious wounds*, *dispel magic*

2nd (5/day)—*gallant inspiration*^{APG} (DC 15), *pyrotechnics* (DC 15), *shatter* (DC 15), *sound burst* (DC 15)

1st (5/day)—*lesser confusion* (DC 14), *cure light wounds*, *expeditious retreat*, *feather fall*, *saving finale*^{APG}

0 (at will)—*detect magic*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *summon instrument*

TACTICS

Before Combat A thundercaller puts on his *war paint* and uses his *wand of cat's grace* once a fight seems likely.

During Combat One thundercaller activates his inspiring rage while the others engage in melee. The first thundercaller supports the melee fighters with healing magic or casts ranged spells; when a thundercaller in melee is reduced to 30 or fewer hit points, that skald falls back and swaps position and roles with the previous thundercaller.

Morale As long as Krojun lives, the thundercallers fight to the death. If Krojun dies or is otherwise incapacitated, the thundercallers abandon the acropolis immediately—in this case, they speak ill of the PCs.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 16, **Con** 20, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 25

Feats Combat Casting, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (*totem spear*), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Scribe Scroll

Skills Knowledge (history) +11, Perception +10, Perform (percussion instruments) +14, Perform (wind instruments) +14, Ride +8, Survival +7

Languages Common

SQ bardic knowledge +4, lore master 1/day, rage powers, versatile performance (percussion, wind)

Combat Gear potion of cure moderate wounds (2), *wand of cat's grace* (15 charges), *wand of cure light wounds* (30 charges); **Other Gear** +1 hide armor, +1 *totem spear*, *totem spears* (3), *Shoanti war paint* (silver, 2; see page 436), 35 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Totem Spear A totem spear is a 6-pound, exotic two-handed melee weapon that deals piercing or slashing damage.

A character proficient with a totem spear can use the holes in the spear's shovel-like head to create eerie whistling music with Perform (wind instruments). Totem spears are detailed on page 14 of *Pathfinder Player's Companion: Varisia, Birthplace of Legends* (note that the rules presented in this stat block correct the totem spear's damage type to piercing and slashing, rather than piercing and bludgeoning).

Respect Points: If the thundercallers flee the acropolis and speak ill of the PCs, the PCs lose 1d6 Respect Points.

Story Award: If the PCs do not attack the hot-headed Shoanti, award the PCs XP for each thundercaller who survives the delve under the acropolis as if the PCs had defeated the Shoanti in combat.

A1 THRALLKEEPER'S WALK

The stone stairs end at a twenty-foot-wide and twenty-foot-tall hallway that leads to the east, opening into a large chamber. The floor is cluttered with dust and tiny mounds of ash that look to have been recently disturbed in places, but signs of the trail vanish to the east once the stones become clear of debris.

With a successful DC 4 Survival check, a PC notes that four human-sized creatures seem to have moved through this area recently, traveling from the stairs toward the room to the east. Within 10 feet of area A2, though, the floor is clear of dust. A PC who succeeds at a DC 19 Survival check can follow the trail, which leads to the door between area A2 and area A3, where Krojun and his thundercallers await.

Red Mantis: If there is activity in area A2 when the Red Mantis assassins enter the acropolis 10 minutes after the PCs do, two remain in hiding here while two sneak into area A2. Otherwise, the assassins break into two groups of two and move into area A2 using Stealth.

Sklar-Quah: The four Sklar-Quah left these prints as they moved toward area A3.

A2 POOL OF THE HAVERO (CR 10+)

The air in this massive, cathedral-like space seems strangely cool. The walls are carved with vertical ridges that rise to support the arch above, where the ceiling vaults into the shadows to a height of nearly sixty feet. A five-foot-wide balcony rings the room, the floor of which drops fifteen feet into a pool of dark water. Halfway between the east and west ends of the room, a bridge crosses the pool. Two large stone

doors stand in the walls to the south and east. Smaller doors sit in the walls to the northwest and southwest—all four doors bear depictions of seven-pointed-stars.

The dark water in the pool is cold and stagnant, clogged with silt and a thick upper layer of dark algae. The pool was once a vast chamber that served as the acropolis's primary summoning chamber, but anyone who investigates the foul water finds that something cold, rubbery, and immense fills most of this chamber to an uneven depth of about 10 feet.

Narrow gaps along the north and south walls allow creatures in the passageways beyond the ability to observe events in this room, but are difficult to notice from inside area A2. A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check locates these cleverly hidden gaps.

Creature: The strange uneven “floor” of the pool is in fact the result of the Thrallkeeper’s attempt to conjure a havero from the Dark Tapestry. If the water were drained, it would reveal what appears to be a petrified, uneven floor of tentacles and coils of flesh—this is a small portion of the havero’s flank. Here and there, strange bulbous protrusions (closed eyes) stud the ropy mass. The slumbering creature is, as far as visitors to this chamber are concerned, in a trance-like state analogous to what mortals would understand as a form of hibernation. In this form of stasis, the havero’s gigantic body is impossibly distant where it orbits its nameless dead star, but the bottom of this pool sits strangely “adjacent” to its side.

Fortunately for the PCs, there is no way to waken the havero or draw it completely through the portal into this room (as detailed on page 472, a havero is a CR 24 creature), but due to a strange quirk of the ancient Thrallkeeper magic, the havero’s body can feel sounds that manifest in this room. Worse, the tips of its most distant tentacles can reach through this boundary to attack creatures in the immediate area.

As the PCs explore areas A2–A7, track their Noise Points to determine how many of the havero’s tentacles awaken. Adjust the PCs’ Noise Points as detailed on the following table.

Action	Noise Points Generated
Casting a spell with a verbal component	1 point per spell
Running (or swimming in water)	1 point per character moving
Yelling	1 point per yell
Combat	5 points per round
Using a sonic effect	10 points per effect
Attacking tentacles	0 points
Attacking havero’s flank	1 point per point of damage

If a noise occurs in area A2, double the Noise Points generated (this does not apply to attacks on the havero). For every minute that passes, reduce the total of accumulated Noise Points by 1d10.

The number of Noise Points determines how the havero’s tentacles waken and investigate. Use the following chart to determine when the arms awaken and what actions they take; the effects of each level of noise occur on the round after the Noise Point total reaches the indicated level. Reductions to Noise Points don’t trigger a new havero tentacle reaction.

Noise Points	Tentacle Reaction
10	Twitch: The havero’s tentacles writhe and tremble. The entire ruin shakes slightly, and the waters of the pool in area A2 slosh and churn as if something large just shifted below the surface.
20	Investigate: One havero tentacle emerges from the water of area A2 to investigate that room. The tentacle emerges from one of the two central squares on a randomly determined side of the pool (between the areas east and west of the central balcony). If there are already tentacles in these squares, new tentacles can emerge in any adjacent square. If the tentacle that emerges senses any creatures within the 60-foot range of its blindsense, it attacks the closest such creature in range.
30	Seek: As per Investigate above, but two havero tentacles emerge from the pool in area A2, one from each side of the pool.
40	Assault: As per Seek above, save that the two tentacles emerge from a square along a pool’s edge closest to the last sound that generated any noise, potentially giving the tentacles further reach.
50	Wrath: As per Assault above, save that four tentacles emerge.

When the havero’s tentacles emerge, treat each one as its own, unique creature. No more than four tentacles can be active at a time, and new tentacles emerge at the start of any round as appropriate for the current Noise Point total. Once a tentacle emerges, it cannot move, but it does have a reach of 60 feet—only 10 feet is “used up” by reaching out of the pool, leaving plenty of length to reach targets throughout the upper floor.

The easiest way to represent the havero’s tentacles in tactical combat is with a large number of similarly sized tokens, such as coins. When a tentacle emerges, place a token on the appropriate square. This first token notes the position of the tentacle’s tip—this is the part of the



A
HISTORY
OF ASHES

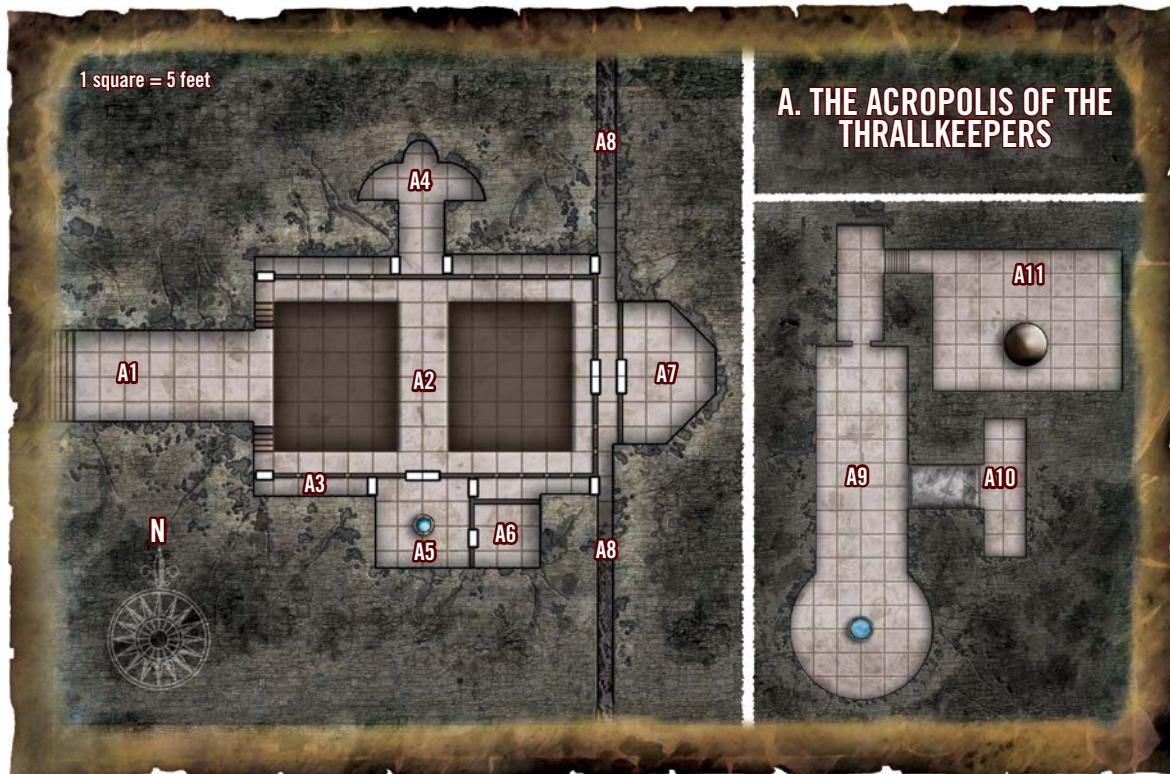
CHAPTER
BACKGROUND

PART 1:
THE ROAD
NORTH

PART 2:
TRIALS OF
RESPECT

PART 3:
MANTIS AND
MAIDEN

CHAPTER
CONCLUSION



tentacle that “moves” when the havero explores. Whenever you move this token out of a square, leave a new token in the square it vacates; this indicates the length of the tentacle as it trails from the tip back to the pool. Consider using differently colored tokens to represent different tentacles, since once they start curling around the room they can quickly grow tangled.

When a tentacle takes its action, the tip can immediately relocate to any point within 50 feet of its base, and the tentacle can make a single attack against any creature that is adjacent to any of the tokens that make up its length. Likewise, a character can attack a tentacle at any point along its length.

Once multiple tentacles emerge, it might be easiest to use additional types of markers as well, if you wish to keep clear which trail of tokens is “attached” to which tip. You might use different colored lengths of string or yarn to track the location of each tentacle, for instance, using tokens at points along the length to weigh down the string so it doesn’t slide all over the battlemat. If a tentacle is reduced to 0 hit points, it retracts into the pool. To represent the havero’s reaction to this tiny amount of pain, reduce the current Noise Point total by 1d20 each time the PCs defeat a tentacle (but remember to keep adding on new Noise Points as the round carries on). At the start of the following round, determine the amount of active havero tentacles again, reducing or increasing the number

as appropriate. The PCs can effectively reduce their Noise Point total to less than 10 by killing one or more tentacles and rolling well on the resulting d20 roll, in which case any active tentacles retract into the pool as well. This means the havero becomes quelled for 1 hour, during which time no amount of noise can attract its attention again.

There is no limit to the number of tentacles the havero can extend into this room, but if the PCs stubbornly kill a minimum of 20 tentacles in the span of a single combat, the creature grows tired of the battle and retracts its tentacles entirely for 1 hour, during which time no amount of noise can attract its attention again.

HAVERO TENTACLE

CR —

hp 66 each (see page 473)

Red Mantis: If the Red Mantis assassins find the PCs here, they hang back and observe, waiting to see what the PCs do in the room. They would prefer to wait for their attack when the PCs split up or are in a room where they can surround the PCs easily, and as such do not wish to initiate attack in this chamber. If the havero wakes, the Red Mantis watch quietly, entering the fray only if they are noticed or to strike while the PCs are wounded as soon as the tentacles withdraw. If there are no PCs here when the assassins arrive, they avoid the pool, spreading out to investigate the surrounding rooms in numerical order.

4

Sklar-Quah: The Sklar-Quah feel ill at ease in this room and don't stay to investigate, instead moving on to area A3. A successful DC 21 Survival check allows PCs to track their progress across the floor to this room. If the Sklar-Quah observe the PCs' fight in this room, they come to the party's aid if things start to look dire, but otherwise, they simply watch.

Story Award: If the PCs navigate this room without waking the havero, or if the PCs wake the creature's tentacles but manage to quell them (regardless of how many havero tentacles are destroyed), award the PCs 9,600 XP.

A3 OBSERVATION POINT

One wall of this otherwise plain hallway features several long narrow gaps that open into the room beyond.

At the time of the acropolis's construction, the Thrallkeepers naively intended to use these gaps to view summoned creatures from a point of safety.

Sklar-Quah: Krojun and his thundercallers choose this area as their observation point. Once the PCs move out of area A2, the barbarians follow as quietly as they can—chances are good they'll be spotted, of course, at which point refer to A Crowded Dungeon on page 210 to see how they react to being discovered.

A4 SHRINE TO KURSHU

The curved northern alcove of this chamber displays a brilliantly colored bas-relief carving of a woman with six wings and a serpentine lower body. The coils of her lower body wind in and out and around a large seven-pointed star. Tiny shards of gemstones embedded in her tail make her scales glisten as though with moisture, but in more places, chunks of the carving have cracked or crumbled away, giving the depiction of the serpentine woman a strange but undeniable look of age and decay.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Knowledge (religion) check recalls that this room was once a shrine dedicated to Lissala's herald, Kurshu; known during Thassilon's height as "Kurshu the Divine Serpent," the herald is known today as "Kurshu the Undying," as she lingers despite the fact that her god seems to have moved on.

The Thrallkeepers called upon Kurshu during the construction of the acropolis, and this shrine was built to honor her aid, yet none have offered prayer here in thousands of years.

Treasure: The sapphire and emerald slivers in the statue's tail collectively total 3,175 gp in value.

Sklar-Quah: If the Sklar-Quah enter this room while tracking the PCs, the thundercallers hoot in appreciation

at the herald's beauty (add 2 Noise Points) while they wait for Krojun to pick up the trail again.

A5 THE ILLUMACORE

The floor of this otherwise empty chamber contains a five-foot-diameter hole in the center, surrounded by a ring of tangled runes. Inside the hole, a shaft filled with brilliant emerald light drops into the depths.

The glowing shaft is a magical elevator called an *illumacore*. A traveler who steps into the ring receives the benefit of a *feather fall* spell and gently floats down the shaft of light for 70 feet into area A9. Once there, a traveler who crosses the matching ring of ruins on the floor and enters the shaft is affected by *levitate*, allowing him to safely ascend back to this chamber. The spell effects terminate each time the traveler steps out of the shaft. A character who studies the *illumacore*'s moderate magic aura and succeeds at a DC 26 Spellcraft check deduces its properties.

Red Mantis: If a pair of assassins move through the double doors into this room in search of the PCs, they spend 2d4 rounds investigating the *illumacore* before determining what the device is for, at which point they descend down into area A9.

Sklar-Quah: The Sklar-Quah don't know what to make of the light-filled shaft. If Krojun determines that the PCs' trail leads down here, his curiosity wanes, as he's not willing to dig that deep into these ruins just to see what the PCs are up to or to get a mark of any sort. If he accompanies the PCs, though, he shows no sign of fear and follows them down the hole; he may even, at this point, be the first to step into the light, if only to show off his bravery.

A6 SHRINE TO LISSALA

A strange bronze statue stands in the center of the room. The statue depicts a half-snake, half-human creature with the lower body of a serpent coiled about a stand and the upper torso of a slender human woman. Her hands are crossed over her chest to clutch two objects at her shoulders—the right hand holds a large quill, while the left holds a jade-handled whip. Six birdlike wings emerge from the torso's shoulders, and instead of a head, it has a disk bearing a seven-pointed star. Jade runes run down the statue's belly and along the length of its snaky lower body.

This statue depicts Lissala, the forgotten goddess of runes and fate. Tradition dictated that the Thrallkeepers ensure that a map of their complex was accessible to visiting members of the order. These maps, however, were



A
HISTORY
OF ASHES

CHAPTER
BACKGROUND

PART 1:
THE ROAD
NORTH

PART 2:
TRIALS OF
RESPECT

PART 3:
MANTIS AND
MAIDEN

CHAPTER
CONCLUSION

4



usually obscured to prevent lowly thralls from educating themselves and becoming tempted to explore forbidden areas of the complex. The statue conceals one such map.

The statue's base contains a wide but shallow drawer, which a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check notices. Inside is a 4-foot-diameter circular frame containing several wedge-shaped metal plates, each punched with its own intricate design. Each plate slides smoothly over or under the two adjacent plates along the outer ring. The ring fits perfectly over the entrance to the *illumacore* in area A5; if it's placed there, light from the shaft below shines through the openings in the plates to create a pattern of lines on the ceiling above. By correctly aligning the wedges (with a successful DC 20 Disable Device check), the markings line up to create a huge map of what the acropolis once looked like during the height of the Thassilonian empire. A few rounds of study should allow a character to note that the few rooms that remain extant today are but a small fraction of the chambers that once sprawled here.

Treasure: The jade-handled whip the statue holds can be removed with a little bit of work—it is a +2 *axiomatic whip* but carries with it a potent curse. Each day someone maintains ownership of the whip, he takes 1 point of Wisdom damage—this damage manifests as vague visions

of menacing but indistinct shapes covered with runes lurking now and then at the edge of that character's vision. Further, Thassilonian runes become harbingers for great menace and fear to the cursed PC—even if he can read Thassilonian, he believes the runes hold some deeper threat to him and his loved ones. As long as Thassilonian writing is visible, the cursed character takes a -6 penalty on all Will saving throws. This curse can be lifted only by returning the whip to the statue's hand, or by a *remove curse* or *break enchantment* effect against CL 18th.

A7 ETERNAL GLYPHS (CR 9)

The walls of this chamber are decorated with six life-sized bas-relief carvings that depict a diverse collection of priests, each adorned in billowing robes covered in Thassilonian runes. An intricate scripture winds around the carvings, coiling across them and along the walls like an immensely long tangle of ribbons. Several ancient skeletons, some clad in hide armor or clutching Shoanti weapons, lie scattered around the statue's base.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Knowledge (religion) check identifies that the carvings portray upper-tier clergy of Lissala. The tiny coded lettering on the walls can be deciphered by a PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Linguistics



check and either understands Thassilonian or uses *comprehend languages*. Although the text purports to be a dire warning of life-threatening perils in the acropolis beyond, it is actually a trap to thwart unwanted visitors.

Trap: The glyphs compel any who begin to read and comprehend them to refrain from any other activity until she has finished reading and made sense of the entire text (characters who do not understand Thassilonian cannot be affected by this trap). This task is impossible, since portions of the text that have already been studied change and alter themselves slightly to create different nonsense meanings that nonetheless seem incredibly important while they are being studied.

To simulate the full extent of the trap's allure, GMs are encouraged to hoodwink players into having their PCs read the text for as long as possible before even requiring a saving throw. For example, should a player ask how long it takes his PC to decipher the script, answer, "Approximately 5 minutes." After the time expires, explain that the PC is almost done but the writing is denser

than anticipated, so deciphering it requires perhaps an additional 15 minutes of work. After that time passes, explain the first line of text is now complete but there are five more that need to be read to piece together all the information from the first. This takes just 6, maybe 7 hours. Only when a player has caught on and insists on tearing away his PC should you have that character attempt a Will save. A character who fails becomes obsessed with the carvings and finds that she cannot stop reading. A new save can be attempted each day to pull away, but each save comes with a cumulative -2 penalty to escape. A character who is not under the influence of the eternal glyphs can manually drag an entranced ally out of the room, at which point she recovers immediately; but a character under the glyphs' influence resists such an act, so a successful grapple combat maneuver check is needed to save her in this manner.

Note that characters who succumb to this trap may become victims of the Red Mantis. At your discretion, if the entire party falls victim to the eternal glyphs, you can have Krojun and his thundercallers step in to drag the PCs to safety.

ETERNAL GLYPHS

CR 9

XP 6,400

Type magic; **Perception DC 33; Disable Device DC 33**

EFFECTS

Trigger when read; **Reset** automatic

Effect spell effect (*suggestion* heightened to 8th level to continue reading glyphs; Will DC 23 negates, new save can be attempted each day at a cumulative -2 penalty)

Treasure: The five skeletons on the floor are the remains of long-dead Shoanti explorers who had the unfortunate ability to read Thassilonian and died of thirst while reading the eternal glyphs. Most of their gear has rotted or rusted away, but among the remains are a suit of +2 hide armor, a +1 frost earth breaker^{UE}, and a +1 returning totem spear (see page 211).

Respect Points: If Krojun has to save the PCs from this trap, they lose 1d6 Respect Points.

A8 COLLAPSED CORRIDORS

This corridor ends abruptly, choked off by thousands of tons of collapsed rock and sand.

These sections of the complex were damaged during the havero's initial rampage, and over the centuries that followed, erosion finished the job. The corridors to the north once led to the Thrallkeepers' opulent living quarters as well as several chambers that housed a number of smaller, less ambitious summoning projects.



A
HISTORY
OF ASHES

CHAPTER
BACKGROUND

PART 1:
THE ROAD
NORTH

PART 2:
TRIALS OF
RESPECT

PART 3:
MANTIS AND
MAIDEN

CHAPTER
CONCLUSION

4

The corridor to the south once led to the Thrallkeepers' slave pens and common rooms for their thralls.

A9 LOWER LEVEL

This wide corridor, composed of polished black granite, runs north to south. A blue stone disc sits on the floor to the south, with a glowing column of blue light rising up from the disc through a hole in the ceiling. To the north, a five-foot-wide circular opening in the wall opens into a smaller chamber. The ceiling here is only fifteen feet high.

As long as the havero remains in hibernation (even if the tips of some of its tentacles are “aware”), this level is beyond the reach of the havero’s arms. Likewise, noise created here cannot alert the slumbering creature above unless the sound is particularly loud.

A huge stone plug blocks a hidden hallway to the east from this passage, and this fact can be discovered with a successful DC 22 Perception check. In its current position, the plug bars entry to area A10. When the Thrallkeepers required entry to area A10, the plug was removed by a huge team of servants, or with the use of Strength-enhancing magic. The plug is 15 feet long and weighs 120 tons—it cannot be pulled out of place without fantastic strength (a single Medium humanoid would need a Strength score of 55 to perform this stunt)—but enough of a gap exists that *gaseous form* can be used to enter area A10. The stone plug has hardness 8 and 1,800 hit points per 5-foot-square.

Red Mantis: If the assassins reach this far before the PCs arrive, they plan an ambush for the PCs, placing themselves around the *illumacore*’s landing pad so that they can surround the first PC to descend into the room. If they reach here after the PCs, they prepare their ambush to the north so they can strike the PCs once the PCs exit from area A11.

A10 THE FALBACK VAULT

A jumble of five crushed humanoid skeletons lie in the southeast corner of this chamber. Stone niches in the southern wall contain a few pieces of clutter.

This vault was used by the Thrallkeepers as a panic room, a common emergency defense in case a conjured creature ever managed to break free of containment. The more powerful Thrallkeepers used teleportation to transport themselves into this chamber, leaving no way for their thralls to follow. Once inside, the Thrallkeepers would use magic to contact another outpost for aid and then wait for their colleagues to unseal the vault once whatever crisis had arisen was safely contained.

When the havero escaped its bonds, five Thrallkeepers fled here, just as they had been taught. The fully wakened havero, however, was able to slide its tentacles between dimensions and reach the Thrallkeepers even here. The skeletons are all that remain of their bodies. Unlike elsewhere in the acropolis where scavengers and explorers have looted most objects of value, the dead bodies in this vault are still wearing their gear. The bones crumble to dust if touched, as does much of what remains of the bodies’ nonmagical clothing, but there are plenty of valuable items here.

Treasure: The shelves contain several ancient magic items designed to sustain sheltering Thrallkeepers until whatever crisis might lurk outside could be quelled. Among a collection of exotic cups, bowls, and silverware worth 75 gp in all are a *bottle of air*, a *decanter of endless water*, and a *sustaining spoon* (which produces gruel with an abnormally spicy taste). The Thrallkeepers also kept two *scrolls of clairvoyance*, two *scrolls of sending*, and two *scrolls of dimension door* here, enabling any members who sought sanctuary to evaluate how safe it was outside the vault.

The treasure scattered among the skeletons consists of a crystal locket depicting a two-headed dove (worth 325 gp), a pair of sapphire earrings (worth 4,350 gp), and a bejeweled holy symbol of Lissala (worth 2,000 gp). Also found among the bones are three magic items: a +1 *magical beast-bane dagger*, a bright orange *cloak of resistance +3*, and a *scabbard of keen edges*.

A11 THE GOLARION GLOBE (CR 8)

The walls, ceiling, and floor of this chamber have been painted to resemble a starry sky, giving the illusion of walking through space. A ten-foot-diameter stone sphere floats five feet above the floor near the room’s southern wall. Three short metal rods protrude from the lower hemisphere, radiating outward like a tripod, only the rods rest on empty air rather than a solid surface. The sphere appears to have been carefully carved with tiny rivers, mountains, oceans, and forests.

This stone globe represents the world of Golarion as it appeared more than 10,000 years in the past. A successful DC 20 Knowledge (geography) check reveals that the sphere is a map of the ancient world, yet there are many features on the globe that seem inaccurate—characters who seek out Varisia, for example, find that the nation is mostly landlocked except for a narrow southern coastline. Other features are missing as well, such as the Inner Sea, while in some places islands or entire continents exist where none appear today. Further casting the globe’s accuracy into suspicion are the vast swaths of blank surface in some regions, where only vague outlines of continents and oceans appear.

Although the globe seems inaccurate, it is simply out of date. Crafted by Thassilonian explorers who were able to cast their minds out into the gulfs of space so they could then look back upon the planet, the globe was created before Earthfall reshaped much of the world.

The globe is hollow—a 1-foot-thick shell of stone surrounding a spherical chamber containing a magical space that the Thrallkeepers used to cast their minds out beyond Golarion to explore and meditate. The globe radiates strong divination magic. Anyone who touches the globe and concentrates on the stars or sky is immediately teleported inside of the globe and placed into a state of suspended animation as his mind is cast out into the distance to see strange and alien worlds and float in the void between the stars. A successful DC 30 Spellcraft check while studying the globe's aura allows a researcher to deduce its function as a magic item, including the method of exiting the globe once a character has entered it (see below).

Originally, this magical device allowed the Thrallkeepers to seek out strange new creatures to attempt to call into the acropolis, but over the years, the magic of the globe has faltered. Today, it does little more than provide a strange series of visions to the user that, over prolonged exposure, can cause madness. Every minute a character remains inside the globe, he must succeed at a DC 15 Will save to avoid taking 1d4 points of Intelligence damage. A character can exit the globe into area A11 at any time by concentrating on Golarion or any part of the world (including creatures that live on the planet). Once a character is reduced to 0 Intelligence, he is shunted out of the globe automatically.

Once a character emerges from the globe, the Thrallkeeper's Mark manifests on one of the character's hands (see Treasure below for what this brand grants).

Treasure: The globe is held in place by a triangle of three *immovable rods*. Removing a rod is a simple matter of pressing the button at the rod's base, but since the hollow stone globe is balanced on the three rods, removing even one causes the globe to roll off and fall crashing to the floor 5 feet below. This sends thunderous echoes up through the ruins (add 10 Noise Points) and cracks the globe's surface—sinister GMs can pick Varisia as the part of the world to suffer this indignity, even though the damage is superficial and meaningless. A creature under the globe when it falls takes 5d6 points of damage from the sphere unless it succeeds at a DC 15 Reflex save to

avoid the damage. If the globe is damaged in this way, it continues to function for 1d4 weeks before its magic forever fades.

The Thrallkeeper's Mark manifests on the palm of a character when he or she emerges from the globe. Each PC understands the ramifications of the mark and how to use it immediately, and can choose to gain the mark on her right or left palm. A character who takes the mark on her right palm gains the ability to use *dismissal* once per day as a spell-like ability, while a character who takes the mark on her left palm instead gains the ability to use *summon monster V* once per day as a spell-like ability. These spell-like abilities function at a caster level equal to the user's total Hit Dice, and the save DC for *dismissal*

is equal to $15 + \text{user's Charisma modifier}$. Regardless of which palm is chosen, the Thrallkeeper's Mark grants a +4 luck bonus on all saving throws against mind-affecting effects. The Thrallkeeper's Mark lasts for only 1 week before its magic fades, and a character can receive the mark only once per year.

Respect Points: If the PCs gain the Thrallkeeper's Mark in the presence of a Shoanti NPC, or if they display the brand and manifest one of its powers before such an NPC, the party gains 3 Respect Points.

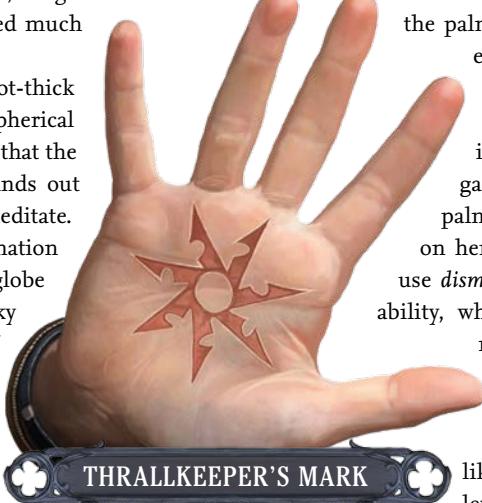
Story Award: If at least one PC gains the Thrallkeeper's Mark, award the party 9,600 XP.

A PARTING OF WAYS

Once the PCs complete their business in the acropolis, the other two groups in the area prepare to depart. If the PCs haven't had a decisive conflict with the Red Mantis assassins by the time they attempt to leave the ruins, they should encounter the Red Mantis then. The Sklar-Quah, if they haven't left already, do so soon after the PCs gain the Thrallkeeper's Mark; the PCs don't encounter Krojun and the Sklar-Quah again until they travel to Flameford (see page 226). At your discretion, though, Krojun may agree to guide the PCs to the Sklar-Quah camp if they wish to travel there next.

HOUSE OF THE MOON

Akram is the only truthspeaker currently living in the Cinderlands. As a member of the Lyrune-Quah, Akram is a nomad and travels with his clan throughout the area; fortunately, Thousand Bones knows where the Lyrune-Quah are likely to be camped during this season—near an



THRALLKEEPER'S MARK



A HISTORY OF ASHES

CHAPTER BACKGROUND

PART 1: THE ROAD NORTH

PART 2: TRIALS OF RESPECT

PART 3: MANTIS AND MAIDEN

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

4

ancient Desnan temple called the House of the Moon. If the PCs wish to contact Akram and attempt to secure his support as a truthspeaker, they must travel to the House of the Moon and search for him there.

The House of the Moon is unlike most of the ruins that dot the Varisian landscape, for it was not built by the Thassilonians. Worship of Desna dates back further than that ancient empire. Before the minions of First King Xin arrived in the region, the Varisians already dwelt here. The Varisians were all nomadic at the time, and many worshiped Desna. As Thassilon rose, though, the runelords saw open worship of the gods as a distraction, and destroyed most of the Desnan shrines that dotted the land. The House of the Moon was no exception. Yet when Thassilon fell and the Age of Darkness began, a new shrine was mysteriously rebuilt on the site of one of those destroyed shrines. It gave the people who would become the Lyrune-Quah a place of shelter in that deadly age, and today it has become one of the anchors of their culture.

MEETING THE MOON MAIDENS

Currently, very few Lyrune-Quah are present at the House of the Moon, though more are en route. As is sometimes the case, unfortunately, the nomads who went ahead to prepare the site arrived to find that a local predator has taken up the shrine as its territory—in this case, a dangerous creature known as a red reaver. Traditionally, the first tribe to arrive at the House of the Moon in a season is responsible for driving out the monsters and making the shrine safe for the tribes yet to arrive, but the red reaver is proving to be more trouble than a pack of gargoyles or a few hungry ankhegs, and already several Lyrune-Quah moon maidens have perished at the monster's talons.

When the PCs arrive in the region, a patrol of six moon maidens notices their approach unless the PCs take pains to reach the area stealthily (in which case they might well come to the House of the Moon unannounced). If they simply defeat the red reaver on their own, the Lyrune-Quah react with the same gratitude as if the PCs had spoken to them beforehand.

Moon maidens are the traditional honor guard and protector caste of the Lyrune-Quah, an order of rangers who prefer to travel and hunt at night under the moon's watchful eye. The patrol's leader is a woman named Tekrakai, and she has grown increasingly worried and distracted at the red reaver's presence in the House of the Moon. Having already thrown nearly a dozen of her moon maidens at the problem, she has consigned herself to the inevitable humiliation of admitting to the main body of the Lyrune-Quah—scheduled to arrive in the area in less than a month—that she was unable to secure the House of the Moon.

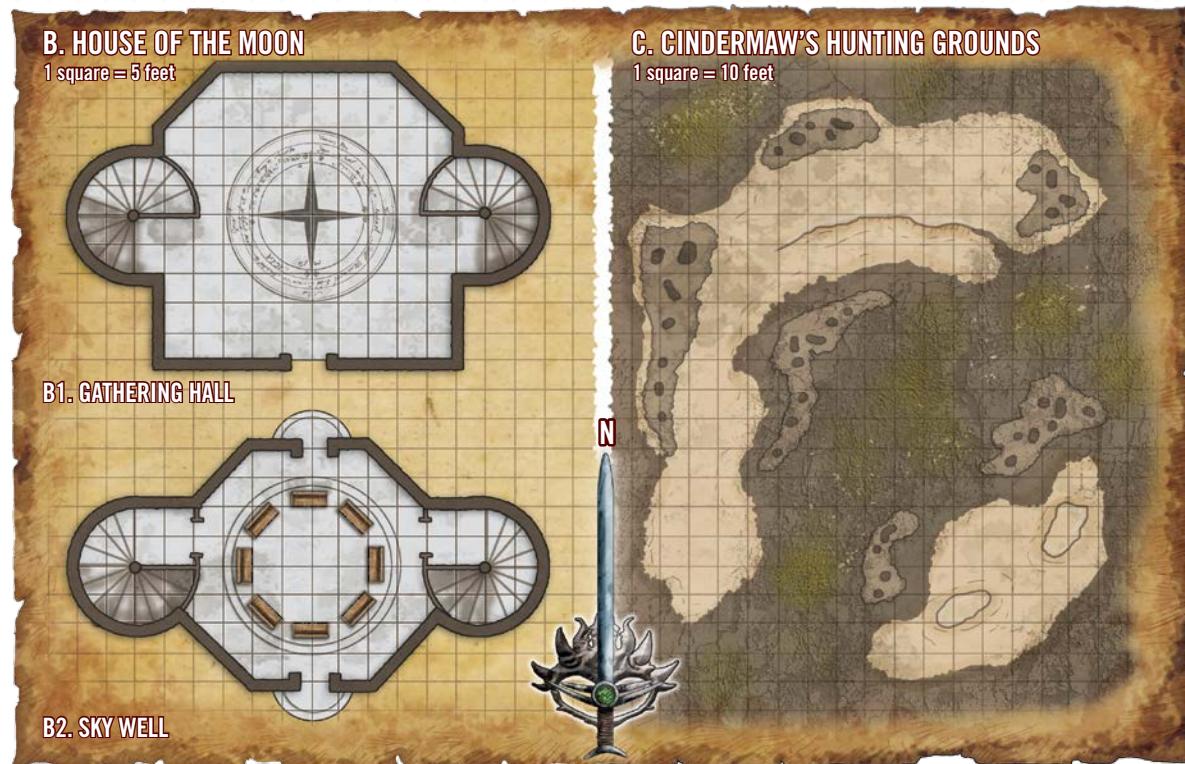
Tekrakai is not the original leader of these moon maidens, but after their previous commander was killed and eaten on the first assault against the red reaver, the others turned to her. She isn't eager to maintain this role, but does her best to live up to the title for the time. The other moon maidens are Eaklai, Maeva, and Yandree—all three are loyal to Tekrakai.

Tekrakai's initial reaction to the PCs is initially one of distrust but not hostility, for she also knows that many tshamek worship Desna, and that the Song of the Spheres often uses traveling adventurers as her agents. In all, only four moon maidens remain in the area, including Tekrakai—far too few to confront the red reaver. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Sense Motive check notes the expressions of worry worn by the moon maidens as they confront the PCs and demand an explanation for why tshamek dare approach a site sacred to the Lyrune-Quah.

As long as the PCs aren't offensive or hostile, Tekrakai's attitude softens. She's a kind person at heart, and as with many Lyrune-Quah, she is more open in accepting tshamek than other quahs. If the PCs ask her about Truthspeaker Akram, Tekrakai admits that he is indeed scheduled to arrive with the rest of her tribe in a few short days, but their sacred House of the Moon has been claimed by a highly territorial monster that the moon maidens have been unable to drive off, and she worries that this year's pilgrimage may need to be rerouted. She would prefer to have the PCs volunteer to help defeat the monster, but if they don't take the hint, she humbly asks for their aid. She adds that if the PCs can help her kill the red reaver, the Lyrune-Quah will be much more prepared to provide aid and allow the PC to travel with their truthspeaker.

Assuming the PCs agree to aid them, Tekrakai sighs in relief and tells them that she and her remaining three moon maidens are prepared to assault the House of the Moon immediately, and if the PCs are ready, she leads them to the structure's entrance at once. She can tell them about the powers and abilities of the red reaver that dwells within, particularly that its claws can rend flesh, its roar can cause fearful discord, and perhaps most importantly, the creature is easily distracted by artistic beauty so a performance could well lull it into a state of temporary calm. She can also point out that the creature never sleeps, and as long as it defends a site it counts as its territory, it fights with a ferocious focus—driving the thing off permanently is likely impossible, and killing it is the best solution.

Tekrakai and her fellow moon maidens are prepared to assist the PCs with the battle to retake the House of the Moon; in fact, if the PCs want them to stay out of the fight, one PC must succeed at a DC 30 Diplomacy check or a DC 23 Intimidate check. A PC who succeeds at



a DC 25 Knowledge (local) check recognizes that forcing the moon maidens to stand down would likely damage any growing respect the PCs might otherwise earn (see Respect Points below).

LYRUNE-QUAH MOON MAIDENS (4)

CR 6

XP 2,400 each

Female human barbarian 1/ranger 6

CG Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Perception +13

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 13 (+5 armor, +1 Dex, +1 dodge, -2 rage)

hp 92 each (7 HD; 6d10+1d12+48)

Fort +13, **Ref** +6, **Will** +6

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee +1 starknife +11/+6 (1d6+5/x3), +1 starknife +11/+6 (1d6+3/x3)

Ranged starknife +9/+4 (1d6+5/x3)

Special Attacks combat style (two-weapon combat), favored enemy (giants +4, magical beasts +2), rage (8 rounds/day)

Ranger Spells Prepared (CL 3rd; concentration +4)

1st—*lead blades*^{APG}, *longstrider*

TACTICS

Before Combat The moon maidens each cast *lead blades* and *longstrider* before entering combat.

C. CINDERMAW'S HUNTING GROUNDS

1 square = 10 feet

N



During Combat The moon maidens rage when combat begins, hurling their nonmagical starknives at their enemies for the first few rounds. Once they're down to only their magical starknives, they rush in to engage foes in melee. If they're fighting with allies, one moon maiden activates her hunter's bond to share her bonuses, with the others activating their bonds in turn when the previous one wears off.

Morale A moon maiden fights until brought to fewer than 10 hit points, at which point she flees to recover and plan her second assault on the enemy. A moon maiden who is raging does not flee, but fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 13, **Con** 22, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 21

Feats Dodge, Endurance, Extra Rage, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Quick Draw, Totem Spirit (Lyrune-Quah)^{ISWG}, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (starknife)

Skills Acrobatics +9, Climb +12, Handle Animal +8, Perception +13, Stealth +9, Survival +11

Languages Common, Shoanti

SQ fast movement, favored terrain (desert +2), hunter's bond (companions), track +3, wild empathy +6

Gear +1 hide armor, +1 starknives (2), starknives (6)

Respect Points: If the PCs argue successfully to keep the moon maidens from taking part in the fight, they lose 2d4 Respect Points.



A
HISTORY
OF ASHES

CHAPTER
BACKGROUND

PART 1:
THE ROAD
NORTH

PART 2:
TRIALS OF
RESPECT

PART 3:
MANTIS AND
MAIDEN

CHAPTER
CONCLUSION

Story Award: For each moon maiden who survives the fight with the red reaver (or who is brought back to life should she be killed), award the PCs XP as if they had defeated that moon maiden in combat.

B HOUSE OF THE MOON (CR 13)

A silvery stone shrine stands atop a low promontory in the foothills here. The surrounding stone has been smoothed by ages of wind, but the shrine itself remains as stark and unweathered as the day its final block was set in place. The structure shimmers with a slightly reflective sheen, and even on moonless nights it glimmers with lunar radiance. A 30-foot-tall opening allows access to the shrine interior at ground level. The curving sides of the archway are framed by the long peacock-like tail feathers of an immense star monarch carved into the building's facade. The creature's wings furl to the left and right, fanning over two side towers attached to the central spire, which rises to a height of 100 feet. Above, a silvery sphere caps the central tower's peak, as if the moon had fallen out of the sky to become impaled upon the steeple.

The House of the Moon is an ancient structure, built (according to legend) by an army of lyrakiens to serve Desna's faithful as a place of shelter during the Age of Darkness. The stone that makes up the sacred site's walls is certainly unusual, featuring many of the qualities of magically treated superior masonry (hardness 16, hp 180, break DC 55). In addition, the stone walls repair damage to themselves at the rate of 5 hit points per round as long as moonlight shines upon the structure. The stone resists magical manipulation and effects with spell resistance 26. At night, the glowing walls provide dim illumination within the structure.

The entire building is suffused with Desna's grace, and a worshiper of Desna who enters the House of the Moon feels welcome even when monsters like the red reaver lurk within. Worshipers who sleep inside the building at night are always visited with dreams in which a birdlike humanoid with jet-black feathers engages the dreamer in conversation. This is a visitation from one of Desna's favored agents, an avoral (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 16) named Nightspear. The conversation functions as *commune* (five questions) followed by a *divination* spell (on any one topic of concern to the dreamer). This dream vision can occur only once per year for each worshiper, and is one of the primary reasons the worshipers of the Lyrune-Quah annually return to the House of the Moon.

The House of the Moon's interior consists of two floors—a large open area below that serves as a

gathering hall (area **B1**) and a smaller area above known as the "sky well" (area **B2**). The two floors are connected by graceful spiraling staircases.

The walls in the gathering hall are decorated with symbols and imagery sacred to the worship of Desna. A massive starknife made of white stone, measuring 20 feet from tip to tip, sits on a pivot in the center of the floor. The starknife is very cunningly balanced, so that despite its size, visiting priests can easily rotate it on its central axis to reflect the current month and day. With its constant need for manual updating, this primitive proto-calendar enables a Shoanti visitor to determine that it's been months since anyone worshiped at the House of the Moon. A formidable stack of picked-over animal carcasses (remnants from the red reaver's meals) and seven dead moon maidens are heaped in the southwest corner of the hall.

Above, in the sky well, a moonlike sphere emanates a shimmering curtain of moonlight at all times that then



reflects upward against the ceiling to project an accurate image of the clear night sky, regardless of the time of day or weather. In this way, the sky well functions as an observatory, allowing astronomers to stargaze even on stormy nights or at high noon.

Creature: The red reaver is not an intrinsically evil creature, but neither is it particularly peaceful. When its previous territory higher up in the Wyvern Mountains (an outdoor observatory ringed by standing menhirs) was destroyed by a landslide, the red reaver lumbered south in search of a new home. After roving through the mountains and down into the Cinderlands, it came upon the House of the Moon—something in the terrain and structure itself felt like a natural fit, and the red reaver adopted the site as its own.

The reaver spends the majority of its time in area **B1**, which it finds to be the most comfortable part of the House of the Moon. As soon as it notices intruders, it swiftly moves to confront them with its fearsome roar. It has learned that heavily armored foes tend to hit harder, so it focuses its wrath on any of the most armored targets in sight. The red reaver fights to the death, and pursues foes to the limit of its territory (half a mile in any direction from the House of the Moon).

RED REAVER

CR 13

XP 25,600

hp 184 (currently 151; see page 476)

Treasure: Among the slain moon maidens in area **B1**, three suits of +1 hide armor and five +1 starknives remain intact. If the PCs aid the Lyrune-Quah in defeating the red reaver, they offer these magical weapons and suits of armor as thanks.

AFTER THE BATTLE

Although the Lyrune-Quah are as passionate about their heritage as any quah, they are much less xenophobic than most other quahs. Once the red reaver is slain, the Lyrune-Quah become even friendlier, and any surviving moon maidens invite the PCs to stay at the House of the Moon for a few nights, if they wish. If the PCs are accompanied by any Skoan-Quah boneslayers, the boneslayers' cultural mores require them to avoid too much interaction with the Lyrune-Quah; they opt instead to camp out of sight in a nearby vale until the PCs decide to move on.

The rest of the Lyrune-Quah tribe arrives, as scheduled, a few nights after the PCs arrive. Tekrakai introduces the PCs to the rest of her people, and once the PCs explain that they seek a Truthspeaker to vouch for their honor, the Shoanti become noticeably impressed. A few moments later, an aged man named Akram steps forward to introduce himself.

Akram himself is quiet, content for the most part to watch and observe. When he learns that the PCs seek to earn the respect of the Shoanti by undertaking quests, he becomes very intrigued and readily agrees to travel with them—primarily so he can witness their acts first-hand. Furthermore, while the Lyrune-Quah are not at war with the Sklar-Quah, relations between the two tribes are tense, and Akram sees traveling with the PCs as an opportunity to speak with a Sun Shaman to attempt to strengthen allegiances between the two tribes.

Akram finds the PCs endlessly fascinating: you should select one PC in particular (the character who is the most out-of-place and awkward in a wilderness environment works best) for him to become specifically interested in. Akram is never too far from this character, and often asks the character to explain choices made in a combat or conflicts. You can use Akram to encourage the PCs to examine their tactics and goals, or you can keep him in the background as a resource that needs to be protected from peril—whatever works best for your game.

In any case, once Akram agrees to accompany the PCs on their journey, he can be ready to go at a moment's notice. The old man presents an additional complication for the PCs—Akram remains relatively spry for man of 68 years, and with sharp mind and vision alike, but he's also quite frail and feeble. Keeping him alive when faced with monsters or other concerns is an unspoken responsibility the PCs shoulder as soon as they leave with their new truthspeaker ally; it's dishonorable for the Lyrune-Quah to send additional members along on a truthspeaker's mission simply to support the man, since that implies that the truthspeaker alone isn't enough to witness the required event.

AKRAM

CR 7

XP 3,200

Male old human cleric of Desna 8

CG Medium humanoid (human)

Init -1; **Senses** discern lies, Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 12, touch 9, flat-footed 12 (+3 armor, -1 Dex)

hp 47 (8d8+8)

Fort +7, **Ref** +2, **Will** +14

Immune charm, compulsion

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee +1 returning starknife +5/+0 (1d4-1/x3)

Special Attacks channel positive energy 6/day (DC 17, 4d6)

Cleric Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th; concentration +13)

At will—dimensional hop (80 feet/day)

8/day—bit of luck

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 8th; concentration +13)

4th—dimension door^o, divination, sending, tongues



A
HISTORY
OF ASHES

CHAPTER
BACKGROUND

PART 1:
THE ROAD
NORTH

PART 2:
TRIALS OF
RESPECT

PART 3:
MANTIS AND
MAIDEN

CHAPTER
CONCLUSION



3rd—*dispel magic, fly⁰, magic vestment, prayer, remove disease*

2nd—*aid⁰, calm emotions (DC 17), enthrall (DC 17), spiritual weapon, zone of truth (DC 17)*

1st—*command (DC 16), endure elements, longstrider⁰, obscuring mist, protection from evil, sanctuary (DC 16), shield of faith*

0 (at will)—*create water, light, mending, purify food and drink (DC 15)*

D domain spell; **Domains** Luck, Travel

TACTICS

Before Combat Akram casts *magic vestment* on his robes every day after breakfast.

During Combat Akram prefers to save his spells for healing or support. He generally casts *prayer* on the first round of battle, followed by *spiritual weapon* and then *sanctuary*, so he can move about the fringe of combat to heal allies in relative safety.

Morale Akram has little interest in combat, and if confronted while alone or if reduced to fewer than 10 hit points, he casts *dimension door* to escape immediate danger and then *fly* to flee to a place of safety.

STATISTICS

Str 6, **Dex** 9, **Con** 10, **Int** 12, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 13

Feats Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wand, Iron Will, Selective Channeling, Skill Focus (Sense Motive)

Skills Diplomacy +12, Knowledge (religion) +12, Linguistics +6, Sense Motive +19, Survival +13

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Shoanti

SQ agile feet (8/day), good fortune (1/day)

Combat Gear *wand of cure moderate wounds* (32 charges), *wand of lesser restoration* (20 charges); **Other**

Gear padded armor, +1 returning starknife, cloak of resistance +1

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Truthspeaker (Su) Akram has undertaken a lifelong quest of fasting, meditation, exploration, and prayer to achieve the status of truthspeaker. This has granted him immunity to all charm and compulsion effects. Furthermore, he is constantly under the effects of *discern lies* (CL 7th).

Respect Points: If the PCs secure the support of Truthspeaker Akram, award them 3 Respect Points.

Story Award: Grant the PCs 3,200 XP if they gain the support of Truthspeaker Akram, and a further 3,200 XP if he survives long enough for the PCs to earn the Sun Shaman's lore (as detailed in the Chapter Conclusion on page 254).

4



BELLY OF THE BEAST

Cindermaw is one of the deadliest predators of the Cinderlands, an ancient purple worm transformed into a unique creature infused with elemental fire after it devoured a malfunctioning portal to the Plane of Fire that stood inside a partially collapsed Thassilonian ruin. The infusion of elemental fire granted Cindermaw a host of unique fire-based abilities, drastically lengthened its lifespan, and awakened its intellect, which enabled it to understand its place in the world. Cindermaw knows that the Shoanti regard it as a sort of god, and it has taken this notion to an extreme. For an immense worm, Cindermaw is surprisingly vain and egocentric.

Cindermaw is a fiercely territorial hunter. Shoanti myth portrays the worm as a demonic creature

capable of consuming entire tribes, and the creature's exceptionally long lifespan has further cemented its position in Shoanti myth. Although it is challenging to track a creature that can burrow, Cindermaw generally sticks to one large hunting ground at a time. Thousand Bones can tell the PCs that their best chances of finding one of Cindermaw's current feeding grounds is to explore a region in the extreme west portion of the Ash-Blown Lands; it is said that the cindercones and other volcanic activity common in this area soothe the beast's troubled spirit.

As the PCs approach the worm's killing ground, they should become increasingly aware of the beast's presence. Encounters with other creatures grow less frequent, and what at first might seem like hills are in fact mounded burrows left behind by Cindermaw's tunneling. You can heighten the excitement of tracking down Cindermaw by confronting the PCs with some of the environmental hazards common to the Cinderlands (see Appendix 2).

C CINDERMAW'S HUNTING GROUNDS (CR 14)

In the end, the PCs don't have to find Cindermaw—if they spend enough time exploring its feeding grounds, the immense worm finds them. Build tension by having the creature surface in the distance and then dive below, as if it were an immense whale swimming through the ground. Have the worm erupt in front of the PCs, then behind them, and then to the side, and so on—Cindermaw enjoys showing off and intimidating prey before it attempts to feed.

In order to fulfill the ancient tradition's requirements and properly display bravery, only one PC needs to be eaten by the worm. How she emerges from within the worm is irrelevant, as long as the event is witnessed by Shoanti. Thousand Bones (and any other Shoanti the PCs speak to) should indicate that slaying Cindermaw isn't recommended, and can ironically undermine the PCs' story. After all, if the monster they fought could be killed, it obviously wasn't that tough of a foe.

The simplest method of fulfilling the goal is for a character to allow the worm to swallow her whole, and then cut her way out of the beast's belly. This is a dangerous stunt, and fire resistance is a good way to prepare for it. Paralyzing the worm (with *hold monster*, for example) is an acceptable way to simplify the situation (although keep in mind that Cindermaw is somewhat resistant to paralysis), as is charming or otherwise magically controlling the worm. If a PC can succeed at the concentration check required to cast spells while inside of a monster, she can even use *dimension door* or *teleport* to escape from the beast's belly once she has been swallowed.



A
HISTORY
OF ASHES

CHAPTER
BACKGROUND

PART 1:
THE ROAD
NORTH

PART 2:
TRAILS OF
RESPECT

PART 3:
MANTIS AND
MAIDEN

CHAPTER
CONCLUSION

Illusions are another option. A convincing illusion of a PC being eaten by Cindermaw might be difficult to create, though, especially if the PCs haven't seen the worm. Since Cindermaw radiates heat, any illusion of the worm must also be capable of radiating warmth. *Major image* (or a more powerful spell) can create a believable scene, but the observing Shoanti can still attempt a Will save against the spell's DC to determine whether he believes it. Of course, for such a deception to function, he also needs to believe he is in Cindermaw's hunting grounds in the first place.

CINDERMAW

CR 14

XP 38,400

Fire-infused advanced purple worm (*Advanced Bestiary* 139, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 230)

N Gargantuan magical beast (fire)

Init +1; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, tremorsense 60 ft.; **Perception +18**

DEFENSE

AC 31, touch 7, flat-footed 30 (+1 Dex, +24 natural, -4 size)

hp 216 (16d10+128); fire healing 1

Fort +18, Ref +11, Will +6

Defensive Abilities elemental body; **Immune** fire

Weaknesses vulnerable to cold

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., burrow 20 ft., firewalk 30 ft., swim 10 ft.

Melee bite +26 (4d8+13/19-20 plus 1d6 fire and grab), sting +26 (2d8+13 plus 1d6 fire)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks fire breath, heat (1d6 fire), poison, swallow whole (4d8+18, AC 22, 21 hp)

TACTICS

During Combat When Cindermaw tires of toying with the PCs, it burrows up directly in their midst. Unfortunately, Cindermaw has recently fed. On the first round of combat, it breathes fire on the most densely packed group of PCs. It then attacks with its bite and sting on the second round of combat. It does not try to swallow foes whole immediately—instead, it bites and moves on. Once the PCs deal more than 100 points of damage to the worm (or once it has breathed fire twice), it abandons this tactic and begins attempting to swallow victims. Alternatively, a character can tempt the worm into swallowing her by attempting a Bluff check to appear particularly appetizing and worth the risk of a stomach ache; she takes a -10 penalty on the check due to the bluff's far-fetched believability. Cindermaw can oppose this check with a Sense Motive check.

Morale Cindermaw retreats if it takes more than 80 points of damage in all from cold attacks, or as soon as it is reduced to fewer than 50 hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 37, Dex 12, Con 27, Int 5, Wis 8, Cha 14

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +33 (+35 bull rush, +37 grapple); **CMD** 44 (46 vs. bull rush, can't be tripped)

Feats Awesome Blow, Critical Focus, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (bite), Iron Will, Power Attack, Staggering Critical, Weapon Focus (bite), Weapon Focus (sting)

Skills Perception +18, Swim +21

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Bonus Feat Rather than receive Quick Draw as a bonus feat from the element-infused creature template, Cindermaw gained Iron Will as a bonus feat.

Elemental Body (Ex) Each time Cindermaw is exposed to a bleed, precision damage, poison, paralysis, seep, or stunning effect, it has a 25% chance to avoid that effect.

Fire Breath (Su) Cindermaw can breathe out a 30-foot cone of fire once every 1d4 rounds, dealing 8d6 points of fire damage to all in the area of effect. A successful DC 26 Reflex saving throw halves this damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Fire Healing (Ex) Cindermaw regains 1 hit point for each full round it remains in contact with a fire at least one size category smaller than itself. When struck by a magical fire



CINDERMAW

effect, Cindermaw regains 1 hit point for every 10 points of damage that the fire effect would otherwise deal.

Firewalk (Su) Cindermaw can climb an object on fire as though it had a climb speed of 30 feet. It can also fly at this speed with perfect maneuverability as long as it remains in contact with fire, and can walk on flames at its highest speed as per *air walk*.

Heat (Su) Each of Cindermaw's attacks deals an extra 1d6 points of fire damage.

Respect Points: The PCs earn 2 Respect points if one of them is swallowed and then escapes the worm's gullet. If she manages this stunt and leaves Cindermaw alive, this award increases to 4 Respect Points. If Cindermaw is slain, the PCs lose 1 Respect Point.

D FLAMEFORD

The PCs need not wait to visit the Sklar-Quah, even if they have not yet accumulated the 20 Respect Points needed to earn an audience with the Sun Shaman. Indeed, once they arrive at the camp of Flameford (the Sklar-Quah camp Thousand Bones suggests the PCs visit), they have additional opportunities to earn Respect Points by undergoing a grueling trial. Flameford's relatively central location in the Cinderlands makes it an attractive place to visit while the PCs are on their way to other locations, and while the Sklar-Quah are not friendly, their camp is not completely closed to tshamek.

As the PCs near Flameford, they are intercepted by a patrolling war party of six Shoanti burn riders—Sklar-Quah riders who have trained their mounts not to fear fire. These burn riders are headstrong and quick to anger, but they stay their weapons and do not attack on sight. If the PCs claim to the burn riders that they seek to gain Shoanti respect and shed their tshamek status, the burn riders respond with a hearty round of laughter. The presence of Boneslayer guides or Akram helps to lend plausibility to the PCs' situation, but regardless, the burn riders soon grow serious and agree to escort the PCs to Flameford at the very heart of Sklar-Quah lands. The Sklar-Quah do not attempt to disarm the PCs (believing that if they can't defeat an armed party of adventurers, they are not worthy of being burn riders), though the PCs are effectively surrounded by hundreds of Shoanti who are ready at an instant to defend their home from the outlanders.

The camp of Flameford is in a highly defensible spot, nestled in the middle of a field of permanent *spike stones* at the edge of an 80-foot-high cliff. The campsite consists of 17 yurts (weatherproof wood-framed tents with aurochs-hide walls and roofs), two larger tents, and a yard for the tribe's horses. In all, 52 Shoanti dwell here under the watchful guidance of Chief **Ready-Klar** (CN male old human barbarian 12), the aging and well-respected

uncle of the tribe's greatest living hero, Krojun Eats-What-He-Kills. The camp is also the home of a wizened old man who gave up his name when he became one of the Sun Shamans of the Sklar-Quah. The majority of the remaining Shoanti who dwell in the camp are 1st- to 3rd-level barbarians, although six thundercallers and eight burn riders dwell here as well. The six points of interest to the PCs in Flameford are described below.

D1. The Approach: Flameford has remained one of the largest and best-defended Sklar-Quah camps due to the presence of large fields of permanent *spike stones* (CL 16th) that surround the site. These fields of dangerous terrain leave unmarked zigzagging paths that permit safe passage to those who know the route. In this way, the Sklar-Quah control the entrance and egress from the camp and the Sun Clan needs to post few guards. The map of the camp shows the safe paths through the fields of *spike stones*, but these paths are all but undetectable to visitors, who must navigate the approach very carefully if they wish to avoid the dangerous hazard. A successful DC 29 Perception check is required to determine whether any one 5-foot square contains *spike stones*.

D2. War Council Fire: Flameford's heart is a massive fire at which the tribe gathers each night to feast and discuss matters of import.

D3. Corral: The tribe's eight horses are kept here; each belongs to one of the camp's eight burn riders.

D4. Sun Shaman's Yurt: The Quah-Chief takes counsel from the **Sun Shaman** (N male venerable human shaman of lore^{ACG} 14), the clan's spiritual leader. When a Sklar-Quah shaman has seen sufficient winters, he is invited to abandon his name and take on the mantle of a Sun Shaman. Hence, "Sun Shaman" is both a name and a title. This yurt is the home of Flameford's Sun Shaman.

D5. Chieftain's Yurt: Chief Ready-Klar's home is the largest yurt in the camp. The chieftain's personal living area takes up the northeasternmost quarter of the tent, with the rest containing a communal feasting hall.

D6. Guest Yurt: This unused yurt is given to the PCs as a place for them to stay during their visit. Apart from a few furs and a single small fire pit, the yurt contains no furnishings at all.

AT THE FOOT OF THE FIRE

As the PCs are led through the *spike stones* into Flameford's heart, the entire camp, chieftain and Sun Shaman included, come to see. The PCs' burn rider escorts lead them to the War Council Fire and bid them to be seated. The PCs might be dismayed or heartened to see that Krojun is in attendance as well.

The Sun Shaman remains quiet for this meeting, letting Ready-Klar speak to the PCs. The chieftain is loud and easily angered, and does not suffer arrogance. He demands



to know why the PCs have dared enter Sklar-Quah lands, even though he likely knows of their desire to speak to the Sun Shaman—he wants to hear from the PCs’ own lips what they want. A PC who succeeds at a DC 29 Diplomacy check mollifies the chieftain (and earns the PCs a few Respect Points; see below). If Akram accompanies the PCs, they gain a +10 bonus on this check. A PC who succeeds at a DC 24 Intimidate check also impresses the chieftain, and after a tense moment of silence when the entire tribe seems ready to attack, his bout of appreciative laughter at the PCs’ bravery earns them Respect Points as if they had successfully used Diplomacy.

If the PCs have accumulated 20 Respect Points, proceed with The Flameford Assault on page 230 before the PCs get a chance to speak to the Sun Shaman and learn what he knows of Kazavon and Midnight’s Teeth.

If the PCs haven’t yet accumulated 20 Respect Points, the chieftain tells them point-blank that they are still tshamek and do not deserve the Sun Shaman’s advice, yet there is a way they can work toward earning more respect: they can petition to take the Trial of the Totem.

As soon as the PCs request to take the trial, the gathered Shoanti fall remarkably silent. The Sun Shaman finally breaks this silence, not by speaking but by placing a hand on the chieftain’s shoulder and indicating wordlessly that they should retreat to the Sun Shaman’s tent to speak in private. The chieftain does so, asking the PCs

to wait for their return. Quiet tension looms while the crowd waits. Krojun crosses his arms and stares at the PC with whom he played sredna (or alternatively, a PC he has faced in melee). If Akram is present, he quietly explains to the PCs that if the Sun Shaman rejects this request and decides the PCs are not worthy of the trial, they (Akram included) will be disemboweled for trespassing on Sklar-Quah land.

An hour later, the shaman and chieftain return to the fire. The shaman asks each of the PCs to stand before him and speak their names. The Sun Shaman repeats the names in sequence, and then tersely announces that the PCs are permitted the opportunity to prove themselves to the Sklar-Quah by enduring the Trial of the Totem. The proclamation startles the gathered Shoanti, Krojun in particular, but while some struggle to contain their fury, only Krojun lashes out. He shouts in protest but immediately realizes the disrespect he has displayed to the Sun Shaman and stops his tirade before it goes too far. Instead, he storms off with several burn riders to take a long ride through the Cinderlands to cool off, much to the Sun Shaman’s apparent amusement and the chieftain’s shock and anger.

Once Krojun is gone, the Sun Shaman announces that the Trial of the Totem shall begin the next morning just after dawn, and then motions for everyone to disperse from the council fire. The gathering begins to break up

A HISTORY OF ASHES

CHAPTER BACKGROUND

PART 1:
THE ROAD NORTH

PART 2:
TRAILS OF RESPECT

PART 3:
MANTIS AND MAIDEN

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

4

at this point, and the Sun Shaman grants the PCs access to the guest yurt (area D6) to use during their stay in Flameford. No word is mentioned of why the Sun Shaman agreed to let the PCs take the trial, or how long the PCs are allowed to stay—in fact, they can stay as long as they wish. If at any point the PCs mention Kazavon, none of the Shoanti save the Sun Shaman gives any indication of recognizing the word. The Sun Shaman pales visibly, but maintains his composure before shaking his head and refusing to hear anything more, explaining that this deep history of his people is not for other tribes to know, and if the PCs wish to learn it, they must continue to earn his people's respect.

For his part, Akram explains that his quah's traditions preclude him from sharing a sunrise with the Sklar-Quah and so he intends to depart before dawn. If the boneslayers are still accompanying the PCs, they volunteer to escort the old truthspeaker back to the Lyrune-Quah; otherwise, an honor guard of three burn riders takes up the charge. Akram wishes the PCs luck in their trial, and as he leaves he offers one final bit of advice: Krojun is an important member of the tribe, and anything the PCs can do to earn his respect can only help them.

Respect Points: Successfully using Diplomacy to show the chieftain respect earns the PCs 2 Respect Points.

TRIAL OF THE TOTEM

Early the following morning, about an hour before dawn, the PCs are awakened by the Sun Shaman, who asks them to follow him. He, along with a trio of thundercallers, escorts the PCs out through the *spike stones* in silence and takes them east across the Cinderlands on a 20-minute walk to a site known as Bolt Rock, a small mesa of spiritual significance to the Sun Clan.

A single ledge winds up to the westernmost flat-topped area of Bolt Rock, a plateau that sits about 30 feet above the surrounding plain. A second ledge leads up higher to a second miniature mesa, this one 40 feet above the ground. During storms, the large quantities of iron ore in the rock here attract numerous lightning bolts, and as a result the place has become one of particular obsession for the Sun Shamans, who often ascend Bolt Rock during storms to experience the fury.

The Sun Shaman explains that for the Trial of the Totems, would-be Sklar-Quah must erect fired-clay pylons called sun totems (hardness 6, hp 40) atop Bolt Rock. Each totem is 10 feet tall, and the sides are decorated

with numerous sigils sacred to the Sklar-Quah. The lower portion of each totem is rounded. When not in use, they're stored in square stone pods at the base of Bolt Rock.

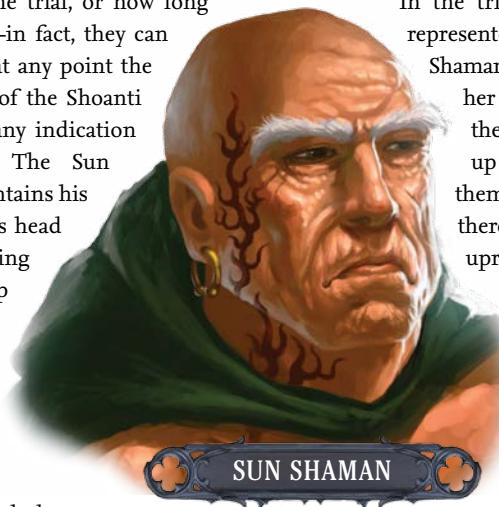
In the trial, each prospective clan member is represented by a specific sun totem. The Sun Shaman directs the PCs to each select a totem as her own and then explains that as a group, they will have 1 hour to carry these totems up to the lower tier of Bolt Rock and erect them in circular depressions in the ground there. They must then keep the totems upright for a day. At the next sunrise, the PCs must move all of their totems up to the highest mesa (again, within 1 hour) and must keep them upright in another set of depressions found there for an additional day. When the sun rises on the third day, any totem still standing grants the PC who kept it upright Sklar-Quah citizenship.

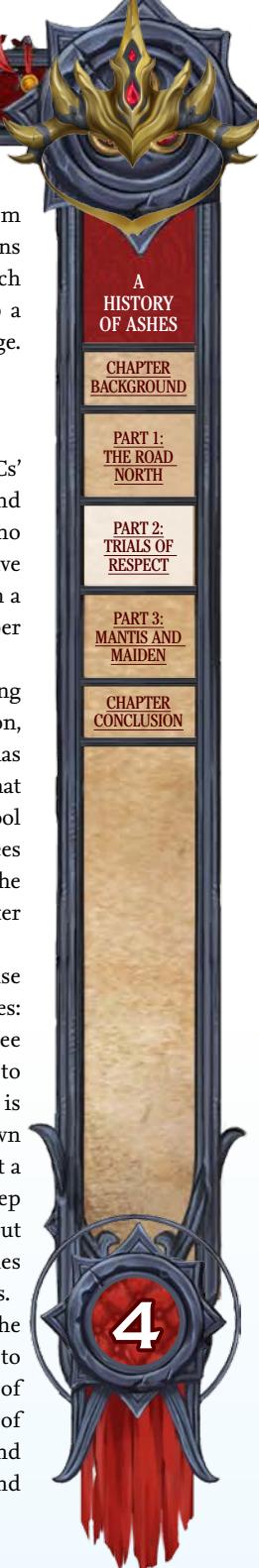
The Sun Shaman goes on to explain that while no food or water will be brought to the PCs for the 2 days they must remain atop Bolt Rock, they are welcome to provide their own. Likewise, they are welcome to use magic or whatever means they have at their disposal to aid in keeping their sun totems upright for the 2 days, as long as the magic does not change or damage the totems or the structure of Bolt Rock in any way. Bolt Rock is clearly visible from Flameford, and the Sun Shaman explains that many eyes will be turned eastward for the next 2 days. At night, the totems glow with their own radiance, the result of minor magical enhancements placed on the totems that enable those in Flameford to see even on darkest nights whether the totems still stand.

The trial explained, the Sun Shaman returns to Flameford to rest, and the PCs are on their own.

RAISING THE TOTEMS

As soon as the sun rises, the PCs have 1 hour to select their totems and carry them up onto the westernmost tier of Bolt Rock above. Though each totem is hollow, they're still quite heavy at 500 pounds apiece. A character with a Strength of 10 can barely manage to drag one of these totems; a character with a Strength of 17 or higher can lift the totem off the ground and stagger around with it at a speed of 5 feet. Characters who are unable to transport their totems alone must rely on aid. There is no penalty for not being able to carry one's own totem, and indeed, the teamwork required for this trial is a valuable part of the lesson. Any character can anchor a totem and push it into an upright position as long as he can drag 500 pounds.





Once a totem is upright, the shallow concavity and rounded base of the totem help stabilize it, but without someone on hand at all times to keep the totems balanced, a totem will eventually topple. Holding a totem in place requires a successful DC 12 Strength check every 6 hours. A character can take 10 on this check, but on a failed check the totem begins to lean precariously. At this point, a DC 16 Strength check is required to stabilize the totem. If this second check fails, the totem topples and takes 3d6 points of damage. As long as the totem isn't broken, it can be lifted back into place, but once a totem shatters, that character can no longer become one of the Sklar-Quah.

Keeping the totems upright for 2 days is a perilous task in and of itself, but unfortunately for the PCs, several other factors combine to make the trial even more arduous.

Exhaustion: The top of Bolt Rock is dangerously exposed to the elements. By default, "A History of Ashes" occurs during late spring, but if in your campaign the events of this chapter take place in the summer, daytime temperatures can rise into hot conditions, so characters must succeed at Fortitude saves to avoid taking nonlethal damage (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 444). Furthermore, once the PCs head into the second day, they are operating on no sleep and become fatigued, making the prospect of another day's worth of Strength checks more difficult. Remember, *lesser restoration*, paladin mercies, and similar effects can remove fatigue, and the use of such resources is not banned from the trial.

Thirst: As detailed on page 444 of the *Core Rulebook*, a character can go without water for 1 day plus a number of hours equal to her Constitution score. After this time, a PC must succeed at a Constitution check each hour (DC 10, +1 for each previous check) or take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage. Once a PC has taken nonlethal damage, he becomes fatigued. Since characters can go without food for 3 days, they need not fear starvation during the trial. If characters bring food with them, they can certainly take short 5-to-10-minute breaks to drink and eat, as long as they remain on Bolt Rock and can hasten back to their totem's side in an emergency, but taking longer breaks (such as to go hunt or seek water) quickly results in a fallen totem.

Magic: Magic like *endure elements* and *create food and water* are perfectly acceptable ways to help endure the trial. While it is against the spirit of the trial to use spells like *stone shape* to fix the totems in place, the PCs can attempt such subterfuge if they wish. When the trial ends, the Sun Shaman inspects Bolt Rock and the totems for damage. He automatically notices evidence of *stone shape* and similar spells if the PCs take no action to hide their trickery—if a PC tries to disguise this evidence, she must succeed at a DC 20 Survival check for each totem so disguised to make

the site appear to be unaltered and natural. Each totem site (or totem) the Sun Shaman detects magical alterations to is disqualified. Using at least three *immovable rods* (such as those found in area A11 of the acropolis) can keep a single totem stable without any obvious signs of damage. Similar tactics may work as well, at your discretion.

SUN VISION OF THE AUROCHS

The Trial of the Totem not only tests the limits of the PCs' stamina, but also to weakens the body so that the mind is open to a vision from Father Sun. Any character who becomes fatigued during the trial has a 10% cumulative chance per hour she remains fatigued of receiving such a vision. The chance of having a vision increases by 30% per hour if the character becomes exhausted.

If a PC receives a vision, she notices waves of heat rising from the stone around him. The shimmers cloud her vision, and the character sees a crystal-clear pool of water has seeped into an empty totem depression. She realizes that if she is quick, perhaps she can steal a drink from the pool before returning to her totem. If she attempts this, she sees the face of a horned aurochs staring back at her from the water. With a successful DC 10 Wisdom check, the character understands she is the aurochs, primal and proud.

No sooner does the character appreciate her new sense of self than she catches the scent of her natural enemies: the beasts with claws are nearby. Although she cannot see them, she senses they are moving in unison, seeking to surround her. Yet as her pulse begins to race and she is sure her unseen enemies close in, the sun beams down upon her. As its light hits her, the character can attempt a second DC 10 Wisdom check to achieve a moment of deep clarity in which she realizes that she is not the prey, but the protector of the Cinderlands. As she feels her enemies begin to quail at her newfound strength, the vision ends.

This vision is meant to signify that it is time for the PCs to stop waiting for the Red Mantis to attack and to turn and face them with full fury. For the remainder of this chapter, a PC who has received the Sun Vision of the Aurochs gains a +1 insight bonus on attack rolls and weapon damage rolls against Red Mantis assassins and their minions.

KROJUN'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

On the morning of the second day, Krojun returns from his therapeutic ride through the wilds and pays the PCs a visit. Although initially enraged that invading tshamek were given the opportunity to join the Sklar-Quah, he calms down considerably when he learns that the Sun Shaman selected a particularly grueling challenge to properly test their mettle and climbs Bolt Rock to see how the PCs are doing. He is especially impressed by scrawny PCs (such as elves) who he suspects would

have a harder time enduring the trial. Krojun stares at the PCs silently for a few minutes and then grudgingly compliments them by suggesting they are lucky to have one another as nalharests (siblings).

HUNGRY VISITORS (CR 11)

Play up the difficulty of the trial, and never let the PCs forget how excruciatingly exhausted they are from balancing the massive totems—because on the afternoon of day two, their predicament gets worse.

Creatures: A pack of six bulettes have noticed the PCs, and as the afternoon of the second day of the trial draws toward night, these bulettes begin circling the ground around Bolt Rock. The sound of the burrowing creatures and their dorsal fins periodically protruding above the ash and gravel of the surrounding earth is unmistakable, giving the PCs $2d4$ rounds to prepare for the assault.

When the attack comes, the six bulettes leap out of the ground and scramble up onto the lower mesa. A character can continue to hold up her totem while she's fighting as long as her totem remains in reach and she devotes one hand to steadyng it. A character who chooses to fight in this manner takes a -4 penalty on all attack rolls as a result. Any totem that is not supported in this way has a flat 10% chance per round of combat of being jostled and toppling.

The bulettes spread out when they attack, each seeking its own target and doubling up on prey only if there are more bulettes than targets. There isn't enough room atop Bolt Rock for all six at once, so any bulettes that are unable to fit pace angrily about on the lower tier or the surrounding ground, eager to snap at anyone who leaves the upper tier or to run up and replace a bulette that is slain or driven off. Although the monsters don't particularly care about the totems, each time a bulette passes through a square that's adjacent to a totem, the character holding the totem must succeed at a DC 15 Strength check to keep the totem upright; if the totem is unsupported, the bulette's passage automatically topples the totem. If a bulette attempts to attack a character engaged in holding up a totem but fails at the attack by 3 or less, the creature's attack has a 50% chance of striking the totem instead and dealing the appropriate amount of damage. A desperate PC can attempt to drop a totem on a bulette, but the bulette can avoid the totem with a successful DC 15 Reflex save, taking $3d6$ points of damage on a failure. A dropped totem takes $3d6$ points of damage as well.

A bulette flees if reduced to fewer than 15 hit points.

BULETTES (6)

XP 3,200 each

hp 84 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 39)

CR 7

THE THIRD DAWN

With the third dawn, the Trial of the Totems ends. The Sun Shaman leads the entire tribe from Flameford up to Bolt Rock in the pre-dawn hours, and as the sun rises, any unbroken totems that are still standing are greeted with a rousing cheer. These totems represent new brothers and sisters in the Sklar-Quah, an event that is cause for great celebration. As long as even one totem remains standing, everyone in the party is accepted as an ally, for even among the Sklar-Quah there are those whose skills lie in areas other than fortitude and stamina. Simply attempting the test where at least one ally succeeds is enough.

Before the jubilation gets too out of hand, the Sun Shaman holds his hands high for silence, then personally welcomes those PCs who succeeded at the trial into the Sklar-Quah. Yet he goes even further—he acknowledges those PCs whose totems toppled and broke as nalharests to those whose totems survived, and while these folk are not considered full-blooded members of the Sklar-Quah, they are welcome at Flameford as guests as long as their allies remain as well.

The PCs are likely exhausted after their trial, and the Sun Shaman has prepared a *lesser restoration* spell to cast on each PC, yet still suggests that they return to the guest yurt in Flameford to rest and recover from their ordeal atop Bolt Rock.

Respect Points: The PCs earn 1 Respect Point for attempting the Trial of the Totem, and an additional 1 Respect Point for each totem that remained upright throughout the trial (maximum of 1 per PC).

Story Award: If at least one PC kept her totem from toppling, award the party 12,800 XP.

THE FLAMEFORD ASSAULT (CR 12 OR 14)

Once the PCs earn 20 Respect Points, they have built up enough esteem to learn what the Sun Shaman knows of Kazavon. If the PCs reach this Respect Point total after completing the Trial of the Totem, the Sun Shaman quietly tells the PCs that he is nearly ready to speak with them about the information they seek regarding Midnight's Teeth and the great evil that the Shoanti once guarded as long ago as they return to Flameford. Otherwise, the PCs need to travel to Flameford to meet with the Sun Shaman and make their request. Once they earn 20 Respect Points, any Shoanti they travel with suggest that they should make this journey.

While the Sun Shaman is ready to divulge what he knows about Kazavon to the PCs, he first wishes to seek out the wisdom of his ancestors by traveling to the Kallow Mounds to commune with them. This trip will also bolster the Sun Shaman's knowledge of the ancient subject, resulting in additional information for the PCs. As tradition demands, the Sun Shaman is accompanied



A
HISTORY
OF ASHES

CHAPTER
BACKGROUND

PART 1:
THE ROAD
NORTH

PART 2:
TRIALS OF
RESPECT

PART 3:
MANTIS AND
MAIDEN

CHAPTER
CONCLUSION



on this trip by Chief Ready-Klar and four of the tribe's thundercallers, and the journey is made via *wind walk*. The Sun Shaman estimates that they will return to Flameford in but a day, and suggests that the PCs take that day to rest, recover, and relax. While they are gone, Krojun is given command of the tribe, a responsibility he accepts with pride and honor. If the PCs volunteer to accompany the Sun Shaman, he thanks them but says that this is a journey that must be taken by as few as possible, and only those who are ancestral members of the quah, so as to not vex and distract the very spirits with which the shaman seeks to commune.

Creatures: Of course, once these two powerful NPCs leave Flameford, the PCs themselves are the most powerful characters remaining in the camp. If the PCs haven't defeated or driven off Cinnabar and crippled the Red Mantis operation in the region yet, the assassins who have been tracking them through the Cinderlands take this opportunity to marshal their resources and allies to launch an attack on the PCs. This assault force is composed of several Red Mantis assassins, their guide the Cinderlander, and a tribe of human-hating gargoyles known as the Ashwings. The Red Mantis have paid the Ashwings well for their services, and when the

assault on Flameford occurs, the bulk of these gargoyles focus on the Shoanti who dwell there, leaving only a few of their number, plus the assassins themselves, to attack the PCs.

The Flameford assault occurs as dusk approaches. The humans in the attack party can avoid the *spike stones* that surround Flameford by having the gargoyles carry them in via flight.

When the gargoyles reach the campsite, they swoop up the cliffside and drop off their deadly passengers amid the westernmost yurts. Unless the Red Mantis assassins know exactly which yurt belongs to the PCs, the assassins and gargoyles simply start tearing into the tents with shrieks and roars. Flameford awakens quickly to the assault, but with the village's chieftain and Sun Shaman not present, the Red Mantis have a deadly advantage.

When the battle begins, be sure to describe to the PCs how the Shoanti quickly rouse themselves to the fight and take on the gargoyles and a few assassins here and there. You don't need to run this entire combat—just keep it in the background. If the PCs survive the battle, so do the majority of the Shoanti. If the PCs fall, the Shoanti are wiped out, though if you're feeling magnanimous, surviving PCs are stripped of their gear and brought back to Korvosa to be

4

imprisoned in Deathhead Vault (see page 236). Whether or not they can escape is up to them and to luck.

You should tailor this encounter for when it takes place, either as a climax for this part of the adventure or a climax for the entire chapter.

CR 12: If the PCs are 11th level or the PCs haven't yet disbanded the Red Mantis hideout (see Part 3), this encounter should be with three Red Mantis assassins who are eager to return to Korvosa to bring proof of the PCs' death to Cinnabar. These assassins are accompanied by three Ashwing gargoyles.

CR 14: If the PCs are 12th level or have disbanded the Red Mantis hideout, the encounter is tougher and includes all six Red Mantis assassins and six Ashwing gargoyles. If Cinnabar escaped the PCs and bears a grudge, she should



be encountered here as well, a complication that increases the CR to 15.

Regardless of the number of attacking assassins and gargoyles the group faces, one of the assassins calls out the PCs by name, accusing them of consigning these proud Shoanti to death—she had no wish to kill this many, but the PCs leave her no choice. She offers the Shoanti an out—if they agree to turn over the PCs to her, or better, aid her in slaying the PCs, she'll call off her minions and leave the survivors alone. If the PCs have at least 5 Respect Points, the Shoanti roar in outrage and turn down the offer, but if the PCs have 4 or fewer Respect Points, the Shoanti grimly nod and step aside, allowing the full force of six assassins, the Cinderlander, 24 Ashwing gargoyles, and perhaps Cinnabar to focus their attention on the PCs.

Once the attack begins, the assassins focus on one PC at a time rather than spreading out their attacks. Any gargoyles who are directly aiding them move to attack other PCs, running interference and doing what they can to prevent anyone from coming to the aid of the primary target. Once the PCs kill all of the assassins they face, any surviving gargoyles break off combat and flee, along with all remaining gargoyles in the area.

RED MANTIS ASSASSINS (3 OR 6)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 78 each (see page 144)

ASHWING GARGOYLES (3 OR 6)

CR 5

XP 1,600 each

hp 52 each (see page 197)

Respect Points: If the PCs defeat the assassins and thus save Flameford during the assault, award them 4 Respect Points.

SAVING KROJUN (CR 12)

During the assault on Flameford, another battle takes place.

Creatures: The Cinderlander—who helped guide the Red Mantis assassins through the Cinderlands, aided in brokering their alliance with the Ashwings, and brought them to Flameford—takes advantage of the mayhem to collect the payment he'd been promised. Namely, he uses the opportunity to try to kill one of the Shoanti's most prominent heroes: Krojun. This battle should initially happen offstage while the PCs take on the Red Mantis, but as soon as they defeat their foes, Krojun and the Cinderlander should still be going at it. If the PCs choose to intervene, either during their own fight or immediately after, the Cinderlander is obviously winning; he's been reduced to 100 hit points (and his animal companion Neverfar is unwounded) but Krojun has been reduced to



A
HISTORY
OF ASHES

CHAPTER
BACKGROUND

PART 1:
THE ROAD
NORTH

PART 2:
TRIALS OF
RESPECT

PART 3:
MANTIS AND
MAIDEN

CHAPTER
CONCLUSION



30 hit points. The two are surrounded by dead gargoyles and a few dead thundercallers. If the PCs don't intervene, the Cinderlander soon kills Krojun and then leaves the area. If the PCs do step in to aid the Shoanti hero, he nods in thanks but doesn't break his stride in fighting against his enemy. The Cinderlander himself attempts to flee combat if reduced to 20 or fewer hit points, but Krojun fights to the death.

THE CINDERLANDER

CR 12

XP 19,200

hp 151 (currently 100, see page 198)

NEVERFAR

CR —

hp 51 (see page 199)

KROJUN EATS-WHAT-HE-KILLS

CR 12

XP 19,200

hp 181 (currently 30, see page 204)

Respect Points: If the PCs save Krojun's life, he becomes their lifelong friend and ally, declaring them his *nalharests*. Award the PCs 3 Respect Points.

Story Award: If the PCs save Krojun's life, award them XP as if they had defeated the barbarian in combat.

AFTERMATH

The Shoanti are hardy folk, and as long as the PCs deal with their enemies swiftly, the people of Flameford come through the assault with relatively few casualties—certainly not enough to dull the sense of triumph. From now until the point when the Sun Shaman returns to Flameford, the campsite hosts a victory party. The PCs are asked to share tales of their adventures with the Shoanti, and Krojun might challenge a PC to a *sredna* rematch. Try to involve each PC in some sort of celebration during this time. A religious or kindly PC might be called upon to tend to the wounded or to help bury the dead. A brave or fearless PC might be given the opportunity to receive a Sklar-Quah tattoo. A loquacious PC might be asked to recount the tale of the party's encounter with Cindermaw. A charming PC might be asked by a Shoanti admirer to share a bed for the night (but only if the PC agrees to shave that unsightly mop of hair beforehand).

When the Sun Shaman, the chieftain, and other Shoanti return to Flameford the next day, they find the camp in a shambles from the previous night's battle and celebration. Flameford needs time for things to get back to normal, but the Sun Shaman doesn't wait. He invites the PCs into his home to speak to them personally—what he has to reveal to them is detailed in the Chapter Conclusion on page 254.

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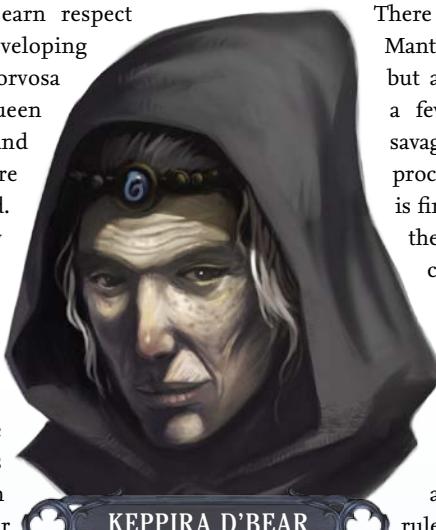
PART 3

MANTIS AND MAIDEN

Things do not remain static in Korvosa while the PCs are out in the Cinderlands. Queen Ileosa continues to build her power and prepare for her final atrocity—the sacrifice of thousands to enable her lasting youth. A growing rebellion inspired by the PCs' heroism begins in the hidden parts of the city, but it falls to the PCs themselves to strike the first blow, and the agents of the Red Mantis and the Gray Maidens make excellent targets!

As the PCs strive to earn respect among the Shoanti, a developing situation back in Korvosa could use their assistance. Queen Ileosa grows more powerful, and those who would oppose her are being dismantled or neutralized. The Sable Company is officially disbanded, the Hellknights of the Nail have fled the city for the safety of their own Citadel, and the Korvosan Guard, already shattered by riots and plague, has become little more than a mockery of its former glory. After some rough moments, the church of Abadar announces its support of Queen Ileosa, and Archbanker Darb Tuttle officially recognizes her as Korvosa's greatest opportunity for recovery. That her methods are seated in cruelty and tyranny doesn't matter to the church, in light of the obvious effects her rule is having on squelching civil unrest. Of course, this decision plants the seeds of a growing schism in the church, with many of its younger members seeking a way to legally oppose the queen while maintaining their good standing with the church. The church of Asmodeus has fewer qualms supporting the queen. The churches of Shelyn and Sarenrae remain apart from the potential conflict, but they are already overwhelmed helping to organize the city's recovery from the plague and riots. Only the church of Pharasma has the right combination of resources and dissatisfaction to oppose the queen, but for now, the Korvosan Pharasmins play their allegiance to the rebellion close to the chest.

True power in Korvosa increasingly lies with the Gray Maidens, ruthless and brutal warrior women who patrol the streets in larger and larger patrols. At the same time, the Red Mantis supports the queen from the shadows.



KEPPIRA D'BEAR

There is no official announcement of the Red Mantis's alliance with the Korvosan monarch, but after several prominent nobles and even a few magistrates and arbiters meet with savage and public assassinations, no formal proclamation is necessary. As a result, Korvosa is firmly in Queen Ileosa's control by the time the PCs are well into this chapter. And this control is what a burgeoning rebellion wishes to oppose.

AN UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITY

The PCs will likely be unsurprised to learn that Cressida Kroft counts herself among those eager to rebel against Ileosa's rule. The news that the high priestess of the church of Pharasma in Korvosa, Bishop Keppira d'Bear, is eager to take action against Ileosa may, however, come as a shock. You may add other NPCs to the rebellion as you wish, but until Chapter 6 begins, the rebels aren't yet ready to take drastic action.

That said, at some point late in this chapter but before the PCs progress too far into Chapter 5, a unique break falls into the rebellion's metaphorical lap—a chance to strike at the heart of the Gray Maidens and Red Mantis alike and rip away their base of operations. The timing of when this occurs is left to you, but you shouldn't start this part of the campaign until the PCs are at least 12th level. The PCs may be in Korvosa at this point, perhaps having teleported back to recover from their adventures in the Cinderlands, or to replenish supplies, or simply to check up on friends and allies who remained behind in the city; if they aren't, they receive a *sending* spell cast by Keppira, as follows.

"Return to Korvosa! An opportunity to strike at our enemies has presented itself. The Mantis and Maidens will fall! Seek us in the Dead Warrens!"



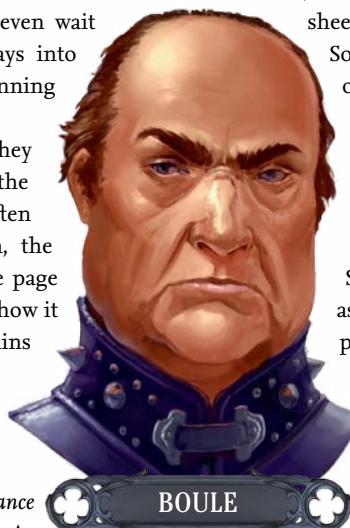
While teleportation, flight, and other magical solutions can swiftly return the PCs to Korvosa, the mission the rebels have for the heroes can wait until they make their way back to Korvosa on foot from the Cinderlands or Kaer Maga if necessary. You can even wait until the PCs have made a few forays into Castle Scarwall in Chapter 5 before running this part if you wish.

When the PCs return to Korvosa, they should seek out their allies back in the Dead Warrens; here, the rebels often meet in that complex's front room, the ossuary (area D1 of that complex; see page 60). The room is quite different from how it appeared the first time. It now contains several chairs arranged around a large wooden table on which a map of Korvosa has been placed. The room also bears additional protections: a *mage's private sanctum* and a *forbiddance* spell (keyed to the neutral alignment). As the PCs approach the Dead Warrens, Cressida Kroft meets them and gives them the password to come and go from the ossuary with ease: "Blackjack."

Within the ossuary, Bishop d'Bear waits to greet the PCs, her expression somber and her manner grim. Other allied NPCs may be present as well, at your discretion, but one person the PCs have not yet met is there as well—a florid and heavyset man with short brown hair and beady dark eyes. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Knowledge (local) check identifies this man as Boule, the guildmaster of Korvosa's thieves' guild, the Cerulean Society. If the PCs don't recognize him, Cressida introduces the guildmaster, her words bitter but resigned. "Tell them, Boule," she says. "Tell them why I'm tolerating your presence." Boule smirks, then makes an exaggerated bow to greet the PCs and relates the following.

"Yes, let me get right to the point. We may operate on different sides of the law, but we can agree that Ileosa is not good for Korvosa. I want her gone as much as you. And while I feel that neither I nor my... associates... are the right ones for the task, you, brave adventurers, have proven time and time again that you are precisely what Korvosa needs.

"Without the Gray Maidens to police the streets or the Red Mantis to stalk the alleys, Ileosa's grip on Korvosa will slip. Yet in their fortress at the Longacre Building, the Red Mantis and the Gray Maidens are bolstered against attack, and many who work within the building may yet be innocent, forced to comply with the queen against their will. But as it happens, I know of a back door into the chambers below. I know the secret to Deathhead Vault."



A PC who succeeds at a DC 10 Knowledge (local) check has heard of Deathhead Vault, where the most violent of Korvosa's criminals go to be imprisoned and, in many cases, executed. Boule goes on to explain, (somewhat sheepishly) that for many years, the Cerulean Society has had an arrangement with a group of derros who operated in a secret network of caverns that adjoin the Deathhead Vault. As long as the Cerulean Society provided the derros with stock for their experiments ("vagrants and lowlives no one missed, I assure you!"), the derros allowed the Cerulean Society to use the upper level of their caverns as a secret route to occasionally smuggle prisoners out of Deathhead Vault. The thieves sometimes freed fellow guild members, and sometimes were hired to rescue a friend or ally from the prison. The derros were masters of stealth and hidden architecture, and maintained this access route for decades. With the Cerulean Society's support, abducted prisoners were often replaced by insane patsies who would then live out the original prisoner's sentence without the Arbiters realizing it.

Boule makes no excuses for the practice, but if the PCs demand it, he does vow to cease if things return to normal—after all, he's giving up the guild's secrets, so the prisoner-smuggling route is no longer of use to him anyway. He has had no contact from the derros in months, since some weeks before the Longacre Building officially shifted over to Gray Maiden control. He's done some investigation on his own and is convinced that the Gray Maidens and their allies, the Red Mantis, have discovered the hidden derro caverns and are using them in some manner. He can confirm that the secret door leading to the derro warren from the abandoned sewers still operates, and while he cannot vouch for what new perils may wait within, assaulting the Longacre Building from this approach provides a direct shot into the prison's heart. Boule also provides the PCs with a special key that can unlock several (but not all) of the doors in Deathhead Vault.

Although she loathes Boule, Cressida Kroft agrees with this plan. If someone like the PCs could stage a successful raid on Deathhead Vault, the Gray Maidens and the Red Mantis could be thrown into disarray. At the very least, rescuing certain prisoners from the Vault would build support for the rebels among Korvosa's citizenry. One prisoner in particular is of note—Kroft has secured reliable intelligence that the ex-commander of the Sable Company, Marcus Endrin, is held within. If he could be rescued, he could become a significant supporter of the rebellion. The recovery of any important documents

held by the Gray Maidens could also help tremendously, as would determining why Arbiter Zenobia Zenderholm has thrown in with the queen (for example, if she's been magically compelled to serve, rescuing her from the Gray Maidens would also be a coup). Finally, defeating or capturing leaders among the Red Mantis or Gray Maidens would deal the opposition a significant blow. Kroft is hesitant to use her own resources, noting that this type of mission is precisely what the PCs have been working toward over the past several months. The queen already knows the PCs oppose her, and Kroft notes grimly that if the PCs are spotted on the mission, that won't undermine other plans at furthering rebellion in the city. As she makes clear, the PCs are her greatest weapon, and if they can't destabilize the Gray Maidens and Red Mantis, none of it will matter anyway.

To the matter of defeating Gray Maiden leadership, Boule has one final gift to offer the PCs. He's prepared a set of fake "coded documents" and can arrange for them to fall into the hands of the Gray Maidens. He knows that the group's second-in-command, Kordaitra, fancies herself a codebreaker, and the acquisition of what she suspects are documents containing information about a rebellion would be too much for her to resist. When the PCs are ready to begin their mission, Boule sets these falsified documents loose, and Kordaitra will certainly take the bait, ensconcing herself in her quarters below the Longacre Building for days and ensuring that when the PCs strike, she'll be present for the PCs to capture or defeat.

Finally, at this point, the PCs may have recovered sensitive documents from area **D16** of Arkona Palace (see page 172) in the previous chapter—documents that contain details on the Cerulean Society. If the PCs make it clear to Boule that they've retrieved these, he grows pale, then offers a reward for them. In return for the PCs handing the documents over, he offers each PC a bounty of 600 pp. If a PC succeeds at a DC 25 Diplomacy check, Boule agrees to increase this per-person payment to 900 pp. Kroft doesn't approve of returning the papers to Boule (unless the PCs make a copy of the information first, of course), and instead of a reward would like the PCs to extract promises of favors from Boule and the Cerulean Society, to be paid to the Korvosan Guard in the future. The exact details of these negotiations are left to your group. Boule is somewhat desperate, though, and should be willing to agree to almost anything so long as he remains in power and his guild isn't unduly penalized. Of course, if the PCs do keep copies of the information and Boule finds out later, he is incensed and may well take retributive actions.

In any event, Kroft is eager for the PCs to begin this mission, for the sooner they can strike, the sooner the Gray Maidens' hold over Korvosa will be shaken.

Story Award: If the PCs broker a deal of favors or other nebulous, non-monetary rewards for the return of the Cerulean Society documents, grant them 12,800 XP.

E DEATHHEAD VAULT

The closest entrance to the abandoned sewers that connect to Deathhead Vault is located in an alley near Arbiter Way and Second Street. The actual navigation of the tunnels to area **E1** should take little time and pose little danger if the PCs follow Boule's directions.

The doors in the western half of the complex (areas **E1–E9**) are made of stone (hardness 8, hp 60, break DC 28) but cannot be locked unless otherwise noted. The doors in the main area of Deathhead Vault (areas **E10–E21**) are made of wood and reinforced with iron unless otherwise specified (hardness 5, hp 20, break DC 25, Disable Device DC 40); these doors are kept locked unless otherwise noted. Keys carried by certain NPCs (as mentioned in the text) are capable of unlocking these; many of the Gray Maiden guards must rely upon their commanders to come and go throughout most of the complex.

E1 “ABANDONED” SEWER ENTRANCE (CR 12)

A ten-foot-wide trough of murky water fills two-thirds of this wide, brick-lined tunnel. A slimy five-foot-wide walkway runs along the east side of the waterway. A wall of rusty iron bars with an equally rusty gate atop the walkway blocks passage further into the tunnel. Further to the south, the tunnel deadends at an ancient collapse.

The rusted iron bars and gate may look old and decrepit, but a PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check confirms that the rust is cunningly applied paint and that the bars and gate are actually well maintained. The gate is locked; Boule's key unlocks it, or it can be forced open (hardness 10, hp 60, break DC 28, Disable Device DC 40). The secret door to area **E2** can be found with a successful DC 40 Perception check, but anyone following Boule's advice on locating the door gains a +20 circumstance bonus on the check.

Creature: While Boule's information and key can help the PCs navigate this area with ease, the guildmaster doesn't know about the creature that dwells here now. This guardian is an albino catoblepas, shipped at great expense from Mediogalti Island. One of Cinnabar's favorite monstrous pets, the catoblepas is fed regularly by the Red Mantis assassins. It recognizes all those who wear the traditional red and black armor as friends but is hardly tame. It roars and bleats at all those who pass through the gate, Red Mantis or not, but the creature attacks any intruders who aren't accompanied by those wearing Red Mantis armor.



A
HISTORY
OF ASHES

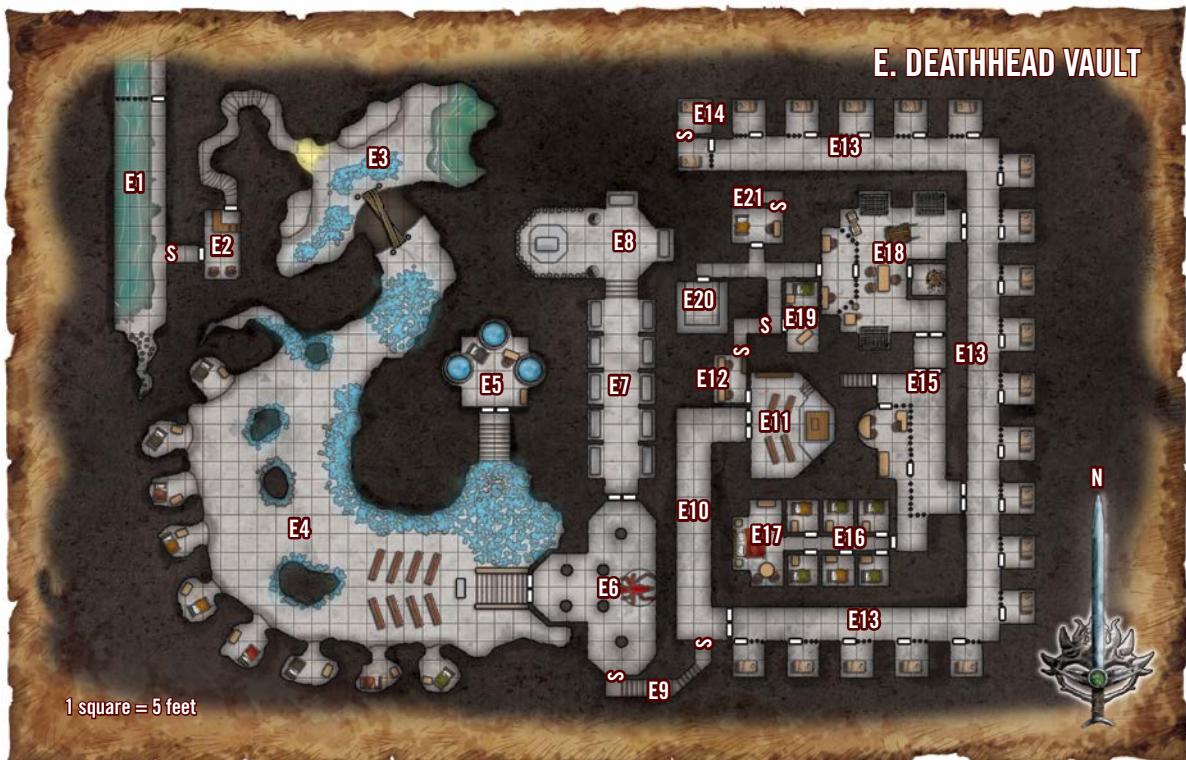
CHAPTER
BACKGROUND

PART 1:
THE ROAD
NORTH

PART 2:
TRAILS OF
RESPECT

PART 3:
MANTIS AND
MAIDEN

CHAPTER
CONCLUSION



CATOLEPAS

CR 12

XP 19,200

hp 161 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 52)

Treasure: The catolepas wears a filth-encrusted collar that, if cleaned up, is revealed to be a waterproof strip of leather set with mithral spikes and bearing a nameplate on which the creature's name, "Snagglebreath," has been engraved. The collar is worth 1,000 gp for its mithral content alone.

E2 WAITING ROOM (CR 8)

The air in this room smells strongly of frankincense and is hazy with smoke from several incense burners mounted on the walls, yet a slight whiff of the stench from the sewers to the west nonetheless manages to linger faintly in the background. A pair of rickety chairs with moldy cushions sit to the south, while to the north stands a strange incongruity—a wooden bar, complete with shelves filled with bottles and tankards on the walls. A wooden door is set into the northeast corner of the room, amid all the shelves behind the bar.

In the days before the Gray Maidens, the Cerulean Society used this room as a staging area for smuggling prisoners out of Deathhead Vault. The room was set up like a tavern bar, and sponsors could actually purchase

drinks to pass the time while they waited for their friends or allies to be rescued.

The door to the north is kept locked (Mogmora carries a key and the key Boule provided to the PCs unlocks it as well—otherwise a PC who succeeds at a DC 40 Disable Device check unlocks it).

Creature: With the derros gone and the Cerulean Society in hiding, this room now serves the Red Mantis as a guard post against intruders. A single advanced greater barghest named Mogmora stands vigil here in goblin form, perched patiently on the bar with its little bandy legs hanging over the edge. Pressed into service by the Red Mantis priestess Koriantu (via *planar ally*), Mogmora hasn't had many chances to fight the boredom of his post, and he greets the arrival of the PCs with excitement. Trusting his innocuous appearance as a goblin to prevent an immediate attack, he hops up onto the bar and holds wide his arms as the PCs step into the room, welcoming them to his tavern, the "Sewer Brewer." He tells the PCs that, as his lucky first-ever customers, drinks are on the house. PCs foolish enough to take the drinks the barghest lines up for them swiftly learn that they've been served cheap ale poisoned with lich dust (*Core Rulebook* 560). Wise PCs instead confront the strange goblin, who does what he can to delay a fight or an attempt to pass through the northern door. He employs irreverent banter and backhanded compliments, like "You smell pretty good—

4

for a dwarf," or "You must be lucky to find clothes that nice that actually fit you!" All the time, he's observing the PCs, taking in their armaments and numbers and descriptions; after 1d4 rounds of chatter (or as soon as he has attacked or the PCs try to go through the northern door), he yelps in apparent fright and flees via *dimension door* to area E6 to report the intruders to Koriantu.

MOGMORA**CR 8****XP 4,800**Male advanced greater barghest (*Pathfinder RPG**Bestiary* 294, 27)**hp** 103

Treasure: Mogmora keeps several doses of ale poisoned with lich dust behind the counter (a number of doses equal to the number of PCs + 4). The other bottles of alcohol are for display only and contain sewer water decorated with various coloring agents.

E3 CHOKEPOINT (CR 11)

The entrance to this cavern from the northwest tunnel is blocked by a 5-foot-thick wall of pale yellow glowing fog—see Trap below.

Trap: The wall of yellow fog in the northwest entrance blocks sight entirely, but can be passed through with ease. Doing so subjects the person passing through the wall to a *greater dispel magic* effect that attempts to dispel all ongoing spell effects (this *greater dispel magic* effect does not affect magic items, but can dispel effects created by magic items). Whenever the wall dispels magic, it makes a loud humming sound and flashes brightly, alerting the room's occupants. Successfully removing the trap via either Disable Device or *dispel magic* (this only negates the trap for 1d4 rounds, though) causes the softly glowing wall to vanish, which also alerts the room's occupants.

DISPELLING MIST**CR 8****XP 4,800****Type** magic; **Perception DC** 20; **Disable Device DC** 30**EFFECTS****Trigger** touch; **Reset** automatic**Effect** spell effect (*greater dispel magic*, CL 12th; targets all active spell effects that pass through)

Once the PCs navigate the yellow fog, proceed with the rest of the room's encounter and description as normal.

The tunnel opens into a wide cavern with a high vaulted ceiling that arches up to a height of thirty feet. Two ten-foot-high ledges look out over the wall from the northwest wall, while to the east the cavern dips down into a pool of dark water. Swaths of softly glowing blue fungus fill the cave with light;

the fungus grows in lumps that bear an eerie resemblance to brains. To the southeast, a fifteen-foot-wide tunnel is bisected by a deep pit. A pair of three-foot-wide planks forms a treacherous-looking bridge over the pit.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Climb check can clamber up either ledge on the northwest wall or the walls of the pit to the southeast. The pool of water to the east is drinkable but has a bitter aftertaste; it served as the primary source of water for the derros before and the Red Mantis assassins now. The pit to the southeast is 60 feet deep and is strewn with sharp rocks; a fall into this pit deals 8d6 points of damage (the additional damage is from the sharp rocks below). The planks across the pit are, in fact, a *permanent image* (DC 17, CL 11th), as anyone who attempts to cross them quickly learns; the assassins move across the pit as needed by jumping or climbing.

The swaths of glowing fungi are patches of cytillesh, also known as brain mold, a substance prized by the derros who previously inhabited the area. Long-term exposure to the mold can cause brain damage (1d4 points of Wisdom damage after being within 20 feet of a patch of cytillesh for 24 hours; Will DC 15 negates). The Red Mantis assassins understand the dangers of the mold and take care to avoid being exposed to the unhealthy illumination for no more than 20 hours at a time if possible.

Creatures: A single Red Mantis assassin stands guard in this room, hidden against the wall on the far side of the pit. Once she spots intruders, she watches silently as they navigate the cave's curiosities or deal with its guardians for 2 rounds before she flees south to area E4 to report.

The primary guardians of the chamber are a pair of hideous undead creatures—manananggals—that perch on the cavern's two ledges. These two legless flying undead creatures were created in the area of a *desecrate* effect by their mistress Zenobia, and remain loyal to her. If the PCs enter the caves during the day, both manananggals appear as normal human women; at night, their lower torsos reside in area E7 and they appear as legless winged monsters. In life, these unfortunates were high-ranking officers among the Sable Company—Avanah Banzul (the company's second-in-command) and Ulweth Wevenner (the company's lead trainer of hippogriffs). Both were held prisoner in Deathhead Vaults for a few days before they were handed over to Zenobia and transformed into undead minions. With a successful DC 20 Knowledge (local) check, a PC can recognize them for who they were in life. Both women remember their lives as humans but have been entirely corrupted by their transformations.

If the PCs enter the room during the night, the two manananggals simply attack, using *deep slumber* and *fear* from their vantage points above to scatter the PCs before they swoop down to claw and bite. If the PCs visit the cavern



A
HISTORY
OF ASHES

CHAPTER
BACKGROUND

PART 1:
THE ROAD
NORTH

PART 2:
TRIALS OF
RESPECT

PART 3:
MANTIS AND
MAIDEN

CHAPTER
CONCLUSION

during the day, the two creatures are in human shape, and they call out to the PCs to attempt to trick them, claiming to have recently escaped torment from derros who dwell in the caves beyond. Their hope is to get the PCs to split their group, with one or two of them climbing up to a ledge to help them climb back down before attacking (even in their human guise, manananggals retain their bite and claw attacks).

MANANANGGALS (2)

CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 105 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 190)

RED MANTIS ASSASSIN

CR 8

XP 4,800

hp 78 (see page 144)

E4 TEMPLE OF ACHAEKEK (CR 11)

The arched ceiling of this vast, crescent-shaped, cathedral-like cavern rises to a height of nearly forty feet, supported by four natural stone columns. These columns are caked with glowing blue swaths of brain-shaped fungi, while a larger section of the stuff grows along the curved wall to the north and east. A total of nine dark openings near the ceiling to the south and west can be reached only by climbing or flight. To the southeast, eight stone benches face a single pulpit that stands before a flight of stairs. The stairs lead up to a worked stone facade that bears a looming carving of an immense mantis, its arms arrayed downward like an archway over a set of double doors.

The fungus patches are cytillesh (see area E3). A tunnel to the north (at area E4a) once wound down to a deeper level of derro warrens that in turn connected to Nar-Voth in the Darklands, but the Gray Maidens collapsed this tunnel soon after they wiped out the derros. What lies beyond the collapse today is beyond the scope of this chapter, but if you allow the PCs to clear the rubble you can fill it with dangerous Darklands adventures of your own design. A PC who succeeds at a DC 28 Knowledge (arcana) check confirms that the carvings on the facade to area E6 were created recently via *stone shape*, while a PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check identifies the subject as Achaekek, god of the Red Mantis assassins.

Creatures: The bulk of the Red Mantis assassins active in Korvosa spend a few nights each week stationed here, in the Temple of Achaekek. The presence of cytillesh ensures that the assassins don't spend more than 20 hours at a time here, so they usually use the barracks along the southern walls to rest in a safe place while recovering from a mission. At this time, the vast majority of the assassins are spread throughout the city or on assignment

in pursuit of the PCs in the Cinderlands, and only three of these assassins (one of which is stationed at area E3) are present (in addition to their leaders). The two stationed here are resting in two of the chambers to the south unless the alarm has been raised, in which case the assassins hide amid the benches to the south, ready to make sneak attacks on intruders.

An additional guardian dwells here as well: a horse-sized insectile monstrosity called a cytilipede. The Gray Maidens allowed the intelligent beast to live after it begged for mercy upon seeing the slaughter of its derro allies, and today counts the Red Mantis assassins as its new family. The centipede-like monster lives amid the cytillesh in the eastern part of the cave, and clatters out to attack any intruders. It uses its cytilesh flash as soon as it can affect as many foes as possible, at which point the Red Mantis assassins move in to sneak attack stunned victims.

ADVANCED CYTILIPED

CR 7

XP 3,200

hp 92 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 5* 288, 65)

RED MANTIS ASSASSINS (2)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 78 each (see page 144)

Development: If the alarm is raised, the PCs face more than a pair of assassins and a cytilipede here. In addition to any guardians from areas E2 or E3 who fled here, they must contend with the leader of the Red Mantis assassins in Korvosa (Cinnabar; see area E5) and the local high priestess of Achaekek (Koriantu; see area E6).

E5 CINNABAR'S CHAMBERS (CR 12)

Three large stone vats sit in alcoves in this room. Each is big enough to hold a human, but apart from a strange blue residue caking the insides of each, they are empty. A cot and a writing desk sit amid the vats—awkward additions of comfort in what once seems to have been a strange laboratory.

Creature: This room was once where the derros cultivated various toxins derived from cytillesh, but the Gray Maidens disposed of the noxious materials. Today, the room serves as barracks for the leader of the Red Mantis assassins currently active in Korvosa—a woman named Cinnabar.

The sole child of the notorious Red Mantis cultist Carmine the Lustful Feaster, Cinnabar was an egregious disappointment to the family tradition, as her meek manner left her ill-suited to be a killer. Carmine, however, had Cinnabar “fixed” at the age of eight by placing a *geas* upon her, compelling the young girl to kill at least one living

4

creature each week without assistance or suffer wracking pain and potential death. Out of necessity, Cinnabar swiftly grew to become a dispassionate and self-reliant killer. As a result, she took to her Red Mantis training with a level of dedication previously unseen in any other initiate. She finally came of age when her mother perished on a job, leaving Cinnabar alone in the world. With the death of her mother came an unforeseen development. Hatred of her mother had been all Cinnabar's main driving force, and with her mother dead and the regular *geas* now removed, little remained but loyalty to the Red Mantis. Cinnabar's chilling lack of passion makes her a truly effective killer, yet also robs her of the drive to climb the ladder of the Red Mantis society. She has stagnated, in effect, in the role of commander, something her superiors seek to cure her of by giving her an important task that will hopefully restore her inner fire and make her fit for true leadership.

Although Cinnabar has had the inconvenience of the *geas* removed, she continues to slay with her trademark dispassion and frequency. Most within the lower-echelon of the Red Mantis are convinced that Cinnabar's *geas* remains in effect and that to displease her is to become her weekly sustenance. This false belief has enabled Cinnabar to command a loyalty based on fear unrivaled by her Red Mantis peers. While she conceals her face with the traditional mantis mask when in battle, Cinnabar is in fact quite beautiful, with strawberry-colored hair, though her original kind countenance has hardened into one of permanent cold severity.

CINNABAR**CR 12****XP 19,200**

Female human ranger 2/rogue 4/Red Mantis assassin 7
(*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: The Inner Sea World Guide* 282)

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +5; **Senses** Perception +19

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 16, flat-footed 20 (+8 armor, +1 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 shield)

hp 133 (13 HD; 11d8+2d10+69)

Fort +10, **Ref** +16, **Will** +4

Defensive Abilities evasion, red shroud, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 60 ft.

Melee +1 sawtooth sabre +15/+10 (1d8+11/17-20), +1 sawtooth sabre +15/+10 (1d8+11/17-20)

Special Attacks combat style (two-weapon combat), favored enemy (humans +2), prayer attack (DC 17), sneak attack +5d6

Red Mantis Assassin Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th; concentration +9)

1/day—summon mantis

Red Mantis Assassin Spells Known (CL 7th; concentration +9)

3rd (1/day)—*fly, haste*

2nd (4/day)—*bear's endurance, bull's strength, cat's grace, summon swarm*

1st (5/day)—*disguise self, expeditious retreat, jump, true strike, vanish^{APG}*

TACTICS

Before Combat Cinnabar casts *fly, bear's endurance, bull's strength*, and *cat's grace* on herself before combat.

During Combat If she is with allies, Cinnabar hangs back to summon 1d3 fiendish giant mantises on the first round of combat, then casts *haste* on the second round before moving in to join the fight in melee, staying mobile as needed to make sneak attacks. If she is alone, she instead fights defensively and attacks via melee on the first round. She uses Arcane Strike to enhance her attacks.

Morale Cinnabar is a relentless leader and loyal to the Red Mantis, yet her personality has begun to crack. If she is reduced to 10 or fewer hit points, her next action in combat is to drop her weapons and fall to her knees and beg for a quick death. If death is not granted in 1 round, she picks her weapons back up (hoping to provoke attacks of opportunity that result in her demise) and then fights to the death with a furious wrath, gaining a +4 morale bonus on attack rolls and weapon damage rolls for the next 10 rounds. If she is granted mercy and given the chance to surrender instead of death, the conditioning in her mind reels and she instead becomes speechless for 1d6 rounds, during which she takes no offensive actions unless she's attacked (in which case she is filled with a wrath as detailed above). If none attack her in those 1d6 rounds, Cinnabar's original, more kind-hearted personality has a chance to return. A full redemption should take many weeks or even months, and while she doesn't aid the PCs in combat (her distaste for bloodshed having returned), she can provide them with information about the repercussions the PCs may face for driving off the Red Mantis. This includes the information in her recent letter from the Crimson Citadel, along with warnings of Mistress Kaytanya, as well as information about the defenders within Deathhead Vault. In time, she'll be targeted for assassination by the Red Mantis, but if the PCs can keep her alive, Cinnabar can become a potent ally in the climax of Curse of the Crimson Throne (at your discretion).

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 21, **Con** 18, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 31

Feats Alertness, Arcane Strike, Dodge, Double Slice, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (sawtooth sabre), Greater Weapon Focus (sawtooth sabre), Greater Weapon Specialization (sawtooth sabre), Improved Critical (sawtooth sabre), Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Toughness, Two-Weapon



A
HISTORY
OF ASHES

CHAPTER
BACKGROUND

PART 1:
THE ROAD
NORTH

PART 2:
TRIALS OF
RESPECT

PART 3:
MANTIS AND
MAIDEN

CHAPTER
CONCLUSION

4

Cinnabar-

Agent Koriantu's reports of your progress in Korvosa paints a very different picture than that you've presented previously to the Crimson Citadel, and we are displeased you have downplayed the facts. In particular, we find the disruptions inflicted on the operation by the adventurers you claimed would be "simple matters to resolve" to be particularly worrisome. If the agents under your command can defeat these adventurers in the Cinderlands as you promise, well and good, but should they continue to act as flies in the ointment, I shall be obliged to relieve you of duty and lead the operation myself. The Blood Mistress is already unhappy with the, shall we say, sloppiness your agents have exhibited to date, and if I am forced to step in to take command of a continually faltering operation, one would hope for your sake that you have not survived this latest mishandling of resources. Any pains inflicted upon you by your simple little adventurers would feel as a lover's tender caress compared to my ministrations.

Trusting you will do what is needed, and may you walk in blood.

-K

HANDOUT #4-2

Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (sawtooth sabre), Weapon Specialization (sawtooth sabre)

Skills Acrobatics +19, Bluff +18, Disguise +18, Fly +12, Intimidate +18, Perception +19, Sense Motive +12, Stealth +19, Survival +15

Languages Common

SQ mantis form, resurrection sense, rogue talents (combat trick, weapon training), track +1, trapfinding +2, wild empathy +4

Combat Gear mask of the mantis (see page 434), potions of cure moderate wounds (2); **Other Gear** +2 mithral chainmail, +1 sawtooth sabre^{UE}, +1 sawtooth sabre^{UE}, boots of striding and springing, ring of protection +1, 8 pp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Mantis Form (Su) Once per day, Cinnabar can transform into a blood-red giant praying mantis as a standard action, as if using *vermin shape II*^{UM} (CL 10th). In addition to the normal adjustments to Strength, Dexterity, and natural armor provided by this spell effect, she gains the giant mantis's darkvision (with a range of 60 feet), grab, lunge, mandibles, and sudden strike extraordinary abilities, but not its immunity to mind-affecting effects or its racial modifiers on Perception and Stealth checks. If she wields a magical sawtooth sabre in her hand when she transforms, the magical enhancements for that weapon apply to her

corresponding claw attack—if she wields two of them, then the weapons each apply to a different claw attack.

Prayer Attack (Su) Resisting Cinnabar's prayer attack requires a successful DC 17 Will save. See page 145 for more details on this signature assassination style.

Red Shroud (Su) Cinnabar's red shroud persists for 7 rounds when she activates it. She can use this ability four times per day. See page 145 for more details.

Resurrection Sense (Su) Cinnabar senses if a creature she has slain within the last year has been restored to life, as long as she and the creature are both on the same plane.

Summon Mantis (Sp) Once per day, Cinnabar can summon an advanced fiendish giant mantis, 1d3 fiendish giant mantises, or 1d4+1 giant mantises, as if using *summon monster V*. She can mentally direct the actions of these summoned vermin as a free action. All mantises summoned by this spell-like ability are bloodred and gain no racial bonuses on Stealth checks in forests.

Treasure: An investigation of the materials on the writing desk reveals the majority of the notes to be concerned with training exercises, prayers to Achaek, and detailed illustrations of anatomy and the best methods of delivering fatal coups de grace or sneak attacks. There is nothing here to directly link the Red Mantis presence in

Korvosa to Queen Ileosa—but one document comes close. With a successful DC 25 Perception check, a PC searching the desk can find what appears to be a piece of crimson parchment tucked away, out of sight between two desk drawers. While this sheet seems to have nothing more than additional illustrations of attack methods, it bears a dim magic aura; in truth, it's a short message from Cinnabar's commander, Kayltanya, who disguised the letter with a *secret page* spell (CL 10th). Speaking the word "Kayltanya" reveals the page's actual contents. The contents of this letter are presented on page 241 as Handout #4-2.

E6 INNER SANCTUM OF THE MANTIS (CR 12)

Six stone pillars support the roof of this T-shaped chamber. The walls are decorated with incredibly detailed paintings of immense mantis-like monsters destroying towns with various forms of architecture. Strangely, the scenes constantly evolve, playing out an eternal scene of slaughter. The most impressive feature in the chamber is a towering stone statue of a four-armed mantis to the west.

This entire room's contents are the product of a *screen* spell placed by the room's inhabitant. The animated paintings on the walls and the statue of Achaeket are illusions, and only the pillars in the room are real. The illusory statue of the mantis hides a cot and a small altar, atop which sits a bowl of water used by the room's occupant for scrying. The illusion also obscures the door in the north wall, although anyone who touches along the wall in the right spot can feel the door. With the *screen* removed, the original decor of the room is revealed—a plain stone chamber once used for meetings between the derros and thieves of the Cerulean Society, where prisoner exchanges and payments were carried out.

The secret door in the south wall can be found with a successful DC 40 Perception check. If the PCs use the information given them by Boule, they gain a +20 circumstance bonus on this check, but as long as a searcher is fooled by the *screen* spell, she also takes a -20 penalty on the check.

Creature: This room's occupant is a relatively recent arrival named Koriantu, a debased aasimar whose loyalty to the Red Mantis has been complete and utter since her conversion from the worship of Iomedae 12 years ago, when she was confronted by hypocrisy and treachery among corrupt priests while serving in the crusade in the Worldwound. She now believes that chaos is the greatest danger facing civilization, and that those who hesitate to slaughter agents of chaos without mercy are the enemy's greatest ally. She fled the crusades after she grew disillusioned with "a contagion of mercy" among her fellow Iomedaeans, and found the culture on Mediogalti

Isle to be the perfect combination of merciless order and welcome distance from Mendev.

In the following 12 years, Koriantu has served the Red Mantis well as a sort of internal observer. Less interested in the mechanics of religion or the workings of magic, Koriantu is exceptionally talented at ferreting out dissenters and free thinkers. She has long campaigned against Cinnabar in particular, seeing in her great potential for a relapse into kindness and betrayal of the church, but the other woman's political ties to powerful families has largely kept her shielded. When rumors rose that Cinnabar's mission in Korvosa was faltering, Koriantu swiftly volunteered to travel to the city to observe and report.

Cinnabar knows Koriantu's reputation, and the aasimar's arrival in the region has had the opposite effect the church had hoped, resulting in a potential relapse (see the Morale entry in Cinnabar's stat block). Koriantu hopes to give Cinnabar the opportunity to fail so she can execute what she's come to see as a weak link in the organization. Koriantu has little interest in the assassins' specific mission in Korvosa and even less interest in the PCs. She has believed from the start that working for Queen Ileosa would only damage the Red Mantis's reputation in the long run—an opinion she has kept mostly to herself.

KORIANTU	CR 12
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XP 19,200

Female azata-blooded aasimar (musetouched) cleric of Achaeket 13 (*Pathfinder Player Companion: Blood of Angels* 22, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 7*)

LE Medium outsider (native)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 30, touch 19, flat-footed 28 (+6 armor, +3 *defending sabre*, +4 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 natural, +4 shield)

hp 140 (13d8+78)

Fort +15, **Ref** +9, **Will** +17

Resist acid 5, cold 5, electricity 5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.; *air walk*

Melee *defending spell-storing sawtooth sabre* +9/+4
(1d8/19-20)

Special Attacks channel negative energy 5/day (DC 18, 7d6)

Aasimar Spell-Like Abilities (CL 13th; concentration +15)

1/day—*glitterdust* (DC 14)

Cleric Spell-Like Abilities (CL 13th; concentration +19)

At will—master's illusion (13 rounds/day)

9/day—battle rage (+6), copycat (13 rounds)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 13th; concentration +19)

7th—*blasphemy* (DC 23), *screen*° (DC 23)

6th—*blade barrier*° (DC 22), quickened *cure moderate wounds*, *heal*, *word of recall*



A
HISTORY
OF ASHES

CHAPTER
BACKGROUND

PART 1:
THE ROAD
NORTH

PART 2:
TRIALS OF
RESPECT

PART 3:
MANTIS AND
MAIDEN

CHAPTER
CONCLUSION

- 5th—quickened divine favor, extended greater magic weapon, quickened sanctuary, scrying, wall of thorns⁰
- 4th—air walk, confusion⁰ (DC 20), cure critical wounds, discern lies (DC 20), extended magic vestment (2)
- 3rd—cure serious wounds (3), dispel magic, speak with dead (DC 19), vampiric touch⁰
- 2nd—cure moderate wounds (2), death knell (DC 18), invisibility⁰, shield other, silence (DC 18), spiritual weapon
- 1st—cure light wounds (4), disguise self⁰, sanctuary (DC 17), shield of faith
- 0 (at will)—bleed (DC 16), detect magic, read magic, stabilize
- D domain spell; Domains Trickery, War (Blood^{APG} subdomain)

TACTICS

Before Combat Koriantu casts greater magic weapon on her sabre and magic vestment twice (on her armor and buckler); just before combat begins she casts air walk and shield of faith.

During Combat Koriantu hangs back in combat, casting quickened sanctuary on the first round of combat and using her spells to control the battlefield or to harry foes while minions fight for her. She devotes her +3 bonus from her defending sabre to her Armor Class. She moves in quickly to use healing magic as needed. Air walk helps her to stay away from ground-based melee foes. Once she decides to fight, she abandons defensive casting to cast blasphemy and quickened divine favor, then blade barrier the next round, following with additional damaging spells as needed. If she sees that Cinnabar has succumbed to her previous weak personality, she focuses her actions on attempts to kill her before the fallen assassin can reveal too much to the enemy.

Morale If she is reduced to 40 hit points or fewer, suffers a debilitating condition, or is outnumbered, Koriantu casts word of recall to return to the Crimson Citadel on distant Mediogalti Island. If she escapes in this way, she can be encountered again at Mistress Kayltanya's side in Chapter 6. If she fails to escape via word of recall, she uses invisibility to hide her flight and abandons the complex. If she can escape to safety on foot, she uses word of recall as soon as she prepares spells the next day.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 15, **Con** 18, **Int** 8, **Wis** 22, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 26

Feats Command Undead, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Extend Spell, Quicken Spell, Selective Channeling, Toughness

Skills Diplomacy +4, Knowledge (religion) +5, Sense Motive +19

Languages Celestial, Common

SQ wounding blade

Gear mwk studded leather, mwk buckler, +1 defending spell-storing sawtooth sabre^{ISWG} (currently contains hold person), amulet of natural armor +1, belt of mighty constitution +4, cloak of resistance +3, headband of inspired wisdom +4, 395 gp

E7 EMPTY BURIAL VAULTS

Alcoves along the east and west walls of this hallway contain ancient stone sarcophagi.

An examination of these stone coffins, along with a successful DC 25 Knowledge (history) check, reveals that they are ancient Shoanti crypts. The contents of the sarcophagi were looted long ago by the derros (they used



KORIANTU

4

the sarcophagi to keep abducted victims caged now and then). Nothing of value remains within.

E8 ZENOBIA'S CRYPT (CR 12)

The walls of this large room bear ancient carvings of wild animals in a scene set within a rugged, barren landscape. Two sarcophagi, their lids pushed aside, sit in alcoves to the north and east, while to the west is a third sarcophagus upon a raised dais surrounded by several three-foot-tall vats. The rank smell of vinegar fills the air.

This chamber was originally the resting place of a great Shoanti shaman (as a PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Knowledge [history] check confirms, identifying the wall carvings as scenes from the Cinderlands meant to soothe the resting spirits within this room); later it was used by the derros as a necromantic workshop. It has recently been given over to one of the Gray Maidens' most tragic recruits: arbiter Zenobia Zenderholm. Now that she exists as a penanggalen, she must soak her entrails in vinegar in order to fit back into her body—the vats in this room contain gallons of the stuff.

If the PCs arrive after dark, Zenobia's body lies in state in the sarcophagus, sans head and entrails. Likewise, the northern two sarcophagi now serve as resting places for Zenobia's two manananggals (see area E3); during the day the coffins are empty, but at night, the discarded lower torsos of the two lie in state here. With a successful DC 27 Knowledge (religion) check, a character correctly identifies these strange remains for what they are, and realizes that if they're destroyed, the manananggals themselves can be destroyed if they still live. Destroying Zenobia's body does not destroy her, but does keep her from masquerading as a living person in the future.

Creature: Zenobia isn't encountered here since she's working on new recruits in area E18 when the PCs arrive. Yet she does not leave this area unguarded. So pleased was Urgathoa with the woman's change of heart and abandonment of her former faith, the deity granted Zenobia a powerful guardian—an advanced meladaemon named Vylloth. Zenobia keeps the meladaemon here with commands to keep her body safe, along with the remains of her two minions, but Vylloth has grown frustrated with the task, seeing it as below his station and as a mockery of his potential. He would rather serve Urgathoa and her faithful by spreading famine and disease than by spending all his time here in this dark room guarding bodies and breathing vinegar fumes.

Vylloth confronts intruders with a snarl but does not immediately attack. Bored, the daemon instead demands to know the PCs' business, hoping for a bit of entertainment before the inevitable fight. If the PCs don't

attack at once, he proposes a trade. In return for answering his questions, he'll answer questions the PCs pose. Vylloth wants to know about the progression of chaos in the city above, particularly how it relates to the spread of disease and famine, but also asks questions about the PCs' purpose here and their goals. He eagerly answers any questions the PCs have of him, but does so with outright lies designed to misdirect the PCs or to instill despair.

Once the PCs grow tired of the game (or once they try to meddle with the bodies or attack), Vylloth steps forward to get the PCs into the area of his consumptive aura (if they weren't there already) and begins the fight with *horrid wilting* and then a quickened *magic missile* cast at the most damaged-looking PC. He focuses his following attacks on anyone who attempts to harm Zenobia's body, but if the body is destroyed, he teleports to her side in area E18 to report the event to her. In this case, the PCs can encounter him again at Zenobia's side. The meladaemon otherwise fights to the death.

VYLOTH

CR 12

XP 19,200

Advanced meladaemon (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 292, 69)

hp 175

E9 SECRET STAIRWELL

This stairwell was crafted many years ago by the Cerulean Society, completing its construction soon after it forged an alliance with the derros; the society managed to keep it secret from the arbiters of the Longacre Building. The thieves accomplished this in part because no one considered the possibility of someone digging a hidden tunnel into the prison (the sheer audacity of such an act helped to camouflage it), but the feat was also a testament to the skill of the talented saboteurs who built the tunnel. The secret doors at either end can be found with a successful DC 40 Perception check, but again, with Boule's advice, attempts to find either gain a +20 circumstance bonus.

E10 THE FINAL WALK

The walls of this ten-foot-wide hallway have been set with polished ivory tiles, each of which bears a softly glowing circle of light.

Known as the "Final Walk" to prisoners, this hallway connects the Deathhead Vault's prison block to its infamous execution chamber. A magical effect woven into the walls of the Final Walk once infused the area with a *calm emotions* effect, but this trap has been disarmed and now does little more than simply provide dim illumination.



E11 EXECUTION CHAMBER (CR 12)

Softly glowing ivory tiles adorn the walls, floor, and ceiling of this room. Four wooden benches sit in the center of the room, facing an upraised area on which an executioner's block sits. To the north, an intimidating-looking greataxe hangs on display on a sturdy weapon rack. An iron door in the west wall, just north of the main double-door entrance, bears a narrow window, currently closed via a sliding metal slat.

This room was where the most depraved and violent criminals convicted by Korvosa's arbiters were sent for execution via beheading. These executions were carried out swiftly, with the condemned being killed within 3 minutes of being delivered to the block and with several priests of Abadar and Pharsma in attendance, along with a minimum of three active arbiters.

Creature: The Gray Maidens do not perform executions here. They've converted this room into a far more terrible purpose. This chamber is where new recruits to their organization are sent when they are ready for their final indoctrination: a ritual where each guard woman is put under the tender ministrations of a monstrous creature called from the Ethereal Plane—a pakalchi sahkil known only as the Mother of Thorns.

This horrific entity, part of a race of warped outsiders that once served Pharsma, finds great delight in serving the Gray Maidens in a chamber where the faith of Pharsma used to hold power. Called to this realm via a scroll of greater planar ally, the Mother of Thorns eagerly serves as a specialized tormentor for the Gray Maidens. Appearing as an emaciated woman with thorny vines growing from her eyes and fingers, the Mother of Thorns skillfully uses her razor-sharp vines to apply the final designs that mar the faces of each Gray Maiden, placing these wounds in a way that both mars the maiden's beauty and gives her a unique appearance once the wounds are

allowed to heal naturally into scars. The Gray Maidens also periodically secure the Mother of Thorns's aid to break the will of a particularly obstinate recruits, using a combination of her mind-numbing venom and mind-controlling magic. The Mother of Thorns has little patience for intruders and attacks on sight.

MOTHER OF THORNS

CR 12

XP 19,200

Female pakalchi sahkil rogue 6 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 5* 216)

NE Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar, sahkil)

Init +13; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, *true seeing*; Perception +24

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 21, flat-footed 18 (+2 deflection, +9 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 161 (17 HD; 6d8+11d10+74)

Fort +11, **Ref** +21, **Will** +13

Defensive Abilities evasion, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge; **DR** 10/good; **Immune** death effects, disease, fear, poison; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10, sonic 10; **SR** 20

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 claws +24 (1d6+7/19–20), 4 vines +23 (1d4+3 plus bleed and poison)

Ranged 4 thorns +24 (1d4+7 plus bleed and poison)

Special Attacks bleed (1d4), entangling train, look of fear (30 ft., DC 25), sneak attack +3d6 plus 3 bleed, spirit touch, sudden strike, thorns

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th; concentration +20)

Constant—*true seeing*

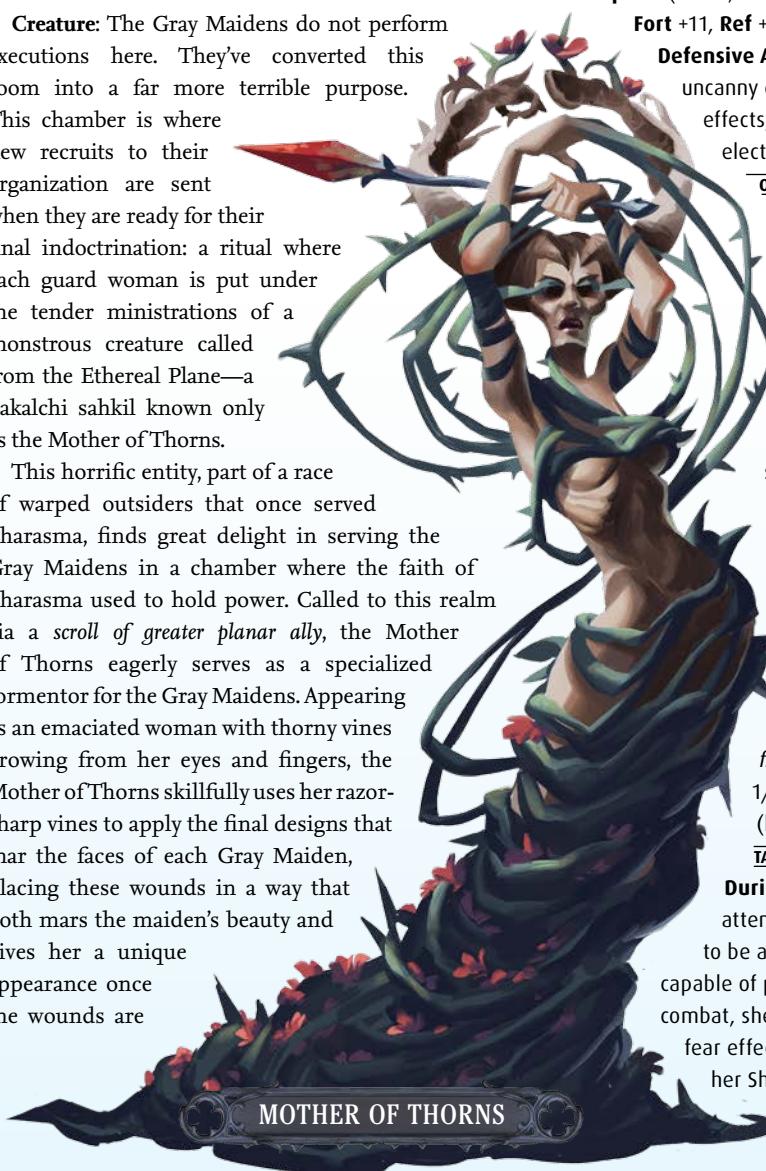
At will—*charm person* (DC 19), *detect good*, *detect magic*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only), *protection from good*

3/day—*blink*, *calm emotions* (DC 22), *fly*

1/day—*dominate person* (DC 23), *summon* (level 6, 1 wihsaak 40%)

TACTICS

During Combat The Mother of Thorns attempts to dominate a character she suspects to be a rogue or a member of another class capable of performing sneak attacks. In melee combat, she uses her many methods of causing fear effects to make additional sneak attacks via her Shatter Defenses feat. She relies on her thorns and *wand of enervation* for ranged combat. During the battle, she



A HISTORY OF ASHES

CHAPTER BACKGROUND

PART 1:
THE ROAD NORTH

PART 2:
TRAILS OF RESPECT

PART 3:
MANTIS AND MAIDEN

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

4

communicates with Kordaitra telepathically, keeping the Gray Maiden updated on her status.

Morale If reduced to 40 hp or fewer, the Mother of Thorns teleports to area **E18**, where she uses her *wand of cure critical wounds* and aid from Zenobia to heal her wounds and prepare for a rematch. When fighting at Zenobia's side, she fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 24, Dex 28, Con 18, Int 15, Wis 19, Cha 26

Base Atk +15; CMB +22; CMD 43

Feats Blind-fight, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dazzling Display, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (claw), Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Shatter Defenses, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (vine)

Skills Acrobatics +29, Bluff +28, Climb +17, Diplomacy +18, Intimidate +28, Knowledge (planes) +13, Knowledge (religion) +13, Perception +24, Sense Motive +24, Spellcraft +10, Stealth +29, Use Magic Device +19

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Infernal; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ easy to call, emotional focus, rogue talents (bleeding attack +3, combat trick, finesse rogue), skip between, trapfinding +3

Combat Gear *wand of cure critical wounds* (15 charges), *wand of enervation* (15 charges); **Other Gear** *ring of protection* +2

GRAY MAIDEN RECRUITS (12) **CR 1/2**

XP 200 each

Human fighter 1 (superstitious mercenary; *Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 80)

hp 14 each (currently at 1d4 hp each)

Story Award: For each of these 12 women rescued and brought to freedom outside of Deathhead Vault, award the PCs 1,600 XP.

E14 ENDRIN'S CELL (CR 13)

This hidden cell can be accessed only via a secret door in the wall of another cell, which is generally kept empty. The secret door can be spotted with a successful DC 40 Perception check. While Boule's advice does not help in locating this door, the documents from area **E20** reveal its presence and using them as a guide grants a searcher a +20 circumstance bonus on the check. The stone door is locked (hardness 8, hp 60, break DC 28, Disable Device DC 40), but can be unlocked by a special cell key carried by Kordaitra.

Creature: Marcus Endrin, once the commander of the Sable Company, languishes unconscious and feebled-minded in this cell. Beaten near to death and kept in this state by regular visits from Kordaitra, Marcus barely survived his failed assassination attempt against the queen, and has been kept here ever since. Queen Ileosa has ordered her Gray Maidens to keep Marcus alive. Once she completes her bid for immortality, her plans for the man certainly don't bode well for his continued well-being.

If the PCs heal Marcus, he wakes but is incapable of doing anything more than cringing and crying. The *feebledmind* effect he is suffering from has reduced him to the mindset of an abused animal, and unless the PCs can remove this condition, escorting him out of the dungeon and to the safe hands of the rebellion is perhaps the most merciful act they can provide.

Marcus has all but given up hope for escape, but if the PCs manage to remove the *feebledmind* effect he's suffering from, his swollen eyes fill with tears of relief. He's still in no condition at this point to provide aid to the PCs unless he's fully healed and given armor and gear; even if this happens, he'd rather just get out of Deathhead Vault. With a successful DC 24 Diplomacy check, a PC can convince him to help the PCs (provided he's healed and outfitted with gear). A successful DC 25 Intimidate check works as well, but once he turns hostile, he attempts to escape to freedom at the first opportunity.

MARCUS ENDRIN **CR 13**

XP 25,600

Male middle-aged human aristocrat 1/ranger (Sable Company marine) 13 (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Combat* 43)



LG Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Perception +18

DEFENSE

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10 (+1 Dex)

hp 91 (currently stable at -2 hp; 14 HD; 1d8+13d10+15)

Fort +8, **Ref** +9, **Will** +9

Defensive Abilities evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee unarmed strike +14/+9/+4 (1d3+1 nonlethal)

Special Attacks combat style (mounted^{APG}), favored enemy (aberrations +4, evil outsiders +4, vermin +2), quarry

TACTICS

During Combat Marcus fights defensively until he regains gear he can use, in which case he favors ranged attacks if possible. He desperately wants to avoid being captured and avoids combat against foes who outnumber him.

Morale Marcus flees if reduced to 30 or fewer hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 13, **Con** 11, **Int** 1 (9 normally), **Wis** 13, **Cha** 1 (19 normally)

Base Atk +13; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 25

Feats Deadly Aim, Endurance, Iron Will, Monstrous Mount, Monstrous Mount Mastery, Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Ride-by Attack, Toughness

Skills Handle Animal +12, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (local) +4, Perception +18, Ride +18, Sense Motive +18, Survival +18

Languages Common

SQ camouflage, favored terrain (plains +2, underground +2, urban +6), swift tracker, track +6, wild empathy +8, woodland stride

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Hippogriff Companion Marcus's previous hippogriff has been slaughtered, and as long as he remains affected by *feeblemind* he cannot gain a new one. This ability and many of his feats (including Monstrous Mount and Monstrous Mount Mastery from *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Combat*) are unlikely to play a role in this chapter, but if you wish to have Marcus show up later in your campaign, feel free to design his new hippogriff mount according to the rules in *Inner Sea Combat*.

Story Award: If the PCs rescue Marcus, award the PCs XP as if they had defeated him in combat.

E15 INDOCTRINATION CHAMBER (CR 10)

The western wall of this tiled hallway is a row of bars that cages a smaller room within, accessible by a heavy iron gate. Within the smaller room sits a desk, a filing cabinet, and a table. A window in the bars allows for a place to perhaps pass objects from the hall to the cage.

This room was once used to process prisoners, but now it serves the Gray Maidens as a place to process new recruits. The door in the northwest corner of the room is kept locked and leads up to the ground floor of the Longacre Building above, where a few dozen Gray Maidens can be located. These lower-ranking members of the group are forbidden from returning to the vault, though, so as long as the PCs avoid the upper floors they need not fear reinforcements. If you wish, you can detail the upper floors of the Longacre Building, but they have no direct bearing on the mission at hand and are beyond the scope of this chapter.

Creatures: Four Gray Maidens guard this room at all times. Two are posted inside the cage (they can fire arrows between the bars while enjoying the benefits of cover), while another two stand at attention in the hall itself. If they're attacked, one of the guards inside the cage raises the alarm with a shout before they attack the PCs.

GRAY MAIDEN GUARDS (4) CR 6

XP 2,400 each

Female human fighter 7

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 11, flat-footed 23 (+10 armor, +1 Dex, +3 shield)

hp 71 each (7d10+28)

Fort +8, **Ref** +3, **Will** +5 (+2 vs. fear)

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 longsword +13/+8 (1d8+7/19-20)

Ranged composite longbow +8/+3 (1d8+3/x3)

Special Attacks weapon training (heavy blades +1)

TACTICS

During Combat The Gray Maiden guards work together, focusing their attacks on one foe at a time rather than spreading the damage out evenly. Each time they attack a new foe, one guard uses Dazzling Display to demoralize their other enemies.

Morale Gray Maiden guards fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 13, **Con** 16, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 21

Feats Alertness, Dazzling Display, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Power Attack, Shield Focus, Skill Focus (Intimidate), Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword)

Skills Intimidate +13, Perception +10, Sense Motive +3

Languages Common

SQ armor training 2

Combat Gear potion of cure moderate wounds; **Other Gear** +1 full plate, mwk heavy steel shield, +1 longsword, composite longbow (+3 Str) with 20 arrows, 16 pp, 5 gp

E16 GUARD QUARTERS (CR 10)

Each of these identical rooms features a single bed and an armor and weapon stand.

Creatures: At any one time, four Gray Maidens are resting here. If an alarm is raised, they all congregate in one room with their gear to help each other to put on their armor, but it still takes about 5 minutes for them to be ready to join a fight in area E15.

GRAY MAIDEN GUARDS (4)**CR 6****XP 2,400 each****hp** 71 each (see page 247)**E17 TISHARUE'S QUARTERS (CR 11)**

This large room has been outfitted to serve as both a study and a bedroom. Several important-looking documents sit on a table to the south, while an elegant suit of silvery, feminine armor is on display to the north.

Creature: The commander of the Gray Maiden guards and warden of Deathhead, an elven fighter named Tisharue, keeps her quarters here. Tisharue was an early applicant to the Gray Maidens, a bitter woman who joined the cause to fuel her need for power. Losing her smooth skin to Gray Maiden scars was easy for her, and she finds the armor the Maidens wear to be far more beautiful than anything of flesh and bone. Tisharue has spent the last several months here in Deathhead Vault and the Longacre Building above, focused not on the recruitment of new soldiers but on watching the Gray Maidens for any signs of disloyalty or relapse. Her skill at noting subtle shifts of personality and the eagerness she applies to “correcting” relapses are the primary reasons the Gray Maidens have so few public incidents of disloyalty. Of late, Tisharue has grown concerned that the commander of the company, Sabina Merrin, may not have undergone the proper conditioning and could become the greatest traitor to the cause, but she has not yet gathered enough evidence to prove her concerns. Tisharue bides her time, hoping to catch Sabina in an act of

irrefutable treason so that she will be rewarded with the other woman’s leadership position once Sabina is executed. Although she is more skilled than the Maidens’ second-in-command, Kordaitra, Tisharue does her best to maintain the cavalier’s respect and support so that when she becomes the commander of the group, she can count on Kordaitra’s continued allegiance.

TISHARUE**CR 11****XP 12,800**

Female elf fighter 12

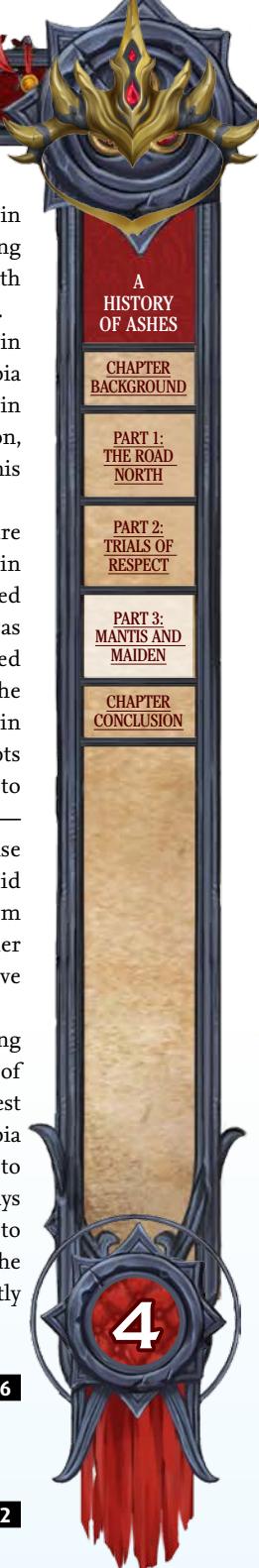
LE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +13**DEFENSE****AC** 25, touch 11, flat-footed 24 (+9 armor, +1 Dex, +5 shield)**hp** 130 (12d10+60)**Fort** +11, **Ref** +5, **Will** +7 (+3 vs. fear); +2 vs. enchantments**Immune** sleep**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** +1 flaming longsword +21/+16/+11
(1d8+11/17-20 plus 1d6 fire)**Special Attacks** weapon trainings
(heavy blades +2, bows +1)**TACTICS**

During Combat Tisharue favors her sword in battle, resorting to her bow only when she can’t close to melee. She prefers to make Power Attacks, but is otherwise a relatively straightforward combatant, stabbing her enemies until they’re brought down.

Morale Warden Tisharue fights to the death.



**STATISTICS****Str 18, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 13****Base Atk +12; CMB +16; CMD 27**

Feats Alertness, Bleeding Critical, Critical Focus, Greater Shield Focus, Greater Weapon Focus (longsword), Greater Weapon Specialization (longsword), Improved Critical (longsword), Iron Will, Power Attack, Shield Focus, Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword)

Skills Intimidate +10, Perception +13, Sense Motive +15**Languages** Common, Elven, Varisian**SQ** armor training 3, elven magic**Other Gear** full plate, +1 heavy steel shield, +1 flaming longsword, belt of physical might +2 (Str, Con), 15 gp

Treasure: When she became a Gray Maiden, Tisharue abandoned her previous suit of armor in favor for the official full plate of her new group, yet she retains an emotional attachment to the old armor, an heirloom from her mother, who fought many years against the demons of Tanglebriar. Tisharue keeps this suit of +2 *invulnerability elven chain*^{UE} on display here.

An investigation of the papers on the table reveals that they are records for the indoctrination of Gray Maidens that track conditioning, scars, and other methods of brainwashing. Notes in the margin, written in Elven, indicate Tisharue's concern that the leader of the Gray Maidens, Sabina Merrin, has undergone far less conditioning than all other Maidens have endured.

E18 MAIDEN'S NURSERY (CR 13+)

This grim chamber is outfitted with all manner of torture implements: a rack, several cages, a cramped stockade with spiky bars, and smaller tools of torture like thumbscrews and iron boots sitting on shelves. A caged-off area to the west serves as a guard post.

Creatures: Currently, three hapless and tormented prisoners languish in cages here, watched over by three Gray Maiden guards stationed in the western watch post (the gate to this area is kept locked). One of the three prisoners has been lashed to a table, and if the PCs arrive without setting off the alarm, they find this prisoner being tormented by Zenobia Zenderholm, who has taken up the role of indoctrinator now that Vavana Dhatri, the Gray Maiden's usual initiator, has been reassigned to the castle. During the day, Zenobia's methods are more classical—a combination of torture and false promises of peace combined with long periods of Gray Maiden rhetoric and propaganda whispered into the victim's ears. At night, she augments these methods with foul caresses from her withering entrails and blood drain via diseased bite.

These hideous torments have had great success in quickening the process of indoctrination, be it pushing those with preexisting allegiances into alignment with Gray Maiden priorities or driving those who resist mad.

If the alarm is raised, all of the prisoners are stowed in cages and the Gray Maiden guards have joined Zenobia in the main room, prepared to defend the Nursery or join a battle in an adjoining area as necessary. In addition, Kordaitra relocates from her quarters (area E21) to this room to join in the defense of this chamber.

Zenobia Zenderholm was a well-known public figure before the rise of the Gray Maidens, but she was deep in the throes of blood veil when the Gray Maidens stormed the Longacre Building during the plague and seized it as their own headquarters. The Gray Maidens quarantined Zenobia in her room upstairs, leaving her to die of the affliction. In her final hours, Zenobia lost her faith in Abadar (in large part due to the fact that her attempts to cure herself with *remove disease* continually failed to work) and called out to the source of her torment—Urgathoa. She promised to serve the goddess of disease if delivered from this torment. Delighted, the Pallid Princess granted Zenobia's wish by separating her from the wracking pains of her body and transformed her into a penanggallen, so Zenobia could physically remove herself from her failing remains.

Zenobia has taken to her transformation with a startling passion. Where once she was among the upper tier of Abadar's church, she has now become Urgathoa's greatest agent in Korvosa with Lady Andaisin's death. Zenobia revels in her newfound power, enjoying the freedom to engage in her whims as a worshiper of Urgathoa in ways her previous beliefs forbade. She's considered returning to the church of Abadar to spread her new faith among the others there, but for now has been focused more intently on her duties to the Gray Maidens.

GRAY MAIDEN GUARDS (5)**CR 6****XP 2,400 each****hp** 71 each (see page 247)**GRAY MAIDEN RECRUTS (3)****CR 1/2****XP 200 each**Human fighter 1 (superstitious mercenary; *Pathfinder RPG**NPC Codex* 80)**hp** 14 each (currently at 1d4 hp each)**ZENOBA ZENDERHOLM****CR 11****XP 12,800**

Female middle-aged human penanggallen aristocrat 2/cleric

of Urgathoa 9 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 216)

NE Medium undead

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., Perception +30



A
HISTORY
OF ASHES

CHAPTER
BACKGROUND

PART 1:
THE ROAD
NORTH

PART 2:
TRIALS OF
RESPECT

PART 3:
MANTIS AND
MAIDEN

CHAPTER
CONCLUSION

4

women recruited and conditioned into serving the Gray Maidens, along with records of those who have failed to be indoctrinated. Recruits who continually fail are eventually executed as traitors to the crown, but a study of the documents here reveals the unfortunate truth that very few women who resist indoctrination survive the torments they endure long enough to face such an execution. No records of the alliance between the crown and the Red Mantis can be found here, unfortunately, but the records will be invaluable to the numerous families who seek closure regarding daughters, wives, or sisters lost to the Gray Maidens over the past several months. In addition, these records reveal the presence of the secret cell (area E14) wherein Endrin is imprisoned.

Story Award: If the PCs recover these important documents, award them 12,800 XP.

E21 KORDAITRA'S QUARTERS

This bedroom's decor reveals little about its occupant, other than that it must be a clean, well-ordered, militaristic person with little interest in decor. The monochromatic furniture is blocky and functional, and only the large landscape painting of Korvosa, presented in lovely colors, brings any personality to the chamber at all.

A successful DC 30 Perception check reveals the presence of the secret door in the north wall. The door is locked (Disable Device DC 40), but can be opened with one of the keys Kordaitra carries.

Creature: This room serves as the personal quarters of Kordaitra Destaid, who is technically the second-in-command of the Gray Maidens under Sabina Merrin. Kordaitra's tireless work is what keeps the Gray Maidens running on a daily basis, since Sabina is continually torn between leadership and serving Queen Ileosa as bodyguard and confidant. Kordaitra has grown frustrated with this arrangement; she believes that Sabina has been taking credit for her hard work and intends to have Sabina replaced soon. In truth, Sabina has been harboring second thoughts about her involvement with the Gray Maidens at all.

Kordaitra often spends long hours out in the city, working with Gray Maiden patrols, meeting with Sabina, or checking up on various projects throughout the city. Yet at this time, her duties keep her ensconced here in Deathhead Vault, thanks in large part to Guildmaster Boule's machinations. For several days, Kordaitra (who has always enjoyed the challenge of navigating complex contracts or encoded documents) has been sifting through a large collection of documents that purport to detail the inner workings of the fictional "Korvosan Revolution" Boule invented. Kordaitra is eager to be the one to break

the code and personally lead the assault on the suspected rebel headquarters, but the time it will take her to decrypt the cunning false documents and determine they're complete fictions is left to you to determine. At the very least, it should take her at least 1 week from the point the PCs make their first foray into the complex. If she learns the truth about the documents before the PCs can confront her, she realizes that the actual rebels have played her and that the documents were a ruse to ensure her presence in Deathhead Vault during a raid; she thereafter relocates to Castle Korvosa, taking with her the resources in her hidden room as detailed below in the Morale entry of her stat block.

Kordaitra Destaid is one of the original Gray Maidens, and her guidance has played a key part in maintaining loyalty among a group that otherwise would have collapsed under its own collective psychological damage long ago. Once a knight-enforcer of the church of Asmodeus, she gladly accepted Ileosa's offer to help found a new martial order in not merely the ways of steel but in true loyalty. She's brought much of her Asmodean training to the methodology of founding loyalty in her troopers, and today no longer considers herself as much a crusader for the church as for the queen herself.

KORDAITRA DESTAID

CR 10

XP 9,600

Female human cavalier (constable) 11 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 32, *Pathfinder Player Companion: Heroes of the Street* 17)

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init -1; **Senses** Perception +16

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 9, flat-footed 23 (+10 armor, -1 Dex, +4 shield)

hp 120 (11d10+55)

Fort +12, **Ref** +4, **Will** +7; +3 vs. target of challenge

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +1 *cruel longsword* +16/+11/+6 (1d8+4/17-20) or unarmed strike +14/+9/+4 (1d3+3)

Special Attacks challenge 4/day (+11 damage, +3 to saves while threatened), for the faith +2, greater tactician 3/day (Outflank or Shield Wall, swift action, 8 rounds)

TACTICS

Before Combat If the alarm is raised, Kordaitra moves to area E18 and activates her squad commander ability to prepare the occupants there to use the Shield Wall teamwork feat for 11 minutes.

During Combat If Zenobia is nearby, Kordaitra starts combat using her instant order ability on the first round to allow Zenobia to cast two spells. She follows this up on the second round by moving over to be near Zenobia so she can receive a *divine power* spell on the third round. After this (or at the

start of any combat where Zenobia isn't involved), Kordaitra issues a challenge to the most dangerous martial PC, and then uses her for the faith ability to gain a +2 bonus on attack rolls (and to grant a +1 bonus to all allies nearby). She prefers to attack creatures suffering from fear effects to make the most of strikes from her *cruel longsword* (a tactic that works well when Gray Maiden guards intimidate foes with their Dazzling Display feats, or the Mother of Thorns uses her gaze weapon), but otherwise focuses her attacks on the target of her challenge.

Morale Kordaitra flees combat if reduced to fewer than 40 hit points and attempts to make her way back to the hidden

chamber in her quarters. Once there, she locks herself in, gathers the remaining gear there, and uses a dose of *dust of disappearance* and a *potion of gaseous form* to make her way to Castle Korvosa. In this event, the PCs can encounter her again in Chapter 6, fighting at Vavana Dhatri's side to defend the False Ileosa. Should this happen, reassign the loot she gathers from the secret room as you see fit among the defenders of Castle Korvosa's third floor.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 8, **Con** 16, **Int** 12, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +14 (+16 disarm, +16 grapple, +16 trip);

CMD 23

Feats Dazzling Display, Improved Critical (longsword), Improved Iron Will, Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Outflank^{APC}, Power Attack, Shield Focus, Shield Wall^{APG}, Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Intimidate +16, Knowledge (local) +7, Knowledge (nobility) +6, Knowledge (religion) +15, Linguistics +12, Perception +16, Sense Motive +14

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Gnome, Halfling, Infernal, Shadowtongue, Shoanti, Varisian

SQ apprehend, badge, calling, instant order (standard action), order of the star, quick interrogator, squad commander

Gear +1 full plate, +1 heavy steel shield, +1 *cruel*^{UE} longsword, cloak of resistance +2, prison cell master key, Endrin's cell key, treasury key, 21 pp, 5 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Apprehend (Ex) Kordaitra gains Improved Unarmed Strike as a bonus feat and can attempt a grapple combat maneuver check in place of the attack at the end of a charge. She receives a +2 bonus on Perception checks and combat maneuver checks to disarm, grapple, or trip opponents, and does not treat crowds as difficult terrain.

Badge (Ex) As long as Kordaitra wears her Gray Maiden armor (and thus displays her badge of authority in that organization), allies within 30 feet who can see her gain a +3 morale bonus on saving throws against charm, compulsion, and fear effects and a +2 morale bonus on attack rolls against targets the constable has challenged.

Instant Order (Ex) Kordaitra can bark an order to an ally within 30 feet as a standard action. That ally can instantly take a move action or standard action to comply with the order. Taking the action dazes the ally for 1 round afterward.

Quick Interrogator (Ex) Kordaitra can attempt a Diplomacy check to gather information in 1d6×5 minutes and can attempt a Diplomacy or Intimidate check to change someone's attitude in 5 rounds.

Squad Commander (Ex) Kordaitra can spend 1 minute laying out a plan to activate the tactician ability without having it count against her number of uses per day. The ability



KORDAITRA DESTAID



A
HISTORY
OF ASHES

CHAPTER
BACKGROUND

PART 1:
THE ROAD
NORTH

PART 2:
TRIALS OF
RESPECT

PART 3:
MANTIS AND
MAIDEN

CHAPTER
CONCLUSION



must be triggered within 1 hour of the plan being made, and the benefits last for 11 minutes. She can have only one plan at a time, and if a new plan is made, any old plan is lost.

Treasure: The painting of Korvosa on the wall is of masterful quality—Kordaitra's one real concession to art in her life. An original work called "Sinister Sister," by the Magnimarian artist Goren Andosalu, the painting measures 3 feet by 6 feet, weighs 40 pounds, and is worth 4,500 gp.

The secret room to the north serves as an emergency repository of equipment and gear for the Gray Maidens, and a place to store items and magic looted from the Longacre Building or other sites seized by the crown in the weeks after Eodred's death. Today, much of these resources have been expended, but a few items of note remain here (assuming they haven't been used by Kordaitra in defending Deathhead Vault from the PCs). These items include a cherrywood coffer with velvet-lined compartments (the coffer itself is worth 500 gp) containing four *potions of cure serious wounds*, three *potions of remove disease*, six *potions of lesser restoration*, and three *potions of gaseous form*. In addition, there are 2 doses of *dust*

of disappearance, a *wand of cure critical wounds* (40 charges), a *scroll of break enchantment*, a *scroll of heal*, a *scroll of limited wish*, a *scroll of resurrection*, two *candles of truth*, and 3 doses of *stone salve*, all kept in a *bag of holding* (type IV).

BOLSTERING THE REBELLION

By disrupting the Red Mantis and Gray Maiden presence under the Longacre Building, rescuing key prisoners, and recovering incriminating documents, the PCs can provide the burgeoning rebellion with a wide range of resources to use against Ileosa and her minions, but even with this accomplishment, the hold the queen has over Korvosa remains strong. But with the PCs' successes in this chapter, the Red Mantis temporarily retreats from the city (to return in a smaller number, led by Mistress Kayltanya herself, during Chapter 6) and the Gray Maidens are forced to relocate the center of their operations to the castle. This, combined with the rebellion's new resources and intelligence recovered from Deathhead Vault, makes Korvosa a somewhat safer place and allows for more resources to be sold and purchased. The crown's reduced resources force an end for now to martial law—use the Korvosa (Unrest) city stat block (see page 399) for Korvosa from this point until the end of the adventure path.

4

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

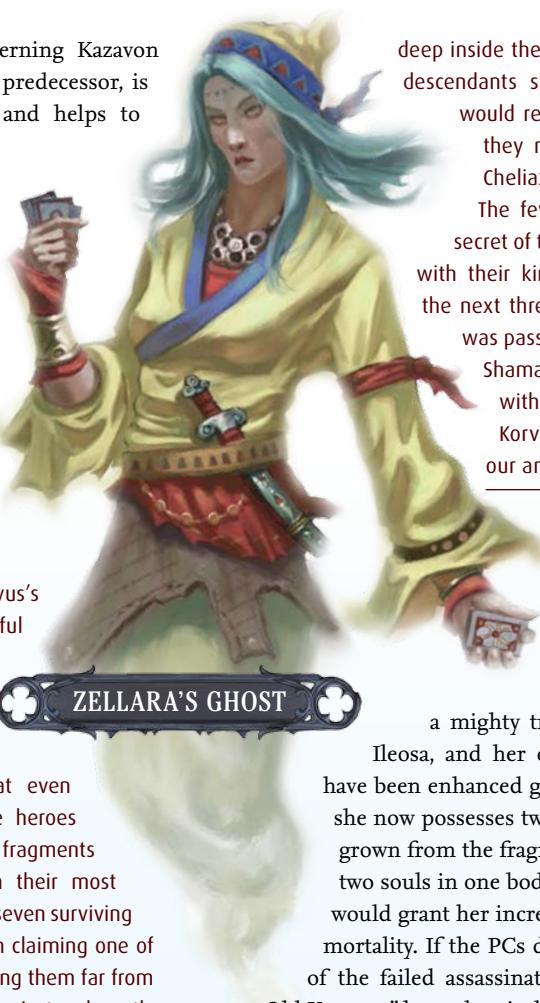
Once the PCs earn 20 Respect Points, the Sun Shaman agrees to aid the PCs. After he has communed with his ancestors and returns to Flameford, he requests their presence in his tent. When the PCs arrive, he congratulates them again on shedding their outlander status to become Sklar-Quah before inviting them to be seated around his personal fire. As one of the few Shoanti to retain knowledge of Midnight's Teeth, what he has to tell the PCs is crucial information.

The Sun Shaman's tale concerning Kazavon fangs, as told to him by his predecessor, is recounted in detail below, and helps to guide the PCs toward their next task.

"Many hundreds of years ago, a man named Mandraivus gathered a small group of heroes to fight a despotic blue dragon named Kazavon, and my ancestor was one who joined this crusade. This ancestor, a shaman named Amarund, was gone for months. When she finally returned she was not the same woman—her hands shook, her eyes carried a haunted stare, and she cried out in fear at night. She spoke little of what she had experienced while fighting at Mandraivus's side, but did say that they were successful in defeating Kazavon and that the dragon's fortress of Scarwall in Belkzen was now under Mandraivus's control.

"While Kazavon had been defeated, his will to live was so immense that even the remains of his body twitched. The heroes attempted to destroy the remains, but key fragments of the dragon's skeleton resisted even their most destructive spells. Mandraivus tasked the seven surviving heroes, among them Amarund, with each claiming one of the bony relics of Kazavon's body and taking them far from Scarwall. None of the seven would communicate where they were going to the others or to Mandraivus in hopes of ensuring that their chosen relics would remain hidden and guarded for all time in order to prevent the dragon from returning to life.

"Amarund told this story to her fellow shamans and revealed that her selected relics were the dragon's fangs, which she called Midnight's Teeth. She and the other shamans chose the ancient pyramid on the shores of Conqueror's Bay as the fangs' reliquary. After hiding them in a secret room



deep inside the pyramid, Amarund and her descendants swore to ensure the fangs would remain safe. For generations, they maintained their task—until Cheliax invaded and drove us off. The few survivors who knew the secret of the fangs were forced to flee with their kin into the Cinderlands. For the next three centuries the knowledge was passed from Sun Shaman to Sun Shaman, and we have watched with fearful eyes as the city of Korvosa has grown up around our ancient reliquary."

The Sun Shaman says that the fragments of Kazavon's soul are like seeds—once they find soil in which to grow, they can bloom into a mighty tree. This is the case with Ilcosa, and her own cruelty and strength have been enhanced greatly by the fangs. Worse, she now possesses two souls: her own, and one grown from the fragment of Kazavon's. Having two souls in one body, the Sun Shaman muses, would grant her incredible power over her own mortality. If the PCs describe to him the events of the failed assassination during "Escape from Old Korvosa," he nods grimly.

THE BLESSING OF THE ANCESTORS

At this point, the Sun Shaman suggests the PCs participate in a ritual called the Blessing of the Ancestors. The Sun Shaman asks the PCs if there is a specific spirit or ancestor with whom they have a particularly strong link. The stronger the link, the more exacting the advice granted



by the Blessing of the Ancestors becomes. While it may seem like the spirit of a dead parent, sibling, child, or lover would make a good choice, there is another spirit with whom the PCs have become quite closely tied—Zellara, the Varisian harrower. If the PCs don't quickly realize she is their greatest link to the spirit world, the character who carries Zellara's *harrow deck* suddenly receives a nearly overwhelming empathic wave of emotion from her, and realizes that she is indeed their best choice. Of course, if one of the PCs is a shaman or spiritualist character, that character's companion may be a more appropriate choice.

The Blessing of the Ancestors is a ritual conducted by Sun Shamans to seek advice concerning a current quandary or event. The information isn't imparted by the contacted spirit, but rather by the realm of spirits, with the spirit contacted serving as a conduit for the information. The general effects of a Blessing of the Ancestors normally duplicate the effects of a *commune* or *contact other plane* spell, but often have unique manifestations.

The ritual itself takes 2 hours to prepare, and to the outside observer, it looks like little more than a rhythmic droning chant performed by the Sun Shaman. Those who wish to partake in the blessing seat themselves in a circle around the Sun Shaman and his focus (a small campfire) so that they are each touching another, forming an unbroken ring of flesh and bone. The ritual must begin 2 hours before sunrise, so that it comes to its conclusion as dawn breaks. The Sun Shaman chooses the upper tier of Bolt Rock to perform the ritual, and unless the PCs request otherwise, the entire Flameford tribe accompanies them to watch, silently and respectfully, as the ritual progresses.

The shaman initially recounts tribal legends and the heroics and wisdom of the ancestors in a sing-song voice, then shifts after 10 minutes into wordless droning and rhythmic chanting. This continues for 2 hours, after which the Sun Shaman slumps and the spirit to be contacted rises from the smoke of the fire to address the participants.

As the spirit coalesces, it regards the PCs favorably. If the PCs chose Zellara, she greets them each by name and offers to perform the next harrowing for them at this time. If the PCs accept, she proceeds with the fifth harrowing for them (see page 260).

Regardless of what spirit speaks to the PCs during this blessing, when the Sun Shaman asks the spirit for advice on how the PCs can defeat their enemy, the spirit begins to sing in a clear, haunting voice. The words to this song are presented in the nearby sidebar.

As the spirit finishes the song, the PCs each feel an upsurge in their souls as the spirits of the dead infuse them with energy to aid them. Even hundreds of miles away, the cruel undead within Scarwall are a blot on the spirit world, and the spirits wish to see that evil destroyed as much as the PCs. The Shoanti stand amazed as the ritual ends and the

THE SPIRIT'S SONG

Fate of steel—Serithtial
Her cage for years sustained.
Four enthralled in lost Scarwall;
Undead to keep her chained.
A spirit first, red war his thirst
Still stands at post of old;
A second foe, infernal soul
Waits high in tower cold.
In kennel's grime, third bides his time
Then vents his killing breath.
And on a stone 'mid ash and bone,
The final dreams of death.
The spirits worn and battle torn
And locked in their damnation,
The chained one's hold at last grows old
And ushers in salvation.
Yet hope remains amid the chains
When blade's stone cage has crumbled,
Friends to dread and death of the dead,
Keys to Kazavon humbled.

HANDOUT #4-3

spirit fades into darkness. Finally Chief Ready-Klar breaks the awestruck silence. "Truly these Friends of the Sun are blessed by the ancestors. They walk with the spirits and bear the spirits' mark. They honor us with their presence and friendship. As they go forth to battle the evil that has plagued these lands of ash for many-score generations, they go with the power of the Sklar-Quah. They shall go forth with the power of Father Sun in their hands."

The sudden influx of spiritual energy gives each PC two additional benefits to aid them in their trials within Scarwall, as detailed below.

Infused Weapon and Armor: The spirit world infuses one weapon, suit of armor, or shield owned by each PC (PC's choice, and the item in question need not be present at the blessing). If the PC chooses a weapon, it gains the *undead-bane* weapon special ability. If the PC chooses armor or a shield, the item gains the *ghost touch* armor special ability. This effect functions only in Castle Scarwall.

Infused Soul: The next time the PC fails a saving throw against a death effect, the effect is negated but the PC is stunned for 1 round as the spiritual energies in her soul burn away. This protection can save each PC from a death effect only once, but can do so anywhere in the world (this boon is not limited to functioning only in Castle Scarwall).

Story Award: Although the PCs need only 20 Respect Points to hear the Sun Shaman's tale, there are opportunities to earn more than that during this chapter. If the PCs earn 30 or more Respect Points, award them an additional 12,800 XP for the outstanding accomplishment!

A HISTORY OF ASHES

CHAPTER BACKGROUND

PART 1:
THE ROAD NORTH

PART 2:
TRIALS OF RESPECT

PART 3:
MANTIS AND MAIDEN

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

4