

PATHFINDER™

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CURSE OF THE CRIMSON THRONE

A HISTORY OF ASHES

By Michael Kortez



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ADVENTURE PATH  PART 4 of 6

CURSE OF THE CRIMSON THRONE

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Contributing Authors
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"A History of Ashes" is a Pathfinder Adventure Path scenario designed for four 10th-level characters. By the end of this adventure, characters should reach 11th level. This adventure is compliant with the Open Game License (OGL) and is suitable for use with the world's most popular fantasy roleplaying game. The OGL can be found on page 92 of this product.

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RUN FOR THE HILLS

Of all the adventures in *Curse of the Crimson Throne*, this one, “A History of Ashes,” is the one I was the most worried about—this is the adventure where we ask the PCs to abandon their home. Even though Korvosá’s in bad shape by the end of the previous adventure, it’s also the place where the PCs have spent their first 10 levels. They’ve likely come to love parts of the city, have made friends and alliances, and have favorite places to shop and eat and sleep. That’s a lot to ask someone to abandon. But at the same time, the hope is that by 10th level, the PCs are ready for a bit of a change. They’ve been embroiled in politics and fighting in alleys and coping with the collapse of their hometown for so long, a trip outside of the city walls might almost feel like a vacation. That’s the hope, at least.

I assigned “A History of Ashes” to Michael Kortés because of the work he’d done for me in *Dungeon* magazine. Of course, his first *Dungeon* adventure landed a few issues before I joined the staff here at Paizo, but even then, issue

100’s “Beast of Burden” caught my eye. A castle built on the back of a giant monster? Awesome!

Each of Michael’s adventures since then has featured similarly creative and unusual situations, be they requests to rescue a corpse from a tribe of mutant troglodytes, an underground cattle drive (but with giant beetles in place of cows), or a war in the streets between two factions of intelligent weapons. And, of course, his module *J1: Entombed with the Pharaohs* has turned out to be one of the more popular adventures in that line. I was hoping for some more unusual stuff from him in “A History of Ashes,” and as it turns out, he delivered. In this volume’s adventure, you can look forward to barbarian games of strength, the Trial of the Totems, a “get swallowed by the giant worm on purpose” quest, and more! But that’s not all. Michael also had an additional task of juggling a huge number of factions as well. Three Shoanti tribes, the Red Mantis, and the Brotherhood of Bones would have been enough to paralyze most writers, I suspect, but Michael

didn't even flinch. Even better, he added in some more as well—the Cinderlander is all Kortes, and once I'd read his write-up, I sort of wish we'd had time to foreshadow him in previous adventures. He's a really interesting character—on one hand, he's a bad guy, but on the other, he's not so different from the PCs themselves.

THE SHOANTI SOURCE

Back when we were launching *Pathfinder*, we knew that, eventually, we wanted to have an adventure in which the PCs interact with various barbarian tribes. Unfortunately, there wasn't really an opportunity during *Rise of the Runelords* to get that adventure in print. Yet we didn't want Varisia's barbarians to be so minor an element in the region that they were ignored until we finally got around to that adventure. As a result, we made sure to introduce the Shoanti right at the start, both in *Pathfinder* #1 (Sandpoint's sheriff is an ex-Shoanti tribe member, after all) and in the *Rise of the Runelords Player's Guide*. We put in enough information so readers would know that the Shoanti were out there, but that was about all we had room for.

And as it turned out, people noticed. We had a small flood of messageboard posts and emails requesting more information about the Shoanti. We knew that, eventually, this volume you're holding in your hands right now would be around, and we'd have a big article about them and an adventure featuring them, but for a few months we didn't quite know *when* that issue would get around to seeing the light of day. Fortunately, I already knew a fair amount about the Shoanti. I made them up back in college when I was running a campaign set in the frozen lands of the north. The players were all members of various Shoanti tribes who had to learn to settle their differences and work together to fight against a violent attempt by a civilized nation to colonize their tribal lands. With all this knowledge, I was able to answer some of those questions here and there, but it never seemed like it was enough.

So, for all of the Shoanti fans out there who've been waiting so long for more information, thank you for being patient! Between this volume's adventure and the article on page 64 about the Shoanti themselves (brought to you by Eric Boyd and Michael Kortes), you should finally have enough information about these exciting nomads.

DOUBLE DIGITS!

Which brings me to my third topic. Check out the spine of this volume of *Pathfinder*. Up near the top. That's right! We've hit volume #10! Double digits! I was a tiny bit worried that we weren't going to have the room to keep running the numbers vertically on the spine, but our awesome art director Sarah Robinson apparently wasn't.

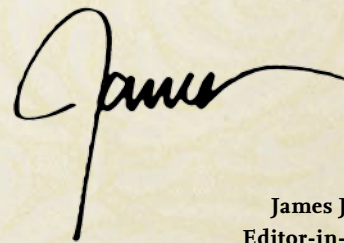
So, as is the case whenever you have a numerically significant anniversary, now's a good time to glance into

the future to talk a bit about where *Pathfinder's* heading. For the most part, that's going to remain six-part Adventure Paths. We're starting our third one in only two months, with *Second Darkness*, an adventure path that reveals the role of the drow in Golarion and presents the first official "save the world" campaign for *Pathfinder*.

Starting with *Second Darkness*, you'll also see a few changes to the contents of *Pathfinder*, though. For one, the adventures themselves are going to be about 10 pages shorter. In working on *Runelords* and *Crimson Throne*, we've discovered that there's probably too much going on in each adventure, and that the sheer size of each adventure was making it tough for us to do what we wanted to do with the support articles to aid GMs in the event that their players go off the adventure's rails.

The total amount of adventure excitement you'll get in *Pathfinder* won't really be changing all that much, because those 10 pages we're saving in the primary adventure are going to get rolled right into a secondary one—we're calling these Set Piece Adventures right now, though that name's still subject to change. These short adventures present a single location that's tied thematically to that volume's main adventure, yet isn't tied directly into the plot. You can use a Set Piece as a one-shot game, as part of a campaign of your own design, or as an expansion to the current Adventure Path. If we were doing Set Pieces in this volume, for example, I suspect that we'd probably take the encounters in the Temple of the Moon out of the adventure, then present them as a Set Piece featuring a "wilderness temple beset by a monster" short adventure. One that you could, of course, insert into "A History of Ashes" and run as it's presented here, or that you could simply run on its own. Even more exciting—the inclusion of Set Piece adventures gives us a great place to try out new adventure writers, and gives aspiring freelancers a new place to see their work in print!

In the meantime, I wonder if it's too early to start worrying about how we're going to fit a triple-digit number on the spine?



James Jacobs
Editor-in-Chief
james.jacobs@paizo.com



A HISTORY OF ASHES

CURSE OF THE CRIMSON THRONE: CHAPTER FOUR

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 more deadly and horrific than petty skirmishes against orcs. 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 reign of murder and blood would last forever.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Kazavon's defeat was not on the field of battle, but in his own throne room. It was there that a secret cabal of heroes and mercenaries managed to do what armies could not. Using power and stealth and led by a hero of Lastwall named Mandraivus, they infiltrated Scarwall. The atrocities they found there tested them to their limits, and when they reached Kazavon's throne room, a terrific battle took place. It was during this battle that they stripped away Kazavon's human disguise, revealing the champion of Zon-Kuthon to be a blue dragon. In the end, Mandraivus managed to lay Kazavon low with his legendary weapon, a magic bastard sword named *Seriththial*. Yet even in death, Kazavon's body shuddered and grasped. 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 brothers and sisters 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 *Seriththial* 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 cleric. When the surviving members of the band each took a relic, this Shoanti cleric chose the *Fangs of Kazavon* as his responsibility. He returned to his homeland in Varisia, opting to hide the fangs 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 priest guarded and protected the *Fangs of Kazavon* from discovery. Eventually, they forgot what exactly it was they were guarding, knowing only that they were bound by tradition and honor to continue the task.

When Cheliox founded Korvosa and warred with the Shoanti, driving them north into the Cinderlands, many of the guardians of the *Fangs of Kazavon* perished. Few Shoanti shamans survived the decades of war, and they 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 time of the evil hidden inside the pyramid had passed. 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 a place back near the seat of their traditional charge, so they can watch and wait and be on hand should the unthinkable occur.

When it did, the change was so small that it went all but unnoticed, overshadowed as it was by riots and disease. Queen Ileosa's discovery of the *Fangs of Kazavon* and the ancient warlord's spirit infused her with incredible power. The scenario the ancient shamans feared has come to pass, yet none remain nearby to move against it. Their words are ignored and their warnings fall on deaf ears. 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—yet little do they know that the time for guarding has long passed. 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.

Adventure Synopsis

The PCs flee the city of Korvosa to seek shelter in the village of Harse, where they learn that Queen Ileosa has fallen under the influence of an ancient evil known as Kazavon. Yet few remember much about Kazavon—and unfortunately, the only ones who might know how to defeat the evil are the Sun Shamans of the Sklar-Quah. Unfortunately, because the Sklar-Quah are readying for war on Korvosa, getting them to share this information won't be easy.

The PCs must travel into the Cinderlands and seek out the Skoan-Quah shaman Thousand Bones—a man they first met during "Edge of Anarchy." With his advice, the PCs undertake a series of trials and tasks of increasing difficulty, culminating in the Trial of the Totems which, if they prevail, will grant them membership in the Sklar-Quah Shoanti tribe. Along the way, the PCs encounter several people who can help or hinder their goals, from suspicious local barbarians to sinister cultists of Zon-Kuthon to a band of assassins sent into the Cinderlands by the queen herself to see that the PCs' meddling ways are put to an end once and for all. The adventure comes to its climax during an all-out assault on the Shoanti of the Flameford camp by these assassins—an assault with the PCs caught in the middle.

PART ONE: THE ROAD NORTH

As this adventure begins, the assumption is that the PCs are accompanying Vencarlo Orisini and Neolandus Kalepopolis as they flee from the city of Korvosa, bound for the town of Harse and Orisini's allies there. Neolandus might have mentioned that he suspects some of the Shoanti know more about what has happened to Queen Ileosa and how to deal with the *Crown of Fangs*, but as he and the PCs head north to safety, he prefers to stay quiet, promising more information once they're safe.

If the PCs chose instead to send Vencarlo and Neolandus up to Harse alone while they remain in Korvosa, let them. They should find the city to be increasingly hostile to them, though, and what allies they do have who remain in the city (Grau, Cressida, or Ishani, for example) take every opportunity they can to try to convince the PCs to leave town before Queen Ileosa grows tired of toying with them. Assassination attempts by Red Mantis agents and increasing raids on their known hideouts and safe houses by patrols of Gray Maidens should hopefully encourage the PCs to leave town and seek answers elsewhere. If your PCs resort to spells like *divination* or *commune* to learn more about how they can defeat Queen Ileosa, try to use the answers you provide to steer the PCs toward Harse and the Cinderlands to get them back on track. Sticking around Korvosa and becoming resistance fighters against an invincible evil queen and her steadily growing army certainly has the makings for an exciting campaign, but it's not the campaign that Curse of the Crimson Throne is presenting. If you'd like to try your hand at such an adventure, the *Guide to Korvosa* and a hefty dose of imagination should be all you need to start. Eventually, Curse of the Crimson Throne returns to Korvosa in *Pathfinder* #12's "Crown of Fangs"—this adventure gives additional details on how Korvosa changes over the course of the next few months, and includes full stat blocks for Queen Ileosa and all of her minions.

Harse

Harse is a narrow village located on a strip of land at the point where Sarwin River empties into Falcon River. The village itself consists of only a few dozen buildings, including a church dedicated to Erastil, two groceries, two taverns (the Spotted Pony and the somewhat dingier Nag Bag), a large inn, and a bustling ferry service—this has been a traditional river-crossing site since as far back as Shoanti times. The northeastern edge of Harse features a large collection of stables and other buildings around an open field—the Harse Market, one of the most popular places to buy and trade livestock in the region, and the site of a yearly rodeo designed to single out the best animals and riders. The majority of Harse's citizens don't live in the village proper, but on one of the dozens of ranches and farms that dot the surrounding countryside. It is one of these, the Blackbird Ranch, that is owned by Vencarlo's friends, and it is here that he leads Neolandus and the PCs.

There isn't much for the PCs in the village itself; Harse's gp limit is too low to support most magic items, and the villagers themselves have little to offer high-level characters apart from rumors. Times aren't quite bad in Harse, but neither are they great—the village, as with all of the Korvosan holdings in the region, rely upon trade from the city as well as regular support of patrols and the like from the Korvosan Guard and the Sable Company. With

the city falling on such hard times, few merchants are coming to and from the city, and patrols have all but ceased. Highwaymen, bandits, and even goblins have become increasingly problematic on the roads. Whispers of what's going on in Korvosa are on everyone's lips, especially since the number of refugees who have fled the city seems to be growing. Word is that the majority of these refugees are traveling to Palin's Cove or Veldraine, and that recently (with Queen Ileosa's closing of the city and institution of martial law) the flow of refugees, and thus news, from Korvosa has all but ceased. If locals become aware of the fact that the PCs are recently fled from Korvosa, word spreads quickly and the PCs find themselves the center of attention. While this might appeal to egos, word gets back to Korvosa relatively quickly, and if the PCs don't move on soon, feel free to have a group of Red Mantis assassins show up in town looking for them.

HARSE

Village conventional (mayor); **AL** NG

GP Limit 200 gp; **Assets** 8,280 gp

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population 828

Type mixed (81% human, 10% halfling, 4% dwarf, 3% half-elf, 1% gnome, 1% other)

Blackbird Ranch

A short 15-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, a horse ranch currently 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.

The Blackbirds broke up more than 2 decades ago over an unfortunate conflict involving the rights to treasure looted from a dwarven tomb—Jasan and Vencarlo wanted to return the weapons recovered from the haunted tomb to Janderhoff, but the others in the group wanted to sell the weapons in Korvosa. The argument came to blows, and in the end Jasan and Vencarlo opted to retire from the adventuring business entirely. The remaining Blackbirds vanished without a trace in the dungeons below Kaer Maga not one season later, and both Jasan and Vencarlo counted themselves lucky at the time to have gotten out when they did.

Although both men took wildly separate paths in life, they remained good friends, 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 the two men's letters grew increasingly political and critical of Korvosa's government, they grew more clandestine and conscious of keeping their code. The system finally 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. Although the meeting is good-natured, and Jasan's booming voice and ready grin are infectious, it should be apparent to the PCs that Vencarlo and Neolandus remain nervous. Trinia Sabor is here as well, eager to reunite with Vencarlo and the PCs (see below), and Jasan invites everyone to join his family for dinner.

After the pleasant and filling dinner, Jasan leads the PCs, Neolandus, Vencarlo, and possibly Trinia down into his basement, a place he uses to brew his own beer. His home-grown hooch is a bit rough, but the true reason he relocates down here is so he and the others 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 hideout of Korvosa's seneschal.

Blackbird Ranch is a large place, but not large enough to comfortably accommodate an entire party of adventurers for long. Worse is the unspoken worry on Vencarlo's and Neolandus's minds—that they are known fugitives, and that Queen Ileosa will spare little expense in tracking them down. Her Red Mantis agents were close to discovering Neolandus in Old Korvosa, and it shouldn't take them long to sift through the recent events there and to piece together what happened. 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, but even then it is only a matter of time before the Red Mantis tracks them all down if they stay in one spot for too long.

Jasan takes the news pretty well, and is the first to suggest that it's about time for a move. By next morning, he has his worried but trusting family packing up all of their belongings for a move west to Magnimar, while Vencarlo and Neolandus decide to seek asylum at the dwarven city of Janderhoff. Before then, though, there is much to discuss. During the late-night meeting in Jasan's basement, Neolandus outlines everything he knows (see The Kazavon Situation section) to the PCs, Vencarlo, and Jasan. 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 the *Fangs of Kazavon*, 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, but that that's hardly even a one-man job. 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.

Trinia Sabor

One other person waits to be reunited with Vencarlo and the PCs at Blackbird Ranch—Trinia Sabor. The PCs last saw her when they escorted her out of Korvosa to escape the possibility of a second capture and execution, and while she enjoyed her time in the country, she's very much an adventurer and city girl at heart. Trinia has grown consumed with wanderlust ever since coming to Blackbird Ranch, and for several weeks she even took up adventuring with a band of Varisians and halflings exploring several Shoanti cairns. After a close call in a cairn infested with ettercaps she left the group. That was several days ago, and her wanderlust has already started to build up again. When the PCs arrive, Trinia is ready to leave Blackbird Ranch to seek adventure anew.

Trinia Sabor's statistics are presented below for you to make use as you see fit. If during the first few adventures she struck up a friendship with a PC, she might simply announce that she's going to come with them into the Cinderlands. Even if the PCs rebuff her, she might still follow along in secret, revealing herself to them, perhaps, to come to their aid against an unexpectedly tough encounter. Alternatively, if a PC has recently taken the Leadership feat, Trinia could make an excellent cohort. Finally, Trinia's interest in the Shoanti has bloomed after her experiences exploring their cairns, and she's recently picked up the language. If the PCs need someone to come along with them as a translator, Trinia fits that role perfectly.

TRINIA SABOR

CR 7

Female human bard 7

CG Medium humanoid

Init +2; Senses Listen -1, Spot -1

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 16

(+5 armor, +1 deflection, +2 Dex)

hp 34 (7 HD; 7d6+7)

Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +4

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk rapier +8 (1d6/18-20)

Ranged +1 shortbow +8 (1d6+1/x3)

Special Attacks bardic music 7/day (countersong, *fascinate*, inspire competence, inspire courage +1, *suggestion*)

Spells Known (CL 7th)

3rd (1/day)—*confusion* (DC 17), *haste*

- 2nd (3/day)—*cure moderate wounds, invisibility, minor image* (DC 15), *suggestion* (DC 16)
- 1st (4/day)—*charm person* (DC 15), *cure light wounds, feather fall, hideous laughter* (DC 15)
- o (3/day)—*daze* (DC 14), *light, mage hand, mending, message, prestidigitation*

TACTICS

During Combat Trinia activates her inspire courage bardic music ability on the first round of combat, then spends the next 4 rounds casting spells (*confusion* if she can catch a lot of enemies at once, *haste* otherwise, followed by *glitterdust, hideous laughter, and suggestion*) and reactivating her inspire courage every few rounds if the combat lasts that long.

Morale Trinia attempts to flee combat if brought below 10 hit points, unless a good friend or ally is still in danger, in which case she'll do everything in her power to try to save him before she runs.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 14, **Con** 13, **Int** 12, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +5

Feats Acrobatic, Shingle Runner, Spell Focus (enchantment), Weapon Finesse

Skills Balance +11, Bluff +13, Climb +12, Craft (painting) +11, Jump +16, Knowledge (local) +11, Perform (comedy) +13, Tumble +16

Languages Common, Elven, Shoanti

SQ bardic knowledge +8

Combat Gear *wand of glitterdust* (33 charges); **Other Gear** +1 mithral shirt, masterwork rapier, +1 shortbow with 20 arrows, *ring of protection* +1, two bronze bracelets worth 50 gp each, copper necklace worth 100 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Shingle Runner This feat (from the *Curse of the Crimson Throne Player's Guide*) grants Trinia a +2 bonus on Climb and Jump checks and allows her to take 10 on Climb checks even when she's distracted. If she falls, she reduces the total damage taken from the fall by 1d6.

The Kazavon Situation

What Neolandus knows about Kazavon is summarized here—you can have the seneschal simply list the facts for the PCs, or you can use the following as talking points and answers in reply to questions the PCs might have for him.

- 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 about the castle's layout, Neolandus barely

managed to escape with his life 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 in Old Korvosa researching the situation by interviewing key people, poring through records in Endrin Academy, and piecing together information and rumors he heard to try to determine what caused Queen Ileosa's sudden personality change from a petulant spoiled queen to a scheming murderous tyrant.

- Neolandus's suspicions grew, but until Queen Ileosa's first public appearance after the plague, he tempered his suspicions with hope. He knew that Queen Ileosa had been "borrowing" the treasury key to look through Korvosa's holdings. Neolandus was also familiar with several old and obscure legends about the chambers below Castle Korvosa—chambers, it was whispered, that were old even when the Shoanti dwelt here, and that used to hide something of great power or evil. There was little more information to go on, but he did uncover mention in some documents from Korvosa's earliest days of something called Midnight's Teeth, and that these teeth were believed to be some sort of sacred relic of great import to the Shoanti. Circumstantial evidence indicates that the Shoanti kept these teeth in the chambers inside the pyramid that now serves as Castle Korvosa's foundation.

- Neolandus's further research uncovered an old legend that chilled his soul. Several hundred years ago, a powerful blue dragon and agent of Zon-Kuthon named Kazavon brought the orcs of Belkzen to their knees and began conquering the neighboring nations of Ustalav and Lastwall, until he was finally defeated and his remains scattered. Some of these remains, according to certain Zon-Kuthonic scriptures, contained fragments of Kazavon's essence. One of these relics was the *Fangs of Kazavon*.

- By piecing together his evidence, Neolandus suspects that Midnight's Teeth were none other than the *Fangs of Kazavon*. The description of the queen's new crown sounds to Neolandus as if she now wears the *Fangs of Kazavon* on her brow, the implications of which troubles him greatly.
- Neolandus wasn't able to gather much more information before the Arkonas took him, but he doesn't suspect there was much more to learn. Hard facts about Midnight's Teeth were sparse to begin with—Korvosa's founders didn't think it important to preserve much in



the way of Shoanti culture. Yet there is still some hope. 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.

Armed with this information, the next step should be clear. The PCs must travel to the Cinderlands and establish a rapport with the Shoanti to discover what they know about Korvosa's earliest days and what they kept so hidden deep inside the pyramid. Unfortunately, rumors that the Shoanti are preparing to launch an attack on Korvosa and her holdings seem to be true—emboldened by the news that Korvosa is buckling under the effects of riots and plagues, word from the Storval Rise is that the largest Shoanti tribe, the Sklar-Quah, is preparing for war. Neolandus has a bit of advice here on where to start—the Skoan-Quah, the Tribe of the Skull.

Of all the Shoanti tribes, it has been the Skoan-Quah who have been most open to talk of peace between Korvosa and the tribes. Until recently, a large number of Skoan-Quah ambassadors dwelt near Korvosa, and peace talks between the two factions were slowly but surely heading in the right direction. 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 meeting with the old shaman, but unfortunately, shortly after an event involving one of the Shoanti braves during the riots, the Shoanti abandoned Korvosa. Thousand Bones and his people have returned to a place east of Kaer Maga in the Cinderlands known as the Kallow Mounds, and their reports on the tumult and chaos in Korvosa very likely fueled the neighboring tribe's sudden need to strike while the enemy was wounded.

Yet Neolandus doubts that Thousand Bones has abandoned hopes for peace. The PCs encountered Thousand Bones themselves near the end of "Edge of Anarchy," and assuming they returned Gaekhen's body to the Shoanti, their memories of how the old shaman remained calm and composed even in the face of such atrocities against one of his own should support Neolandus's belief. Neolandus knows that Thousand Bones's tribe dwells in the southeastern portion of the Cinderlands; he 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 if they do know more—perhaps they know how to fight against an evil that apparently grants Queen Ileosa the ability to survive a mortal wound.

If the PCs seek to verify Neolandus's theories, either by magic or by traveling to other locations to do research on Korvosa's history on their own (Palin's Cove is the best place to go for this, as a DC 15 Knowledge [history] check

can verify), or by making their own DC 25 Knowledge (history) check to confirm that his research is accurate, let them. This adventure's not on a timer—the Sklar-Quah and Queen Ileosa need plenty of time to prepare for their next steps, after all. Use the results of the PCs' research and spellcasting to both encourage them to seek out Shoanti advice and to discourage them from returning to Korvosa to tackle the queen immediately. If your players seem hell-bent on returning to Korvosa nonetheless, *Pathfinder* #12's "Crown of Fangs" presents the information you'll need to run such an ill-advised gambit.

The Fourth Harrowing

In "Edge of Anarchy," the PCs gained a powerful magic item—*Zellara's Harrow Deck*. As indicated in that adventure, this Harrow deck plays a recurring role throughout *Curse of the Crimson Throne*. "A History of Ashes" is tied to the suit of Hammers in a Harrow deck—and by extension, to Strength.

Zellara's spirit haunts her Harrow deck, and at several points during this Adventure Path, she can perform a special Harrow reading to grant her chosen heroes, the PCs, advantages over what is to come in the adventure. Soon after the PCs finish speaking with Neolandus, Vencarlo, and the rest, about when they decide they must travel to the Cinderlands to seek out Thousand Bones, Zellara uses her empathic link to instill an urge to perform a Harrow reading in the mind of the PC who carries her deck. If that PC doesn't comply soon by using her cards to perform a reading, Zellara takes matters into her own hands once she sees the PCs are alone by creating a *major image* of herself who then performs the reading.

You can use the results of this Harrowing to further encourage the PCs to travel to the Cinderlands to seek out advice from the Shoanti. 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, perhaps enforcing their now homeless state and that they have been turned into nomads; you can even draw parallels between the PCs' forced flight from Korvosa and the Shoanti's expulsion centuries ago, and 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, one that isn't safe for the PCs for some time to come, but imply that when they are ready, they will return to liberate it. You can also foreshadow certain events in this adventure, especially the encounter with Cinderdaw, the emberstorm, the Moon Temple, or their trials on Bolt Rock. Use these cards to imply to the PCs that strength will be important in their immediate

HARROW POINT USES

In "A History of Ashes," the PCs are faced with numerous situations where might and muscle determine destiny. Impressing savage barbarians, wrestling with enormous monsters, and lifting impossibly heavy objects can make all the difference.

Players receive a number of Harrow Points to spend during "A History of Ashes." Rules for determining this number as part of a Harrow reading appear in *Pathfinder* #7's "Edge of Anarchy." If you don't have this book, you can determine how many Harrow Points each PC has to spend during "A History of Ashes" by simply rolling 1d10. During this adventure, a character can spend his Harrow Points in the following ways.

Strength Rerolls: Spend a Harrow Point to reroll any one Strength-based skill check. You must abide by the new result (although if you have additional Harrow Points remaining, you can use them to attempt additional rerolls).

Mighty Thews: Spend a Harrow Point to be treated as a creature one size category larger than your normal category for the purposes of making grapple checks, lifting heavy objects, or determining if a hungry monster can swallow you whole; this adjustment lasts for one encounter (but no more than 10 minutes at the very most).

Brutal Strike: Spend a Harrow Point to gain a +5 bonus on all melee or natural weapons for the duration of one combat. Alternatively, brutal strike allows you to ignore an object's hardness for 1 round.

THE CHOSEN

In addition, the card a PC draws during the choosing has special qualities during this adventure. Each of these cards is tied to a specific encounter in "A History of Ashes," and when a PC who drew that card reaches that encounter, he gains a +2 bonus on all rolls modified by Strength and an additional +4 bonus on Grapple checks and Strength checks made to break objects. These bonuses last for the encounter's duration.

The Paladin: All conflicts with the Shoanti Krojun-Eats-What-He-Kills

The Forge: Battle against the Cinderlander

The Fiend: Battle against Cinnabar

The Keep: Battles that occur in the House of the Moon

The Bear: Battle against Cinderdaw

The Beating: All sredna matches

The Big Sky: The Trial of the Totems (including battle against the bulettes)

The Uprising: Battles against Red Mantis assassins that don't include named NPCs

The Cyclone: Battle against the havoro

future, but that they are not yet strong enough to face Queen Ileosa herself. Finally, you can use these readings to not only foreshadow the coming conflict with the Red Mantis (implying that the PCs are being hunted or chased by murderous insects, for example), but to hint to them that other forces they will encounter in the Cinderlands who might at first seem enemies could be powerful allies (foreshadowing the Brotherhood of Bones).

Three cards in particular should have increased importance in this reading, as detailed below.

The Mountain Man: This card represents the Shoanti; play it up if it appears in your reading. If the card is in a favorable position, it indicates that the Shoanti are powerful allies who can help the PCs. If the card is in an unfavorable position, it should warn the PCs that while the Shoanti can be allies, they must be treated with respect and that they are perilously close to war.

The Uprising: If this card appears as part of the future, suggest that the PCs have a role to play in a future uprising, and that its appearance in this part of the reading implies that now is not the time for direct action against the queen. If it appears in the past or present, downplay its presence, explaining it as simply representing the unquiet times the PCs find themselves in and move on to the next card.

The Big Sky: This card represents the Cinderlands. In the past, it symbolizes how the Shoanti fled here and found a new life. In the present, it symbolizes the PCs having emerged from the city and their journey into the wilds. In the future, it predicts that the PCs will find salvation in open lands—the Cinderlands.

Into the Cinderlands

When it comes time for the PCs to leave, Vencarlo and Neolandus (and Trinia, if the PCs have made it clear that she shouldn't 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. *Pathfinder* #3's gazetteer of Varisia presents information on the villages the PCs might pass through on their journey, as well as a wandering monster chart, but overall, little should occur until the PCs reach the Storval Rise.

The easiest way to navigate the towering cliffs that separate Varisia from the Cinderlands is to pass through the anarchic city of Kaer Maga. Additional details on this unusual city of merchants and thieves can be found in *Pathfinder* #3 or *D2: Seven Swords of Sin*. Kaer Maga is perched on the edge of the Storval Rise, and the majority of the traffic across the cliffs winds through it. There's no official toll for passing through the city, but the sheer number of beggars and cutpurses the PCs brush



shoulders with could easily take an unofficial toll of 3d6 gp. A DC 20 Diplomacy or Intimidate check is enough to bypass this event.

Flight and teleportation, of course, allow for much swifter routes up and over the cliff to the lands above, but apart from Kaer Maga, there aren't many easy land routes available. Climbing up the cliffs is a formidable task, as the cliff averages 1,000 feet in height. Hand- and footholds are plentiful, making it a DC 15 Climb check, but the sheer number of checks required should make this option a poor one. It's also possible to navigate the numerous cave systems that riddle the cliffs, but these areas are home to trolls, ettins, wyverns, gargoyles, harpies, and other dangerous monsters.

Of course, once the PCs surmount the Storval Rise and enter the Cinderlands themselves, the peril increases. The article on the Cinderlands that begins on page 58 gives full details on this rugged, hostile region. To the uninitiated, the Cinderlands are arid, barren, and silent. It is not a true desert, however—weed-like grasses grow in abundance wherever they can, as the great Yondabakari River and its tributaries feed any soil they can reach.

Also, remember that the Cinderlands were once part of Thassilon, an ancient civilization which built great monuments of a size and scope unknown today. As such,

even in these hellish wastes in the middle of nowhere, the PCs might suddenly come across the ruin of an ancient temple, a forgotten statuary, or even a previously undiscovered monolith.

During “A History of Ashes,” the PCs travel widely across the Cinderlands, a region well known for its dangers and hostile inhabitants. The wandering monster table provided on page 81 presents several possible encounters the PCs can have as they travel though this perilous land. They'll also interact with several different groups—the Shoanti, the Red Mantis, the Brotherhood of Bones, and the Cinderlander. All four of these are summarized on the following pages, as their roles in this adventure are dynamic and can influence multiple parts in different ways.

The Shoanti

There are three tribes of Shoanti dwelling in the Cinderlands, each of which have distinct traditions and lifestyles. Additional information about the Shoanti can be found in “People of the Storval Plateau” on page 66, but the tribes that play the primary role in this adventure are summarized here.

Sklar-Quah (Clan of the Sun): The largest of the Shoanti tribes in the Cinderlands, the Sklar-Quah are

SHOANTI WAR PAINT

Aura moderate (school varies); **CL** 7th

Slot special; **Price**

900 gp, 1,800 gp;

Weight —

DESCRIPTION

The Shoanti have developed numerous variations of magical war paint, each providing a specific benefit to aid their hunters, warriors, and heroes in a variety of tasks. *Shoanti war paint* can be applied to any visible part of the body—typically the face, shoulders, legs, or arms. Applying a dose of war paint is a full-round action that provokes an attack of opportunity. *Shoanti war paint* does not take up a magic item slot, but you can only benefit from one color of Shoanti war paint at a time—applying a dose of a different color replaces the effects of the previous application. Once applied, the effects granted by the war paint last for 24 hours.

The eight most common colors and their effects are listed here.

Black (1,800 gp): You become cloaked in shadows and smoke, gaining the effects of a *blur* spell.

Blue (900 gp): You gain a 30-foot enhancement bonus to your base move speed.

Green (900 gp): When you use bardic music to inspire courage, the morale bonus you grant increases by 1; this is treated as an enhancement bonus.

Orange (900 gp): You gain damage reduction 1/—. This effect stacks with the damage reduction granted by the barbarian class.

Red (900 gp): You gain fire resistance 10.

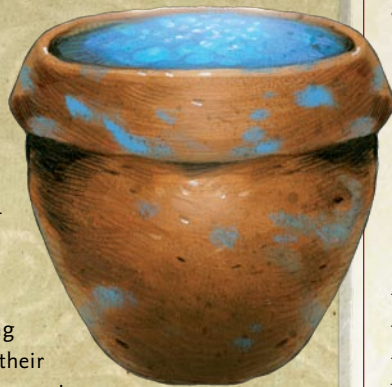
Silver (900 gp): You gain a +3 deflection bonus to AC.

White (1,800 gp): You gain a +4 resistance bonus on all saving throws against level drain and negative energy. As soon as you receive a negative level from an energy drain attack, the white war paint absorbs the effect and then fades away, ending the ongoing duration of the paint's effect immediately.

Yellow (900 gp): Grants a +5 competence bonus on Listen and Spot checks.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item; *blur* (black), *expeditious retreat* (blue), *heroism* (green), *stoneskin* (orange), *resist energy* (red), *shield of faith* (silver), *death ward* (white), *clairaudience/clairvoyance* (yellow); **Cost** 900 gp, 72 XP (black and white paints); 450 gp, 36 XP (all other paints)



also the most warlike. Sklar-Quah braves endure a large number of dangerous trials before they become warriors, including the infamous Burn Runs. The only shamans who retain any lore about the *Fangs of Kazavon* are all Sklar-Quah shamans. The majority of Shoanti the PCs might encounter during their exploration of the Cinderlands are Sklar-Quah.

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 people, a trait that has seen the Skoan-Quah 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 that they guard Shoanti ancestors from evil spirits, the other clans have begrudgingly refrained from truly ostracizing the Skoan-Quah.

Lyrune-Quah (Clan of the Moon): The Lyrune-Quah are nomads and, unlike their Shoanti kin, worshipers of Desna. Currently, a large group of Lyrune-Quah are visiting an ancient shrine to Desna called the House of the Moon, yet their traditional campsite has become the lair of a dangerous local predator.

The Red Mantis

In “Escape from Old Korvosa,” the PCs first crossed paths with the Red Mantis. Even if that initial encounter didn’t result in the death of any Red Mantis assassins, the group nevertheless targets the PCs for death in this adventure at the request of Queen Ileosa, who has finally realized, just too late to take action against them directly, how dangerous the PCs are to her.

That changes with “A History of Ashes.” Queen Ileosa has her own concerns to keep her attentions focused on Korvosa, but at the start of this adventure she charges the Red Mantis cell operating in her city with the task of not only finishing the assassination of Neolandus Kalepopolis, but also with hunting down and murdering the PCs. The queen has already moved so far beyond the city charter that Neolandus isn’t as much of a threat to her, but the PCs are. Within the Red Mantis, responsibility for the assassination of the PCs falls upon one of the region’s most deadly assassins: a woman named Cinnabar. It takes Cinnabar a few days to organize her crew of killers, but once she moves out, she does so with speed.

The sole child of the notorious Red Mantis cultist Carmine the Lustful Feaster, Cinnabar was an egregious disappointment to the family tradition—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 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, though, came an unforeseen development. Hatred of her mother was all Cinnabar had to cling to, and with her mother dead and the regular *geas* now removed, little remained but loyalty to the Red Mantis. Emotionless and hollow, 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 hope to cure her of by giving her an important task—something that will return her inner fire and make her fit for true leadership within the society.

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 believe 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 of fear unrivaled by her Red Mantis peers.

Although she conceals her face with the traditional *mantis mask* when in battle, Cinnabar is in fact quite beautiful, with strawberry hair and what was once a kind face. Her loveliness, however, is marred by the fact that she has long since ceased to smile.

As the adventure progresses, Cinnabar sends small groups of assassins after Vencarlo and Neolandus, but you should assume they reach safety in Janderhoff—the true focus should remain the PCs. It's easiest to assume that as long as the PCs survive the assassination attempts that occur at times during this adventure, Vencarlo and Neolandus do as well. The Red Mantis track the PCs through a combination of mundane and magical means, by following eyewitness accounts, footprint trails, and divination magic. Once she discovers the PCs are heading into the Cinderlands, one of Cinnabar's coups is to swiftly secure the aid of a local legend—a Shoanti-hunting ranger known only as the Cinderlander. With his intimate knowledge of the Cinderlands at Cinnabar's side, the Red Mantises should have little problem heading off the PCs when necessary to make their strikes as scheduled in the adventure. You should periodically have Cinnabar use *scrying* on the PCs during this adventure—chances are that the characters won't notice, but if they do, they can perhaps do something to prevent the Red Mantis from gaining too much of an advantage over them.

RED MANTIS ASSASSINS

Human rogue 3/fighter 2/Red Mantis assassin 3

CR 8

LE Medium humanoid

Init +5; **Senses** Listen +11, Spot +11

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 14

(+3 armor, +5 Dexterity, +1 Dodge, +1 shield)

hp 50 (8 HD; 6d6+2d10+16); fast healing 2

Fort +8, **Ref** +12, **Will** +5

Defensive Abilities evasion, red shroud, trap sense +1

OFFENSE

Spd 60 ft.

Melee mwk sawtooth sabre +11/+6 (1d8+1/19–20) and

mwk sawtooth sabre +11/+6 (1d8/19–20)

Ranged dagger +11 (1d4+2/19–20)

Special Attacks prayer attack, sneak attack +3d6

Spells Known (CL 3rd)

2nd (1/day)—*cat's grace*, *hold person* (DC 14)

1st (3/day)—*expeditious retreat*, *feather fall*, *spider climb*

TACTICS

Before Combat A Red Mantis casts *cat's grace* and *expeditious retreat* before entering combat, and activates her *mantis mask* (*deathwatch* at day or darkvision at night).

During Combat The assassins use prayer attacks if facing lone targets. Otherwise, they team up to flank foes so as to make the most of their sneak attacks. They activate their red shrouds on the first round of combat.

Morale The assassins are fanatics and fight to the death.

Base Statistics **Init** +3; **AC** 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14; **Ref** +10;

Spd 30 ft.; **Melee** mwk sawtooth sabre +9/+4 (1d8+1/19–20)

and mwk sawtooth sabre +9/+4 (1d8/19–20); **Ranged** dagger

+9 (1d4+2/19–20); **Dex** 16; **Skills** Balance +9, Hide +14, Jump

+12, Move Silently +14, Tumble +11

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 20, **Con** 14, **Int** 8, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +7

Feats Alertness, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (sawtooth sabre),

Stealthy, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting,

Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (sawtooth sabre)

Skills Bluff +11, Climb +7, Hide +16, Intimidate +8, Jump +24,

Listen +11, Move Silently +16, Spot +11, Tumble +13

Languages Common, Infernal, Varisian

SQ trapfinding

Gear +1 *leather armor*, 2 masterwork sawtooth sabres, 4

daggers, *mantis mask*, *cloak of resistance* +1

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Red Shroud (Su) A Red Mantis assassin can create a veil of swirling red mist around himself twice per day as a move-equivalent action. The red shroud persists for 3 rounds. As long as it is active, the Red Mantis gains a +1 dodge bonus to his Armor Class and fast healing 2. The mist is supernaturally resistant to wind, and cannot be dissipated by such before its duration ceases.

Prayer Attack (Su) A Red Mantis assassin must be within 30 feet of his victim and visible to said victim in order to begin

TURNING THE TABLES ON THE ASSASSINS

It's possible that the PCs decide to take matters into their own hands during the adventure and set aside their other tasks to focus on tracking down Cinnabar and her Red Mantis minions in an attempt to strike at them before they can make additional assassination attempts. As written, the PCs get their chance for revenge in the final encounter, where they help defend a Sklar-Quah camp from Cinnabar and her minions. If the PCs manage to track down the assassins before this event and confront them, you can just as easily have this encounter occur earlier than scheduled. Without the aid of the Sklar-Quah, though, a direct confrontation against Cinnabar and her assassins is a deadly fight, one that might well kill the entire party. You can try to discourage this distraction by portraying the Red Mantis attacks during Part Three as this adventure's natural climax with the mantises, playing down their further attempts to catch the PCs until the end.

If the PCs insist on tracking down the Red Mantis, you'll need to do some quick planning. Within a few days of arriving in the Cinderlands, the Red Mantis secure the aid of both the Cinderlander and a tribe of gargoyles called the Ashwings. The Ashwings are a nomadic tribe, moving from rookery to rookery on a nightly basis as they swoop along a particularly large territory encompassing much of the Ash-Blown lands. Cinnabar has many assassins working for her, and at any one time, keeps a group of four nearby—it is this group she uses to strike against the Sklar-Quah at the end of this adventure. Other groups of assassins prowl the Cinderlands as directed by her, eventually ambushing the PCs at the Acropolis of the Thrallkeepers. If the PCs track down the mantises, they find Cinnabar, her four assassins, and the Cinderlander taking shelter in a small five-room cave system, one of dozens of rookeries used by the Ashwings. A group of 2d6 gargoyles are on site as well, providing what could be a dangerous battle indeed.

a prayer attack. He begins to sway in a hypnotic pattern, drawing his arms upward and wielding a sawtooth sabre in at least one hand as he attempts to fascinate the victim. The victim can resist fascination by making a DC 15 Will save. By concentrating, the Red Mantis assassin can maintain this fascination, and after 3 rounds of fascination, may make a coup de grace attack against the fascinated target—if the victim is slain by this attack, he is typically beheaded. A victim who survives the coup de grace is no longer fascinated by the Red Mantis assassin, but the assassin can attempt a new prayer attack against the victim if he so desires. Activating or concentrating on maintaining a prayer attack does not provoke an attack of opportunity. The victim can escape fascination before this coup de grace attack if the Red Mantis

assassin ceases to concentrate on maintaining the effect. Alternatively, the victim may attempt a new saving throw to resist the fascination each time a potential threat (other than the fascinating Red Mantis assassin) approaches the victim. An obvious threat other than the Red Mantis assassin automatically breaks the victim's fascination, as can a fascinated creature's ally who takes a standard action to shake the victim free of the fascination.

CINNABAR

CR 12

Female human rogue 4/ranger 2/Red Mantis assassin 6
LE Medium humanoid

Init +2; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +8

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 16, flat-footed 16

(+5 armor, +1 deflection, +5 Dex)

hp 76 (12 HD; 4d6+8d8+24)

Fort +6, **Ref** +12, **Will** +6

Defensive Abilities evasion, red shroud 2/day, trap sense +1

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +1 sawtooth sabre +14/+9 (1d8+3/17–20) and

+1 sawtooth sabre +14 (1d8+3/17–20)

Special Attacks call mantis, favored enemy (human +2), mantis form 1/day, prayer attack (DC 19), sneak attack +4d6

Spells Known (CL 6th)

3rd (2/day)—*fear* (DC 16), *fly*, *scrying*

2nd (3/day)—*blur*, *invisibility*, see *invisibility*, *summon swarm*

1st (4/day)—*darkvision*, *expeditious retreat*, *jump*, *true strike*

TACTICS

Before Combat Prior to facing the PCs, Cinnabar casts *darkvision*, *expeditious retreat*, and *see invisibility*. She also activates her red shroud ability.

During Combat On her opening strike, she transforms her sawtooth sabre into a mantis claw, gaining a further +2 to hit. She channels her stunning fist through her sabre until her uses are exhausted, holding nothing back. Once injured and in need of healing, she changes into a blood mantis (+13 hit points from the healing accompanying the *polymorph* plus an additional +26 hit points from the enhanced Constitution of her new form). This also enables her to pick up two extra uses of her fading ability. See below for her new statistics block.

Morale Although tactically-minded, Cinnabar secretly harbors a death wish and does not flee from her destiny. Moments before a PC can connect with a final attack, she closes her eyes and enjoys her first moment of true peace.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 20, **Con** 14, **Int** 13, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +9

Feats Alertness, Combat Expertise, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (sawtooth sabre), Improved Critical (sawtooth sabre),

Improved Disarm, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (sawtooth sabre), Weapon Specialization (sawtooth sabre)

Skills Balance +18, Bluff +16, Concentration +15, Hide +19, Intimidate +18, Jump +9, Move Silently +19, Search +14, Sense Motive +6, Spot +8, Survival +6, Tumble +20

Languages Common, Infernal

SQ resurrection sense, trapfinding, wild empathy +4

Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds*, *potion of haste*, *wand of hold person* (19 charges), large scorpion venom (4 doses); **Other Gear** +2 studded leather armor, two +1 sawtooth sabres, cloak of Charisma +2, gloves of Dexterity +2, amulet of health +2, ring of protection +1, mantis mask, elixir of shadewalking (3)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Call Mantis (Sp) Cinnabar may cast a specialized version of *summon monster IV* once per day to summon 1d4+1 fiendish giant praying mantises or 1d3 half-fiend giant praying mantises. Both types are blood red in hue, and thus do not gain the typical bonus on Hide checks in foliage.

Mantis Form (Su) Cinnabar can change into a giant praying mantis, as per the spell *polymorph*. She may make this change once per day. The mantis form is blood red in hue, and as such does not gain the bonus on Hide checks in foliage. While in mantis form, she may cast a quickened still silent *fear* spell once every hour. She may remain in mantis form a number of hours equal to her class level.

Red Shroud (Su) Cinnabar can activate her red shroud two times per day. It persists for 6 rounds and grants fast healing 2. See page 15 for more details on this special attack.

Prayer Attack (Su) Cinnabar's prayer attack can be resisted with a DC 19 Will save; see page 16 for more details on this special attack.

Resurrection Sense

(Su) Cinnabar is supernaturally sensitive to the movement of souls she has killed. If anyone she slew is brought back to life, she notices the resurrection unless the event takes place in an area that prevents scrying effects, and even then, she can sense the previously assassinated life the instant it steps out of that area. The sensation lasts only for a moment—not enough to tell the mantis where the resurrected victim is located, only that a specific previous victim has returned to life. If Cinnabar confronts this victim again, she gains a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls to hit the victim, and her prayer attack save DC increases by 1 when used against that victim.

The Brotherhood of Bones

The Brotherhood of Bones consists of a group of Zon-Kuthonites from across Avistan, fanatics who seek a singular goal: the gathering of the relics of Kazavon so that the ancient warlord can be reborn. The Brotherhood of Bones has long suspected that one of these relics was located in Varisia, and with Kazavon's recent awakening in Korvosa, the closest Brotherhood agent, Laori, came to investigate the signs and portents. Her interactions with the PCs in "Escape from Old Korvosa" were the first time the Brotherhood learned of the characters and realized that their goals—to remove the power of Kazavon from Ileosa—are more similar than they might at first appear.

Taking Laori's words under advisement, the Brotherhood elected to send one of their star agents to observe the PCs, both to learn what their eventual goals regarding the *Fangs of Kazavon* could be, and to determine how much aid the PCs can be to the Brotherhood in wresting the fangs away from Queen Ileosa when the time comes. Laori seethes at being passed over for the job, since she feels the glory should be hers—she "found" the PCs, after all. Instead, the Brotherhood awarded the prestigious task to a Chelaxian man



CINNABAR



MASK OF THE MANTIS

As much as they are veils to hide the assassins' identities, the insectile masks of the Red Mantis are tools of murder and symbols of dread to those they hunt. The equally distinct weapon of the Red Mantis, the sawtooth sabre, appears in the *Curse of the Crimson Throne Player's Guide*.

MANTIS MASK

Aura faint divination; **CL** 3rd
Slot head; **Price** 6,000 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.

DESCRIPTION

Upon becoming a Red Mantis assassin, a new recruit is granted his *mantis mask* by his superior. These masks cover the entire face, and give the assassin the well-known look fostered by the organization over the years—an assassin is expected to wear his mask at all times while on a job.

A *mantis mask* has three daily charges. The wearer can spend a charge to gain darkvision to a range of 60 feet, the effects of *see invisibility*, the effects of *deathwatch*, or a +5 competence bonus on Spot checks. Once a charge is spent, the effect granted persists for 30 minutes before fading. Multiple effects can be active simultaneously. Charges used replenish after 24 hours.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *darkvision*, *see invisibility*, *deathwatch*; **Cost** 3,000 gp, 240 XP

named Sial, one of the priesthood's most famous and well-known philosophers.

Sial didn't start his priestly career in the service of the Midnight Lord. Instead, he entered the priesthood of Asmodeus at a young age, eager to leverage the political capital it would provide him in his native Chelixa. A gifted academic, Sial quickly became an accomplished devil binder, but slowly drifted from the church as his use for the connections of organized religion began to wane. Sial's outlook changed drastically, however, after he listlessly undertook a 1-year assignment to serve as an ambassador on the Chelixa/Nidal border at a monastery dedicated to the teachings of Zon-Kuthon. Sial took the post hoping to further his knowledge of the complex but poorly understood relationship between devils and undeath, but quickly became enraptured by the rituals he saw performed there. Here was the song of faith that had so long eluded him in the service to Asmodeus.

Sial's defection was swift, and not the first of its kind. The church of Zon-Kuthon faked his death and whisked him away to the heart of its shadowy nation, where he

was put in contact with the Brotherhood of Bones. Within weeks, Sial's knowledge of devilbinding and all things infernal markedly increased that area within the Brotherhood, and his swift rise in the ranks to the vaunted title of Shadowcount made him the pride of the church. Over the following years, Sial swiftly became one of the Brotherhood's most trusted agents and now acts as an elderly mentor to many within the Brotherhood. He has since re-established his name in Chelixa after several tense summits with the church of Asmodeus, and he now serves as an ambassador and diplomat when needed.

Sial comports himself with an air of superiority, always walking with his chin held high and his expression one of knowing disdain. When interacting with those outside the Brotherhood, Sial typically speaks slowly and softly, as though addressing small children. To those in service to him, though, such as lower-ranking members of the Brotherhood of Bones, Sial is harsh and biting, a leader who brooks no dissent. Sial is a fastidious dresser, wearing all jet-black, layered with a spotless hakama.

When Sial learned that a lead on the true fate of Kazavon, one of the church's most important prophets, had been discovered in Korvosa, he volunteered to lead a team but understood when Laori Vaus was assigned as a solo operative instead. Now that she's returned and the Brotherhood has chosen him to locate the PCs, observe them unseen, and analyze their use, he has been gifted with two important tools: First is the servitude of a charming but deadly chain devil named Asyra, who serves him as a bodyguard and companion. Second, he has been given charge of a *bone house*, a portable fortress that comes with its own small army of undead servants. Sial's use of *divination* and *commune* has pointed him toward the Acropolis of the Thrallkeepers, and by the time the PCs reach this area, he and his agents are already within, set to watch and observe.

SHADOWCOUNT SIAL

CR 11

Male human cleric 7/thaumaturge 4

LE Medium humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +4

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 18

(+6 armor, +2 deflection, +1 Dex)

hp 65 (11 HD; 7d8+4d4+11+9 temporary)

Fort +9, **Ref** +4, **Will** +15

Immune fear, poison

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +2 *guided spiked chain* +14/+9 (2d4+6)

Special Attacks death touch 1/day, rebuke undead 5/day (+2, 2d6+9)

Spells Prepared (CL 11th, law spells CL 12th, ranged attack +9)

- 6th—*heroes' feast*, *hold monster*^D (DC 20)
 5th—extended *greater magic weapon*, *scrying* (DC 19), *slay living*^D (DC 19)
 4th—*air walk*, extended *magic vestment*, *order's wrath*^D (DC 18), *spell immunity*, *summon monster IV*
 3rd—*cure serious wounds*, extended *death knell*^D (DC 16), *dispel magic*, extended *hold person* (DC 16), *protection from energy*, *summon monster III*
 2nd—*align weapon*, *calm emotions*^D (DC 16), *cure moderate wounds*, *lesser restoration*, *resist energy*, *silence* (DC 16)
 1st—*comprehend languages*, *cure light wounds* (2), *divine favor*, *endure elements*, *protection from chaos*^D, *sanctuary* (DC 15)
 o—*create water*, *cure minor wounds*, *detect magic*, *light* (2), *mending*

D domain spell; **Domains** Death, Law

TACTICS

Before Combat Sial has a strict regimen of daily spellcasting. Each morning, he casts extended *magic vestment* on his chain shirt and extended *greater magic weapon* on his +1 *guided spiked chain*. He also casts *endure elements* on himself each morning as long as he remains in the Cinderlands. Now and then, as necessary, he uses *scrying* to spy on the PCs' progress. Each evening, before he sets out on the night's duties, Sial casts *heroes' feast*, sharing his banquet of bland gray wafers and bitter wine with Asyra. In anticipation of combat, he prepares by casting *protection from chaos*, *align weapon*, *resist energy (fire)*, *protection from energy (electricity)*, *air walk*, and *spell immunity* (favoring *suggestion* and *charm monster* as his immune spells if no more logical choice is obvious).

During Combat Sial lets his foes come to him, casting his ranged spells while his minions engage in melee. Once his opponents close, he casts *divine favor* and relishes the chance to fight with his *guided spiked chain*.

Morale If Sial's hit points fall below 15, he uses his *scroll of word of recall* to flee back to his home in Nidal. He then uses spells like *sending* to re-establish contact with the PCs, if they were allied, to arrange a place where they can reconnect, traveling via *wind walk* if necessary to reach them swiftly.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 12, **Con** 14, **Int** 10, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +6

Feats Augmented Summoning, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Extend Spell, Great Fortitude, Improved Turning, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (conjuration)

Skills Concentration +12, Diplomacy +14, Knowledge (religion) +10, Knowledge (the planes) +4, Sense Motive +12

Languages Common, Infernal

SQ contingent conjuration, extended summoning, improved ally, mark of Zon-Kuthon, spontaneous casting (inflict spells)

Combat Gear *wand of cure moderate wounds* (45 charges), *scroll*

ELIXIR OF SHADEWALKING

Aura moderate illusion; **CL** 11th

Slot —; **Price** 3,500 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.

DESCRIPTION

Typically kept in a small bone flask, a draught of this potent elixir is enough to catapult the drinker and up to 11 additional creatures the drinker is in contact with at the time of imbibing into the Shadow Plane. Once there, the affected creatures are under the effects of a *shadow walk* spell and may travel at an effective speed of 50 mph over land for up to 11 hours.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *shadow walk*; **Cost** 1,750 gp, 140 XP



of death ward, *scroll of dimensional anchor*, *scroll of discern lies*, *scroll of dispel magic*, *scroll of lesser planar ally*, *scroll of summon monster V*, *scroll of tongues*, *scroll of word of recall*;
Other Gear +1 *chain shirt*, +1 *guided spiked chain*, *bone house*, *periapt of Wisdom* +2, *ring of protection* +2

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Contingent Conjuration (Su) If Sial ever takes damage, his contingent conjuration triggers a *summon monster VI* spell, summoning a chain devil to aid him.

Mark of Zon-Kuthon As a member of the Brotherhood of Bones, Sial is the willing recipient of an invisible *mark of justice*. If he ever denounces the faith of Zon-Kuthon he is inflicted with a brand of disloyalty, a *bestow curse* spell which causes his eyes to glaze over with a hardened metallic film resulting in a permanent (and painful) blindness.

ASYRA

CR 10

Female chain devil fighter 4

LE Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar, lawful)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +10, Spot +10

Aura unnerving gaze (30 ft., DC 18)

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 15, flat-footed 22

(+2 deflection, +3 Dex, +8 natural, +2 shield)

hp 127 (12 HD; 8d8+4d10+60+9 temporary); regeneration 2 (silver or good)

Fort +15, **Ref** +10, **Will** +9

DR 5/silver or good; **Immune** cold, fear, poison; **SR** 18

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee 2 chains +18 melee (2d4+6/19–20)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with chains)

Special Attacks dancing chains

TACTICS



During Combat Asyra seeks out opponents who wear lockets or amulets, or anybody with chains around their necks.

She then closes within 20 feet and uses her dancing chains ability to cause the chains to enlarge and grow spikes, strangling her victims with their own baubles. In melee combat, she grows the tiny chain adorning her wrist to full size and attacks. Anyone drawing aside her shawl is subjected to her unnerving gaze ability.

Morale Asyra knows that if killed or banished she merely returns to the realm of the Midnight Lord, where her torment continues. She fears nothing.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 17, **Con** 20, **Int** 6, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +16

Feats Ability Focus (unnerving gaze), Dodge, Improved Critical (chain), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (chain), Weapon Specialization (chain)

Skills Climb +15, Escape Artist +14, Intimidate +17, Listen +10, Spot +10, Tumble +8

Languages Common, Infernal

Gear *amulet of health +2, ring of protection +2, ring of force shield*

The Cinderlander

Sklar-Quah raiders have long descended the Storval Rise in raiding bands to strike at locations like Sarwin and Abken, but these raiders typically 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—a particularly dangerous occupation. Notorious amongst the Quahs of the Cinderlands, the Shoanti refer to the Cinderlander as the “devil *tshamek*,” with many Shoanti believing that the Cinderlander can’t be a living man, but rather a spirit of wrath fueled by men slain during these 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 civilization to the south and more brutal orcs to the north. His righteous fury largely exhausted, the Cinderlander now rents himself out as a guide for those who seek to cross the Cinderlands 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 Chelaxian 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 braves 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.

Cinnabar of the Red Mantis hires the Cinderlander through some agents in Kaer Maga, and before long, the sour, embittered loner is making more money than he has in years leading a strange and sinister group of assassins into the Cinderlands. In true cynical style, the Cinderlander doesn't care that the ones the assassins hunt are probably his countrymen—he tells himself that their payments might finally net him enough money 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 so despises.

THE CINDERLANDER

CR 12

Male human ranger 10/horizon walker 2

CN Medium humanoid

Init +3; **Senses** Listen +21, Spot +6

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16

(+6 armor, +3 Dex)

hp 105 (12 HD; 12d8+48)

Fort +14, **Ref** +10, **Will** +5

Defensive Abilities evasion

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk handaxe +14/+9/+4 (1d6+1/×3) and

mwk handaxe +14 (1d6/×3)

Ranged *Vindicator* +18/+13/+8 (1d10+2/19–20 plus *screaming bolt*)

Special Attacks favored enemy (humans +6, giants +4, magical beasts +2)

Spells Prepared (CL 5th)

2nd—*barkskin*, *wind wall*

1st—*charm animal* (DC 13), *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*, 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 the mount to lessen his foe's mobility. Against foes who bring superior firepower, he uses a *wind wall* to create cover from their archers. He resorts to a pair of masterwork handaxes only when forced. 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.

BONE HOUSE—MINOR ARTIFACT

Aura strong conjuration and necromancy; CL 17th

Slot —; **Weight** 2 lb.

DESCRIPTION

A *bone house* is a variant of the *instant fortress* developed by the Brotherhood of Bones. Only a few of these items exist, and they are granted only to the Brotherhood's favored agents. Each *bone house* appears as a fist-sized bone carving of a skull-topped fortress. When activated by speaking a command word, it grows to form a tower 20 feet square and 30 feet high, with arrow slits on all sides and a crenellated battlement atop it. The bone walls extend 10 feet into the ground, rooting it to the spot and preventing it from being tipped over. The fortress has a small door that opens only at the command of the owner of the fortress—even *knock* spells can't open the door.

The bone walls are magically enhanced to be as hard as stone, and have 100 hit points and hardness 10. The *bone house* can be repaired by casting *inflict* spells on the walls, with each 10 points of negative energy repairing 1 point of damage. A *bone house* springs up in just 1 round, with the door facing the device's owner. The door opens and closes instantly at his command. People and creatures nearby (except the owner) must be careful not to be caught by the fortress's sudden growth. Anyone so caught takes 10d6 points of damage (Reflex DC 19 half). The interior of a *bone house* is under the constant effects of a *desecrate* spell (the *bone house* itself is considered an altar to Zon-Kuthon for the purposes of determining the *desecrate*'s modifiers).

Once a *bone house* is expanded into tower size, its owner can create up to four mummies per month from the drifts of bone ash and detritus that litters the inner rooms. Creating a mummy in this manner takes 10 minutes, and the owner must be inside of the *bone house* the entire time. Mummies created gain +2 hit points per HD (thanks to the *desecrate* effect), and guard the contents of the *bone house* without needing to be commanded. If the owner wishes to command these mummies to perform other tasks, he must use other means to do so. No more than four mummies may be active at one time.

A *bone house* is deactivated by speaking a command word (different from the one used to activate it). It cannot be deactivated unless it is empty.



GUIDED WEAPON

Aura moderate evocation; **CL** 7th

Slot weapon quality; **Price** +1 bonus

DESCRIPTION

A weapon with the guided property allows its wielder to use his instinct when striking blows with it. Attacks from a guided weapon generally don't strike hard, but they strike at precisely the right moment to maximize damage if in the hands of a particularly wise wielder. A character who attacks with a guided weapon modifies his attack rolls and weapon damage rolls with his Wisdom modifier, not his Strength modifier. This modifier to damage is not adjusted for two-handed weapons or off-hand weapons—it always remains equal to the wielder's Wisdom modifier. A guided weapon may be wielded as a normal weapon, using Strength to modify attack and damage rolls, but this goes against the weapon's nature and imparts a –2 penalty on all attack rolls made in this manner.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft
Magic Arms and Armor,
spiritual weapon

THE CINDERLANDER

Morale Although far from cowardly, the Cinderlander does not particularly like the Red Mantis. He can certainly be bought, and for a bribe of no less than 500 gp, he abandons Cinnabar and the assassins to their fate. He's seen what they're capable of, though, and isn't particularly interested in taking up a fight against them. In any event, he attempts to flee if brought below 20 hp.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 17, **Con** 18, **Int** 10, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +13

Feats Diehard, Endurance, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (repeating heavy crossbow), Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (repeating heavy crossbow)

Skills Concentration +17, Hide +18, Knowledge (geography) +15, Listen +21, Move Silently +18, Search +13, Survival +15

Languages Common, Giant, Shoanti

SQ animal companion (Neverfar), swift tracker, terrain mastery (hills, plains), wild empathy +9, woodland stride

Combat Gear *potion of haste*, *wand of cure moderate wounds* (22 charges); **Other Gear** +2 *mithral shirt*, *Vindicator* (+1 *human bane repeating heavy crossbow*) with 20 *screaming bolts* in four pre-loaded clips of five, *masterwork handaxes* (2), *amulet of health* +2, *gloves of Dexterity* +2, *pouch of 80 gp*

NEVERFAR

Firepelt cougar animal companion

hp 19; **MM** 174 (leopard)

CR —

Meanwhile, In Korvosa

"A History Of Ashes" assumes that the PCs do not return to Korvosa at all, that they remain focused on the task at hand and, more or less, follow the series of quests as outlined in the rest of the adventure. Of course, once PCs have reached 10th level, many have access to a wide range of spells and abilities that allow them to teleport, scry, communicate, or otherwise interact with contacts over vast distances. In case your party decides to take a quick break from the Cinderlands to check up on how things are going back home, you can use this section to answer their questions.

As this adventure begins, Queen Ileosa has reached the height of her power through the infusion of Kazavon's essence via the *Crown of Fangs*, an artifact she fashioned with infernal aid from the *Fangs of Kazavon*. In addition to advancing her to an aristocrat 2/bard 17, the *Crown of Fangs* grants her additional powers, the most potent of which may be the capability to survive mortal wounds. Commandant Marcus Thalassinus Endrin's dramatic but failed assassination attempt at the start of "Escape from Old Korvosa" marked the first public manifestation of this power, and it alone would have been enough to convince much of the city to bow before Ileosa.

Yet she has more tools at her disposal. During this adventure, the balance of military power in Korvosa shifts rapidly. The Sable Company is officially disbanded, the Hellknights of the Order of the Nail abandons the city and begin a long (and ultimately fruitless) campaign to attempt to bring



A HISTORY OF ASHES



in reinforcements from Cheliox to oppose the queen, and the Korvosan Guard, already shattered by riots and plague, becomes little more than a mockery of its former glory. After some rough moments, the Temple of Abadar even announces its support of Queen Ileosa, Archbanker Darb Tuttle officially recognizing 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 in 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 oppose the queen legally while maintaining their good standing with the church. The Temple of Asmodeus has fewer qualms supporting the queen—only the Temple of Pharsasma remains apart, but they have their own problems in helping to organize the city's recovery from the plague and riots.

True power in Korvosa now lies with the Gray Maidens, ruthless and brutal warrior women who patrol the streets in increasingly larger patrols. At the same time, the Red Mantis supports the queen from the shadows—there is no official announcement of the Red Mantis's support, but after several prominent nobles and even a few magistrates and arbiters meet with savage and public assassinations, no formal announcement is necessary. As

a result, Korvosa is firmly in Queen Ileosa's control by the time the PCs are wrapping up this adventure.

If the PCs contact allies in Korvosa during this adventure, they receive worried reports about the direction the queen is taking the city. Martial law is in full effect, limiting certain kinds of communication, and rumors of the queen's supposed allegiances with devils, dragons, and worse are growing. Field Marshal Cressida Kroft keeps her head down during these troubling times, maintaining her role as commander of the Korvosan Guard and doing what she can on the side to protect the city's citizens (including anyone the PCs were forced to leave behind when they fled the city), but it's getting tough. Whispers of rebels and a burgeoning underground resistance against the queen increasingly tempt Cressida to take a more direct role in opposing the throne, but for now, she stays her hand.

If the PCs decide to return to Korvosa, they should face little opposition as long as they maintain low profiles. Their primary concerns in Korvosa at this time should be patrols of Gray Maidens (each group of six female human fighter 2 soldiers is led by a fighter 7 commander), and if anyone recognizes them and word gets out that they've returned, assassination attempts from the Red Mantis (typically carried out by a group of four Red Mantis

INTERACTING WITH THE SHOANTI

This adventure assumes that the PCs follow the path of least resistance as they attempt to earn the trust and 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 gives them an advantage, especially if they use magic like *sending* or *dream* to contact the shaman beforehand. 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 "Edge of Anarchy."

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 wandering monsters can be your friend. Use the results of spells like *divination* or *commune* to guide the PCs toward the adventure's next part. 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), you can run this adventure in a more straightforward manner—give the Sun Shaman of Fireford an ancient scroll or stone tablet that contains the required information the PCs need to send them on to Scarwall to retrieve the sword *Serethial*, at which point they'll be able to win this information after a long and bloody battle against the Shoanti tribes.

assassins; see page 15 for their statistics). Try to impress upon the PCs the fact that there's little they can do in Korvosa at this time to save the city—that their skills are more useful in the Cinderlands. Until they learn from the Sun Shamans of the Sklar-Quah precisely what it is that's granted Ileosa such power, skirmishes and other actions taken in Korvosa itself are little more than a waste of time and resources, and only serve to give Ileosa and her draconic patron more time to cement their rule.

PART TWO: CLAN OF THE SKULL

By the time the PCs venture into the Cinderlands, they should know that their first target is a place called the Kallow Mounds, the heart of Skoan-Quah territory and the home of Thousand Bones, one of the few Shoanti willing

to speak with *tshamek* (oustiders). Neolandus knows that the Kallow Mounds are located about 50 miles east of Kaer Maga, as does any PC who can make a DC 25 Knowledge (geography) check.

The Kallow Mounds

Although the Skoan-Quah are not as warlike as the Sklar-Quah, they still remain distrustful of strangers, particularly when *tshamek* 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 double as both signposts and warnings to deter strangers. As the PCs approach the Kallow Mounds, these cairns grow more and more frequent.

As soon as the PCs get within a half-mile of the Kallow Mounds, they are intercepted by a group of four Skoan-Quah boneslayers—warriors 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. Their demands for what the PCs are doing approaching their campsite aren't completely rude and hostile, and as long as the PCs state their desires plainly, the boneslayers agree to lead them into their 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 themselves 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 caretakers of these cairns, and typically camp at a small dale on the westernmost edge of the mounds. At any one time, approximately 75 Skoan-Quah barbarians dwell in this camp, with a constant influx of new nomads maintaining this level as smaller tribes move on. Most of these nomads are 1st-level barbarian humans, but there's always at least a dozen boneslayers in camp 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 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 human ranger 2/cleric 9), the tribe's eldest and most experienced shaman and the leader of the boneslayers. The Kallow Mounds are further protected by a crippled dragonne named **Wicked-Claws** (N 12 HD dragonne, no fly speed). 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 above, Wicked-Claws has adopted 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** (CG male human cleric 8), one of the Skoan-Quah historians. 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 weakened the city, and he knows his Shoanti kin (particularly those among the Sklar-Quah) are eager to strike when they perceive Korvosa's defenses are down, but he also knows that—even crippled—Korvosa can field a potent army. If the Shoanti declare war now, there will be no victors, only tragedy on both sides of the Storval Rise.

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—many of the Skoan-Quah have never 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.

Until evening, 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 the PCs himself for some time—he's eager to hear about their adventures since they recovered Gaekhen's body, and if he learns that the man who dishonored the young brave has been punished, 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.

Feuding Guests

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 Burn Riders, 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, but he was asked to bring the hero's body south to the Kallow Mounds to join with the other heroes by his chieftain. Krojun knew better than to speak ill 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

SHOANTI PCS

It's possible that some of the PCs are Shoanti. It's even possible they might have chosen to be members of one of the Cinderlands tribes. In this case, that the PC has spent so much time in the company of *tshamek* means the Sklar-Quah are likely to see him as *tshamek* as well. Being accepted back into a Shoanti tribe could add an interesting layer to such a PC's quest, but it shouldn't suffice as a shortcut to avoid having to earn the Sklar-Quah's respect.

Nevertheless, if there is at least one Shoanti character in the party, the group gains one respect point (see page 26).

the ceremony, but before he leaves he notices that the Skoan-Quah have other visitors, either by seeing the PCs directly or simply by noticing that the guest yurt has been prepared and is in use. He quickly seeks out Chief One-Life and demands to know who visits, and 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 spilt here would undermine the already shaky situation between the tribes. When Krojun does arrive, he spends a few moments sizing up the PCs with a sneer before turning to address 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 nods at the giant's words as though considering them carefully, but then responds sharply, "Tell me, Krojun, when did the Sklar-Quah become judges of who trespasses on 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," answers Thousand Bones. "But not today, and not here. Would you have word of Berak's burial 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 DC 25 Knowledge (local) check is enough to recognize 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

RESPECT POINTS

This adventure is all about earning the respect of the Sklar-Quah. As the PCs accomplish goals during this adventure, they are awarded respect points. Keep a tally of these points, as at the adventure's end, this total will determine the degree of their success or failure.

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 braves while they see their brother off before they leave for Sklar-Quah lands themselves.

A “Friendly” Game of Sredna

In sredna, two opponents face one another on their hands and knees with their foreheads spaced just over a foot apart. The contest requires a thin cord of leather tied in a loop. One end of the loop is placed behind the ears of each competitor so that the players are bound to one another. When the game begins, each player 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. Sredna games typically only last for seconds, but two evenly matched opponents might duel much longer. In such cases, standoffs and ties are frequent.

When a sredna match begins, each player must spend three “breaths” (3 rounds) staring into each 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 players make opposed Intimidate checks by growling, gnashing teeth, and spitting insults. Each time a player wins one of these checks, he gains two sredna points, and in the case of a tied Intimidate check, both players gain one sredna point.

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

Tug: The characters make 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 two sredna points. If he fails (or if the results are evenly matched), his opponent gains two sredna points instead.

Dig In: The character readies himself to withstand his opponent's tug, he gains a +4 bonus on his next Strength check to resist a tug.

At the end of each round, total up each player's sredna points. This is the DC each player must make on a Fortitude save to continue the match. A player who fails this save collapses and loses the match. If both players fail their saving throw, the match is declared a draw. Characters who possess the Endurance feat gain a +4 bonus on this saving throw.

If the match lasts longer than 6 rounds, Krojun activates his greater rage to give himself an additional edge over the PC; he also activates his rage in response to any PC doing the same.

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 too 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 one respect point for this feat.

If, on the other hand, the game is a draw, Krojun says nothing. He regards his competitor with narrowed eyes, then with a curt nod returns to the funeral. The party earns two 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 of the head and another grin before rejoining his brothers. The party earns three respect points.

Krojun Eats-What-He-Kills

Krojun is a symbol and hero of the Sklar-Quah. As a young brave, Krojun sought the means to enact revenge upon an orc champion named Kyrust Chiefkiller, a Rotten Tongue marauder from Urglin who had long organized 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 sent Krojun on several punishing tests, 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 only 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, and in a fantastic display of rage and power, single-handedly defeated the orcs and their leader Kyrust. It was only as Krojun claimed the orc's *belt of giant strength* as both a trophy and a symbol of the Sklar-Quah's power over the orcs that he realized the truth—that strange old sorcerer

had indeed given him a gift: the gift of rage. Without the skills and strength Krojun honed in completing the tasks the sorcerer had set him to, he would surely have fallen in such a combat as he had just won.

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. The little remaining space upon his rippling muscles that has not already been tattooed or branded is frequently plastered with war paint in symbols of Shoanti pride.

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* are not as savage or cruel as the orcs. He has seen much of his own people reflected in the workings of *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, to learn more about their ways, and to hopefully prevent what he believes will be a disastrous war, should his people march on Korvosa.

If Krojun survives to the end of the adventure, and the PCs pass their initiation into the Sun Clan, Krojun becomes a lifelong friend and ally, calling the PCs his *nalharest* (brothers). This will be difficult to achieve, however, as Krojun seeks to challenge the PCs several times during the adventure, and he does not pull his punches.

KROJUN EATS-WHAT-HE-KILLS CR 12

Male human barbarian 12

N Medium humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 16
(+6 armor, +2 Dex, -2 rage, +2 shield)

hp 155 (12 HD; 12d12+72)

Fort +14, **Ref** +6, **Will** +7

Defensive Abilities improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +4;

DR 3/—

OFFENSE

Spd 50 ft.

Melee +1 *thundering earth breaker* +18/+14/+8 (2d6+7/×3) and +1 *klar* +18 (1d6+4)

Special Attacks greater rage 4/day

TACTICS

Before Combat Only if Krojun knows he is about to face great opposition does he apply his *orange Shoanti war paint*.

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 less. Only when raging does he fight to the death.

Base Statistics AC 20, touch 12, flat-footed 18; **hp** 119; **Fort** +12, **Will** +4; **Melee** +1 *thundering earth breaker* +15/+10/+5 (2d6+4/×3) and +1 *klar* +15 (1d6+2); **Str** 16, **Con** 16; **Grp** +20; **Skills** Climb +15, Jump +30

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +19

Feats Endurance, Thunder and Fang, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (earthbreaker), Weapon Focus (klar)

Skills Intimidate +16, Jump +32, Ride +17, Survival +15

Languages Common,

Shoanti

SQ fast movement, illiteracy

Combat Gear

potion of cure serious wounds (2);

Other Gear +2 *hide shirt*,

+1 *thundering earth breaker*,

+1/+1 *klar*, *belt of giant*

strength +4, *boots of striding and springing*, *orange Shoanti war paint* (3 doses)

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



KROJUN

NEW FEAT: THUNDER AND FANG

You have mastered the ancient Shoanti fighting style of Thunder and Fang, allowing you to fight with increased effectiveness when wielding an earth breaker and a klar. As you swing at foes with Thunder (your earth breaker), you slash at them with the Fang (your klar).

Prerequisites: Str 15, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (earth breaker), Weapon Focus (klar)

Benefit: As long as you are fighting with an earth breaker and a klar (and you make attacks with your klar as your offhand attack), you can fight with both weapons as if you were wielding a double weapon, and retain your shield bonus to your Armor Class granted by your klar. Treat your klar as a light weapon for the purposes of determining your total penalty to attack.

Special: A fighter may select Thunder and Fang as one of his fighter bonus feats.

people present are the PCs and their allies, Thousand Bones, Chief One-Life, and Ash Dancer. 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. Thousand Bones's speech to the PCs is short and direct, as is his way.

"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 a favor in return, yet know that by doing this favor, 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 keep them from open hostility against us. My words do not reach their ears when I advise against war on Korvosa. They hear tales of the city in flames, of its king dead, of disease ravaging its people, and they see this as the time foretold. A time when the Shoanti can ride down from these burning lands and reclaim greener lands to the south, lands that were once ours. Yet war is not good for us. My brothers do not see that, even crippled, Korvosa remains a powerful enemy. It is best to make your enemies your friends, do you not think? Yet my brothers do not listen to these words. They see weakness, they demand action.

"Yet you could not know of the coming war. You come to me with a different favor. Speak of what you wish of me, and perhaps we may find our needs are the same."

Thousand Bones listens to the PCs' tale quietly and somberly, answering questions they might pose him as detailed below.

Tell us about the Shoanti who dwelt by the river before Korvosa was founded. "This was many generations ago, yet it is a wound that has never healed. My brothers among the Skoan-Quah have forgiven, but our numbers are small. We were once a part of the Sklar-Quah, yet our readiness to forgive marked us traitors and we were exiled from that clan. In the generations that passed we grew more at peace with our role here—there is beauty in the Cinderlands, if you know where to look. We have abandoned our memories of lives below the rise in a way the Sklar-Quah have not. Those memories poison them. They do not see that this land is theirs. They only see lands that their ancestors called home. If you seek more wisdom of those times, you must seek out the keepers of words among the Sklar-Quah. You must seek the words of a Sun Shaman."

What can you tell us of Midnight's Teeth? Thousand Bones' brow furrows at this question and he appears to be deep in thought for a moment before answering. "The name is not unfamiliar, yet I know little more than that I have heard it mentioned but twice by Sun Shamans of the Sklar-Quah. Always in reference to the past, and to what you now call Korvosa."

Can we simply walk into a Sklar-Quah camp and ask them for aid? "Sadly, no. You are *tshamek*. Outlanders. Rightful or not, the Sklar-Quah will see you as the children of those who murdered their ancestors and drove them from the green lands. The Sun Clan does not like outsiders at the best of times. And less so now that war against Korvosa is on every brave's lips."

Tell us more of this talk of war on Korvosa. "It pains my heart. Many will die, Shoanti and *tshamek* alike, if such a tragedy comes to pass. The Sklar-Quah talk of a great Burn Run from the Storval Rise all the way to the heart of *tshamek* lands, to Korvosa. The Sklar-Quah's mood is very dark. This is hard for the Skoan-Quah. We have made paper with Korvosa, agreeing that we will not make war. Yet after the Sklar-Quah raid, the *tshamek* will come north, led by your new queen. They will kill many Shoanti brothers and sisters, including Skoan-Quah. The winter will be harsh and many giants will be coming south to take advantage of the loss of braves.

Can you talk to the Sklar-Quah for us? You're not *tshamek*. "Alas, this will not work. They would ask us why we want to know of such things. We would have to tell them. They will not give us secrets to tell *tshamek*."

Is there any way the Sun Clan will stop treating us as *tshamek*? "You must understand. The Sklar-Quah are very certain of these things. They may come to respect lone *tshamek* after many days of seeing them act honorably, but

what you ask is for the Sun Shaman to lay bare his quah's heart. The deepest memories of his clan. These memories are not for *tshamek*. Not since Skurak the Reborn have the members of the Sklar-Quah unbanished a man and welcomed him into their quah.

Skurak? How did he manage it? Thousand Bones smiles enigmatically for a brief instant before going on. "The legend of Skurak is of a great warrior and greater traitor to the Sklar-Quah. He slew his brother, a brave of even greater courage. To the Sklar-Quah, family is purity—crimes against the family are the greatest a man can commit. Although Skurak claimed the death was an accident as 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 the great Cindermaid the Clan-Eater. Skurak walked up to the beast carrying only his dagger. Without fear he dove inside the beast 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 Cindermaid's belly. The legend says the Sun Shaman accepted this and Skurak's time as a *tshamek* was spoken of no more."

What is Cindermaid? "A legend, yet one of flesh and blood. Cindermaid dwells on the northernmost edge of Shoanti lands, in the place where Shoanti and orc and giant vie for life and water. His hunting grounds are known as the Feeding Grounds of the Quah-Kael, the land of the Clan Eater. The orcs of Urglin avoid this region; the giants of the north hunt only on its edges. Within, few have returned to tell tales, but those who do speak of a mountain that crawls and of fire that roars."

So this is a way for us to earn the Sklar-Quah's favor? To be eaten by and then escape from Cindermaid? "Perhaps. Yet this route is more complex than you suspect. The Sklar-Quah would never believe the words of *tshamek* on such a matter, nor would they risk travel to the Feeding Grounds just to see foolish outlanders attempt to recreate legends. I could come with you, if my bones were not so tired, yet I am Skoan-Quah. My words would hold little light with the Sun Shaman, I fear."

Here Thousand Bones grows silent for a moment, and Ash Dancer speaks for the first time. "They could bring a Truthspeaker, Thousand Bones."

What is a Truthspeaker? "There are those among our people who, after living lives without lie and never speaking falsehood, have earned the title of Truthspeaker. It is a rare honor, one that requires many years of chastity, of self-control, of introspection. There are Truthspeakers among the Sklar-Quah, yet that does not help you. Were

that the Skoan-Quah had one. Yet The Skoan-Quah and the Sklar-Quah are not the only Shoanti in the Cinderlands. I have heard tell that the Lyrune-Quah, who dwell in the shadow of the Wyvern Mountains far to the northwest, have Truthspeakers among them. If you could perform the ritual of rebirth at the Feeding Grounds of the Quah-Kael in the presence of a Truthspeaker, his words would be all the proof you need to secure an audience with the Sklar-Quah."

Where do we even find the Moon clan? "The Lyrune-Quah are nomads. This time of year, they gather at a place sacred to them, a place called the House of the Moon at the northeasternmost edge of the Wyvern Mountains. Yet I fear that they will distrust you as *tshamek* as well, unless you bring to them proof of your honesty and need."



THOUSAND BONES



TOO MANY CHAINED QUESTS?

Warning! The structure of this adventure may not be to the liking of some groups. “A History of Ashes” is designed both to introduce several NPCs and to show off the Shoanti and the Cinderlands, but some players get annoyed by overly complex quests. In this adventure, your players need to secure an audience with a Sklar-Quah Sun Shaman to learn what he knows about Kazavon. But in order to do that, the PCs are expected to undertake a large number of preliminary quests, each one granting a reward that allows the next stage in the chain of quests to occur.

You know your group better than I do. If your players balk or resist the concept of being forced to undertake a specific line of quests in a specific order, you might want to consider removing a stage or two from the quest chain in “A History of Ashes,” or perhaps changing the order around. For example, rather than asking the PCs to go to the Acropolis of the Thrallkeepers to get the Spherewalker’s Mark just so they can prove to the Lyrune-Quah that they can be trusted, perhaps Thousand Bones simply sends the PCs directly to the Lyrune-Quah. Once the PCs get there, Truthspeaker Akram can agree to witness the PCs’ encounter with Cindermaid only if they first do him a favor by escorting one of his nephews to the acropolis so he can receive the Spherewalker’s Mark. You can even just skip the acropolis entirely, setting it aside as an extended encounter for the PCs to explore along the way—perhaps the acropolis is nothing more than the closest shelter at hand when an unexpected emberstorm strikes.

—James Jacobs

What can we bring them to secure their aid? “The Lyrune-Quah are unusual among the Shoanti. They do not seek enlightenment through our ancestors, but from the Song of the Spheres. They are devotees of Desna, and they trust those who worship her. Yet that trust is, alone, not enough to earn the aid of a Truthspeaker to be witness to your heroics against Cindermaid. The faithful of Desna have a tradition of exploring distant and dangerous places as a way to honor their deity, who watches over all who travel. When they reach the goal of their pilgrimage, a priest leaves a found-mark to honor his journey. One of the Lyrune-Quah’s greatest ancestors was a priest of Desna named Tanjah—their legends speak of her pilgrimage into an ancient ruin and her discovery of a potent relic sacred to Desna, a stone globe held deep within a place called the Acropolis of the Thrallkeepers. Those who follow Tanjah’s footsteps and seek her found-mark upon this globe are said to be given the Spherewalker’s Mark, and with this mark, the Lyrune-Quah would welcome into their camp even their most bitter rivals.”

What is the Acropolis of the Thrallkeepers? Where is it? “It is a ruin left over from an ancient time, a time when great powers ruled over this land. We speak of these ancient lords only in whispers today, but you may know their mark by the Sihedron, the seven-pointed star. I know not what perils await you within the Acropolis, but its location is not unknown to the Skoan-Quah. When you are ready to leave, I shall send with you four boneslayers to lead you there.”

How can we repay you for your help? “By convincing the Sklar-Quah you are friends, that you represent Korvosa, and that war is not in anyone’s best interest. This will save both our peoples needless pain and grief. If you can earn their trust and respect enough to learn from them the secret of what their ancestors watched over before the outlanders drove them away, they will listen to your words and see the wisdom there. This is all I ask, and it benefits you as well.”

Once the PCs have asked their questions and are sure of their goals, Thousand Bones tells them that he will not send 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 the PCs’ guides through the Cinderlands, and lead them where they need to go. Further, he presents some 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). If asked about these gifts, Thousand Bones smiles and says, “I had suspected for some time you would need my help. These gifts are nothing to me, but they may be everything to you.”

SKOAN-QUAH BONESLAYERS (4)

CR 4

Human ranger 2/cleric 2

CN Medium humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14

(+4 armor, +1 Dex)

hp 25 (4 HD; 4d8+4)

Fort +7, **Ref** +4, **Will** +6

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk earth breaker +6 (2d6+3/×3)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +5 (1d8+2/×3)

Special Attacks favored enemy (undead +2), feat of Strength 1/day, greater turning 1/day, turn undead 6/day (–1, 2d6+2)

Spells Known (CL 2nd)

1st—*detect undead*, *hide from undead*, *sanctuary* (DC 14)

0—*create water*, *detect magic*, *mending*, *purify food and drink*

D domain spell; **Domains** Strength, Sun

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 his aid.

Morale Boneslayers fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 13, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +5

Feats Extra Turning, Improved Turning, Totem Spirit (Skoan-Quah), Track

Skills Concentration +6, Handle Animal +4, Heal +10, Hide +4, Knowledge (nature) +5, Knowledge (religion) +6, Move Silently +4, Survival +8

Languages Common, Shoanti

SQ spontaneous casting (cure spells)

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of delay poison, potion of lesser restoration*; **Other Gear** masterwork hide shirt, masterwork earth breaker, masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str), *white Shoanti war paint*, holy symbol

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Totem Spirit This feat (described in the *Rise of the Runelords Player's Guide*) grants the Boneslayer a +2 bonus on weapon damage against undead and a +2 bonus on Heal checks.

PART THREE: ACROPOLIS OF THE THRALLKEEPERS

With the gifts given by Thousand Bones and the assistance of four reliable guides, the journey to the Acropolis of the Thrallkeepers should be relatively safe, depending on how often you wish to liven up the trip with wandering monsters. At times during the journey, feel free to have the PCs make Spot checks; whoever rolls the highest catches a glimpse of what seems to be another small group of riders on a distant outcropping. A DC 40 Spot check confirms that the man at the head of this group is Krojun—the Sklar-Quah is keeping an eye on the PCs as they travel, 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 his men 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 lost souls. He lets lie the implication 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 actually reach the Acropolis of the Thrallkeepers, however, try to avoid having too many direct confrontations with Krojun's band.

A Grim Warning

As the journey progresses, the PCs should come upon at least one grisly totem—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 almost like a flag on the side of a building. Bright red crossbow bolts have been driven into each of the head's eyes.

The boneslayers accompanying the PCs mutter and whisper at this discovery. If asked about it, one of the Sklar-Quah says the head belonged to a Sklar-Quah, but was placed here by a “*tshamek* devil” the Shoanti call the Cinderlander. The brave goes on to explain that, for the past several years, this mysterious figure has stalked the Cinderlands. He never attacks large groups—targeting only lone braves with a strange “sideways screaming bow.” 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 his victims equal those the Shoanti took from him. 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 region. In any event, one of the bonecallers scrambles up to retrieve the decapitated head. Without knowing the Shoanti's identity, his ashes cannot be interred in the Kallow Mounds, so instead, that evening, the boneslayers hold a short service of their own, burning the head, scattering the ashes, and burying the skull under a cairn of rocks.

More information about the Cinderlander and his role in this adventure can be found on page 21.

Arrival at the Acropolis

As the PCs approach the acropolis, the sky on the horizon begins to darken alarmingly. A DC 20 Knowledge (nature) check or a quick warning from one of their boneslayer guides confirms the worst—an emberstorm is brewing. Powerful duststorms filled with blasts of burning ash and cinders, these devastating storms are feared by the Shoanti for their swift speed and terrible fury—known as Black Blizzards to most tribes, the advent of an emberstorm could be taken as a bad omen, as the boneslayer companions are quick to point out. The PCs should have plenty of time to find the entrance to the acropolis before the storm strikes, though—see page 74 of *Pathfinder #7* for rules if the PCs get caught unprotected in the emberstorm itself.

The Acropolis of the Thrallkeepers sits atop a raised area in the shadows of the Wyvern Mountains. Built originally by an order of Thassilonian wizards known as the Thrallkeepers (a competing order against the



Therassic Monks who built the Black Tower and the Library under Jorgenfist—see *Pathfinder* #4), the acropolis's true grandeur lies hidden underground. Eager to prove their value and use to Runelord Karzoug, they turned increasingly to the teachings of the rune goddess Lissala, and through those meditations, they sought a method to duplicate the great works of Thassilon's most powerful conjurers. The acropolis was a place where they could perfect their conjurations and study the strange and horrific monstrosities like scarlet walkers, shining children, and other 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 runes and methods stolen from dubious sources (perhaps from 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. They managed to pull down a *havero* from these distant unknown places and imprisoned it in the vast summoning chamber below,

but the *havero* was too powerful for the Thrallkeepers to fully control. Its body trapped in the conjuration chamber, the *havero* sent its countless appendages up through the surrounding structure and, in a matter of minutes, had sought out and murdered every single Thrallkeeper within the acropolis.

The Therassic Monks attempted several times to move in and claim the vacated structure, yet it soon became obvious that the *havero* would allow none to dwell in the acropolis—even those who sought nothing more than to release it from its prison. When Thassilon crumbled, visits to the acropolis ended, and in time, all but one of the once-mighty buildings that stood atop it crumbled. The ageless *havero* itself fell into hibernation, and now only wakes when intruders explore the ruins of the acropolis—even then, only a few of the creature's twitching limbs awaken at a time to defend the place. The Shoanti have learned to avoid the ruins, but worshipers of Desna can sense the presence of a creature from beyond the stars here, and as such it has become a sacred place to her worshipers. They know that the *havero* is a dangerous creature that must remain imprisoned, yet the secrets of what it has seen in the places at the edge of the universe are a lure to their inquisitive minds.

Above ground, all that remains today is a partially collapsed tower bearing the mark of the seven-pointed star—the Sihedron Rune. Just to the side of the mark, a pair of 20-foot-wide stone doors stand ajar (having already been opened by the Brotherhood of Bones), leading down to a dusty flight of stairs descending to area **A1**.

Unless otherwise specified, the acropolis is lightless. 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 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 then descends on its own accord 1 minute later. The door's mechanism may be jammed, keeping the door open (or sealed) with a successful DC 15 Disable Device check. 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 for 3d6 points of damage and becomes pinned in place until he can escape with a DC 25 Strength or Escape Artist check.

A Crowded Dungeon

While the PCs are just here to receive the blessing of the Desnan found-mark in area **A11**, they aren't the only group exploring the acropolis. Three other groups are destined to clash in the acropolis as well—the Brotherhood of Bones, Krojun and his Thundercallers, and a group of Red Mantis assassins. Each group is summarized below, and in every room description, the group's actions (and when it enters that room) are detailed. In addition, the havero itself still lives, and its countless limbs slowly awaken as the four groups explore.

Brotherhood of Bones (EL 12): The first group to arrive in the acropolis is Shadowcount Sial and his chain devil companion Asyra. Sial's divinations have led him here, and he makes his way to area **A3** hoping to observe the PCs and follow them quietly once they arrive. He would prefer to remain unseen, but if his hand is forced, he allies with the PCs unless they wish otherwise. The boneslayers object loudly to such an alliance, and Sial has little but disdain for the local "primitives."

If the PCs discover the priest, he abandons his pretense of silent observation and greets the PCs, explaining that he has been watching them for some time. He introduces himself and Asyra as accomplices of Laori Vaus, explaining that she had reported the PCs' efforts in Old Korvosa to the organization that he and she both belong to. Sial attempts to remain as mysterious as he can, asking only leave of the PCs to accompany them and

observe their methods. He understands full well that he's given the PCs little reason to trust him, and offers his spells as support for their exploration as needed. If combat with the havero or Red Mantis occurs, he even joins in on the PCs' side to aid them.

Although Sial admits to belonging to the Brotherhood of Bones (a DC 25 Knowledge [religion] check reveals only that this is a mysterious order of scholars and historians that operates inside of the church of Zon-Kuthon), he would rather avoid mentioning anything else about his actual interests at this time, promising only that, once they're out of this ruin, he'll explain himself more fully. If the PCs still don't want his company, he nods in understanding and withdraws to area **A1** to await the end of the emberstorm, approaching the PCs at a later date to ask again if they will allow him to accompany them on their travels.

SHADOWCOUNT SIAL

hp 56 (see page 18)

ASYRA

hp 118 (see page 19)

Red Mantis (EL 12): A group of four Red Mantis assassins enters the acropolis not long after the PCs arrive. 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, who is scrying on one of the assassins, can observe the PCs in combat and therefore prepare her assault with more accuracy later in the adventure. If the PCs have taken pains to ensure that the Red Mantis can't track them easily, Cinnabar gives one of the assassins an *elixir of shadewalking* so he can travel to the acropolis in about an hour from their Ashwing gargoyle base of operations—assuming at least that she's able to scry upon the PCs or knows that's where they're going. Unless the PCs have already noticed the Red Mantises, it's simplest to 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 discover the assassins, the mantises attack at once—they have little interest in talking.

RED MANTIS ASSASSINS (4)

hp 50 each (see page 15)

Sklar-Quah (EL 13): When the emberstorm picks up, Krojun sends most of his war party away to seek safety elsewhere. He keeps three of his thundercallers at his side and watches the acropolis entrance from a distant crag, local stories and legends about the region staying him from following. Just as he's about to abandon his

The Acropolis of the Thrall Keepers

Main Level



vigil, though, the Red Mantis enters. This event intrigues Krojun enough that he leads his three thundercaller braves down to the acropolis to enter as well. The Sklar-Quah enter about 15 minutes after the PCs do (or at about the time the PCs have explored three areas on the main level or are about to move into the lower level).

Once the PCs discover that Krojun and his thundercallers have followed them into the acropolis, Krojun's demeanor is brisk. He greets them with a stoic nod, explaining that he and his braves decided to take shelter in here while the storm raged outside. He then goes on to warn the PCs that this place is bad, and that they shouldn't be here. If the PCs explain that they're seeking the Desnan found-mark, he snorts derisively, saying that the PCs are no better than those "stargazing Lyrune-Quah," but he doesn't take action to prevent their exploration. He does, however, demand to know what the PCs are doing in the Cinderlands. He meets most answers with non-committal grunts, but if the PCs say that they seek an audience with a Sun Shaman, he laughs loudly (add two noise points in this event—see page 36 for further details) and says that such a thing will never happen—that the Sun Shamans of the Sklar-Quah have nothing to say to *tshamek*.

Krojun accompanies the PCs for a short time, explaining only that he finds them to be entertaining while he waits out the emberstorm, when in fact he's simply sizing them up and trying to figure them out. He doesn't aid them in a fight against the Red Mantis unless the assassins harm him or one of his braves, but he does aid the PCs in any fight against the haverro. He doesn't follow the PCs into the lower level—once they head down there, he takes his leave of the PCs to finish waiting out the storm at area A1. He is gone by the time the PCs complete their business here.

KROJUN EATS-WHAT-HE-KILLS **CR 12**
hp 155 (see page 27)

SKLAR-QUAH THUNDERCALLERS (3) **CR 7**

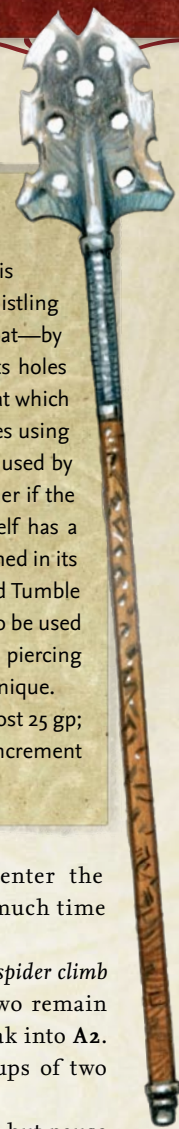
Human barbarian 1/bard 6
N Medium humanoid (human)
Init +7; **Senses** Listen +9, Spot -1

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 13
(+5 armor, +3 Dex, -2 rage)

hp 61 (7 HD; 1d12+6d6+28)

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



OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.

Melee +1 *totem spear* +10 (1d10+7/×3)

Ranged +1 *totem spear* +9 (1d10+5/×3)

Special Attacks bardic music 6/day (countersong, *fascinate*, inspire courage +2, inspire competence, *suggestion*), rage 1/day

Spells Known (CL 6th)

2nd (3/day)—*pyrotechnics*, *shatter* (DC 15), *sound burst* (DC 15)

1st (4/day)—*cure light wounds*, *expeditious retreat*, *feather fall*, *lesser confusion* (DC 14)

0 (3/day)—*detect magic*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *summon instrument*

TACTICS

Before Combat If time permits, the thundercallers first prepare their war band with war paint.

During Combat One thundercaller initiates his inspire courage bardic music ability while the others attack. In melee, the thundercallers rage and then move in to flank foes with their totem spears

Morale Thundercallers never flee unless called away by their chief or another authority figure, such as Krojun.

Base Statistics AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15; **hp** 47; **Fort** +6, **Ref** +6, **Will** +4, **Str** 14, **Dex** 12, **Con** 14; **Skills** Concentration +12, Jump +13

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +5; **Gp** +7

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

Skills Concentration +14, Intimidate +7, Jump +17, Knowledge (history) +10, Listen +9, Perform (wind instrument) +13, Ride +7, Survival +3, Tumble +12

Languages Common, Shoanti

SQ bardic knowledge +8, fast movement

Combat Gear barbarian chew, *wand of cure light wounds* (30 charges), *wand of cat's grace* (15 charges); **Other Gear** +1 *hide shirt*, +1 *totem spear*, *green Shoanti war paint*

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.

It's only a DC 10 Survival check to note that two 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 ground is clear, and continuing to follow the trail requires a DC 25 Survival check. Doing so leads the PCs to the door from area **A2** to area **A3**.

TOTEM SPEAR

The shaft of this traditional Sklar-Quah spear is carved with sacred symbols, and its wide head is drilled with cunning holes that create a loud whistling when the weapon is hurled or used in combat—by turning the spear so that the wind blows over its holes in different orientations, or by varying the speed at which it is swung, a character can create mournful dirges using Perform (wind instrument). Totem spears can be used by bards to create bardic music effects in this manner if the user is trained in the spear's use. The spear itself has a strong, flexible shaft, and in the hands of one trained in its use, grants a +2 circumstance bonus on Jump and Tumble checks. The spear's relatively wide head allows it to be used as a slashing weapon, swung side to side, or as a piercing weapon in a more traditional spear-fighting technique.

Totem Spear (Two-Handed Exotic Weapon): Cost 25 gp; Dmg (S) 1d8; Dmg (M) 1d10; Critical ×3; Range Increment 10 ft.; Weight 6 lb.; Type piercing or slashing.

Brotherhood of Bones: Sial and Asyra enter the ruins before the PCs arrive but don't spend much time in this area.

Red Mantis: The Red Mantis assassins cast *spider climb* at this point. If there's activity in area **A2**, two remain in hiding here near the ceiling while two sneak into **A2**. Otherwise, the assassins break into two groups of two and move into **A2** under stealth.

Sklar-Quah: The Sklar-Quah enter the area but pause for a few rounds before entering area **A2** if there's no activity there. Any Red Mantis assassins hidden above remain hidden; the Sklar-Quah aren't observant enough to notice them.

A2. Pool of the Haverro (EL 10+)

The air in this massive cathedral-like space seems strangely cool. The ceiling vaults into the shadows above to a height of nearly sixty feet, while the walls are carved with vertical ridges that rise to support the arch above. A five-foot-wide balcony rings the room, the floor of which drops fifteen feet into a pool of dark water. A bridge crosses the pool down the room's center, and two large stone doors stand in the walls to the south and east. Smaller doors sit in the walls to the northwest and northeast—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 once served as the acropolis's primary summoning chamber, but anyone who investigates the foul water finds that something cold,

TENTACLE COMBAT

The easiest way to represent the havero's tentacles on a battlemat is with a large number of pennies and dimes (or similarly-sized tokens). When a tentacle emerges, it may do so at any pool square in area **A2**. Use a dime to note the current position of the tentacle's tip—this is the part of the tentacle that “moves” when the havero explores. Whenever you move this dime out of a square, leave a penny in the square it vacates; this indicates the length of the tentacle itself as it trails from the tip back to the pool.

The tentacle itself can attack any target within 20 feet of its tip, and threatens any creature in this range. Any creature that wishes to move through a square marked by a penny can do so, but treats that square as difficult terrain as he is forced to clamber or jump over the writhing tentacle length.

A character can attack a tentacle at any point along its length. Attacking a tentacle while out of reach of the tip is a relatively safe way to combat a havero tentacle, but it is certain to call the tip back to the current location.

Once multiple tentacles emerge, it might be easiest to use additional markers as well, if you wish to keep clear which trail of pennies is “attached” to which tip. You can also use different colored lengths of string or yarn to track the location of each tentacle if you wish, using pennies at points along its length to weight down the string so it doesn't slide all over the battlemat.

The havero's tentacles are treated as Huge creatures for the purposes of determining attack rolls, Hide checks, and grapple checks.

rubbery, and immense fills most of this chamber to an uneven depth ranging from 10 to 30 feet.

Narrow gaps along the north and south walls allow creatures in the passageways beyond the luxury of observing events in this room from there, but are difficult to notice from inside area **A2**. It's a DC 20 Search check to locate these cleverly hidden gaps.

Creature: The pool is far from empty—it contains the slumbering havero conjured so long ago by the Thrallkeepers. Their magic holds the creature still, suspending it in a trance-like state analogous to what mortals would understand as a form of hibernation. In this form of stasis, its body lies immense but immobile under the dark waters of the pool, a vast tangle of tentacles and coils. Close inspection reveals a dark-colored mass of thick, rubbery material that heals all damage done to it in a single round. Here and there, strange bulbous protrusions (closed eyes) stud the uneven ropey mass. The exact conditions required to waken the havero have yet to occur, and whatever these conditions are should be outside of the capability of the PCs to accomplish—the havero itself

is a CR 25 creature, and should not be unleashed on a 10th-level party. Yet while the havero dreams away the ages, its countless limbs do not sleep as deeply as its colossal body, and if intruders are loud or destructive enough, some of these unquiet limbs could awaken.

As the PCs explore the ruins, track their “noise points” to determine how many of the havero's tentacles awaken. Award noise points as follows:

Action	Noise Points Awarded
Combat	5 points per round
Yelling	1 point
Casting a spell with a verbal component	1 point
Running	1 point
Utilizing a sonic effect	10 points
Noise occurs in area A2	Double the points awarded
Swimming in the pool	2 points per round

Directly attacking the havero's body awards a number of noise points equal to the amount of damage dealt (attacking a tentacle does not award any additional points beyond those normally awarded for combat). Every minute that passes in which no new noise points are awarded, the current total of noise points drops by 1d10.

The number of noise points determines how many of the havero's arms 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 (note that reductions to noise points cannot trigger a new havero reaction).

Noise Point Total	Havero Reaction
10	Twitch: The havero's tentacles writhe and twitch. 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. It investigates for 1d4 rounds before slumping back into the water—if it encounters any creatures, it attacks.
30	Seek: Two havero tentacles emerge from the pool in area A2 to investigate the room for 2d4 rounds, slithering outward into surrounding rooms as time permits. If they encounter any creatures, all other tentacles quickly move to aid the fight as soon as it begins.
40	Assault: As “seek” above, save that four tentacles emerge to investigate the ruins. The tentacles continue to investigate until the noise point

50

total drops below 40.

Wrath: As “assault” above, save that six tentacles emerge. A new tentacle emerges to replace one forced to withdraw on the round after that tentacle’s withdrawal, up to a maximum of six active tentacles at a time. Tentacles continue to emerge to replace withdrawn ones as long as the noise point total remains at 50 or higher.

When the havero’s tentacles emerge, treat each one as its own, unique creature. The tentacles present a unique situation on a battlemat, since they don’t really conform to standard rules for creature space. Although each of the havero’s tentacles are long enough to reach anywhere on the main level, they never get much thicker than about a foot or two in diameter, no matter how long they stretch. See the Tentacle Combat sidebar for rules on how these limbs work on a battlemat.

HAVERO TENTACLE

CR 6

NE Huge aberration

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +5, Spot +5

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 9, flat-footed 18

(+1 Dex, +10 natural, –2 size)

hp 66 (7 HD; 7d8+35)

Fort +7, **Ref** +3, **Will** +10

DR 5/slashing; **Immune** cold, inhaled effects, mind-affecting effects, poison; **Resist** acid 10, fire 10

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee tentacle +12 (2d6+13)

Space 5 ft. (special); **Reach** 20 ft. (special)

Special Attacks constrict 2d6+13, improved grab

TACTICS

During Combat The havero’s tentacles attack the closest visible target, switching to attack other targets only to defend themselves as necessary.

Morale Once a havero tentacle is reduced to 0 hit points, it stops attacking and withdraws back into the pool in area **A2** at a speed of 60 feet.

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 12, **Con** 20, **Int** —, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +22

SQ mindless, no breath

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Constrict (Ex) On a successful grapple check, a havero tentacle deals 2d6+13 points of damage.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a havero tentacle must hit a target of any size with its tentacle attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Mindless (Ex) Although the havero itself is fantastically

intelligent, it is currently slumbering, leaving its tentacles little more than instinct to operate on. The tentacles are effectively mindless, and thus immune to mind-affecting attacks.

No Breath (Ex) A havero tentacle does not breathe, and as such is immune to inhaled toxins and odor-based effects.

Brotherhood of Bones: Sial and Asyra didn’t investigate this room much, and chose area **A3** as their observation point. It’s a DC 25 Survival check to track their progress across the floor to this room. If they observe the PCs’ fight in this room, they come to the party’s aid if things start to look dire but otherwise simply observe the battle.

Red Mantis: If the Red Mantis find the PCs here, they clamber up onto the ceiling stealthily so they can *feather fall* down to attack with surprise. If the PCs are fighting the Havero, the mantises watch quietly, entering the fray only if noticed or to strike while the PCs are wounded as soon as the tentacles withdraw. If there are no PCs here when the mantises arrive, they avoid the pool. One pair remains hidden on the roof above the eastern doors while the other moves south to investigate area **A5**.

Sklar-Quah: The Sklar-Quah are somewhat nervous about the ominous water in the pool, and while none of them enter the slime, a few toss rocks into it while Krojun walks the perimeter of the place, looking for the PCs’ trail. Each round, Krojun attempts a DC 25 check to pick up the PCs’ trail on the stone floor; each round he fails, add 3 noise points as his thundercallers throw rocks into the water. Eventually, he picks up the trail or his thundercallers rile the havero to life. If the Sklar-Quah start to fight the havero here, give the PCs Listen checks to hear the combat (DC –10 check, modified as appropriate for barriers and distance); you don’t need to run the combat between the Shoanti and the tentacles if you don’t want. If the PCs don’t come to investigate, the Shoanti retreat from the acropolis to take their chances with the emberstorm after 5 rounds of battle and are not encountered again until Part Five. If the PCs come to investigate, they find the Shoanti battling the appropriate number of tentacles. Each combatant has taken 5d6 points of damage already.

A3. Brotherhood 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. Treat the gaps as arrow slits.

Brotherhood of Bones: Sial and Asyra choose this area as their observation point. Once the PCs move



out of area **A2**, Sial casts *scrying* to attempt to continue observing them as they explore this complex. If this fails, he casts *silence* on a pebble and attempts to follow them unnoticed.

Sklar-Quah: The Sklar-Quah pass through the northern areas only if they're following the PCs' route. They make enough noise in their approach that Sial and Asyra have time to move ahead of them through **A5**, to area **A8**, and then back around through the northern hallways by area **A4** if necessary to avoid a confrontation.

A4. Shrine to Alahaniss

The curved northern alcove of this chamber displays a brilliantly colored bas-relief carving of an alluring mermaid. The figure lounges upon a bed of stone seaweed while the cunning sculpt creates the illusion that her luxurious tresses of long hair float around her body in swirling rings. Tiny shards of gemstones embedded in her tail make it appear as though her scales glisten with moisture.

This room was once a shrine dedicated to one of Lissala's now-forgotten lesser heralds, a water elemental named Alahaniss the Haven-Bringer, giver of boons to servants who toil in the heat and drowning death to the indolent. The Thrallkeepers had called upon Alahaniss to assist in the creation of the oasis outside the acropolis

that once made life within the temple more comfortable. Millennia later, this gem-encrusted carving of Alahaniss is all that remains of her shrine.

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 they track the PCs, the thundercallers hoot in appreciation at the mermaid's feminine beauty (add 2 noise points) while they wait for Krojun to pick up the trail again.

A5. The Illumacone

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

The glowing shaft is an arcane elevator called an *illumacone*. 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 a *levitate*, allowing him to gently ascend back to this chamber. The spell effects terminate each time the traveler steps out of the shaft.

Red Mantis: If a pair of assassins moves through the double doors into this room in search of the PCs, they

spend 2d4 rounds investigating the *illumacone* 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—he's not willing to dig that deep into these notorious ruins just to see what the PCs are up to.

A6. Image of 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. A line of jade runes runs down the statue's belly and along the length of its snaky lower body.

This statue depicts Lissala, the now-dead 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 usually obscured to prevent lowly thralls from educating themselves and becoming tempted to explore forbidden areas of the complex. The statue here conceals one such map.

The statue's base contains a wide but shallow drawer, noticeable on a DC 20 Search check. Inside is a 4-foot-diameter circular frame containing several wedge-shaped metal plates, each punched with its own intricate design. Each plate slides perfectly over or under the two adjacent plates along the outer ring. The ring itself fits perfectly over the entrance to the *illumacone* in area A5; if 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 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 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 suffers 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 magic.



A7. Eternal Glyphs (EL 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 draped in Thassilonian runes. An intricate scripture winds around each carving, coiling around them and along the walls like an immensely long tangle of ribbons.

A DC 35 Knowledge (religion) check identifies that the carvings portray upper-tier clergy of Lissala. The tiny coded lettering on the walls can be deciphered with a DC 30 Decipher Script check made by someone who understands Thassilonian or by *comprehend languages*. Although the script purports to be a dire warning of life-threatening perils in the acropolis beyond, the text is actually a trap to thwart unwanted visitors.

Trap: The glyphs compel their readers to refrain from any other activity until the entire text has been finished. 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, requiring perhaps an hour. After an hour, explain the first statue is now complete but there are five more that need to be read to piece together all the information. This takes just 6, maybe 7 hours. Only when a player has caught on and insists on tearing away his PC should you ask for a Will save. Those who fail become obsessed with the carvings, and find that they 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 he recovers immediately, but characters under the influence resist such an act, requiring successful grapple checks to save them in this manner.

ETERNAL GLYPHS

CR 9

Type magical; Search DC 33; Disable Device DC 33

EFFECTS

Trigger when read; Reset automatic

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

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 to follow, erosion finished the job. The corridors to the north once led to the Thrallkeepers' opulent living quarters as well as several chambers which housed a number of smaller, less ambitious summoning projects. 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-south. A blue stone disc sits on the floor to the south, 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.

This level is beyond the reach of the Havero's arms—likewise, noise created here has little effect on the slumbering creature above.

A huge stone plug blocks a hidden hallway to the east from this passage—it can be discovered with a DC 22 Search check. In its current position, the plug bars entry to area A10. When the Thrallkeepers required entry, the plug was removed by a huge team of servants, or with the use of Strength-enhancing magic. The plug itself 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 of 55 to perform this stunt)—but enough of a gap exists that gaseous form can be used to enter area A10. The stone itself has hardness 8 and 1,800 hp per 5-foot-square.

Red Mantis: If the assassins reach this far, they set up an ambush for the PCs, hiding on the ceiling as long as their *spider climb* spells last. Once the spells expire, they return to join their kin in area A2 to wait in ambush until they're sure that the PCs have gone for good.

A10. The Fallback Vault

A jumble of five 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 saved for the event a conjured creature should ever manage 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 used their magic to contact another outpost for aid and wait for their colleagues to unseal the vault once whatever crisis that had arisen was safely contained.

When the havelo escaped its bonds, five Thrallkeepers fled here, just as they had been taught. The havelo, 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 and scavenged most objects of value, the gear on these dead bodies remains for the taking. The bones themselves crumble to dust if touched, as does much of what remains of their non-magical clothing, but there are plenty of valuable items here.

Treasure: The shelves contain several ancient magic items designed to sustain a Thrallkeeper until whatever crisis which 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* (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.

This treasure scattered among the skeletons consists of a crystal locket depicting a two-headed dove worth 325 gp, a pair of sapphire cufflinks worth 435 gp, and a bejeweled holy symbol of Lissala worth 2,000 gp. Also scattered among the bones are three magic items: a bright orange *cloak of resistance +3*, a *scabbard of keen edges*, and a *+1 magical beast bane dagger*.

A11. The Golarion Globe (EL 8)

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

This stone globe represents the world of Golarion more than 10,000 years in the past. A DC 20 Knowledge (geography) check is enough to reveal that the sphere is indeed a map of the 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 entire islands or continents appear 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 incomplete, it is in fact merely 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 world, the globe was created before the *Starstone* fell and reshaped much of the world.

The globe itself is hollow—a 1-foot-thick shell of stone surrounding a spherical chamber that contains a magical space that the Thrallkeepers could use to cast their minds out into the depths of space to explore and meditate. The globe itself 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 to float in the spaces between the stars.

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 make a DC 15 Will save to avoid taking 1d4 points of Intelligence damage. A character can exit the globe 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.

When the globe was discovered by the Lyrune-Quah priestess Tanjah, she interpreted the visions granted by the globe as sendings from Desna. It was she who added the stars and butterflies to the room's walls, transforming the chamber into a shrine of sorts dedicated to Desna. A DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check reveals the religious connotations of the room. Ever since, handfuls of Lyrune-Quah followers of Desna make the yearly pilgrimage to this chamber to spend a few minutes inside the globe and to retouch the murals as necessary. After decades of this attention, Desna herself noticed the shrine. Pleased with what her followers had done with the globe, she invested a small amount of her divinity into the device—now, any creature who spends any amount of time inside of the globe gains the Spherewalker's Mark. This is a light blue tattoo-like marking of Desna's holy symbol on the back of the left hand. The Spherewalker's Mark lasts for a week, and can only be granted to a specific creature once per year. As long as the mark persists, that creature gains a +4 bonus on Listen and Spot checks.

Treasure: The globe is held in place from the bottom 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 makes a DC 15 Reflex save to avoid the damage.

A Parting of Ways

Once the PCs complete their business in the acropolis, the other three groups gathered in the area depart, each in their own way. The Red Mantis depart only through death and defeat—if the PCs haven't had a decisive conflict with the assassins by the time they make 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 emberstorm ends (which should coincidentally be about the point at which the PCs gain the Spherewalker's

Mark); the PCs don't encounter Krojun and the Sklar-Quah again until Part Six.

Finally, if the PCs encountered and allied with the Brotherhood of Bones, Sial proposes a longer-term alliance. At this point, he admits that his organization feels that the PCs are inexorably tied to matters of great interest to the church of Zon-Kuthon, and if the PCs don't mind, Sial would like to accompany them as an observer. In return for this, he offers chambers in his *bone house* to the PCs as a place for them to rest as they need, and also offers his services as a spellcaster. If the PCs ask nicely (and if you feel that they could use the extra aid), he even deigns to provide support in combat, allowing his chain devil minion to fight alongside the PCs and supporting them from the back ranks with magic. Of course, he remains unapologetically evil and disturbing, and PCs are right to feel ill at ease in his presence. If the characters don't want Sial accompanying them, the cleric nods in understanding and retreats to some other point in the Cinderlands, intending to continue his observation of the PCs from afar via *scrying* whether they like it or not. Sial and the Brotherhood of Bones have a more important role to play in the next adventure, but for now, all you need to really do is make sure the PCs know about him to foreshadow the role he is destined to play in "Skeletons of Scarwall."

PART FOUR: CLAN OF THE MOON

Once the PCs have gained at least one Spherewalker's Mark, the next stage of their journey should be to seek out the Lyrune-Quah and to try to secure the aid of a Truthspeaker. As Thousand Bones has told the PCs, the nomadic Lyrune-Quah spend this part of the year camped near an ancient Desnan temple called the House of the Moon—a place known to some simply as the Moon Ruin.

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 Thassilon—before the minions of First King Xin arrived in the region, the Varisians already dwelt here. At that ancient time, they were all nomadic, and they also worshiped Desna. As Thassilon rose, though, the runelords saw open worship of the gods as a distraction, and they 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 rose, this mysterious building reappeared 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.

Currently, very few Lyrune-Quah have gathered at the House of the Moon. It is still early in their season, and the bulk of the tribe has yet to arrive in the area. Unfortunately, as is sometimes the case, they arrived to find that a local predator took up the ruins as its territory—in this case, a dangerous creature known as a red reaver. In these situations, the first tribe to arrive in the region is responsible for driving out the monsters and making the House of the Moon safe for the tribes yet to arrive. Unfortunately, the red reaver is proving to be a bit 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.

The Lyrune-Quah have sent many of their warriors into the House of the Moon to try to slay or at least drive out the red reaver. Unfortunately for them, the reason for the reaver's interest in the House of the Moon is that the monster has bonded with the site and now views the structure as its territory.

When the PCs approach, they are swiftly intercepted by a patrol of six moon maidens, the traditional honor guard and protector caste of the Lyrune-Quah. Each moon maiden bonds with a wolf upon being accepted into the guard, at which point the two are rarely seen apart from each other. The patrol's leader is a woman named **Tekra'Kai** (CG female human barbarian 1/ranger 5), 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 warriors 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 at the rise of the next moon, that she was unable to secure the House of the Moon.

Tekra'Kai's initial reaction to the PCs is one of distrust—her upbringing has taught her to view all *tshamek* as the enemy, yet she also knows that many *tshamek* worship Desna. If the PCs have the Spherewalker's Mark and show it to Tekra'Kai, though, her initial distrust transforms into relief—she immediately comes to see the PCs as saviors sent by Desna to help take care of the problem in the House of the Moon, and quickly explains to them what the problem is, presuming the PCs are just as eager as she is to deal with the red reaver. If the PCs don't have the mark, they need to make Tekra'Kai helpful before she listens to their requests. Diplomacy and magic can achieve this result (her initial attitude toward unmarked PCs is unfriendly), but so can taking the initiative and dealing with the red reaver. Killing it or driving it off ensures the moon maidens' cooperation, even if the PCs don't have a Spherewalker's Mark to vouch for them.

If the PCs secure her cooperation and ask for the use of a Truthspeaker, Tekra'Kai admits that her tribe does indeed have one—his name is Akram, and he is scheduled

to arrive with the rest of her tribe at the rise of the next moon. Yet as long as the red reaver remains in the House of the Moon, she warns the PCs that her fellow tribesmen will have little time to talk about anything else. At the same time, she indicates that if the PCs help in getting rid of the unwelcome monster, the tribe will be much more disposed toward helping them in return.

Assuming the PCs help, Tekra'Kai beams in relief and tells them that she and three of her remaining moon maidens are prepared to assault the House of the Moon immediately—if the PCs are ready, she leads them to the structure's entrance at once.

LYRUNE-QUAH MOON MAIDENS (4) CR 6

Female human barbarian 1/ranger 5

CG Medium humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +12, Spot +1

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15

(+5 armor, +3 deflection, +1 Dex, -2 rage)

hp 64 (6 HD; 1d12+5d8+30)

Fort +11, **Ref** +5, **Will** +5

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.

Melee +1 *starknife* +10/+5 (1d4+5/×3) and

+1 *starknife* +10 (1d4+3/×3)

Ranged *starknife* +8/+3 (1d4+4/×3)

Special Attacks favored enemy (giants +4, magical beasts +2), rage 1/day

Spell Prepared (CL 2nd)

1st—*longstrider*

TACTICS

Before Combat All of the moon maidens have used a dose of their war paint.

During Combat Moon maidens rage on the first round of combat, but focus on hurling starknives at their enemies for the first few rounds of combat. Once they're down to only their magic starknives, they rush in to engage foes in melee.

Morale A moon maiden fights until brought below 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—she fights to the death.

Base Statistics **AC** 19, touch 14, flat-footed 17; **hp** 52; **Fort** +9, **Will** +3; **Melee** +1 *starknife* +8/+3 (1d4+3/×3) and +1 *starknife* +8 (1d4+2/×3); **Str** 14, **Con** 16; **Grp** +8; **Skills** Climb +11, Jump +13

STATISTICS

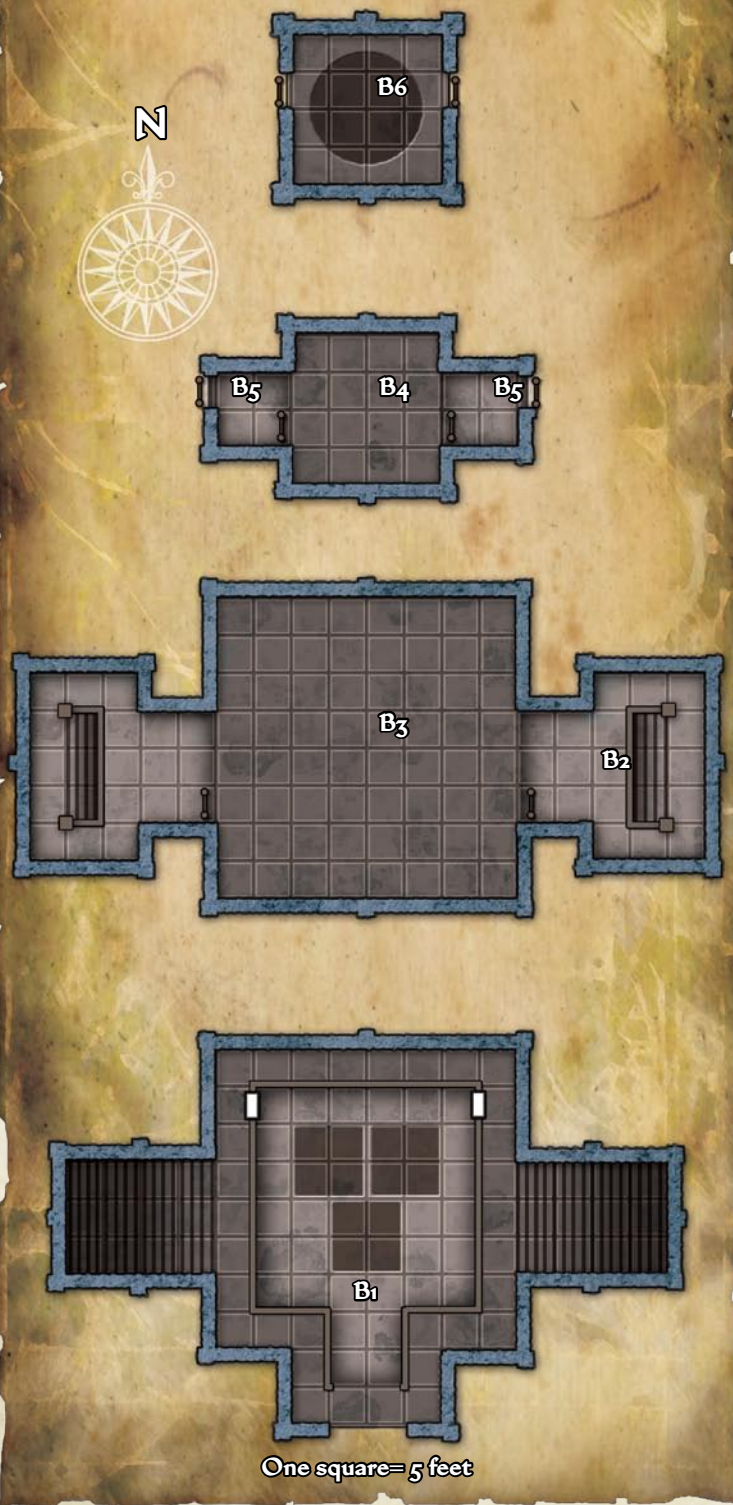
Str 18, **Dex** 12, **Con** 20, **Int** 8, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +10

Feats Endurance, Quick Draw, Stealthy, Track, Totem Spirit (Lyrune-Quah), Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (*starknife*)

Skills Climb +13, Hide +6, Jump +15, Listen +12, Move Silently

The Moon Ruin



+6, Survival +10

Languages Shoanti

SQ animal companion (wolf), fast movement

Gear +1 hide shirt, +1 starknives (2), starknives (6), silver Shoanti war paint (2)

The Red Reaver

The red reaver is not an intrinsically evil creature, but neither is it a particularly peaceful creature. Like its gray render cousins, the reaver bonds to a particular site and then protects that place from intruders with a singular devotion. Until recently, its territory was higher up in the Wyvern Mountains, but after a large flock of particularly tough night wyverns descended on the region (the flock itself having been displaced by giant activity deeper in the mountains), the red reaver was forced to abandon its lair. After roving through the mountains and down into the Cinderlands, it came upon the House of the Moon—as with all reaver locations, something in the terrain and structure itself clicked, and the red reaver adopted the site as its own.

RED REAVER

CR 13

hp 184 (currently 151; see page 88)

TACTICS

During Combat The red reaver spends the majority of its time in area B3, which it finds to be the most comfortable site in the House of the Moon. As soon as it notices intruders, it swiftly moves to confront them.

Morale The red reaver fights until brought below 20 hit points, at which point it loses its bond to the House of the Moon and flees to find another site.

The House of the Moon

A silvery tower stands atop a low promontory in the foothills here. The surrounding stone has been smoothed by ages of wind, but the tower itself remains as stark and crisp as the day its final block was set in place. The structure shimmers with a slightly reflective sheen, as if an almost invisible layer of silver covered it. A thirty-foot-tall opening allows access to the tower interior at ground level, the curving sides framed by the long peacock tailfeathers of an immense butterfly or moth that has been 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 a hundred feet. Above, a silvery sphere caps the tower's peak, as if the moon itself had fallen out of the sky to become impaled upon the structure's steeple.

The House of the Moon is an ancient structure, built (according to legend) by an army of flyrakiens (see *Pathfinder* #2 page 83) to serve Desna's faithful as a place of shelter

during the Age of Darkness. The stone that comprises the sacred site's walls is certainly unusual, featuring many of the qualities of magically treated superior masonry (hardness 16, 180 hp per inch). In addition, the stone walls repair damage to themselves at the rate of 5 hp per round as long as the moon is visible. The stone itself resists magical manipulation and effects with spell resistance 26. At night, the walls of the House of the Moon glow with soft moonlight.

The entire building is suffused with Desna's grace. Any worshiper of Desna who enters the House of the Moon feels welcome. 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 named Nightspear (see *Pathfinder* #2, page 75). The conversation itself functions as a *commune* spell (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, and is one of the primary reasons the worshipers of the Lyrune-Quah come back to the House of the Moon each year.

Ceiling heights inside of the structure average 25 feet. The House of the Moon consists of six locations, as detailed below.

B1. Entrance: The central area of this room contains three 10-foot-square areas on the ground. A character who stands upon one of these darker-colored areas and concentrates on an image of the moon being obscured by clouds activates the square, creating an extradimensional dwelling similar in nature to that created by a *secure shelter* spell (CL 12th), save that each can only contain one person at a time.

B2. Lower Rooftops: These open-air rooftops provide majestic views of the stars. Stairs lead down to the ground floor below, and the entrances into area **B3** are open arches. A ladder ascends along the sides of each of these arches to smaller balconies (area **B5**) above.

B3. Gathering Hall: The walls here have been painted with symbols and imagery sacred to the worship of Desna. A massive starknife is affixed to the ceiling above. Visiting priests rotate the starknife on its central axis to reflect the changes in the four seasons. With its constant need for updating, this primitive proto-calendar enables a visitor to determine how long it had been since the House of the Moon was last visited by a worshipper. This room is also the chosen lair of the red reaver, and a formidable stack of animal carcasses (remnants from the beast's meals) and seven dead moon maidens are heaped in the southwest corner as a result. Much of the moon maidens' gear is intact, but the Lyrune-Quah would like to keep the gear in the clan and frown upon PC requests to loot it.



B4. Upper Walk: Once the Lyrune-Quah settle in the area, this chamber is set aside for their resident Truthspeaker to use as a home. Currently, the chamber is empty.

B5. Upper Rooftops: Smaller versions of the open lower rooftops below.

B6. The Sky Well: A circular dome in the ceiling of this room casts down a shimmering curtain of shadow below. The area encompassed by this shadow acts as a scrying device that can be used to scan the stars of the night sky. At night, the pool reflects the constellations above, but by moving hands in different patterns while an observer is within the shadow, the image can be shifted to bring specific constellations or heavenly bodies into sharper focus. This chamber functions in many ways as an observatory, allowing the faithful of Desna to stargaze even on stormy nights.

After the Battle

Although the Moon Clan is a terse and gritty clan of warriors, their xenophobia pales in comparison to that of their brothers in the Sun Clan, particularly if the PCs have Spherewalker's Marks to indicate they've already gone on a pilgrimage. Once the red reaver is slain or driven off, the Lyrune-Quah become even friendlier, and invite the PCs to stay with the tribe for a few nights, if they wish. If the PCs still have Skoan-Quah guides, these Shoanti prefer to avoid too much interaction with the Lyrune-Quah—certainly, if Shadowcount Sial is still with the PCs he politely refuses the invitation, opting instead to erect the *bone house* out of sight in a nearby vale until the PCs decide to move on.

The rest of the Lyrune-Quah tribe arrives, as scheduled, one night after the PCs arrive. Tekra'Kai introduces the PCs, and once the PCs explain that they seek a Truthspeaker to witness their journey to the Feeding Grounds of the Quah-Kael, the Shoanti become rather impressed. The tribe's only current living Truthspeaker is an aged man named Akram, and assuming the PCs have established a friendly relationship, he readily agrees to travel with the PCs—if only so he can witness the fury of Cinderfist himself. The Lyrune-Quah are not at war with the Sklar-Quah, but neither do the two tribes particularly enjoy each other's company—Akram sees this as an opportunity to speak with a Sun Shaman to attempt to strengthen allegiances between the two tribes.

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 level of complexity to the PCs—Akram remains relatively spry for man of 68 years and his mind and vision remain sharp, but he's also quite frail and feeble. Keeping him alive when faced with wandering monsters or other concerns is an unspeakable

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 himself is a quiet man, content for the most part to watch and observe. He 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 particularly interested in. Akram is never too far from this character, and often asks him to explain the choices he made in a combat or conflict. You can use Akram as a voice to make the PCs examine their tactics and methods 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.

TRUTHSPEAKER AKRAM

CR 7

Male old human cleric 7 (Desna)

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init -1; **Senses** discern lies; Listen +5, Spot +5

DEFENSE

AC 10, touch 9, flat-footed 10

(+1 armor, -1 Dex)

hp 28 (7 HD; 7d8-7)

Fort +6, **Ref** +2, **Will** +13

Defensive Abilities freedom of movement 7 rounds/day, luck reroll 1/day

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk starknife +3 (1d4-3/x3)

Special Attacks turn undead 5/day (+4, 2d6+9)

Spells Prepared (CL 7th)

4th—*dimension door*^P, *sending*, *tongues*

3rd—*dispel magic*, *fly*^P, *magic vestment*, *prayer*

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

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

0—*create water* (2), *light* (2), *mending*, *purify food and drink*

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 *dimension doors*

to safety and then casts *fly* to escape peril if confronted while alone, or if reduced to less than 10 hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 5, **Dex** 9, **Con** 11, **Int** 12, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +2

Feats Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wand, Iron Will, Track

Skills Diplomacy +10, Knowledge (religion) +7, Survival +13

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Shoanti

SQ spontaneous spellcasting (*cure* spells), Truthspeaker

Combat Gear *wand of cure moderate wounds* (32 charges), *wand of lesser restoration* (29 charges); **Other Gear** masterwork starknife, *cloak of resistance* +1, *periapt of wisdom* +2

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).

PART FIVE: BELLY OF THE BEAST

Cindermaw is one of the deadliest predators of the Cinderlands, an ancient purple worm changed and transformed into a unique creature infused with elemental fire after it devoured a malfunctioning portal to the Elemental Plane of Fire that stood inside a partially collapsed Thassilonian ruin the creature blundered into. The infusion of fire not only granted Cindermaw a host of unique fire-based abilities, but awakened its intellect as well, granting it the ability 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 demon-like creature capable of consuming entire tribes. The creature's exceptionally long lifespan (another side effect of consuming the portal to the Elemental Plane of Fire) has only further cemented its position in Shoanti myth. Although it is a challenge tracking a creature that can burrow, Cindermaw generally sticks to one large hunting ground in particular. 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 increasingly become aware of the beast's presence. Encounters with other creatures grow less and 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 Ash-Blown Lands, such as earth tremors or even cindercones.

Cindermaw Rising (EL 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, arc, and then dive below, as if it were an immense whale swimming through the ground, showing the PCs its massive segmented body. 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 he emerges from within the worm is irrelevant, as long as Akram sees (and believes) a character swallowed, and then later sees that character alive and outside of the worm (and is given a believable story as to how that character escaped). The character's tale will hold water when the PCs approach the Sklar-Quah later. Slaying Cindermaw isn't recommended, and can ironically undermine the PCs' story. After all, if the worm they fought could be killed, it obviously wasn't that tough of a foe.

The simplest method of fulfilling the goal is to allow the worm to swallow a character whole, and then that character simply cuts his way out of the beast's belly. Of course, this is a dangerous stunt, and fire and acid 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, as is charming or otherwise magically controlling the worm. If a PC can handle the Concentration check required to spellcast while inside of a monster, he can even *dimension door* or otherwise *teleport* out of the beast's belly once he's been swallowed.

Illusions are another option—since the PCs only really require Akram to truthspeak to the Sun Shaman for them, they could use illusions to trick Akram into believing they have completed the deed. Fooling Akram in this way requires an illusion capable of replicating a Gargantuan creature visually and audibly—since Cindermaw radiates heat, the illusion must also be capable of radiating warmth as well. *Major image* (or a more powerful illusion) can create a believable scene, but Akram still gets a Will save against the spell's DC to determine if he believes it enough to truthspeak the tale later. Of course, in order for such a deception to function, he also needs to believe he is in Cindermaw's hunting grounds in the first place.

If the PCs succeed in recreating the legend but do not slay Cindermaw in the process, they gain one respect point when Akram tells the tale to the Sklar-Quah.

Shoanti Camp

One square = 10 feet



CINDERMAW THE CLAN EATER

CR 14

Elite fire-infused purple worm (MM 211, *Advanced Bestiary* 111)

N Gargantuan magical beast (fire)

Init +1; **Senses** tremorsense 60 ft.; Listen +17, Spot –2

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 7, flat-footed 21

(+1 Dex, +15 natural, –4 size)

hp 216 (16 HD; 16d10+128)

Fort +18, **Ref** +13, **Will** +5

Defensive Abilities elemental body, fire healing; **Immune** fire

Weaknesses vulnerable to cold

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft., burrow 20 ft.

Melee bite +24 (2d8+12 plus 1d6 fire) and
sting +19 (2d6+6 plus 1d6 fire plus poison)

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

Special Attacks breath weapon, heat, improved grab,
swallow whole

TACTICS

During Combat When the beast eventually tires of toying with the PCs, it attempts to burrow up directly in their midst by making a Move Silently check. Unfortunately for the PCs' particular objective, Cinderdaw has recently fed. On the first round of combat, the worm breathes fire on the most densely packed group of PCs, only

attacking with its bite and sting on the second round of combat. It does not attempt to swallow foes whole immediately—instead, it simply 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 challenge the worm into swallowing him by attempting a Bluff check to appear appetizing—Cinderdaw resists this check with a Sense Motive check, but the character making the Bluff check suffers a –10 penalty to the role for the difficulty of the check in the first place.

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

STATISTICS

Str 35, **Dex** 12, **Con** 27, **Int** 6, **Wis** 6, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +16; **Grp** +40

Feats Awesome Blow, Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Iron Will,
Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack

Skills Listen +17

SQ firewalk, heat

Languages understands Shoanti (cannot speak)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Breath Weapon (Su) Once every 1d4 rounds, Cinderdaw can

breathe out a 30-foot cone of fire that deals 8d6 points of damage (DC 26 Reflex half).

Elemental Body (Ex) Cinderdaw has a 25% chance to ignore extra damage from critical hits and sneak attacks, poison, paralysis, sleep, and stunning effects.

Fire Healing (Ex) Cinderdaw gains fast healing 1 when in contact with fire. When struck by a magical fire attack, it is healed 1 point of damage per 10 points of damage the attack would otherwise deal.

Firewalk (Su) Cinderdaw can climb burning objects as if it had a climb speed of 10 feet. It can fly at a speed of 20 feet (perfect maneuverability) as long as it's in contact with fire, and can walk on flames or lava at its base land speed.

Heat (Su) Cinderdaw deals an additional 1d6 points of fire damage when it hits with any attack. A swallowed creature takes an additional 1d6 points of fire damage each round he remains swallowed.

PART SIX: CLAN OF THE SUN

Having done their best to shed their *tshamek* status by recreating the ancient Quah-Kael Shoanti legend, all that in theory remains for the

PCs is to track down a tribe of Sklar-Quah and allow Akram to truthspeak the story of the PCs' bravery against Cinderdaw. Akram knows of several Sklar-Quah camps scattered throughout the central Cinderlands, but he recommends that the PCs approach one of the oldest campsites, a place called Flameford. Moreso than most of the more recent camps, Flameford is steeped in Sklar-Quah tradition, and therefore these Shoanti are much more likely to honor and respect what the PCs have done to impress them.

As the PCs delve deeply into Sklar-Quah territory, it's just a matter of time before they are intercepted by a patrolling war party of six burn riders, Sklar-Quah horsemen who have trained their mounts to no longer fear fire. The burn riders are headstrong and quick to anger, but as long as the PCs are in Akram's company, they stay their hands and do not attack on sight. Akram greets the burn riders and explains quickly how the PCs seek to divest themselves of their *tshamek* status, a comment that elicits a round of laughter from the burn riders. Yet as soon as Akram mentions the PCs have recreated the Legend of Skurak and Cinderdaw, they grow serious. The patrol swiftly agrees to escort Akram and the PCs to Flameford at the very heart

of Sklar-Quah lands. The Sklar-Quah do not attempt to disarm the PCs, though the PCs are effectively surrounded by hundreds of Shoanti who are ready at an instant to defend their home from the outlanders.

Flameford

The camp of Flameford is in a very defensible spot, nestled in the middle of a field of razor-sharp slash rock at the edge of an 80-foot-high cliff. The campsite consists of 17 yurts, two larger tents, and a stable for the tribe's horses.

In all, 52 Shoanti dwell here under the watchful guidance of **Chief Ready-Klar** (CN male human barbarian 10), the aging and well-respected uncle of the tribe's greatest living hero, KrojunEats-What-He-Kills.

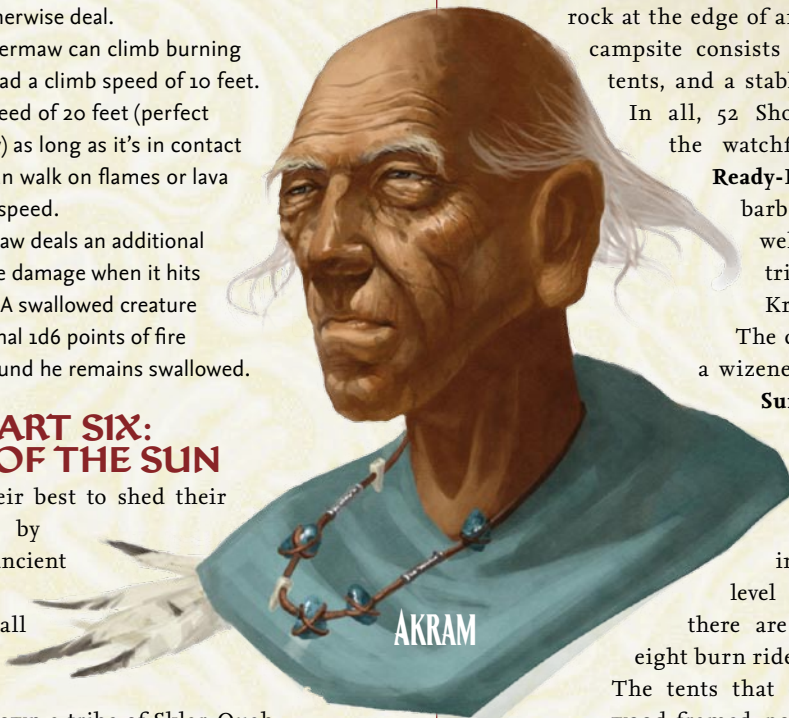
The camp is also the home of a wizened old druid, one of the **Sun Shamans of the Sklar**

Quah (N male human druid 16). The majority of the remaining Shoanti who dwell in the camp are 1st to 3rd level barbarians, although there are six thundercallers and eight burn riders dwelling here as well.

The tents that comprise the camp are wood-framed portable structures called yurts—weatherproof constructions with aurochs-hide walls and roofs. The six points of interest to the PCs in Flameford are described below.

C1. The Approach: Like all Sklar-Quah encampments fortunate enough to be accompanied by a full-fledged Sun Shaman, the outer rim of the encampment is blanketed by layers of permanent *spike stone* spells (CL 16th) known as slash rock. The spells are set to leave unmarked zigzag paths between the slash rock to permit safe passage to those who know the way. In this way, the Sklar-Quah control the entrance and egress from the camp and the Sun Clan need to post few guards. The map of the camp shows the safe paths through the fields of slash rock, but these paths are all but undetectable to visitors, who must navigate the approach very carefully if they wish to avoid the dangerous hazard.

C2. War Council Fire: Flameford's heart is a massive fire at which the tribe gathers each night to discuss their coalescing plans of war upon Korvosa. Often, the Sun Shaman takes a position in the fire in fire elemental form, from which he can observe the surrounding proceedings with ease.



C3. Stables: The tribe's eight horses (all light warhorses) are kept here—each belongs to one of the camp's eight burn riders.

C4. Sun Shaman's Yurt: The Quah-Chief takes counsel from the Sun Shaman, the clan's spiritual leadership. When a male Sklar-Quah druid 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 as well as a title. While the Sun Shamans are able to distinguish amongst themselves, they discourage the rest of the tribe from doing so. This yurt is the home of Flameford's Sun Shaman.

C5. Chieftain's Yurt: Chief Ready-Klar's home is the largest yurt in the camp (only slightly larger than the Sun Shaman's). A large portion of this yurt contains a communal feasting hall, with the chieftain's personal quarters taking up the northeasternmost quarter of the yurt.

C6. 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 slash rock into the heart of Flameford, the entire camp, Chieftan and Sun Shaman included, come to see. The PCs' burn rider escort leads them to the War Council Fire and bids them be seated. The PCs might be dismayed or heartened to see that Krojun is in attendance as well. Akram then entreats the Sun Shaman on the PCs' behalf. He formally requests that the Sklar-Quah accept the PCs as Shoanti with full entitlement to walk the Cinderlands. To do so, he first recites the Ritual of Cycles—a long, convoluted story of the never-ending relationship between the sun and the moon. Once tradition has been appeased, Akram boldly announces that he is a Truthspeaker and demands that any who challenge his standing speak now. A lengthy period of uncomfortable silence hangs in the air. A PC who succeeds on a DC 15 Sense Motive check can tell that Krojun seems to be thinking long and hard as to whether to speak, but in the end he does not. The silence is eventually followed by a patient nod of approval from the Sun Shaman. Akram then breaks into a tale of the

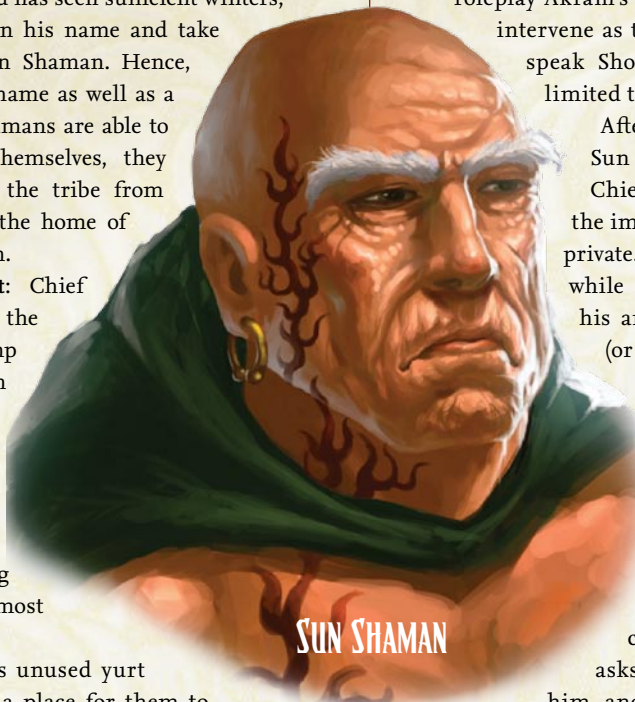
PCs' recent deeds, tying them to the legend of Skurak. Should Akram's report include a description of a PC cutting his way out of the Quah-Kael, Krojun and a few others make guffawing noises in disbelief, but they are silenced by a glare from the Sun Shaman. Feel free to roleplay Akram's recitation and permit the PCs to intervene as they see fit, but if the PCs do not speak Shoanti or employ magic, they are limited to gesturing.

After Akram's tale is complete, the Sun Shaman retreats to his tent with Chief Ready-Klar to further discuss the implications of what the PCs seek in private. An uncomfortable silence looms while the crowd waits. Krojun crosses his arms and stares at the largest PC (or alternatively, one he has faced in melee). Akram quietly explains to the PCs that if the Sun Shaman rejects his petition and decides the PCs are still *tshamek*, they (Akram included) will be disemboweled for trespassing on Sklar-Quah land.

An hour later, the shaman and chieftain return to the fire. He 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 henceforth the PCs are to be considered *tshamek* no more. They are free to come and go among the lands of the Sklar-Quah, as long as they maintain peace and honor and respect Sklar-Quah tradition. Many of the Shoanti, Krojun included, struggle to contain their fury but none openly reject the Sun Shaman's proclamation.

The gathering begins to break-up, and the Sun Shaman grants the PCs a yurt (area C6) to use during their stay in Flameford. No word is mentioned of how long the PCs are allowed to stay—in fact, they can stay as long as they wish. At this point, or possibly later, the PCs might beseech the Sun Shaman for the information they came for. The Sun Shaman patiently listens until it becomes clear the PCs are asking about the *Fangs of Kazavon*. At this point he shakes his head and refuses to hear anything more, explaining that while the PCs are no longer *tshamek*, neither are they Sklar-Quah, and this deep history of his people is not for other tribes to know.

If the PCs do not think of it, Akram suggests at this point that the PCs should further petition the Sun Shaman to join the Sklar-Quah. After all, now that they are no longer *tshamek*, there is no real reason why they couldn't. Of course, word of such a request spreads



quickly through the camp, and the initial shock that the PCs have become Shoanti is replaced by this new scandal. Only the great respect the Sklar-Quah have for the Sun Shaman prevents an uprising.

If the PCs make such a request, a DC 20 Sense Motive check allows them to note a look of amusement on the Sun Shaman's face. In his ever-patient voice, he explains that if the PCs can pass the Trial of the Totem, they can be acknowledged as honorary members of the Sklar-Quah, but that is the best he can offer them. He does confirm that if they pass the trial, he can speak to them of the tribe's past.

At the mention of the trial, Krojun can take no more. He shouts in protest and then storms off with several burn riders to take a long ride through the Cinderlands to cool off. If the PCs agree to accept the Sun Shaman's nebulous offer, the Sun Shaman advises that it begins after dawn and motions for everyone to disperse from the council fire. For his part, Akram explains that his 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 offers one final bit of advice—Krojun is an important member of the tribe, and anything the PCs can do to win his respect can only help them.

Gaining the right to undertake the Trial of the Totem earns the PCs one respect point.

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 slash rock 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 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.

Atop Bolt Rock stand several fired-clay pylons known as sun totems. 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

IF AKRAM FAILS

As written, Akram is automatically successful in convincing the Sun Shaman that the PCs deserve to be freed of their *tshamek* stigma. If the PCs weren't able to replicate the legend of Skurak and Cinderdaw to Akram's requirements, though, he is unable to lie on the PCs' behalf. In this case, the adventure takes a horrific turn as the PCs suddenly find themselves surrounded by the full might of the Flameford Gathering. Throw waves of burn riders, thundercallers and even the powerful Sun Shaman at the PCs as the Shoanti attempt to capture the outlanders for execution—the only real option for the PCs at this point is swift escape (likely via flight or teleportation). If they escape, the PCs' reputations with the Sklar-Quah is permanently damaged and the adventure is effectively over. Concluding the Adventure contains several tips on how to continue the campaign in this event.

use, they are stored in an upright position in square stone pods at the base of Bolt Rock.

The Sun Shaman explains that during the Trial of the Totems, each prospective clan member is represented by a specific sun totem. He directs the PCs to each select one totem as their own, then explains that, as a group, they must carry these totems up to the lower tier of Bolt Rock, where they must be balanced in circular depressions and kept upright for a day. He explains further that the PCs have until the shadow of the upper tier is no longer cast upon the lower tier to erect the totems. At the next sunrise, the PCs must then move all of their totems up to the highest mesa (again, before the lower tier is in full sunlight) and keep them upright in another set of depressions found there for an additional day. When the sun rises on that second day, any totem still standing grants its PC equivalent Sklar-Quah citizenship.

The Sun Shaman goes on to explain that while no food or water are 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 themselves 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, an effect of minor magical enhancements placed on the totems that allows those in Flameford to see even on darkest nights if the totems still stand.

The trial explained, the Sun Shaman transforms into a crow and returns to Flameford to rest—the PCs are on their own.

SUN TOTEM

hp 40; hardness 6

Raising the Totems

As soon as the sun rises, the PCs have only an hour to select their totems and carry them up onto the westernmost tier of Bolt Rock above. Even 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. Chances are good that most PCs will need to work together to place their totems atop Bolt Rock. A character can seat 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 to stabilize it, but without someone on hand at all times to keep the totems balanced, they eventually topple. Holding a totem in place requires a 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 5d6 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 the Bolt Rock is dangerously exposed to the elements. It's assumed that "A History of Ashes" occurs during late spring, but if in your campaign the adventure takes place in the summer, daytime temperatures can rise into hot conditions, forcing characters to make Fortitudes saves to avoid taking nonlethal damage (see page 303 of the DMG). 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* and more powerful magic of this sort can remove fatigue.

Thirst: As detailed on page 304 of the DMG, a character can go without water for 1 day plus a number of hours equal to his Constitution score. After this time, a PC must make 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 a character can go without food for 3 days, he need not fear starvation during the Trial of the Totems. 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: 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 took no action to hide their trickery—if the PCs try to disguise this evidence, they must make 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.

Sun Vision of the Aurochs

The true purpose of the trial is not just to test the limits of the PCs' stamina, but also to weaken the body so that the mind is open to a vision from the Sun. Any character who becomes fatigued during the trial has a 10% cumulative chance per hour 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, he first notices shimmering waves of heat rising from the stone around him. The shimmers begin to cloud his vision, and a moment later the character sees a crystal-clear pool of water has seeped into an empty totem depression. If the character is quick, certainly he can steal a drink from the pool before returning to his totem. If he attempts this, he sees the face of a massive horned aurochs staring back at him from the water. With a DC



10 Wisdom check, the character understands that he is the aurochs, primal and proud.

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

This Sun Totem's vision is meant to signify that it is time for the PCs to stop waiting for the Red Mantis to attack them and to turn and face them with full fury. The next time a PC who has received the Sun Vision of the Aurochs faces the Red Mantis, he receives a +1 insight bonus on attack rolls and weapon damage rolls.

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 calmed down considerably when he learned 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) whom he suspects would have a harder time enduring the trial. Krojun stares at the PCs silently for a few minutes and then begrudgingly compliments them by suggesting they are lucky to have one another as *nalharest* (brothers and sisters).

As long as at least half of the PCs still have intact totems, this visit earns them one respect point.

Hungry Visitors (EL 11)

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

Creatures: A pack of bulettes have noticed the PCs, and as the afternoon of the second day of the trial draws toward night, these six 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 ground is unmistakable, giving the PCs 2d4 rounds to prepare for the assault.

When it comes, the six bulettes leap out of the ground and scramble up onto the lower mesa. Note that the

creatures can leap up onto the upper mesa from the lower one pretty much automatically, hopping up onto the higher level by spending 10 feet of movement.

A character can continue to hold up his totem while fighting as long as his totem remains in his reach and he devotes one hand to steady it. Characters who choose to fight in this manner take a -4 penalty on all attack rolls as a result.

BULETTES (6)

CR 7

hp 94 (MM 30)

TACTICS

During Combat 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's not enough room atop Bolt Rock for all six at once, so any bulettes 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 make a DC 15 Strength check to keep the totem upright. If a bulette attempts to attack a character engaged in holding up a totem but misses the character by no more than 3 points, the creature's attack has a 50% chance of striking the totem instead and dealing the appropriate amount of damage. Desperate PCs can attempt to drop a totem on a bulette—the bulette can avoid the totem with a DC 15 Reflex save, taking 5d6 points of damage on a failure. In any event, a dropped totem takes 3d6 points of damage.

Morale A bulette flees if reduced to less than 15 hit points.

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 totems still intact and 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. Before the jubilation gets too out of hand, the Sun Shaman holds high his hands for silence, then personally welcomes each PC whose totem remained standing and intact into the Sklar-Quah. Yet he goes even further—he acknowledges those PCs whose totems toppled and broke as *nalharest* 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 suggests that they return to their yurt in Flameford to rest and recover from their ordeal atop Bolt Rock. As the Shoanti and the PCs make their way back to



Flameford, 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 so long ago. Before he does, however, he must seek out the wisdom of his ancestors by traveling to the Kallow Mounds to commune with them. As tradition demands, the Sun Shaman is accompanied on this trip by Chief Ready-Klar and four of the tribe's thundercallers—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.

In any event, for each surviving totem, the PCs receive one respect point. If no totems remain standing, the Shoanti come to Bolt Rock not to welcome new brothers and sisters, but to drive out the outsiders by force. In this event, consult the start of the next adventure for advice on how to continue the campaign.

The Flameford Assault

Once the PCs have passed the Trial of the Totems, they have accomplished their goals—they have befriended the Sklar-Quah, and now need only wait for the Sun Shaman

to finish his communion with his ancestors to learn about the truth of what afflicts Queen Ileosa. Yet one more hurdle lies between the PCs and this triumph—the Red Mantis.

Frustrated that the PCs have found sanctuary among the Sun Clan and sensing that her window of opportunity to eliminate the PCs is quickly vanishing, Cinnabar organizes her allies in preparation for an all-out assault. With her remaining assassins, her well-paid Ashwing gargoyle allies, and the Cinderlander, Cinnabar's spies and *screaming* reveal that the Sun Shaman, Chief Ready-Klar, and several burn riders are going to be gone for a day, making this her best opportunity. That evening, as dusk approaches, she and her allies stalk toward Flameford with ill intent.

Creatures: While the Ashwing gargoyles have the same statistics as regular gargoyles, their appearance is slightly different than the more common, craggy gargoyles. Like the wind-blasted surrounding rock of the Cinderlands, the Ashwing gargoyles' bodies are smooth and polished. Their stone frames have been worn in rippling patterns. In this way, the gargoyles' racial Hide bonus is preserved, enabling them to camouflage themselves against the rock formations of the Cinderlands even though the natural stone differs

greatly in texture from the hewn stone walls which their cousins might hide against.

In order to avoid the slash rock, the gargoyles each carry one human with them as they approach Flameford from the west. When they reach the campsite, they swoop up the cliff-side and drop off their deadly passengers amid the westernmost yurts. Unless Cinnabar knows 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.

The best way to run this battle is to hit the PCs in several waves. The following series of attacks present a good way to confront the PCs with increasing dangers, finally culminating in a battle against Cinnabar herself. As the PCs move from one battle to the next, feel free to augment them with one or two burn riders or thundercallers. As the PCs face their own battles, describe to them how gargoyles and Red Mantis assassins attack the Shoanti elsewhere. The assault should carry with it a definite feeling of chaos.

Gargoyle Strike (EL 8): The PCs are attacked by four Ashwing gargoyles in their tent.

Assassins (EL 11): As the PCs emerge from their tent, they are spotted by two Red Mantis assassins. The Mantises recognize the PCs at once and swiftly move to engage the characters—as they do, they're joined by four gargoyles eager to impress their new allies.

The Cinderlander (EL 14): Not long after the PCs defeat the assassins, the tell-tale sound of Krojun's indignant roar fills the air. The burly barbarian has challenged the Cinderlander to a battle, and the haunting sound of the Cinderlander's shrieking bolts fills the night with screams. By the time the PCs reach the War Council Fire, both the Cinderlander and Krojun have taken 3d6 points of damage. Unfortunately for Krojun, the Cinderlander has just been joined by four Red Mantises—if the PCs don't come to his rescue, he is swiftly overwhelmed.

The Final Strike (EL 14): The battle against the Cinderlander quickly turns into a focus for the rest of the Shoanti and gargoyles, and as this battle plays out, the surrounding skirmishes come to a close while both sides watch in awe, eager to join in once the battle ends. Yet once it does end, Cinnabar steps into the fray. She 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 turn over the PCs to her, or better, aid her in slaying them, she'll call off her minions and leave the survivors alone. Of course, by this point, the Shoanti likely see the PCs as their own. Krojun certainly does—his response to Cinnabar is a roar and an attack.

In this battle, the PCs face Cinnabar and four Red Mantis assassins. Feel free to augment the PCs with Krojun or other Sklar-Quah burn riders or thundercallers. As soon as Cinnabar is defeated, the Ashwing gargoyles realize their allies aren't as potent as they hoped, and as one they take wing and flee to the west back to their rookery. The four assassins who fight at Cinnabar's side represent the last of the Red Mantises active in the Cinderlands—once this battle is concluded, the PCs are safe from the Red Mantis until they return to Korvosa in the last adventure, "Crown of Fangs."

If the PCs aid in protecting the Sklar-Quah in this battle, they gain 4 respect points.

ASHWING GARGOYLE **CR 4**
hp 37 each (MM 113)

TACTICS

During Combat The gargoyles trust in their damage reduction, capitalizing on the Sklar-Quah's relative lack of magic to overcome it. On their initial pass, they land in the clan's corrals and terrify the horses with thunderstones, causing them to stampede fatally into the slash rock. Once the air is filled with the panic of the horses' death throes, the Ashwings leverage the confusion to continue their assault. When they face significant opposition, the gargoyles take to the air and employ their longbows. Where possible, they use the slash rock against the Sklar-Quah, flying over it to prevent dangerous opponents from getting too close to them.

Morale An individual gargoyle flees if reduced to 5 hit points or less.

RED MANTIS ASSASSINS **CR 8**
hp 50 each (see page 15)

THE CINDERLANDER **CR 12**
hp 105 (see page 21)

CINNABAR **CR 12**
hp 76 (see page 16)

SKLAR-QUAH BURN RIDER (4) **CR 4**
Human barbarian 4

CN Medium humanoid
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 9, flat-footed 13
(+4 armor, +1 Dex, -2 rage, +1 shield)
hp 51 (4 HD; 4d12+20)
Fort +9, **Ref** +2, **Will** +4
Defensive Abilities uncanny dodge, trap sense +1

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.

Melee mwk short spear +9 (1d6+4/×3) or
mwk klar +9 (1d6+4)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +6 (1d8+2/×3)

Special Attacks rage 2/day

TACTICS

During Combat The burn rider patrol does not parlay or give warnings. If their enemies are armed, the burn riders fire a volley of arrows at long range, retreat out of range and wait to fire another volley. If their foes are unarmed, riders gallop in to run them down. In melee, burn riders often seek to catch their opponents off-guard by attempting a fast dismount in conjunction with their Tumbling skill to suddenly leap off their horses and flank an opponent from the opposite side. When fighting dangerous opponents whom they outnumber, half of the burn riders set their spears to deal double damage against a charge while the other half fire their short bows from behind the protective wall set by their Quah-brothers.

Morale If their foes display magic or other signs of powerful opposition, the burn riders send a scout to alert their champion, Krojun Eats-What-He-Kills, and his war party (see Part Three). The burn riders have heard many tales of unusually powerful *tshamek* and know better than to try and take down *tshamek* champions unaided.

Base Statistics AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15; hp 43; Fort +7, Will +2, **Melee** mwk short spear +7 (1d6+2/×3) or mwk klar +7 (1d6+2); Str 14, Con 16; Skills Jump +11

STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 13, Con 20, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8

Base Atk +4; Grp +6

Feats Burn Rider, Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack

Skills Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +6, Jump +13, Ride +10, Survival +8

Languages Common, Shoanti

SQ fast movement, illiteracy

Combat Gear barbarian chew (2), *potion of cure serious wounds* (2); **Other Gear** masterwork hide shirt, masterwork short spear, masterwork klar, masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str) with 20 arrows, *yellow Shoanti war paint*, flask of oil (2), flint and steel, torch

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Burn Rider This feat is from *Pathfinder* #7. As long as the burn rider is mounted and travels at least 40 feet in a round, he gains fire resistance 3, a +4 bonus on Reflex saves to avoid catching fire, and a +4 bonus on Fortitude saves against choking on smoke. He can confer these bonuses to his mount as a free action with a DC 20 Ride check.

SKLAR-QUAH THUNDERCALLERS (6)

hp 61 each (see page 35)

CR 12

KROJUN EATS-WHAT-HE-KILLS

hp 155 (see page 27)

CR 12

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

As the Flameford assault draws to a close, the Sklar-Quah send up a cheer. 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 becomes a victory party. 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 cleric PC might be called upon to tend to the wounded or to help bury the dead. A barbarian PC might be given the opportunity to receive a Sklar-Quah tattoo. A bard PC might be asked to recount the tale of the party's encounter with Cindermau. A rogue might be asked by a beautiful Shoanti woman to share her bed for the night (but only if he agrees to shave his unsightly mop of hair beforehand).

When the Sun Shaman, Chief Ready-Klar, and the other Shoanti braves return to Flameford the next day, they find the camp in a shambles from the previous night's battle and celebration. It takes some time for things to get back to normal in Flameford, 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 at the start of the next adventure, "Skeletons of Scarwall."

At this time, total the number of respect points the PCs have accumulated during the adventure and consult the list below to see the results.

5 or fewer Respect Points: Although the Shoanti are thankful the PCs were on hand to help defend Flameford, they cannot help but recall that the assault would never have happened if the PCs had never come to their camp. The plans to wage war on Korvosa continue unabated, with repercussions as detailed in "Crown of Fangs."

6 to 11 Respect Points: The Shoanti respect the PCs, but not necessarily who and what they represent. Still, as word spreads of their heroics, the Shoanti of the Cinderlands slowly begin to question their ideas about the *tshamek* of the lowlands, enough so that the talk of war on Korvosa never quite moves beyond the planning stages. Given time, forward-thinking diplomats like Thousand Bones might well be able to forge peace between their people and the lowlanders, but for now, even though tensions remain, war does not come.

12 or more Respect Points: Word of the PCs' heroics and bravery spreads quickly through the Cinderlands, and as the Shoanti realize that even *tshamek* can become heroes of their people, the concept of waging war against them starts to seem more and more ridiculous. Talk of war on Korvosa swiftly comes to a halt, and assuming that the

trouble with Queen Ileosa can be resolved, a lasting peace between the two peoples might be closer than ever.

If the PCs Fail

Completing this adventure hinges on the successful completion of a complex, multi-stage quest. Since there are so many stages to this adventure, with each building off of the previous section's events, there are many points where the PCs can simply fail without suffering a total loss of all life. If the PCs aren't able to secure Akram's aid (or worse, if he's killed and they can't bring him back to life); if they fail to pass the Trial of the Totem or the attempt to recreate the Cindermaew legend; or if they incite the anger and wrath of the Sklar-Quah, they'll have lost the opportunity to speak with the Sun Shaman and learn what he knows about Kazavon, and in so doing, they'll lose their lead into the next adventure.

In this case, you'll need to recognize the fact that, for your group, "A History of Ashes" has ended, even if they haven't made it through every encounter. But that doesn't mean that they can't go on. Players are notoriously adept at recovering from dire situations such as these, so if you come to a point where things look grim, let the PCs try to work things out. Perhaps they can smuggle Akram's body back to Korvosa and secure the aid of Bishop Keppira d'Bear of Pharama in restoring the Truthspeaker to life. A PC with a particularly well-spoken appeal to the Sklar-Quah (and a good Diplomacy check) might be able to stall for enough time after failing the Test of the Totems that the Red Mantis attack gives them an unexpected opportunity to prove themselves to the Sklar-Quah again—if they can defend the tribe, certainly that show of solidarity and good faith can overshadow earlier bad luck on Bolt Rock.

And if worst comes to worst, there's always the Brotherhood of Bones. If the PCs seem ready to give up, you can have Shadowcount Sial approach them. He's continued to observe the PCs via scrying and other methods, but has recently received permission from his organization to open up a little more to the PCs. He apologizes for not being so forthright before, but explains that he had to be sure the PCs were trustworthy before he explains to them how Queen Ileosa has fallen under Kazavon's sway. He and the PCs want the same thing—to free the queen from this influence. That he wants the power of the *Crown of Fangs* for his church he leaves unsaid. Unfortunately, the means to divorce the queen from Kazavon lie hidden in the ancient warlord's citadel, and for reasons Sial is now prepared to explain (as detailed in the next adventure)—he can't quite take care of this problem on his own. He needs the PCs aid if Scarwall's secret is to be recovered.





THE CINDERLANDS

THE FIRES OF THE STORVAL PLATEAU

The Cinderlands play host to a desolate backdrop of scrubland and drought, famine and death. As hot as a forge and dry as a desert, the broken flats radiate a hazy, wavering heat so tangible that it robs the body of precious moisture in mere hours. What beasts make their homes there are deceptive and violent, while what few plants claw their way through the cracked ground are as nourishing as rocks. It is the next best thing to Hell on Golarion. Gozreh swelters in this parched place, repeatedly venting his fury against the unsuspecting lands in cleansing baptisms of fire.”

—*The Cinderlands Expeditions, Preface*

By far the least hospitable landscape in Varisia, the Cinderlands have been written off by most of the region's residents as worthless—fit only for the crazed Shoanti barbarians displaced over the centuries by immigration from Cheliar. Yet such views are shortsighted, for within the Cinderlands' borders lurks a surprising display of life and geologic diversity. What follows is an in-depth, ecological examination of this charred and bitter land—a synopsis of its violent origins, an assessment of its outwardly inhospitable environment, an inspection of its unstable natural resources and irregular weather patterns, and a fascinating look at the unusual plants and creatures that are as callous and unforgiving as the fuming landscape they call home.

NATURAL HISTORY OF THE CINDERLANDS

As one stands in the Cinderlands and gazes across a terrain that occasionally belches flames across its breadth, driving panicked creatures before it, it is hard to imagine this place as anything but a wasteland. Yet this inhospitable land was not always so bleak. During the early chapters of Golarion's natural history, the Cinderlands were actually a prehistoric coral reef system which rested beneath a primordial sea.

Far below the sea floor of those ancient times, the world's bowels shifted and caused two tectonic plates to collide. The impact of that convergence was so great that the rocks in the lithosphere compressed together, forcing the oceanic plate to slide beneath the continental plate to relieve the pressure. This subduction gave rise to a reverse fault that uplifted a large section of the sea floor—a landmark that would one day be dubbed the Storval Plateau. As the waters of that doomed sea drained away and the lands saw their first rays of sunlight, magma rose to the surface and formed a volcanic arc—a belt of cinder cone volcanoes that runs parallel to the trench of the Arcadian Ocean. Today, the ejecta those cones spew into the environment blankets the ground, and when environmental conditions are favorable, emberstorms—impenetrable blizzards of ash and cinders—rumble across the southern portion of the plateau.

The fate of the now-extinct prehistoric reef was to form an extraordinary deposit of organic peat that settled deep into the ground. Layer upon layer of sediment formed atop that living graveyard, and the resulting heat and compression squeezed out all of the moisture. This fossil fuel became so deeply entrenched that it reached a breaking point of extreme temperature and pressure, triggering a reaction that converted solid fuel to natural gas. A massive cap rock held these flammable vapors in check for ages, but when Bakrakhan sank into the sea, the rock splintered and the trapped gas that had remained

buried for centuries suddenly had a route to the open air, encouraging a land already besieged by wildfires to burn faster and hotter.

The natural history of the Cinderlands has been one of violent upheaval. As it stands today, the Cinderlands are still in the process of change. By all accounts the Storval Fault is yet rising, driven ever upwards by the innards of Golarion.

By far the most exasperating aspect of the badlands is the wind—ceaseless, unrelenting wind. To say it has played havoc with our research material is an understatement. Just yesterday, we lost an entire month's worth of geological notes. If it were constant, the wind wouldn't be quite as much of a nuisance, but the continuous pattern of extreme buffeting followed by a few seconds of stillness is maddening. The dust and ash get into everything: backpacks, canteens, boots, eyes, nostrils—you name it, sand gets into it.

—*The Cinderlands Expeditions,*
Chapter 2: *The Blistering Wind*

GEOGRAPHY OF THE CINDERLANDS

The Cinderlands rest on the southern Storval Plateau, bounded by the banks of the Kazaron River and the Kodar Mountains in the north, the Storval Deep and Wyvern Mountains in the west, the Mindspin Mountains in the east, and the Storval Rise in the south. The Kazaron flows from the Kodars following the southwest tilt of the plateau, meanders through the broken foothills and grasslands, and eventually empties into the Storval Deep. The Yondabakari flows south from the Mindspins and cuts a stubborn path right through the heart of the Cinderlands, providing the lands just enough water to prevent desertification.

The badlands are rugged, inhospitable terrain formed by long periods of drought and heavy wind erosion and make up the majority of the Cinderlands, particularly near the mountain chains and east of the Yondabakari. Odd rock formations, canyons, gullies, and hoodoos fill the landscape, separated by twisting valleys and crags. Deep gorges create natural wind tunnels, and their howling can carry for miles. Many of the rock formations have alternating tiers of sandstone and ash rock, creating a stark, contrasting ambience of red and black layers. The wind's effect is everywhere—the rocks and formations are smooth and curved, mimicking the sand dunes of a desert. Large areas are solid rock, but other areas have stretches of leached soil and silt. A short, weedy scrub grows in patches throughout the badlands, offset by succulent plants.

Just north of the Storval Rise are the galtroot flats, a land of short, red galtroot bushes that grow in deposits of red

clay. Also residing in this region are the squat and menacing cinder cones that produce the ever-present volcanic ash that blankets the ground. The extreme winds here make any travel through this land treacherous, as the airborne ash creates a gray, impenetrable haze and an occasional ash devil.

In the northern Cinderlands, the waters of the Kazaron make the ground rich in soluble nutrients, producing soil that is more fertile for producing areas of grassland. Because there are no trees to rob the sunlight, the topsoil is rich with life, and the vast majority of northern plant species take the form of grass or scrub.

GEOLOGY OF THE CINDERLANDS

Due to the enormous amount of geological activity in the crust, many different rocks and minerals exist in the Cinderlands. Blood-red charstone, composed of black granite speckled with potash feldspar gemstones, is much prized among the Shoanti. Rocks that form within copper ore, such as azurite and malachite, are useful as pigments when ground into a paste. Ash rock is similar to sandstone; it forms when layers of volcanic basalt particles accumulate through sedimentation and pressure, eventually forming unique black-tinged cliffs, eroded hoodoos, and other formations.

Copper and iron are plentiful—in particular, the foothills of the Mindspins dump massive amounts of copper ore onto the banks of the Yondabakari. Many crystal veins in the crust contain electrum in addition to small traces of other metals, such as copper, gold, and zinc—all of which make the area valuable to dwarven miners from Janderhoff.

During the convergence of the tectonic plates, chunks of diamond broke free from underground veins and rose to the surface, and now lie buried beneath the grounds of the cinder cones, waiting

to be easily extracted by those willing to work so close to violent geologic activity. Deposits of coal, hidden just below the surface, rest near the mountain chains that bound the Cinderlands. Some of the deposits near the Wyvern Mountains have been burning for decades, due to the sheer amount of coal concentrated there.

Cinder Cones

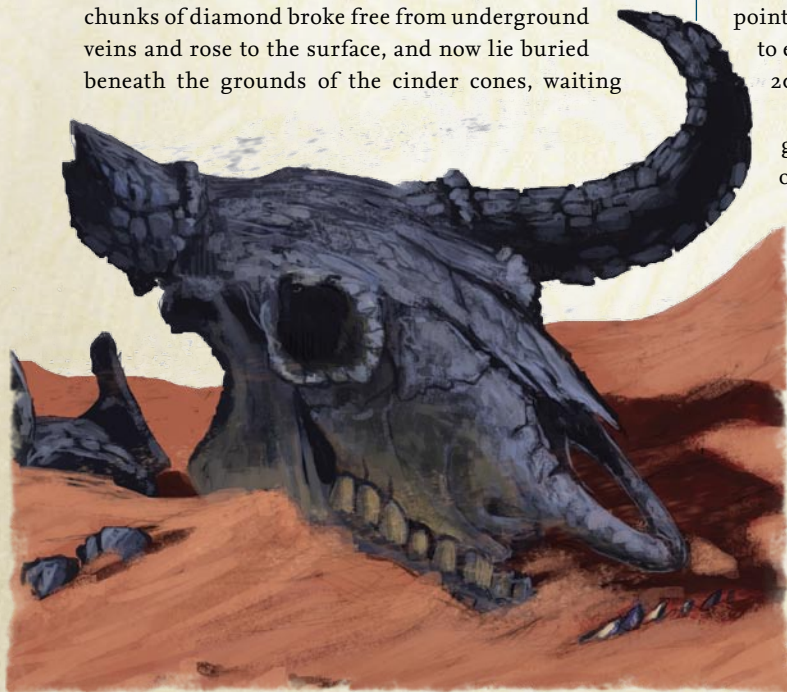
The Cinderlands are spotted with cinder cones—hills of volcanic fragments built up around volcanic vents. The larger ones near natural gas seeps are capable of lava flows and extreme explosive eruptions. Seismic activity accompanies these magma fountains, and the small volcanoes vent incredible amounts of ash through their flanks and summit craters.

The majority of the material expelled by cinder cones is miniscule particles of ash, although the immense amount spewed into the environment invades every aspect of the Cinderlands. Infrequently, magma explodes from one of these small volcanoes (see page 304 of the DMG for details on lava effects). After an eruption, shelves of black volcanic glass sometimes form, which the Shoanti frequently harvest to make knives many times sharper than the keenest steel.

Sarenrae's Tears (CR 5): Large cinder cones can produce deadly debris known locally as Sarenrae's Tears—buckler-sized globs of half-cooled molten basalt and trapped volcanic gases—that eject with enormous force, potentially shooting great distances. Cooling as they fly through the air, the volatile rock solidifies into elongated tear-shaped rocks, making them aerodynamic enough to travel up to a mile. The impact of one of Sarenrae's Tears often causes it to shatter explosively, dealing 3d6 points of piercing damage and 3d6 points of fire damage to everything within 15 feet of the point of impact (DC 20 Reflex, save for half).

Hundreds of these natural powder kegs litter the grounds surrounding cinder cones. If damaged or disturbed, these deadly rocks can still explode (hardness 7, 1 hit point), blowing glass shrapnel in all directions just as the airborne variety. Sarenrae's Tears the size of wagons with proportionately scaled destructive capabilities have been recorded, but are fortunately rare.

Sarenrae's Tresses (CR 4): During periods of heavily sustained wind, long strands of glass fibers form when wind picks up the magma of a fountain eruption and carries it downwind, cooling it in the process and ripping to shreds anything in its path. Named Sarenrae's Tresses by the Shoanti, the glass strands bear a strong resemblance to hair or straw and litter the ground miles downwind of the cones in long, jumbled heaps. During the Cinderlands'



occasional windstorms, Sarenrae's Tresses are kicked into the air, flensing anything unfortunate enough to be nearby. Anyone within a quarter mile of a cinder cone during a windstorm suffers not only the effects of the high winds (see page 95 of the DMG) but takes 2d6 points of piercing damage per round.

Emberstorms

During the peak of summer, when the wind is at its driest, an emberstorm can form in the aftermath of a particularly large wildfire. Because the generated heat is so great, the surrounding oxygen burns instantly, creating inward-facing wind currents. Once this occurs, a perpetual cycle of oxygen, ash, and embers feeds the fire and intensifies its heat, giving it its own renewable source of fuel. The winds produced by this phenomenon can reach hurricane-force gales that cause the emberstorm to grow to devastating sizes. With a good wind behind it, the storm can travel hundreds of miles, appearing from afar like a black blizzard that flickers with fire.

Emberstorms are massive areas of moving, deadly weather, easily measured in miles. There are two parts to the storm: the edge (up to 100 feet inside the storm's borders) and the heart (the area more than 100 feet into the storm). Within the edge, creatures are subjected to the effects of strong winds (see page 95 of the DMG), take a -10 penalty on Spot, Listen and Search checks as well as missile attacks beyond 10 feet, and gain concealment.

Within the heart of an emberstorm, the wind increases to severe or even windstorm levels. The scouring ash and grit in the air also creates all the effects of a duststorm, save that they normally leave behind only 1d4-1 feet of dust and ash in their wake (see DMG page 94). Additionally, whenever a character takes nonlethal damage from an emberstorm, he also takes 1 point of fire damage from the cinders and hot ashes. An emberstorm is a CR 4 encounter.

We have been experimenting with a deep crack in the ground that we located today. If you look at it from a certain angle, you can almost see invisible vapors emanating from it. After much debate over our next course of action, we agreed to set it on fire—in retrospect, this was not the wisest choice. Even our guide seemed shocked when it combusted with a loud popping sound, followed by an intense shaft of blue flame. All of our attempts at extinguishing it have been unsuccessful. Minch has been trying to come up with a proper term for this phenomenon. God's Pyre, Tinderbox Geysers, and Cerulean Scorch (of which I was particularly fond) all met with playful derision and were vetoed by the majority. For lack of a better term, we have settled for calling this blue flame rockfire for the remainder of this research.

—*The Cinderlands Expeditions,*
Chapter 3: The Fields Will Burn

PEOPLE OF THE CINDERLANDS

As inhospitable as the burning plains of the Storval Plateau are, several species actively seek to claw a life from the hard clay and lifeless ash.

Gargoyles: Bands of savage gargoyles have long made their home on the Storval Plateau. In the Cinderlands particularly, the ashen and brick-colored gargoyles of the Ashwing tribe soar from aerie to aerie, snatching up whatever meals they can and taking wing when the fires of the land grow too near.

Orcs: Raiders from the Hold of Belkzen and brutes from Urglin frequently prey upon the same animals as the native Shoanti, and upon the Shoanti themselves. Fearful of the deadly land, they rarely linger for long, yet it's not uncommon to find the charred remains of orcs who were unable to outrun an emberstorm.

Shoanti: The Shoanti tribes of the Sklar-Quah wander the Cinderlands, preying upon the lands' deadly predators and following migrating aurochs. The flames of the land have long held a place in the faith and traditions of these warlike barbarians, most noticeably in the fearless charges of the burn riders and in the rite of passage all quah members must face: the Burn Run (see "People of the Storval Plateau" and the Pathfinder's Journal in *Pathfinder* #7).

Varisians: The wandering cousins of the Shoanti occasionally make their way through the Cinderlands, always either on their way somewhere else, or just to say they've been.

Methane Seeps

Gas seeps emit odorless, volatile organic compounds that the naked eye cannot perceive. While these vapors are non-toxic, they are composed of a highly flammable compound that combusts in the presence of any heat source. These methane seeps fuel the Cinderlands' natural wildfires and keep them burning even in areas of sparse vegetation. A methane seep might take the form of an isolated gas vent or an entire gas field hundreds of feet in diameter.

Some of the larger geysers have depleted their gas stores, leaving sprawling caverns deep below the surface. What creatures inhabit these murky cavities is unknown, but extensive veins of raw diamond and underground lakes of crude petroleum draw prospectors from all over. Attempts at mining are fraught with peril, however, as the underground passages interconnect, comprising a vast network of tunnels, tubes, oil reservoirs, and gas chambers that permeate the entire shelf. If a combustive chain reaction were set off, it is unlikely that anything would survive.

Rockfire (CR 6): When the rare summer thunderstorm travels into the central areas of the Cinderlands, lightning can combust an entire gas field and set it ablaze, producing what is known as rockfire—large sheets of blue flame that



whoosh through gas fields in the blink of an eye. Any creature in a gas field set alight—either by lightning or open flame—takes 8d6 points of fire damage (DC 25 Reflex save for half).

CLIMATOLOGY OF THE CINDERLANDS

The climate of the Cinderlands is hot and dry, seeing little in the way of moisture and precipitation. Although the environment meets the requirements for desert classification, it contains few of the geographical features often associated with deserts. Still, the stifling air of the plateau makes it one of the driest places on Golarion.

The Cinderlands boil during the summer and freeze during the winter, although the low precipitation (as little as 8 inches of rainfall per year) makes snow practically unheard of. Any serious study of the plateau shows its weather patterns to be unpredictable, and the only real constant is the drought brought on by rain shadows. Because mountain chains bound the Cinderlands on three sides, only the southern monsoon winds bring the Cinderlands any significant precipitation. Under these conditions, the vegetation becomes dry and brittle—perfect tinder for wildfires.

This morning, we took turns counting lightning strikes, but we lost count around 50 or so. There are just too many to count effectively. Suffice to say, a good thunderstorm can produce strikes numbering in the hundreds. With all of this activity, it still doesn't seem to rain here. We see the dark clouds gathering in the mountains, and they produce fantastic lightning displays, but they never seem to progress down into the Cinderlands.

—*The Cinderlands Expeditions*, Chapter 4: Gozreh's Wrath

ECOLOGY OF THE CINDERLANDS

The Cinderlands contain hundreds of different species of animals and insects of all classifications, including numerous creatures not found anywhere else in Varisia. The harsh environment has forever left its mark on the organisms that live there, and many of its plants and animals have adapted to the hot and dry conditions in unique—and sometimes startling—fashions.

Flora

The local flora must employ exceptional methods for gathering moisture and surviving the regular wildfires, giving rise to three major groupings of floras—water hoarders, drought tolerators, and fire adaptors.

Water hoarders are succulent plants capable of storing water during periods of rainfall that sustains them through droughts. They gather moisture via shallow roots and store water in membranes composed of expandable tissue, which swell noticeably when full. Since they are targets of thirsty animals, most hoarders have developed defense mechanisms, such as poisonous thorns, to keep potential water poachers at bay. Cacti comprise the majority of this group, although some bushes and trees can hoard water as well.

Drought tolerators have learned to use what water they need when it is available, and then enter dormant states during periods of drought. A resinous substance coats their seeds and washes off when it rains, allowing germination to occur only in the presence of water. To bear the lack of hydration, many have evolved small leaves that require little water, which they shed during periods of extreme drought. Common tolerators include bushes, scrub, and grass.

Fire adaptors have changed to survive fire through various techniques. The majority of them grow reserve buds and branches at root level, which burgeon after a fire has burned the plants' leaves. Some exotic plants display a trait known as fire-induced germination—the seeds remain dormant until the presence of heat opens the fire-resistant seedpods, allowing them to take over an area quickly after a fire has reduced the competition to fertile ash. The more ruthless adaptors even encourage fire by exuding flammable oil from their leaves. Fire adaptors contain all manner of flora, found in the hottest areas and those that sustain wildfires.

Basilisk Barrel: An 8-foot-tall barrel capable of storing 2 tons of water makes up the bulk of this purple-mottled cactus. Because the large amount of water it holds makes it a prime target, it has developed sensitive, bright red pods that cover its exterior. When disturbed, the pods discharge a cloud of paralytic droplets affecting a 10-foot area around the perimeter of the plant. Some of the more enterprising predators have learned to patrol these barrels, hoping to make an easy meal of any creature paralyzed by these dangerous cacti, and particularly deft shoanti sometimes harvest the pods for use in potions.

Ember Poppy: A waxy substance that reacts with combustion coats the seed banks of the ember poppy, and once a fire passes through an area it sprouts and germinates. Its seeds remain buried in the soil for years, awaiting the next fire.

Flask Tree: At first glance, flask trees appear to be dead, but upon closer inspection one learns that this is simply a surprisingly successful camouflage system—many creatures walk right past a substantial store of water thinking the trees to be just burnt chunks of wood. A flask tree gets its name from the shape of its trunk—enlarged at

THE ANGEL OF STORMS

Windstorms are common during all seasons, but on hot days, whirlwinds have the potential to materialize from the overheated air above the ground. While these dust devils are typically only a few hundred feet high and move erratically, the more violent whirls can reach heights of several thousand feet. During particularly large wildfires, firestorms appear when warm updrafts coalesce into a vertical cone of rotating fire. Once this tornado-like phenomenon is born, it can travel on its own or move within the existing wildfire, making it that much more deadly.

These tornadoes are known collectively by the Shoanti as *Yayoncha*, the Angel of Storms, and are viewed with both fear and awe. Several stories in their oral tradition culminate in shamans calling *Yayoncha* from the brooding skies in order to tear through battlefields and scatter enemies.

its base from the water store giving it the appearance of a potion bottle.

Galtroot Bush: This short bush grows in red clay and often sheds its crimson leaves during drought periods to tolerate the loss of water. Containing a powerful narcotic, the galtroot has many uses, both medicinal and recreational. The Shoanti tribesmen mix the dried leaves with wood ash to create barbarian chew, which invigorates their warriors' ferociousness during battle.

Lotra Tree: These short trees have adapted tough, thick barks laced with oil that is resistant to fire. Younger trees burn in severe blazes, but the mature trees survive relatively unscathed, showing at most only bole scorching.

Scrub: This short, stunted vegetation grows in patches throughout the Cinderlands. While scrub refers primarily to dry, straggly weed, the term encompasses much of the vegetation, including trees and bushes.

Devoid of foliage and permanently blackened by the barrage of flames, flask trees offer up one of the gloomiest sights in the Cinderlands. At dusk this evening, as we sat in hushed silence, their bloated, misshapen figures surrounded us on the orange-blasted horizon, creating an eerie landscape of squat, dejected husks reaching their withered branches toward the sky. We would have given the dismal trees a wide berth if it weren't for our always-resourceful Shoanti escort. To our astonishment, he pulled out a tap, promptly hammered it into the base of one of those charred stumps, and proceeded to fill 20 of our canteens.

—*The Cinderlands Expeditions*,

Chapter 5: Flowers in an Ashen Land

Fauna

Many creatures in the Cinderlands have had to make special accommodations simply to survive. A mammal grows longer eyelashes than usual and has the ability

For many years, we scholarly types assumed the crustaceous fossils found in the Cinderlands to be the remains of gigantic, prehistoric crabs. Nevertheless, as I sit here in the shadow of one of those half-buried colossal beasts, I fear I can no longer say with any certainty that these were sea creatures. Minch was the first to point it out, but it looks rather look like a giant insect. Yet if we were to propose that these remnants are, in fact, fossilized exoskeletons of some long-gone giant bug, we would be outright ridiculed.

—*The Cinderlands Expeditions,*
Chapter 6: Shadows of the Past

to close its nostrils—two traits that keep dust and ash out of its system. A predator lies in wait in a burn zone until the approaching wildfire drives fleeing prey into its hungry maw. An animal that is diurnal in most other environments becomes nocturnal to avoid the blistering winds and heat. The underlying theme is one of survival, and this mind-set radiates throughout the Cinderlands, from the massive storm roc to the lowly scrub rat.

Akyrak: These large arachnid predators have remarkable camouflage abilities—their quivering, translucent bodies blend in so well with the surrounding heat waves that they appear invisible to the naked eye. More akin to a scorpion than a spider, these creatures hunt large game.

Ankheg: This massive, burrowing insect thrives in the Cinderlands. Many ankheg burrows rest in areas that



regularly sustain wildfires, and these oversized, well-fed insects are surprisingly adept at darting out of the safety of their holes and snatching fire-fleeing prey.

Aurochs: These herd animals can reach weights of 2,600 pounds and heights of 80 inches at the shoulder. While the females have smaller horns, the horns of a bull can reach 2-1/2 feet in length and have ridges at their bases and edges, which they whet on large boulders until razor sharp.

When herding, female aurochs, their calves, and young males travel at the center, and the bulls patrol the perimeter. During the mating season, sparring matches erupt as the bulls contend for the females in heat. The males often hold their heads low and swing their massive horns from side to side while sizing up their competitors. These clashes, which involve head butting and rending, are vicious and sometimes fatal.

Basilisk: These reptiles cluster together in considerable numbers deep in the wind tunnels of the eastern badlands. Existing almost entirely on a diet of ash rock and minerals, the basilisks keep to themselves unless disturbed, which is a rare event.

Bulette: Found in the areas devoid of rock formations, bulettes keep to the hills for the most part and tunnel into the loose soil. These burrowing creatures sense minute vibrations in the ground and attack from below without warning, and travelers seeking to avoid their wide territories are advised to keep an eye out for their distinctive temporary dens, called drifts.

Bush Tiger: These powerful hyenas have oversized heads and necks and underdeveloped hindquarters that give them arched spines. Their front feet are larger than their back feet, making their tracks easily distinguishable. They are consummate scavengers and form ranging circles around feeding predators, waiting for the sated beasts to leave before moving in and taking over the carcass. Bush tigers have the ability to digest bones, giving them a source of marrow nutrients that other carnivores leave behind.

Cindersnake: This reddish-patterned snake is one of the deadliest in Varisia, and has little to fear from most other predators. It spends its hunting hours buried in the silt lying in wait, and holds the tip of its tail erect from its burrow to attract prey. Unlike other snakes, it stands its ground if a larger creature approaches it.

Ember Scorpion: The exoskeleton of an ember scorpion is composed of several layers—the soft epidermis, two chitinous layers (one flexible, one rigid), and a tough external layer coated with a waxy substance. They often hunt actively in the open in addition to the proven method of lying in wait. Ember scorpions display the bone-chilling trait of sucking all of the nutrients

and marrow from their kills, leaving behind only hollow bones and loose skins of internal organs, making them efficient scavengers as well as ruthless predators.

Horned Spirestalker: The scales of the giant geckos of the Cinderlands, the horned spirestalkers, display many grooves and channels that lead directly to the lizards' mouths. By passing through condensation-gathering vegetation, the spirestalkers are able to extract the necessary moisture for hydration. Many of these lizards dwell on crags and hoodoos, snatching prey from the rocky floor below. The rare black-scaled spirestalkers live in harmony in the wind tunnels alongside the basilisks, and blend in well with the basalt-tinted rock walls and formations found there. The basilisks ignore them, as the geckos keep the tunnels devoid of insects, small mammals, and other nuisances.

Jewel Beetle: A jewel beetle is an offshoot of the more common fire beetle but has adapted its receptor glands to detect infrared radiation produced by large fires. The annual mating migration occurs during the peak of summer when the chance of fire is at its greatest. Once the beetles locate a suitable heat source, a mating frenzy occurs within the flames. Afterwards, the females lay their eggs in the dead wood of the burnt trees and continue on their way. Since most of the consumers of beetles flee from wildfires, the eggs are safe from predation and, as a result, the jewel beetle population is high.

Purple Worm: These gargantuan worms live beneath the Cinderlands, feeding on the plentiful minerals and gems. While hundreds of these creatures exist below ground, only occasionally will one grub its way to the surface. Purple worms' diets consist of rocks and minerals, and they are especially fond of diamonds. Organic material is a delicacy—a purple worm sometimes surfaces to snack on large concentrations of living organisms such as an aurochs herd. The innards of a purple worm consist of a pharynx for pulling in food, an esophagus where the food travels to the gizzard that breaks it down, and sprawling intestines where digestion occurs.

Ko-Minka: These blink dogs rove the fringes of the badlands in wild packs. Other creatures in their domain have learned some of the meanings behind their barks—mostly predator warnings and yelps of impending bad weather. This symbiosis has served the Ko-Minkas well, for they understand that strength in numbers is a key to survival. They forage during the day, rooting for insects and lizards, using their large ears to locate underground vibrations and movement.

Redback Rattlesnake: Most active in the morning when temperatures are at their lowest, the redback spends the hottest part of the day underground in its burrow or hidden away within deep scrub. During the winter, when temperatures are lower, the redback hunts actively during the daytime.

CINDERLANDS CREATURES

The Cinderlands are home to a wide variety of creatures, many unique to the region. Listed below are the game statistics and sources for use in constructing encounters with species not listed in the MM or presented here under an alternate name.

Akyrak: See page 80

Aurochs: Advanced 7 HD bison

Bush Tiger: Advanced 5 HD hyena

Cindersnake: Tiny viper

Ember Scorpion: Large monstrous scorpion

Horned Spirestalker: Giant gecko, see *Pathfinder* #1

Jewel Beetle: Giant fire beetle with immunity to fire, and only glows within 1 mile of a substantial heat source

Ko-Minka: Blink dog

Redback Rattlesnake: Large viper

Scrub Rat: Badger

Storm Roc: Roc

Tube Centipede: Medium monstrous centipede

Scrub Rat: These rats live in almost any terrain that displays loose scrub covering. Building extensive underground warrens just beneath the ground, large colonies congregate together for mutual protection. Scrub rats are a constant feature of the terrain, and provide a steady food supply for many of its predators.

Storm Roc: Invading the lowlands from their mighty nests high up in the Wyvern Mountains, these birds of prey sit unchallenged at the apex of the food chain. Storm rocs have compact bodies with short but extremely strong necks. Short legs with long toes and sharp claws allow them to grasp creatures of substantial size. The full-grown storm rocs hunt the aurochs herds, and often drive them to panic and stampedes.

Tube Centipede: These curiosities use the red clay common to their environment to construct hollow tubes that rise above ground level, serving as entrances to their underground tunnels. Centipede tubes often cluster together with various diameters and heights, and winds blown across their jagged tops produce a ghastly, dissonant screech that carries for miles. This cacophony achieves two goals—it warns predators away and attracts the jewel beetles that are a staple of the centipedes' diet. Any slight variation in the vibrations of the tubes alerts the centipedes to the presence of potential prey.

Wyvern: Occasionally flights of wyverns make their way down from the mountain range that bears their name to hunt aurochs. Amazingly, these lizards successfully compete with the storm rocs over the same hunting grounds, and conflicts between the two groups often arise.



PEOPLE OF THE STORVAL PLATEAU

THE SHOANTI WAY OF LIFE

"All right now, gather round—in a moment the Axe Clan will round the cliff side and be right upon us. This better go off without a hitch, so let's all review the rules one more time. First: no staring at their tattoos. Get over it and be man enough to look them in the eye. But for gods' sake, don't try to stare them down. We're here to deliver the grain, say 'thanks for your efforts,' and get the hell out. In the unlikely event one of them is interested in talking, keep it light and simple—follow my lead. Don't act like you're shocked that some of them speak Common—that's why it's called the common tongue. Absolutely no religion. Don't ask about their spirit totems; that's their private business. And no politics. For gods' sake, if anyone even so much as mentions Bloodsworn Vale I will kill you where you stand and spare them the trouble!"

—Tors Kaiman,
agent of Magnimar's Council of Ushers at the annual delivery of the Calvatarium

The seven quahs (clans) of the Shoanti roam the harshest environments of Varisia, from the Cinderlands to the Calphiak Mountains and from the Curchain Hills to the Storval Plateau. Known for their warlike nature and proud traditions, the Shoanti claim all of Varisia as their own, although they have been forced to cede its southern lands to waves of Chelish conquest. A disparate people, bound together by honor and tradition, the Shoanti share a history steeped in conflict, from their brutally heroic legends to the defeats of the recent past and the harshness of their modern lives. Shaped by strife, the Shoanti are stalwart, tenacious, and suspicious people, oath-sworn to regain all that was once theirs and honor-bound to avenge themselves against all schemers who would dare call them barbarians.

The essence of “Shoanti” is more of a set of warrior traditions than it is a true racial group. While by and large most Shoanti are humans, some quahs have adopted foreigners and exiles from other races. Among individual, open-minded tribes, those who demonstrate that they share Shoanti ideals and face the trials of their adoptive quah find themselves welcomed after a measure of persistence. As such, a small number of dwarves, half-elves, and non-native humans on occasion live among the Shoanti. Indeed, in many ways, demihumans have a much easier time overcoming the Shoanti’s ingrained mistrust of outsiders than Chelaxians.

Shoanti possess widely varying skin tones, reflecting the broad diversity of their ancestry from the time of the Azghat, the cruel gods their lore claims carried them to the Storval region in the time before time. Regardless of pigmentation, almost all Shoanti are vigorous, with powerful builds. Most adult males are more than 6 feet in height and adult females are only slightly shorter. Hair is considered a dangerous weakness in hand-to-hand combat, and both men and women typically shave their heads, save for shamans or the elderly. This practice is more pronounced among the eastern tribes, who are typically born with straight hair, and less so amongst the westernmost Shadde-Quah. Some young Shoanti men and women forgo this practice as a sign that they are not bound to another and seek a companion.

Their culture besieged, their world changing, the Shoanti fiercely struggle to hold onto the traditions of their people and fight against a world seemingly intent on their destruction. Yet, having survived against the giants of the Kodar Mountains, the predators of the wastes, drought, starvation, and lands that burn for centuries, the people of the Storval Plateau alone will decide when their time is at an end—and that time is not now.

“And So It Was” by Angmack the Destrier

“Stand ready for the campaign at all times,” the Azghat said. And so it was. The Azghat brought order to the world and we

were their Shoanti, their blades. Where there was dissension, the Shoanti brought order and peace in the name of the Azghat. To be Shoanti was the greatest of honors, for the Shoanti were selected by the Azghat from those of the greatest skill, speed, strength, and honor. The Azghat’s gift to us was to organize us into quahs and unto each quah was given purpose, a commitment unique to its gifts. And so it was.

Then came the time of the Hollow Sky. The forces of those who rebelled against the will of the Azghat rose so great that the Shoanti began to dwindle in number. In response, the Azghat took it upon themselves to share their honor with the Shoanti so as to renew our battered resolve. But this was a terrible misstep. With their honor diminished, the Azghat fell into a spiral of evil, and with each passing year the Azghat grew closer to becoming one with the very enemies that moved against them. In time, with the heaviest of hearts, the Shoanti were forced to turn on the great Azghat and with their defeat, the kingdom of the Azghat finally crumbled into dust. And so it was.

To this day, we as Shoanti carry not only our own honor, but the remains of the gift of the Azghat. It is said that those warriors who continue to conduct themselves with honor slowly restore the Azghat’s memory and resurrect the glory of their land. One day, perhaps, the Shoanti debt will be repaid. Until that day, the Shoanti’s enemies will always remain many. Always will our enemies seek to purge us and the memory of the Azghat from the land. But we will not allow this. We will remain here, where the Azghat first brought us together and shaped each quah, in honor of their gift to us. And so it shall be.

“The Tale of the Seven Klars” by Razilk of the Skoan-Quah

After the battle of Angraysan, each of the seven quah-jothka came together to praise one another for their role in the victory. Lajtru of the Spire Clan snapped the blade off of his klar and laid it upon the ground so that it pointed at Halrik of the Hawk Clan. “Your horsemen turned the tide of the battle,” said Lajtru. “No,” answered Halrik, “it was the Wind Clan who showed us the way and where to begin our charge. This battle was over before it began.” And with that Holrik snapped off the blade of his klar and placed it on the ground pointing at Churtan, Quah-Jothka of the Wind Clan. The mute Churtan shook his head and silently arranged his klar blade so that it faced Myton of the Skull Clan. As he did, the remaining quah-jothka each began to place their klars as well, each one giving due to the other quah they thought contributed the most to the victory. When each was done, the quah-jothka looked down and saw that the klar blades were arranged in a seven-pointed star, with each quah recognized by another. When the Azghat came and saw the star upon the ground, the Azghat nodded with approval. “This is the symbol of victory,” said the Azghat.

SHOANTI SHAMANS

The spiritual leaders of the Shoanti, shamans guide their peoples, grant them hope, protect them in battle, and offer balm for their many wounds. Clan shamans (typically adepts, clerics, or druids) exhibit broader connections with totem spirits than everyday warriors. They speak with their tribe's totems and entreat the spirits on behalf of their people. Their rituals and ceremonies are largely unfathomable to those uninitiated in their ways, with long meditations influenced by the consumption of poisonous herbs; interpretations of cloud shapes, rock structures, and animal behavior; and dreams sent from the ancestors being integral to their perception of the spirits' will. A tribe only ever has one shaman, though he typically has as many as four young apprentices who learn the history of the quah and aid him in safeguarding the ancient knowledge of the spirits.

Clerical Shoanti shamans worship their clan's totems, which are typically of neutral alignment and grant domains as noted in the descriptions of each quah. The favored weapon of Shoanti totems is either the klar or the longbow.

Many Shoanti shamans—as well as those under their protection—take the Totem Spirit feat described in the *Rise of the Runelords Player's Guide*.

SHOANTI SOCIETY

The Shoanti people are divided into seven distinctive nations called quahs. The seven quahs share a common heritage, culture, and way of life. Although there are many societal variations between the quahs, the gulf between the quahs and other cultures is much larger. Each quah is further subdivided into tribes of varying sizes. Each tribe or sub-clan is led by its own war-chief, called a jothka. Each tribe's jothka in turn answers the call of the quah-jothka, the military and political leader of the entire clan. Together, the jothkas of every tribe form the quah-jothka's counsel of war that the quah-jothka calls together in times of need. All jothkas are advised by their tribes shamans and thundercallers—wise storytellers and performers who pass on the lessons of ages past.

By tradition, the Shoanti are seasonally nomadic hunter-gatherers, with most tribes following the Storval Plateau's great herds of aurochs, although some quahs engage in subsistence farming or a small amount of trade in favored lands. In centuries past, several Shoanti quahs established fixed settlements in southern Varisia, but such outposts served as forts, not centers of trade. Since their defeat by Chelish colonizers, most Shoanti have eschewed fixed settlements, seeing a need to defend a particular piece of land as an invitation to their many enemies.

The Shoanti do not recognize the concept of personal property when it comes to land, although they do define territories as belonging to one quah or another. They do not

use coins amongst themselves, but recognize the value of such objects when trading with other cultures. Aside from weapons and armor, the Shoanti own most items (such as yurts) collectively and gladly share within their tribe.

Enemies and Outsiders

The Shoanti are typically unwelcoming of outsiders and more inclined to fight than trade. If a member of a tribe offers sanctuary to an outsider (the act of "Ortak-Hurong"), however, then the entire tribe is obligated to respect the gift until such time as the tribe's jothka or shaman intervenes. The Shoanti's enemies are numerous and include the giants of the Kodar, the orcs of the Hold of Belzken, raiders from the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, and Chelish immigrants. In the latter case, few Shoanti care to differentiate between true Chelaxians, the disparate non-native residents of southern Varisia, and travelers from the southeast—all are considered invaders. While no armies currently muster at the foot of the Storval Rise, the nomads still consider themselves besieged, as every year more and more foreigners trod upon their tribal lands and many communities hold Shoanti as dangerous primitives. Although few communities murder Shoanti outright, within recent memory the Korvosan government paid bounties on Shoanti scalps. The Order of the Nail Hellknights also see the barbarians as threats to law and peace in southern Varisia and actively—and sometimes violently—seek to dissuade Shoanti from traveling beyond the Storval Plateau. Both affronts remain sore subjects in the Shoanti mind, and many still seek revenge for countless specific dishonors.

Religion

The Shoanti belief system heavily incorporates the notion of spiritual totems: natural spirits that watch over and guide warriors who have the wisdom to accept their protection and influence. It is said that spirits first identify themselves to warriors in the form of a vision at the precipice of adulthood, typically during a sacred but dangerous rite of passage organized by the clan's shaman and unique to each quah (see The Seven Quahs). The various quahs each hold particular totems as sacred, and their members find themselves guided by these forces more often than those of other quahs. While most totems are the spirits of animals or magical beasts, some Shoanti claim to have instead been gifted with revelations from powers that guide natural forces such as rivers, the rarely glimpsed Athaureon (northern lights), or even the Cinderlands' deadly emberstorms.

While the Shoanti are well aware of the roles of the gods of Golarion—and worship is not unheard of by Shoanti who leave their people—among the various quahs, shamans practice a combination of animism, ancestor worship, and druidism, revering the often violent spirits of the natural

world and heroes of the past. While individuals are not worshiped, the feats of dead warriors and tendencies of great beasts or powerful natural events are often invoked, particularly in inspirational ceremonies before hunts and battles. All Shoanti revere those who came before them and respect the powers of the land that—while often cruel—still supports their people.

THE SEVEN QUAHS

The Shoanti are not one people but many—seven nations united by heritage and lifestyle. The various quahs largely respect one another and their lands, making disagreements over resources, territory disputes, and other politics—widely held as distasteful and duplicitous—few. When conflicts do arise, small skirmishes and individual battles between champions quickly determine whom the spirits favor.



Although it is said there were once as many as nine clans, there are currently seven Shoanti quahs—the same number Shoanti lore says were forged in the distant past. While certain quahs are respected for different reasons and each has its own ways and traditions, among their people all are accorded the respect of honored warriors.

Lyrune-Quah (The Moon Clan)

Known to be expert bowmen and hunters, the swift-footed and keen-eyed warriors of the Lyrune-Quah hunt by dusk and travel by the light of the bright Storval moon. The Clan of the Moon embraces wisdom as much as strength, knowing that one arrow loosed from a precisely aimed bow can fell a giant more effectively than a band of wildly swinging brawlers.

The Moon Clan's true traditional rivals are the Sun Clan, and centuries ago the two quahs fought bitterly to establish the borders of their respective territories. The two quahs are far more alike than each cares to admit, though, and each quah respects the martial prowess of the other. Now that both have become irrevocably invested in battling their own separate wars with outsiders, they are far more frequently riding to each other's aid as allies than as enemies. Warriors of the two quahs value nothing more than bragging rights gained by helping members of the other quah out of a tough scrape.

Territory: The Clan of the Moon traverses the open lands east of the Wyvern Mountains, ranging between the Kazaron River and the Yondabakari River.

Rite of Passage: The Black Walk. On a moonless night, the young brave must find the entrance to an underground cave complex in the Wyvern Mountains. He must then traverse the dangerous caverns and emerge on the other side, a feat typically lasting several days. It is during the Black Walk that many Lyrune-Quah braves first receive a vision from their future totems.

Common Totems: Bat, cave bear, field mouse, moon, mountain lion, mountains, owl, rainstorm, stars, wolf.

Totem Domains: Animal, Darkness, Strength, Weather, War.

Shadde-Quah (The Axe Clan)

The warriors and hunters of the Axe Clan are expert divers and harpooners, and their people subsist on a diet of fish, crustaceans, and black abalone. In lieu of yurts, the Shadde-Quah dwells in sea caves scattered along the coast, many of which are now linked by narrow twisting passages hand-dug by the Shoanti. They are one of the few Shoanti quahs who enjoy permanent settlements.

The Shadde-Quah are quite isolated, largely cut off from their Shoanti brethren to the east. Despite their isolation, the Shadde-Quah play an important role in the defense of coastal Varisia. The Lands of the Linnorm Kings mount

COMMON SHOANTI EXPRESSIONS

The Shoanti are a proud and aloof people. When dealing with outsiders, their words are likely to be colored by the basic greetings and most fiercely held truths of their people.

Storval dharanok ekbit roark Shoanti.

Our thunder rolls across the Storval Plateau.
(The Shoanti defend the Storval Plateau.)

Kel-grish!

Greetings!
(A common welcoming.)

Sharatok... tshamek.

Be received... stranger.
(A colder, more formalized greeting for outsiders.)

Ferik niklit forenk skoans.

Until our skulls are gathered.
(We fight until our death.)

Ahk Storval—rel abeshk!

Away from our lands!
(A final territorial warning.)

Irok devit fendrik swork.

By blood it is sworn.
(An iron-clad vow.)

Storval ekbitel nalharest!

We walk the land as brothers!
(An oath accepting someone not of one's quah as a brother.)

regular nautical incursions along the western shores of Varisia in hopes of establishing an outpost on the Varisian Gulf. The Axe Clan views such incursions as a threat to its domain and posts hawk-eyed spotters on the seaward peaks of the western Calphiaks. When a northern fleet is spotted, word quickly spreads throughout the tribe, and the warriors of the Clan of the Axe sail out in their wavecutters—fast-moving outriggers—to attack the raiders. In recent decades, Magnimar's Council of Ushers has dispatched what has become known as the Calvitarium, a fleet of caravels laden with harvested grains as payment and thanks to the Clan of the Axe for its efforts in guarding the northern approach to the Varisian Gulf.

Territory: The Clan of the Axe claims the coastal valleys of the Calphiak Mountains.

Rite of Passage: The Return. This harsh ritual requires a young warrior to be bound and dropped into the ocean depths. Survival requires bursting oneself free from

the bonds and then swimming up a fjord against the outgoing tide.

Common Totems: Cave bear, cliff, dire bear, eagle, sea, squid, water elemental.

Totem Domains: Animal, Destruction, Strength, Water, Weather.

Shriikirri-Quah (The Hawk Clan)

The Shriikirri-Quah reveres the animals with which it shares the land. It is the Hawk Clan, more so than any other clan, that believes the study of the nature's beasts holds the key to victory against its foes. Both predators and prey have much to teach to a Shoanti who watches and listen. As such, the Hawk Clan swells with both expert hunters and animal trainers. The quah's braves' skill as horsemen is rivaled only by the riders of the Velashu Uplands.

Although they retain many of the traditional cultural prejudices against Chelaxians, the Shoanti of the Hawk Clan are also the most likely of the seven quahs to interact with other peoples. For many generations, the Clan of the Hawk has been the face of the Shoanti to the people of southwestern Varisia. Chelish inhabitants of Magnimar's holdings and Ravenmoor regularly trade with emissaries from the Clan of the Hawk, falsely assuming that the other Shoanti tribes of the Storval Plateau are much the same. The other Shoanti quahs have begun to look down upon the "soft" members of the Shriikirri-Quah who have grown too friendly with their land's invaders.

Territory: The Clan of the Hawk ranges far in its travels, from the Gnashers to the Churlwood, claiming much of the Curchain Hills between the Chavali River and Lampblack River as its demesne. Members of this tribe regularly camp at the bottom and top of the Storval Stairs, keeping this important trade artery open to passage.

Rite of Passage: The Plummet. Shriikirri braves undergo many tests, the culmination of which is the Plummet: a leap of faith off of the Storval Rise. The brave is saved from certain death by a hawk shaman who wildshapes into a giant raptor and swoops down to snatch the brave just before he hits the ground. It is said that the rush and trauma of the impending doom has attracted many a spirit to grant a fleeting vision.

Common Totems: Air elemental, cloud, firepelt, forest grove, hawk, horse, hippogriff, and wind.

Totem Domains: Animal, Air, Liberation, Strength, Weather.

Shundar-Quah (The Spire Clan)

The Shundar-Quah see themselves as the diplomats and storytellers of the Shoanti people, smoothing tensions between the various clans. Their tribes travel far and continually remind the other quahs that every clan is first and foremost Shoanti, and that brotherhood and



bringing honor to their people must be the ambition of every warrior.

Members of the Shundar-Quah hold the monolith wonder Spindlehorn sacred. Once a decade, the shamans of the Shundar-Quah perform a pilgrimage to the shadow of Spindlehorn, on the eastern shore of the Storval Deep. There, they commune with their totems, share what they have learned, and discuss matters that concern their quah and all others.

Because the Shundar-Quah see the welfare of all Shoanti as their sacred trust, by necessity they must also have an interest in each clan's warfare. Whenever a quah loses ground to a significant foe, it is the Spire Clan that is first to bring offers of reinforcements. To this end, Spire Clan braves train to duplicate the tactics of their fellow quahs so that they can swell their brethren's ranks as seamlessly as possible.

Territory: To this day, the Clan of the Spire wanders across the northern Storval Plateau, ever seeking to unite the Shoanti tribes into a single people. They fend for themselves in the custom of the local Shoanti tribes in whose territory they wander.

Rite of Passage: The Journey. Young members of the Shundar-Quah must journey into the world and spend 3

years among the members of another quah. There, they learn of the differing ways of their people, their problems and their strengths. At the end of this tenure—easily the longest rite of passage of any of the quahs—they return to their clan more experienced, world-wise, and informed.

Common Totems: Earth elemental, mountain spire, rock fall, spiretalker, storm roc. Although rare, some Spire Clan warriors are adopted by a totem of their host tribe.

Totem Domains: Animal, Knowledge, Protection, Rune, Weather.

Sklar-Quah (The Sun Clan)

More so than any other clan in recent memory, the Sklar-Quah find themselves embattled by their foes. Since its retreat over the Storval Rise from southern Varisia, the Sun Clan has found itself in a vise between orc marauders from the Hold of Belkzen and foreign invaders. The Sklar-Quah now acts as an unwitting buffer, protecting its two enemies from one another, a reality that has cost the blood of countless sons and daughters.

Sun Clan youth are taught to hate *tshamek* (non-Shoanti) at an early age. Their day-to-day prejudice is viewed as a necessary component of their well-honed survival

instincts. Indeed, the xenophobia is clan-deep; the Sklar-Quah's shamans are the most warlike among the shaman of any quah.

Many Sklar-Quah warriors aspire to join the ranks of the Sklar-Quah's famed burn riders, their elite mounted cavalry who are able to coax their horses to race through the flames and wildfires of the Cinderlands. Burn riders frequently shave much more than just their heads to protect themselves from the flames, and tend to wear minimal armor and clothing.

The quah's oral history claims that its ancestors once inhabited the fertile lands east of the Fenwall Mountains, and honored their totems from a sacred site upon a massive pyramid (now the site of the city-state of Korvosa) but that they were driven into the Cinderlands by Chelish colonists after decades of battle (see *Pathfinder Chronicles: Guide to Korvosa*).

Territory: The warlike Clan of the Sun inhabits the eastern and central reaches of the Cinderlands, both south of the Kazaron River as well as the plains south and east of the Yondabakari River.

Rite of Passage: The Burn Run. While there are several variations among Sklar-Quah tribes, in its most common form, a brave must outrace a wildfire, bolting for the shelter of a river or fire break before he is overcome by smoke and consumed by the flames.

Common Totems: Aurochs, cindersnake, emberstorm, fire elemental, fire pelt, sun.

Totem Domains: Animal, Fire, Strength, War, Weather.

Skoan-Quah (The Skull Clan)

All six of the other quahs still shudder on occasion when they deal with the enigmatic Skull Clan and its impenetrable skull shamans. Warriors of the Skoan-Quah cake their bodies with a mixture of mud and ash, making their skin smoky white. This ritual is said to give them protection against the walking dead, whom they are sworn to destroy.

The Skull Clan is zealous in its protection and honoring of the dead. Many Skull Clan tribes sojourn far to consecrate the burial sites of their fellow Shoanti. This service is grudgingly appreciated by the other clans, who respect the power of the Skull Clan and their totems, even if their morbid shamans quietly unnerve them. The most honored dead of each tribe are entrusted into the Skull Clan's care, leaving the guardians of the dead to transport such heroes to the Shoanti's most honored burial grounds—the Kallow Mounds to the east and the Life Falls to the west. The Skoan-Quah also shoulders the duty of acting as the historians of the Shoanti as a whole. In this way, the memories of many Shoanti live on with the Skoan-Quah, long after their own quah might have forgotten.

Territory: The Skull Clan keeps to the ancestral burial lands of their people, primarily surrounding the Kallow

Mounds of the southeastern Cinderlands and the Life Falls northeast of the Stony Mountains.

Rite of Passage: The Yawning Cave. The final test a Skoan-Quah brave must undergo is to enter a tight cave complex within the Mindspin Mountains and exit after retrieving an animal skull (usually signifying the young brave's future totem). The skull shaman, however, wards the cave with glyphs laced with fear-inspiring magic, making progress within the cave extremely challenging.

Common Totems: Ancestor spirit, earth elemental, giant scarab beetle, vulture, will-o'-wisp, wolf.

Totem Domains: Animal, Darkness, Earth, Protection, Repose.



Tamiir-Quah (The Wind Clan)

Cloaked in the skins and feathers of mountain lions, Lurkwood bears, and storm rocs, the Tamiir-Quah know the hardship of their Sklar-Quah brothers to the east and stand determined not to lose their mountainous homes. While not utterly murderous like the savages of the Nolands, they have little patience for trespassers and sternly—even violently—warn off any who come too near.

During the winter months, the Tamiir-Quah take shelter in a multitude of caves along the western fringe of the Storval Plateau. Once winter gives way to the spring thaw, the tribe moves up into small, lush mountaintop valleys fed by cold mountain springs that are carefully tended. From these high gardens, the Tamiir-Quah mount lightning raids down onto the plateau, attacking any who dare trespass in their domain.

The Clan of the Wind occasionally attacks travelers in the western Curchain Hills and even as far south as the road between Riddleport and Roderic's Cove—driving much traffic between those two communities onto the waters of the Varisian Gulf.

Territory: The secluded Clan of the Wind pervades the Stony Mountains, claiming all territory within sight of the mountains as their land. In truth, though, most tribes of the Tamiir-Quah keep to within 50 miles of the mountains' eastern and southern hills.

Rite of Passage: The Longest Cross. The final test for a Tamiir-Quah brave is a marathon-style race through the mountains, lasting several grueling days. Exhausted and weak, the young Shoanti are often vulnerable to predators.

Common Totems: Air elemental, cloud, griffin, storm, storm roc, wind.

Totem Domains: Animal, Air, Earth, Protection, War.

SHOANTI TATTOOS

Upon completing their quah's rite of passage, both male and female Shoanti receive their first tattoo. These designs sometimes wrap around the newly accepted adult's torso and limbs, and even up the neck and across the face. Chosen and traced by a tribe's shaman or thundercaller, hundreds of different tattoo designs exist, each being drawn from an expansive traditional assortment of symbols with their own varied meanings and implications. These tattoos are typically inked with pigments created from clay and vegetation native to the lands a quah inhabits, giving the symbols of each clan distinctive colorations. While a Shoanti receives his tattoo as part of the celebration marking his survival of his quah's rite of passage, this mark is only the basis of a design that expands and evolves over the course of the wearer's life. With each decade and every significant accomplishment, the tribe's shaman or a thundercaller

TATTOOS OF THE QUAHS

Each Shoanti quah has its own styles of tattooing and symbols that are either favored or particularly pertinent to their people. While these runes might appear among members of other clans, for warriors of certain quahs they hold particular prestige.

Lyrune-Quah: Hunters of the Clan of the Moon tend to favor symbols suggestive of the night, sight, and wisdom. The runes Navrik (Eyeless Sight), Lyon (The Great Moon), and Vinic (Piercing Stone) hold particular prestige.

Shadde-Quah: Among the Axe Clan, runes that suggest vitality, endurance, and traits of the ocean and its beasts are greatly desired, among them Vonark (Many Arms), Donark (The Long Armed), and Eanaw (The Endless Journey).

Shriikirri-Quah: The Clan of the Hawk favors symbols suggestive of travel, the wilds, and animals—particularly the horse. The symbols Rotomo (Headwind), Ingir (Beast Heart), and Iyavak (The Pack) are among the most desirable.

Shundar-Quah: Unity, watchfulness, and the ability to lead are all vaunted virtues of the Clan of the Spire. For them, the runes Drimiil (Guardian Heart), Kokip (Sentinel), and Klartitil (Broad Klar) carry extra weight.

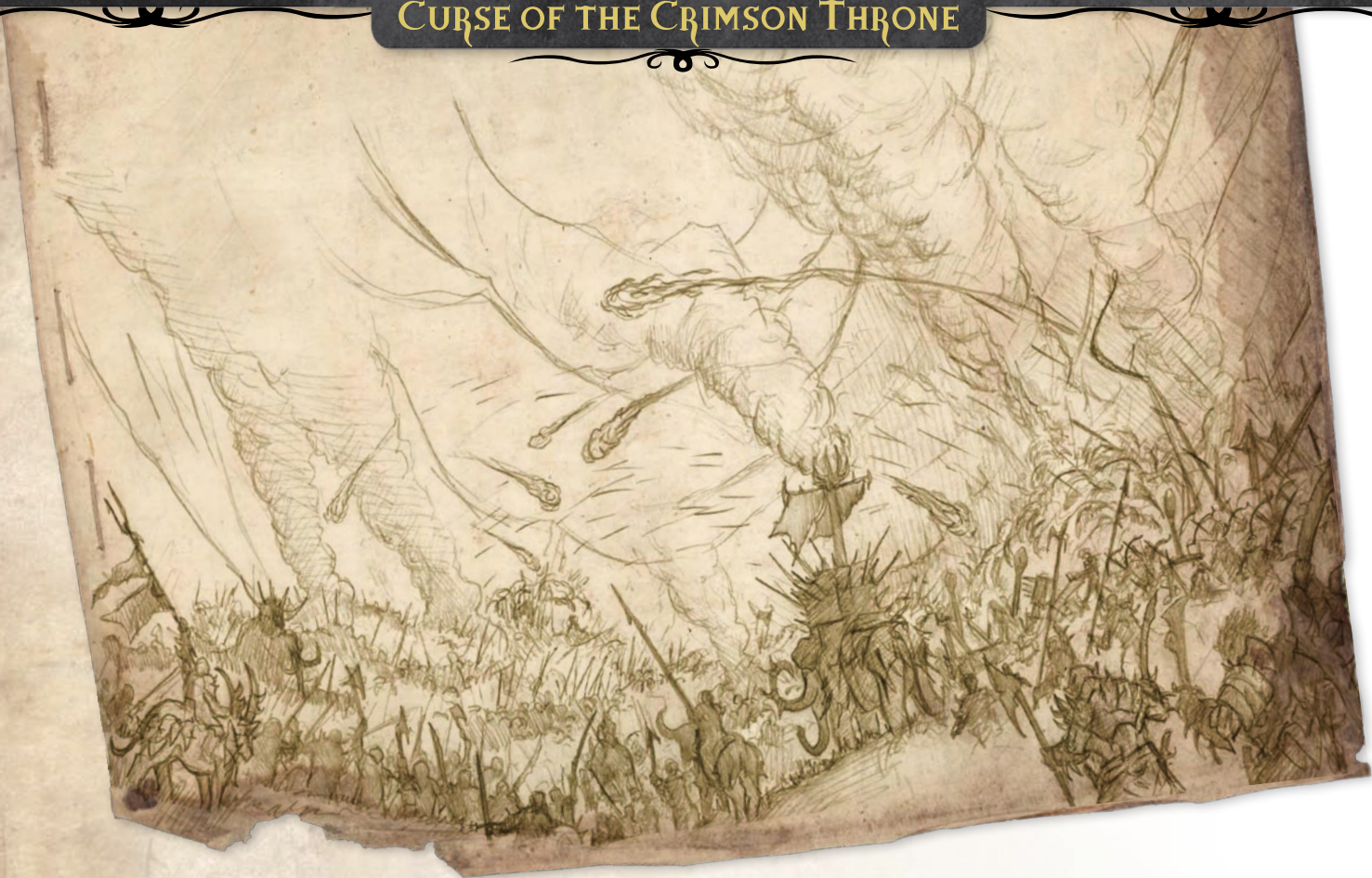
Sklar-Quah: The fires of their land and way of the warrior fill the hearts of the Clan of the Sun. Among the Sklar-Quah, the greatest warriors bear the runes Damkil (Orc Skull), Akmiz (Fire Hand), and Razkiv (Emberstorm).

Skoan-Quah: Members of the Clan of the Skull adorn their bodies with symbols of bones and skulls, their favored patterns creating the symbols Sosmo (Forever Dead), Eiril (Duty), and Graxt (Eternity).

Tamiir-Quah: The raiders of the Wind Clan often bear symbols related to speed, freedom, and their mountain homes. The runes Dra (Mist), Cilvat (Wind Soul), and Sovola (The Roc King) bring particular honor.

embellishes upon an adult's tattoo, adding flourishes and elaborations, each of which alters the meaning of the base rune. While specific meanings are often vague, quah members can always identify the symbols of their tribes, and a tattoo's wearer can proudly account for every specific mark.

For example, upon being accepted as an adult, the Sklar-Quah warrior Ardirik receives the rune known as *Cidir*, a mark meaning "power through wrath." Upon aiding his fellow hunters in the defeat of a particularly destructive orc raiding band, Ardirik is called upon by his tribe's shaman, who elaborates upon his tattoo with numerous vaguely klar-shaped protrusions, suggesting his role as defender. Upon attaining his 40th summer, Ardirik is again summoned, receiving new lengths to his tattoo that creep farther across his arms and neck, suggesting growth and a deepening of the core symbol's meaning.



THE STORM BREAKS

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There comes a point in any climb where mountain and man become one, where the landscape finally dominates your senses and there is only you and it, nothing more.

Our miserable trek across the lesser peaks in the Mindspin Mountains tested my faith in the wayfinder once more, but despite each gully, scree slope, and cliff we had to cross on its whim, I continued to follow its unwavering needle.

We had been climbing all day, and even though we had started at dawn, I hesitated to think we'd make the ridge by nightfall. The pathway (if such a perilous ledge deserves the name) seemed to be without end, and I wondered if I would come across the gods themselves at the summit. At last, the wind picked up and I could hear the roar of it crossing the ridge above. With renewed energy, I jogged the last few steps onto the crest. From my vantage point, I could see a huge bowl of land below, a massive cauldron of dust and stone cowering under a sky thick with the threat of storms. Yet it was not the landscape that held my view.

It was the armies.

A black stain filled the valley, stretching from side to side. Row upon row of dark figures huddled in tight

clusters around high banners, too distant for me to make out their emblems. Yet there were other rallying points as well—the lines of severed heads held aloft on spears, or a man-shaped tower of metal cages filled with impaled figures and gibbeted prisoners screaming for mercy while crows swooped and pecked at them. Huge ogres clad in rusted steel wheeled the iron man on the edges of the battlefield, for battlefield it was, or would be when these sickened ants set about each other.

Joskan trudged up toward me. “Resting already?” he asked. Then his eyes fell on the sight ahead and his jaw dropped visibly. “Great. Just great,” he said.

“Looks like there’s trouble ahead for us,” I said, surreptitiously checking the wayfinder, which pointed straight through the valley, with its brooding clouds and teeming hordes. I could see that any deviation would take us onto jagged drops and peaks around this bowl.

“You mean to go straight, don’t you?”

I nodded.

“And let me guess—nothing I could tell you about the journey ahead will stop you.”

“Correct.”

“You do realize that going ahead is certain death?”

"We've been through worse."

"Believe me, we haven't."

I shrugged. "Maybe, but straight is the way we go."

"You've spent too much time amongst the orcs," he growled. "Do you even know what 'trouble' means?"

"I think so."

"I'll ask you that question again, later." He hooked his thumbs in his pack straps and gazed across the valley. "I can see several tribal banners. And there's a stench like war rhino, unless I'm mistaken." He tossed his head back and gulped at the air.

"War rhino?" Cries of beasts and orcs echoed up to our lofty perch.

"Let's just hope you only get to imagine what they look like." He set down his pack, drew out an empty ration sack, and cut two holes in it.

"So, you're the guide—can we do it?"

He sniffed again and stared at me earnestly. "If we can cross before the battle starts—maybe. But there are two problems."

"Which are?"

"Well, first things first—they'll scent your stink a mile away. Rub this on yourself." He tossed me a small, hard toadstool which, when I did as I was asked, made me reek like the grave.

"I'll not ask what you use this for. And second?"

"Put this on." He threw the sack at me, the rough burlap now complete with two tiny eye-holes.

The sack was tight, and there was a strong smell of oilskins and onions that made my eyes run. The two holes barely allowed me to see anything, and I became instantly afraid of suffocating.

"Good enough, though you'll want to rub soil into your skin and gear to darken it as much as possible. And for the love of the gods, don't say anything—nobody down there will be speaking your tongue, and besides, your reedy voice sounds like a woman's." He had a point about my voice, so I refrained from mentioning that I was actually fluent in Orc, and instead set to work rolling in the dirt, grinding the dark dust into my pores. Finally I stood up, disheveled and reeking.

Joskan looked me up and down. "Good enough," he said. "It'll have to do."

Was that a smile?

We watched the forces below as we ate our meager meal, cutting thin slivers of meat from our rations and savoring each sip of water.

"How soon will the battle start, do you think?" I asked.

"This is no battle," he said. "This is merely a squabble."

I looked at the orcs, hundreds of them, and wondered what sort of disagreement had brought this situation about.

"Very well then, how long before this 'squabble' becomes nasty?"

He sniffed at the air. "I can smell meat roasting," he said, inhaling greedily. "They're preparing the Last Feast—what some orcs call the Gorging. They will not fight until sundown tomorrow."

"And who is fighting who, exactly?"

"That won't be easy to tell until we get down there and I talk, although I have a nasty feeling that this is a kresk."

"A kresk?"

"A general free-for-all, winner takes all."

"You mean they'll fight until only one tribe is left?"

"Or one orc. We should go."

Descending a mountain is almost as hard as climbing one, and it was dark before we reached the valley. Taking those last few steps very cautiously, we began to close in on the first group of orcs—the perimeter of their camp surrounded by lines of severed heads on crude poles.

"Well, that's good news for a start—the Cleft Head tribe." Joskan's dirty teeth flashed in the collective glow of campfires springing up across the valley, slowly being joined by orc music—a mixture of grunts, shouts, and swearing.

"And it's good news because...?"

"They're wimps, well known for being last into battle and first out. Just thank your puny gods that we didn't have to meet the Defiled Corpse orcs. Now, let's just try to mix in with the group and make our way through as inconspicuously as possible."

Joskan led me through the drunken rabble that formed the Cleft Head tribe. I caught site of at least two giants and a half-dozen ogres as we walked cautiously through the camp. The smell and smoke of charcoal concealed much of the goings-on, but I saw a lot in that first walk. Several orcs charged at each other across a long field and butted each other in a game called "rutt." Others were eating or playing a dangerous gambling game with woodaxes and blindfolds, or else dallying with their grotesque mates in full view of the others. Many of the orcs dragged long lines of heads and skulls behind them, and I was reminded of the daisy chains children on the edges of Barrowood make to ward away wights.

We passed a battle-menagerie, which Joskan whispered was a common enough sight in orc battles: cages of weird, deformed, or just plain violent monsters. I saw tar-daubed griffons and howlers, wolves and scorpions, and several huge creatures for which I had no name.

So taken was I with the sights and smells of the orc camp that I failed to look properly as I was walking and clattered into a huge, brutish orc. I tried to think of the Orc word for "apologies," then realized that there was no such thing. I muttered something under my breath, hunched my shoulders, and attempted to carry on.

Trust me to pick the biggest thug in the camp to bump into—this orc was huge, with a train of eight human heads

behind him and a ridiculously large weapon in an oiled sack. Worse, half his face was missing, no doubt the result of a previous battle. Half-Face walked quickly after me, his train of heads bouncing and dragging as he hobbled. A group of smaller but equally ugly orcs followed in the wake of his head-chain, snarling insults. I noticed the head of one lay at right angles to his shoulders, and one side of his face was flat, as though he'd been run over by a cart. A giant, meaty hand landed on my shoulder, spinning me around.

"You smell bad," Half-Face grumbled in Orc. He pinched me hard, then sniffed me again and murmured, "You smell... strange..."

Suddenly Joskan was at my side, breaking the huge orc's grip on my shoulder. "Back off," he snarled. "This one's mine."

"A female!" Half-Face grinned broadly. He stepped back and reached into his sack, drawing forth a ridiculously large three-headed meat cleaver. "I call my weapon Fleshwrecker," he said, eyeing me lasciviously.

"Why?" Joskan asked.

The giant looked momentarily stunned by the question, and I took the confusion as my signal to strike. I stepped forward and punched him hard in the gut, twisting to put my whole body into the blow. He staggered back, and within a second my sword was in my hand. Around us, a space was rapidly clearing. Half-Face eyed my weapon with a mixture of amusement and disgust.

"My brood-mother used to sew clothes with something like that," he chuckled. Then he swung his cleaver heavenward and roared, "Fleshwrecker!"

"Come on, woman!" An orc with a huge slit across his face shouted at me.

"Woman! Woman! Woman!" The orcs around us began to chant, happy for the entertainment. Money changed hands, hands changed hands, heads changed hands as we circled around, eyeing each other, Joskan and I trying to get on either side of Half-Face.

I began to work defensively for position, sure that the cleaver would soon tire its wielder. I dodged several arcing blows before ducking and tumbling past my opponent, who swung one last time and missed, his cleaver sticking into the ground. I turned and thrust my sword into the orc, who merely stared at me, his mouth parting again in that sickening grin. He began to pull the sword out of his wound, yelling and laughing as he did so, only to have Joskan reach around from behind and slit his throat neatly, kicking his feet from under him. Before Half-Face even hit the ground, his kin were falling on the corpse to rob it.

"Beaten by a woman!" a tall brutish orc cried out in laughter. Another orc—one without a nose, ears, or a lower jaw—tried to say something and failed, much to the amusement of the others.

"You'd make a good brood-mother." Slit-Face eyed me with his one good eye, the other lolling blindly whilst his hand fumbled for my shoulder.

"You're not her type." Joskan said, placing a bloody arm between us. Slit-Face paused, obviously considering the odds, then shrugged and moved away.

"That was lucky," said Joskan. "Next time we won't be. Don't let it happen again."

We moved quickly on, trying to mingle with the revelers, who variously staggered and sang and cheered. We were cutting quietly behind a line of jeering orcs when their noise suddenly stopped. The bag over my head left little visibility, but I could tell they were watching something with rapt attention.

"Warriors!" A booming voice split the air above. "Tomorrow we go to victory! Any insult must be avenged, and I, K'zaarg the Drover, will feast on succulent flesh, and the cracklings will be the finest we ever tasted!"

A roar struck up around us, the orcs slapping and grabbing each other, clanging weapons and swearing oaths, headbutting each other and biting their arms until they bled. I was pinched and pushed and prodded until I lost sight of my companion. Suddenly, a massive fist grabbed me from behind. I was carried aloft and turned, coming face to face to bag with an ettin of great size, one head spilt by a terrible wound, the other missing an eye. On its back it had an iron cradle in which stood an enormous orc, his chest bare above rolls of fat and his body so huge that his legs could barely support it. He pointed one thick finger at me.

"Will you kill tomorrow?" the chief shouted.

I nodded.

"Will you rend and bite and gouge?"

I nodded again, gasping as the fist tightened.

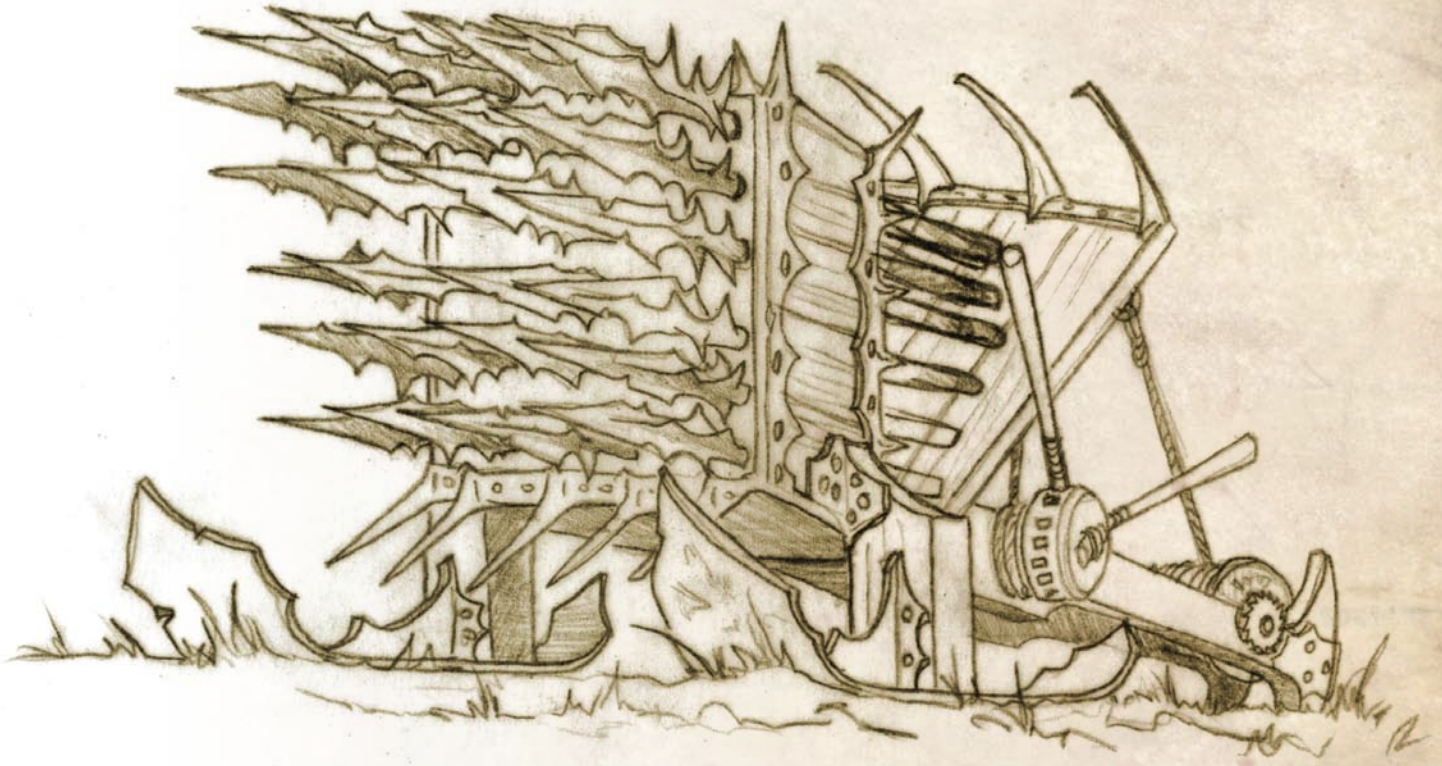
"Good, my mighty one." The chief looked away and the ettin lowered its hand, still gripping me tight. "Bring out the Forsaker!" the orc ordered.

A great drum struck up and a pair of mammoths came shuffling slowly through the crowd, driven by a dozen whip-wielding orcs. They dragged a colossus of iron and timber, spikes and corpses into the clearing before the chief—a siege machine of such size as I had never seen. An orc dressed in violet robes and carrying rolls of parchment stood at its summit, surrounded by a dozen ballistae and catapults of enormous size.

"Behold," proclaimed Violet Cloak, "the Forsaker!"

The Forsaker came to a stop with a tremendous grating sound. I could see timbers straining and iron bolts close to popping. From my vantage point, I caught sight of Joskan once more in the crowd, signaling me to remain still.

"Inventor, you have done well. Let us send our enemies a little starting gift!" The chief waved and the orc in the violet robes pushed a lever.



Orcs love big weapons.

For a moment, nothing happened, then the heavy catapults arced upwards, flinging their loads high into the sky. The crowd cheered.

“Reward the inventor!” the chief yelled.

Then something within the straining mass of timbers gave way. In a matter of seconds, the mighty siege weapon—made by orcs who are, on the whole, not noted for their engineering skills—began to unravel. The collapse of the towering weapon took less than a minute—a minute of chaos, splintering wood, and screams. When it finished, the Forsaker lay in ruins, with orcs dying beneath its broken limbs. The orc in violet was dragging himself from the wreckage in terror.

Mocking cries and jeers came from across the valley.

“Take the inventor to the Wheel of Unending Woe!” roared the chief, urging his ettin mount through the crowd. The giant cast me casually aside and I fell heavily on the ground.

I took the momentary confusion as my signal to leave and dashed through the crowd, soon locating my companion, who’d had the good sense not to move in the chaos. Fatigue was taking its toll on me now, and I found my eyes growing heavy. “I’m exhausted,” I said.

“We can’t be far from the edges of the first camp,” Joskan replied, “and I saw signs of the Defiled Corpse tribe ahead. I’ll ask around, you rest here.” He indicated a large timber crate filled halfway with strange, warm

globes. I climbed in and presently found myself drowsing.

Joskan returned shortly.

“So what did they say? Is it the Defiled Corpse tribe?” I asked, anxiously.

“Yes.”

“And what did the Cleft Head orcs say about them?”

Joskan made a dismissive gesture. “They said they’re crazy.”

“Crazy? *They’re* crazy?!”

“That’s what they said.”

“Any chance we can go through tomorrow? I’m not sure how much more of this I can take tonight.”

Joskan nodded and joined me in the hefty crate, half-burying himself in the globes and shutting the lid. Together we fell into an uneasy sleep, surrounded by the sounds of the orc camp, the growl of the thunderclouds, and the voices of orc mothers telling tales to their young about the Happy Fellow—the elf who comes to eat children who smile in their sleep.

I was moving as I woke. My guide had a look of concern as he peered from a crack beneath the crate’s lid, his face lit by the drab gray of day.

“This is bad,” he said. He looked worried, and I became aware that we were being pulled by something.

“Has battle been joined?”



Joskan's definition of "trouble."

"Yes, but that's not the bad thing." He hauled me upright to the crate's edge, and through the narrow crack I saw that we were being pulled by a great horned beast—a war rhino. Other animals flanked us, some pulling catapults, some simply cavalry, with orcs on their broad backs. The beasts were as big as houses—things of war clad in spikes and leather and whirring blades, great howdahs lashed to the backs of some by tight leather and iron straps that had become part of the creature itself. Others were like living siege engines, with rams and towers and ladders. On each screamed orcs, some firing great ballistae at will and laughing as they did. A huge windmill spun at the top of one howdah, a mass of black ragged sails spinning in the storm, skulls and fleshy heads spiked on its ends.

"What's the windmill for?" I asked, gaping.

"Decoration."

I kept scanning the field and noticed that several beasts pulled catapults with wooden crates loaded and ready to be flung.

Wooden crates like ours. I mentioned as much to Joskan.

"Yes, but that's not the bad thing, either."

"No?"

"No. Now that it's daylight, I've noticed that these globes are full of rockwasps."

"Rockwasps?"

"Hornets about the size of a rat. Sometimes shamans catch 'em and seal them in wax with tiny air holes. They catapult these into battle, and they burst on impact and cause havoc."

"Great."

"Oh, and the sting is fatal."

"Pity you didn't see them last night."

Joskan shrugged. "It was night."

"I thought orcs were good in the dark."

"I was tired, and I'm only half an orc. I have my mother's eyes."

I grimaced and picked up one of the waxy globes very carefully. I could see dark shapes within now, and faintly heard their angry buzzing.

"This, by the way, is what I would define as 'trouble,'" Joskan said.

So there we were, trapped in a crate of rockwasps about to be catapulted into the air to land, broken, amongst an army of orcs, surrounded by swarming insects whose sting is death.

"Any reason why we aren't even now sprinting for freedom?" I asked.

"Can't," he said, thumping on the roof of the crate, which rose just enough to reveal the weighty padlock thrust through its latch. "They must have locked it sometime during the night, probably to prevent accidental opening during launch."

"I thought you said they wouldn't fight until sundown."

"I guess I was wrong."

"K'zaarg!" A cry came up from the catapult next to us, and the crate on its platform was hurled skyward. I glanced hopefully at my companion, who shrugged his shoulders.

"K'zaarg!" Another crate flew, and another.

The sky broke above us and thunder roared.

"K'zaarg!" an orc voice nearby screamed, and I saw a hand reach for the rope to fire us heavenward.

I closed my eyes.

There was a second yell and a deafening crack as a ball of fire broke above us. An orc fell, screaming as he was crushed under the wheels of our catapult. We saw more bodies fall from the burning howdah. I slapped Joskan's back and laughed, enjoying a moment's relief before the jostling increased and I understood our new fate: our driver dead, the catapult thundered forward into the heat of battle, towed by an out-of-control war rhino.

Joskan began to batter himself against the crate, to little effect. The globes clattered ominously as we crossed the rough terrain. Ahead, through the rain, I could see a cliff approaching. I fumbled in my pockets.

"Keep still, damn it," I said. "I need to concentrate."
 "Of course!" Joskan grinned. "A spell for the warping of wood!"

I shook my head, fumbling deeper into my pockets.

"A spell to open locks?"

I sighed.

The rhino sped on, the drop closing.

"A spell for—"

"Shut up!" I yelled, and triumphantly pulled out a tiny piece of shiny stone.

"A pebble to the rescue. Great." Joskan began punching at the crate once more, yelling as he saw the drop closing.

Lifting up the lid of the crate as much as I could, I yelled as I touched the piece of mica to the lock's haft. There was a resounding crack, and then it sundered and split. With a bound, I burst open the lid and leapt for safety, rolling as I hit the ground. I looked back just in time to watch helplessly as Joskan, attempting to do the same, had his axe snag on the lid. He was halfway out of the crate when the catapult vanished over the drop.

I heard a distant crash, followed by the sound of buzzing.

I picked myself up and dashed to the edge, now visible as a low stone cliff some fifty feet high. At its foot lay the crushed remnants of the catapult, pinning the rhino to the ground. Several huge black hornets flew into the air, eager to join the battle. Nearby orcs began to run.

"Lift me up, gods damn it!" My companion clung to the cliff beneath my feet.

"How did you...?"

"I prayed to an orc god at the last moment. Orc gods always listen. Now stop talking and start lifting."

I laughed as I leaned over and pulled him up. The sound of battle intensified all around us, and through the driving rain we could see combat joined on all flanks. I pulled my wayfinder from my shirt and checked it again, then followed its course away from the cliff and into the gray murk ahead.

The smoke and rain turned the battlefield into a muddy swamp in moments, blood mingling with rain and flashing lightning. We fought orcs where we had to and ran past them where we could, our stealth forgotten in the press of bodies. Arrows flew randomly, a burning head sailed past, and a huge rock crashed near us. At last we came out on top of a low hill, from where we could make out our situation better.

The clouds above were almost touching the ground now, so heavy were they with the storm. Lightning flashed down into the battle, some of it no doubt called by orc shamans, and the rain pelted the chaos until it was impossible to pick out who was fighting who.

Then something incredible happened. As Joskan and I looked on in awe, the sky above the battle suddenly howled, and a wavering finger descended from above, a needle of cloud that tore at the ground it touched, dancing across

ORC SIEGE ENGINES

The orcs of Belkzen are fond of using bizarre war machines in their battles, many of them as much deranged works of art as effective weapons. While most of these are designed by the clan-neutral Steeleaters of the Foundry, occasionally orc leaders commission independent designs, with mixed results. A few common types are listed below.

Battle Barrow: This metal-shielded wheelbarrow provides complete cover for the archer hidden inside. The orc conscripted to push it is rarely as lucky.

Crushing Wheel: In close-packed battles, few weapons are as feared as this massive steel rolling pin. Whether pushed by orc or beast, it can be counted on to flatten everything in its path.

Earthmaul: This enormous hammer functions like a sideways-mounted catapult, and is capable of clearing wide swaths of enemies.

Harvester: This aurochs-pulled threshing machine is a long line of whirling blades that can be pulled through battle with great effect.

Manticore's Tail: This massive ballista fires a dozen or more spears at once in a devastating, if wildly inaccurate, rain of steel.

the land and consuming everything in its path. Bellowing its fury, it began to spin, flashes of lightning dancing with it as it rotated faster and faster.

The finger of the gods had come to the battle, a thing the Shoanti have a whispered name for: Yaponcha, the Angel of Storms. The tornado grew in noise and fury as it tore through the battle, lifting orcs and steeds as it raced, an inescapable scream of crushing wind.

Below us, the orcs were laughing. Laughing as the storm tore through their armies, picking up great rhinos and siege machines and bending them like corn in a breeze. Laughing as the roar burst their ears, as weapons and debris—given insane speed by the tornado—flew with terrible effect through weak flesh. Laughed as they rode into battle in a world gone mad with noise and anger and hate.

"Nozalu'rg! Nozalu'rg!" they screamed.

I asked Joskan what it meant.

"Apocalypse," he answered.

I realized that the orcs must think that the world was ending.

And they were laughing.

Our flight from the battle was one that gives me uneasy sleep. After what seemed an eternity, the noise became calm. As distance lost the battle behind us, the blood and combat became merely an uncomfortable memory.

Yet something remains with me still. Something that is beyond explanation.

The laughter of the orcs as they thought their world was ending.



BESTIARY

A HISTORY OF ASHES

“Our fathers didn’t name this place the Cinderlands just for its fires. Plenty of places burn, but none in so many ways as here.

“In the Cinderlands, the land burns: scorched by a sun that draws too close, charred by fires from the belly of the earth, parched by the rains that rarely come, and lashed by lightning when they do.

“In the Cinderlands, the wind burns: howling in waves of smoldering ash and black smoke, dancing with fires set by the heavens, and scouring flesh as sure as any flame.

“In the Cinderlands, the beasts burn, their skin like blisters, their teeth like stone, and their hunger like fire.

“In the Cinderlands, we burn, and it proves our mettle to all the world.”

—Nol Ashes-For-Eyes, Thundercaller of the Sklar-Quah

The Pathfinder Bestiary heads into the burning wastes of Varisia's Cinderlands this month—a parched, barren region home to all manner of deadly beasts and fiery foes. Of these fierce predators, several are unique to this burning region of Varisia's Storval Plateau: magical beasts with flaming maws, the raging remnants of the dead, and some things drawn to Golarion long ago that are best left buried. Not that a land known for plains of flaming gas, miniature volcanoes, and blizzards of burning ash really needs more ways to kill.

WANDERING MONSTERS

Well known as one of the deadliest expanses in Varisia, the Cinderlands are a place of stifling heat, flash fires, and endless ash. More than just the land's natural inhospitality makes these angry plains dangerous. Among the cracked clay, parched dust, and scorched bones, countless tenacious beasts make their homes. Yet for all its danger, several peoples seek to carve lives from the burning earth. Savages like orcs, gargoyles, and giants endlessly hunt for food and water, but also among them are the hardy Shoanti, unwavering human tribes determined to survive despite all with which their neighbors, nature, and the gods themselves confound them.

While braving the Cinderlands, travelers have much to dread. Characters forced to wander these blasted lands during the course of “A History of Ashes” might find their travels interrupted by any number of deadly beasts, murderous weather, or lethal terrain. Here are a few encounters from the Cinderlands Random Encounters table that warrant further details.

Dangerous Lands: The volatile nature of the Cinderlands produce a variety of deadly natural features. From sprawling gas fields to volcano-like cinder cones, these unpredictable terrains can kill as effectively as any wild beast. See “The Cinderlands” on page 58 of this volume for more details.

Emberstorm: Windstorms of ash and flame that sweep across the Cinderlands, emberstorms scour the land and char all in their path. See page 61 for full details on these black blizzards.

Orcs: Raiders from Urglin or the Hold of Belkzen frequently wander from their despoiled refuges to pillage Shoanti settlements and prey upon the beasts of the Cinderlands. While an orc hunting party of 1d12 typical orcs is EL 4, a fully armed raiding party of a dozen or more classed orcs might be significantly higher.

Shoanti: Any who roam the Cinderlands eventually encounter the land's fierce barbarians. An encounter with Shoanti can take a variety of forms, from a run-in with a lone Shoanti brave (EL 1), to a confrontation with a band of 6 Sklar-Quah Burn Riders (EL 9; see page 55) to happening across an entire tribe of migrating nomads.

CINDERLANDS RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d%	Encounter	Avg. EL	Source
1–6	1 cindersnake*	1/3	MM 279
7–11	1d4 horned spirestalkers*	2	Pathfinder #1
12–14	1 ember scorpion*	3	MM 287
15–17	Emberstorm	4	See description
18–22	1d4 redback rattlesnakes*	4	MM 279
23–26	1d6 hippogriffs	5	MM 152
27–29	1 basilisk	5	MM 23
30–35	1d6 bush tigers*	5	MM 274
36–39	1 bulette	7	MM 30
40–45	1d12 cinderwolves	7	Pathfinder #10
46–51	1d12 ankhegs	8	MM 14
52–56	2d12 aurochs*	9	MM 269
57–59	1d4 chimeras	9	MM 34
60–63	1d6 wyverns	9	MM 259
64–67	2d6 gargoyles	10	MM 113
68–70	1d4 stone giants	10	MM 124
71–72	1 bonestorm	11	Pathfinder #10
73–75	1d4 storm rocs	11	MM 215
76–77	1 purple worm	12	MM 211
78–80	1d6 dragonnes	12	MM 89
81–83	1 red render	13	Pathfinder #10
84–88	Orcs	—	See description
89–95	Shoanti	—	See description
96–99	Dangerous lands	—	See description
100	1 adult red dragon	15	MM 75

* Native Cinderlands creature, see page 65 for stat details.



TRULY RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

When designing a random encounter table, there are generally two ways to go about it. You can create a list of encounters specific to the adventure you're preparing, or you can create a more organic list, choosing encounters and creatures likely to populate an adventure site regardless of your PCs' levels.

While the first method assures you'll get an encounter of an adequate EL every time, the convenience of that fact might detract from some GMs' feelings of verisimilitude. Using the other method, though, the PCs have a good chance of being under- or overmatched by the result.

In the cases of unbalanced encounters, GMs are encouraged to make such match-ups less combat based. Using this month's table as an example, waking up one morning and finding a cindersnake in one's boot isn't much of a threat per se, but it helps drive home the wild feel of the Cinderlands. Alternately, even the distant silhouette of a red dragon is probably enough to make unprepared parties run for cover and make them feel like they're part of a world that's populated by more creatures than just those within an encounter level or two of their level.

—Wes Schneider

BONESTORM

A swirling, 15-foot-high, funnel cloud composed of thousands of jagged human bones whirls in an uncontrolled vortex of death. From it, the air splits with the deafening grind of bone-on-bone.

BONESTORM

Always CE Diminutive undead (swarm)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60; Listen +1,

Spot +1

Aura unholy winds 10 ft. (DC 18)

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 20, flat-footed 17

(+6 Dex, +3 natural,

+4 size)

hp 104 (16d12)

Fort +5, **Ref** +11,

Will +11

Immune cold,

swarm traits,

undead traits,

weapon damage;

SR 20

OFFENSE

Spd fly 50 ft.

(perfect)

Melee swarm (3d6 plus 3d6 unholy)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Special Attacks wrath

TACTICS

Before Combat Unliving and unthinking, a bonestorm does not prepare before combat, it simply turns and speeds toward living creatures as soon as it detects their presence, intent on adding their bones to itself.

During Combat A bonestorm does not preferentially select opponents, rather just seeking to encompass as many living creatures as possible. If injured, however, it does pause to suck up the bones of any convenient skeleton.

Morale Completely devoid of fear or sense of self, a bonestorm fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 3, **Dex** 23, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +8; **Grp** —

SQ gather bones

ECOLOGY

Environment any

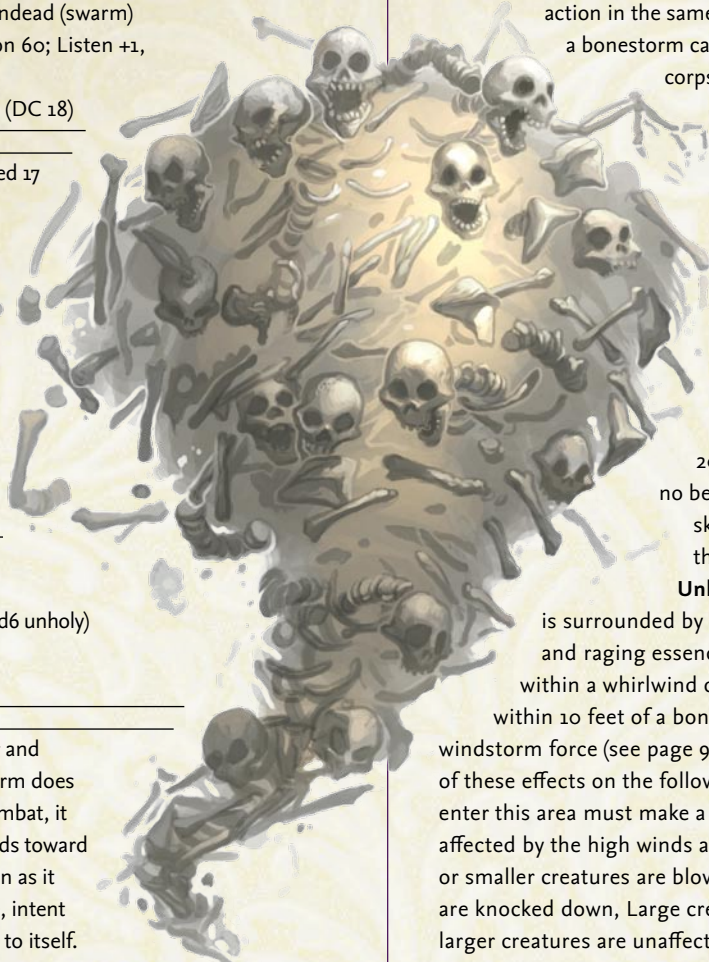
Organization solitary

Treasure none

Advancement none

Level Adjustment —

CR 8



SPECIAL ABILITIES

Distraction (Ex) Any living creature that begins its turn with a bonestorm in its space must succeed on a DC 18 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Gather Bones (Su) By spending a full-round action in the same square as a dead creature, a bonestorm can shred the flesh from the corpse and absorb the bones into its swarm. The absorption grants the bonestorm healing (or temporary hit points if it is unwounded). The amount of healing depends on the size of the body absorbed. A Small creature grants 2 points of healing. A Medium grants 5 points, Large grants 10 points, and Huge grants 20 point. A bonestorm gains no benefit from collecting the skeletons of creatures smaller than Small or larger than Huge.

Unholy Winds (Su) A bonestorm is surrounded by fierce netherwinds, the howls and raging essences of souls forever trapped within a whirlwind of death. As such, the area within 10 feet of a bonestorm is affected by winds of windstorm force (see page 95 of the DMG or the summary of these effects on the following page). Creatures that enter this area must make a DC 18 Fortitude save or be affected by the high winds as dictated by their size: Small or smaller creatures are blown away, Medium creatures are knocked down, Large creatures are checked, and larger creatures are unaffected. In addition, these winds are responsible for a bonestorm's movement and protect it from the damage and dispersal Diminutive swarms typically face when affected by powerful winds.

Wrath (Su) A bonestorm cuts apart creatures occupying the same space as it, not just with splintered bones and bludgeoning skulls, but with the unholy energies of the damned souls that make up the undead whirlwind. Thus, 3d6 points of the damage dealt by a bone swarm is physical, and 3d6 points are untyped damage, resulting directly from unholy power.

Bonestorms are the charnel offspring of vast battlefields, the wrathful resurrections of legions of the fallen unwilling to let go of their wrath and unable to accept defeat. Amid violent currents of tormented souls, the rent corpses of the fallen rise again, formless masses of marrow and splintered bone that know only revenge.

While bonestorms can spontaneously form—typically days or weeks after a particularly violent or meaningful battle—they have also been known to be created by malicious necromancers and arcane warlords. Brought into being to serve as lifeless engines of war or to wreak havoc upon their creators' enemies, bonestorms purposefully brought into existence have slightly more direction than their spontaneously forming counterparts. Upon completing a task, however, its not uncommon for one of these cyclones of bones to indulge its motivating rage, attacking and destroying living things far in excess of its creator's wishes.

A bonestorm typically rises to about 10 feet tall, though it has no weight besides the hundreds of pounds of bones caught up in its macabre vortex.

ECOLOGY

Bonestorms are wholly unnatural creations, formed of tortured souls and rage. As mindless undead, they exist only to serve their creators or, in the cases where these horrors come into being of their own accord or escape a master's control, blindly wreak their formless rage upon the living.

Bonestorms cannot be conversed with: they have no intellect of their own. If successfully rebuked, one of these undead swarms can be directed to follow simple commands, though once its instructions are exhausted, it goes back about its assault on the living

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Bonestorms are most commonly found wherever residual ill will and a sufficient supply of raw bone material permits them to subsist: graveyards, battlefields, and catacombs being most common. While bonestorms often rise from the corpses of defeated armies—especially those defeated while defending their countries, on religious crusades, or fighting for other strongly held beliefs—such grim sites are by no means the only places these horrors form. In some cases, bonestorms have been known to rise from trash mounds piled high with the discarded bones of wasted or maltreated animals, from the catacombs of the dishonored dead, from shipwreck sites on lonely desolate coastlines, and even from the ashes of unjustly burned outcasts. Wherever the lingering wrath of numerous souls and a large number of bones come together in one place, there might a bonestorm form.

Although mindless, bonestorms do seem to be drawn to burial grounds, ossuaries, and similar areas of death. With their ability to gather up the remains of the dead to fuel their revenge, this draw seems to be less a matter of morbid affinity and more an instinct to sustain their existence and continue on their vengeful rampages.

WIND EFFECTS

The bonestorm makes use of a variety of conditions typically caused by weather and high winds. For ease of reference, the most pertinent of these conditions are detailed here.

Checked: Creatures are unable to move forward against the force of the wind. Flying creatures are blown back 1d6×5 feet.

Knocked Down: Creatures are knocked prone by the force of the wind. Flying creatures are instead blown back 1d6×10 feet.

Blown Away: Creatures on the ground are knocked prone and rolled 1d4×10 feet, taking 1d4 points of nonlethal damage per 10 feet. Flying creatures are blown back 2d6×10 feet and take 2d6 points of nonlethal damage due to battering and buffeting.

CREATING A BONESTORM

A cleric, wizard, or sorcerer may create a bonestorm by casting *create greater undead*, if the caster possesses the required caster level of 19th or higher. In addition to the material components required by the spell, the caster also requires 16 Hit Dice worth of unanimated corpses within 100 feet to use as raw material. These corpses may be separated from the caster by earth or walls, allowing the creator to animate the buried or entombed.

Although mindless, and even when animated by magic, bonestorms are creatures of rage. This makes them relatively difficult to control. Whenever a bonestorm completes a task given it by its creator or other caster who has gain control of it, there is a 10% chance that the undead swarm breaks away from its controller and goes berserk, rampaging of its own accord. While a caster can regain control of a berserk bonestorm, it requires an additional control undead check.

THE BONES OF BLOODSWORN

In 4396 AR, Chelish victory at the Battle of Bloodsworn Vale paved the way for southern colonization of the Varisian wilderness. This path, however, was opened with the bones of thousands of Shoanti warriors who, for all their ferocity and bravery, could not stop the march of Chelish imperialism. From the battlefields of Bloodsworn Vale rose one of the largest and most famous bonestorms in existence, simply called the Bones of Bloodsworn by those forced or frightened to travel the valley. Spontaneously formed from the corpses of thousands of Shoanti warriors determined to defend their lands even after their ignominious deaths, the incredible bonestorm was destroyed by a band of heroic early Korvosans known as the Watchers of the Way in 4411 AR. More than a dozen times in the past few centuries, however, bonestorms of terrible size and destructive power have spawned from Bloodsworn Vale's thorn-tangled earth, wreaking havoc and brutal revenge upon Varisia's invaders anew.



CINDER WOLF

This wolf-like beast has a charred and blackened hide, its flesh split in places and seeping a fiery red ooze. The slavering creature stalks closer, snarling gutturally as cinders flicker from its maw.

CINDER WOLF

CR 2

N Medium magical beast

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +4, Spot +4

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 15
(+1 Dex, +4 natural)

hp 15 (2d10+4); fast healing 3 (in fire)

Fort +5, **Ref** +4, **Will** +1

Resist fire 10

Weakness vulnerable to cold

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares)

Melee bite +5 (1d6+4 plus 1d4 fire)

Special Attacks trip

TACTICS

During Combat When encountered alone, a cinder wolf attempts to run down its prey, attacking only once its victim is too tired to put up a fight. In packs, they circle prey, trapping their victims between multiple pack members. Once the prey slows down, the cinder wolves surround their target and close in, setting themselves up

to receive flanking bonuses. When fighting an opponent of its size or larger, a cinder wolf tries to trip its foe and attack it on the ground, giving itself and any pack members a better chance to bite.

Morale An individual cinder wolf breaks off the attack if reduced to fewer than 5 hit points. A group of cinder wolves retreats if more than 75% of their original number are slain or have already fled.

STATISTICS

Str 17, **Dex** 13, **Con** 14, **Int** 2, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +5

Feats Track

Skills Listen +4, Spot +4, Survival +3
(+7 when tracking living creatures)

SQ fiery body

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate or warm deserts

Organization solitary, pair (2), or pack (5–24)

Treasure none

Advancement 3–4 HD (Medium); 5–7 HD (Large)

Level Adjustment +2 (cohort)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Fast Healing (Ex) A cinder wolf heals 1 point of damage every round that it resists a point or more of fire damage, so long as it has at least 1 hit point. This fire must be from an external source, not from a cinder wolf's fiery bite.

Fiery Body (Su) A cinderwolf inflicts 1d4 points of fire damage when it bites a foe in addition to the normal bite damage. In any round that the cinderwolf resists at least one point of fire damage, it gains fast healing 3.

Trip (Ex) A cinder wolf that hits with a bite attack can attempt to trip the opponent (+3 check modifier) as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the cinder wolf.

Skills Cinder wolves have a +2 racial bonus on Listen, Spot, and Survival checks. *The Survival bonus increases to +6 when tracking living creatures.

Vicious predators and tireless trackers, cinder wolves are a relentless threat to the travelers and native tribes who make the Cinderlands their home. Ravenous creatures that endlessly hunt to fuel their fiery metabolisms, cinder wolves attack nearly any creature, from well-armored horned spirestalkers and ember scorpions to Shoanti barbarians and even stone giant warriors. Fleet footed and fearsome in appearance, these tenacious pack hunters thrive amid the flames of the Cinderlands, their fiery bites and relentless hunger embodying the deadliness of the burning plains.

An adult cinder wolf stands just over 3 feet tall and weighs up to 200 pounds. What little fur they have is often singed and black, but can also be ash-gray. Their eyes are frequently bloodshot red with yellow irises.

ECOLOGY

Sages widely hold that cinder wolves were originally the offspring of the Kodar crag wolf—now found almost exclusively along the western and northern faces of the mountain range—and hell hounds kept by ancient wizards and their minions. Although countless generations have bred the outsider nature out of modern cinder wolves, the fiery connection to their distant relatives remains readily apparent in their dark fur and flaming breath.

Cinder wolves are unfortunate creatures, as even after centuries of survival, the blood of natural creatures and their hellish ancestors does not mix well. Although the species breeds true and is more than capable of survival, the life of a cinder wolf pup is often short and painful. Unborn cinder wolves do not gain their resistance to flame until late in their mothers' pregnancies, developing it as a reaction to the intense heat of their mothers' metabolism and countless burns while still being carried. Thus, of the dozen or so pups a mother typically births, more than half are stillborn, and even those that do survive bear lifelong scars.

While the infernal fires of a hell hound are a product of its connection to the Lower Planes, in a cinder wolf they rely upon an unnatural quick metabolism for fuel. As such, cinder wolves are constantly hungry, needing to eat several times their weight each week—a particular difficulty in a region as harsh as the Cinderlands—lest the flames within them run low. When these fires gutter out completely, the cinder wolf dies as well.

Cinder wolves are somewhat short-lived, as they are only resistant to the Cinderlands' annual firestorms and not immune. While their resilience and instincts allow most to weather or avoid the worst emberstorms or volcanic events, a sizable portion of the cinder wolf population is culled every year when particularly deadly storms blow through.

A cinderwolf's vision is remarkable in its ability to view heat to a limited extent. By following the lingering heat left by a creature's passage, cinderwolves are adept at tracking live prey. This heat sight proves limited beyond its usefulness in tracking, though, and too weak for the hunters to glimpse prey through solid barriers.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

A typical cinder wolf den might have as many as a dozen adults, with as many as double that number adolescents and cubs. When threatened, all but the cubs fight, the

CINDER WOLF PELTS

The hides of cinder wolves prove exceptionally useful in the creation of heat resilient armors. By making a DC 16 Survival check, one can successfully skin a cinder wolf, leaving its coarse pelt in quality good enough to work into armor or other goods. Should this pelt be used later in the creation of a suit of hide armor (in addition to all the normal materials, DC 13 Craft [armorsmithing]), that armor can be enhanced with the fire resistance, improved fire resistance, or greater fire resistance special abilities at 75% of the normal price.

A cinder wolf pelt is an uncommon commodity and can rarely be found for sale, the bristly fur being uncomfortable and hard to work with and the demand—despite their usefulness in magic—is limited. Even when found in Varisian markets, the cost is typically upwards of 600 gp. Thus, most who desire a cinder wolf pelt are forced to either find and skin a cinder wolf himself, or trade with Shoanti native to the Cinderlands.

older wolves doing all they can to bring down or lead off danger.

Cinder wolves build their lairs in hot places: near gas fields, on the edges of cinder cones, and within rocky outcroppings exposed to the midday heat and frequent emberstorms. The predators favor such lairs as they suffer near constant pain from their skin splitting and rupturing in cool air. Aside from finding smoldering dens, their only relief from this pain comes from licking themselves—thus exposing their skin to their fiery breath—but it is a very small comfort at best.

The Shoanti of the Cinderlands hunt cinder wolves when their numbers become too great for the local wildlife to support—usually just prior to significant annual firestorms—and the predators begin turning their attention to the humanoid tribes. Many barbarian tribes hold annual hunts specifically to thin the numbers of the cinder wolves and reduce the predators' depredations on their tribes. Experienced hunters who have slain more than one cinder wolf usually sew the pelts together to make hide armor and blankets.

TRAINING CINDER WOLVES

The constant hunger and pain cinder wolves endure make them hard to manage and even more difficult to tame. Taming a cinder wolf requires 6 weeks of work and a DC 25 Handle Animal check. This DC decreases to 20 if the beast is trained in an area that is constantly 100 degrees or hotter. Even after this initial training, though, the DCs of all attempts to further train a cinder wolf are 5 higher, unless they're again made in areas of extreme heat. Although difficult to teach and quick to disobey, cinder wolves make excellent trackers and are widely coveted by hunters on the Storval Plateau and beyond.



HAVERO

This massive mound of tentacles rises and falls, hinting at the breathing of a great slumbering beast below. Every so often, the tip of one of the glistening filaments twitches to life, spontaneously growing a razor-like feeler, horrible eye, or other alien appendage. The creature's body is a looming clot of these appendages, a twitching knot of wriggling matter.

HAVERO

CR 24

NE Colossal aberration

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 100 ft.; Listen +9, Spot +46

DEFENSE

AC 43, touch 3, flat-footed 42

(+1 Dex, +40 natural, -8 size)

hp 459 (34d8+309); fast healing 25

Fort +20, **Ref** +12, **Will** +28

Defensive Abilities alien mind; **DR** 20/—; **Immune** cold, inhaled effects, mind-affecting effects, **Resist** acid 30, fire 30, electricity 30; **SR** 34

Weaknesses light sensitivity

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (clumsy)

Melee variable (see below)

Space 60 ft.; **Reach** 120 ft.

Special Attacks appendages

TACTICS

Before Combat As most haveros are deep in hibernation upon being encountered, the creatures often take 1d3 rounds to rouse themselves to action.

During Combat Haveros manufacture appendages as needed to respond to their environment and enemies, generally fighting with two tentacles, two ocular tentacles, two slashing tentacles, two armored tentacles, and an acid spewer.

Morale Haveros understand the concepts of fear and flight but such ideas do not apply to their existences.

Thus, haveros fight until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 38, **Dex** 12, **Con** 28, **Int** 5, **Wis** 29, **Cha** 30

Base Atk +25; **Grp** +55

Feats Alertness, Awesome Blow, Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack.

Skills Spot +46

Languages telepathic savant

SQ no breath

ECOLOGY

Environment any (usually outer space)

Organization solitary

Treasure none

Advancement 35+ (Colossal)

Level Adjustment —

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Alien Mind (Ex) Anyone who attempts to link minds with a haveros (such as via *detect thoughts* or *telepathy*) risks the trauma associated with tapping into its raw alien thoughts. Such an act forces the character to make a DC 36 Will save. Those who fail are permanently affected by a *feblemind* spell (CL 20th). The save DC is Wisdom-based.

Light Sensitivity (Ex) Haveros despise sunlight. Even when it lacks an ocular appendage, a haveros is dazzled in the presence of natural sunlight or when within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

Appendages (Ex) A haveros can alter the shape of any of its hundreds of squirming appendages, specializing them into a variety of tentacular tools. A haveros has 20 appendage points, which it can spend as a full-round action to create a number of specialized appendages not exceeding this point total. As another full-round action, it can withdraw its tentacles back into itself, dissolving them and regaining the points spent to create them. If one of a haveros's tentacles is destroyed in combat, it immediately regains the points used to create it.

For example, a haverero could use its 20 points to create 6 slashing tentacles, a grasping tentacle, and an incorporeal tentacle; 4 brilliant energy tentacles; 20 reaching tentacles; or any other number of tentacles whose sum total is 20 points. Havereros typically manifest the following tentacles, although some might have the ability to create more. The point cost of each tentacle is listed after each name.

Tentacle (1): Grants the following attack—tentacle +23 (2d6+14).

Ocular Tentacle (2): Grants +8 bonus on Spot checks per ocular tentacle.

Slashing Tentacle (2): Grants the following attack—claw +23 (2d6+14/18–20).

Armored Tentacle (3): Increases the haverero's total natural armor bonus by +2 per armored tentacle.

Grasping Tentacle (3): Grants the following attack—tentacle +23 (2d6+14); constrict (2d6+14), improved grab.

Reaving Tentacle (3): Grants the following attack—tentacle +23 (2d6+14), rend 4d6+21; requires two reaving tentacles, both of which must hit the same target in the same round in order to rend.

Acid-Spewer (4): 30-ft. cone, damage 6d6 acid, Reflex DC 36 half; each additional 4 points spent adds +6d6 acid damage and 10 feet to the cone's length.

Poison Stinger (4): Grants the following attack—sting +23 (2d6+14 plus poison); haverero poison: injury; Fortitude DC 36; initial and secondary damage 3d6 Wisdom drain. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Incorporeal Tentacle (5): Grants the following attack—incorporeal touch +23 (2d6 negative energy plus 1d10 Charisma drain, can attack targets through walls and other solid barriers).

Vorpal Tentacle (10): Grants the following attack—pincer +23 (4d6+14; on a successful critical hit, target is beheaded as per the *vorpal* weapon quality).

No Breath (Ex) A haverero does not breathe, and as such is immune to inhaled toxins and odor-based effects.

Telepathic Savant (Su) A haverero can transmit vague impressions of its thoughts across limitless distances to any creature it is aware of. A haverero does not communicate using language and its thoughts are limited and often unintelligible to mortal minds. A haverero contacting a creature using this ability does not subject the target to its alien mind.

The word “haverero” has its roots in ancient Thassilonian, roughly translating into “smothering arms.” The creature itself was first described in notes and theories postulated by ancient students of the stars and delvers into dark lore. Horrifically, havereros are not the mere imaginings of those sages who chronicle the heavens. They are entities of deepest blackness, and on terrible occasions a lone haverero has been drawn to Golarion, putting all the races of the world into reach of its endless, ruinous arms.

HISTORY

The existence of havereros was first discovered accidentally through the course of divination magics in the ancient empire of Thassilon. Ever seeking larger, more potent beasts to conjure and command, Thassilonian sages gradually uncovered the existence of a massive creature capable of spawning unlimited clawed horrors that dwelt far beyond the range of most remote viewing devices. Intrigued by a new potential source of military power buried somewhere in the night sky, the Thrallkeepers of Thassilon engaged in a race to be the first to secure a haverero. When their wizards' long-range spells of communication at last tapped the creatures' minds and confirmed the existence of dark, maddening intelligences, the wizards' desire to possess one only intensified.

Methods of conjuring or otherwise leading the creatures to Golarion through the span of space were devised in haste. Eventually, coaxed by fathomless desires, a number of havereros ultimately permitted themselves to be drawn to Thassilon, but not to become pawns: the havereros came to kill.

ECOLOGY

Although their thought processes are too alien to permit interpretation, havereros are decidedly malevolent. They have no need for sustenance of any kind, yet they consume living creatures with mouths buried beneath their mounds of tentacles. Havereros do not age, nor do they die of any known natural cause. Beyond these apparent facts, though, exceedingly little rational knowledge has been gleaned about these unearthly horrors.

A haverero's telepathy is theoretically limitless in range, although when sending its mind across galaxies, even its thoughts require considerable time to travel. The Thrallkeepers theorized that the accidental interception of a haverero's stray thought might be a cause for some forms of madness and inexplicable genius. One sage even hypothesized that the ancient Thrallkeepers were able to transport havereros to Golarion not because of their own discoveries, but because the havereros quietly sent them the necessary ideas as to how they might accomplish the feat.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

The ancient tome of starry observations and occult lore, *On Verified Madness*, refers to the haverero's home as the farthest corner of “The Dark Tapestry,” a place that includes the blackness blotting the space between the stars. Havereros have no natural niche in Golarion and they exist only by the machinations of those who once possessed both the power and recklessness to transport them to this world. No one knows how many of these horrors lurk in the silent, lightless depths of the universe.



RED REAVER

This hulking humanoid towers at a height of ten feet. Its body is thick and hairless, its gray hide flushing with crimson along the arms and legs. Strangely tiny bat-like jut from its shoulder blades while its gangly claws swing down to its ankles. Three separate pairs of crimson eyes hint at the creature's crude intellect, but its powerful jaws and razor-sharp talons dismiss any suggestion of docility.

RED REAVER

CR 13

Usually N Large magical beast

Init -2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft; Listen +9, Spot +9

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 9, flat-footed 29
(+22 natural, -1 Size, -2 Dex)

hp 184 (16d10+96)

Fort +16, **Ref** +8, **Will** +6

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft., fly 20 ft. (clumsy)

Melee 2 claws +23 (1d8+8) and
bite +18 (2d6+4)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks rend, roar

TACTICS

During Combat Red reavers are moody, volatile creatures that put no thought into tactics, relying on their brute strength to overcome any danger. Whenever possible, red reavers roar and then charge into battle, making use of their Improved Bull Rush and Awesome Blow feats.

Morale A red reaver withdraws if it believes its bonded site is in danger and in need of protection. A reaver confronted at its bonded site sometimes abandons the site and flees if severely damaged.

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 6, **Con** 23, **Int** 3, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +16; **Grp** +28

Feats Awesome Blow, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Track

Skills Listen +9, Spot +9, Survival +4

Language understands a few simple words of Giant

SQ distracted, flight

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate deserts and hills

Organization solitary

Treasure standard

Advancement 17–25 HD (Large), 26–34 (Huge)

Level Adjustment —

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Distracted (Ex) Red reavers are easily distracted by beautiful sights and sounds. Any successful Perform check of DC 30 or higher has the additional effect of placating the creature, causing it to stop whatever it's doing and stand still to enjoy the performance. The red reaver remains stationary and calm until the performance stops or it takes damage. A performer can only take advantage of a red reaver's distraction ability once per hour. At the GM's discretion, a red reaver might also be affected by scenes of particular beauty, although they are usually only distracted by a static view or work of art for 5 minutes. It generally isn't distracted by beautiful creatures, but it could be distracted by particularly eye-catching apparel worn by a creature.

Flight (Su) A red reaver's ability to fly is partially supernatural. In areas where supernatural abilities do not function, a red reaver can only fly for short distances, and must land at the end of each turn or it falls.

Rend (Ex) A red reaver that hits a single opponent with both claw attacks latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. This attack automatically deals 2d6+12 damage.

Roar (Su) A red reaver can loose a devastating roar every 1d4 rounds. All creatures except red reavers within 120 feet must succeed on a DC 20 Will save or become shaken. Those within 30 feet who fail their saves become panicked. Creatures who successfully save cannot be affected by the same red reaver's roar for 24 hours. This is a mind-affecting fear effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Slow-witted but possessed of a dangerous temper, massive red reavers are violent forces of nature. With weights of almost 4,500 pounds, they often leave sizeable depressions in the ground when they crash to earth upon their disproportionately small wings. While red reavers do not seek out creatures to battle and are rarely aggressive at first, these simple creatures' territorial natures and tendency to misinterpret threats make approaching one an exceedingly dangerous proposition.

ECOLOGY

Red reavers are omnivorous. They spend days at a time hunting along rivers and secluded shorelines for fish and larger creatures that come to the water to drink. While red reavers often seek out caves in foul weather, most of the time these brutes merely collapse where they stand when overcome by slumber.

Simple in both heart and mind, red reavers are often transfixed by the natural beauty of random curiosities. On occasion, red reavers have been spotted standing as still as statues watching multi-colored sunsets. Others might be beguiled for hours when they spy their own reflection in a clear pool of water. Tales are told of red reavers drawn to traveling bards, the reaver listening to the minstrel's music with fascination but then unintentionally tearing the hapless performer to shreds after the exhausted bard at last puts down his instrument.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Red reavers prefer to live among mountain ranges, particularly those with an abundance of rivers and streams or near the sea. The massive brawlers are almost always solitary, save for a brief frenetic mating season every 6 years. Following its live birth, a reaver infant grows swiftly and leaves home within months, eager to claim its own territory.

Red reavers do not get along with gray renders. A chance passing between the two invariably results in an immediate brawl. Each brute clamps its jaws on the other's neck and the pair rolls around on the ground as each tears away at its opponent's flesh, completely oblivious to its surrounding environment. Although these battles are often long and vicious, they are rarely fought to the death.

BONDED SITE

Like their gray render cousins, red reavers possess the curious habit of bonding, although red reavers typically become the stalwart guardians of places or particular things. Red reavers imprint themselves with a unique natural structure, such as unusual outcroppings of rocks, pristine waterfalls, or even elaborately grown, solitary trees. In more unusual cases, though, the brutes might find a discarded piece of art, a statue in a ruined temple, or even an ornate monument or road post to fixate on.

Upon finding a location or beautiful work, a reaver usually stays in close proximity to the site. A red reaver guards its bonded site from a distance, content to simply check in from time to time and stare in wonderment. When its favored site is approached by other creatures, though, a red reaver rushes in to guard its charge, roaring at the first whiff of danger.

If a red reaver's bonded site is ever moved or destroyed, the brawler flies into a vengeful rage, wrecking whatever it comes across and slaying everyone it believes responsible—typically the first living creatures it encounters after finding its charge damaged. After its spat of mournful revenge is complete, the reaver collapses and blubbers for days on end. It takes 1d4 days before a red reaver who has lost its bonded site spontaneously brightens and wanders off to find a new locale to adopt.

SAMPLE RED REAVERS

Although red reavers in Golarion are rare overall, their savagery is usually sufficient to leave a lasting impression.

Auger: The sleepy village of Caldamin, along Andoran's Verduan Forest, has long enjoyed the protection of an old gray render called Shepherd Graygulp, a name chosen for the beast's habit of adopting lambs within Caldamin's herds as its bonded companions. Within the same territory is a wild red reaver known to the Caldaminians as Auger, who occasionally comes to feed upon the sheep under Graygulp's protection. The titanic battles that ensue when these monstrous brutes encounter one another is the stuff of legend. As such, much to Caldamin's dismay, the village has now begun to attract foreigners known as "Auger Watchers," who make the trip to Caldamin in hopes of witnessing or—in a recent unfortunate case—eliciting the famous brawl.

The Ripper: On a journey 3 years ago, Free Captain Kelsin Southmoore, in command of the frigate *Hurassa III*, captured a slumbering red reaver from the West Bandu Hills of Sargava on the beach of Desperation Bay. After his men amputated the creature's wings, he entered it in the infamous Viper Cage, Ilizmagorti's bestial pit-fighting competition. The enraged reaver, nicknamed "The Ripper," was the first beast to ever survive and go on to win two consecutive tournaments and has been a local favorite ever since.

The Red Warden: The Lastwall village of Roslar's Coffin, just east of the Mindspin Mountains, was overrun by orc raiders several seasons ago, driving off the local residents. Although the rampaging orcs were eventually put to the sword, in the survivors' absence a red reaver wandered into the area and became infatuated with the striking façade of the village's burnt shrine of Sarenrae. The villagers have tried to return to their homes, but every time anyone gets too close, the reaver chases them off.

EZREN

MALE HUMAN WIZARD 10

ALIGN NG INIT +3 SPEED 30 ft.

DEITY: Atheist **HOMELAND:** Absalom

ABILITIES

11	STR
9	DEX
12	CON
20	INT
15	WIS
9	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 36	
AC 15	
touch 11, flat-footed 15	
Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +10	

OFFENSE

Melee cane +5 (1d6)
Ranged light crossbow +4 (1d8/19–20)
 Base Atk +5; Grp +5

Spells (CL 10th, +4 ranged touch)
 5th—*cone of cold* (DC 20), *teleport*, *wall of force*
 4th—*dimension door*, *enervation*, *ice storm*, *stoneskin*
 3rd—*dispel magic*, *fireball* (DC 17), *fly*, *haste*
 2nd—*bull's strength*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *scorching ray*, *web* (DC 17)
 1st—*alarm*, *magic missile* (3), *ray of enfeeblement*, *shield*
 0—*daze* (DC 15), *detect magic* (2), *light*

SKILLS

Appraise	+9
Concentration	+14
Knowledge (arcana)	+18
Knowledge (geography)	+18
Knowledge (history)	+18
Knowledge (the planes)	+13
Spellcraft	+20

FEATS

Combat Casting, Empower Spell, Great Fortitude, Greater Spell Penetration, Improved Initiative, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Penetration

FAMILIAR

Sneak (weasel, MM 282)



Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *scroll of dispel magic*, *wand of magic missile* (CL 9th, 50 charges); **Other Gear** cane (as club), dagger, light crossbow with 20 bolts, *bracers of armor +4*, *cloak of resistance +1*, *headband of intellect +2*, *ring of protection +2*, *blessed book*, rations (6), scroll case, diamond dust (250 gp), 100 gp pearls (2), 100 gp

The son of a successful spice merchant, Ezren's childhood was pleasantly safe. This changed when his father was charged with heresy by the church of Abadar. Ezren spent much of his adult life working to repair his father's ruined reputation, but when he discovered proof of his father's guilt he abandoned his family and set out into the world. Lacking the spry limbs of youth, Ezren fell naturally into the ways of wizardry, swiftly becoming a gifted self-taught spellcaster. While he often argues on the value of religion with Seelah, and his atrophied sense of humor often makes him the butt of Lem's jokes, his world experience and keen wit are quite valued by his younger traveling companions.



SEELAH

FEMALE HUMAN PALADIN 10

ALIGN LG INIT +0 SPEED 20 ft.

DEITY: Iomedae **HOMELAND:** Katapesh

ABILITIES

18	STR
10	DEX
16	CON
8	INT
14	WIS
14	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 89	
AC 24	
touch 10, flat-footed 24	
Fort +12, Ref +5, Will +7	

OFFENSE

Melee +1 *holy cold iron longsword*
 +16/+11 (1d8+5/19–20)

Ranged mwk composite longbow
 +11/+6 (1d8+4/x3)

Base Atk +10; Grp +14

Special Attacks lay on hands (20 hp/day), smite evil 3/day, turn undead 5/day (+4, 2d6+9, 7th)

Spells Prepared (CL 5th)

2nd—*resist energy*, *remove paralysis*
 1st—*bless weapon*, *lesser restoration*

Special Qualities aura of courage, *detect evil at will*, divine grace, divine health, *remove disease* 2/week, *special mount*

SKILLS

Concentration	+6
Heal	+6
Knowledge (religion)	+6
Ride	+7
Sense Motive	+8

FEATS

Combat Reflexes, Power Attack, Ride-By Attack, Mounted Combat, Weapon Focus (longsword)

MOUNT

Aristide (heavy warhorse; MM 273)



Combat Gear *wand of cure moderate wounds* (50 charges); **Other Gear** +2 *full plate*, +2 *heavy steel shield*, +1 *holy cold iron longsword*, mwk composite longbow (+4 Str) with 20 arrows, *amulet of health +2*, *cloak of Charisma +2*, *gauntlets of ogre power*, *phylactery of faithfulness*, backpack, rations (4), silver holy symbol, 64 gp

Seelah's parents were slain by gnomish raiders within months of their settling in Solku. When a group of Iomedae's knights arrived to help defend the town, Seelah was taken with their beautiful, shining armor. She stole a helm from one of the paladins, but became overwhelmed with guilt. Worse, before she had a chance to return the helm, the paladin was herself slain. Wracked with guilt, Seelah confessed her guilt and vowed her life to the paladins' cause. A full paladin today, she values Ezren's wisdom and Harsk's conviction, but it is irreverent Lem who Seelah is most amused by, even if she sometimes feels his jokes go too far.



HARSK

MALE DWARF RANGER 10

ALIGN LN INIT +4 SPEED 20 ft.

DEITY: Torag HOMELAND: Druma

ABILITIES

14	STR
18	DEX
16	CON
10	INT
12	WIS
6	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 78
AC 22
touch 16, flat-footed 18 +4 against giants
Fort +10, Ref +11, Will +4 +2 against poison and spells; evasion

OFFENSE

Melee +2 *greataxe* +14/+9 (1d12+5/x3)
Ranged +1 *flaming burst heavy crossbow* +15/+10 (1d10+1 plus 1d6 fire/17–20)
Base Atk +10; **Grp** +12
Special Attacks favored enemy (giants) +6; undead +4; dragons +2, +1 on attack rolls vs. orcs and goblinoids

Spells Prepared (CL 3rd)
2nd—*bear's endurance*
1st—*entangle* (DC 12), *resist energy*
Special Qualities darkvision 60 ft., stability, stonecunning, swift tracker, woodland stride

SKILLS

Heal	+14
Hide	+22
Listen	+14
Move Silently	+17
Spot	+14
Survival	+14
Wild Empathy	+8

FEATS

Crossbow Mastery, Endurance, Imp. Crit. (heavy crossbow), Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Reload (heavy crossbow), Rapid Shot, Track

ANIMAL COMPANION

Biter (badger, MM 268)



Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds* (2); **Other Gear** +2 studded leather armor, +2 *greataxe*, +1 heavy crossbow with 30 bolts, screaming bolt (3), mwk silver dagger, *amulet of natural armor* +1, *gloves of Dexterity* +2, *ring of protection* +2, *cloak of elvenkind*, backpack, rations (4), signal whistle, tea pot, 40 pp

Harsk is, in many ways, not your standard dwarf. He prefers strong tea over alcohol (to keep his senses sharp), the wildlands of the surface world (where giants can be found), and the crossbow over the axe (which allows him to start fights faster). Yet few dare to mock him for his choices, for if there's anywhere that Harsk is dwarven, it is in his gruff and offputting attitude. Much of his anger stems from the death of his brother's warband. Slain to a man by giants, Harsk came upon the slaughter moments too late to save his brother. Harsk's hatred of giants has fueled him and shapes his life. His companions value his skill at combat even if they're somewhat afraid of him.

LEM

MALE HALFLING BARD 10

ALIGN CG INIT +5 SPEED 20 ft.

DEITY: Shelyn HOMELAND: Cheliox

ABILITIES

8	STR
20	DEX
13	CON
12	INT
8	WIS
21	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 47
AC 22
touch 18, flat-footed 17
Fort +6, Ref +14, Will +8 +2 vs. fear

OFFENSE

Melee +1 *short sword* +8/+3 (1d4/19–20)
Ranged +1 *shock sling* +15/+10 (1d3 plus 1d6 electricity)
Base Atk +7; **Grp** +2
Special Attacks bardic music 10/day
Spells Known (CL 7th)
4th (1/day)—*cure critical wounds*, *dimension door*
3rd (3/day)—*charm monster* (DC 16), *dispel magic*, *haste*, *major image* (DC 17)
2nd (4/day)—*alter self*, *c. moderate wounds*, *mirror image*, *sound burst* (DC 15)
1st (5/day)—*c. light wounds*, *feather fall*, *hideous laughter* (DC 14), *silent image* (DC 15)
0 (3/day)—*detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 14), *light*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *summon instrument*

SKILLS

Bardic Knowledge	+11
Bluff	+18
Climb	+1
Concentration	+14
Diplomacy	+20
Hide	+10
Jump	–3
Listen	+4
Move Silently	+7
Perform (comedy)	+18
Perform (wind instruments)	+12
Tumble	+18
Use Magic Device	+18

FEATS

Dodge, Mobility, Quick Draw, Spell Focus (illusion)



Combat Gear *wand of cure moderate wounds* (CL 2nd, 50 charges); **Gear** +2 leather armor, dagger, +1 *short sword*, +1 *shock sling* with 20 bullets, *cloak of Charisma* +4, *gloves of Dexterity* +2, *ring of protection* +2, backpack, masterwork flute, rations (6), spell component pouch, sunrods (3), 40 pp

Growing up a slave in the devil-haunted empire of Cheliox exposed Lem to a shocking range of decadence and debauchery. Always quick to side with the underdog, Lem has learned that his most powerful trait is his optimism and sense of humor—skills that almost make up for his small stature and impulsive nature. Lem's reasons for traveling with his current companions vary upon the day and his mood, but he certainly values their strengths—and the never-ending supply of comedy material their antics provide him with.



NEXT MONTH IN PATHFINDER

SKELETONS OF SCARWALL

by Greg A. Vaughan

The secret of the evil festering in Korvosa's heart leads to the dreaded castle Scarwall, a haunted citadel deep in the orc-ravaged wasteland of Belkzen. Once home to a murderous warlord, the castle halls resound with the skeletal footfalls and agonized howls of the unquiet dead—horrors still obedient to their lost master even after centuries. Can the PCs find the key to Korvosa's salvation? Or are they doomed to join the ranks of Scarwall's skeletal armies?

ZON-KUTHON

by Sean K Reynolds

Gaze into the endless void of Zon-Kuthon, deadly god of darkness, envy, pain, and loss. Shudder at the sights and screams of his eternally tortured victims, cringe at the secrets of his tragic immortal corruption, and partake of the ecstatic torments of his pain-addicted church.

THE HOLD OF BELKZEN

by James L. Sutter

Bloodshed and brutality rule in the rugged, monster-infested Hold of Belkzen. For centuries, armies of orcs have stamped the land into a sprawling, broken battlefield. Yet, surviving the endless warfare, the ruins of past empires, remnants of lost peoples, and evidence of dark secrets lie hidden in the dust.

PATHFINDER'S JOURNAL

Pathfinder Eando Kline discovers that there's more to Belkzen's savagery than howling orcs and hungry monsters. Savages turn sinister in the next entry in the Pathfinder's Journal.

BESTIARY

The dead don't just walk, they dance! Light-footed undead, the herald of Zon-Kuthon, *Pathfinder's* first new dragon, and more!

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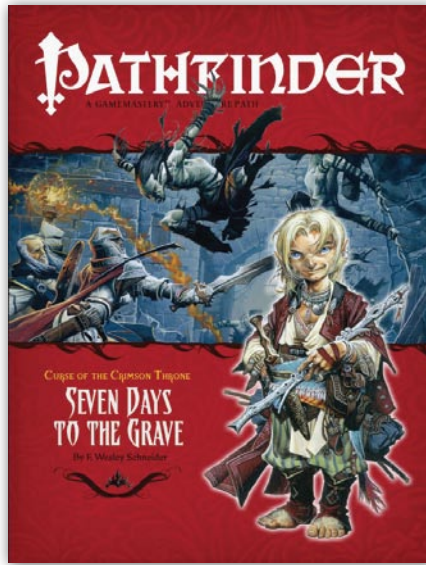
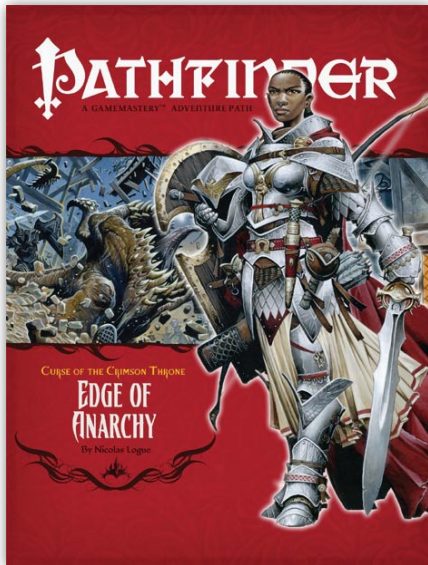
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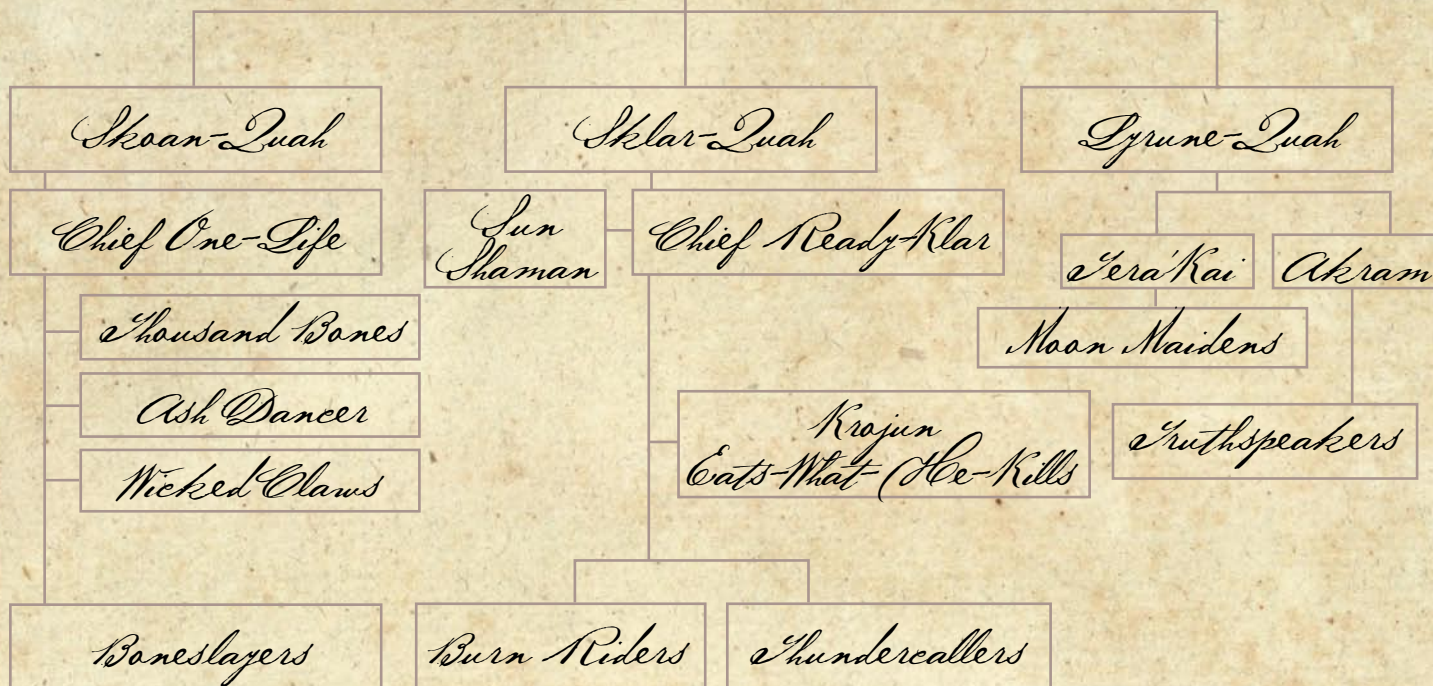
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