

Dragonshards

Blades of the Quori

By Keith Baker



The Inspired assassin faced Silhareth in the shadowy chamber. Her mind blade glittered in the darkness -- a focused shaft of pure malevolence. "Surrender, kalashtar," she said. "You are not to blame for the folly of your ancestors. Surrender, and let your shattered spirit return to the welcoming dark."

Silhareth brought his blade up into the kal jilash guard. "You underestimate the kalashtar, souleater. My union gives me strength." He concentrated, reshaping his mind blade and shifting to a two-handed grip.

"An impressive trick from so flawed a vessel. But you have only begun to touch the power of your quori spirit, renegade." As she spoke, her blade twisted and grew, becoming a gnarled, glittering flail formed from links of razor-sharp chain. In the blink of an eye, the thoughtstealer had wrapped the chain around Silhareth's blade and pulled it from his grasp; the sword vanished as it left his hands. "And it seems you have much to learn."

War is the legacy of the kalashtar. The Inspired will not rest until the traitorous spirits have been destroyed, and to accomplish this goal they must kill every last kalashtar. The people of Adar face this struggle every day by fighting a never-ending battle against the vast armies of Riedra. In Khorvaire the power of the Inspired is limited, and this means that they must use stealth and intrigue to accomplish their goals. A Brelish kalashtar may not need to fear the Riedran army -- but anyone could be an agent of the Dreaming Dark.

This struggle has stretched out for over a thousand years, and it has no end in sight. And so those touched by the quori -- the kalashtar and the vessels of the Inspired -- are always preparing for the next round of battle.

Most quori consider weapons of steel and wood to be hopelessly crude. When the children of Dal Quor do battle, they fight with deadly thoughts. Most learn the pure arts of the psion, where they shape reality as one might mold a lucid dream. But some focus on physical combat and fight with fist, foot, or solid thought.

The Quori Monk: the Path of Shadows

Many kalashtar practice a martial art called *sheshan talarash dasyannah* -- which roughly translates to "dancing with the shadows on the path to light," or more commonly "the path of shadows." This serves as a form of exercise, meditation, combat training, and artistic expression. The path of shadows is a fluid art, full of smooth, sweeping motions that are both beautiful and hypnotic. A character that focuses on the pure movement of the dance is said to be "staying in the light," while one who trains for battle is "facing the shadows." While many who walk this path begin as monks, anyone who possesses the appropriate skills and feats can be said to be skilled in this art. Balance, Tumble, and Perform (dance) are the key skills of the path of shadows, while Improved Unarmed Strike, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Mobility, and Cloak Dance (from the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*) are critical feats. Kalashtar monks often take the Monastic Training feat, which allows the character to continue to advance on the path of shadows while studying other skills.

The Inspired do not follow the path of shadows, but they have their own monastic traditions. Different martial arts reflect the nature of each class of quori spirit -- the raw power of the du'ulora, the sly cunning of the tsucora -- and an empty vessel who trains as a monk will usually follow the path of the spirit he will one day embody.

The Quori Soulknife

The quori are spirits of dream and nightmare. Steel, stone, and wood are dull and inert; a quori prefers to work with thought and emotion. As a result, kalashtar and Inspired who embrace a martial path often take up the mantle of the soulknife.

When creating a kalashtar or Inspired soulknife, think about the appearance of his mind blade. For many soulknives, a mind blade is simply a shaft of energy. But for a quori-linked character, the weapon is an expression of the spirit within, and it should reflect on the personality and inner nature of the character. A mind blade is not bound by the laws of physics; as a weapon of pure thought it can take the appearance of a stream of razor shards, a blade of black glass, or bolt of brilliant white light. These cosmetic changes do not affect the abilities of the mind blade in any way, but they can add color to a character by helping to set the assassin of the Dreaming Dark apart from the bold paladin of the Path of Light.

Blended Paths

Soldiers of the quori typically draw on three different classes: the monk, the soulknife, and the psychic warrior. While a quori-touched character may devote herself to a single class, three traditions bind these paths together: the jilashtora, ojilashta, and tashalantora. These traditions can be found among both the kalashtar and the Inspired, and while they are bitter enemies, quori-touched characters who follow the same tradition often show a grudging respect for their foes.

The Jilashtora: "Flowing Blades"

The majority of the quori warriors are jilashtora, "flowing blades." For one of the jilashtora, thought and fist are as one, and this path combines levels of soulknife and monk. Mobility, Dodge, and Combat Expertise are common among the jilashtora, along with the Flowing Blade feat described at the end of this article. Fluid motion is the hallmark of the jilashtora, and Tumble and Perform (dance) are important skills to those who follow this tradition.

The Ojilashta: "Bladeshapers"

The ojilashta combine the disciplines of the soulknife and the psychic warrior. An ojilashta uses her psionic powers to enhance her mind blade, and she reshapes her weapon to suit the needs of the moment. An ojilashta wields a blade of dreams, which performs in ways a sword of steel never could.

While a soulknife is limited in the shape her mindblade can take, a level of psychic warrior will give the character access to the *call weaponry* power. This allows her to produce whatever weapon suits the needs of the moment -- a bow for striking a distant foe, a flail for disarming or tripping the enemy, or even a sap when a victim needs to be subdued. When an ojilashta uses *call weaponry*, it can be described as a reshaping of her mind blade for purposes of adding color to the scene, but bear in mind that the new weapon is *not* a mind blade for purposes of feats or class abilities.

Beyond *call weaponry*, ojilashta typically manifest powers that enhance weaponry or provide psionic armor. Common powers include *dissolving weapon*, *inertial armor*, *force screen*, *metaphysical weapon*, *prevenom weapon*, and *vampiric blade*.

The Tashalantora: "Fists of Fluid Thought"

The rarest tradition is that of the *tashalantora*, a path combining the physical art of the monk with the mental power of the psychic warrior. Mechanically, this is identical to the Fist of Zuoken prestige class presented in the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*. While the ojilashta typically focus on combat powers, tashalantora often manifest powers that aid in stealth and infiltration, such as *burst*, *chameleon*, and *conceal thoughts*.

The most common martial path among the quori is that of the jilashtora, in which the discipline of monk and soulknife are woven together. At the discretion of the DM, the following feat can be used to represent this tradition.

Flowing Blade [General]

Your mind blade is an extension of your body and soul, and you wield it with the same grace as your foot or fist.

Prerequisite: Ability to generate a mind blade, Weapon Focus (mind blade), flurry of blows class feature.

Benefit: You can treat your mind blade as a special monk weapon so that you can perform a flurry of blows with it.

Special: A kalashtar or Inspired monk can select this as a bonus feat at 2nd or 6th level, in addition to the normal options available at those levels. They must still meet all prerequisites for the feat.

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of **Eberron** to the Wizards of the Coast Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and *Shadows of the Last War*, he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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