

the edge of a riot where a mob of six men wielding shovels, chair-legs, and lengths of iron pipe surround a beardless young nobleman. One of the laborers, a fat bald man with greasy muttonchops framing his rotund face, jeers and addresses the young man in a booming voice, “Bet’cha never worked an honest day’s wage in your life, eh, Queen’s Man? M’brother had his arm crushed by a barrel on the docks when he was younger than you. Never raised a mug of ale with that wrist again. Wanna know what it feels like?” If the PCs don’t swiftly intervene, the mob attacks young Amin Jalento. A successful DC 15 Diplomacy check or a DC 20 Intimidate check is enough to disperse the mob long enough to let Amin escape to safety—otherwise, the PCs might find themselves in a fight against six 1st-level human warriors. If the PCs defeat or drive off the mob, Amin thanks them profusely for their gallantry and tips them 5 pp, but he doesn’t stick around for long and wants only to return home.

Otyugh Uprising: A rumble issues from below, and a moment later the city street cracks apart, long fissures running across the bricks. The road bursts upward, casting chunks of rock into the air and raining bricks on the surrounding area. The stench of sewer filth and garbage belches forth, heralding the approach of a loud and hungry otyugh, drawn by the chaos and noise of the world above. Korvosa uses otyughs as a method to keep the sewers under Old Korvosa clean and flowing, but now and then some of them, like this one, escape their pits and find their way into the city’s main sewers. As this is a CR 4 creature, you’ll probably want to hold off on this encounter until later in the adventure—alternatively, the otyugh could burst up from below when a few Korvosan Guards or a Hellknight is close by to aid in the fight to keep the monster from running amok through the city streets.

What Now?

After the PCs emerge from Gaedren’s fishery to find Korvosa in chaos, their fate is in large part left to them to decide. You can use some of the street encounters detailed above to impress upon the PCs how quickly things have gone bad, and if they really want to strike out on their own, the *Guide to Korvosa* has a wealth of information on the city. Yet two options in particular are more likely than anything else the PCs might try to do, and it is these two options that trigger the Curse of the Crimson Throne Adventure Path.

Returning to Zellara’s Home: After defeating Gaedren, the PCs likely learn that Zellara has been dead for some time. Even if they don’t discover this, she’s the one who sent them to Gaedren—it’s logical to return to her to report on the mission’s success. Of course, when the PCs return, they find her home abandoned, looking as if it had been empty for weeks. No sign of food, the wall hangings,

the rugs, or Zellara herself can be found—the furniture is in pieces scattered throughout the room. If the PCs discovered *Zellara’s Harrow deck* in area A14, now would be an excellent time for Zellara to use her *major image* power to manifest before the PCs and tell them the truth, and of how she can help them in the dark times ahead (effectively revealing the various powers of her Harrow deck). If they didn’t find her deck, Zellara’s link to her home of 30 years remains strong enough that she can manifest one final ghostly image of herself to steer the PCs back to the fishery to find her deck. In any event, there is little more guidance Zellara can provide the PCs at this time, and nothing left in her home they can use.

The Queen’s Brooch: Even if none of the PCs recognize the source of the expensive brooch from Gaedren’s treasure, the first merchant they take it to for appraisal and selling certainly does. He excitedly informs the PCs that the brooch belongs to the queen, and furthermore, that it’s been registered with the Korvosan Guard as stolen property. The queen has even offered a reward for its return. Certainly, the merchant doesn’t want to risk his job by purchasing jewelry stolen from the queen, even in these doubtful times. His advice—return it to Castle Korvosa and claim the reward of 1,200 gp.

PART THREE: LONG LIVE THE QUEEN!

The initial civil unrest and outbreaks of riots are quelled quickly, thanks to swift action by the Korvosan Guard, the Sable Company, and the Hellknights. By the time the PCs decide to approach Castle Korvosa to return the queen’s brooch, the streets should be once again relatively safe to walk, but a thick tension remains in the air. For the remainder of this adventure, riots, fires, lootings, and similar events continue to erupt, and certain small parts of the city remain out of control.

As a terrifying testament to the power of whatever mighty overlord ruled this land thousands of years ago, Castle Korvosa’s long shadow looms over the city. A magnificent achievement of architecture, the castle walls and spires rise high into the sky above. The entire structure looms even higher for its ancient foundation—a Thassilonian ruin in the shape of an immense flat-topped pyramid. Although one corner of this impressive foundation has fallen into ruin, the additions built onto the sides by eager and talented Korvosan masons have created one of the most recognizable landmarks in all of Varisia.

Castle Korvosa can be approached from all four directions—ramps or stairways allow access up the sides of the pyramid to the courtyard surrounding the central structure. Normally, petitioners to the monarchy (such as PCs seeking to return a stolen brooch) would approach from the Great Ramp, wait in the Public Courtyard to speak

to the Korvosan Guards on duty, and hope for a chance to be heard. In these frantic times, the Castle itself has been locked tight and bristles with pikes and crossbows. Guards demand to know the PCs' business as they approach, then converse among themselves quickly at the answer. As long as the PCs look relatively harmless and aren't completely standoffish, the nervous guards don't immediately chase them off. Mentioning that they wish to return the queen's missing brooch certainly gets things moving a little faster, as does a DC 20 Diplomacy check.

Before too long, though, one of the guards nods at the PCs and indicates that they should head up the stairs to the courtyard. Weapons must be left with the guards at the base of the stairs—no obvious weapons are allowed in the queen's company. Characters who refuse to part with their weapons are not allowed to see the queen, but those who acquiesce have no need to fear—their weapons are returned as soon as their business with the queen is done.

The invitation to ascend to the castle isn't one extended out of respect for the PCs or even so they can return the stolen brooch in person—Queen Ileosa has told her guards that any group of trustworthy-seeming adventurers that approaches for work should be allowed into the castle to introduce themselves. The Korvosan Guard finds this an unwise decision, but the queen's orders are orders. If she wants to trust mercenaries to aid in keeping the city's peace, it's the Korvosan Guard's duty to help her realize the plan.

A group of obviously nervous guards armed with heavy crossbows and swords escort the PCs up to the castle. As they reach the top of the pyramid and the wide stairs curling up to the castle's third floor, where the Crimson Throne awaits, they are greeted by a beautiful woman dressed in magnificent full plate armor—the queen's handmaiden, bodyguard, and closest companion: **Sabina Merrin** (LN female human fighter 10). Sabina was once the protégé of the famed weapons master Vencarlo Orisini, whose family has been influential in Korvosa for generations. Sabina left the school under dubious circumstances after a bitter duel with her former master. Since her departure from Orisini's academy, she found her way into the Korvosan Guard. Her skills led to a swift rise through the ranks, and her ferocity in battle and her gothic beauty quickly caught Ileosa's eye. The queen requested Sabina be discharged from the Guard, then quickly reassigned her to her current role as royal bodyguard, handmaiden, and (rumor purports) lover. Whatever Sabina's actual relationship with Ileosa, she is rarely seen far from the queen's side.

In fact, Sabina has long been obsessed with Queen Ileosa, to a point where her loyalty borders on worship.

For the past 4 years, from training under Orisini to excelling in the Guard in places where she could catch the queen's eye, Sabina's life has been a tightly calculated plot to reach the position she holds today. Sabina has no interest in being a ruler herself, but she covets the role of being in charge of an army in service to a queen. Sabina has seen the changes at work in her queen, brought on by Kazavon's influence, and although she does not yet know the extent or source of this influence (or the fact that the queen was behind Eodred II's death), she approves of Ileosa's sudden uprising of self-confidence, courage, and military eagerness. She suspects that Eodred was stifling her, and that the king's death has finally allowed her queen to bloom into the ruler she was destined to become.



**SABINA
MERRIN**

Sabina nods curtly at the PCs as they approach, then says, “Greetings. They tell me you’ve something that belongs to the queen. Is this correct?” If the PCs show her the brooch, Sabina smiles and steps aside, holding out a hand to welcome the PCs to Castle Korvosa. As the guards make to follow, she steps in. “You may return to your posts. These heroes pose no threat to the queen.” Sabina hopes to engender a bit of trust in the PCs by doing so—she certainly isn’t threatened by them and is confident she can handle any trouble they might have planned.

Sabina Merrin is not much for mincing words. She curtly asks the PCs how they’d like to be introduced to the queen. As they answer, she continues to appraise their trustworthiness and skill, and more importantly, their eagerness to please the queen. As they round the corner, she announces their arrival with a loud, clear voice, then steps aside to allow the PCs to enter the throne room.

Queen Ileosa sits upon the Crimson Throne. She is a vision of celestial beauty despite the black mourning dress and veil she wears in honor of her husband’s death. A small silver coffer sits in her lap. The throne room itself is pristine but strangely empty—an open area with a vaulted ceiling, stained glass windows of past kings and queens looking down from the eastern wall, and crimson tapestries hanging along the others. An immense fireplace offers additional light and heat to the hall, and a silk carpet provides a gently arching path to the throne’s base. Sabina takes the brooch from the PCs, hands it over to her queen with a flourish, then takes up a position at the throne’s left side as Ileosa addresses the PCs.

“This brooch was stolen from me some time ago—I had not expected to see it again, truth be told. And yet, here on my darkest day, you come before me with kindness. The return of this brooch is much more than an honorable deed. It is inspiration. It is hope.

“I love Korvosa, as my husband did before me. His death has shocked the city as it has me, but I will not see his legacy destroyed in death, and I shall not see my city torn apart. All Korvosa stands at the precipice of a disaster wrought by her citizens—these riots cannot continue. You have already done my heart a great service in returning this bauble to me on this dark day, and you shall be rewarded. Yet, perhaps you can serve your city more.

“If you so choose, I shall have Sabina see to it that you have an escort of guards when you leave here—they can see to your safe journey to Citadel Volshyenek. I shall send word ahead of you to Field Marshal Cressida Kroft to let her know you are on the way—the Korvosan Guard is stretched thin, and it can certainly use the aid of heroes such as yourself. Now, I need to retire to my personal quarters—my grief has drained me. Again, I thank you for the kindness you have shown me, and I hope your days of serving the crown are only just beginning.”

With this, the queen directs Sabina to hand over the reward for returning the brooch—the bodyguard swiftly does so, handing the small silver chest (itself worth 50 gp) to the PCs. Inside the red-velvet-lined interior rest 12 gold ingots imprinted with the royal seal of Korvosa—each bar is worth 100 gp.

At this point, Queen Ileosa excuses herself. With a whirl of the hem of her mourning dress, Queen Ileosa is gone from sight. Sabina escorts the PCs back out of Castle Korvosa and, if they wish, assigns them an escort to the Citadel before bidding them farewell also.

PART FOUR: WELCOME TO THE GUARD

Citadel Volshyenek is located in Midland, overlooking Jeggare Harbor, where it serves as the base of operations for the Korvosan Guard. The Citadel currently operates on a skeleton crew, as almost all available guards are hard at work in the city, desperately trying to keep order. Two nervous guards stand at the entrance to the Yard, but as the queen promised, the PCs are expected. They quickly wave the party through, and one guard escorts the PCs into the central keep, where a harried and tired-looking woman rises from her desk to greet the PCs—this is Field Marshal Cressida Kroft, an attractive, dark-haired human woman dressed in red armor. She introduces herself and asks for the PCs’ names as she bids them to sit. Since Eodred II’s death, Cressida hasn’t slept, yet she bears her exhaustion well, in no small part due to regular visits from a priest of Abadar who casts *lesser restoration* on her to help in fighting back fatigue. She sighs deeply as she speaks to the PCs.

“Ah yes—you are the ones sent by Queen Ileosa. Greetings—my name is Cressida, and heroes of your caliber are exactly what Korvosa needs now. You’ve been on the streets. You know better than me how bad things are out there. It’s breaking my heart to see Korvosa tear herself apart like this. Every little bit of aid we can get from upstanding citizens like you helps. If you’re willing, I’d very much like to retain your services as agents of the Guard. I don’t need to say, of course, that you’ll be well compensated for these services.”

Assuming the PCs agree to hear her out, Cressida continues.

“Korvosa’s got enough troubles as it is without my own men losing their way and going rogue. As much as it pains me to admit, though, this has happened several times already. Many guards have deserted their posts, more concerned about friends and family than the city. I can understand this, yet not all of the deserters have family—some of them are simply using the riots as an excuse for personal gain. One such man is Verik Vancaskerkin. Worse than a lone deserter, he’s convinced a small group of fellow guards that Queen Ileosa is going to ruin the city.