



SEVEN DAYS TO THE GRAVE

CURSE OF THE CRIMSON THRONE: CHAPTER TWO

Although the flames of rebellion have been reduced to embers, peace is a short-lived comfort for Korvosa. From the red-tinted windows of Castle Korvosa's galleries and vaults, the increasingly morbid dreams of a new queen fall upon the crawling, filthy citizenry below. What care are mewling masses and simpering slaves to a high-and-mighty monarch? Why bother with the smothering obligations and unending exercises of rule? The life of a queen would be ideal, were it not for her subjects.

Her Majesty's mind has long mused on the subtle culling of her city's chaff, and royal coin can buy even the darkest dreams. With agents willing to commit any atrocity for gold and the eager zealots of Golarion's foulest gods, the madness of Queen Ileosa takes form—a form with black sails and a hull festering with death.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

For years, agents of the guild of assassins known as the Red Mantis have been active in Varisia, scouring the mysterious land for ancient relics, tribal magics, and deadly beasts that might prove useful or profitable in the assassins' far-reaching and nefarious dealings. While they currently pursue numerous ventures in the region, the most promising came to them quite by accident.

In months past, a mysterious group calling itself the Brothers of the Seven offered to sell the Red Mantis infected rats bearing a newly discovered magical disease. While proxies of the Magnimarian group proved tight-lipped on the source of the new affliction, demonstrations of its speed and horrifying blistering effects captivated the cruel imaginations of the Red Mantis agents. The Red Mantis purchased the affliction, referred to by the brothers as "Vorel's phage," and spirited it away to their secret dens in the bowels of Korvosa, where it could be researched and then sent on to the group's mysterious leaders far to the south.

The time for study proved short, though. Deeply Chelish in its ways and thinking, Korvosa had never been a tolerant city, especially toward the native peoples of Varisia: the Shoanti and the Varisians. When someone started making sinister inquiries in the city's riverside smoke and poison dens and throwing around enough coin to be noticed, the Red Mantis responded. Subtly at first, the Red Mantis's representatives sought out the one making these secretive inquiries, discovering her to be none other than a magically disguised Queen Ileosa, a monarch eager to contact the guild of assassins with a task. When it became apparent that she wanted the Red Mantis to assassinate her husband, the assassins informed the queen of their policy against direct regicide. Yet they could still aid her indirectly, supplying her with the poison needed to do the deed.

The Red Mantis took secret pride in the resulting chaos, knowing well the role its hand had played. Yet not long after the king's death, the queen contacted them again—this time with a much more interesting request, and one the Red Mantis was only too eager to aid her with. She wanted a method to take care of Korvosa's "native problem"—she wanted a city in her own image, and in order for this to come to pass, those of Varisian descent, Shoanti blood, or simply the poor luck to be among Korvosa's lowest class had to go.

The order of genocide against Korvosa's unwanted populace fell to a cold-minded sociopath, a Chelaxian "doctor" named Reiner Davaulus. Reputed to be a "gentleman's killer," Davaulus's modus operandi forsook blades and bloodshed, favoring the path of sickbed poisonings and "accidental" deaths. Seeing the assignment as a fantastic challenge, the good doctor came to Korvosa to meet with Queen Ileosa in secret, and in swift course

became the primary point of contact between her and the Red Mantis. With *carte blanche* to do as he would with Korvosa, and with access to Red Mantis assets, Davaulus quickly came to the conclusion that the best way to engineer the death of Korvosa's undesirables was a plague. And here, his contacts with the Red Mantis proved invaluable, for the assassins themselves had the perfect agents in mind.

Acting again as intermediaries, the Red Mantis put Davaulus in contact with the local cult of Urgathoa—goddess of disease, gluttony, and undead—and Conte Senir Tiriatic, an exiled ruler from distant Ustalav and a near-peerless scholar of disease. Offering both significant fortunes from the Korvosan royal vaults, Davaulus retained their services to aid him in a citywide assassination, while the Red Mantis did what it did best—stepped back to watch and enjoy the mayhem its influence encouraged.

Within weeks, the foundation of Queen Ileosa's plot against her people was laid. The cult of Urgathoa, working in secret with Davaulus and the Red Mantis's discovered disease—Vorel's phage—swiftly crafted the perfect epidemic to plague the city. The result: a slower, easy-to-spread variation with dramatic symptoms sure to panic the populace. The Urgathoans named their creation "blood veil."

Utilizing methods perfected by Conte Tiriatic, Davaulus planned a double-tiered infection targeting the lifeblood of any city: its coin. Overseen by Tiriatic's meticulous agent, Ramoska Arkminos, a fortune in Korvosan silver was tainted with blood veil. Split into two loads, part of the silver filled the hull of a Chelish ship called the *Direption*, a red herring and scapegoat meant to draw attention away from the second fortune of tainted silver. The rest of the silver would be deposited at the Grand Vault of Abadar, where its taint would both spread throughout the city and cripple the priests best posed to combat the disease.

Her wishes fulfilled, her new dark allies marshalled, and her mind afflicted with insidious dreams, Queen Ileosa gave the nod that launched a ship with black sails and opened her city gates to a pestilence unlike any Korvosa has ever known.

Adventure Synopsis

What begins as a simple favor for a recent acquaintance draws the PCs into a battle against a rampant plague that threatens to consume all of Korvosa. Becoming unofficial agents of the desperate church of Abadar, the party must do all it can to halt the progression of the plague and save as many infected citizens as possible. Through the course of their work, the PCs gradually discover the sinister groups responsible for the plague's outbreak and the deaths of thousands: the criminal Red Mantis, the disease-worshipping church of Urgathoa, and Korvosa's own genocidal queen.

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Points of Interest

