

HARROW POINT USES

In “Escape from Old Korvosa,” the PCs are faced with numerous situations where reasoning, logic, and attention to detail can save lives. Disabling deadly traps, discovering hidden clues, and being able to recognize threats for what they are (and to know about the key weaknesses of certain monsters, like the rakshasas) can make all the difference. During this adventure, a character can spend his Harrow Points in the following ways.

Intelligence Rerolls: Spend a Harrow Point to reroll any one Intelligence-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).

Flash of Insight: Spend a Harrow Point to be able to make a skill check in an untrained skill you don’t normally have ranks in. You gain a one-time +5 insight bonus on this skill check.

Arcane Wrath: Spend a Harrow Point to increase the strength of an arcane spell as it is cast. This spell gains a +2 bonus on its save DC, a +4 bonus on its caster level check to overcome spell resistance, and a +2 bonus on any attack rolls needed to strike the target.

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 “Escape from Old Korvosa,” and when a PC who drew that card reaches that encounter, he gains a +2 bonus on all rolls modified by Intelligence, and all arcane spells cast by him manifest at +1 caster level. These bonuses last for the encounter’s duration.

The Hidden Truth: Combat with Vimanda

The Wanderer: Combat with Sivit the darksphinx

The Joke: Encounters involving Pilts Swastel

The Inquisitor: Combat with Senshiir the beatific one

The Foreign Trader: Encounters involving Laori Vaus

The Vision: Encounters involving Salvator Scream

The Rakshasa: Encounters involving Bahor/Glorio Arkona

The Idiot: Games of Blood Pig

The Snakebite: Combats against Red Mantis assassins

PCs learn that a strange artist named Salvator Scream likely knows where Vencarlo went, as well as what information sent the teacher into such a state in the first place. Unfortunately, Salvator is now securely in the hands of a petty warlord who calls himself the Emperor of Old Korvosa.

After dealing with the Emperor and interrogating Salvator, the PCs learn the secret—the seneschal of Korvosa still lives! He, and likely Vencarlo now, is in the clutches of the notorious Arkona family, the self-styled rulers of Old Korvosa. The PCs visit Palace Arkona only to learn that its patriarch has secrets of his own. In order to rescue

Vencarlo and the seneschal and learn the awful truth behind the queen’s mysterious power and rising cruelty, the PCs must brave the infamous Vivified Labyrinth below Palace Arkona and then escape from Old Korvosa alive.

The Third Harrowing

In “Edge of Anarchy,” the PCs gained a powerful magic item—*Zellara’s Harrow Deck*. As indicated in the previous adventure, this Harrow deck plays a recurring role throughout *Curse of the Crimson Throne*. “Escape from Old Korvosa” is tied to the suit of Books in a Harrow deck—and by extension, to Intelligence.

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. Not long after the PCs defeat the cultists of Urgathoa and save Korvosa from the plague, Zellara senses Ileosa’s growing strength, but does not yet know what it signifies. She 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, she takes matters into her own hands once she sees the PCs are alone by creating a *major image* of herself and performing the reading. When you do this reading, take pains to interpret the cards from the past to dwell upon events (either of the campaign world or each PC’s life) that involved despotic overlords and cruel dictators. When you get to cards representing the present, focus on metaphors that relate to Korvosa’s current woes, particularly the growing sense of oppression, martial law, and the fact that the queen herself might be seeking the PCs’ deaths. For the cards representing the future, get grim—interpret the cards as ghosts and demonic animals (particularly tigers and mantises) who plague the living, metaphors that place life as a cruel and vindictive play or other work of art, and recurring themes of beautiful women with ashen skin and blank faces (to symbolize the Gray Maidens). As a particular note, if the Rakshasa card comes up in the reading, you might want to give the role that card plays in the reading particular attention—focusing on its interpretations of dominance or freedom from enslavement, depending on its alignment in the spread.

PART ONE: INTO THE DYING CITY

With the end of the blood veil plague, Korvosa settles into a wounded silence. At first, it seems as if the city is healing and recovering from the tragedies she has suffered, but it should soon become apparent that the damage done to Korvosa during the riots after Eodred II’s death and the plague itself might have been even greater than anyone feared. The streets are dull and muted, strangely empty

except for when markets quietly open. People seem to be more interested in staying home than going out, and when they do, they shamble quickly and quietly to their destination and conduct their business swiftly. The Order of the Nail has withdrawn from Korvosa, retreating to Citadel Vraid for the first time in Korvosa's history—some whisper the Hellknights are planning a full-scale invasion of Korvosa to seize control, but more knowledgeable sources know that dozens of Hellknights perished or failed to uphold their charges during the recent events, and that Lictor Severs has recalled his troops to punish them for these failures. City temples have their hands full tracking down the last remaining pockets of sick in the city or disposing of the dead, and the Acadamae has kept its doors shut and resources ensconced for the duration, apparently hoping to wait out these troubled times. Both the Korvosan Guard and the Sable Company took staggering hits to both their personnel and morale. The commanders of both organizations talk about recruitment drives to replenish their ranks, yet helping Korvosa recover remains their primary goal—a goal made difficult by Queen Ileosa's reduced support. Yet the queen is not ignoring Korvosa. The energy and support once lent to the Korvosan Guard is now funneled into a new order of peacekeepers—the enigmatic Gray Maidens. Even as the number of Korvosan Guards on the streets seems to dwindle, the presence of these armored warrior women increases. Regular patrols of Gray Maidens march along the major streets, and rumors of strike forces breaking into homes and buildings reputed to house those who voiced dissenting opinions of the monarchy are growing. Old Korvosa remains under tight quarantine, with troops of Gray Maidens stationed along the Narrows and patrolling the Jeggare in swift warships to ensure that no one gets off Endrin Isle—the plumes of smoke as buildings burn and the periodic roars of riots that echo down from Old Korvosa alone are enough to warn away the curious. No one mentions the words “martial law” yet, but they hover on every tongue.

Feel free to give the PCs as much time as they want to recover from the events of “Seven Days to the Grave” before starting this adventure. The *Pathfinder Chronicles Guide to Korvosa* can help fill out any adventures the PCs might go on during this time, but the atmosphere of oppression and fear that fills Korvosa should continue, making the city a very different place than the one presented in *Guide to Korvosa*. Furthermore, depending on how the PCs dealt with the Gray Maidens and the discovery of links between the plague and Queen Ileosa, they might not even be able to openly walk the streets of Korvosa. If they've publicly decried the queen and tried to prove she was responsible for the plague, the PCs quickly find that her hold over Korvosa is even stronger than it appears. Even if they've kept their suspicions quiet

(which is what allies like Field Marshall Cressida Kroft, Ishani, and Grau Soldado all suggest if consulted), the queen knows of their involvement in the disruption of the Queen's Physicians and the cult of Urgathoa, and it isn't long before she sends Red Mantis assassins after them.

The Crown of Fangs Revealed

This event is best handled off-stage. The PCs should certainly hear about the aftermath of this event soon enough, though. There's too much opportunity for PCs to get in over their heads if they're on site when Queen Ileosa makes her first public appearance since the botched attempt to execute Trina Sabor at the end of “Edge of Anarchy.”

Since that time, Queen Ileosa has been busy. Not only has she helped orchestrate the plague and establish a new order of the city's military, she collected the *Fangs of Kazavon* and, using her influence with certain high-ranking individuals in Korvosa's Acadamae (namely a powerful bloatmage wizard named Togomor: an obese and constantly sweating man who hides the leeches he uses to control his blood with voluminous red robes), and the fleeting memories of Kazavon in her mind, she bound the *Fangs of Kazavon* into a new badge of her office—the *Crown of Fangs*.

Her new crown complete, Queen Ileosa announces a public address when it becomes clear the plague is coming to an end. In attendance at this address at the queen's side are her bodyguard and lover Sabina Merrin (clad in her breathtaking and intimidating suit of Gray Maiden armor), her new advisor and ally Togomor (whom she announces has taken up the duties of castle seneschal), the commander of the Korvosan Guard Cressida Kroft, and the commandant of the Sable Company Marcus Endrin. In the days to follow, many speak of how ill-at-ease Marcus appeared, as if they knew at the time what the desperate commandant had planned all along.

Queen Ileosa announces triumphantly that the plague has been defeated, although unfortunately at the cost of Doctor Davalus's life. The good doctor's body, she goes on, has already been shipped back to Chelias for burial in his family vault, and the order of the Queen's Physicians has been disbanded as well. Yet Korvosa remains wounded. She goes on to report that the Order of the Nail has showed its true colors and fled like cowards into Citadel Vraid. Worse, both the Korvosan Guard and the Sable Company have suffered terrible losses over the past weeks. Neither group is fully capable of continuing as Korvosa's protectors, and thus, to shore up this fault, Queen Ileosa names her newly created order of Gray Maidens as the new protectors of Korvosa, appointing Sabina Merrin as the new General of Korvosa. As a ripple of concerned whispers spreads, Queen Ileosa continues her speech, saying that she has decided to dissolve the Sable Company and that the remaining marines will be folded into the Korvosan Guard. At this



point, she asks Commandant Endrin to step forth to surrender his badge of office.

As Endrin does so, he trembles. He reaches for his badge, but instead of handing it over, he throws it at the queen, striking her in the cheek with it. Everyone (queen included) is shocked into paralysis for a few moments, long enough for Endrin to bellow out, “Your shameful reign ends now! Korvosa will be free again!” An instant later, his crossbow is in his hands, aimed at the still-shocked queen. Endrin pulls the trigger. His aim is true. The crossbow strikes Queen Ileosa in the temple.

Yet she does not fall.

With incredible speed, she regains her composure and yanks the bolt from her skull. Before the blood from the wound has time to run all the way down to her shoulder, she’s standing before Endrin. Her free hand whips out and seizes him by the throat, lifting him off the ground as she holds him up for all to see. An instant later, she buries Endrin’s own bolt between his eyes with a single powerful blow.

As Endrin’s lifeless body crumples to the ground and Ileosa imperiously shakes his blood from her hand, she cries out in a strong, clear voice—“This shall be the fate of all enemies of Korvosa! Mark well his death! It is only the first!” A moment later, Togomor steps forward, taking

Ileosa’s hand and teleporting her back into the Castle. The resulting riot is quelled quickly and brutally by the Gray Maidens. Shocked by the turn of events, Field Marshal Cressida Kroft flees to Citadel Volshyenek, stunned and horrified by what she witnessed, and knowing that things have indeed taken a turn in her city—a turn for the worse.

Whispers from Old Korvosa

Not long after the PCs hear about the failed assassination attempt, they receive an urgent request to meet from Cressida. If the PCs haven’t visited Citadel Volshyenek since the introduction of Doctor Davaulus and the Queen’s Physicians during “Seven Days to the Grave,” they might be shocked to see the place so understaffed. Only one guard stands at the Citadel entrance, and none train in the large inner courtyard. The halls of the Citadel are silent and empty, with refuse and trash scattered here and there, dust gathering in empty barracks, and an overall state of creeping neglect hanging like a pall over the place.

Cressida Kroft looks haggard and tired when the PCs arrive; she ushers them into the central keep quickly, leading them into a smaller meeting room in the depths of the keep, a plain-looking chamber with a single long table (on which

sits a small closed coffer) and enough chairs for the PCs and herself—a chamber protected by a permanent *private sanctum* spell. After everyone is seated, she speaks in a low voice.

“Korvosa is dying. No, strike that. Korvosa is being murdered. Killed by our queen. The evidence you’ve uncovered that links her to the plague is damning enough, but this recent display at her address... Endrin is dead. She’s more in control now than ever. I dare not move against her—my Guard would be executed to the last man by her Gray Maidens by sundown. She must be stopped. And I know of no one else but yourselves to do this deed.

“Whatever foul magic the queen has wrapped herself in is obviously of the highest order. Endrin’s aim was true—his shot should have dropped her. I had feared he was going to take matters into his own hands like this, but I had hoped he would find it within himself to find a better route. If only he could have waited.

“You see, just this morning, new information came to me. I have received a missive from my friend Vencarlo Orisini, the first I’ve heard from him since Queen Ileosa cut off Old Korvosa and put it in quarantine. A message that gives me hope. Vencarlo speaks of discovering something of vital importance regarding the queen—he mentions something about dark magic and a pact with a devil, but until the events of this morning, I found his claims difficult to believe. Yet now... if Queen Ileosa has entered an infernal pact of some sort, we must tread carefully indeed.

“Vencarlo asked for you in the missive. You’ve made quite the impression on him, it appears. He remains in Old Korvosa now, but has asked that I send you to him, to his home, to hear what he has discovered. Ironically, you should be safe in Old Korvosa—the queen’s quarantine has cut off the island entirely, and word on the street is that she plans on leaving it to rot. She won’t think to look for you there if you maintain a low profile and avoid confrontations with the Gray Maidens.

“Once you find him, you’ll need to escape Korvosa, I fear. This city is no longer safe for you, or for those associated with you. As Field Marshal, I suspect that as long as I comply with the Queen, I shall be safe—and I will do what I can to ensure those friends and family you might leave behind are protected. By remaining in this city, I fear that you put them into more peril. Go to Old Korvosa, find Vencarlo and hear what he has to say. He has contacts in Harse—he’ll be able to help you lay low. I shall be in contact with you when I can, at which point our plan, I hope, shall be clear.

The Citadel treasury is nearly empty, but Cressida does have a small cache of potions and a few wands that she wants to give the PCs to aid them in their mission into Old Korvosa; they’re contained in the wood coffer on the table. The cache consists of four *potions of cure serious wounds*, three *potions of lesser restoration*, two *potions of remove disease*, a *wand of invisibility*

(10 charges), and a *wand of cure moderate wounds* (30 charges). After handing them the gear, though, she urges the PCs to make haste to Old Korvosa and track down Vencarlo—the queen won’t take long to recover from the indignation of the failed assassination, and once she does, Cressida fears that martial law might make things very difficult for those who remain within the city walls. If asked how to infiltrate the quarantined island, Cressida suggests swimming or taking a skiff from the northern banks of the Jeggare, optimally under the cover of darkness to avoid notice.

Old Korvosa Today

The last few weeks have been the most terrifying the good people of Old Korvosa have known. The king’s death and the plague were bad enough, but it was the sudden destruction of the bridges linking the old city to the new that heralded the final breakdown in law and order in Old Korvosa. Abandoned by the government, Old Korvosa descended into anarchy. Where honest laborers once toiled in the streets, a mob now rules—a mob falling increasingly under the sway of the self-styled Emperor of Old Korvosa, Pilts Swastel. Yet in truth, even the Emperor of Old Korvosa is more of a symptom than a cause. The true architects of Old Korvosa’s rapid descent into madness are its supposed representatives to the city—the Arkona family.

In the eyes of many of Old Korvosa’s citizens, the Arkona family has acted as champions for the district, protecting as many good citizens as they can with their own house guards or representing the district in government gatherings. Yet no one openly discusses the fact that the Arkonas fund and support the vast majority of the criminal dealings in Old Korvosa. When the district was cut off from the rest of Korvosa and put into quarantine, the Arkonas withdrew their influence to the highest part of Old Korvosa, the ward known as Fort Korvosa, and abandoned the rest of the district to anarchy. Pilts Swastel used this as a major proponent to his platform, promising that eventually, the treacherous Arkonas will be ousted from Old Korvosa and the entire place will revert to the people. Of course, the Arkonas are wise—they know that Pilts is a momentary distraction. Once the mob has burnt itself out, it will be an easy matter for them to reclaim even greater control over Old Korvosa than before, giving the Arkonas a perfect place to make their next move—wrestling control of the entire city from the queen. Many of Old Korvosa’s inhabitants suspect the Arkonas of such plots and machinations, yet what none suspect is the family’s greatest secret—they are, and have been for hundreds of years, *rakshasas*.

Among the four wards of Old Korvosa, it is Fort Korvosa, the highest point of the district, that weathered the quarantine the best, in large part due to the Arkonas’ continued presence here. In the shadow of Fort Korvosa’s relative order, Garrison Hill has not had the benefit of the



Arkonas' protection. Several fires have destroyed buildings in this district, and the citizens here venture out only as necessary to scavenge for supplies. Bridgefront has suffered the most under the quarantine; the destruction of the bridges over the Narrows having a similar destructive influence on the morale and sanity of those living in this neighborhood. Yet Bridgefront is not the most dangerous place today in Old Korvosa—that honor falls upon Old Dock, for it is here that the mob rules; a mob ruled in turn by a lunatic who calls himself the Emperor of Old Korvosa.

Local Korvosans

As the PCs explore Old Korvosa, you should mention the hapless and forlorn and desperate who now live in this dying town. The following sample NPCs can help you get started if a PC stops to talk to someone on the street.

Children: A flock of incongruously happy children sing a rhyme as they gather around something in the middle of the street “Headless, headless, that’s what you’ll be, brand new dolls in the Emp’rer’s ceme’try! Choppy, choppy, chop, the tall knife calls, waitin’ for the day for Korvosa to fall.” One of the children has fashioned an odd object from sticks and pegs—a crude guillotine that the children are using to behead a collection of

dolls. If the PCs can gain the children’s confidence (by changing their initial unfriendly attitude to friendly) the children brag that they’ve been to see the Emperor’s real “tall knife” at his palace, when in fact this is just false bravado.

Foolhardy Hero: Tesh Zobberdin, a wild-eyed human wearing an ill-fitting suit of leather armor, strides purposefully down the street toward Old Dock, axe in hand. The last surviving member of a family executed by the Emperor for refusing to turn out their food stores and life savings, Tesh has murder on his mind. Unfortunately, he’s only a 1st level warrior, and thus no match for the Emperor or his goons. Tesh nonetheless could aid the PCs in navigating Old Korvosa if you wish.

Ranting Local: Olmere Bliversin addresses the mostly empty street from a balcony above his bakery—demanding to know what the queen’s going to do about the mob, when she is going to repair the bridges, and how long the quarantine will persist. The fact that Olmere does much of his ranting wearing his nightclothes and punctuates his rants with high-pitched giggles certainly undermines his arguments.

Sad Old Woman: Old Mother Mifeg shamles along the edges of the streets, doing her best to continue her

Vencarlo's Home



One Square = Five Feet

The Artist's Lair



One Square = Five Feet

living selling not-so-brightly colored fungi for pigments. She mutters and sobs periodically, worrying that she might not make enough coppers to support her six children—the truth is even more depressing, for Mifeg is the last survivor of her family's brush with blood veil, and the old woman simply hasn't admitted to herself that the rotting bodies she keeps so lovingly sheltered back home are anything but "sleeping off the sick."

Vencarlo's Home (EL 10)

Vencarlo lives in a small building just east of his Academy—or at least, where his Academy once stood, for the once-proud structure itself is no more, burned to the ground in a recent fire set by the Red Mantis as a warning to those who defy them. The fire aroused the Arkonas' wrath since the Academy was located in their territory, and the family's resulting hostility toward the Red Mantis and suspected Red Mantis agents has forced the assassins to continue their work here in a more subtle manner. Vencarlo's home still stands, nestled in the southern section of Fort Korvosa, although Vencarlo himself is not at home by the time the PCs arrive.

The only door into Vencarlo's home is closed but not locked. The interior of the building is warm but quiet.

Announcements of arrival, be they knocks on the door or calls out for Vencarlo, go unanswered. The contents of the house itself (with the exception of the hidden cache in area A8) speak of a man who lives a simple life despite his success as an instructor at an esteemed academy. As the PCs move from room to room, they may find hints here and there that something is amiss before things suddenly and swiftly get out of hand.

Once the PCs reach area A7 or A8, allow them a DC 20 Wisdom check to notice a strange tang to the scent of smoke in the air; characters with the scent ability gain a +10 circumstance bonus on this check. Those who smell the odor can identify it with a DC 15 Craft (alchemy) check as dried alchemist's fire—a DC 25 Spot check reveals that the walls, floor, and even the furniture are faintly stained in multiple places with the stuff.

A1. Entrance: An elegant Vudran throw rug covers much of the floor of this otherwise empty room.

A2. Workshop: This is a well-stocked workshop for decorating and repairing bladed weapons. Several partially repaired daggers and rapiers lie on the table—none are particularly valuable.

A3. Bathroom: This room contains a free-standing bathtub and a toilet.



A4. Study: A single leather chair sits at a desk, while two tall cabinets filled with books about sword fighting and philosophy stand to the east. The papers on the desk are mostly accounting documents and ledgers for Vencarlo's Academy. It appears that up until the death of King Eodred II, Vencarlo's Academy was doing rather well, but then things turned bad as students failed to show and Vencarlo himself took an increasing number of breaks from teaching.

A5. Pantry: Food and water are stored here, although the majority of the perishable food has gone bad. Vencarlo had no kitchen to speak of—he generally made and took his meals in the living room or in his workshop.

A6. Living Room: Two large sofas face a brick fireplace; a fire burns brightly inside the hearth, despite the fact that the building seems to be abandoned.

A7. Training Room: This is an open room used to train and practice sword fighting. Practice dummies stand in the western corners, to either side of a brick fireplace. A fire burns inside, as down below. The ceiling is 14 feet high, with exposed rafters giving the room an open feel.

A8. Bedroom: Vencarlo's bedroom appears well lived in, but the bed is made and unslept in. A desk and chair sit next to the bed, and a small clothes closet is to the north behind a narrow door.

Creatures: In truth, while Vencarlo hasn't been here since he fled the burning of his Academy (and shortly thereafter was captured by the Arkonas), someone else has been living in secret here—a pair of Red Mantis assassins. Stationed here in case Vencarlo should attempt to return, the assassins have waited patiently in hiding, eager to ambush anyone who enters the home.

Patient and professional, these red mantis assassins serve 8-hour shifts here before they are replaced by two others sent from their hidden headquarters elsewhere in the city. One Red Mantis hides in the nook behind the northern sofa in area **A6** (just under the rising stairs) while the second assassin lurks in the rafters above area **A7**. As soon as they hear anyone enter the building, they activate the +5 bonus on Spot checks, *see invisibility*, and *deathwatch* (or *darkvision*, if it's night) abilities of their masks, followed by their preparatory spells as they ready their ambush.

The Red Mantis is concerned with finding and finishing the job it started—it seeks Neolandus Kalepopolis, but since he's currently being held in secrecy by the Arkonas, and since Queen Ileosa has the Mantis's resources spread so thin, it's been slow going for the assassins. The lead the PCs receive that Vencarlo might know something about the seneschal's location took the Mantis weeks, if not months, to acquire, and when the PCs (and as a result, the Gray

Maidens) arrive at Vencarlo's Home, the delicate operation set into motion by the Mantis becomes threatened. Despite the fact that the PCs don't officially become targets of the Red Mantis until the next adventure, their involvement in Kalepopolis's fate quickly puts them at odds with the infamous assassin's guild.

RED MANTIS ASSASSINS (2)

CR 8

Human rogue 3/fighter 2/red mantis assassin 3
LE Medium humanoid

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

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 14

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

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

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

Defensive Abilities evasion, trap sense +1; **Resist** fire 10

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 (DC 15, see page 70), 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 As soon as the assassins realize someone's entering the house, they drink their *potions of resist fire*; cast *cat's grace*, *spider climb*, and *expeditious retreat*; then fully activate their masks (*deathwatch* at day or darkvision at night). They activate their red shrouds just before they begin combat, remaining hidden until they are spotted or until at least one PC climbs the stairs up to area A7.

During Combat The assassins are outnumbered, but they've got a deadly advantage: just as in their previous attempt to slay Vencarlo, they snuck into the ambush site early and prepared the place with distilled alchemist's fire. On the first round of combat, the assassins throw a vial of alchemist's fire at the fireplace, causing the fire to burst out and quickly light the room itself on fire. Note the 3 squares the fireplace takes up with bits of red paper or a red marker to indicate that those squares are burning—each round, the fire spreads quickly to 1d4 adjacent squares. Characters in a square that is on fire take 1d6 points of fire damage and must make a DC 15 Reflex save to avoid catching on fire. The Red Mantis assassins need not fear the fire as long as their potions last, and use the fire to their advantage as they are able. Once the battle begins, the assassins make an effort to reach each other so they can team up and flank foes, but if they begin combat with only one PC in sight, an assassin attempts to use his prayer attack on that PC before starting his fire. If a

BECOMING BLACKJACK

With the gear hidden in Vencarlo's closet, a PC could effectively become the next Blackjack. An infamous folk hero of Korvosa, Blackjack's identity has passed down from hero to hero over the course of generations—Vencarlo is the latest Blackjack, although with his imprisonment in the Arkona Dungeons and the discovery of these clothes by the PCs, that mantle may shift.

As long as a PC wears Blackjack's cloak, mask, daggers, armor, boots, gloves, and rapier, he gains the Blackjack persona. With this persona comes the expectation of not only skill at wielding the weapons, but a fierce devotion to Korvosa's citizens. As long as a character does nothing to compromise these expectations, he gains a +10 circumstance bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Intimidate checks made against Korvosan citizens of non-noble status (this includes Pilts Swastel).

PC ends his turn in a burning square, a Red Mantis casts *hold person* on that PC to keep him from escaping the fire.

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** 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

Combat Gear *potion of resist fire*, alchemist's fire; **Other Gear** +1 leather armor, 2 masterwork sawtooth sabres, 4 daggers, *mantis mask*, *cloak of resistance* +1

Treasure: A DC 30 Search check made in Vencarlo's closet reveals a hidden panel in the east wall. Opening it reveals a tiny compartment containing a metal iron lockbox. The box can be opened with a DC 40 Open Lock check (the key is now in the possession of Bahor), or bashed open (Hardness 10; hp 40). Inside is a *bag of holding* (type I) that contains a black hooded *cloak of elvenkind*, several black masks, a dozen masterwork daggers with a stylized "B" engraved in their pommels, a black leather suit of +2 *slick leather armor*, a pair of black leather *boots of elvenkind*, an *amulet of proof against detection and location*, a pair of black leather *gloves of Dexterity* +2 (with two fingers in the right

hand containing fake, posable wooden fingers), and an exquisite mithral +2 *keen rapier*. Characters who attended Trinia's execution attempt at the end of "Edge of Anarchy" recognize the clothes immediately—otherwise it's a DC 15 Knowledge (local) check to recognize Blackjack's signature armor and weaponry.

Development: If the PCs don't put out the fire, Vencarlo's home goes up in flames. Fire is one of the few things that draws Old Korvosa's citizens out, and they and brigades of Arkona agents do their best to contain the fire—without aid, they do, but they are unable to save the house. If the house burns, Vencarlo's iron coffer can be found in the rubble with a DC 25 Search check.

The Concerned Student

Hitting a dead end this early in the adventure might stump the PCs at first, but fortunately an ally with more clues approaches them shortly after the PCs visit Vencarlo's home. Drawn by the flames as Vencarlo's house burns, or perhaps by the sounds of combat or the sight of the PCs entering his teacher's home, a desperate and worried student named Amin Jalento approaches them not long after things in Vencarlo's home come to an end. This might not be the first time the PCs have met young Amin—they might have saved him from the mob back in "Edge of Anarchy," in which case his delight upon recognizing the PCs is apparent in his expression.

Once he has the PCs in a place where they can talk quietly (likely in the partially collapsed building across the street from the Academy where he's been squatting for the past several days), Amin tells the PCs his story. He was attending classes at Vencarlo's Academy when the quarantine hit, and after he was unable to escape back to the mainland and his home, Vencarlo was gracious enough to allow Amin to stay at the Academy as a guest. That stay ended not long after, when several Red Mantis assassins invaded the building. Vencarlo confronted them and took one of them down, but there were too many. The master was forced to flee, and Amin assumes that the assassins burnt down the academy as a warning as much as anything else.

Amin doesn't know where Vencarlo has gone, but he does suspect who might. In the days after the quarantine, while Amin was Vencarlo's houseguest, he noticed that his teacher seemed restless and distracted. Vencarlo regularly left his house at odd hours in the night, sometimes not returning until the morning. After one such return, Vencarlo's clothes were bloody—he said he had to fight off

a thief, but Amin is sure there was more to it than that. Furthermore, in the days before the Red Mantis attacked, Vencarlo had a singularly strange houseguest visit several times—a man with paint-stained hands, wild hair, and a jittery habit of looking about. Vencarlo introduced him as a friend, but Amin recognized him as a somewhat notorious local artist named Salvator Scream. Vencarlo and Salvator always met behind closed doors, three times in all, and on that last meeting Amin swore he heard Vencarlo's voice raised in anger. Unfortunately, he has little more information than that—he's been meaning to try to track down Salvator to ask him if he knows what happened to Vencarlo, but has not, of yet, worked up the courage to brave Old Dock, the place where Salvator's home is located.

Ad Hoc Experience Award: Grant the PCs experience as if they'd defeated a CR 8 creature if they escort Amin to safety.



AMIN JALENTO

Seeking Salvator

Amin knows that Salvator lives in Old Dock—he did enough asking around to confirm that the artist lived in a building located at 140 Wave Street. He also knows that Old Dock is under the control of the Emperor of Old Korvosa. Amin's heard plenty of rumors about the Emperor—that he's a cannibal, that he's beheaded more folk than have died to blood veil, that he's a devil hiding in the flesh of a man, and that his minions are almost as bad as him. Although Amin doesn't believe the rumors, he does believe that the Emperor deserves them, and wants nothing to do with Old Dock as a result.

A DC 15 Knowledge (local) or Gather Information check is enough to know that Salvator Scream is a notorious artist whose gruesome and often scandalous art was held in relatively high esteem by several of Korvosa's nobles. Certainly, his popularity could not be denied among the lower classes, who were most familiar with his work at the Old Dock playhouse known as Exemplary Execrables, where his paintings served as grisly backdrops to that venue's notoriously violent entertainments. Salvator himself wasn't a public figure, though, and beyond his name, few folk could say they knew him before the quarantine went up.

Of course, Salvator Scream hasn't been at home for some time now. Not long after his last meeting with Vencarlo, agents of the Emperor of Old Korvosa broke into his home, killed his fellow artists, and abducted him. The Emperor is eager to rebuild his collection of violence and mayhem after Exemplary Execrables burnt

to the ground—he’s managed to reacquire or salvage a lot from the ruined playhouse, and Salvator Scream is merely the latest of his acquisitions. The Emperor has kept Salvator’s capture relatively quiet, but *locate creature* could lead the PCs directly to Salvator.

Salvator’s home is a leaning, decrepit building located on the Narrows, not far from one of the many now-ruined bridges that once connected Old Korvosa to the mainland. Salvator continued to live in this home for some time after the quarantine, but after his last visit to Vencarlo (and well after he’d turned over Neolandus to the Arkonas for safekeeping), the Emperor of Old Korvosa sent a group of thugs out here to “collect” the artist. Yet the house is not abandoned. Its current inhabitant is Laori, a Forlorn elf and worshiper of Zon-Kuthon, a member of the secretive society known as the Brotherhood of Bones. Although she worships the same patron as legendary Kazavon himself, she might be one of the more useful allies the PCs meet.

B1. Front Room

The smell in this entry is of must and mildew, much of it coming from the mud tracked over the floorboards, as if a small army had marched through the room. To the south stands a single empty set of shelves.

The muddy prints on the floor were left by the Emperor’s thugs when they invaded the building several days ago. A DC 20 Survival check is enough to confirm not only that a half-dozen humans were involved, but that a seventh person was likely dragged back out of the building, the thin trails and scuff marks of his dangling feet hinting at the abduction’s tale.

B2. Bedroom

A single bed, the blankets and pillows atop it scattered and in disarray, sits to the south in this room. More mudstained bootprints mar the wooden floor here and a splash of dried blood decorates one pillow.

When they invaded, the Emperor’s thugs found Salvator sleeping here. One of them knocked him out with a blow to the head, and the others helped in dragging him back to Pilts’s Palace. A DC 20 Survival check confirms that the prints lead up to the bed and that the victim was likely abducted as he slept.

B3. Salvator’s Studio (EL 10)

Both of this room’s windows are tightly shuttered, yet the air inside seems strangely fresh and scented, no doubt from the six large candles that burn within. Each candle has been affixed

VENCARLO’S STORY

Vencarlo might hate the queen, but his personal code prevents him from even contemplating assassination as a way to get Korvosa’s government back on track. This leaves him with few options. When he first heard rumors that seneschal Neolandus Kalepopolis might still be alive, and furthermore, might be hiding out in Old Korvosa, Vencarlo grew more and more obsessed with finding the man. His investigations led him eventually to Salvator Scream, but the artist was particularly close-lipped in revealing anything; it took several meetings and bribes and reassurances on Vencarlo’s part to prove to Salvator that he wanted to help his friend Neolandus, but when the artist revealed to Vencarlo that he’d given Neolandus to the Arkonas for safe-keeping, Vencarlo nearly lost it. His rage frightened Salvator into fleeing, and not long thereafter, the Red Mantis attacked Vencarlo’s Academy as they themselves continued to search for Neolandus (their leads having led them along parallel lines of investigation that pointed to Vencarlo as being Blackjack and therefore the agent most likely to be hiding the seneschal). Vencarlo survived the ambush, but when he attempted to infiltrate the Arkona palace a day later, the rakshasas captured him. Vencarlo thus had found Neolandus—both were imprisoned in the same dungeon—but he is now as much a prisoner as his quarry.

by a glob of melted wax to the crown of a gleaming, polished skull, and each of these impromptu and grisly candleholders has been placed atop an otherwise clear desk to the west, arrayed in a gentle arc. A chair sits before the desk, and a careful stack of papers and scrolls sits inside the arc of skulls. To the south stands a nearly empty cabinet, its shelves barren save for a few paintbrushes and a cracked pottery urn.

This chamber served Salvator as his studio, and it was here that he spent the majority of his time, committing the visions of violence in his head to canvas. His painting supplies, finished art, and easel were taken from here soon after he was abducted, leaving behind only the room’s few furnishings.

Creature: This room’s current occupant is an elven woman named Laori Vaus, a priestess of the god of darkness and pain, a member of a sinister cult called the Brotherhood of Bones, and possibly one of the party’s greatest allies in “Escape from Old Korvosa.”

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

here in Korvosa, the closest Brotherhood agent, Laori, came to investigate the signs and portents. What she found was the proof she sought—over half a dozen artists whose work incorporated Kazavon’s unmistakable influence. Yet even more incredible, his influence was the most potent in the city’s new queen. Laori contacted her allies and was ordered to remain in Korvosa to watch and observe, while the Brotherhood determined how to act. And ever since, those have been Laori’s standing orders.

As she waited and watched the queen, Laori tracked down the seven artists. Unfortunately, one after the other, they proved to be dead by their own hands, so Laori did the next best thing. She tracked down their bodies and collected their skulls—these six now sit on the table in this room. Periodically, Laori uses *Speak with Dead* to try to communicate with the skulls, but the results of these castings are generally too garbled to make much sense. From left to right, the skulls belonged to the following artists: Jeonia Chirco (a seamstress), Boathar Kaay (a toymaker), Velaka Hoon (a writer), Maxtel Erns (a sculptor), Yvos Tanguany (a tattooist), and Imon Vernell (a poet).

Laori saved Salvator for last in her search because she suspected the whisperings of Kazavon were strongest in this artist, judging by his work. Although she was disappointed to find that Salvator had gone missing by the time she tracked down his address, she tempered that disappointment with the discovery that the artist, unlike the other six, remained alive and was the captive of the Emperor of Old Korvosa. Laori has been trying to decide on the best route to confront the Emperor and gain access to Salvator to interrogate him, spending the last few nights here at Salvator’s home meditating and attempting to discover any remaining shadows of Kazavon’s influence in the area. She’s found none, but hopes to learn more by speaking with Salvator in person.

Although she’s a sadist and something of a lunatic, Laori is not the enemy. To a certain extent, the PCs and the Brotherhood of Bones will eventually share the same goals—they both want to remove Kazavon’s influence from Queen Ileosa and the city of Korvosa, after all. For now, Laori views the arrival of a group of adventurers as a sign from Zon-Kuthon—here she was trying to figure out the best way to confront the Emperor of Old Korvosa to gain access to Salvator. When a handy group of specialists showed up looking for the same thing. Assuming the PCs don’t immediately attack her, she greets them cheerfully, introducing herself as Laori and asking if they’re looking for Salvator as well.

While Laori doesn’t hide her allegiance to Zon-Kuthon, and openly admits (if asked) that she wants to speak to Salvator because his art has a lot of themes important to Zon-Kuthon’s faith, she remains close-lipped about the Brotherhood of Bones, never mentioning her group and

volunteering no information about her suspicions about Queen Ileosa. She certainly doesn’t mention anything about Kazavon. She hopes the PCs can help her secure an audience with Salvator, but isn’t sure how far she can actually trust them, especially if members of the group include paladins or priests of Shelyn. Only if magically compelled does Laori reveal this information—the fact that Queen Ileosa’s new crown is made out of the teeth of a notorious warlord of Zon-Kuthon is a revelation that the adventure expects the PCs to learn at the end when they rescue Neolandus Kalepopolis, but learning this a little early from Laori works just as well—the PCs still need to rescue the seneschal, if only to learn what he knows about defeating such powerful magic.

If the PCs voice concern that she might be planning to harm Salvator, she brushes the very concept off with a good-natured laugh: “Why would I want to hurt him? He’s a talented artist! I would just like to ask him where his inspiration comes from.” It shouldn’t be long before Laori proposes that she and the PCs team up to find Salvator. She mentions that she already found out who took him and suspects she knows where he is, and to further sweeten the deal, she insinuates that she found something here she suspects the PCs would be very interested to know about.

Laori is referring to a fragment of cloth she found in Salvator’s bedroom. When Neolandus staggered into Salvator’s home in the pre-dawn hours, dreadfully wounded and poisoned from his run-in with the Red Mantis, his uniform was in terrible shape. Salvator did what he could to tend Neolandus’ wounds, but was forced to tear apart the seneschal’s uniform to get a splint on the man’s broken arm. A fragment of the sleeve slipped down between the bed and the wall—a fragment Laori discovered and kept. She recognized the scrap as coming from a government official’s uniform, but has not yet deciphered its significance. She assumes that a blood-stained fragment of a politician’s uniform is of interest to the PCs, though. She hands it over to them if they agree to an alliance, and she also reveals that Salvator is held by the Emperor of Old Korvosa.

The bloodstained fragment is obviously from a high-ranking government official in Korvosa—the city’s coat of arms appears on the fragment, but it takes a DC 15 Knowledge (nobility & royalty) check to determine that the fragment is from a very singular source—the uniform of the seneschal of Castle Korvosa.

Laori displays her allegiance to Zon-Kuthon openly in her choice of weapon and armor (a spiked chain and hook-studded chainmail), yet her demeanor and attitude are anything but grim. Laori is chronically cheerful, always brimming with delight and quick to laugh. This affectation has somewhat damaged her reputation among

the church, as many of the more conventional worshipers of Zon-Kuthon find her attitude to be irreverent and even sacrilegious, yet none deny her contributions to the faith. Even when discussing the finer methods of skinning a living man, self-flagellation, torture, or her open admiration of all things diabolical, her plucky attitude remains. As a result, Laori can be unsettling to be around, for both her fellow worshipers of Zon-Kuthon and those who see her faith as a horror to be stamped out.

As with many Forlorn elves, Laori never knew her birth parents. She grew up on the rough streets of Riddleport, and although she suspects her family dwelt in the nearby town of Crying Leaf, she never bothered to contact them. It was in Riddleport that she first learned of Zon-Kuthon, and the Midnight Lord's teachings quickly grew into an obsession for her. Armed only with her indomitable optimism and an appetite for pain, she made the pilgrimage down to the shadowy nation of Nidal, and over the course of several decades became an accomplished priestess of Zon-Kuthon, despite her grating (to the other priests) attitude. The culmination of her work saw her induction into the Brotherhood of Bones, and her familiarity with Riddleport and Varisia made her a natural choice to take the search for Kazavon's relics there.

LAORI VAUS

CR 10

Female elf cleric 10 (Zon-Kuthon)

LE Medium humanoid

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +5, Spot +5

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 15, flat-footed 20

(+7 armor, +3 deflection, +2 Dex)

hp 88 (10d8+40)

Fort +11, **Ref** +5, **Will** +10

SR 22

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft.

Melee +2 *spell storing spiked chain* +12/+7 (2d4+6)

Special Attacks smite 1/day (+4 attack, +10 damage), rebuke undead

Spells Prepared (CL 10th)

5th—*flame strike* (DC 18), *spell resistance*, *summon monster V*^D (only summons 1d3 shadows)

4th—*air walk*, *greater magic weapon* (already cast), *inflict critical wounds*^D (DC 17), *sending*

3rd—*contagion*^D (DC 16), *dispel magic*, *magic vestment* (already cast), *remove disease*, *speak with dead*

2nd—*bear's endurance*, *blindness*^D (DC 15), *bull's strength*, *lesser restoration*, *resist energy*, *silence* (DC 15)

1st—*command* (DC 14), *cure light wounds*, *divine favor*, *obscuring mist*^D, *sanctuary* (DC 14), *shield of faith*

o—*create water*, *cure minor wounds* (3), *light* (2)

D domain spell; **Domains** Darkness, Destruction

TACTICS

Before Combat Every morning, Laori casts *greater magic weapon* and *magic vestment* on her spiked chain and armor. If she has a chance before combat begins, she also casts the following spells as well: *air walk*, *bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, and *spell resistance*.

During Combat Laori's first act in combat is to summon 1d3 shadows with *summon monster V*; on the second round, as her shadows appear, she hits the thickest concentration of her enemies with *flame strike*. She moves into melee against



LAORI VAUS

foes on the third round, using her smite and unleashing the *inflict serious wounds* from her *spell-storing spiked chain* on her first attack. As she fights, she hums or whistles as if she were merely doing some pleasant chore, periodically punctuating a particularly solid blow with a giggle or a wink.

Morale Laori enjoys pain, but would rather not give up her life before she has a chance to see Kazavon reborn. If brought below 20 hit points, she flees; if she escapes, she appears again in “Skeletons of Scarwall” as scheduled.

Base Statistics AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15; **Str** 13, **Con** 14

STATISTICS

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

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +10

Feats Blind-Fight, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Diehard, Endurance, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain)

Skills Concentration +15, Knowledge (religion) +13

Languages Common, Elven

SQ spontaneous casting (inflict spells)

Combat Gear *wand of cure moderate wounds* (11 charges), *wand of sound burst* (19 charges), *wand of death knell* (34 charges);

Other Gear masterwork hook mail (spiked chain mail), +1 *spell storing spiked chain* (contains *inflict serious wounds*), *phylactery of Wisdom* +2, scrap of Neolandus’s uniform, 68 pp, 24 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Darkness Domain This domain grants Laori Blind-Fight as a bonus feat.

Ad Hoc Experience Award: If the PCs deal with Laori peacefully and form an alliance with her, award them experience points as if they had defeated her in combat.

B4. Fungal Incursion (EL 6)

This room appears to have once been a combination kitchen and storeroom, but is now a bewildering riot of brightly colored fungus and mold. The stuff grows everywhere and in every color, over tables, across cupboards, and in swaths along the floor and walls, but seems thickest to the southwest, where puffy sheets of yellow fungus cover several objects so completely that it’s impossible to make out what lies beneath.

In an effort to get just the right colors on canvas his visions required, Salvator eventually resorted to cultivating several brightly colored strains of fungus to craft his own pigments, an endeavor in which he met with some success. Since he was taken from his home, though, the fungus he normally kept well maintained here has run riot, covering much of the room’s otherwise mundane contents.

B5. Sinkhole (EL 7)

What once might have been a small house has been obliterated, collapsed from within by a twenty-foot-diameter sinkhole.

Water from the Narrows fills the hole, creating a muddy pit strewn with jagged bits of timber and flotsam. The edges of the hole are muddy and patchy with fungus. Immediately south of the sinkhole, the boardwalk has also collapsed, creating a dangerous tangle of timber and crazily tilted pilings.

The sinkhole isn’t quite as deep as it looks, although the 5 feet of standing water covers several more feet of mud. Moving through the mud on the bottom of the hole is considered difficult terrain.

Creature: With Old Korvosa going under quarantine, the soldiers normally in charge of keeping the island’s indigenous otyugh population contained have not been able to keep up their jobs, and the otyughs of Old Korvosa are slowly coming to realize that they’re free. The sinkhole here was created when several otyughs forced their way out of the sewers through a drainage tunnel. Barely able to fit, the otyughs’ struggles to escape caused the collapse of the small shack that once stood here, and their further thrashings caused the destruction of the boardwalk. Now, the monsters wallow in the water and mud of the sinkhole, periodically lurching out of the water to attack anyone who comes too close.

OTYUGHS (3)

hp 36 (MM 204)

CR 4

Development: If the PCs haven’t yet met Laori when the otyughs attack, she emerges from area **B3** a round after combat begins. She shrieks in delight at the sight of the battle, and rushes to provide aid to the PCs, hoping that by helping them the PCs become more disposed toward helping her contact Salvator.

PART TWO: THE EMPEROR OF OLD KORVOSA

Eventually, through conversation with Laori, magical divination, or DC 20 Gather Information checks, the PCs should learn that their quarry, Salvator Scream, has been taken by the self-styled ruler of the region—the Emperor of Old Korvosa. In his previous life, this Emperor was a man named Pilts Swastel, the owner and director of Exemplary Execrables, a notorious playhouse that specialized in violent, gruesome productions. Already a bit unhinged before Korvosa fell apart, the riots, a bout with blood veil, and the quarantine were enough to push Pilts the rest of the way. With his knack for showboating, organizing crowds, and his horrifying imagination, it was a relatively simple thing for him to make the transition from director to ganglord.

Today, Pilts’s position of power is growing. Every day, his mob absorbs or murders more of Old Korvosa’s remaining citizens, and his resulting influence grows.