



THE RED MANTIS

THOSE WHO WALK IN BLOOD

“We assured Inabrin that he was quite safe with twenty Hellknights’ blades around him, but his unease continued through midmorning, and by noontime had spread among the wagon men and caravan regulars. He begged me to board the windows, reinforce the locks, and taste the water in the fresh carafe the servant brought, so I did, yet nothing set him at ease.

“The next morning we found Inabrin. He drowned in his own blood when they cut his throat. No sound in the night, no trace of a killer, nothing but a vexed detachment of Hellknights and a corpse they were supposed to keep breathing. That was the first time I believed the Red Mantises were more than myth. The first time I saw their deadly handiwork with my own eyes.”

—Savanda Thrice-Slain, Prologue of Lives Writ in Blood

All who have wronged, who have enemies, or who cling to coveted power fear the Red Mantis. For decades, this order of peerless assassins has stalked the nights and nightmares of their victims. Dutiful and discreet, professional and deadly effective, these killers' blades cull commoners and counts with equal ease, with no spell, secret safe house, or army of guardians comforting those taken as a mantis's mark. And for those with the gold and guile to attract the attentions of the Red Mantis, their coin buys the assassins' promise that those slain by their sawtoothed sabers do not just die, but will never rise again.

Some whisper the Red Mantis are death cultists, others murmur they are an insidious brotherhood of fiends for hire, but no one speaks of the Mantis without the tremble of fear on their lips. The scars of their murderous blades stretch through history, taking bloody prominence in modern times with the public assassination of the famed Chelioxian Duke Kotaros in 4609. History is fraught with mysterious demises of generals on the eve of key battles and heroes laid low in their beds by unseen knives. Thus, many believe the Red Mantis have murdered for centuries, not just for coin and profit, but to rework the world to suit ancient, mysterious, and doubtlessly blood-soaked ambitions.

THE WAY OF THE MANTIS

The Red Mantis operates throughout Golarion, although they hide their presence from the common people under veils of subtlety and shadow. In criminal circles the world over, they are known as the finest assassins for hire, whose zealous commitment to death exceeds professionalism. Those who hire the Red Mantis pay for annihilation, as the assassins guarantee not just a mark's death, but an absolute and permanent end. Through arcane and secret methods, the Mantis guarantees that those they kill are the correct target—not some clever magical duplicate or sacrificial lamb. In addition, they keep tabs on their victims even after death, and should a target return from the dead their mark is renewed, the assassins moving to eliminate their prey as many times as it takes.

Red Mantis assassins are purists. They do not dabble in other illegitimate enterprise to the extent that many of Golarion's shadowy guilds do, letting nothing distract them from the purity of the assassin's art. Consummate professionals, they kill by contract alone and choose not to muddy the needs of their order by allying with other criminal organizations. Their claws reach far, though, and

agents of the Red Mantis, whether furtive or overt, maintain ties with governments, religious orders, guilds, and merchant groups throughout Avistan and Garund. Thus, there is little they cannot obtain if a mission requires it.

PATH OF THE MANTIS GOD

Although few outside the Red Mantis realize it, the assassins' effectiveness springs not just from obsession and elitism, but true religious fervor. To a Mantis assassin, completion of a contract isn't about money or reputation, but rather furthering the goals of his merciless organization and doing honor to its enigmatic patron deity, the Mantis God, He Who Walks in Blood. Little is known of the Red Mantis's faith, but the *Book of Maan, Path of Ways*, and several other ancient religious texts mention Achaekek, a servant of the deities and the terrible assassin of the gods. It is said that he sleeps among the Outer Rifts of the planes, bathed in the blood of heretics and worshipers, a killer to fell those

who would rival the true gods or to destroy worlds past redemption. Thus, the leaders and highest-ranking initiates of the Red Mantis see their work and worship as one and the same. Every life claimed delights their dark god and spills blood into the pool of his immortal rest.

In homage to its deity, the Red Mantis refuses all contracts on rightful monarchs. Just as the Mantis God serves as the weapon of the gods, so too do members of the Red Mantis see themselves as agents of righteous death. They view the murder of kings and queens as blasphemy, honoring the right of rulers as the mortal world's parallel of godhood. Anyone else, though—even religious figures, princes, the leaders of non-monarchies, or the mightiest of generals—are food for He Who Walks in Blood. (More details on the Mantis God can be found on page 80.)

EMPLOYING THE RED MANTIS

Those who seek the deadly services of the Mantis do so at great risk. Word spread among the shadier personalities in any city eventually reaches the assassins, but more remarkable is the Red Mantis's ability to select their clients before they even know they have need of the guild's lethal services. Many a man betrayed by his brother or merchant cheated by a rival finds himself approached by a businesslike agent of the Red Mantis, able to recount every misdeed with uncanny accuracy and offering absolute vengeance for a price. This payment is often a sum set in gold, but the assassins also accept compensation in the





form of possessions, titles to land, and—as nefariously as any servants of Asmodeus—future favors. Stories also tell of Mantis agents leaving methods of payment vague until after their work is complete, forcing their employer to part with the things they value most, like athletic daughters or charming sons. The method of determining the price the Red Mantis requests for an assassination is known to the order's leaders alone. Where a fickle merchant-baron might be dispatched for a mere handful of coins, the price for killing a cheating landlord could cost the buyer his family's most treasured heirlooms. In any case, the assassins' fees are as much a factor of who wants the killing performed as who is marked for death. When the time to pay finally comes, those who renege are condemned. Although they might flee far and hide for years, the lives of those who cheat the Red Mantis are sure to end on sawtoothed blades.

LEADERS OF THE RED MANTIS

Beneath the Mantis God, agents of the Red Mantis answer to a cabal of deadly assassin lords known as the Vernai, the High Killers. Comprised of several dozen master assassins, tried in the field and with reputations written

in blood, the Vernai lead the organization and interpret the will of He Who Walks in Blood from their hidden island redoubt, the Crimson Citadel. The majority of these leaders are known as mistresses, although the rare master exists. Each mistress has a particular country or region of influence, deciding where to send agents, choosing what marks to act upon, and directing subordinates to further the order's will. Above these mistresses stands the Blood Mistress, the leader of the Red Mantis and most potent vassal of the Mantis God, a title currently held by the aging Blood Mistress Jakalyn. This deadly honor can only be held by a woman, and brings with it great influence—yet not absolute control—over the Vernai, command of any individual Mantis agent, unquestioned authority in interpreting the will of the Mantis God, and sole access to the Sarzari Library.

THE CRIMSON CITADEL

Although many believe this cabal of knives and death is based in Ilizmagorti, the scum-tide city of smugglers, demon whores, and degenerate pirates, the Red Mantis's true stronghold lies deep in the shadowy jungles of Mediogalti,

THE RED MANTIS

inland of the port city. A majestic castle shrouded by the tropical canopy of leaf and vine, borne on a crag of obsidian, is where the Red Mantis train its finest and pay respects to its inscrutable deity. The tales of those who claim to have seen the assassins' citadel describe it as a dream above the jungle—a sinister palace, both wondrous and terrible—where within a crimson waterfall of fresh gore flows over a towering idol to He Who Walks in Blood. This is the Crimson Citadel.

The lair of the Red Mantis holds dozens of floors and hides countless halls and traps, being divided into three areas. The mantises call the lower levels of the castle Ruvári, the Ruby Halls. These darkened corridors are filled with poisoned razors and countless lethal traps. Poisonous beasts and monsters collected from the world over also stalk the bloodstained labyrinth, rare terrors that hunt noiselessly and kill with venomous thoughts. This is the Red Mantis's training ground, where the finest of the order prove their worth against trials that murderously cull all but the most skillful initiates.

Matching Ruvári's level of lethality with unbridled opulence are the central halls of Sivlamlik, the Honeyed Gardens, a sprawling complex of pleasure groves where guardian slaves and mind-whirling narcotics flow as freely as the blood-bubbling fountains of this gory paradise. Here, the Red Mantis's elite rest among the rewards of a thousand nefarious deeds, collecting themselves for future missions and paying homage to their crimson god. While most members of the Red Mantis only visit these halls for a day or two—so as to not let their murderous edges dull—for the halls' warrior-slaves, the Honeyed Gardens are a lavish prison. Most of these deadly servants are men—paragons of physical beauty, strength, and fitness—for the predominantly female leaders of the Mantis to enjoy and dispose of afterward.

Collectively, the spires of the Crimson Citadel form the Odalis, the Lavish Heart, the living quarters, meeting halls, workshops, and treasuries of the Red Mantis elite. While most Red Mantises never even visit the citadel, the finest assassins, most cunning minds, and members of the Vernai make their home in this lofty assassin's refuge. From here, the work of every Red Mantis member is considered and coordinated, marks are selected and missions meted out, all carefully chosen to advance the organization's needs and mysterious goals. Somewhere within Odalis lies the Faynas, the Iron Heart, the hidden home of the Blood Mistress, the order's greatest treasures and weapons, and the Sarzari Library—said to be among the largest collections of lost knowledge in Garund.



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 death 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 gifted a *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

RED MANTIS ASSASSIN

Initiates of the Red Mantis begin their training as rogues or multiclassed fighter/rogues, as stealth and skill at arms are both prerequisites to joining the order. Initiates are subjected to rigorous brainwashing and indoctrination into the convoluted religion of He Who Walks in Blood, a regimen of trials and tortures that strips away fear of death and replaces it with fear of failure. Those who survive become the claws of the Red Mantis, elite killers who deal death with impunity born of unnatural skill: the sly and subtle Red Mantis assassins.

Requirements

To qualify to become a Red Mantis assassin, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Alignment: Lawful evil.

Skills: Hide 8 ranks, Intimidate 5 ranks, Move Silently 8 ranks.

Feats: Alertness, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (sawtooth sabre), Weapon Finesse

Class Features

The following are class features of the Red Mantis assassin prestige class.

Red Mantis Assassin

Hit Die: D8

Base						Spells per Day				
Level	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
1st	+0	+0	+2	+2	Sneak attack +1d6, Weapon Focus	0	—	—	—	—
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+3	Prayer attack	1	—	—	—	—
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+3	Red shroud	2	0	—	—	—
4th	+3	+1	+4	+4	Call mantis, sneak attack +2d6	2	1	—	—	—
5th	+3	+1	+4	+4	Resurrection sense, Weapon Specialization	3	2	0	—	—
6th	+4	+2	+5	+5	Mantis form	3	2	1	—	—
7th	+5	+2	+5	+5	Sneak attack +3d6, Greater Weapon Focus	3	3	2	0	—
8th	+6	+2	+6	+6	Blood mantis form, fading	4	3	2	1	—
9th	+6	+3	+6	+6	Mantis doom, Greater Weapon Specialization	4	3	3	2	0
10th	+7	+3	+7	+7	Death mantis form, sneak attack +4d6	4	4	3	2	1

Skills (6 + Int bonus per level) Appraise, Balance, Bluff, Climb, Concentration, Disguise, Escape Artist, Heal, Hide, Intimidate, Jump, Knowledge (religion), Listen, Move Silently, Search, Spot, Tumble.

Spells: Beginning at 1st level, a Red Mantis assassin gains the ability to cast a small number of arcane spells. To cast a spell, the Red Mantis assassin must have an Intelligence score of at least 10 + the spell's level. Red Mantis assassin bonus spells are based on Intelligence, and saving throws against these spells have a DC of 10 + the spell level + the caster's Int modifier (if any). When the Red Mantis gets 0 spells of a given level, she gains only bonus spells. A Red Mantis assassin prepares and casts spells just as a bard does, and does not suffer arcane spell failure chance when wearing light armor.

At 6th, 8th, and 10th level, a Red Mantis assassin can choose to learn a new spell in place of one she already knows. The new spell's level must be the same as that being exchanged.

Sneak Attack (Ex): This is exactly like the rogue ability of the same name. The extra damage increases by +1d6 at 4th level, 7th level, and 10th level. This stacks with sneak attack bonuses from other sources.

Sawtooth Mastery (Ex): A Red Mantis assassin continues to improve at using the sawtooth sabre as she gains levels. At 1st level, she gains Weapon Focus (sawtooth sabre) as a bonus feat. At 5th level, she gains Weapon Specialization (sawtooth sabre) as a bonus feat. At 7th level, she gains Greater Weapon Focus (sawtooth sabre) as a bonus feat. At 9th level, she gains Greater Weapon Specialization (sawtooth sabre) as a bonus feat.

Prayer Attack (Su): At 2nd level, a Red Mantis assassin gains this deadly attack. The mantis must be within 30 feet of her victim and must be visible to her victim. While wielding a sawtooth sabre, the assassin can begin weaving her weapon in a hypnotic pattern, fascinating her victim. Her victim can resist fascination by making a Will save against DC 10 + the Red Mantis assassin's class level + the Red Mantis assassin's Charisma modifier. By concentrating, the Red Mantis assassin can maintain this fascination, and after 3 rounds of fascination, she may make a coup de grace attack against her fascinated target—if her victim is slain by this attack,

he is typically beheaded. A victim who survives the coup de grace is no longer fascinated, but the Red Mantis assassin can attempt a new prayer attack against the same victim if she 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 him. Taking damage from any source 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 effects. This assassination attack is therefore most effective against foes who are alone.

Red Shroud (Su): At 3rd level, the Red Mantis assassin gains the supernatural ability to create a veil of swirling red mist around herself a number of times per day equal to her Constitution bonus (minimum once per day) as a move-equivalent action. The red shroud persists for 1 round per Red Mantis assassin level. As long as the shroud is active, the Red Mantis assassin gains a +1 dodge bonus to her Armor Class and fast healing equal to her Constitution bonus (minimum of fast healing 1). The mist is supernaturally resistant to wind and cannot be dissipated by such before its duration ceases. When a Red Mantis assassin is slain, at the moment of her death, she can choose to remain corporeal or disintegrate into a cloud of red mist that disperses quickly, leaving behind no trace of the assassin's existence.

Call Mantis (Sp): At 4th level, a Red Mantis assassin 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, and thus do not gain the typical bonus on Hide checks in foliage.

Resurrection Sense (Su): At 5th level, a Red Mantis assassin becomes supernaturally sensitive to the movement

of the souls of those she killed. This allows the Red Mantis assassin a chance to notice if anyone slain by her within the last year is brought back to life. If such an event occurs, the Red Mantis assassin notices the resurrection unless it takes place on another plane or in an area that prevents scrying effects, and even then, she can sense the previously assassinated life the instant it returns to Golarion or steps out of the protected area. The sensation does not tell the mantis where the resurrected victim is located, only which victim has returned to life. If a Red Mantis assassin senses such a resurrection, she is honor-bound to track down the previous target and attempt to kill him again.

Mantis Form (Su): At 6th level, a red mantis assassin may 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 to Hide checks in foliage. While in mantis form, the Red Mantis assassin 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.

At 8th level, the mantis form grows more powerful, and is known as the blood mantis. In this form, the Red Mantis assassin gains a +2 bonus to Strength and Constitution, and causes 2 points of Constitution damage when she makes a successful bite attack as she drains blood from her foe.

At 10th level, the mantis form gains distinctive black stripes and black eyes—this is the death mantis. She now gains a +4 bonus to Strength and Constitution while in this form, and her first successful attack in a round also imparts a negative level. Each negative level inflicted heals 5 points of damage to the Red Mantis assassin. The save DC to remove this level is 10 + the Red Mantis assassin's level + her Constitution modifier. In addition, while in death mantis form, the Red Mantis assassin gains DR 10/good.

Fading (Su): At 8th level, the Red Mantis assassin gains the ability to momentarily and partially fade into the Ethereal Plane. This is a free action that can be used a number of times each day equal to the Red Mantis assassin's Constitution modifier (minimum once per day). Whenever the Red Mantis assassin is struck by a weapon or is forced to make a Reflex saving throw, she may choose to fade (she must choose to do so before damage is rolled for the attack, but after the hit is confirmed or the Reflex saving throw is made). This grants a 50% miss chance for that attack, or a 50% chance to evade all effects of the attack that forced the Reflex saving throw. Fading represents an additional miss chance; if the Red Mantis is currently protected by a second effect that provides a miss chance (such as concealment), opponents must check twice to determine if the hit strikes.

Mantis Doom (Su): At 9th level, a Red Mantis assassin may call forth a mantis doom as a full round action, targeting any one creature within 100 feet. This ability summons a swarm of fiendish mantises that quickly shroud the targeted creature

RED MANTIS SPELL LIST

Red Mantis assassins choose their spells from the following list:

1st Level: *animate rope, cause fear, change self, darkvision, detect magic, expeditious retreat, feather fall, ghost sound, inflict light wounds, jump, magic fang, obscurement, silent image, spider climb, true strike*

2nd Level: *alter self, blur, cat's grace, darkness, fog cloud, hold person, inflict moderate wounds, invisibility, keen edge, levitate, minor image, scare, see invisibility, summon swarm*

3rd Level: *clairaudience/clairvoyance, deeper darkness, fear, fly, gaseous form, giant vermin, inflict serious wounds, major image, rage, scrying*

4th Level: *dimension door, improved invisibility, inflict critical wounds, insect plague, modify memory, phantasmal killer, polymorph self, solid fog*

5th Level: *mark of justice, nightmare, prying eyes, slay living, word of recall*

RED MANTIS ASSASSIN SPELLS KNOWN

Level	Spells Known				
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
1st	2*	—	—	—	—
2nd	3	—	—	—	—
3rd	3	2*	—	—	—
4th	4	3	—	—	—
5th	4	3	2*	—	—
6th	4	4	3	—	—
7th	4	4	3	2*	—
8th	5	4	4	3	—
9th	5	4	4	3	2*
10th	5	5	4	4	3

*Provided the Red Mantis assassin has sufficient Intelligence to have a bonus spell of this level.

and begin biting and cutting away at exposed flesh. The Red Mantis assassin rolls 1d8 per class level and compares the result to the target's current hit points. If the result equals or exceeds the target's hit points, the target is immediately slain by the swarm of mantises and his body (but not gear) is devoured. If the result is lower than the target's current hit points, he takes nonlethal damage equal to the amount rolled and becomes panicked for 1d4 rounds. He can negate the panic and halve the damage with a successful Reflex save against DC 10 + the Red Mantis assassin's class level + the Red Mantis assassin's Charisma modifier. The swarm's attack is non-magical, so spell resistance does not apply. The mantis doom's damage penetrates damage reduction as if it were a magic and evil weapon. Each mantis only does one point of damage on a bite, so any damage reduction it cannot bypass grants complete immunity to this effect.