



## A HISTORY OF ASHES

### CURSE OF THE CRIMSON THRONE: CHAPTER FOUR

Several hundred years ago, a brutal warlord of Zon-Kuthon named Kazavon conquered much of the Hold of Belkzen. His violent expansion and assaults against the neighboring countries of Ustalav and Lastwall quickly became far more deadly and horrific than petty skirmishes against orcs. From his castle, Scarwall, Kazavon threatened to engulf all who dared rise against him. His tactical brilliance, combined with his savage armies of orcs and barbarians, continuously broke every army Lastwall and Ustalav could throw against him. With none able to withstand his power, it seemed as if his reign of murder and blood would last forever.

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Kazavon's defeat was not on the field of battle, but in his own throne room. It was there that a secret cabal of heroes and mercenaries managed to do what armies could not. Using power and stealth and led by a hero of Lastwall named Mandraivus, they infiltrated Scarwall. The atrocities they found there tested them to their limits, and when they reached Kazavon's throne room, a terrific battle took place. It was during this battle that they stripped away Kazavon's human disguise, revealing the champion of Zon-Kuthon to be a blue dragon. In the end, Mandraivus managed to lay Kazavon low with his legendary weapon, a magic bastard sword named *Seriththial*. Yet even in death, Kazavon's body shuddered and grasped. Fire and acid destroyed much of the dragon's corpse, yet seven fragments proved impossible to destroy. These grisly relics were so suffused with evil and malignancy they refused to burn or melt—even as the heroes watched, the bones twitched and writhed as they tried to return to life.

Mandraivus ordered his surviving brothers and sisters to each take one of these seven relics out into the world and go into hiding. None would know where the other members went, least of all their leader, who would remain in Scarwall with *Seriththial* to guard against it ever being used by Kazavon or his minions again.

One of the heroes Mandraivus called to join his cabal was a powerful Shoanti cleric. When the surviving members of the band each took a relic, this Shoanti cleric chose the *Fangs of Kazavon* as his responsibility. He returned to his homeland in Varisia, opting to hide the fangs in an ancient Thassilonian monument on the shore of his people's ancestral lands. He spent the rest of his life guarding the monument, seeking to ensure that nothing dared enter the hidden chambers within, and before he died, he passed the task down to his son. And so, for hundreds of years, the descendants of this now-forgotten Shoanti priest guarded and protected the *Fangs of Kazavon* from discovery. Eventually, they forgot what exactly it was they were guarding, knowing only that they were bound by tradition and honor to continue the task.

When Cheliox founded Korvosa and warred with the Shoanti, driving them north into the Cinderlands, many of the guardians of the *Fangs of Kazavon* perished. Few Shoanti shamans survived the decades of war, and they watched with fear from afar as the invaders built a castle atop the hidden chambers. Yet as the years wore on, the world didn't end, and the Shoanti began to hope that the time of the evil hidden inside the pyramid had passed. Recently, Shoanti ambassadors have attempted to entreat Korvosa for peace, but these reconciliations are little more than an excuse to get the line of guardian shamans a place back near the seat of their traditional charge, so they can watch and wait and be on hand should the unthinkable occur.

When it did, the change was so small that it went all but unnoticed, overshadowed as it was by riots and disease. Queen Ileosa's discovery of the *Fangs of Kazavon* and the ancient warlord's spirit infused her with incredible power. The scenario the ancient shamans feared has come to pass, yet none remain nearby to move against it. Their words are ignored and their warnings fall on deaf ears. Now, sensing weakness in the city as it reels from riots and plague and staggers under the despotic rule of a new tyrant, the Shoanti are preparing for war. By driving out the invaders, they hope to return to their traditional role of guardians over the ancient evil—yet little do they know that the time for guarding has long passed. If they are allowed to march on Korvosa, the resulting slaughter on both sides of the conflict will surely be a crowning glory for Queen Ileosa and her newfound patron Kazavon.

## Adventure Synopsis

The PCs flee the city of Korvosa to seek shelter in the village of Harse, where they learn that Queen Ileosa has fallen under the influence of an ancient evil known as Kazavon. Yet few remember much about Kazavon—and unfortunately, the only ones who might know how to defeat the evil are the Sun Shamans of the Sklar-Quah. Unfortunately, because the Sklar-Quah are readying for war on Korvosa, getting them to share this information won't be easy.

The PCs must travel into the Cinderlands and seek out the Skloan-Quah shaman Thousand Bones—a man they first met during "Edge of Anarchy." With his advice, the PCs undertake a series of trials and tasks of increasing difficulty, culminating in the Trial of the Totems which, if they prevail, will grant them membership in the Sklar-Quah Shoanti tribe. Along the way, the PCs encounter several people who can help or hinder their goals, from suspicious local barbarians to sinister cultists of Zon-Kuthon to a band of assassins sent into the Cinderlands by the queen herself to see that the PCs' meddling ways are put to an end once and for all. The adventure comes to its climax during an all-out assault on the Shoanti of the Flameford camp by these assassins—an assault with the PCs caught in the middle.

## PART ONE: THE ROAD NORTH

As this adventure begins, the assumption is that the PCs are accompanying Vencarlo Orisini and Neolandus Kalepopolis as they flee from the city of Korvosa, bound for the town of Harse and Orisini's allies there. Neolandus might have mentioned that he suspects some of the Shoanti know more about what has happened to Queen Ileosa and how to deal with the *Crown of Fangs*, but as he and the PCs head north to safety, he prefers to stay quiet, promising more information once they're safe.