

During Combat The boneslayers prefer to fire their bows from covered positions, but if one of them is attacked in melee, the others quickly come to his aid.

Morale Boneslayers fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 13, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +5

Feats Extra Turning, Improved Turning, Totem Spirit (Skoan-Quah), Track

Skills Concentration +6, Handle Animal +4, Heal +10, Hide +4, Knowledge (nature) +5, Knowledge (religion) +6, Move Silently +4, Survival +8

Languages Common, Shoanti

SQ spontaneous casting (cure spells)

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of delay poison, potion of lesser restoration*; **Other Gear** masterwork hide shirt, masterwork earth breaker, masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str), *white Shoanti war paint*, holy symbol

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Totem Spirit This feat (described in the *Rise of the Runelords Player's Guide*) grants the Boneslayer a +2 bonus on weapon damage against undead and a +2 bonus on Heal checks.

PART THREE: ACROPOLIS OF THE THRALLKEEPERS

With the gifts given by Thousand Bones and the assistance of four reliable guides, the journey to the Acropolis of the Thrallkeepers should be relatively safe, depending on how often you wish to liven up the trip with wandering monsters. At times during the journey, feel free to have the PCs make Spot checks; whoever rolls the highest catches a glimpse of what seems to be another small group of riders on a distant outcropping. A DC 40 Spot check confirms that the man at the head of this group is Krojun—the Sklar-Quah is keeping an eye on the PCs as they travel, waiting for an opportunity to test them further. If the PCs attempt to confront him, he easily avoids them unless the PCs teleport directly to his location, a display of power that spooks his men but simply makes Krojun smile. In such an event, he points out that the Cinderlands are a dangerous place, and if the PCs die, someone needs to carry their bodies back to the Kallow Mounds, lest they rise as lost souls. He lets lie the implication that he also wouldn't pass up the opportunity to loot the PCs' dead bodies if the opportunity arose.

You can heighten the tension caused by the war party's presence by drawing out this distant game of cat and mouse, perhaps to the point of where it becomes unclear who is hunting whom. Until the PCs actually reach the Acropolis of the Thrallkeepers, however, try to avoid having too many direct confrontations with Krojun's band.

A Grim Warning

As the journey progresses, the PCs should come upon at least one grisly totem—the rotting head of a Shoanti man mounted on a sharp wooden pole, the other end of which has been jammed into a cleft between two rocks so that the head hangs out almost like a flag on the side of a building. Bright red crossbow bolts have been driven into each of the head's eyes.

The boneslayers accompanying the PCs mutter and whisper at this discovery. If asked about it, one of the Sklar-Quah says the head belonged to a Sklar-Quah, but was placed here by a “*tshamek* devil” the Shoanti call the Cinderlander. The brave goes on to explain that, for the past several years, this mysterious figure has stalked the Cinderlands. He never attacks large groups—targeting only lone braves with a strange “sideways screaming bow.” There are plenty of legends and tales about the Cinderlander, who he is, where he's from, and why he hunts the Shoanti. The Skoan-Quah believe he is the unquiet ghost of a Korvosan general who stalks these lands and will continue to slay Shoanti until his victims equal those the Shoanti took from him. Two crossbow bolts in the eyes have become the Cinderlander's calling card, but the aged condition of the head implies that the mysterious killer is long gone from the region. In any event, one of the bonecallers scrambles up to retrieve the decapitated head. Without knowing the Shoanti's identity, his ashes cannot be interred in the Kallow Mounds, so instead, that evening, the boneslayers hold a short service of their own, burning the head, scattering the ashes, and burying the skull under a cairn of rocks.

More information about the Cinderlander and his role in this adventure can be found on page 21.

Arrival at the Acropolis

As the PCs approach the acropolis, the sky on the horizon begins to darken alarmingly. A DC 20 Knowledge (nature) check or a quick warning from one of their boneslayer guides confirms the worst—an emberstorm is brewing. Powerful duststorms filled with blasts of burning ash and cinders, these devastating storms are feared by the Shoanti for their swift speed and terrible fury—known as Black Blizzards to most tribes, the advent of an emberstorm could be taken as a bad omen, as the boneslayer companions are quick to point out. The PCs should have plenty of time to find the entrance to the acropolis before the storm strikes, though—see page 74 of *Pathfinder #7* for rules if the PCs get caught unprotected in the emberstorm itself.

The Acropolis of the Thrallkeepers sits atop a raised area in the shadows of the Wyvern Mountains. Built originally by an order of Thassilonian wizards known as the Thrallkeepers (a competing order against the



Therassic Monks who built the Black Tower and the Library under Jorgenfist—see *Pathfinder* #4), the acropolis's true grandeur lies hidden underground. Eager to prove their value and use to Runelord Karzoug, they turned increasingly to the teachings of the rune goddess Lissala, and through those meditations, they sought a method to duplicate the great works of Thassilon's most powerful conjurers. The acropolis was a place where they could perfect their conjurations and study the strange and horrific monstrosities like scarlet walkers, shining children, and other malignancies from beyond the stars, ever seeking ways to call down larger and more dangerous minions to present to Karzoug. The most arrogant of the order hoped one day to call upon a creature like the Oliphant of Jandelay, yet they never quite reached such a level of power before they overstepped their own ability.

Following forbidden runes and methods stolen from dubious sources (perhaps from strangely-garbed merchants visiting from Leng), the Thrallkeepers set about the conjuration of a gigantic entity from a distant corner of the universe—a monster referred to as the *havero*, or the Arms and Eyes of Forever. They managed to pull down a *havero* from these distant unknown places and imprisoned it in the vast summoning chamber below,

but the *havero* was too powerful for the Thrallkeepers to fully control. Its body trapped in the conjuration chamber, the *havero* sent its countless appendages up through the surrounding structure and, in a matter of minutes, had sought out and murdered every single Thrallkeeper within the acropolis.

The Therassic Monks attempted several times to move in and claim the vacated structure, yet it soon became obvious that the *havero* would allow none to dwell in the acropolis—even those who sought nothing more than to release it from its prison. When Thassilon crumbled, visits to the acropolis ended, and in time, all but one of the once-mighty buildings that stood atop it crumbled. The ageless *havero* itself fell into hibernation, and now only wakes when intruders explore the ruins of the acropolis—even then, only a few of the creature's twitching limbs awaken at a time to defend the place. The Shoanti have learned to avoid the ruins, but worshipers of Desna can sense the presence of a creature from beyond the stars here, and as such it has become a sacred place to her worshipers. They know that the *havero* is a dangerous creature that must remain imprisoned, yet the secrets of what it has seen in the places at the edge of the universe are a lure to their inquisitive minds.

Above ground, all that remains today is a partially collapsed tower bearing the mark of the seven-pointed star—the Sihedron Rune. Just to the side of the mark, a pair of 20-foot-wide stone doors stand ajar (having already been opened by the Brotherhood of Bones), leading down to a dusty flight of stairs descending to area **A1**.

Unless otherwise specified, the acropolis is lightless. Walls are composed of black granite flecked with blood-red deposits of rock crystal. Intricate rune patterns of Thassilonian writing extolling the virtues of Runelord Karzoug and the power of Lissala decorate the walls at regular intervals, as does the ubiquitous seven-pointed Sihedron. Each stone door bears a bas relief of the Sihedron on its face as well. If the symbol is pressed, it clicks and the door slowly grinds up into the ceiling the following round, granting access beyond. The door then descends on its own accord 1 minute later. The door's mechanism may be jammed, keeping the door open (or sealed) with a successful DC 15 Disable Device check. A similar check from either side restores the door to functionality. A creature that is unable to step out of a descending door's slow path is crushed for 3d6 points of damage and becomes pinned in place until he can escape with a DC 25 Strength or Escape Artist check.

A Crowded Dungeon

While the PCs are just here to receive the blessing of the Desnan found-mark in area **A11**, they aren't the only group exploring the acropolis. Three other groups are destined to clash in the acropolis as well—the Brotherhood of Bones, Krojun and his Thundercallers, and a group of Red Mantis assassins. Each group is summarized below, and in every room description, the group's actions (and when it enters that room) are detailed. In addition, the havelo itself still lives, and its countless limbs slowly awaken as the four groups explore.

Brotherhood of Bones (EL 12): The first group to arrive in the acropolis is Shadowcount Sial and his chain devil companion Asyra. Sial's divinations have led him here, and he makes his way to area **A3** hoping to observe the PCs and follow them quietly once they arrive. He would prefer to remain unseen, but if his hand is forced, he allies with the PCs unless they wish otherwise. The boneslayers object loudly to such an alliance, and Sial has little but disdain for the local "primitives."

If the PCs discover the priest, he abandons his pretense of silent observation and greets the PCs, explaining that he has been watching them for some time. He introduces himself and Asyra as accomplices of Laori Vaus, explaining that she had reported the PCs' efforts in Old Korvosa to the organization that he and she both belong to. Sial attempts to remain as mysterious as he can, asking only leave of the PCs to accompany them and

observe their methods. He understands full well that he's given the PCs little reason to trust him, and offers his spells as support for their exploration as needed. If combat with the havelo or Red Mantis occurs, he even joins in on the PCs' side to aid them.

Although Sial admits to belonging to the Brotherhood of Bones (a DC 25 Knowledge [religion] check reveals only that this is a mysterious order of scholars and historians that operates inside of the church of Zon-Kuthon), he would rather avoid mentioning anything else about his actual interests at this time, promising only that, once they're out of this ruin, he'll explain himself more fully. If the PCs still don't want his company, he nods in understanding and withdraws to area **A1** to await the end of the emberstorm, approaching the PCs at a later date to ask again if they will allow him to accompany them on their travels.

SHADOWCOUNT SIAL

hp 56 (see page 18)

ASYRA

hp 118 (see page 19)

Red Mantis (EL 12): A group of four Red Mantis assassins enters the acropolis not long after the PCs arrive. Cinnabar doesn't honestly expect these four to be able to slay all of the PCs—their primary job is to engage the PCs so that Cinnabar, who is scrying on one of the assassins, can observe the PCs in combat and therefore prepare her assault with more accuracy later in the adventure. If the PCs have taken pains to ensure that the Red Mantis can't track them easily, Cinnabar gives one of the assassins an *elixir of shadewalking* so he can travel to the acropolis in about an hour from their Ashwing gargoyle base of operations—assuming at least that she's able to scry upon the PCs or knows that's where they're going. Unless the PCs have already noticed the Red Mantises, it's simplest to assume that these four assassins are on top of their game and enter the acropolis about 10 minutes after the PCs (or at about the time the PCs move on beyond area **A2**).

Once the PCs discover the assassins, the mantises attack at once—they have little interest in talking.

RED MANTIS ASSASSINS (4)

hp 50 each (see page 15)

Sklar-Quah (EL 13): When the emberstorm picks up, Krojun sends most of his war party away to seek safety elsewhere. He keeps three of his thundercallers at his side and watches the acropolis entrance from a distant crag, local stories and legends about the region staying him from following. Just as he's about to abandon his

The Acropolis of the Thrall Keepers

Main Level



vigil, though, the Red Mantis enters. This event intrigues Krojun enough that he leads his three thundercaller braves down to the acropolis to enter as well. The Sklar-Quah enter about 15 minutes after the PCs do (or at about the time the PCs have explored three areas on the main level or are about to move into the lower level).

Once the PCs discover that Krojun and his thundercallers have followed them into the acropolis, Krojun's demeanor is brisk. He greets them with a stoic nod, explaining that he and his braves decided to take shelter in here while the storm raged outside. He then goes on to warn the PCs that this place is bad, and that they shouldn't be here. If the PCs explain that they're seeking the Desnan found-mark, he snorts derisively, saying that the PCs are no better than those "stargazing Lyrune-Quah," but he doesn't take action to prevent their exploration. He does, however, demand to know what the PCs are doing in the Cinderlands. He meets most answers with non-committal grunts, but if the PCs say that they seek an audience with a Sun Shaman, he laughs loudly (add two noise points in this event—see page 36 for further details) and says that such a thing will never happen—that the Sun Shamans of the Sklar-Quah have nothing to say to *tshamek*.

Krojun accompanies the PCs for a short time, explaining only that he finds them to be entertaining while he waits out the emberstorm, when in fact he's simply sizing them up and trying to figure them out. He doesn't aid them in a fight against the Red Mantis unless the assassins harm him or one of his braves, but he does aid the PCs in any fight against the haverro. He doesn't follow the PCs into the lower level—once they head down there, he takes his leave of the PCs to finish waiting out the storm at area A1. He is gone by the time the PCs complete their business here.

KROJUN EATS-WHAT-HE-KILLS CR 12
hp 155 (see page 27)

SKLAR-QUAH THUNDERCALLERS (3) CR 7

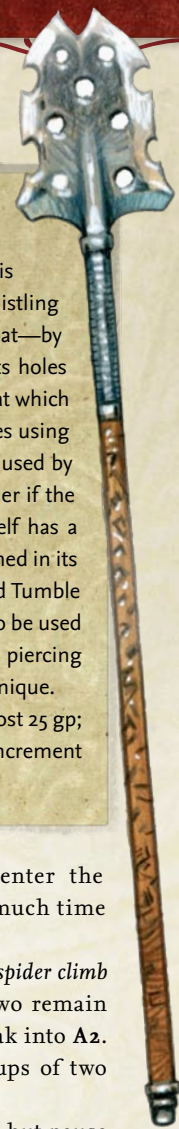
Human barbarian 1/bard 6
N Medium humanoid (human)
Init +7; **Senses** Listen +9, Spot -1

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 13
(+5 armor, +3 Dex, -2 rage)

hp 61 (7 HD; 1d12+6d6+28)

Fort +8, **Ref** +8, **Will** +6



OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.

Melee +1 *totem spear* +10 (1d10+7/×3)

Ranged +1 *totem spear* +9 (1d10+5/×3)

Special Attacks bardic music 6/day (countersong, *fascinate*, inspire courage +2, inspire competence, *suggestion*), rage 1/day

Spells Known (CL 6th)

2nd (3/day)—*pyrotechnics*, *shatter* (DC 15), *sound burst* (DC 15)

1st (4/day)—*cure light wounds*, *expeditious retreat*, *feather fall*, *lesser confusion* (DC 14)

0 (3/day)—*detect magic*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *summon instrument*

TACTICS

Before Combat If time permits, the thundercallers first prepare their war band with war paint.

During Combat One thundercaller initiates his inspire courage bardic music ability while the others attack. In melee, the thundercallers rage and then move in to flank foes with their totem spears

Morale Thundercallers never flee unless called away by their chief or another authority figure, such as Krojun.

Base Statistics AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15; hp 47; Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +4, Str 14, Dex 12, Con 14; Skills Concentration +12, Jump +13

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 16, **Con** 18, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +5; **Gp** +7

Feats Combat Casting, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (totem spear), Improved Initiative, Iron Will

Skills Concentration +14, Intimidate +7, Jump +17, Knowledge (history) +10, Listen +9, Perform (wind instrument) +13, Ride +7, Survival +3, Tumble +12

Languages Common, Shoanti

SQ bardic knowledge +8, fast movement

Combat Gear barbarian chew, *wand of cure light wounds* (30 charges), *wand of cat's grace* (15 charges); **Other Gear** +1 *hide shirt*, +1 *totem spear*, *green Shoanti war paint*

A1. Thrallkeeper's Walk

The stone stairs end at a twenty-foot-wide and twenty-foot-tall hallway that leads to the east, opening into a large chamber. The floor is cluttered with dust and tiny mounds of ash that look to have been recently disturbed in places, but signs of the trail vanish to the east once the stones become clear of debris.

It's only a DC 10 Survival check to note that two human-sized creatures seem to have moved through this area recently, traveling from the stairs toward the room to the east. Within 10 feet of area A2, though, the ground is clear, and continuing to follow the trail requires a DC 25 Survival check. Doing so leads the PCs to the door from area A2 to area A3.

TOTEM SPEAR

The shaft of this traditional Sklar-Quah spear is carved with sacred symbols, and its wide head is drilled with cunning holes that create a loud whistling when the weapon is hurled or used in combat—by turning the spear so that the wind blows over its holes in different orientations, or by varying the speed at which it is swung, a character can create mournful dirges using Perform (wind instrument). Totem spears can be used by bards to create bardic music effects in this manner if the user is trained in the spear's use. The spear itself has a strong, flexible shaft, and in the hands of one trained in its use, grants a +2 circumstance bonus on Jump and Tumble checks. The spear's relatively wide head allows it to be used as a slashing weapon, swung side to side, or as a piercing weapon in a more traditional spear-fighting technique.

Totem Spear (Two-Handed Exotic Weapon): Cost 25 gp; Dmg (S) 1d8; Dmg (M) 1d10; Critical ×3; Range Increment 10 ft.; Weight 6 lb.; Type piercing or slashing.

Brotherhood of Bones: Sial and Asyra enter the ruins before the PCs arrive but don't spend much time in this area.

Red Mantis: The Red Mantis assassins cast *spider climb* at this point. If there's activity in area A2, two remain in hiding here near the ceiling while two sneak into A2. Otherwise, the assassins break into two groups of two and move into A2 under stealth.

Sklar-Quah: The Sklar-Quah enter the area but pause for a few rounds before entering area A2 if there's no activity there. Any Red Mantis assassins hidden above remain hidden; the Sklar-Quah aren't observant enough to notice them.

A2. Pool of the Haverro (EL 10+)

The air in this massive cathedral-like space seems strangely cool. The ceiling vaults into the shadows above to a height of nearly sixty feet, while the walls are carved with vertical ridges that rise to support the arch above. A five-foot-wide balcony rings the room, the floor of which drops fifteen feet into a pool of dark water. A bridge crosses the pool down the room's center, and two large stone doors stand in the walls to the south and east. Smaller doors sit in the walls to the northwest and northeast—all four doors bear depictions of seven-pointed-stars.

The dark water in the pool is cold and stagnant, clogged with silt and a thick upper layer of dark algae. The "pool" was once a vast chamber that once served as the acropolis's primary summoning chamber, but anyone who investigates the foul water finds that something cold,

TENTACLE COMBAT

The easiest way to represent the havero's tentacles on a battlemat is with a large number of pennies and dimes (or similarly-sized tokens). When a tentacle emerges, it may do so at any pool square in area **A2**. Use a dime to note the current position of the tentacle's tip—this is the part of the tentacle that “moves” when the havero explores. Whenever you move this dime out of a square, leave a penny in the square it vacates; this indicates the length of the tentacle itself as it trails from the tip back to the pool.

The tentacle itself can attack any target within 20 feet of its tip, and threatens any creature in this range. Any creature that wishes to move through a square marked by a penny can do so, but treats that square as difficult terrain as he is forced to clamber or jump over the writhing tentacle length.

A character can attack a tentacle at any point along its length. Attacking a tentacle while out of reach of the tip is a relatively safe way to combat a havero tentacle, but it is certain to call the tip back to the current location.

Once multiple tentacles emerge, it might be easiest to use additional markers as well, if you wish to keep clear which trail of pennies is “attached” to which tip. You can also use different colored lengths of string or yarn to track the location of each tentacle if you wish, using pennies at points along its length to weight down the string so it doesn't slide all over the battlemat.

The havero's tentacles are treated as Huge creatures for the purposes of determining attack rolls, Hide checks, and grapple checks.

rubbery, and immense fills most of this chamber to an uneven depth ranging from 10 to 30 feet.

Narrow gaps along the north and south walls allow creatures in the passageways beyond the luxury of observing events in this room from there, but are difficult to notice from inside area **A2**. It's a DC 20 Search check to locate these cleverly hidden gaps.

Creature: The pool is far from empty—it contains the slumbering havero conjured so long ago by the Thrallkeepers. Their magic holds the creature still, suspending it in a trance-like state analogous to what mortals would understand as a form of hibernation. In this form of stasis, its body lies immense but immobile under the dark waters of the pool, a vast tangle of tentacles and coils. Close inspection reveals a dark-colored mass of thick, rubbery material that heals all damage done to it in a single round. Here and there, strange bulbous protrusions (closed eyes) stud the uneven ropey mass. The exact conditions required to waken the havero have yet to occur, and whatever these conditions are should be outside of the capability of the PCs to accomplish—the havero itself

is a CR 25 creature, and should not be unleashed on a 10th-level party. Yet while the havero dreams away the ages, its countless limbs do not sleep as deeply as its colossal body, and if intruders are loud or destructive enough, some of these unquiet limbs could awaken.

As the PCs explore the ruins, track their “noise points” to determine how many of the havero's tentacles awaken. Award noise points as follows:

Action	Noise Points Awarded
Combat	5 points per round
Yelling	1 point
Casting a spell with a verbal component	1 point
Running	1 point
Utilizing a sonic effect	10 points
Noise occurs in area A2	Double the points awarded
Swimming in the pool	2 points per round

Directly attacking the havero's body awards a number of noise points equal to the amount of damage dealt (attacking a tentacle does not award any additional points beyond those normally awarded for combat). Every minute that passes in which no new noise points are awarded, the current total of noise points drops by 1d10.

The number of noise points determines how many of the havero's arms waken and investigate. Use the following chart to determine when the arms awaken and what actions they take; the effects of each level of noise occur on the round after the noise point total reaches the indicated level (note that reductions to noise points cannot trigger a new havero reaction).

Noise Point Total	Havero Reaction
10	Twitch: The havero's tentacles writhe and twitch. The entire ruin shakes slightly, and the waters of the pool in area A2 slosh and churn as if something large just shifted below the surface.
20	Investigate: One havero tentacle emerges from the water of area A2 to investigate that room. It investigates for 1d4 rounds before slumping back into the water—if it encounters any creatures, it attacks.
30	Seek: Two havero tentacles emerge from the pool in area A2 to investigate the room for 2d4 rounds, slithering outward into surrounding rooms as time permits. If they encounter any creatures, all other tentacles quickly move to aid the fight as soon as it begins.
40	Assault: As “seek” above, save that four tentacles emerge to investigate the ruins. The tentacles continue to investigate until the noise point

50

total drops below 40.

Wrath: As “assault” above, save that six tentacles emerge. A new tentacle emerges to replace one forced to withdraw on the round after that tentacle’s withdrawal, up to a maximum of six active tentacles at a time. Tentacles continue to emerge to replace withdrawn ones as long as the noise point total remains at 50 or higher.

When the havero’s tentacles emerge, treat each one as its own, unique creature. The tentacles present a unique situation on a battlemat, since they don’t really conform to standard rules for creature space. Although each of the havero’s tentacles are long enough to reach anywhere on the main level, they never get much thicker than about a foot or two in diameter, no matter how long they stretch. See the Tentacle Combat sidebar for rules on how these limbs work on a battlemat.

HAVERO TENTACLE

CR 6

NE Huge aberration

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +5, Spot +5

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 9, flat-footed 18

(+1 Dex, +10 natural, –2 size)

hp 66 (7 HD; 7d8+35)

Fort +7, **Ref** +3, **Will** +10

DR 5/slashing; **Immune** cold, inhaled effects, mind-affecting effects, poison; **Resist** acid 10, fire 10

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee tentacle +12 (2d6+13)

Space 5 ft. (special); **Reach** 20 ft. (special)

Special Attacks constrict 2d6+13, improved grab

TACTICS

During Combat The havero’s tentacles attack the closest visible target, switching to attack other targets only to defend themselves as necessary.

Morale Once a havero tentacle is reduced to 0 hit points, it stops attacking and withdraws back into the pool in area **A2** at a speed of 60 feet.

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 12, **Con** 20, **Int** —, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +22

SQ mindless, no breath

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Constrict (Ex) On a successful grapple check, a havero tentacle deals 2d6+13 points of damage.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a havero tentacle must hit a target of any size with its tentacle attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Mindless (Ex) Although the havero itself is fantastically

intelligent, it is currently slumbering, leaving its tentacles little more than instinct to operate on. The tentacles are effectively mindless, and thus immune to mind-affecting attacks.

No Breath (Ex) A havero tentacle does not breathe, and as such is immune to inhaled toxins and odor-based effects.

Brotherhood of Bones: Sial and Asyra didn’t investigate this room much, and chose area **A3** as their observation point. It’s a DC 25 Survival check to track their progress across the floor to this room. If they observe the PCs’ fight in this room, they come to the party’s aid if things start to look dire but otherwise simply observe the battle.

Red Mantis: If the Red Mantis find the PCs here, they clamber up onto the ceiling stealthily so they can *feather fall* down to attack with surprise. If the PCs are fighting the Havero, the mantises watch quietly, entering the fray only if noticed or to strike while the PCs are wounded as soon as the tentacles withdraw. If there are no PCs here when the mantises arrive, they avoid the pool. One pair remains hidden on the roof above the eastern doors while the other moves south to investigate area **A5**.

Sklar-Quah: The Sklar-Quah are somewhat nervous about the ominous water in the pool, and while none of them enter the slime, a few toss rocks into it while Krojun walks the perimeter of the place, looking for the PCs’ trail. Each round, Krojun attempts a DC 25 check to pick up the PCs’ trail on the stone floor; each round he fails, add 3 noise points as his thundercallers throw rocks into the water. Eventually, he picks up the trail or his thundercallers rile the havero to life. If the Sklar-Quah start to fight the havero here, give the PCs Listen checks to hear the combat (DC –10 check, modified as appropriate for barriers and distance); you don’t need to run the combat between the Shoanti and the tentacles if you don’t want. If the PCs don’t come to investigate, the Shoanti retreat from the acropolis to take their chances with the emberstorm after 5 rounds of battle and are not encountered again until Part Five. If the PCs come to investigate, they find the Shoanti battling the appropriate number of tentacles. Each combatant has taken 5d6 points of damage already.

A3. Brotherhood Observation Point

One wall of this otherwise plain hallway features several long narrow gaps that open into the room beyond.

At the time of the acropolis’s construction, the Thrallkeepers naively intended to use these gaps to view summoned creatures from a point of safety. Treat the gaps as arrow slits.

Brotherhood of Bones: Sial and Asyra choose this area as their observation point. Once the PCs move



out of area **A2**, Sial casts *scrying* to attempt to continue observing them as they explore this complex. If this fails, he casts *silence* on a pebble and attempts to follow them unnoticed.

Sklar-Quah: The Sklar-Quah pass through the northern areas only if they're following the PCs' route. They make enough noise in their approach that Sial and Asyra have time to move ahead of them through **A5**, to area **A8**, and then back around through the northern hallways by area **A4** if necessary to avoid a confrontation.

A4. Shrine to Alahaniss

The curved northern alcove of this chamber displays a brilliantly colored bas-relief carving of an alluring mermaid. The figure lounges upon a bed of stone seaweed while the cunning sculpt creates the illusion that her luxurious tresses of long hair float around her body in swirling rings. Tiny shards of gemstones embedded in her tail make it appear as though her scales glisten with moisture.

This room was once a shrine dedicated to one of Lissala's now-forgotten lesser heralds, a water elemental named Alahaniss the Haven-Bringer, giver of boons to servants who toil in the heat and drowning death to the indolent. The Thrallkeepers had called upon Alahaniss to assist in the creation of the oasis outside the acropolis

that once made life within the temple more comfortable. Millennia later, this gem-encrusted carving of Alahaniss is all that remains of her shrine.

Treasure: The sapphire and emerald slivers in the statue's tail collectively total 3,175 gp in value.

Sklar-Quah: If the Sklar-Quah enter this room while they track the PCs, the thundercallers hoot in appreciation at the mermaid's feminine beauty (add 2 noise points) while they wait for Krojun to pick up the trail again.

A5. The Illumacone

The floor of this otherwise empty chamber contains a five-foot-diameter hole in the center, surrounded by a ring of wavy runes. Inside the hole, a shaft filled with brilliant emerald light drops into the depths.

The glowing shaft is an arcane elevator called an *illumacone*. A traveler who steps into the ring receives the benefit of a *feather fall* spell and gently floats down the shaft of light for 70 feet into area **A9**. Once there, a traveler who crosses the matching ring of ruins on the floor and enters the shaft is affected by a *levitate*, allowing him to gently ascend back to this chamber. The spell effects terminate each time the traveler steps out of the shaft.

Red Mantis: If a pair of assassins moves through the double doors into this room in search of the PCs, they

spend 2d4 rounds investigating the *illumacone* before determining what the device is for, at which point they descend down into area A9.

Sklar-Quah: The Sklar-Quah don't know what to make of the light-filled shaft. If Krojun determines that the PCs' trail leads down here, his curiosity wanes—he's not willing to dig that deep into these notorious ruins just to see what the PCs are up to.

A6. Image of Lissala

A strange bronze statue stands in the center of the room. The statue depicts a half-snake, half-human creature with the lower body of a serpent coiled about a stand and the upper torso of a slender human woman. Her hands are crossed over her chest to clutch two objects at her shoulders—the right hand holds a large quill, while the left holds a jade-handled whip. Six birdlike wings emerge from the torso's shoulders, and instead of a head, it has a disk bearing a seven-pointed star. A line of jade runes runs down the statue's belly and along the length of its snaky lower body.

This statue depicts Lissala, the now-dead goddess of runes and fate. Tradition dictated that the Thrallkeepers ensure that a map of their complex was accessible to visiting members of the order. These maps, however, were usually obscured to prevent lowly thralls from educating themselves and becoming tempted to explore forbidden areas of the complex. The statue here conceals one such map.

The statue's base contains a wide but shallow drawer, noticeable on a DC 20 Search check. Inside is a 4-foot-diameter circular frame containing several wedge-shaped metal plates, each punched with its own intricate design. Each plate slides perfectly over or under the two adjacent plates along the outer ring. The ring itself fits perfectly over the entrance to the *illumacone* in area A5; if placed there, light from the shaft below shines through the openings in the plates to create a pattern of lines on the ceiling above. By correctly aligning the wedges (with a DC 20 Disable Device check), the markings line up to create a huge map of what the Acropolis once looked like during the height of the Thassilonian empire. A few rounds of study should allow a character to note that the few rooms that remain extant today are but a small fraction of the chambers that once sprawled here.

Treasure: The jade-handled whip the statue holds can be removed with a little bit of work—it is a +2 *axiomatic whip* but carries with it a potent curse. Each day someone maintains ownership of the whip, he takes 1 point of Wisdom damage—this damage manifests as vague visions of menacing but indistinct shapes covered with runes lurking now and then at the edge of vision. Further, Thassilonian runes become harbingers for great menace and fear to the cursed PC—even if he can read Thassilonian, he believes the runes hold some deeper threat to him and his loved ones. As long as Thassilonian writing is visible, the cursed character suffers a –6 penalty on all Will saving throws. This curse can be lifted only by returning the whip to the statue's hand, or by a *remove curse* or *break enchantment* effect against CL 18th magic.



A7. Eternal Glyphs (EL 9)

The walls of this chamber are decorated with six life-sized bas-relief carvings that depict a diverse collection of priests, each adorned in billowing robes draped in Thassilonian runes. An intricate scripture winds around each carving, coiling around them and along the walls like an immensely long tangle of ribbons.

A DC 35 Knowledge (religion) check identifies that the carvings portray upper-tier clergy of Lissala. The tiny coded lettering on the walls can be deciphered with a DC 30 Decipher Script check made by someone who understands Thassilonian or by *comprehend languages*. Although the script purports to be a dire warning of life-threatening perils in the acropolis beyond, the text is actually a trap to thwart unwanted visitors.

Trap: The glyphs compel their readers to refrain from any other activity until the entire text has been finished. This task is impossible, since portions of the text that have already been studied change and alter themselves slightly to create different nonsense meanings that nonetheless seem incredibly important while they are being studied.

To simulate the full extent of the trap's allure, GMs are encouraged to hoodwink players into having their PCs read the text for as long as possible before even requiring a saving throw. For example, should a player ask how long it takes his PC to decipher the script, answer, "Approximately 5 minutes." After the time expires, explain that the PC is almost done but the writing is denser than anticipated, requiring perhaps an hour. After an hour, explain the first statue is now complete but there are five more that need to be read to piece together all the information. This takes just 6, maybe 7 hours. Only when a player has caught on and insists on tearing away his PC should you ask for a Will save. Those who fail become obsessed with the carvings, and find that they cannot stop reading. A new save can be attempted each day to pull away, but each save comes with a cumulative -2 penalty to escape. A character who is not under the influence of the eternal glyphs can manually drag an entranced ally out of the room, at which point he recovers immediately, but characters under the influence resist such an act, requiring successful grapple checks to save them in this manner.

ETERNAL GLYPHS

CR 9

Type magical; Search DC 33; Disable Device DC 33

EFFECTS

Trigger when read; **Reset** automatic

Effect *suggestion* effect (heightened to 8th level) to continue reading glyphs (Will DC 23 negates, new save may be attempted each day at a cumulative -2 penalty)

A8. Collapsed Corridors

This corridor ends abruptly, choked off by thousands of tons of collapsed rock and sand.

These sections of the complex were damaged during the Havero's initial rampage, and over the centuries to follow, erosion finished the job. The corridors to the north once led to the Thrallkeepers' opulent living quarters as well as several chambers which housed a number of smaller, less ambitious summoning projects. The corridor to the south once led to the Thrallkeepers' slave pens and common rooms for their thralls.

A9. Lower Level

This wide corridor, composed of polished black granite, runs north-south. A blue stone disc sits on the floor to the south, a glowing column of blue light rising up from the disc through a hole in the ceiling. To the north, a five-foot-wide circular opening in the wall opens into a smaller chamber. The ceiling here is only fifteen feet high.

This level is beyond the reach of the Havero's arms—likewise, noise created here has little effect on the slumbering creature above.

A huge stone plug blocks a hidden hallway to the east from this passage—it can be discovered with a DC 22 Search check. In its current position, the plug bars entry to area A10. When the Thrallkeepers required entry, the plug was removed by a huge team of servants, or with the use of Strength-enhancing magic. The plug itself is 15 feet long and weighs 120 tons—it cannot be pulled out of place without fantastic strength (a single Medium humanoid would need a Strength of 55 to perform this stunt)—but enough of a gap exists that gaseous form can be used to enter area A10. The stone itself has hardness 8 and 1,800 hp per 5-foot-square.

Red Mantis: If the assassins reach this far, they set up an ambush for the PCs, hiding on the ceiling as long as their *spider climb* spells last. Once the spells expire, they return to join their kin in area A2 to wait in ambush until they're sure that the PCs have gone for good.

A10. The Fallback Vault

A jumble of five humanoid skeletons lie in the southeast corner of this chamber. Stone niches in the southern wall contain a few pieces of clutter.

This vault was used by the Thrallkeepers as a panic room, a common emergency defense saved for the event a conjured creature should ever manage to break

free of containment. The more powerful Thrallkeepers used teleportation to transport themselves into this chamber, leaving no way for their thralls to follow. Once inside, the Thrallkeepers used their magic to contact another outpost for aid and wait for their colleagues to unseal the vault once whatever crisis that had arisen was safely contained.

When the havelo escaped its bonds, five Thrallkeepers fled here, just as they had been taught. The havelo, however, was able to slide its tentacles between dimensions and reach the Thrallkeepers even here. The skeletons are all that remain of their bodies. Unlike elsewhere in the acropolis where scavengers and explorers have looted and scavenged most objects of value, the gear on these dead bodies remains for the taking. The bones themselves crumble to dust if touched, as does much of what remains of their non-magical clothing, but there are plenty of valuable items here.

Treasure: The shelves contain several ancient magic items designed to sustain a Thrallkeeper until whatever crisis which might lurk outside could be quelled. Among a collection of exotic cups, bowls, and silverware worth 75 gp in all are a *bottle of air*, a *decanter of endless water*, and a *sustaining spoon* (with an abnormally spicy taste). The Thrallkeepers also kept two *scrolls of clairvoyance*, two *scrolls of sending*, and two *scrolls of dimension door* here, enabling any members who sought sanctuary to evaluate how safe it was outside the vault.

This treasure scattered among the skeletons consists of a crystal locket depicting a two-headed dove worth 325 gp, a pair of sapphire cufflinks worth 435 gp, and a bejeweled holy symbol of Lissala worth 2,000 gp. Also scattered among the bones are three magic items: a bright orange *cloak of resistance +3*, a *scabbard of keen edges*, and a *+1 magical beast bane dagger*.

Atl. The Golarion Globe (EL 8)

The walls, ceiling, and floor of this chamber have been painted to resemble a starry sky, giving the illusion of walking through space. Here and there between the stars are painted small blue butterflies. A ten-foot-diameter stone sphere floats near the room's southern wall. Three short metal rods protrude from the lower hemisphere, radiating outward like the legs of a tripod, only the rods rest on empty air rather than a solid surface. The sphere itself appears to have been carefully carved with drawings of tiny rivers, mountains, oceans, and forests.

This stone globe represents the world of Golarion more than 10,000 years in the past. A DC 20 Knowledge (geography) check is enough to reveal that the sphere is indeed a map of the world, yet there are many features on the globe that seem inaccurate—characters who seek



out Varisia, for example, find that the nation is mostly landlocked except for a narrow southern coastline. Other features are missing as well, such as the Inner Sea, while in some places entire islands or continents appear where none appear today. Further casting the globe's accuracy into suspicion are the vast swaths of blank surface in some regions, where only vague outlines of continents and oceans appear.

Although the globe seems incomplete, it is in fact merely out of date. Crafted by Thassilonian explorers who were able to cast their minds out into the gulfs of space so they could then look back upon the world, the globe was created before the *Starstone* fell and reshaped much of the world.

The globe itself is hollow—a 1-foot-thick shell of stone surrounding a spherical chamber that contains a magical space that the Thrallkeepers could use to cast their minds out into the depths of space to explore and meditate. The globe itself radiates strong divination magic. Anyone who touches the globe and concentrates on the stars or sky is immediately teleported inside of the globe and placed into a state of suspended animation as his mind is cast out into the distance to see strange and alien worlds and to float in the spaces between the stars.

Originally, this magical device allowed the Thrallkeepers to seek out strange new creatures to attempt to call into the acropolis, but over the years, the magic of the globe has faltered. Today, it does little

more than provide a strange series of visions to the user that, over prolonged exposure, can cause madness. Every minute a character remains inside the globe, he must make a DC 15 Will save to avoid taking 1d4 points of Intelligence damage. A character can exit the globe at any time by concentrating on Golarion or any part of the world (including creatures that live on the planet)—once a character is reduced to 0 Intelligence, he is shunted out of the globe automatically.

When the globe was discovered by the Lyrune-Quah priestess Tanjah, she interpreted the visions granted by the globe as sendings from Desna. It was she who added the stars and butterflies to the room's walls, transforming the chamber into a shrine of sorts dedicated to Desna. A DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check reveals the religious connotations of the room. Ever since, handfuls of Lyrune-Quah followers of Desna make the yearly pilgrimage to this chamber to spend a few minutes inside the globe and to retouch the murals as necessary. After decades of this attention, Desna herself noticed the shrine. Pleased with what her followers had done with the globe, she invested a small amount of her divinity into the device—now, any creature who spends any amount of time inside of the globe gains the Spherewalker's Mark. This is a light blue tattoo-like marking of Desna's holy symbol on the back of the left hand. The Spherewalker's Mark lasts for a week, and can only be granted to a specific creature once per year. As long as the mark persists, that creature gains a +4 bonus on Listen and Spot checks.

Treasure: The globe is held in place from the bottom by a triangle of three *immovable rods*. Removing a rod is a simple matter of pressing the button at the rod's base, but since the hollow stone globe is balanced on the three rods, removing even one causes the globe to roll off and fall crashing to the floor 5 feet below. This sends thunderous echoes up through the ruins (add 10 noise points) and cracks the globe's surface—sinister GMs can pick Varisia as the part of the world to suffer this indignity, even though the damage is superficial and meaningless. A creature under the globe when it falls takes 5d6 points of damage from the sphere unless it makes a DC 15 Reflex save to avoid the damage.

A Parting of Ways

Once the PCs complete their business in the acropolis, the other three groups gathered in the area depart, each in their own way. The Red Mantis depart only through death and defeat—if the PCs haven't had a decisive conflict with the assassins by the time they make to leave the ruins, they should encounter the Red Mantis then. The Sklar-Quah, if they haven't left already, do so soon after the emberstorm ends (which should coincidentally be about the point at which the PCs gain the Spherewalker's

Mark); the PCs don't encounter Krojun and the Sklar-Quah again until Part Six.

Finally, if the PCs encountered and allied with the Brotherhood of Bones, Sial proposes a longer-term alliance. At this point, he admits that his organization feels that the PCs are inexorably tied to matters of great interest to the church of Zon-Kuthon, and if the PCs don't mind, Sial would like to accompany them as an observer. In return for this, he offers chambers in his *bone house* to the PCs as a place for them to rest as they need, and also offers his services as a spellcaster. If the PCs ask nicely (and if you feel that they could use the extra aid), he even deigns to provide support in combat, allowing his chain devil minion to fight alongside the PCs and supporting them from the back ranks with magic. Of course, he remains unapologetically evil and disturbing, and PCs are right to feel ill at ease in his presence. If the characters don't want Sial accompanying them, the cleric nods in understanding and retreats to some other point in the Cinderlands, intending to continue his observation of the PCs from afar via *scrying* whether they like it or not. Sial and the Brotherhood of Bones have a more important role to play in the next adventure, but for now, all you need to really do is make sure the PCs know about him to foreshadow the role he is destined to play in "Skeletons of Scarwall."

PART FOUR: CLAN OF THE MOON

Once the PCs have gained at least one Spherewalker's Mark, the next stage of their journey should be to seek out the Lyrune-Quah and to try to secure the aid of a Truthspeaker. As Thousand Bones has told the PCs, the nomadic Lyrune-Quah spend this part of the year camped near an ancient Desnan temple called the House of the Moon—a place known to some simply as the Moon Ruin.

The House of the Moon is unlike most of the ruins that dot the Varisian landscape, for it was not built by the Thassilonians. Worship of Desna dates back further than Thassilon—before the minions of First King Xin arrived in the region, the Varisians already dwelt here. At that ancient time, they were all nomadic, and they also worshiped Desna. As Thassilon rose, though, the runelords saw open worship of the gods as a distraction, and they destroyed most of the Desnan shrines that dotted the land. The House of the Moon was no exception. Yet when Thassilon fell and the Age of Darkness rose, this mysterious building reappeared on the site of one of those destroyed shrines. It gave the people who would become the Lyrune-Quah a place of shelter in that deadly age, and today it has become one of the anchors of their culture.