

to safety and then casts *fly* to escape peril if confronted while alone, or if reduced to less than 10 hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 5, **Dex** 9, **Con** 11, **Int** 12, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +2

Feats Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wand, Iron Will, Track

Skills Diplomacy +10, Knowledge (religion) +7, Survival +13

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Shoanti

SQ spontaneous spellcasting (*cure* spells), Truthspeaker

Combat Gear *wand of cure moderate wounds* (32 charges), *wand of lesser restoration* (29 charges); **Other Gear** masterwork starknife, *cloak of resistance* +1, *periapt of wisdom* +2

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Truthspeaker (Su) Akram has undertaken a lifelong quest of fasting, meditation, exploration, and prayer to achieve the status of Truthspeaker. This has granted him immunity to all charm and compulsion effects. Furthermore, he is constantly under the effects of *discern lies* (CL 7th).

PART FIVE: BELLY OF THE BEAST

Cindermaw is one of the deadliest predators of the Cinderlands, an ancient purple worm changed and transformed into a unique creature infused with elemental fire after it devoured a malfunctioning portal to the Elemental Plane of Fire that stood inside a partially collapsed Thassilonian ruin the creature blundered into. The infusion of fire not only granted Cindermaw a host of unique fire-based abilities, but awakened its intellect as well, granting it the ability to understand its place in the world. Cindermaw knows that the Shoanti regard it as a sort of god, and it has taken this notion to an extreme. For an immense worm, Cindermaw is surprisingly vain and egocentric.

Cindermaw is a fiercely territorial hunter. Shoanti myth portrays the worm as a demon-like creature capable of consuming entire tribes. The creature's exceptionally long lifespan (another side effect of consuming the portal to the Elemental Plane of Fire) has only further cemented its position in Shoanti myth. Although it is a challenge tracking a creature that can burrow, Cindermaw generally sticks to one large hunting ground in particular. Thousand Bones can tell the PCs that their best chances of finding one of Cindermaw's current feeding grounds is to explore a region in the extreme west portion of the Ash-Blown Lands; it is said that the cindercones and other volcanic activity common in this area soothe the beast's troubled spirit.

As the PCs approach the worm's killing ground, they should increasingly become aware of the beast's presence. Encounters with other creatures grow less and less frequent, and what at first might seem like hills are in fact mounded burrows left behind by Cindermaw's tunneling. You can heighten the excitement of tracking down Cindermaw by confronting the PCs with some of

the environmental hazards common to the Ash-Blown Lands, such as earth tremors or even cindercones.

Cindermaw Rising (EL 14)

In the end, the PCs don't have to find Cindermaw—if they spend enough time exploring its feeding grounds, the immense worm finds them. Build tension by having the creature surface in the distance, arc, and then dive below, as if it were an immense whale swimming through the ground, showing the PCs its massive segmented body. Have the worm erupt in front of the PCs, then behind them, and then to the side, and so on—Cindermaw enjoys showing off and intimidating prey before it attempts to feed.

In order to fulfill the ancient tradition's requirements and properly display bravery, only one PC needs to be eaten by the worm. How he emerges from within the worm is irrelevant, as long as Akram sees (and believes) a character swallowed, and then later sees that character alive and outside of the worm (and is given a believable story as to how that character escaped). The character's tale will hold water when the PCs approach the Sklar-Quah later. Slaying Cindermaw isn't recommended, and can ironically undermine the PCs' story. After all, if the worm they fought could be killed, it obviously wasn't that tough of a foe.

The simplest method of fulfilling the goal is to allow the worm to swallow a character whole, and then that character simply cuts his way out of the beast's belly. Of course, this is a dangerous stunt, and fire and acid resistance is a good way to prepare for it. Paralyzing the worm (with *hold monster*, for example) is an acceptable way to simplify the situation, as is charming or otherwise magically controlling the worm. If a PC can handle the Concentration check required to spellcast while inside of a monster, he can even *dimension door* or otherwise *teleport* out of the beast's belly once he's been swallowed.

Illusions are another option—since the PCs only really require Akram to truthspeak to the Sun Shaman for them, they could use illusions to trick Akram into believing they have completed the deed. Fooling Akram in this way requires an illusion capable of replicating a Gargantuan creature visually and audibly—since Cindermaw radiates heat, the illusion must also be capable of radiating warmth as well. *Major image* (or a more powerful illusion) can create a believable scene, but Akram still gets a Will save against the spell's DC to determine if he believes it enough to truthspeak the tale later. Of course, in order for such a deception to function, he also needs to believe he is in Cindermaw's hunting grounds in the first place.

If the PCs succeed in recreating the legend but do not slay Cindermaw in the process, they gain one respect point when Akram tells the tale to the Sklar-Quah.

Shoanti Camp

One square = 10 feet



CINDERMAW THE CLAN EATER

CR 14

Elite fire-infused purple worm (MM 211, *Advanced Bestiary* 111)

N Gargantuan magical beast (fire)

Init +1; **Senses** tremorsense 60 ft.; Listen +17, Spot –2

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 7, flat-footed 21

(+1 Dex, +15 natural, –4 size)

hp 216 (16 HD; 16d10+128)

Fort +18, **Ref** +13, **Will** +5

Defensive Abilities elemental body, fire healing; **Immune** fire

Weaknesses vulnerable to cold

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft., burrow 20 ft.

Melee bite +24 (2d8+12 plus 1d6 fire) and
sting +19 (2d6+6 plus 1d6 fire plus poison)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks breath weapon, heat, improved grab,
swallow whole

TACTICS

During Combat When the beast eventually tires of toying with the PCs, it attempts to burrow up directly in their midst by making a Move Silently check. Unfortunately for the PCs' particular objective, Cinderdaw has recently fed. On the first round of combat, the worm breathes fire on the most densely packed group of PCs, only

attacking with its bite and sting on the second round of combat. It does not attempt to swallow foes whole immediately—instead, it simply bites and moves on. Once the PCs deal more than 100 points of damage to the worm (or once it has breathed fire twice), it abandons this tactic and begins attempting to swallow victims. Alternatively, a character can challenge the worm into swallowing him by attempting a Bluff check to appear appetizing—Cinderdaw resists this check with a Sense Motive check, but the character making the Bluff check suffers a –10 penalty to the role for the difficulty of the check in the first place.

Morale Cinderdaw retreats if it takes more than 80 points of damage in all from cold attacks, or as soon as it is reduced below 50 hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 35, **Dex** 12, **Con** 27, **Int** 6, **Wis** 6, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +16; **Grp** +40

Feats Awesome Blow, Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Iron Will,
Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack

Skills Listen +17

SQ firewalk, heat

Languages understands Shoanti (cannot speak)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Breath Weapon (Su) Once every 1d4 rounds, Cinderdaw can

breathe out a 30-foot cone of fire that deals 8d6 points of damage (DC 26 Reflex half).

Elemental Body (Ex) Cinderdaw has a 25% chance to ignore extra damage from critical hits and sneak attacks, poison, paralysis, sleep, and stunning effects.

Fire Healing (Ex) Cinderdaw gains fast healing 1 when in contact with fire. When struck by a magical fire attack, it is healed 1 point of damage per 10 points of damage the attack would otherwise deal.

Firewalk (Su) Cinderdaw can climb burning objects as if it had a climb speed of 10 feet. It can fly at a speed of 20 feet (perfect maneuverability) as long as it's in contact with fire, and can walk on flames or lava at its base land speed.

Heat (Su) Cinderdaw deals an additional 1d6 points of fire damage when it hits with any attack. A swallowed creature takes an additional 1d6 points of fire damage each round he remains swallowed.

PART SIX: CLAN OF THE SUN

Having done their best to shed their *tshamek* status by recreating the ancient Quah-Kael Shoanti legend, all that in theory remains for the

PCs is to track down a tribe of Sklar-Quah and allow Akram to truthspeak the story of the PCs' bravery against Cinderdaw. Akram knows of several Sklar-Quah camps scattered throughout the central Cinderlands, but he recommends that the PCs approach one of the oldest campsites, a place called Flameford. Moreso than most of the more recent camps, Flameford is steeped in Sklar-Quah tradition, and therefore these Shoanti are much more likely to honor and respect what the PCs have done to impress them.

As the PCs delve deeply into Sklar-Quah territory, it's just a matter of time before they are intercepted by a patrolling war party of six burn riders, Sklar-Quah horsemen who have trained their mounts to no longer fear fire. The burn riders are headstrong and quick to anger, but as long as the PCs are in Akram's company, they stay their hands and do not attack on sight. Akram greets the burn riders and explains quickly how the PCs seek to divest themselves of their *tshamek* status, a comment that elicits a round of laughter from the burn riders. Yet as soon as Akram mentions the PCs have recreated the Legend of Skurak and Cinderdaw, they grow serious. The patrol swiftly agrees to escort Akram and the PCs to Flameford at the very heart

of Sklar-Quah lands. The Sklar-Quah do not attempt to disarm the PCs, though the PCs are effectively surrounded by hundreds of Shoanti who are ready at an instant to defend their home from the outlanders.

Flameford

The camp of Flameford is in a very defensible spot, nestled in the middle of a field of razor-sharp slash rock at the edge of an 80-foot-high cliff. The campsite consists of 17 yurts, two larger tents, and a stable for the tribe's horses.

In all, 52 Shoanti dwell here under the watchful guidance of **Chief Ready-Klar** (CN male human barbarian 10), the aging and well-respected uncle of the tribe's greatest living hero, KrojunEats-What-He-Kills. The camp is also the home of a wizened old druid, one of the **Sun Shamans of the Sklar**

Quah (N male human druid 16). The majority of the remaining Shoanti who dwell in the camp are 1st to 3rd level barbarians, although there are six thundercallers and eight burn riders dwelling here as well.

The tents that comprise the camp are wood-framed portable structures called yurts—weatherproof constructions with aurochs-hide walls and roofs. The six points of interest to the PCs in Flameford are described below.

C1. The Approach: Like all Sklar-Quah encampments fortunate enough to be accompanied by a full-fledged Sun Shaman, the outer rim of the encampment is blanketed by layers of permanent *spike stone* spells (CL 16th) known as slash rock. The spells are set to leave unmarked zigzag paths between the slash rock to permit safe passage to those who know the way. In this way, the Sklar-Quah control the entrance and egress from the camp and the Sun Clan need to post few guards. The map of the camp shows the safe paths through the fields of slash rock, but these paths are all but undetectable to visitors, who must navigate the approach very carefully if they wish to avoid the dangerous hazard.

C2. War Council Fire: Flameford's heart is a massive fire at which the tribe gathers each night to discuss their coalescing plans of war upon Korvosa. Often, the Sun Shaman takes a position in the fire in fire elemental form, from which he can observe the surrounding proceedings with ease.

