

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.

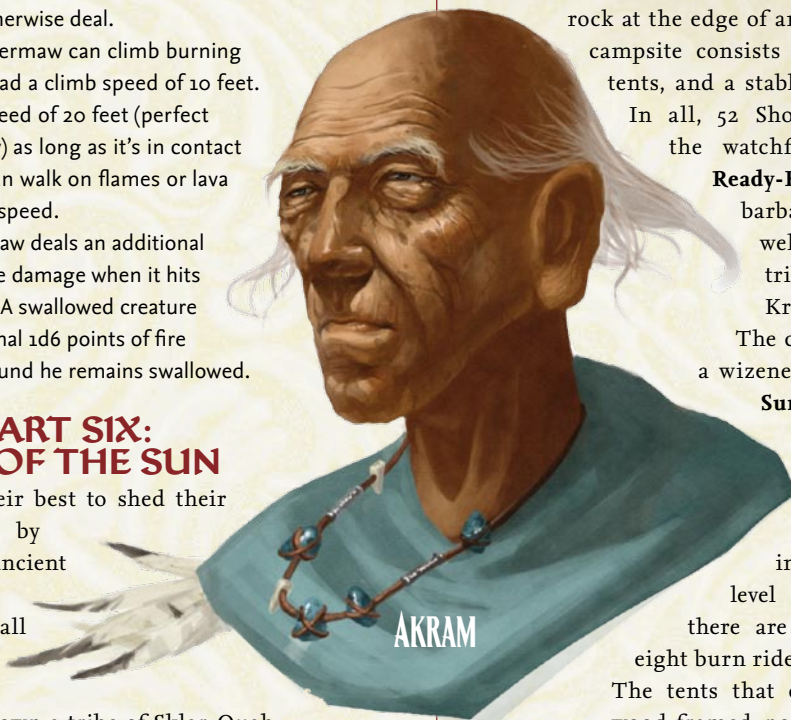
The camp is also the home of a wizened old druid, one of the **Sun Shamans of the Sklar**

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.



C3. Stables: The tribe's eight horses (all light warhorses) are kept here—each belongs to one of the camp's eight burn riders.

C4. Sun Shaman's Yurt: The Quah-Chief takes counsel from the Sun Shaman, the clan's spiritual leadership. When a male Sklar-Quah druid has seen sufficient winters, he is invited to abandon his name and take on the mantle of a Sun Shaman. Hence, Sun Shaman is both a name as well as a title. While the Sun Shamans are able to distinguish amongst themselves, they discourage the rest of the tribe from doing so. This yurt is the home of Flameford's Sun Shaman.

C5. Chieftain's Yurt: Chief Ready-Klar's home is the largest yurt in the camp (only slightly larger than the Sun Shaman's). A large portion of this yurt contains a communal feasting hall, with the chieftain's personal quarters taking up the northeasternmost quarter of the yurt.

C6. Guest Yurt: This unused yurt is given to the PCs as a place for them to stay during their visit. Apart from a few furs and a single small fire pit, the yurt contains no furnishings at all.

At the Foot of the Fire

As the PCs are led through the slash rock into the heart of Flameford, the entire camp, Chieftan and Sun Shaman included, come to see. The PCs' burn rider escort leads them to the War Council Fire and bids them be seated. The PCs might be dismayed or heartened to see that Krojun is in attendance as well. Akram then entreats the Sun Shaman on the PCs' behalf. He formally requests that the Sklar-Quah accept the PCs as Shoanti with full entitlement to walk the Cinderlands. To do so, he first recites the Ritual of Cycles—a long, convoluted story of the never-ending relationship between the sun and the moon. Once tradition has been appeased, Akram boldly announces that he is a Truthspeaker and demands that any who challenge his standing speak now. A lengthy period of uncomfortable silence hangs in the air. A PC who succeeds on a DC 15 Sense Motive check can tell that Krojun seems to be thinking long and hard as to whether to speak, but in the end he does not. The silence is eventually followed by a patient nod of approval from the Sun Shaman. Akram then breaks into a tale of the

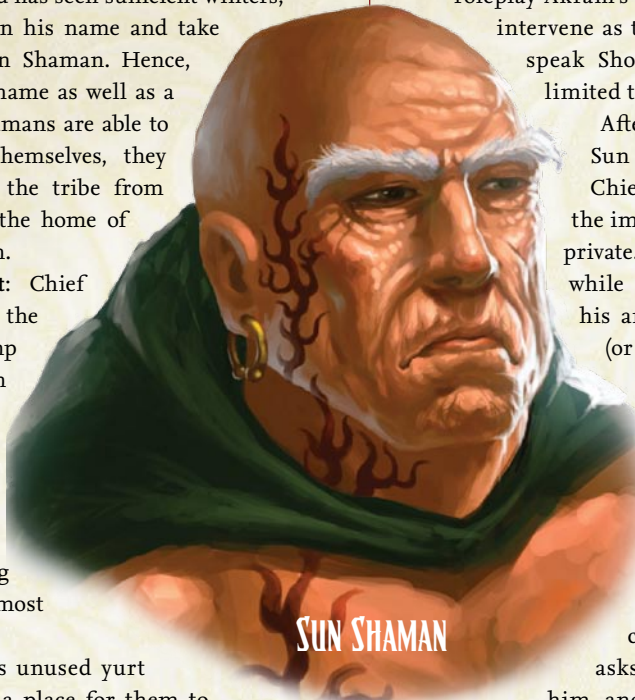
PCs' recent deeds, tying them to the legend of Skurak. Should Akram's report include a description of a PC cutting his way out of the Quah-Kael, Krojun and a few others make guffawing noises in disbelief, but they are silenced by a glare from the Sun Shaman. Feel free to roleplay Akram's recitation and permit the PCs to intervene as they see fit, but if the PCs do not speak Shoanti or employ magic, they are limited to gesturing.

After Akram's tale is complete, the Sun Shaman retreats to his tent with Chief Ready-Klar to further discuss the implications of what the PCs seek in private. An uncomfortable silence looms while the crowd waits. Krojun crosses his arms and stares at the largest PC (or alternatively, one he has faced in melee). Akram quietly explains to the PCs that if the Sun Shaman rejects his petition and decides the PCs are still *tshamek*, they (Akram included) will be disemboweled for trespassing on Sklar-Quah land.

An hour later, the shaman and chieftain return to the fire. He asks each of the PCs to stand before him and speak their names. The Sun Shaman repeats the names in sequence, and then tersely announces that henceforth the PCs are to be considered *tshamek* no more. They are free to come and go among the lands of the Sklar-Quah, as long as they maintain peace and honor and respect Sklar-Quah tradition. Many of the Shoanti, Krojun included, struggle to contain their fury but none openly reject the Sun Shaman's proclamation.

The gathering begins to break-up, and the Sun Shaman grants the PCs a yurt (area C6) to use during their stay in Flameford. No word is mentioned of how long the PCs are allowed to stay—in fact, they can stay as long as they wish. At this point, or possibly later, the PCs might beseech the Sun Shaman for the information they came for. The Sun Shaman patiently listens until it becomes clear the PCs are asking about the *Fangs of Kazavon*. At this point he shakes his head and refuses to hear anything more, explaining that while the PCs are no longer *tshamek*, neither are they Sklar-Quah, and this deep history of his people is not for other tribes to know.

If the PCs do not think of it, Akram suggests at this point that the PCs should further petition the Sun Shaman to join the Sklar-Quah. After all, now that they are no longer *tshamek*, there is no real reason why they couldn't. Of course, word of such a request spreads



quickly through the camp, and the initial shock that the PCs have become Shoanti is replaced by this new scandal. Only the great respect the Sklar-Quah have for the Sun Shaman prevents an uprising.

If the PCs make such a request, a DC 20 Sense Motive check allows them to note a look of amusement on the Sun Shaman's face. In his ever-patient voice, he explains that if the PCs can pass the Trial of the Totem, they can be acknowledged as honorary members of the Sklar-Quah, but that is the best he can offer them. He does confirm that if they pass the trial, he can speak to them of the tribe's past.

At the mention of the trial, Krojun can take no more. He shouts in protest and then storms off with several burn riders to take a long ride through the Cinderlands to cool off. If the PCs agree to accept the Sun Shaman's nebulous offer, the Sun Shaman advises that it begins after dawn and motions for everyone to disperse from the council fire. For his part, Akram explains that his traditions preclude him from sharing a sunrise with the Sklar-Quah and so he intends to depart before dawn—if the boneslayers are still accompanying the PCs, they volunteer to escort the old Truthspeaker back to the Lyrune-Quah, otherwise an honor guard of three burn riders takes up the charge. Akram wishes the PCs luck in their trial, and as he leaves offers one final bit of advice—Krojun is an important member of the tribe, and anything the PCs can do to win his respect can only help them.

Gaining the right to undertake the Trial of the Totem earns the PCs one respect point.

Trial of the Totem

Early the following morning, about an hour before dawn, the PCs are awakened by the Sun Shaman, who asks them to follow him. He, along with a trio of thundercallers, escorts the PCs out through the slash rock in silence and takes them east across the Cinderlands on a 20-minute walk to a site known as Bolt Rock—a small mesa of spiritual significance to the Sun Clan.

A single ledge winds up to the westernmost flat-topped area of Bolt Rock, a plateau that sits about 30 feet above the surrounding plain. A second ledge leads up higher to a second mesa, this one 40 feet above the ground. During storms, the large quantities of iron ore in the rock here attract numerous lightning bolts, and as a result the place has become one of particular obsession for the Sun Shamans, who often ascend Bolt Rock during storms to experience the fury.

Atop Bolt Rock stand several fired-clay pylons known as sun totems. Each totem is 10 feet tall, and the sides are decorated with numerous sigils sacred to the Sklar-Quah. The lower portion of each totem is rounded. When not in

IF AKRAM FAILS

As written, Akram is automatically successful in convincing the Sun Shaman that the PCs deserve to be freed of their *tshamek* stigma. If the PCs weren't able to replicate the legend of Skurak and Cinderdaw to Akram's requirements, though, he is unable to lie on the PCs' behalf. In this case, the adventure takes a horrific turn as the PCs suddenly find themselves surrounded by the full might of the Flameford Gathering. Throw waves of burn riders, thundercallers and even the powerful Sun Shaman at the PCs as the Shoanti attempt to capture the outlanders for execution—the only real option for the PCs at this point is swift escape (likely via flight or teleportation). If they escape, the PCs' reputations with the Sklar-Quah is permanently damaged and the adventure is effectively over. Concluding the Adventure contains several tips on how to continue the campaign in this event.

use, they are stored in an upright position in square stone pods at the base of Bolt Rock.

The Sun Shaman explains that during the Trial of the Totems, each prospective clan member is represented by a specific sun totem. He directs the PCs to each select one totem as their own, then explains that, as a group, they must carry these totems up to the lower tier of Bolt Rock, where they must be balanced in circular depressions and kept upright for a day. He explains further that the PCs have until the shadow of the upper tier is no longer cast upon the lower tier to erect the totems. At the next sunrise, the PCs must then move all of their totems up to the highest mesa (again, before the lower tier is in full sunlight) and keep them upright in another set of depressions found there for an additional day. When the sun rises on that second day, any totem still standing grants its PC equivalent Sklar-Quah citizenship.

The Sun Shaman goes on to explain that while no food or water are brought to the PCs for the 2 days they must remain atop Bolt Rock, they are welcome to provide their own. Likewise, they are welcome to use magic or whatever means they have at their disposal to aid in keeping their sun totems upright for the 2 days, as long as the magic does not change or damage the totems themselves or the structure of Bolt Rock in any way. Bolt Rock is clearly visible from Flameford, and the Sun Shaman explains that many eyes will be turned eastward for the next 2 days. At night, the totems glow with their own radiance, an effect of minor magical enhancements placed on the totems that allows those in Flameford to see even on darkest nights if the totems still stand.

The trial explained, the Sun Shaman transforms into a crow and returns to Flameford to rest—the PCs are on their own.

SUN TOTEM

hp 40; hardness 6

Raising the Totems

As soon as the sun rises, the PCs have only an hour to select their totems and carry them up onto the westernmost tier of Bolt Rock above. Even though each totem is hollow, they're still quite heavy at 500 pounds apiece. A character with a Strength of 10 can barely manage to drag one of these totems; a character with a Strength of 17 or higher can lift the totem off the ground and stagger around with it at a speed of 5 feet. Chances are good that most PCs will need to work together to place their totems atop Bolt Rock. A character can seat a totem and push it into an upright position as long as he can drag 500 pounds.

Once a totem is upright, the shallow concavity and rounded base of the totem help to stabilize it, but without someone on hand at all times to keep the totems balanced, they eventually topple. Holding a totem in place requires a DC 12 Strength check every 6 hours. A character can take 10 on this check, but on a failed check the totem begins to lean precariously. At this point, a DC 16 Strength check is required to stabilize the totem. If this second check fails, the totem topples and takes 5d6 points of damage. As long as the totem isn't broken, it can be lifted back into place, but once a totem shatters, that character can no longer become one of the Sklar-Quah.

Keeping the totems upright for 2 days is a perilous task in and of itself, but unfortunately for the PCs, several other factors combine to make the trial even more arduous.

Exhaustion: The top of the Bolt Rock is dangerously exposed to the elements. It's assumed that "A History of Ashes" occurs during late spring, but if in your campaign the adventure takes place in the summer, daytime temperatures can rise into hot conditions, forcing characters to make Fortitudes saves to avoid taking nonlethal damage (see page 303 of the DMG). Furthermore, once the PCs head into the second day, they are operating on no sleep and become fatigued, making the prospect of another day's worth of Strength checks more difficult. Remember, *lesser restoration* and more powerful magic of this sort can remove fatigue.

Thirst: As detailed on page 304 of the DMG, a character can go without water for 1 day plus a number of hours equal to his Constitution score. After this time, a PC must make a Constitution check each hour (DC 10, +1 for each previous check) or take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage. Once a PC has taken nonlethal damage, he becomes fatigued. Since a character can go without food for 3 days, he need not fear starvation during the Trial of the Totems. If characters bring food with them, they can certainly take short 5-to-10-minute breaks to drink and eat, as long as they remain on Bolt Rock and can hasten back to their totem's side in an emergency, but taking longer breaks (such as to go hunt or seek water) quickly results in a fallen totem.

Magic: While it is against the spirit of the trial to use spells like *stone shape* to fix the totems in place, the PCs can attempt such subterfuge if they wish. When the trial ends, the Sun Shaman inspects Bolt Rock and the totems for damage. He automatically notices evidence of *stone shape* and similar spells if the PCs took no action to hide their trickery—if the PCs try to disguise this evidence, they must make a DC 20 Survival check for each totem so disguised to make the site appear to be unaltered and natural. Each totem site (or totem) the Sun Shaman detects magical alterations to is disqualified.

Sun Vision of the Aurochs

The true purpose of the trial is not just to test the limits of the PCs' stamina, but also to weaken the body so that the mind is open to a vision from the Sun. Any character who becomes fatigued during the trial has a 10% cumulative chance per hour of receiving such a vision. The chance of having a vision increases by 30% per hour if the character becomes exhausted.

If a PC receives a vision, he first notices shimmering waves of heat rising from the stone around him. The shimmers begin to cloud his vision, and a moment later the character sees a crystal-clear pool of water has seeped into an empty totem depression. If the character is quick, certainly he can steal a drink from the pool before returning to his totem. If he attempts this, he sees the face of a massive horned aurochs staring back at him from the water. With a DC



10 Wisdom check, the character understands that he is the aurochs, primal and proud.

No sooner does the character appreciate his new sense of self than he catches the scent of his natural enemies: the beasts with claws are nearby. Although he cannot see them, he senses they are moving in unison, seeking to surround him. Yet just as his pulse begins to race and he is sure his unseen enemies close in, suddenly the sun beams down upon him. As its light hits him, the character can attempt a second DC 10 Wisdom check to achieve a moment of deep clarity in which he realizes that he is not the prey, but the protector of the Cinderlands. As he feels his enemies begin to quail at his newfound strength, the vision abruptly ends.

This Sun Totem's vision is meant to signify that it is time for the PCs to stop waiting for the Red Mantis to attack them and to turn and face them with full fury. The next time a PC who has received the Sun Vision of the Aurochs faces the Red Mantis, he receives a +1 insight bonus on attack rolls and weapon damage rolls.

Krojun's Acknowledgement

On the morning of the second day, Krojun returns from his therapeutic ride through the wilds and pays the PCs a visit. Although initially enraged that invading *tshamek* were given the opportunity to join the Sklar-Quah, he calmed down considerably when he learned that the Sun Shaman selected a particularly grueling challenge to properly test their mettle and climbs Bolt Rock to see how the PCs are doing. He is especially impressed by scrawny PCs (such as elves) whom he suspects would have a harder time enduring the trial. Krojun stares at the PCs silently for a few minutes and then begrudgingly compliments them by suggesting they are lucky to have one another as *nalharest* (brothers and sisters).

As long as at least half of the PCs still have intact totems, this visit earns them one respect point.

Hungry Visitors (EL 11)

Play up the difficulty of the trial, and never let the PCs forget how excruciatingly exhausted they are from balancing the massive totems. Toward the afternoon of day two, their predicament gets worse.

Creatures: A pack of bulettes have noticed the PCs, and as the afternoon of the second day of the trial draws toward night, these six bulettes begin circling the ground around Bolt Rock. The sound of the burrowing creatures and their dorsal fins periodically protruding above the ash and gravel of the surrounding ground is unmistakable, giving the PCs 2d4 rounds to prepare for the assault.

When it comes, the six bulettes leap out of the ground and scramble up onto the lower mesa. Note that the

creatures can leap up onto the upper mesa from the lower one pretty much automatically, hopping up onto the higher level by spending 10 feet of movement.

A character can continue to hold up his totem while fighting as long as his totem remains in his reach and he devotes one hand to steady it. Characters who choose to fight in this manner take a -4 penalty on all attack rolls as a result.

BULETTES (6)

CR 7

hp 94 (MM 30)

TACTICS

During Combat The bulettes spread out when they attack, each seeking its own target and doubling up on prey only if there are more bulettes than targets. There's not enough room atop Bolt Rock for all six at once, so any bulettes unable to fit pace angrily about on the lower tier or the surrounding ground, eager to snap at anyone who leaves the upper tier or to run up and replace a bulette that is slain or driven off. Although the monsters don't particularly care about the totems, each time a bulette passes through a square that's adjacent to a totem, the character holding the totem must make a DC 15 Strength check to keep the totem upright. If a bulette attempts to attack a character engaged in holding up a totem but misses the character by no more than 3 points, the creature's attack has a 50% chance of striking the totem instead and dealing the appropriate amount of damage. Desperate PCs can attempt to drop a totem on a bulette—the bulette can avoid the totem with a DC 15 Reflex save, taking 5d6 points of damage on a failure. In any event, a dropped totem takes 3d6 points of damage.

Morale A bulette flees if reduced to less than 15 hit points.

The Third Dawn

With the third dawn, the Trial of the Totems ends. The Sun Shaman leads the entire tribe from Flameford up to Bolt Rock in the pre-dawn hours, and as the sun rises, any totems still intact and standing are greeted with a rousing cheer. These totems represent new brothers and sisters in the Sklar-Quah, an event that is cause for great celebration. Before the jubilation gets too out of hand, the Sun Shaman holds high his hands for silence, then personally welcomes each PC whose totem remained standing and intact into the Sklar-Quah. Yet he goes even further—he acknowledges those PCs whose totems toppled and broke as *nalharest* to those whose totems survived, and while these folk are not considered full-blooded members of the Sklar-Quah, they are welcome at Flameford as guests as long as their allies remain as well.

The PCs are likely exhausted after their trial, and the Sun Shaman suggests that they return to their yurt in Flameford to rest and recover from their ordeal atop Bolt Rock. As the Shoanti and the PCs make their way back to



Flameford, the Sun Shaman quietly tells the PCs that he is nearly ready to speak with them about the information they seek regarding Midnight's Teeth and the great evil that the Shoanti once guarded so long ago. Before he does, however, he must seek out the wisdom of his ancestors by traveling to the Kallow Mounds to commune with them. As tradition demands, the Sun Shaman is accompanied on this trip by Chief Ready-Klar and four of the tribe's thundercallers—the journey is made via *wind walk*. The Sun Shaman estimates that they will return to Flameford in but a day, and suggests that the PCs take that day to rest, recover, and relax. While they are gone, Krojun is given command of the tribe, a responsibility he accepts with pride and honor.

In any event, for each surviving totem, the PCs receive one respect point. If no totems remain standing, the Shoanti come to Bolt Rock not to welcome new brothers and sisters, but to drive out the outsiders by force. In this event, consult the start of the next adventure for advice on how to continue the campaign.

The Flameford Assault

Once the PCs have passed the Trial of the Totems, they have accomplished their goals—they have befriended the Sklar-Quah, and now need only wait for the Sun Shaman

to finish his communion with his ancestors to learn about the truth of what afflicts Queen Ileosa. Yet one more hurdle lies between the PCs and this triumph—the Red Mantis.

Frustrated that the PCs have found sanctuary among the Sun Clan and sensing that her window of opportunity to eliminate the PCs is quickly vanishing, Cinnabar organizes her allies in preparation for an all-out assault. With her remaining assassins, her well-paid Ashwing gargoyle allies, and the Cinderlander, Cinnabar's spies and *screaming* reveal that the Sun Shaman, Chief Ready-Klar, and several burn riders are going to be gone for a day, making this her best opportunity. That evening, as dusk approaches, she and her allies stalk toward Flameford with ill intent.

Creatures: While the Ashwing gargoyles have the same statistics as regular gargoyles, their appearance is slightly different than the more common, craggy gargoyles. Like the wind-blasted surrounding rock of the Cinderlands, the Ashwing gargoyles' bodies are smooth and polished. Their stone frames have been worn in rippling patterns. In this way, the gargoyles' racial Hide bonus is preserved, enabling them to camouflage themselves against the rock formations of the Cinderlands even though the natural stone differs

greatly in texture from the hewn stone walls which their cousins might hide against.

In order to avoid the slash rock, the gargoyles each carry one human with them as they approach Flameford from the west. When they reach the campsite, they swoop up the cliff-side and drop off their deadly passengers amid the westernmost yurts. Unless Cinnabar knows exactly which yurt belongs to the PCs, the assassins and gargoyles simply start tearing into the tents with shrieks and roars. Flameford awakens quickly to the assault, but with the village's chieftain and Sun Shaman not present, the Red Mantis have a deadly advantage.

The best way to run this battle is to hit the PCs in several waves. The following series of attacks present a good way to confront the PCs with increasing dangers, finally culminating in a battle against Cinnabar herself. As the PCs move from one battle to the next, feel free to augment them with one or two burn riders or thundercallers. As the PCs face their own battles, describe to them how gargoyles and Red Mantis assassins attack the Shoanti elsewhere. The assault should carry with it a definite feeling of chaos.

Gargoyle Strike (EL 8): The PCs are attacked by four Ashwing gargoyles in their tent.

Assassins (EL 11): As the PCs emerge from their tent, they are spotted by two Red Mantis assassins. The Mantises recognize the PCs at once and swiftly move to engage the characters—as they do, they're joined by four gargoyles eager to impress their new allies.

The Cinderlander (EL 14): Not long after the PCs defeat the assassins, the tell-tale sound of Krojun's indignant roar fills the air. The burly barbarian has challenged the Cinderlander to a battle, and the haunting sound of the Cinderlander's shrieking bolts fills the night with screams. By the time the PCs reach the War Council Fire, both the Cinderlander and Krojun have taken 3d6 points of damage. Unfortunately for Krojun, the Cinderlander has just been joined by four Red Mantises—if the PCs don't come to his rescue, he is swiftly overwhelmed.

The Final Strike (EL 14): The battle against the Cinderlander quickly turns into a focus for the rest of the Shoanti and gargoyles, and as this battle plays out, the surrounding skirmishes come to a close while both sides watch in awe, eager to join in once the battle ends. Yet once it does end, Cinnabar steps into the fray. She calls out the PCs by name, accusing them of consigning these proud Shoanti to death—she had no wish to kill this many, but the PCs leave her no choice. She offers the Shoanti an out—if they turn over the PCs to her, or better, aid her in slaying them, she'll call off her minions and leave the survivors alone. Of course, by this point, the Shoanti likely see the PCs as their own. Krojun certainly does—his response to Cinnabar is a roar and an attack.

In this battle, the PCs face Cinnabar and four Red Mantis assassins. Feel free to augment the PCs with Krojun or other Sklar-Quah burn riders or thundercallers. As soon as Cinnabar is defeated, the Ashwing gargoyles realize their allies aren't as potent as they hoped, and as one they take wing and flee to the west back to their rookery. The four assassins who fight at Cinnabar's side represent the last of the Red Mantises active in the Cinderlands—once this battle is concluded, the PCs are safe from the Red Mantis until they return to Korvosa in the last adventure, "Crown of Fangs."

If the PCs aid in protecting the Sklar-Quah in this battle, they gain 4 respect points.

ASHWING GARGOYLE **CR 4**
hp 37 each (MM 113)

TACTICS

During Combat The gargoyles trust in their damage reduction, capitalizing on the Sklar-Quah's relative lack of magic to overcome it. On their initial pass, they land in the clan's corrals and terrify the horses with thunderstones, causing them to stampede fatally into the slash rock. Once the air is filled with the panic of the horses' death throes, the Ashwings leverage the confusion to continue their assault. When they face significant opposition, the gargoyles take to the air and employ their longbows. Where possible, they use the slash rock against the Sklar-Quah, flying over it to prevent dangerous opponents from getting too close to them.

Morale An individual gargoyle flees if reduced to 5 hit points or less.

RED MANTIS ASSASSINS **CR 8**
hp 50 each (see page 15)

THE CINDERLANDER **CR 12**
hp 105 (see page 21)

CINNABAR **CR 12**
hp 76 (see page 16)

SKLAR-QUAH BURN RIDER (4) **CR 4**

Human barbarian 4

CN Medium humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 9, flat-footed 13

(+4 armor, +1 Dex, -2 rage, +1 shield)

hp 51 (4 HD; 4d12+20)

Fort +9, **Ref** +2, **Will** +4

Defensive Abilities uncanny dodge, trap sense +1

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.

Melee mwk short spear +9 (1d6+4/×3) or
mwk klar +9 (1d6+4)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +6 (1d8+2/×3)

Special Attacks rage 2/day

TACTICS

During Combat The burn rider patrol does not parlay or give warnings. If their enemies are armed, the burn riders fire a volley of arrows at long range, retreat out of range and wait to fire another volley. If their foes are unarmed, riders gallop in to run them down. In melee, burn riders often seek to catch their opponents off-guard by attempting a fast dismount in conjunction with their Tumbling skill to suddenly leap off their horses and flank an opponent from the opposite side. When fighting dangerous opponents whom they outnumber, half of the burn riders set their spears to deal double damage against a charge while the other half fire their short bows from behind the protective wall set by their Quah-brothers.

Morale If their foes display magic or other signs of powerful opposition, the burn riders send a scout to alert their champion, Krojun Eats-What-He-Kills, and his war party (see Part Three). The burn riders have heard many tales of unusually powerful *tshamek* and know better than to try and take down *tshamek* champions unaided.

Base Statistics AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15; hp 43; Fort +7, Will +2, **Melee** mwk short spear +7 (1d6+2/×3) or mwk klar +7 (1d6+2); Str 14, Con 16; Skills Jump +11

STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 13, Con 20, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8

Base Atk +4; Grp +6

Feats Burn Rider, Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack

Skills Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +6, Jump +13, Ride +10, Survival +8

Languages Common, Shoanti

SQ fast movement, illiteracy

Combat Gear barbarian chew (2), *potion of cure serious wounds* (2); **Other Gear** masterwork hide shirt, masterwork short spear, masterwork klar, masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str) with 20 arrows, *yellow Shoanti war paint*, flask of oil (2), flint and steel, torch

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Burn Rider This feat is from *Pathfinder* #7. As long as the burn rider is mounted and travels at least 40 feet in a round, he gains fire resistance 3, a +4 bonus on Reflex saves to avoid catching fire, and a +4 bonus on Fortitude saves against choking on smoke. He can confer these bonuses to his mount as a free action with a DC 20 Ride check.

SKLAR-QUAH THUNDERCALLERS (6)

hp 61 each (see page 35)

CR 12

KROJUN EATS-WHAT-HE-KILLS

hp 155 (see page 27)

CR 12

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

As the Flameford assault draws to a close, the Sklar-Quah send up a cheer. The Shoanti are hardy folk, and as long as the PCs deal with their enemies swiftly, the people of Flameford come through the assault with relatively few casualties—certainly not enough to dull the sense of triumph. From now until the point when the Sun Shaman returns to Flameford, the campsite becomes a victory party. PCs are asked to share tales of their adventures with the Shoanti, and Krojun might challenge a PC to a sredna rematch. Try to involve each PC in some sort of celebration during this time. A cleric PC might be called upon to tend to the wounded or to help bury the dead. A barbarian PC might be given the opportunity to receive a Sklar-Quah tattoo. A bard PC might be asked to recount the tale of the party's encounter with Cindermau. A rogue might be asked by a beautiful Shoanti woman to share her bed for the night (but only if he agrees to shave his unsightly mop of hair beforehand).

When the Sun Shaman, Chief Ready-Klar, and the other Shoanti braves return to Flameford the next day, they find the camp in a shambles from the previous night's battle and celebration. It takes some time for things to get back to normal in Flameford, but the Sun Shaman doesn't wait. He invites the PCs into his home to speak to them personally—what he has to reveal to them is detailed at the start of the next adventure, "Skeletons of Scarwall."

At this time, total the number of respect points the PCs have accumulated during the adventure and consult the list below to see the results.

5 or fewer Respect Points: Although the Shoanti are thankful the PCs were on hand to help defend Flameford, they cannot help but recall that the assault would never have happened if the PCs had never come to their camp. The plans to wage war on Korvosa continue unabated, with repercussions as detailed in "Crown of Fangs."

6 to 11 Respect Points: The Shoanti respect the PCs, but not necessarily who and what they represent. Still, as word spreads of their heroics, the Shoanti of the Cinderlands slowly begin to question their ideas about the *tshamek* of the lowlands, enough so that the talk of war on Korvosa never quite moves beyond the planning stages. Given time, forward-thinking diplomats like Thousand Bones might well be able to forge peace between their people and the lowlanders, but for now, even though tensions remain, war does not come.

12 or more Respect Points: Word of the PCs' heroics and bravery spreads quickly through the Cinderlands, and as the Shoanti realize that even *tshamek* can become heroes of their people, the concept of waging war against them starts to seem more and more ridiculous. Talk of war on Korvosa swiftly comes to a halt, and assuming that the

trouble with Queen Ileosa can be resolved, a lasting peace between the two peoples might be closer than ever.

If the PCs Fail

Completing this adventure hinges on the successful completion of a complex, multi-stage quest. Since there are so many stages to this adventure, with each building off of the previous section's events, there are many points where the PCs can simply fail without suffering a total loss of all life. If the PCs aren't able to secure Akram's aid (or worse, if he's killed and they can't bring him back to life); if they fail to pass the Trial of the Totem or the attempt to recreate the Cindermaew legend; or if they incite the anger and wrath of the Sklar-Quah, they'll have lost the opportunity to speak with the Sun Shaman and learn what he knows about Kazavon, and in so doing, they'll lose their lead into the next adventure.

In this case, you'll need to recognize the fact that, for your group, "A History of Ashes" has ended, even if they haven't made it through every encounter. But that doesn't mean that they can't go on. Players are notoriously adept at recovering from dire situations such as these, so if you come to a point where things look grim, let the PCs try to work things out. Perhaps they can smuggle Akram's body back to Korvosa and secure the aid of Bishop Keppira d'Bear of Pharama in restoring the Truthspeaker to life. A PC with a particularly well-spoken appeal to the Sklar-Quah (and a good Diplomacy check) might be able to stall for enough time after failing the Test of the Totems that the Red Mantis attack gives them an unexpected opportunity to prove themselves to the Sklar-Quah again—if they can defend the tribe, certainly that show of solidarity and good faith can overshadow earlier bad luck on Bolt Rock.

And if worst comes to worst, there's always the Brotherhood of Bones. If the PCs seem ready to give up, you can have Shadowcount Sial approach them. He's continued to observe the PCs via scrying and other methods, but has recently received permission from his organization to open up a little more to the PCs. He apologizes for not being so forthright before, but explains that he had to be sure the PCs were trustworthy before he explains to them how Queen Ileosa has fallen under Kazavon's sway. He and the PCs want the same thing—to free the queen from this influence. That he wants the power of the *Crown of Fangs* for his church he leaves unsaid. Unfortunately, the means to divorce the queen from Kazavon lie hidden in the ancient warlord's citadel, and for reasons Sial is now prepared to explain (as detailed in the next adventure)—he can't quite take care of this problem on his own. He needs the PCs aid if Scarwall's secret is to be recovered.

