The Path of the Manticore

The Witchers of the Manticore School were not part of the division of land organized by the Griffin, Wolf, Cat, Bear, and Viper Schools. Their path meandered around the Korath Desert rather than the western Continent. No longer welcomed as heroes in Zerrikania, many Manticore witches wander aimlessly.

Manticore Mutations

The mutations of the Manticore school are founded on the same processes created by the Sorcerer Alzur so many years ago. However, they have undergone some slight changes as Iwan was not well versed in the mutation process and he was forced to reverse engineer it with the Zerrikanian Sorceress Nasira Faizan.

Additional experiments were also attempted by Nasira and other Zerrikanian Mages aligning with their studies and culture. At one point an attempt was even made to apply the mutations to the acolytes of the famed warrior women of Zerrikania. These initial experiments were deemed inconclusive.

The Manticore's Bandoliers

In addition to their swords and shields, witches of the Manticore School can also be recognized by their bandoliers which hold numerous potions to be used in battle against the many monsters of the Korath Desert.

Traveling through the Tir Tochair Mountains is considered a fool’s errand by most people on the Continent. The few passes through the mountains are treacherous except during specific seasons and filled with monsters. Beyond the mountains lies the Korath Desert, a massive span of burning sand, blood thirsty monsters, and dangerous hazards. But this was not always the case.

Centuries ago, this passage was commonly used by Zerrikanian traders to bring their goods to the western coast of the continent. Before the sea route between Zerrikania and the west coast was charted, Zerrikanian caravans traversed the Korath desert regularly, suffering great losses and developing paths that could almost be considered safe. All of this was made possible by the witchers of the School of the Manticore, known to the Zerrikanians as “Alqatil.”

The Founding

The School of the Manticore was founded not long after the School of the Viper, by a small cadre of witches who did not share the high-minded goals of their brothers. Their leader, a witcher named Iwan, left Haern Caduch with Ivar Evil Eye when the second fracturing formed the School of the Viper. Iwan had never cared for Arnaghad or his brutal philosophy and when the falling out between Arnaghad and Ivar reached its head, he had no qualms about leaving. But as the witches who would come to be called the Vipers traveled in search of a new home, Iwan learned more of Ivar Evil Eye’s dark prophecy and his grim resolution. The young witcher did not share his Grandmaster’s ambition nor his sense of duty and so as the group climbed into the Tir Tochair Mountains, heading for a rumored fortress that could house them, Iwan gathered all of the witchers who doubted Ivar’s plan and split from the Vipers.

Together, this small collection of witchers made their way to a place where they knew they could find work, Elskerdeg Pass in the Tir Tochair Mountains. There, at the edge of the burning desert, the witchers offered their services to merchant caravans seeking to cross the Korath Desert. With their services in high demand, the witchers began to travel back and forth across the Korath Desert, guarding caravans against the many dangers of the vast wasteland. Along the way, Iwan and his brothers learned and evolved, changing from lone hunters into skilled defenders.

One fateful day would elevate Iwan and his brothers into the Manticore School known and respected by the Zerrikanian crown. While traversing the Korath, Iwan and his fellow witches spotted a group of stragglers fleeing the site of a ruined caravan. Recognizing the trappings of Zerrikanian royalty, Iwan and his brothers investigated and found a few remaining survivors, struggling to hold a mated pair of manticores.

“...I have heard tales of witchers beyond the Tir Tochair Mountains. Unaffiliated with the witchers of the western continent and uninterested in our dealings. Though their mutations resemble ours and their abilities are similar, I have heard they take a different approach to their duties. More protectors than hunters.”

—Erland of Larvik
at bay. Seeing an opportunity, the witchers drew silver and engaged the manticores, killing both of them and protecting the survivors. In the aftermath, Iwan learned that the caravan had been traveling to the Northern Realms to meet with the mages of Aretuza and among their company was the Zerrikanian Queen’s Court Mage, Nasira Faizan.

Nasira had heard stories of foreign warriors guiding caravans across the Korath Desert but witnessing them firsthand was something entirely different. The sorceress offered Iwan and his brothers their weight in gold and an audience with the Queen if they could guide her back to Zerrikania safely. Of course, the witchers agreed. Iwan and the witchers traveled back across the desert with Nasira to the capital of Zerrikania where they were met with a warmer welcome than they could have expected. They were introduced to the queen only as “Alqatil” or “Slayers” and their exploits were told in great detail. The Queen’s interest was piqued and a deal was proposed. Iwan and his brothers would work exclusively for the Zerrikanian crown, guarding their merchant caravans and emissaries and in return, Zerrikania would build them a castle at each side of the Korath and help them to build their school.

Iwan and his brothers agreed and their path was set. Two great castles were built at either side of the Korath Desert: Behelt Nar in the west and Bialsuf Alsarea in the east. Nasira worked closely with Iwan to recreate the mutation process of the witchers, though Iwan always kept the details hazy, and great warriors from all over the eastern lands were brought in to teach the new acolytes. This training focused on defense and employed numerous potions and special shields of meteoritic steel and silver. Soon, the newly founded School of the Manticore was known across Zerrikania, training guards who could ensure safe passage across the Korath Desert for a fee. Iwan remained at Bialsuf Alsarea with Nasira and the young acolytes, eventually changing his name to Imad Asem and taking on the mantle of personal witcher to the Queen.

The Fall

The fall of the School of the Manticore would come in 1146 after a terrible event known as the Day of Fire. In the autumn of 1146, the Queen of Zerrikania organized a royal caravan to cross the Korath Desert in an effort to arrange a diplomatic marriage between her son and the Princess of Mettina. The Prince would be traveling with his entire entourage and many members of the royal family. In preparation, nearly the entirety of the School of the Manticore was called upon to guard the caravan. Imad himself traveled with them despite his advanced age. Unfortunately, the witchers couldn’t have planned for what happened as they came into the shadow of the Fiery Mountains. In the early morning, the royal caravan was hit by a tremendous light in the west. A titanic fire elemental standing almost 20 meters tall was descending out of the Fiery Mountains, headed directly for the caravan. The witchers mobilized and engaged the monster but no siege artillery had been brought leaving them unprepared to face such a tremendous threat. In the battle, nearly all of the witchers of the Manticore School were killed, along with half of the royal family and a third of the Zerrikanian court. In the aftermath of the Day of Fire, Zerrikania shunned the few remaining Witchers and redoubled their efforts to find a safe sea route to the western coast. The remaining few Manticores were left to fend for themselves, and fell into a decline with no support from the Zerrikanian crown.

By 1272, the handful of remaining manticores witchers have turned back to monster hunting, gathering at their dilapidated western keep in the winter and reminiscing about days long gone.

Manticore School Ability: Shieldmaster

Witchers of the Manticore School are defenders first and foremost and their training reflects that. These witchers are extensively trained in the use of special shields crafted for them by master craftsmen at Behelt Nar. A manticore school witcher is never required to take an action to draw or stow a shield, takes no penalty to parrying with a shield, and can still use the hand carrying their shield to drink potions, throw bombs, or cast signs.

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The Twin Keeps

While their names have been bastardized over time like the other witcher keeps, the twin keeps of the Manticore School form one saying in Zerrikanian. Behelt Nar meaning “In a suit of fire” and Bialsuf Alsarea meaning “with swift swords.”

Subterfuge in the Desert

Rogue elementals are known to spontaneously generate around places of power but an elemental the size of the one which destroyed the Manticore School is exceedingly rare without interference by a mage. Rumors persist that an enemy of the crown or perhaps of the School of the Manticore arranged for the attack on the Day of Fire.

Witcher Shields

Manticore Witchers use unique shields plated with meteoritic steel and inlaid with silver. These shields are used in combat to defend themselves and others and also to bludgeon monsters.

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**Manticore’s Shield**

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**Investment:** 652

- Hardened Timber (x4), Hardened Leather (x2), Meteorite (x3), Silver (x2), Ester Grease (x2), Fitching Acid (x4), River Clay (x6)
Cast & Crew

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