

Ravenloft

G A Z E T T E E R

KALIDNAY



BY CATHERINE EVANS



WITH ANNOTATIONS BY "S"

What Is Kalidnay?

Kalidnay is a domain of dread nested in the Mists of Ravenloft. More specifically, it is one of the "Islands Of Terror". Each "island" is surrounded by an environment that isolates it, just as The Mists seal off Barovia. In the case of Kalidnay, this is a sea of silt - because in Kalidnay, a small, precarious, desert domain, water is more precious than gold, and gold is as rare as a kind-hearted stranger.

The world that spawned Kalidnay is a harsh one; all deserts, monsters, and powerful sorcerer-kings willing to destroy the world and its people in their quest for power. Magic corrupts the landscape and kills onlookers, but psionic powers are so common they're not worth remarking on. Residents of the domain protect themselves with weapons made of bone or stone, and everything is dangerous.

The Darklord, Thakok-An, does what she can to preserve the precarious state of nature that lets life persist here, but it's always balanced on a knife-edge.

What to Expect

Unlike other domains of Ravenloft, Kalidnay's Darklord is only one of the possible threats characters will face here. The biggest challenge is surviving in a world where even water has a price. Finding safety, and figuring out how to exist without falling into slavery or being sacrificed in the arena, is an adventure in itself, but corrupt officials with an iota of power, twisted magic, and desiccated undead all offer a range of story possibilities. This is not to downplay the danger Thakok-An poses. Outsiders threaten the status-quo she works so hard to maintain. They can either serve her or oppose her. And if they oppose her, they cannot be allowed to live.

A note on currency: there is not enough metal in Kalidnay to waste it on coins. Transactions here are made in ceramic pieces (1 ceramic piece = 1 gold piece) and bits (1 bit = 1 copper piece).

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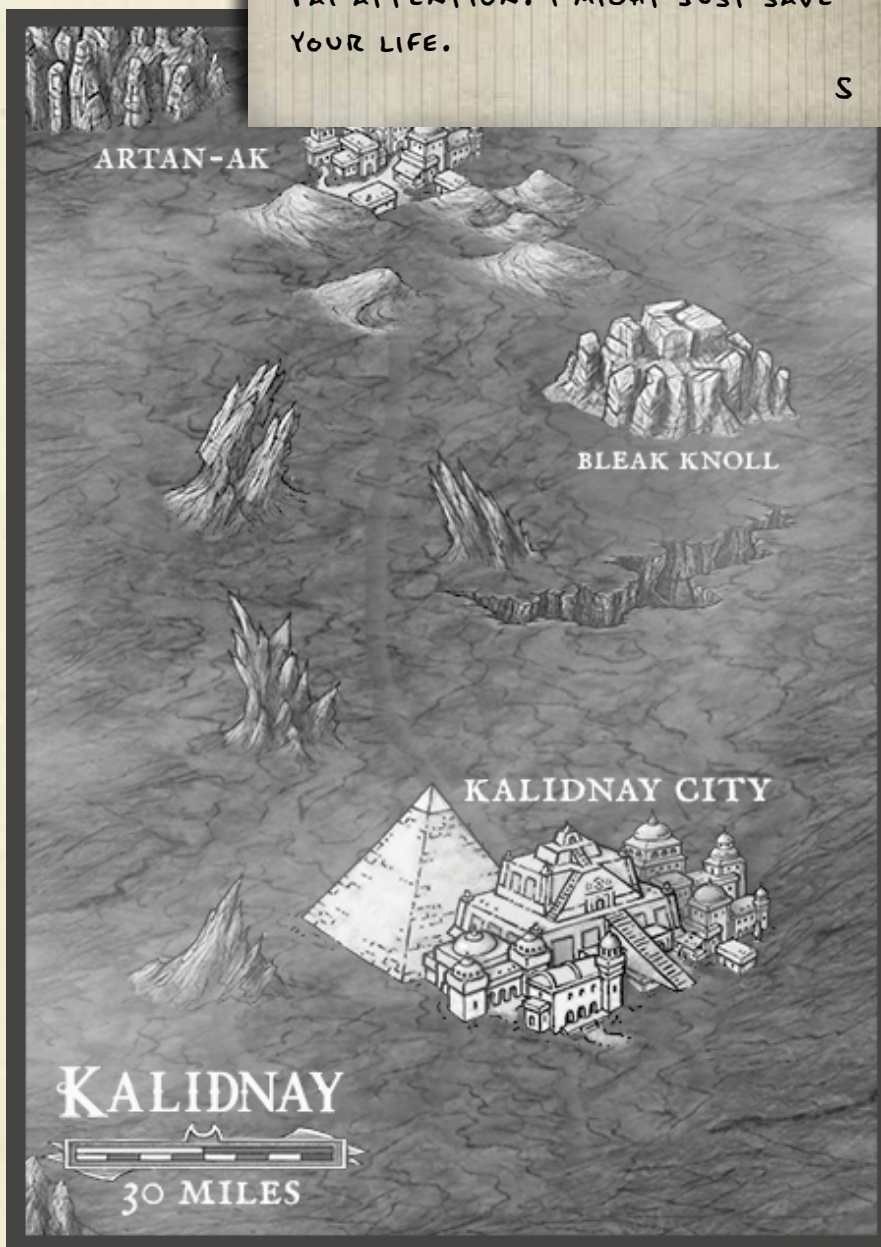
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YOU'LL FIND SOME OF MY NOTES
THROUGHOUT. THEY'LL LOOK A LITTLE
LIKE THIS, THOUGH I DO TEND TO WRITE
ON WHATEVER COMES TO HAND.

PAY ATTENTION. I MIGHT JUST SAVE
YOUR LIFE.

S



Thakok-An, Darklord of Kalidnay

YOU KNOW, IN SOME WAYS I REALLY DO ADMIRE THAKOK-AN. SHE HAS A VISION, AND SHE EXECUTES IT. NATURALLY SHE EXECUTES A LOT OF PEOPLE TOO, BUT THAT'S JUST THE COST OF DOING BUSINESS.

Is loyalty a crime? If so, it's a disappointingly rare one. But loyalty to the sorcerer-king Kalid-Ma is what brought Thakok-An, and the city she stewards for him, into The Mists.

The world Kalidnay came from is a hard one. A desert wasteland, where city-states make war for power and resources and mighty sorcerer-kings seek to become 'Dragons,' ascending to a form more powerful than humans can conceive of. Magic in that world draws its power from the land, sucking it dry of life and fertility, and the magic of the sorcerer-kings, being most powerful, requires the most fuel. Most of these rulers are cruel, selfish creatures who run their kingdoms only as a means of channelling resources to themselves. They care little for their cities, leaving their management to their priesthood, the Templars.

Kalid-Ma was different. While his laws were harsh, they were fair, and every citizen was equal under them. There was little corruption, nepotism, or privilege, and Kalid-Ma was respected, if not loved.

None of that protected him from the machinations of his fellow sorcerer-kings, who grew concerned at the power he wielded, and his subjects' loyalty, and plotted against him. At least, so Thakok-An claims. And as his chief Templar and steward of Kalidnay, she should know. Thakok-An saw one obvious way to raise him above their schemes: to hasten his draconic ascension. All it would take was one almighty sacrifice.

And that, after much research and some soul-searching, is how Thakok-An came to murder all of her known blood relatives on the highest platform of a stone ziggurat in the centre of Kalidnay City. She timed the murders to coincide with the nightly ceremony Kalid-Ma performed in pursuit of his ascension. Her ritual, and the deaths of her family, should have thrust Kalid-Ma immediately into his full power. Instead, as the steps ran red with blood, a vicious sandstorm whipped up, the ziggurat cracked and collapsed, and the life-force was drained from thousands upon thousands of the citizens of Kalidnay.

Thakok-An lost consciousness during the ziggurat's collapse. When she recovered, she found little was left of Kalid-Ma's kingdom. Kalidnay City, the distant lights of the farming town of Artan-Ak... and little else. A few dozen miles of desert surrounded by the great, impassable, Silt Sea. Worse, Kalid-Ma had not ascended. He too was unconscious - and he did not wake up.

Kalid-Ma slumbers still, in a chamber beneath the palace, watched over by Thakok-An and the most loyal of her Templars.

Her only goals now are to steward Kalidnay safely through this dark disaster, until its sorcerer-king awakes and restores things to the way they were. To do so, she keeps him nourished on the life force of the people who die in the city's arena and ensures there is something left for him to reclaim.



Thakok-An's concern with preserving the fragile ecosystem of Kalidnay borders on obsession, and for good reason. There are perilously few water sources and the sleeping sorcerer-king defiles the land around the city, leaving Artan-Ak as the only place where crops can be grown. A single drought could destroy everything Thakok-An has worked to maintain.

So could a single magic-user. Arcane magic is not only banned in Kalidnay it is punishable by death. Every citizen knows how precarious their situation is, and very few would hesitate to turn a magic-user over to Thakok-An's Templars. The Templars, in turn, would likely kill such a person on sight.

Thakok-An has served her king loyally, and she will continue to do so. No matter how many people have to die to make it so.

Appearance

Thakok-An is a handsome half-elven woman in her early thirties with light brown skin and straight, sandy blonde hair. Sharp, attenuated, features and pointed ears are clear signs of her elven heritage. She stands six feet tall, dresses in light, loose-fitting white robes, and carries an ornate bone spear as a ceremonial staff of office. Also ceremonial, she wears a headdress of carved bone which forms three high ridges over her skull.

Like many in Kalidnay, Thakok-An chooses to partially cover her face. In her case, she wears a gem-studded half mask made of leather which covers her forehead and cheeks, revealing only her yellow eyes.

Personality

Thakok-An is truly a devoted caretaker of her king's city. All that drives her, every day, is ensuring there is something left for Kalid-Ma to reclaim when - not if - he awakens. She will take any measures necessary to do so. Lining

up arena fights that nourish him with the life essence of the fallen; hunting down any mages - or suspected mages - before they can harm the land; rooting out any sign of resistance or corruption that could make her job harder.

The work takes its toll. Always pragmatic and low on empathy, Thakok-An has become clinically cold; it is usually easier to solve a problem with a couple of judicious murders than to untangle it. And the more she kills, and rations food, and grows into a tyrant, the more she fears her people will turn on her. It's a vicious cycle and over time, she has come to resent Kalid-Ma for forcing her into this position. She has begun to think of Kalidnay as *her* city: after all, she is the one who sacrificed her family and her happiness for it. While she would never admit it, even to herself, she's started to doubt whether she really wants Kalid-Ma to wake up and take back the reins of power.

Tactics

Thakok-An is powerful, but she does not think of herself as a fighter. She would much prefer to leave the scene of any combat (using *invisibility* as a legendary action or *greater invisibility* and *far step*) and leave her loyal Templars to deal with any pesky adventurers. Thakok-An is accompanied by at least 4 Templars inside the royal palace, and 2d8 + 4 outside of the palace walls.

She will stand and fight only if an adventuring party presents a major threat to Kalidnay (e.g. contains a powerful arcane spellcaster) or Kalid-Ma. If this happens, Thakok-An will alternate between buffing her Templars and dealing with spellcasters herself, while the Templars focus on martial characters. Her preference is to control and subdue enemies so that they can be executed later - preferably in the arena, where Kalid-Ma can benefit from their life force.

Settlements

KALIDNAY CITY - SILENT METROPOLIS

The people fear me, but they do not realise: I am only a caretaker, stewarding this skeleton of a city until Kalid-Ma wakes once more.

--Thakok-An

On the night Thakok-An conducted her great sacrifice and the Dark Powers claimed the city-state, there were fifteen-thousand people living in Kalidnay City. Since the ritual, the population stands at around 2,500. Most of the city is an empty, lifeless, monument to former splendor. Dust and sand build up in the streets and even the poorest city-folk live in luxurious homes that they have claimed from the dead.

Those in the districts that are still populated live well, compared to people elsewhere in the domain. The city still has working wells supplying clean water, though it is rationed, and most of the food produced in Artan-Ak is sent here to feed the city-dwellers. There is a marketplace, selling food and goods either hand-made or plundered from the tomb-like empty sections of the city. Musicians, the occasional bard, and of course the arena, provide entertainment. The weekly day of arena combat is both the main public event and the way Thakok-An deals with criminals.

Kalidnay City is loyal to Thakok-An; it can't afford not to be. She ensures that water flows and food trickles in, and she keeps her people safe from magic that could end all life in Kalidnay. And then, of course, there is Kalid-Ma. The populace believes that Thakok-An still hears from him in her dreams. Her orders are his will made manifest, and the people would prefer not to anger even a sleeping god.

Leadership

Kalidnay City is Thakok-An's stronghold and seat of power. She is a very hands-on ruler, but even she has to delegate. She is very careful in her choices, relying on a Chief Templar she has known since her youth, and the only woman more obsessed with keeping the city running than Thakok-An herself.

Thakok-An

Thakok-An is a pragmatic survivor who wants only to safeguard Kalidnay until - or in case - Kalid-Ma wakes from his sleep. She has learned that the best way to keep the city-state in balance is to trust no one, as well as playing her enemies off against one another. Her greatest fear is magic-users. A single one would be powerful enough to destroy Kalidnay... so she seeks them out and destroys them wherever she can.

Outsiders are of great interest to Thakok-An. Opening up the borders of the domain would make Kalidnay a much safer, less precarious, place to live. If people can get in, then there must be a way for her to reach out. Of course, if there is even the slightest hint that a party of adventurers contains mages, or might plot against her, she will execute them in the arena first and ask questions later.

For more information on Thakok-An, see **Thakok-An, Darklord of Kalidnay**.

Gennet

Very few people could be said to have profited from the cataclysm that threw Kalidnay into Ravenloft, but Gennet (LE male **mummy lord**) did. He is now Chief Templar, after all. He is unaware that it is Thakok-An who now grants

PEOPLE DO A LOT OF COMPLAINING ABOUT THE WATER IN KALIDNAY. "I'M DYING OF THIRST. MY BABY HASN'T WASHED IN THREE WEEKS." AND SO ON. THEY REALLY SHOULD HAVE THOUGHT OF THAT BEFORE THEY BECAME PEASANTS.



him spells, as Kalid-Ma used to, and believes himself still in direct service to the Sorcerer King. If he ever learned that Kalid-Ma does not speak, even in dreams, he might finally start to question Thakok-An's leadership.

For the time being, Gennet is a loyal, tireless servant of the state. To the extent that people dare jest about the Chief Templar at all, it is joked that he never sleeps; that at any time of day or night, he might be found wandering the palace or the streets, looking for any sign of dissent or disloyalty.

And it is true. Gennet hasn't slept since the night of Thakok-An's sacrifice. Or breathed. He died that night, every drop of life sucked out of him and leaving a desiccated husk of a person with leathery skin, fleshless lips, and round, staring eyes. Death did not interfere with his duty, however, and so he presses on. While Gennet is conscious and rational, he has absolutely no imagination and he does not question orders. Once he has cause to suspect someone of being a danger to the state, he will not cease from hunting them down.

Inara-Ves

Inara-Ves (LE human female, **Kalidnay commoner**) is the 'Mayor' of Kalidnay City. While Thakok-An is theoretically responsible for ensuring there are resources, and that people survive to partake of them, Inara-Ves is the woman who calculates water rations and knows how many days away the city is from famine.

Inara-Ves is totally loyal, honest, and dutiful. But she understands the precariousness of life here better than anyone else. The ground around the city is barren (she does not know that this is because its energy goes to nourish Kalid-Ma), and the food supply from Artan-Ak is insecure. Adding to her problems, the population of the city and the whole domain is getting older, which means fewer workers to feed hungry mouths.

Inara-Ves is slowly and secretly working on a plan to make sure that the food and water don't run out. It means culling roughly one-third of the population, but it will keep the others alive. She doesn't like it, but she also doesn't like the prospect of starving slowly to death in a dying world.

Local Celebrities: the Arena

There aren't many causes for celebration in Kalidnay, but the spectacle of the arena has the power to unite the whole city. There are

two types of combatants:

- **Prisoners** - whose role is to die horribly to the rousing cheers of the audience
- **Gladiators** - who are tough, trained professionals with a track record of victory and legions of fans. Citizens send them love letters and gifts, and it is said that their sweat, properly collected, is a powerful aphrodisiac.

There are roughly twenty professional gladiators 'stabled' at the arena. Most of them are relative newcomers: a short-lived attempt at rebellion five years ago, led by the gladiator Orek, gave Thakok-An and Gennet cause to execute many of the veteran fighters, and some of their noble fans, too. Orek wanted to stop the bloody, wholesale slaughter in the arena. That cannot be allowed. The blood must flow, to keep Kalid-Ma fed.



IT'S NOT THAT I DON'T LIKE INARA VES BUT SHE HAS THIS AWFUL HABIT OF TURNING UP AND INTERFERING WITH PERFECTLY UTILITARIAN NECROMANCY. WHAT WAS SHE EVEN GOING TO USE THOSE BODIES FOR ANYWAY? THIS WOULD NEVER HAPPEN IN DARKON.

The most noteworthy current gladiators are:

Vortre

Vortre (N male human **gladiator**) fights with shield and spear and is the undisputed champion of the arena. He has been a professional since before Kalidnay entered Ravenloft. He even weathered the revolution started by his lover, Orek, by taking shelter with a noble patron until it, and the wave of retribution that followed, were over.

Fans think Vortre is aging and losing his edge. In actual fact, he's lost interest in his career since his former friends and allies died. He now takes money to throw fights (primarily from a bookmaker called Borei, who operates out of the marketplace when she is not at the arena), working to stash away money until he can buy himself a comfortable overseer position in Artan-Ak, where he can finally be with Orek again.

Nandis

Nandis (CN human female **assassin**; remove crossbow). Nandis was one of the first gladiators to join the ranks after the rebellion. She, like many of the new fighters, has less of a conscience than the previous generation. Nandis was a hired killer before she entered the arena, and she finds her new career far less morally objectionable.

Nandis has worked out how to build up a following in the arena. With a forked tongue and skin covered in brands and scars, she looks like a monster. The audience loves to hate her, and she thrives on it. Her specialty is stalking terrified victims through the ruins of the arena while the audience watches and cheers from above. She still occasionally takes contracts as an assassin, even though it's getting harder to pass discreetly around the city.

Kiri-Talat

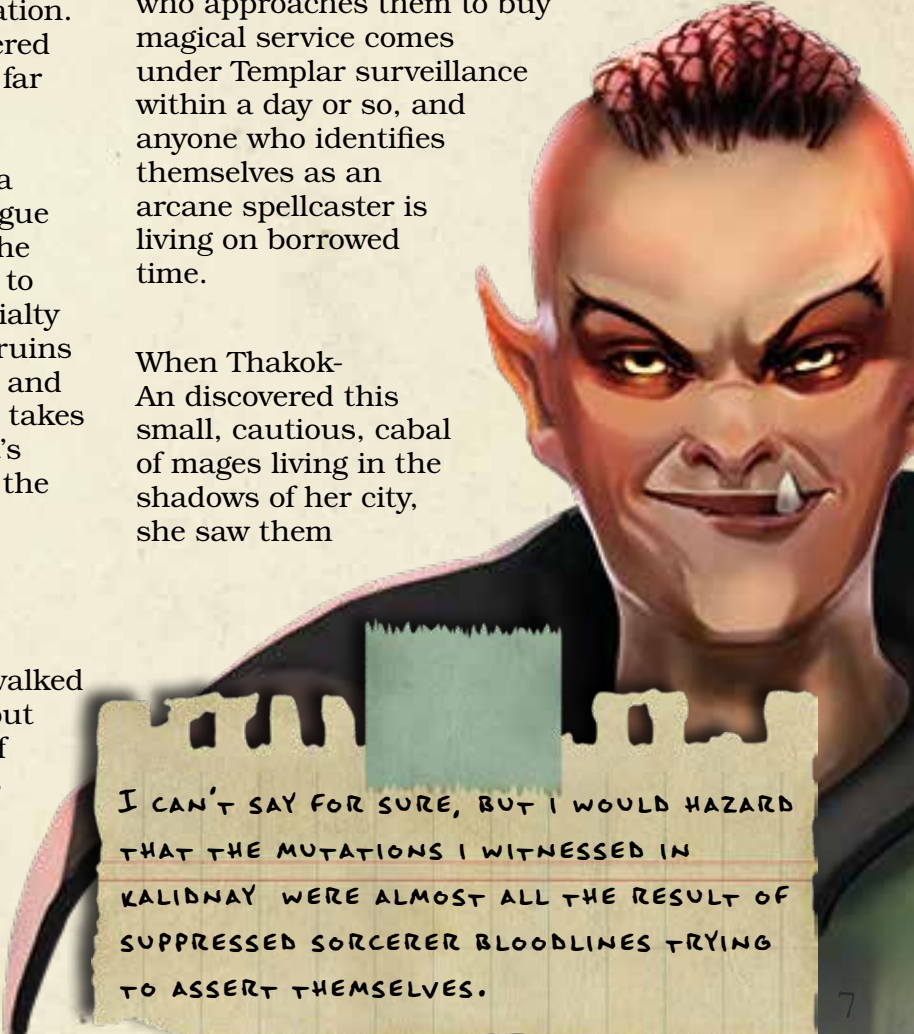
Kiri-Talat (CG female blue dragonborn **gladiator**; armed with net and trident) walked out of the Empty Districts one day without a word of explanation, presenting herself at the arena looking for work. Mutations occur infrequently in Kalidnay bloodlines - usually minor things, like an extra finger or a patch of scales - but Kiri-Talat takes them to new levels.

Deep blue in colour, and distinctly lizard-like, she inspires a mix of fear and fascination in audiences. Her strange blend of charm and strangeness means she makes friends quickly, and that those wealthy, noble friends don't worry too much about what they say in front of her. Kiri-Talat has blackmail material on most of the Templars in the city; everything from water fraud to murder. She doesn't desire to do anything with it, but she values her safety, and her friends' safety; if she was ever under threat, she could throw the entire Templar order into chaos in a heartbeat.

The Hidden Order

Rumors abound of a secret order of mages operating somewhere in the city. These are tales told to scare children, but there is a grain of truth in them. Thakok-An knows that the best way to find mages is through other mages, so she allows a few of them to live in Kalidnay City as long as they never, ever, make the mistake of Defiling, and as long as they do not grow too powerful. No one except Thakok-An knows that the mage Kellar (LE human female **mage**; additional spells - see Marketplace) and her two apprentices, Azzer and Lendri (N nonbinary, female, **apprentice wizards** - see *VGtM*; 25 hit points and additional spells - see Marketplace), report to her. Anyone who approaches them to buy magical service comes under Templar surveillance within a day or so, and anyone who identifies themselves as an arcane spellcaster is living on borrowed time.

When Thakok-An discovered this small, cautious, cabal of mages living in the shadows of her city, she saw them



I CAN'T SAY FOR SURE, BUT I WOULD HAZARD THAT THE MUTATIONS I WITNESSED IN KALIDNAY WERE ALMOST ALL THE RESULT OF SUPPRESSED SORCERER BLOODLINES TRYING TO ASSERT THEMSELVES.

immediately as excellent tools. Kellar and the others know full well that their choices are loyalty to Thakok-An, or death. They are not good people forced into a difficult position. They are not desperately hunting for a way out of their deal. They agree with Thakok-An's position on mages, fully believing that mages should not be allowed to live, and count themselves as the only exceptions. They form a tight-knit family who trust one another as they trust no one else.

City Environment: the Wasteland

Nothing grows in Kalidnay City. There is not one single cactus, vine, or potted plant. The land outside the city is utterly barren. This is common knowledge. Fewer people realize, or understand, that corpses do not decay in the city: they desiccate and mummify, but the microscopic organisms that would usually feed on them are few in number here. Like the plants, their life force goes to feed Kalid-Ma.

This has two important consequences. Firstly, noble families usually have mausoleums to lay their dead to rest, but most corpses are burned. Secondly, when corpses rise as undead, they do so as **Kalidnay mummies**, not skeletons or zombies. Corpses animated by magic are exceptions to this rule, rising as whatever creatures are specified by the spell.

Water Sources

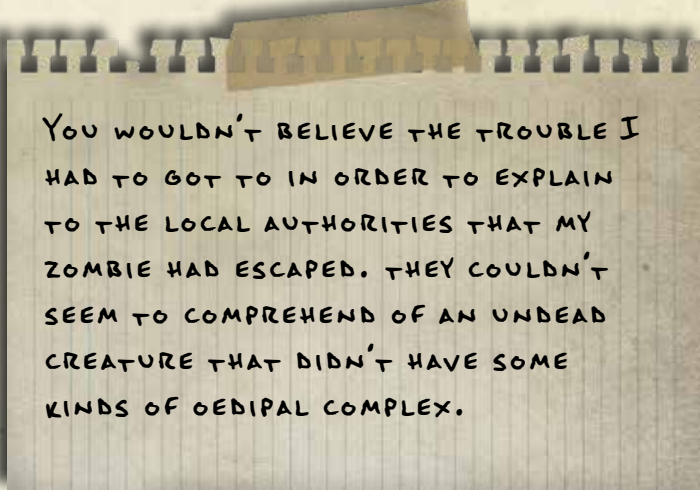
There are five working wells in Kalidnay City. One is in the palace, for the use of Thakok-An, the Templars, and the servants. One is in

the arena. One is in the empty districts and is sealed over, being extremely hazardous to reach. The other two are accessible for general use by the citizens. Except for the palace and arena, rationing is in effect, but it is much more generous than in Artan-Ak.

Not a drop to drink

Citizens of Kalidnay City are entitled to a ration of water per person, per day. A single ration is enough for drinking, food preparation, and basic sanitation needs. A small number of businesses are allowed separate rations for customers.

An individual can collect water on behalf of an entire household; people are simply asked to show their water tokens at the well. These ceramic rectangles are issued at the beginning of each month, and whenever they are presented at a well, a chip is knocked out of them to mark off that day's ration.



YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE THE TROUBLE I HAD TO GO TO IN ORDER TO EXPLAIN TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES THAT MY ZOMBIE HAD ESCAPED. THEY COULDN'T SEEM TO COMPREHEND OF AN UNDEAD CREATURE THAT DIDN'T HAVE SOME KINDS OF OEDIPAL COMPLEX.



If a person has no token, they get no water. The authorities don't particularly care whether every person gets their share; their concern is that no more than the prescribed volume of water is doled out every day. This leads to several major issues:

Deprivation. Large households often do not distribute their water rations equally amongst members. Nobles bathe, servants thirst.

Resale. Some households deliberately limit their own usage so that they can sell water to others. This is the only way for those without water tokens (which are issued only to citizens registered at the palace) to obtain drinking water in Kalidnay City, and prices are whatever the vendor wishes to charge.

Death and Disease. Heatstroke, dehydration, and unsanitary conditions kill every day.

Rumours on the Streets

We are all dead, but some of us don't know it. Somewhat true. Gennet is not the only mummy walking amongst the living. Anyone in robes and veils that hide their face should be treated with suspicion. Unfortunately, between the climate and the prevailing fashion trends, this describes roughly half the population.

Kalid-Ma speaks to Thakok-An less often than he used to. Partially true, in that the sleeping sorcerer-king doesn't speak to Thakok-An at all.

We are running out of water. Water rations fluctuate, based on Inara-Ves' current level of paranoia, and there is a real long-term risk of this, but it is currently not true. Occasionally this rumor gains a stronger hold than usual, at which point there may be riots - followed by arrests and executions.

Thakok-An feeds on the blood and fear of those who die in the arena. Not Thakok-An, but Kalid-Ma.

There are mages in the marketplace. This is technically true but the mages in these rumours are always either assumed to be Defilers or revolutionaries, whereas they are in fact allies and informants to Thakok-An.

There are people living in the Empty Districts. Very much no. There are creatures there, but they should not be described as people or living.

Locations

ra. The Market

The marketplace is the literal and figurative centre of Kalidnay City. The round plaza is one of the few places that can ever be described as 'bustling.' The market is divided into three sections:

1. **The Main Market:** reputable stallholders sell produce brought in from Artan-Ak - either in large volumes to other businesses, or in small amounts to individuals - and wares crafted in Kalidnay City itself. The latter range from clothing, to tools, to occasional weapons and armor. No metal is available, and the flash of a metal coin - let alone metal armor or weapons - is enough to attract the attention of serious, organised, bands of criminals (1d6+3 **thugs** and 1d4 **spies**).
 2. **The Dust Market:** this collection of traders fill the streets and alleyways that feed into the main plaza. They sell goods scavenged up from the empty districts. These can be as innocuous as furniture or as exciting as ancient magical items. Whatever is on offer, the vendor faced great dangers to obtain it (or paid someone else to), and the prices run from three to ten times higher than comparable items in the *Player's Handbook* and other published sources.
 - Traders in the Dust Market are frequently denizens of the Empty Districts themselves. Like everyone who lives there, they are **Kalidnay mummies**.
 3. **The Slave Market:** once every ten days, all other commerce pauses, and the marketplace is taken over by the slave market. Humans - and occasionally other races - are corralled in pens and auctioned off. Most of the people sold here are minor criminals (debtors, vandals, or guilty of other crimes that don't justify death in the arena), slaves changing hands, or the children of slaves. Human life is cheap; an unskilled slave can often be bought for less than a nice piece of salvage from the Empty Districts.
- Rumour has it that magical services are available in the market too. This is true, up to a point. Kellar and her apprentices Azzer and Lendri run a stall here, selling poisons to kill vermin, basic medicinal supplies, and cosmetics. Those who know the right way to approach them - a specific hand gesture,

or a few words of a spell carefully seeded into a conversation - can obtain spellcasting services for the following rates (plus the cost of components, where listed in the spell):

Potions of Healing. 75 ceramic pieces.

Cantrips. 50 ceramic pieces. *Light, mending, prestidigitation.*

1st level. 200 ceramic pieces.

Comprehend languages, detect magic, identify.

2nd level. 300 ceramic pieces. *Arcane lock, gentle repose, knock, locate object.*

3rd level (Kellar only). 500 ceramic pieces. *Dispel magic, nondetection, tongues.*

Market Encounters

Roll 1d6.

d6	Encounter
1	Pickpocket
2	Beggar
3	Escaping slave
4	Dust market trader
5	"Mages"
6	Robbers

Pickpocket

Choose a character in the party at random. Characters with passive Wisdom (Perception) of 14 or higher notice:

There's a tiny hand on your purse. It's attached to a blonde child who can't be more than six. Or maybe they're just malnourished. They yelp as you notice them and try to take off into the crowd.

Characters with a lower passive Wisdom (Perception) roll randomly to determine which of their possessions are missing. Read or paraphrase:

You see a tiny figure, barefoot and with tousled blonde hair, weaving between the legs of nearby shoppers. They move through the crowd like a fish in the ocean. If you don't act soon, they're going to get away.

Beggar

You've passed plenty of beggars in the marketplace. The sick or merely old; those who cannot work. The kindness of strangers here seems to be sorely lacking; few have any coin at all, and most look like they barely have the energy left to move. The one who holds out their chipped, clay cup at you now has grimy cloth bandages wrapped around their eyes and ears, keeping their stringy grey hair in place. Their parched lips move slowly:

"I can get you home."

This beggar is **Andreea**, a Vistana. The rest of her family perished in the desert, and she was badly ravaged by desert birds. She is convinced she can find a way across the Silt Sea and back to Barovia - and offers to take the characters with her if they will protect her in the desert. Andreea is, unfortunately, incorrect: she is unable to leave Kalidnay.



IF THERE'S ONE THING I'VE ALWAYS APPRECIATED ABOUT KALIDNAY, IT'S THEIR DEDICATION TO FASHION. THE KHOPEH IS A DEVILISH ADDITION TO ANY WARDROBE, AND CAN BE EASILY HIDDEN UNDER A VOLUMINOUS SKIRT, SHOULD THE NEED ARISE. I'VE USED ONE ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION TO DECAPITATE AN ARCHIVAL, WHILST REMAINING UNDENIABLY A LA MODE

Escaping Slave

Coughing isn't uncommon in this dry, dusty place. When it starts, no-one reacts. When it continues and turns into wet, hacking sounds, a space clears. A woman is on her knees, fine robes and feathered mask spattered in dirt. She clutches her throat, as if that will do any good when she's coughing up blood.

Behind her, a slender, short, young man with wide eyes and an obsidian slave collar is backing away.

Choose a character at random. The young slave stumbles into them. He has poisoned his master and is attempting to escape as she chokes to death. There would be a sizable reward for his arrest, however...

Dust Market Trader

A hooded figure beckons you from down a narrow, shadowed, side street. Covered by black robes, and bracketed on either side by armed, robed, figures, this trader doesn't even reveal his face.

"Want to earn some bits?"

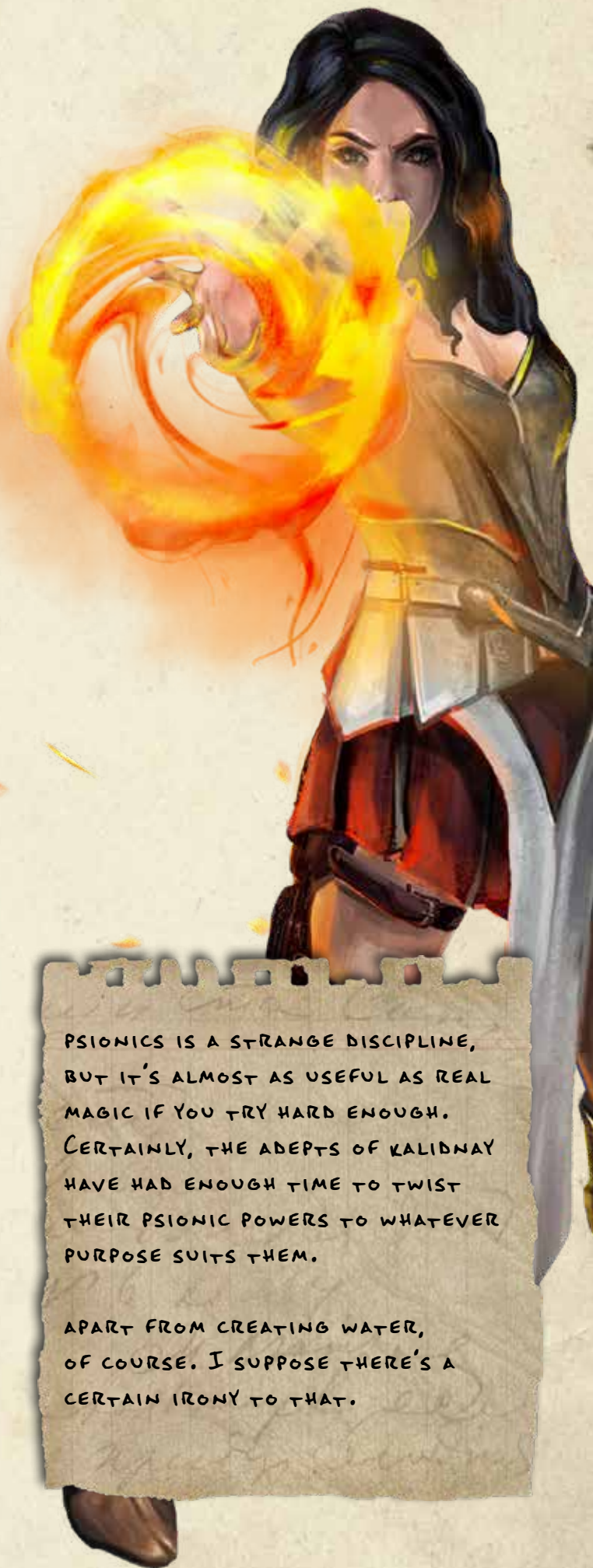
This Dust Market trader (LE human male **commoner**; accompanied by two NE human **thugs**) would prefer not to scavenge in the dangerous Empty Districts themselves. He has a proposition for the characters: go and empty out some abandoned houses, and he will pay them well in ceramic pieces or even water tokens for the rest of the month.

"Mages"

Two women stand close together, half-hidden by the corner of a stall. Both veiled and robed, they seem wealthy and well-fed; not the type who would need to sneak around and fear passers-by. One says to the other:

"I've heard there's a woman who can find it for you. The ring. Before he knows you lost it. She's here, in this very market. A mage... but not one of the bad ones."

If characters listen to more of the conversation, they will learn about Kellar, and how to find her (see previous section).



PSIONICS IS A STRANGE DISCIPLINE, BUT IT'S ALMOST AS USEFUL AS REAL MAGIC IF YOU TRY HARD ENOUGH. CERTAINLY, THE ADEPTS OF KALIDNAY HAVE HAD ENOUGH TIME TO TWIST THEIR PSIONIC POWERS TO WHATEVER PURPOSE SUITS THEM.

APART FROM CREATING WATER, OF COURSE. I SUPPOSE THERE'S A CERTAIN IRONY TO THAT.

Robbers

"I like your sword. I'll take it."

The voice is behind you. It belongs to a heavily muscled man, wearing leather and bone spikes, and a cloak that hides most of him. There's another like him to his left. And his right. And another, and another. You're surrounded.

Five **bandits** and a **bandit leader** have taken an interest in the characters, attracted to obvious wealth or metal. The characters will probably be able to deal with them, but a fight will attract the attention of a patrol of five **Templars** - who will probably bring unwanted attention to the characters, especially if any of them are spellcasters.

1b. The Arena

The Arena is far too large for Kalidnay City's current population. Once each week, it fills up with almost every living person in the city, ready to watch professional fighters dispatch prisoners, rebels, and - in desperate times - slaves. It is never more than half full.

The west side of the circular structure has collapsed in recent years. There is no pressing need to rebuild, and there aren't enough people in the city to undertake such a major project. And so it continues to sag and crumble, and legends spread about the ghosts of executed gladiators walking amongst the ruins.

While there are no ghosts, there is a pervasive aura of oppression that haunts the arena. It lifts only when the seats are full, and the bloodshed is in full swing. The tournaments feed Kalid-Ma, and when the arena is not full of new energy, it is dead and lifeless, devoid of even hope. If the tournaments were to stop, or slow down, or become less brutal, Kalid-Ma would unconsciously feed on the city itself, stripping life from the people just as he already has from

the ground.

The gladiators, and a crew of servants and trainers, live in a glorious villa close to the arena. The compound is guarded to keep out fans, rather than to keep the fighters in.

Arena Encounters

Roll 1d6.

d6	Encounter
1	Fans
2	Nandis
3	Merchandise vendor
4	Bookmaker
5	Job offer
6	Prisoners

Fans

A small crowd is gathered around the back gate of the arena, hot and weary under the sun. There is no fight scheduled today, or even tomorrow, but that doesn't seem to have dissuaded them from their vigil.

At your approach, a pair - dark-skinned, light-haired - break from the group focused on the gate and turn to you.

"Are you new?" asks the woman.

"New fighters?" asks the man.

There is a lot of coin to be made, and a lot of goodwill to be earned, by convincing these passionate fight fans that the characters are



I CONSIDERED RUNNING AWAY AND STARTING A NEW LIFE AS A GLADIATOR ONCE.
BUT I DON'T THINK MY PATRON WOULD APPROVE.

SHE IS RIGHT.

gladiators, or about to be. It's an excellent way to make connections in noble families they would not normally have access to. Of course, it's also a great way to make enemies when their new 'fans' learn that their story isn't true, and having rich, demanding fans who think they are entitled to your time and attention has its own problems.

Nandis

There is life amongst the rubble of the arena's ruined side. A figure with vividly dyed blue hair, dressed for heat in plates of bone and slips of fabric cut to show her muscles and tattoos. Not only is she watching you, but she is also sipping, openly, from a heavy-looking waterskin. It's asking for trouble in this city.

"Lost?" she calls out to you.

This is **Nandis** (see **Local Celebrities**). The ruins are her turf, and she expects people to leave her be. She threatens anyone who is disrespectful or doesn't leave when instructed. Nandis has never been in a fight she couldn't finish, and she is practically fearless. However, she won't fight a large group head-on. She will appear to leave, stalking them through the shadows of the ruins, attacking from cover, and picking them off one by one.

Adventurers might kill her, of course... but killing a gladiator will not only draw the wrath of the Templars, it could turn the whole city against them.

Merchandise vendor

There is a single blanket laid out, right outside the front gate of the arena. Its stock of glass bottles, braided circlets of hair, small cloth bags of unknown contents, is attracting a healthy crowd. In the market traders send children or assistants amongst the crowd, showing off wares. Here, there is no need: people come to the wizened old woman running the stall without prompting.

The stall sells merchandise from lucky charms to potions promising virility, fertility, and general good health, all of them made from the gladiators themselves. Everything from vials of blood, sweat, and tears can be obtained, along with clothes worn by these heroes, their discarded weapons, and even nail clippings and eyelashes. There is no guarantee that any of these things are real, but they sell for anywhere from 10-500 ceramic pieces.

Bookmaker

A huge, hulking, mountain of a man sits under a parasol that barely shades him. A stone casket sits on the ground, one of his sandaled feet resting on the lid. He calls odds into the empty street: chances of victory, time until the first fatality; total number of bodies; long odds on whether the gladiators will suffer a blow. There is no permutation of the upcoming fights that you could not bet on, if you wanted.

Big money bets are the order of the day. Fortunes are made and lost at the arena every week... but betting on deaths, maimings, and ruined lives can take its toll on a person. Characters betting on the more macabre aspects of fights should make Dark Powers checks at a relatively low DC.

Job offer

"You look like you can handle yourselves."

The creature watching you is unlike any you've seen in Kalidnay. Scaly skin, a reptilian snout with long, sharp, teeth and glittering golden eyes. She wears a loose cotton wrap and no armor, but she leans her weight on a long, wickedly sharp trident and there is a net bundled up on one hip.

"Looking for work?"

This is Kiri-Talat, gladiator and trainer (see **Local Celebrities**). She has two major interests in the characters: whether they would consider a career as gladiators... and what they are doing in Kalidnay. She hoards as much information as she can - and, at a later date, will ask the characters to do something for her. Place a large bet on a fighter she knows is going to lose, for example, or deliver a threat - and some violence - to a Templar she can't blackmail, to stop them from scrutinising one of her nice, noble, friends too closely.

If there are dragonborn in the party, Kiri-Talat will be fascinated by them, wanting every detail of their history and home; she has never seen another person like her.

Prisoners

Stone weights drag across the stone street. A line of weary, slumped, shuffling men and women are being herded towards the arena by a patrol of Templars. It's like watching a line of animals going to slaughter; the chances of these people surviving, let alone winning a fight, is laughable.

The debtors and criminals being transported inside the arena are the intended cannon fodder for this week's fights. They will die unless the characters somehow help them escape, but what would be the point of angering the Templars, and turning a dozen people loose to die in the desert or starve in the Empty Districts? Even the prisoners would prefer not to end their lives that way.

ic. The Ziggurat

The mighty ziggurat where Thakok-An sacrificed her family to fuel Kalid-Ma's transformation still stands. The colossal stone structure is cracked, as though hit by lightning, and stained with the blood of sacrificial victims. Nothing prevents an individual from simply climbing to the pinnacle - except that it is hundreds of feet high and the smaller, climbable steps, were swallowed by the fissure that opened up; each step is almost six feet high.

There is nothing to see there, however, and to even approach it and linger for too long would draw Thakok-An's attention and suspicion.

Kalid-Ma sleeps directly underneath the ziggurat. Directly. There is a staircase within the ziggurat that descends to the vault where he sleeps, but it would require a psionist at least as powerful as Thakok-An, and a mage equally as powerful, to force their way past the wards and guards to encounter the sleeping

Sorcerer-King.

Null Field

Magic operates strangely on and around the ziggurat. On it, and within fifty feet of it, it is almost impossible to work arcane magic without defiling. The sleeping Kalid-Ma's thoughts - his craving for power, the fierce excitement at the working of magic - permeates reality here and tempts spellcasters to test their limits:

To cast a spell of first level or higher without defiling, the caster must succeed on an Intelligence saving throw, with a DC equal to 10 + the spell's level.

Spells cast as defiling magic are automatically cast using the spellcaster's highest available spell slot.

Defiling always saps the energy of creatures, as the ground is already dead.

Defiling saps double the usual number of hit points.

Wards and Guards

Descending to Kalid-Ma's underground resting place is simply a matter of climbing down almost a mile of steps, and then breaking through the psionic and magical seals that make it impossible for anyone but Thakok-An to enter.

Doing so requires *dispel magic* cast simultaneously by a psionist and a wizard, using 5th level spell slots; this alerts Thakok-An immediately to the presence of outsiders in the chamber.

Standing in the presence of a Sorcerer-King means losing control of one's own thoughts. On stepping into the unlit, obsidian-walled, octagonal room in which Kalid-Ma's sarcophagus rests, visitors are assaulted by the Sorcerer King's dreams:

I OFTEN WONDER IF THAKOK-AN
REALIZES HOW DANGEROUS KALID-MA
TRULY IS, OR THE DESTRUCTION HE
WOULD WREAK SHOULD HE WAKE

IN THE END, LOVE MAKES US ALL
BLIND, DEAD OR DRAGON FOOD.
USUALLY IN THAT ORDER.



Kalid-Ma manifests as a dragon-like form, fifty feet high (a fraction of the height of the massive chamber) and shaped out of bone plates and leathery, copper-toned skin. This creation functions as per the *illusory dragon* spell (XGtE), but has no duration: it lasts until dispelled.

The illusory dragon is aggressive and enters combat immediately. It is, however, neutral to Thakok-An's presence and largely ignores her.

Should characters somehow open the sarcophagus (the lid of which weighs two-hundred pounds), they black out for 1d10 minutes and wake with three levels of exhaustion and no memory of what they saw.

rd. The Palace

Thakok-An's – apologies, Kalid-Ma's – palace is a collection of stone buildings behind a curtain wall that separates it from the city. Inside and out, every surface is beautifully decorated with frescoes depicting the great deeds of the Sorcerer-King; the passing of laws, adjudication of disputes... the crushing of his enemies, often non-humans, by his mighty armies.

The palace is divided into buildings with distinct functions. Once characters are inside the palace, bystanders assume they have permission to be anywhere but the Templar Hall and Thakok-An's private quarters.

Thakok-An's quarters and the throne room sit at the middle of the complex, with the other buildings arranged around them in a circle.

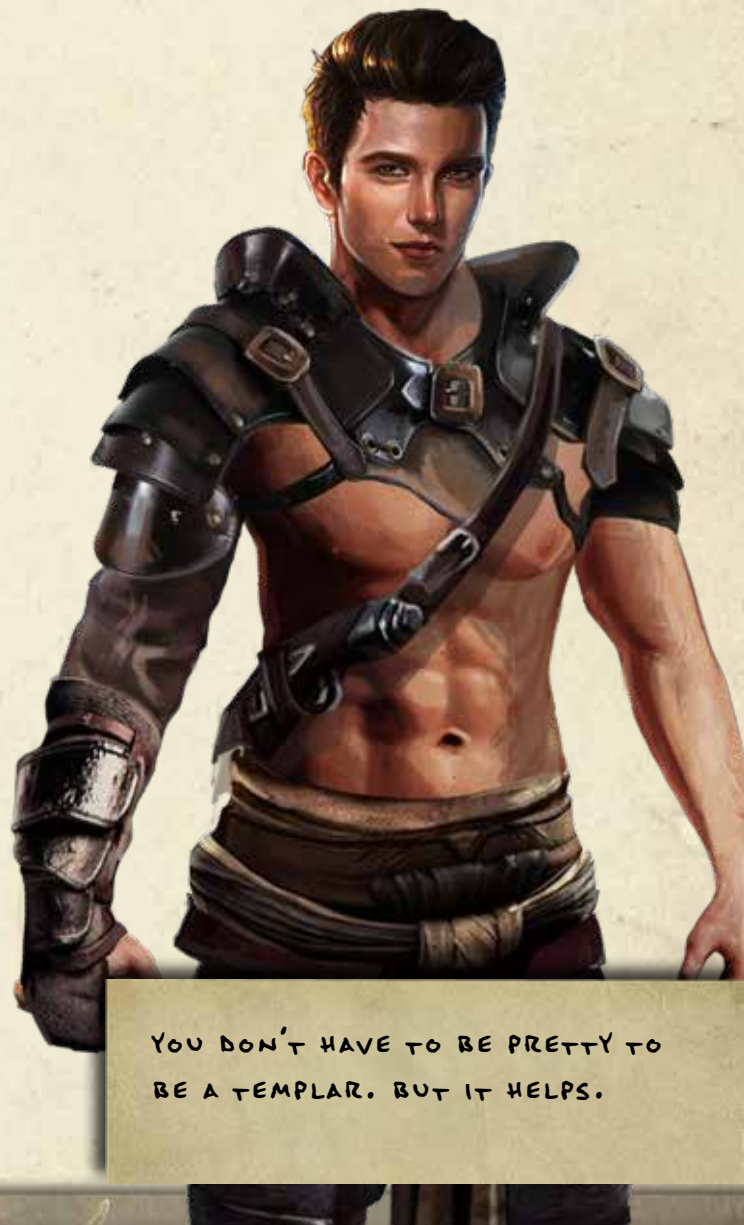
Thakok-An's Quarters; Throne Room

This round building is situated right in the centre of the palace complex. The throne room fills the entire structure above ground. The throne room is 100 feet in diameter, enclosed by carved columns rather than walls, and holds only stone benches for courtiers and petitioners; a massive dais, ten feet off the ground, on which the polished stone throne – big enough for something much larger than a human – stands. Next to the throne is a smaller stone chair, sized for a human, in which Thakok-An sits when she grants audiences.

Below ground level are Thakok-An's rooms, and below that, Kalid-Ma's chambers. Both are locked with *arcane lock* spells and trapped with *alarm* spells that silently summon Thakok-An and a Templar patrol (2d4 +2 **Templars**).

Thakok-An's chambers are comfortable but not lavish. A pleasant place to relax and slough off the cares of the day. She is a great reader, with many clay tablets covering legal codes, city history, and a range of philosophical topics, about the place.

Kalid-Ma's chambers are not the dwelling of a human. Cold, stone, rooms are empty of possessions except for a collection of reading materials even finer than Thakok-An's. There are no comforts here; those who enter find hard stone beds and seats, and no light sources. The walls are, however, decorated with more scenes of Kalid-Ma's triumphs (in which he is depicted as a human man who towers several feet above his subjects). One wall contains a secret door which requires a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice it. The door opens onto a narrow, dark passage which runs the short distance to the ziggurat, emerging into Kalid-Ma's resting chamber.



YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE PRETTY TO
BE A TEMPLAR. BUT IT HELPS.

Templar Hall

This single-story, square, stone building houses all of the Templars in the city (over 200, though usually, no more than 50 are in the palace at any time), and Gennet. It contains large dormitories, training rooms for combat skills and meditation/spellcasting, and a library dedicated to the rules and expectations of the Templar order, plus histories of Kalid-Ma's reign.

Guard Barracks

The Guard barracks are next to the Templar Hall and are similar in style and function, though they lack a library. There are approximately 100 **guards** in total, but only 2d10 will be in the barracks at any given time, of whom at least one will be a **veteran**.

Treasury

This small, domed building is open to all, which should be enough to suggest that it is not home to the real riches of Kalidnay. It largely contains gifts provided by city-states in Kalidnay's originating world, before it was taken into Ravenloft. Treasures on display include:

- A 20-foot-tall white marble statue, depicting an armoured warrior wielding a lance and riding on a giant beetle.
- A tiny fruit tree, pond, and flowerbed in a glass bell jar 2-feet in diameter.
- Two spears with shafts of polished woods and iron heads, decorated with crimson tassels made from the hair of some sort of creature (perhaps something equine).
- Templar regalia bearing the insignia of a different city-state, including a hood and mask lavishly decorated with rubies and opals

WHERE IS THE TREASURE?

The real treasury, including the kilns and workshop where water tokens are created each month, is in the basements of the administrative block. Details are deliberately omitted: they are irrelevant unless characters are planning a heist (in which case, Inara-Ves has the plans of the entire building on an ancient papyrus scroll in her office).

Servants' Quarters

Even the servants' quarters are grand, decorated with the legends of Kalid-Ma's successes. Only the great kitchen is above ground, and it is full of servants at all hours (no slaves in the palace as Thakok-An does not trust them). Below ground are storerooms and sleeping quarters.

Administrative Block

The administrative block is where Inara-Ves and her small army of bureaucrats do their work. Divided into shared offices, rooms full of records on clay tablets, and Inara-Ves' private rooms, this building is always a hive of activity. By day, over one-hundred people work there, and there are usually anywhere from a dozen to fifty working up until midnight.

Inara-Ves keeps her plan for controlling the city population in her office. It sits on her desk in plain sight but is written in a code that only she knows. It can, of course, be deciphered, given 2-3 days of work by someone proficient in Investigation, and with an Intelligence score of at least 15.

ie. The Empty Districts

Kalidnay City lost over four-fifths of its population in Thakok-An's ritual. The survivors have migrated towards the city centre, nearer to the market and the arena. The outer districts are desolate and decaying, populated only by the dead.

No one lives there but brave folk still venture into the Empty Districts looking for salvage. Resources are scarce, and it's much easier to steal high-quality art, or furniture, or personal possessions, than to make them. There is always a market for salvaged goods as the Dust Market struggles to meet demand.

Of course, the Empty Districts would have been picked clean already if they were safe. The dilapidated buildings are unsound, liable to collapse under sudden weights, or even in strong winds. The **cranium rats** that run unchecked through these areas are as dangerous as some street toughs, but the real threat comes from the dead.

Kalidnay mummies walk these districts freely, though they never leave them. Some are relatively peaceful, seeking only to continue the existence they knew in life; others are angry and violent, forming into groups to stalk and kill outsiders. Even the less aggressive mummies do not tolerate looters.

Empty Districts Encounters

Roll 1d6.

D6	Encounter
1	Scavengers
2	Cranium rats
3	Mummy - single
4	Mummies - group
5	Building collapse
6	Psionic sandstorm

Scavengers

They're just a bunch of children. Not one of them is older than ten - or so you would guess. But the small figures efficiently appraising and selecting possessions from the empty house on the corner of the block are armed to the teeth with sharpened stone knives and slingshots. They're clearly ready to defend themselves.

These young scavengers (1d8 +4 CN male and female human **Kalidnay commoners**) are fully prepared to fight to chase the characters off their turf. They distrust strangers; after all, there is no reason for the living to be out in the Empty Districts except to compete for the



NO-ONE EXITS THEIR OWN TOMB GRACEFULLY. I SHOULD KNOW, I'VE HAD TO DO IT SEVERAL TIMES, ONCE ON THE TOP OF A MOVING CARRIAGE.

increasingly slim pickings of salvage.

Cranium Rats

The hole at the bottom of the wall is glowing with a soft, white light that spills just a few feet onto the street. It dims as soon as you notice it.

If characters investigate, they find a swarm of **cranium rats**. The rats, like every other denizen of the Empty Districts, do not wish to be disturbed. If threatened, they attempt to *confuse* and *dominate* the characters to avoid combat. *Note that cranium rats in Kalidnay are not associated with Mind Flayers. They are created from the concentration of psionic power here.*

Mummy

The house no longer has a front wall. It has crumbled and caved in, giving you a perfect view of the inside, like a doll's house. Three bodies sit at a table, dusty plates and cups before them. They have been dead for years, clothes rotting away, and every drop of moisture gone to leave bared teeth and empty eye sockets. One of them has a clay tablet before it and, slowly, its withered

Like many of the **Kalidnay mummies** in the Empty Districts, this one simply wants to be left alone. However, if characters approach respectfully, it may have information relevant to their goals.

Mummies

It's hard to say what first alerts you as the dead are quiet. But you are aware of presences. Three... no, four... human-sized figures stepping out of a tumbledown house. Their skin is tanned leather, and dried sinews crack as one of them opens its mouth to speak.

"Despoilers. Return to the living, or die here." finger moves from one line of text to the next.

This group of **Kalidnay mummies** is used to dealing with looters and scavengers, and they seek to defend their home from predators. If characters are able to talk them down through roleplaying or ability checks,

they can offer useful information about the Empty Districts. Otherwise, they will attack, fighting to the death.

Building Collapse

There's a sound somewhere, streets away; bricks falling as a building comes down. It's enough to shake the earth, and set the wall nearest to you shuddering.

The buildings in the Empty Districts are fundamentally unstable. When one falls, several fall. Characters must find shelter or succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw to get out of the way of falling rubble. Those who fail take 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage, and those who succeed take half as much. The collapsed buildings, and the ones next to them, are perilous to explore, requiring another successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw to avoid triggering another collapse.

Psionic sandstorm

It starts as a whisper. The hissing of a thousand grains of sand slithering and shifting, whipped up into life by a breeze out of nowhere. The motion intensifies, flurries of sand, then walls of it, whipping up around you and cutting you off from the rest of the street.

The characters have encountered a **psionic sandstorm** (see NPCs & Monsters).

APPROACHING THE TOWN

When the characters first approach Kalidnay City, read or paraphrase the following:

To approach Kalidnay City is akin to climbing atop a dragon's skeleton. The land around the city is beaten and brutalized from futile efforts to grow crops, and the earth is as dry and red as the sun overhead. The city sprawls like scattered bones, the outer circles empty of people and full of red sand that whispers and shifts in the breeze. In the centre, there is movement, like flies crawling on a corpse; not enough to pass for life, but most certainly animation.

Despite its decay, Kalidnay City was beautiful once, and some of its pulchritude lingers yet in the great buildings decorated with arches and awnings, thick with carved detail in frescos and ornaments. But all of the city's glory, even the majestic stone edifice of the palace, is dwarfed by the ziggurat that casts its shadow over the western zones, reaching stubbornly into the hazy sky.

House Occupants

If the characters explore a residence, roll 1d20 and consult the following table to determine its occupants.

d20	General
1-2	Empty house
2-3	Unattended children
4-9	Slaves at work
10-15	Citizen family
16-19	Noble family
20	Memorial

Empty House

Most of the houses in the Empty Districts, and a few in the more populated areas of the city, are unoccupied. They are in poor repair, but the signs of lives lived here linger on in faded fabrics, broken possessions, and frescoes painted on the walls.



Roll 1d100:

1-50 - there is nothing worth looting (other scavengers got here first).

51-80 - characters can, if they wish, salvage 1d100 ceramic pieces worth of trinkets, furniture, used clothing, etc.

81-95 - characters can, if they wish, salvage 50 + 1d100 ceramic pieces worth of possessions (as above, plus art, jewellery, etc.).

96-100 - there is nothing worth looting, and the building is home to a nest of **cranium rats**.

Unattended Children

This house is clean and lived-in, but currently, the only people home are 1d4+2 children (CN human non-combatants) from several nearby homes, playing games that primarily involve throwing rocks at other rocks and laughing at children who throw poorly. One slightly older child (CN human non-combatant) is preparing a meal.

The children do not welcome strangers and inform the characters that their parents will be back from work soon. If characters do not leave, one of the children will run and fetch the nearest Templar patrol (1d4 +2 **Templars**).

Slaves at Work

This large, elaborately furnished house is occupied only by 1d6 slaves (LN **Kalidnay commoners**), cleaning, preparing food, and carrying out other household tasks. They initially assume characters are visitors and welcome them, only asking them to leave when/if it becomes clear they do not know the homeowners. They are unwilling to talk much about their work or life, but are clear that they consider enforced service a better option than dying in the arena, the only other option presented to debtors and petty criminals.

Citizen Family

These homes are often lavish. Large, with good air circulation, and well-furnished. They are usually far too large for the families occupying them. At any time there are 1d6 adults (N human **Kalidnay commoners**) and 1d4-2 children, in villas that are meant for a dozen or more.

They extend a courteous but cool welcome, especially if characters have no reason to be present. If the characters seem to present any threat, or to be carrying luxurious possessions or a substantial quantity of metal, a family member will excuse themselves and run to summon either a Templar patrol (1d4 +2 **Templars**) or a group of local thugs (2d6 **bandits** and one **bandit captain**).

Noble Family

This large, spacious, villa is owned and occupied by a noble family, plus their slaves and guards. At any time, there are 1d4 adult family members (NE human **Kalidnay commoners**), 1d4-2 children (CN human non-combatants), 1d6 slaves (N human **Kalidnay commoners**) and 1 guard (NE human **thug**) armed with an obsidian longsword (1d8/1d10 damage; Versatile) per adult family member present. Noble families are used to receiving guests at home, and as long as characters look the part (i.e. are well-dressed, well-spoken, and human), they receive a cordial welcome.

If the characters display any magic whatsoever, the family members order the guard(s) to arrest them, or discreetly send slaves to fetch a Templar patrol (1d4 +2 **Templars**).

Memorial

This house is empty, but the people who lived here are not forgotten. Pictures of them adorn the walls, drawn in bright chalk and charcoal, and treasured possessions are arranged beneath the drawings. Lines of poetry and 'goodbye' messages on the walls show these people as sorely missed.

d6	Empty Districts
1-10	Empty house
11-15	Corpses
16-18	Mummies
19-20	Scavenger

Empty House

Most of the houses in the Empty Districts, and a few in the more populated areas of the city, are unoccupied. They are in poor repair, but the signs of lives lived here linger on in faded fabrics, broken possessions, and frescoes painted on the walls.

Roll 1d100:

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81-95 - characters can, if they wish, salvage 50 + 1d100 ceramic pieces worth of possessions (as above, plus art, jewellery, etc.).

96-100 - there is nothing worth looting, and the building is home to a nest of **cranium rats**.

Corpses

Not only does no one live here, but nobody has removed the bodies of the people who once did. The house contains the mummified corpses of 1d4 adults and 1d4-1 children (all human). Each one is carrying 1d20 ceramic pieces. In addition:

1-50 - characters can, if they wish, salvage 1d100 ceramic pieces worth of trinkets, furniture, used clothing, etc.

51-75 - characters can, if they wish, salvage 50 + 1d100 ceramic pieces worth of possessions (as above, plus art, jewellery, etc.).

76-90 - 1d6 +1 human scavengers (NE male and female human **Kalidnay commoners**) notice the characters' presence and come to fight for their territory.

91-95 - 1d4 +1 **Kalidnay mummies** notice the characters' presence and come to drive them off.

Mummies

Many of the undead in the Empty Districts continue their existence just as they did before the cataclysm. This house contains 1d4 **Kalidnay mummies** reading, playing board games, conversing, or simply existing quietly in the same space as one another. They are not necessarily opposed to the characters' presence and may be glad of the company, unless characters attack or steal from them, in which case, they will defend themselves.

Scavenger

The trouble with looting empty houses is that there is an entire industry of other people doing the same. This house contains 1d4 +1 scavengers (NE male and female human **bandits**). They regard this house as theirs to loot and attack immediately.



I ONCE BOUGHT A FULL SET OF KALIDNIAN LEATHERS FROM A FALKOVNIAN STREET MERCHANT. WHEN I GOT HOME, I WAS DISAPPOINTED TO DISCOVER THAT THEY WEREN'T EVEN A LITTLE BIT CURSED.

KALIDNAY SUCKS THE FUN OUT OF EVERYTHING, APPARENTLY.

ARTAN-AK

LIFEBLOOD OF KALIDNAY

That town is like a tear on a cheek: too precious to waste, but a traitor all the same.

---Thakok-An

Artan-Ak exists solely to keep Kalidnay City fed. It has the best farmland in Kalidnay; Thakok-An and her Templars recognise it as their main lifeline and keep a death grip on it. Farmers are in theory free citizens, but they are overworked and kept in line by harsh punishments from the overseers, whilst all the while hating the city for the way they are treated. Specifically, they blame Thakok-An, believing she has usurped Kalid-Ma.

Over two-thirds of the crops grown in Artan-Ak go to feed the city. Residents of Artan-Ak are acutely aware that they live in scarcity so that the city-folk can eat. The city knows exactly how they feel: caravans sent to collect grain and other foodstuffs come bristling with guards and Templars to make sure their precious cargo makes it back across the desert.

Due to the populace's sentiments and the town's distance from the city, Artan-Ak is a hotbed of resistance activity. There are even mages here, deep in hiding. Unfortunately, the underground is riddled with Thakok-An's spies and so this promising resistance rarely

achieves much.

This is a small town and a tight-knit community. There are only a few hundred souls here, and even the wealthiest can only aspire to live comfortably. Most folk are farmers making a subsistence living; what doesn't go to feed the city goes to tradespeople who provide vital goods and services, to the overseers, and their guards. 'Rights' and 'laws' in Artan-Ak exist only insofar as the overseers can't afford to lose too many workers.

Leadership: The Overseers

There are many overseers in Artan-Ak, but three hold significant power... and vie constantly for more. Much of the discord that keeps them fighting is fomented by Thakok-An's agents. She likes to keep them busy with each other; dealing with organised, powerful resistance from her breadbasket is not on her to-do list.

Astareh

Astareh's family have been overseers in Artan-Ak for generations. They once lived in relative luxury, but standards have slipped. Astareh has given up a lot of things her family once valued - regular visits to Kalidnay City, the cosmetics and fabrics that used to be imported from other city-states, music, art, and the spectacle of arena combat. One thing she will not give up: *meat*.

THE SIGHT OF GRASS, THE SMELL OF LIFE. A HONEYPOT, CERTAINLY. THOUGH IT MIGHT SEEM LIKE A REPRIEVE, ARTAN-AK IS MERELY ONE IN AN ENDLESS LINE OF EXAMPLES DEMONSTRATING AN AGE OLD TRUTH: NOTHING IS WHAT IT SEEMS.

EXCEPT THE SANDSTORMS. THOSE ARE EXACTLY WHAT THEY SEEM LIKE.

There is no meat in Artan-Ak; water is for raising crops and keeping workers alive. No one's wasting it on animals, and the wild animals that once existed have been hunted almost to extinction. But... rich, red, meat, is life, and the sizzling of hot fat and the drip of red blood down the chin is a beautiful thing.

Astareh treats herself rarely. Artan-Ak is a small town, and if her secret were revealed she knows she would not survive it. Only her manservant and bodyguard **Targus** (NE male human **veteran**), a hulking, hairless creature almost seven feet tall, said to have dwarven blood somewhere in his ancestry, knows the truth, and only then because he shares in its rewards.

Targus usually preys on the "parasites" who are too sick to work, and who won't be missed, snatching them from their homes – sometimes whole families at a time – and bringing them back to Astareh's compound where they are imprisoned, slaughtered, and eaten.

Between them, Astareh and Targus eat every organ and scrap of flesh, and Astareh drinks their blood. The feasts have gone from a habit to a craving for both of them, and increasingly it feels as though nothing but meat sates their terrible hunger.

Astareh's diet has begun to change her; although she appears and considers herself human, she has monstrous strength and charm (see Monsters).

Domitian

Thakok-An executed Domitian's entire family. All of them. Perhaps his sister and her family really were traitors; perhaps there's some truth in the rumour that Kalid-Ma cared deeply about Domitian's Templar nephew, and Thakok-An was jealous.

Domitian (LN human male **Kalidnay commoner**) is a broken man. While he owns the majority of the land to the south of town, he leaves its management to his servants. All he wants is to stay far from the city and to lose himself in as much *nakwa* as he can lay his hands on. There aren't enough hallucinogens in the world to make him oblivious to what goes on around him, however. When his mind is clear, he's been known to send resources and information to the Resistance.

Kalet-Am

Sometimes Kalet-Am (LE male human **Kalidnay commoner**) thinks he is the only person who remotely cares what happens in Artan-Ak. The land he owns is poor, but he is the mind behind both the irrigation system and the Bone Garden. He has done more to ensure the survival of Artan-Ak – and by extension, Kalidnay – than anyone else. So he is fond of saying.

With the responsibility of keeping the Bone Garden filled, Kalet-Am and his servants keep the town running. They supervise food, waste collection... and law enforcement, which is summary and better at supplying more mulch for the fields than at providing justice.

Almost unique amongst the residents of Artan-Ak, Kalet-Am is fiercely loyal to Thakok-An. He believes the lie that Kalid-Ma speaks to her. To please her is to please Kalid-Ma... and to please Kalid-Ma is to one day rise to a position of real power.

Counterculture:

The Resistance

Orek

Orek (CG male human **gladiator**) was once a gladiator in Kalidnay City. He was famous there; he survived a hundred fights and soaked the arena floor with the blood of his opponents.



NOT EVERYONE HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP SUCH A SOPHISTICATED PALATE. THEY SHOULD BE GRATEFUL.

Thakok-An was pleased. Orek gained fame and adoration and it rather went to his head. He dared to suggest that perhaps the bloodthirsty murder of unwilling humans for sport was a poor form of entertainment. Many other gladiators agreed, and many of the gladiators' wealthy fans were infatuated enough to go along with the idea.

The rebellion was short-lived and bloody; when it was over, the gladiators were herded into the arena and put to death. Except for Orek. Thakok-An broke his mind with magic and banished him to the ignominious life of a farmer in Artan-Ak.

He is widely assumed to be incapable of anything more complex than picking crops and remembering to feed himself... but that hasn't been true for some time. Orek is alert, observant, and ready to seize any opportunity to work against Thakok-An. He hasn't made anyone else aware of this fact yet; he's been watching and he's well aware of how thoroughly Thakok-An's spies have compromised the Resistance. He's whittling their numbers down through stealthy murder and when he's satisfied that it's safe, he will contact the *real* Resistance members.

Cinta, The Dark of the Moon

Cinta (N human female **mage** with 15 Strength and proficiency with a spear) is eighteen years old and one of Domitian's house guards. She is also one of the most powerful mages in Kalidnay. Very few members of the resistance know this latter fact; she trusts no one, not even her own parents, with the knowledge. It would only get them hurt.

She is self-taught, and apart from some small, early mistakes, has worked out how to wield arcane power without defiling the land around her. Her main goal is to keep learning, working out spells that she writes in code, in knots tied in cords and in patterns painted on the ceiling of her bedroom.

Magic is a secondary passion for Cinta. She focuses on organising the Resistance in town enough to steal and hoard food that can be shared out when times are leaner than normal, and on keeping up friendships with the caravan guards who come in from the city so that she maintains a good flow of information about what goes on there.

Tiris

Tiris (CN male half-elf **psionacist** - see Monsters) is an exile and a murderer. He's not resisting Thakok-An's power because of how she wields it. He just hates her. An expert with psionics, daggers, and secrets, Tiris passes as a storyteller and, of course, a farm worker; nobody survives in Artan-Ak by telling pretty stories so he bides his time, and waits.

Tiris is Thakok-An's half-brother. They share the same elven father, though neither of them knows him except by name and reputation. Thakok-An became a Templar, Tiris' mother died of drinking dirty water. Thakok-An has the ear of a Sorcerer-King, Tiris lost three fingers on his left hand for stealing. The unfairness of their outcomes drives Tiris wild with jealousy. He would take Thakok-An's place if he could, but failing that he will settle for seeing her brought low enough that she has to grovel at his feet.

Rumours

Kalidnay City is about to attack. The city has grown weary of the restless, recalcitrant population, and will kill them all and replace them with slave labour. Thakok-An thinks about this frequently, but having somewhere the resistance think is safe is too useful to her to want to really shake things up.

So-and-so is a Templar spy. There's an even chance this is true. This usually results in the Resistance causing a nasty accident.

So-and-so is a Defiler. This is almost certainly not true but usually results in the overseers and guards arresting and executing the accused. Better safe than sorry.

Someone is killing off Resistance members - secretly. True. This refers to Orek's as yet unsuspected string of murders.

Overseer Astareh bathes in the blood of virgins. Partially correct. She eats them. And other people.

It's not safe to go near the Bone Garden at night. Absolutely true. There is a small pack of ghouls that roams the silt near the Bone Garden.

Sometimes, at night, the screams of the people Thakok-An has hurt echo through the desert. There is a banshee - Uran-Tor - out in the wastes, so yes, this is true.

Locations

2a. The Bone Garden

The Bone Garden sprawls on the northern edge of town, huge heaps of organic matter slowly rotting down to mulch to fertilise the fields. The waste heaps are a heady mix of human waste, decaying wood, vegetation, and bodies.

The Bone Garden is where every corpse in Artan-Ak – and most of Kalidnay City – ends up. A small crew of workers with strong stomachs, and health too poor to work the fields, spend their days hacking up meat and grinding down bones. Most of them consume a huge amount of *nakwa* to keep themselves oblivious to the details of their existence.

The Bone Garden is a dangerous place; the refuse piles are home to colonies of **rot grubs** and **giant centipedes**, and the Silt Sea beyond is the territory of a pack of **ghouls** that creep in every night to feast on what meat they can find, including any workers foolish enough to be in the Bone Garden after dark. It's also one of the few places in Artan-Ak that offers privacy... so in spite of the dangers, any number of dark deals are made, and secrets traded there, night after night.

2b. The Fields

During the day, the verdant fields teem with life; more than half the population of Artan-Ak works them, digging and planting and picking. Many of the rest work as overseers and guards, walking amongst the neat rows of crops and ensuring workers are honest and productive.

Artan-Ak runs on farming, and agriculture here is well managed. There is always something growing, something ready to harvest, and some land lying fallow, and crops are rotated regularly to keep the land healthy.

The fields are irrigated by a system of canals that carry water from reservoirs deep underground. These are maintained with an almost religious zeal, and every worker on the farms knows it's an emergency if so much as a few drops are spilled. Using that water for

anything but its intended purpose – washing dust and sweat from skin, sipping to soothe a parched throat – is punished with enough lashes to keep an adult hurt and healing for weeks.

Sandstorms are the greatest threat to Artan-Ak's crops. They are less common here than elsewhere in Kalidnay, but a few times each year they rip through the town and destroy a substantial amount of crops. This does not lessen Kalidnay City's demands; it just means Artan-Ak goes hungry.

2c. Kiss-of-Shade-and-Cool-Skin

Alcohol is almost unknown in Artan-Ak. Brewing is a waste of water and dehydration kills. When people want to slough off the hardships of another day under the boiling sun they go to the basement of a basket weaver's shop on the east side of the town for the simple pleasures of music, conversation, and the powerful hallucinogen *nakwa*. *Nakwa* is made



from the flesh of two different desert cacti and a certain type of weed that springs up amongst the food crops and has to be harvested secretly.

It throws users into vivid, waking, dreams, always similar in form. They live, for a brief while, in a land where everything is green and fresh, where water drips from the sky and mist clings to the grass in the morning. The dreams always show users the same images... and coming down from the drug always means watching the fall of civilisation: seas boil down to silt, cities fall, and deserts swallow up the fertile land. Is it history? Is it just that, by now, every user knows what to expect and dreams accordingly? Is it, as some brave souls dare to claim, tapping into the memories of the Sorcerer King Kalid-Ma himself?

It's a very welcome break from the mundane, and it comes at a very low price. *Nakwa* is not physically addictive but the escape it provides is hard to resist.

Kiss-of-Shade-and-Cool-Skin is run by **Metaira** (NG human **Kalidnay commoner**) but not at a profit. She enjoys the community and the feeling of being important to people. Only she and her mute teenage son **Balos** (CG human **Kalidnay commoner**) know the secret of producing *nakwa*, and they have no intention of revealing it.

2d. The Artan-Sar Spring

The spring in the centre of town is a microcosm of Artan-Ak. Beautiful, tantalising, and heavily defended. Trapped behind a high stone wall and watched over by no fewer than six guards at any given time. People walk by just to hear the splashing of the water behind the wall, and the line for water, doled out once a day, is the best place to catch rumours and gossip.

Approaching the Town

When the characters first approach Artan-Ak, read or paraphrase the following:

Artan-Ak is a mosquito-bite; a mud-brick farming town squatting under the baleful red sky. Refuse heaps form mounds outside the town, organic matter rotting down to compost to feed the hungry fields. But it is green, like nowhere else in Kalidnay. Fields of crops, carefully irrigated by pumps and canals that wring water out of the depths of the earth, surround the houses and the air here is fresh. The town is deathly quiet, but the fields teem with life: workers – mostly human – clean irrigation channels and pick crops under the blistering sun, overseen by muscular men and women with bone armor, obsidian flails, and little patience.

House Occupants

If the characters explore a residence, roll 1d20 and consult the following table to determine its occupants:

d20	Occupant
1-2	None
3-4	"Parasites"
5-14	Worker family
16-17	Tradesperson family
18-19	Overseer and family
19-20	Resistance members

Parasites

"Parasites" is the less than affectionate term for those in Artan-Ak who cannot work. A house of "parasites" contains 1d4-1 adults (N human **Kalidnay commoners**), injured or diseased, and 1d4-1 children (CN human non-combatants). There is nothing of value in these homes; all but the most essential furniture has already been sold, and the children will be the next to go. Residents are suspicious of intruders and even more suspicious of charity, though they will accept it. They know that their choices are either to recover enough to work or to die, and to die means to fertilise the fields.

If there are 0 adults and 0 children, characters find 1d4 corpses (adults and/or children) who

have recently died by suicide (usually either poison or bloodletting).

Workers

By day most workers' houses are empty. There is a 10% chance that one is occupied by an elderly person (N human **Kalidnay commoner**) minding 2d6 children (CN human non-combatants) aged under eight years old (children of several local families), all of whom are relatively friendly to visitors. These are modest homes but well cared for, with obvious personal touches, like wall-paintings, woven decorations, and the like.

By night, there are 1d6+1 adults (N human **commoners**) and 1d4-1 children (CN human non-combatants). They are polite, but not friendly, and show immediate deference to characters who are armed or armoured. At the slightest sign that characters have magic *of any kind*, they are asked to leave. If they do not comply, a family member will run for an overseer and guards.

Tradesperson

The homes of tradespeople are slightly more luxurious than workers' housing. Some have two stories, and all have a central courtyard where business is done, where wares – pottery, baskets or fabrics woven from plant fibres, beverages extracted from desert cacti, stone or wooden tools – are sold, or services such as equipment repairs, or commission of a caravan to cross the desert – are provided. The house is occupied by 1d4 adults (LN human **Kalidnay commoners** with Charisma 14 and Intelligence 13), 1d4-1 children (CN human non-combatants) and 1d4-1 guards (N human **bandit**) each armed with a bone spear (1d6 piercing damage).

Characters with significant amounts of metal on their person are treated with excruciating obsequiousness ... and overcharged by a minimum of 200% for any purchases. Tradespeople and their families are friendly and welcoming, but extremely curious about newcomers, and will report any suspicious words or deeds to overseers within minutes of characters' departure.

Overseer

These dwellings are as close to luxury as Artan-Ak gets. They are well built, well-furnished with wares from Kalidnay City, and occupied by servants and guards as well as family members. At any time, there are 1d4 adult family members (NE human



KALIDNAY IS DESPERATELY DEPRIVED OF FOOD, WATER, LEATHER, METAL AND OTHER RESOURCES, BUT MAKES UP FOR IT IN THE NO DOUBT RELATED ABUNDANCE OF AMUSINGLY UNDERDRESSED GLADIATORS.

BLEAK KNOLL – No MAN’S LAND

It is mine, but only because there is no one to cede it to.

---Thakok-An

At the far north of Kalidnay, the desert gives way once again to land that can still support life. Cacti sprout from the sands and the earth around the small, rounded, hill hosts sparse grass and occasional trees.

Bleak Knoll is technically part of Thakok-An's domain, but in practical terms, it is far from Kalidnay City, and dangerous for city-folk. Between the Oled'ar ranchers, the Bone Runner elves, and the rumours of monsters beneath the mound, no one willingly ventures out to Bleak Knoll.

The Bone Runners

This group of elves roam the whole of Kalidnay but returns to Bleak Knoll for certain seasonal rituals and major events, like the rites that mark the transition from child to adult. They tolerate the presence of the Oled'ar family; the Bone Runners take their stock to Kalidnay City for sale, which gives them a plausible reason to be in the city, keeping an eye on the schemes of the humans.

It's a tense truce at best and if the Oled'ar so much as set foot on the knoll itself, there would be war.

Safei

Safei (N female **Bone Runner elf**) is the current leader of the Bone Runners. She is getting old, not as fast as she used to be. Soon it will be time for her to walk out into the desert to die, and her bones will join those of her ancestors, singing on the Bone Tree.

Except her sister's bones are not there. Uran-Tor's body is somewhere in the desert and her mournful spirit haunts the wasteland. Safei wants to achieve two things before she passes on to her rest. She wants to see Uran-Tor at peace... and she wants to ruin Thakok-An. Her sister's rest is her top priority, but she knows that humans broke the world, and the older she gets, the more inclined she is to finish the job. She doesn't know how yet, but she's sure the psionist the Oled'ar think they're hiding from her could do the job.

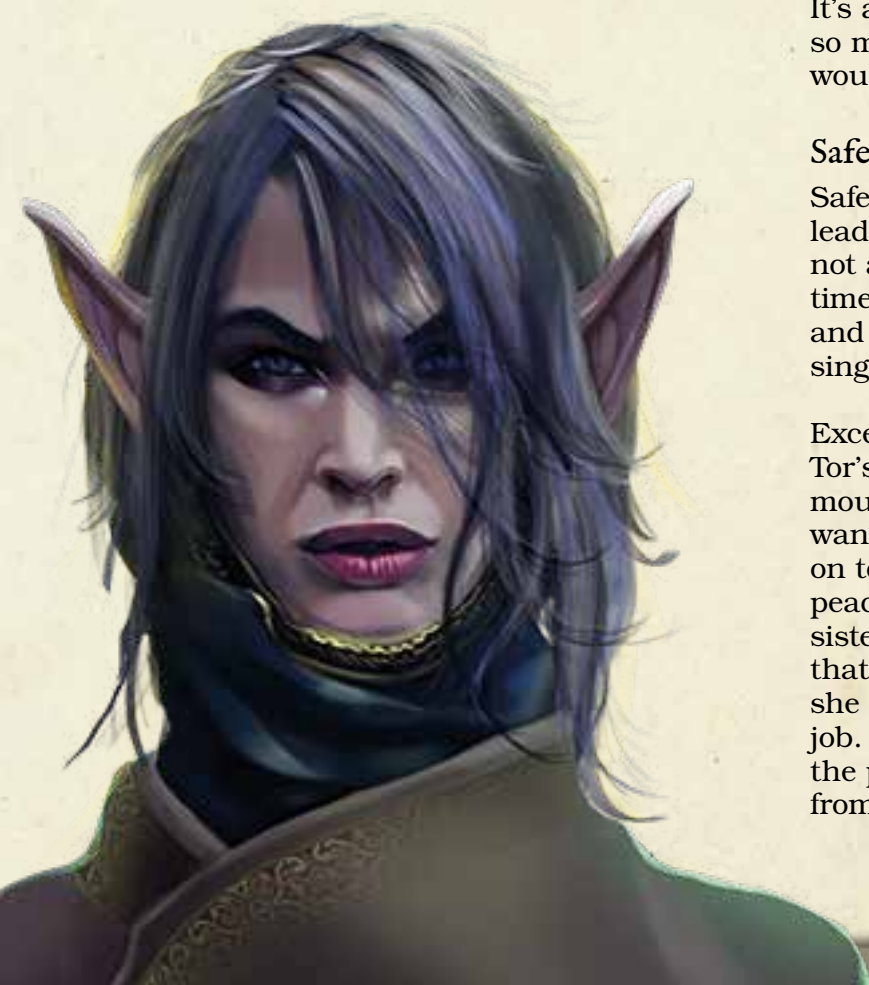
Kalidnay commoners), 1d4-1 children (CN human non-combatants), 1d6 servants (N human **Kalidnay commoners**) and 1 guard (NE human **thugs**) armed with an obsidian longsword (1d8/1d10 damage; Versatile) per adult family member present. Overseer families are initially welcoming, assuming visitors come from Kalidnay City. They will overlook many suspicious behaviours or lack of familiarity with local customs based on that assumption, but if they begin to suspect characters have any magic, they will quickly order the guards to 'arrest' them.

'Arrest' is a colourful local idiom which here means 'murder as brutally as possible.'

Resistance Members

From the outside, this appears to be a normal family home. Inside are 1d6+1 adults (CG human **spies** and **thugs**) 1d4-2 mages (NG human **apprentice wizards** – see *Volo's Guide to Monsters*) and 1d4-3 Templar spies (NE human **acolytes**) masquerading as resistance members.

Resistance members are on edge, keen to placate visitors and be left alone as quickly as possible. If characters convince them they are not allied with the overseers or Thakok-An, they will be welcomed. Resistance members make strong, reliable allies (unless one of them is a spy for Thakok-An, in which case Templars will arrive to 'investigate' in a couple of days).



Eldeyan

Eldeyan (CN male **Bone Runner elf**) is one of the few elves who goes into Kalidnay City. He sells **mrix** on behalf of the Oled'ar family, as well as doing a discreet trade in poisons, secrets, and assassinations. He is Thakok-An and Tiris' father. He doesn't know of Tiris' existence, but he keeps an eye on Thakok-An from afar. He is... proud of her ... after a fashion. Not her dedicated service to a human sorcerer, but her ability to lead, and preserve, Kalidnay since his death. He might be the only person in Kalidnay with any warm feelings towards her, and the only person who would stand between her enemies and her.

The other Bone Runners

There are approximately fifty other Bone Runners. All except the youngest children have mastered surviving in the desert and are capable fighters.

The Oled'ar Ranch

Only one human family is bold enough to live so far away from the other settlements. The Oled'ar are insular and do not welcome strangers. Thakok-An distrusts anyone who lives so far from her control; she would have done away with them years ago except that they breed and train the mighty **mrix** beasts

that draw merchant caravans, thus aiding in the movement of goods between Artan-Ak and Kalidnay City.

Thakok-An is right to be suspicious. The Oled'ar have powerful psionic talents in their bloodline. With inbreeding the only practical way to continue their lineage, that power is growing more and more concentrated with each generation.

The family values their privacy, mostly because they know Thakok-An will turn her attention to them one day, and destroy what she can't control. For the same reason, they stockpile the best weapons - and any magic items - they come across, to prepare for the fight they expect to face. Characters with magic items, good weapons or armor, or any substantial quantity of weapons, are likely to get a warmer than usual welcome at the Oled'ar ranch... and then be poisoned over dinner.

Their home is a rough, poorly maintained, assortment of farm buildings arranged at the foot of Bleak Knoll.

Oled'ar Ashari

Oled'ar Ashari (NE human female **druid**) is a weathered, muscular, woman in her forties, with laughter lines and bright, sparkling,

I WAS RATHER EXCITED, AS YOU CAN IMAGINE, WHEN I HEARD THE TALES OF A GIGANTIC GNOLL.

MY EVENTUAL DISAPPOINTMENT WAS ACUTE.

blue eyes. She is the Oled'ar most often seen in public; she occasionally even travels into Kalidnay City to buy the supplies the family can't grow or make themselves. While she can tolerate being around people other than her family, she doesn't like it. The presence of more than one or two strangers quickly makes her short-tempered and suspicious.

Oled'ar Ashari wants her family left alone. She is polite to characters who keep a respectful distance; she might even sell them beasts. Anyone who takes an interest in her, or her family, or Bleak Knoll in general, makes an enemy. And the Oled'ar's enemies die, quickly and unmourned. **Mrix** will eat anything.

Oled'ar Ashari takes charge of training the **mrix**. Every single one of the beasts in Kalidnay knows and obeys her, to the point that on her command, they will charge and trample her enemies.

Oled'ar Stryom

Oled'ar Stryom (NE human male **Kalidnay commoner**) has outlived every friend he ever had. He is almost a hundred years old and still hale and healthy. He takes it as a sign that he has some destiny yet to fulfil.

Oled'ar Stryom regards himself as the king of a very small domain, populated by his niece Oled'ar Ashari, his grandson Oled'ar Vit, and the **mrix**. He does not recognise Thakok-An's authority in the slightest. The plan to stockpile all possible weapons against her is a product of his paranoid mind. He is also an expert poisoner. He thinks of himself as a friendly and personable fellow but in reality, his conversational skills are rusty; attempts to 'talk' with people are a mix of rambling stories - which he expects to be received like they are words of wisdom - personal questions and absolutely irrational opinions.

Oled'ar Vit

Oled'ar Vit (TN male human **psionist**) is Oled'ar Ashari's youngest son. He is all of twenty years old, and a psionist of such power that he scares his family. He'd scare them much more if they didn't feel they had him fully under their control. Oled'ar Vit has never met, or even seen, a human he wasn't related to, and he has been taught to fear them; if he ever encounters them, the best course of action is to swiftly murder them, unless his family says otherwise.

It also helps that while Oled'ar Vit's mind is strong, his body is not. He doesn't have his grandfather and mother's robust constitution. He is fragile and prone to illnesses and spends most of his life asleep.

If Thakok-An ever learned of Oled'ar Vit's existence, she would not hesitate to destroy the Oled'ar, root and branch.

The rest of the family

There are about a dozen other members of the Oled'ar family living at the ranch, mostly adults. All are NE human **Kalidnay commoners**.

Beneath the Mound

Bleak Knoll is older than Kalidnay City, older than Kalid-Ma, and older than the concept of Sorcerer Kings. Opinions differ on what exactly is underneath the hill but virtually everyone in Kalidnay has some personal theory. Some of the most common are:

A portal to another world. A desperate hope prevails throughout Kalidnay that they are not really cut off from the rest of existence; that there is something beyond the Silt Sea, whether that is the rest of their world, or somewhere else. There is no evidence that this is true, but Bleak Knoll attracts stories like refuse attracts flies.

Relics of a 'green age.' Some believe that Bleak Knoll is the dirt mounded over an ancient tomb, dating back to a legendary time before Kalidnay and its world turned to arid desert. If this were true, there would be untold riches below the hill, for the ancients were said to be expert engineers, and to have access to the rarest of resources, metal.

A sleeping giant. Others think that whatever rests below Bleak Knoll is not dead, only sleeping. Based on the hill's size, 'some sort of giant' is a favoured theory.

Locations

3a. The Oled'ar Ranch

The Oled'ar Ranch does not welcome visitors.

3b. Bone Tree

The Bone Tree is the only sign that Bleak Knoll is Bone Runner territory, unless the elves are present. They visit every solstice and equinox, and there is a 1 in 10 chance (roll 1d10) that they are present at any other time.

Approaching Bleak Knoll

When the characters first approach Bleak Knoll, read or paraphrase the following:

It's no paradise, but Bleak Knoll shows signs of life. The ground is less parched here; dry grasses rustle and cacti and twisted trees spear up out of the ground. The low, mud-brick buildings of a farmhouse and outbuildings curve around the west of the hill but the knoll itself is pristine, marked only by a single bare tree in the centre. The tree makes its own music; the hollow bones suspended from the branches sing in every hot gust of wind.

There is nothing inherently dangerous about the Bone Tree. Most of the bones suspended from the branches are long and slender, marking them as elvish; some are animal, and some are human. Apart from making eerie, sombre music when the wind catches them, they are utterly mundane. However, the tree is an important site to the elves, bearing the bones of their dead, beloved companion creatures - mostly birds or jackals, and the occasional human they have adopted or befriended. Defiling it in any way will earn the enmity of the Bone Runners, which makes the Kalidnay Desert an even more unfriendly place than usual.

3c. The Shaft

On the north side of the hill, and therefore unseen by most, there is a cave at the base of the slope. Within the cave, there is a passage that leads steeply downwards. About 30 feet down, it is blocked by a rockfall, but not before the walls show signs of being deliberately worked, lined with stones that have been weathered over the year and still bearing the traces of ancient paint.

Is there anything under Bleak Knoll? That is for the DM to decide. Any of the rumours above could be true, or there could be something else there entirely. Only you can choose; do you want players to find a way out of Ravenloft? Or bring large amounts of metal or magic items to Kalidnay? Or do you just want to tempt them with the hope of such a thing?

HAVE YOU EVER TRIED TO DECORATE A TREE WITH BONES? IT'S ACTUALLY QUITE HARD TO DO IT TASTEFULLY. I FOUND THE BONE RUNNERS' ATTEMPT TO BE QUITE CHARMING. POSTMODERN, EVEN.

Appendix A:

Kalidnay Random Encounters

2d8 roll	Encounter
2	Desiccated corpse
3	Animated corpses
4	Merchant caravan
5	Sandstorm
6	Psionic sandstorm
7	Desert shrieks
8	Burrower serpents
9	Psychic mirage
10	Lightning storm
11	Elven hunters
12	Elven bard
13	Colossal skeleton
14	Templar patrol
15	Defiled area
16	Defiler

2. Desiccated Corpse

It might almost be a sand dune, except that it doesn't shift and disperse as the hot wind touches the desert. As you draw close and grains of sand scatter off its surfaces, you see the shape off the path for what it is; the corpse of a traveller just like you, leather-clad and wrapped against the wind. The desert - or something within it - has leached the life from its body, leaving a withered, desiccated form.

The corpse carries:

- 25 ceramic pieces (equivalent value to gold pieces, in Kalidnay only).
- An empty waterskin.
- Earrings, necklace, and bracelets of red and gold scales (worth 60 ceramic pieces each, or 200 cp as a set).
- A thin clay tablet cracked into three

pieces. A message is written on it in a cypher.

There are no signs of any injuries, wounds, or other cause of death, but a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check determines that death occurred several weeks ago.

The message can be decoded with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check, or translated by any of the resistance members in Artan-Ak or Kalidnay City. It reads:

Vartek An-Satesh is a Templar spy. Neutralise or remove. Abandon current stratagem immediately.

3. Animated Corpses

A cluster of figures lurch across the trackless desert towards you, the sun behind them showing them as nothing more than shadows against its blazing scarlet. They stumble, perhaps deranged by thirst, or heatstroke... But no. As they draw closer to you, you see that such concerns are behind them. Skins turned to leather by the dry heat, pulled back from yellowed teeth and empty eye sockets, these people have been dead for years.

The animated, desiccated, dead are **Kalidnay mummies**. At the DM's discretion, they may be encountered in any number from a couple of ill-prepared travellers to an entire undead caravan; do what you need to in order to challenge your players. This is Ravenloft, and Ravenloft is never kind.

4. Merchant Caravan

It has been a long time since you heard laughter, but it rises up ahead of you as welcome as the sound of water bubbling from a spring. Sheltered in the shade of a rock outcropping are almost enough people to be called a village; guards armoured in leather and armed in bone; merchants in veils and headdresses; servants in cheaper versions of the same. There is food and water being shared, and even the huge, reptilian beasts, recently unhitched from their wagons, seem at ease.

The merchant caravan is made up of 2d4+1 covered wagons, each drawn by an enormous reptile called a **mrlix** (see Monsters). Along

with the wagons are 1d4 merchants (N human **Kalidnay commoners**), 3 **guards** for each wagon, 3 laborers (drivers, mrix tenders, porters; **Kalidnay commoners**) for each wagon, and 1 personal servant for each merchant.

Caravans travel much more safely through the desert than individuals; anything not scared off by their numbers is dispatched by the guards. A merchant may allow characters to travel with the caravan in exchange for labour, extra protection, or services. If, however, a party gives them any cause to be suspicious, most caravans will drive them off into the desert - probably taking their water and supplies to make sure the party doesn't live long enough for revenge. Particularly cold-blooded merchants might let the characters rest near their fire, then kill them while they sleep.

5. Sandstorm

As the sun sinks and the moon rises, the desert transforms from searing heat to bone-chilling cold. Only the light of a campfire and the stars above give any relief from the jet-black wasteland of the desert by night. Until, that is, the stars go out. The wind rises, and the insistent, quickening, whispers of a million grains of displaced sand promise you a swift, cold death, unless you find shelter from the impending sandstorm.

Characters who have camped in some kind of shelter - a canyon, beside a rocky plateau, etc. - are relatively safe from the storm and will not be physically harmed. There is a 25% chance for each character that one of their possessions is ruined by the storm. Roll 1d6 on the **Equipment Damage** table to determine what is ruined:

d6 roll	Equipment Damage
1	Water
2	Rations
3	Non-magical weapon
4	Non-magical armor
5	Non-magical piece of equipment (player's choice)
6	Non-magical piece of equipment (DM's choice)

Characters who don't have shelter have half a minute (5 rounds) to prepare before the sandstorm is upon them. Their preparations offer bonuses to their Constitution saving throws. Ultimately, the DM should decide what bonuses to apply, but some suggestions are:

- Apply veils, masks, or other coverings to protect their eyes, nose, and mouth (1 action; +1 to saving throw).
- Dig a ditch or make a bank to shelter in/behind (3 actions; +2 on saving throw).
- Physically shelter another character (1 action; -2 on own saving throw, +2 on sheltered character's saving throw).
- Create magical shelter e.g. *rope trick*, *Leomund's tiny hut* (as per spell casting time, no save required).

When the sandstorm arrives, each character must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw each round they are exposed; failure results in them taking 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage, or half as much on a successful save.



ONLY A FOOL WOULD REFUSE TO SEEK SHELTER FROM A KALIDNIAN SANDSTORM. THERE IS A MALEVOLENCE TO THOSE WINDS. I HAVE SEEN IT.

6. Psionic Sandstorm

As the sun sinks and the moon rises, the desert transforms from searing heat to bone-chilling cold. Only the light of a campfire and the stars above give any relief from the jet-black wasteland of the desert by night. Until, that is, the stars go out. The wind rises, and the insistent, quickening, whispers of a million grains of displaced sand promise you a swift, cold death, unless you find shelter from the impending sandstorm.

Unlike its natural counterpart, a **psionic sandstorm** (see **Monsters**) is intelligent and malevolent. It will find its way into any shelter, and methodically destroy any intelligent life it finds there, feeding on the intellect it sucks from its victims.

If not dispersed by reducing it to zero hit points, the psionic sandstorm moves on once it has drained 6 points of Intelligence from its victims.

7. Desert Shrikes

You sit back, as close to sated from your repast as anyone can be, on lean rations. The twittering of birds is cheerful and innocent - and also completely unfamiliar. It goes quickly from cheerful tweeting to shrill, piercing, shrieks. The red sky turns black with birds - tiny, long-beaked things, that would be sweet if they weren't flying straight towards whatever exposed skin they can find.

Attracted by food, refuse, and soft fleshy prey, the characters have drawn the attention of a **swarm of desert shrikes**: tiny, carnivorous birds out for eyeballs, tongues, and anything else they can snatch. The shrikes use the same stat block as a **swarm of bats**, but replace **Echolocation** with **Keen Smell**.

8. Burrower Serpents

Hissssssss.

That's what it sounds like when you put your foot down and what you thought was solid ground crumbles away underneath you as grains of sand rush away. But there's still something where the ground used to be. Something glistening and sinuous... and it's moving.

The characters have intruded upon the structurally unsound home of a nest of 1d6 **burrower serpents** (see **Monsters**).

9. Psychic Mirage

You smell water. The unmistakable fresh scent of clean water. And you feel its presence, too. The air is... softer, less arid and harsh. You even hear the gentle lapping of a current. Through the heat haze, you can almost see it ahead of you: slender trees, blue water like a jewel in the red desert. An oasis.

Needless to say, this is not a real oasis. The characters have encountered a **psychic mirage** (see **Monsters**).



THE THING ABOUT A MIRAGE, IS THAT YOU ALWAYS SEE IT COMING.

ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT. YOU'VE MADE YOUR POINT. I'LL STAY AWAY FROM JOKES.

INDEED.

10. Lightning Storm

The sound of thunder rumbles overhead as though some great monster is tearing the sky apart. Again and again, it rolls and cracks... and then comes the lightning. It strikes hard, a little way ahead of you and the dull sand is transmuted to shimmering glass. It strikes again, closer this time. A strike like that could end a life, and there are more piercing down from the sky with every passing second.

Characters must make a DC 14 Dexterity save every minute they are out in the dry storm. If they fail, they are struck by lightning, taking 16 (3d10) lightning damage. How near or far the characters are from cover is the DM's decision, but assuming that they are five minutes' run, reduced by one minute (minimum one minute) for every point above 10 rolled on a Wisdom (Survival) check.

11. Elven Hunters

Plumes of dust spring up from the sand, accompanied by the rhythmic thunder of feet rapidly closing in on your position. The spindle-limbed creatures racing across the desert must be elves: they have the grace, the slenderness, the almost ethereal delicacy, but they are wind-burned, suntanned, lean and wiry as serpents. With longbows on their shoulders and spears and staves strapped to their backs, they look deadly - and they are coming your way.

In theory, the Bone Runner elves have no interest in a group of travellers. They are a hunting party - but there is very little prey in the desert. Pickings are slim, and while they wouldn't eat humanoid meat, there's nothing wrong with blowing off some steam chasing them through the desert until they take a spear to the skull or drop dead of exhaustion.

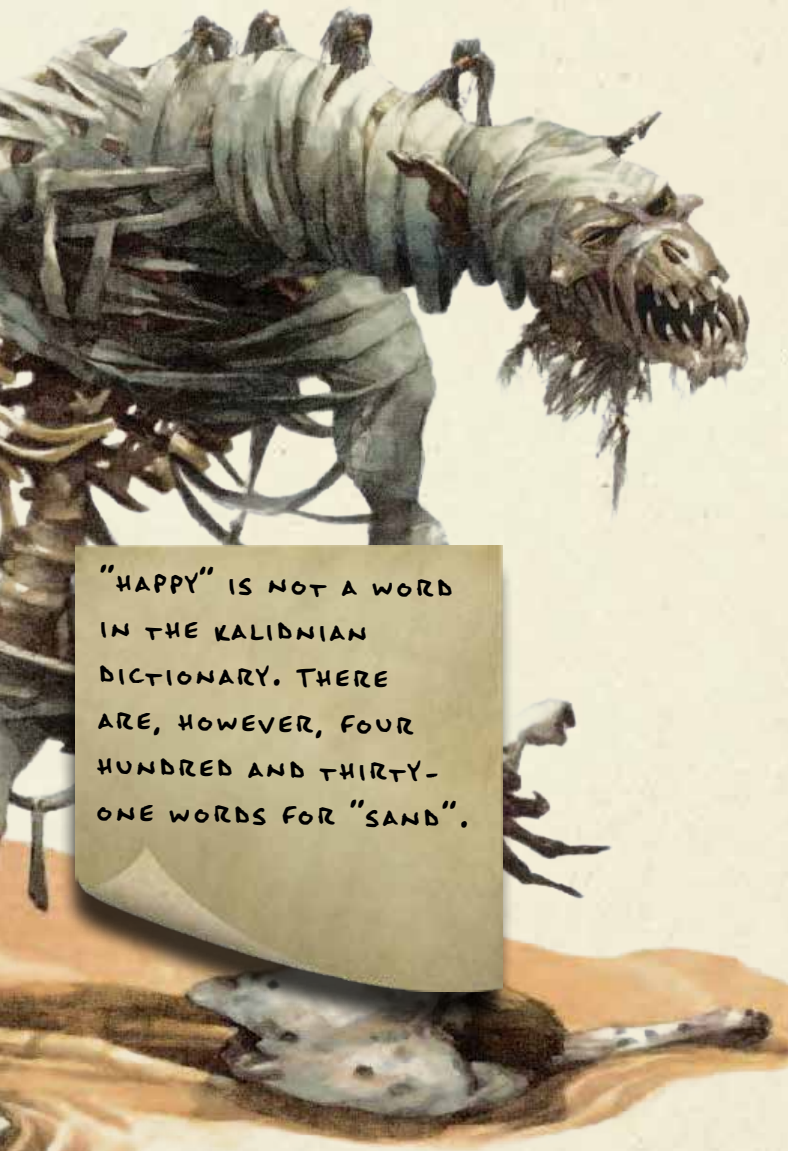
11. Elven Bard

The figure in front of you, perched on a spire of rock and baking in the sun, is long and gangly, marked as elven mostly by the delicate length of their ears. In leather leggings and vest, their tanned body covered in tattoos, their ears and face adorned with sharp, obsidian piercings, they are not a welcoming sight. But they are playing music, the wispy sound coming from a bone flute pressed to their lips.

This androgynous figure is one of the Bone Runners' few bards. They travel from the desert to the settlements, trading the weapons and plants - many narcotic, all poisonous to some degree - that they grow. As lethal as the bard can be, they are also an excellent source of rumour, secrets, and forbidden substances.

The bard can provide:

- **Elven weapons** (quarterstaves, longbows, and spears; prices as per the PHB, but replacing gp with ceramic pieces).
- **Poisons:**
 1. A sticky, black substance used to coat weapons; the first time the wielder makes a successful attack, the target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be Poisoned for 10 minutes; on the second successful attack, the saving throw is made at DC 13; after the



"HAPPY" IS NOT A WORD
IN THE KALIDNIAN
DICTIONARY. THERE
ARE, HOWEVER, FOUR
HUNDRED AND THIRTY-
ONE WORDS FOR "SAND".

second successful attack, the weapon is clean. 20 ceramic pieces per dose.

2. A pale green poison designed to be ingested. A creature who drinks the poison must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. The creature takes 30 poison damage, halved on a successful save. 35 ceramic pieces per dose.
 3. A greyish powder designed to be ingested. This is designed to slowly poison a victim over time. One dose can be administered each day, requiring a successful DC 14 Constitution save. Every third failed save lowers the victim's Constitution by 1 point. A victim who reaches 0 Constitution dies. 5 ceramic pieces per dose.
- **Information.** The bard knows three rumours from Artan-Ak, and three from
 - **Kalidnay City.** There is no monetary price for these; the bard will trade one piece of information for another.

12. Colossal Skeleton

Bones jut out of the sand like a pale forest. The ribs, spine, tail, and skull of some enormous beast, bigger than houses, are splayed out before you. Under the light of the red sun, it almost glows.

This enormous skeleton is a figurative gold mine - or, in Kalidnay, a ceramic mine. Bone is used for tools, weapons, and armour... and cutting and picking chunks of this bone pile could be lucrative.

Every hour of labour allows a character to harvest 100 ceramic pieces worth of bone. Every hour of time spent this way also requires that characters drink an extra 2 pints of water. A maximum of 10,000 ceramic pieces worth of bone can be harvested in this manner.

13. Templar Patrol

"Get off the road!"

The term 'road' is an inaccurate description of the relatively stable, packed dirt, you're walking on, but the meaning is clear. So is the purpose; the half dozen humans behind you - burly, sun-weathered folk with bone breastplates, ceremonial headdresses, and obsidian bladed spears - need the full width of the path for themselves.

These travellers are a group of Templars en-route from Kalidnay City to Artan-Ak. The only other people who make the journey are caravans moving food and supplies from one place to the next. A group of adventurers, especially if they are strangely armed and armoured, is highly suspicious. The Templars have many questions for the party (who they are, why they are on the road, etc.) and any misstep will lead to combat and a return to Kalidnay in ropes and fetters, or maybe even a quick death at the side of the road.

If defeated, the Templars each have the following:

- an obsidian spear.
- ceremonial headdresses worth 50 ceramic pieces (although they cannot be sold anywhere in Kalidnay).
- wood and bead jewellery worth 20 ceramic pieces.

14. Defiled Area

You're traversing some high ground, a spine of rock that overlooks the endless sea of sand, when you see it. A perfect circle of lifeless ground. Hard, grey, dirt with - of all the unexpected sights - the bleached skeleton of a tree reaching up out of it like a clawed hand.

This circle of dead ground, 30 feet in diameter, is the aftermath of a piece of powerful defiling magic (see **Spells & Items**). The area is now magically, as well as physically, dead.

- Rituals take 10 minutes longer than usual to cast.
- Cantrips require a first level spell slot to cast.
- All other spells require a spell slot one level higher than normal.

There are advantages and disadvantages to loitering in this area. No other creature will willingly venture into it. It is therefore safe from all other desert predators, including powerful creatures like Palik and Uran-Tor. However, spending more than an hour there is emotionally draining; it leads to restless sleep that night, weariness, and lethargy. At the end of the first long rest after visiting the defiled area, each character must make a DC 13 Constitution save. If they succeed, they benefit from a long rest as normal. If they fail, they do not.

15. Defiler

The ground is the grey of ash and cinders, cracked like a giant fist punched down onto the desert. At the centre of the lifeless circle, two crouched figures cling to each other for dear life.

The two are a sorcerer newly come into her powers, and a former companion, fleeing Kalidnay City before the Templars can catch her. While fighting off some desert threat - elves, undead, or desert wildlife - she unknowingly pulled on the power of the land, and her companion... who is now a dry, lifeless husk. The sorcerer (N human female **apprentice wizard**) is frightened for her life and attacks if the characters approach, but can be talked down with relevant ability checks. If characters kill her, they can take her 3d10 ceramic pieces and a half-full waterskin.

Appendix B: Spells & Items

Magic in Kalidnay is unique amongst all of the domains of Ravenloft. The land's devastation is part of its curse and cannot be circumvented. On the contrary, magic is a trap that can actively damage the land further, sucking the remaining life from it. While magic is more limited and dangerous in Kalidnay than elsewhere, some compensation can be found in the form of psionic talents, which are commonplace here.

The Limitations of Magic

Any magic that creates food, water, or plants simply does not work in Kalidnay. This is part of the land's curse, and the Dark Powers are stronger than any mortal spellcaster. Spellcasters who have such spells prepared may *attempt* to cast them, and the spell slot used is expended, but spells labelled ineffective have (predictably) no effect.

The list of spells that are ineffective, or altered in effect, in Kalidnay includes:

- **control weather:** cannot increase the likelihood of precipitation
- **create food and water:** ineffective
- **create or destroy water:** can only destroy water, not create.
- **druidcraft:** cannot be used to "instantly make a flower blossom, a seed pod open, or a leaf bud bloom."
- **goodberry:** berries each heal 1 hit point, but do not cause the user to feel sated
- **maelstrom:** ineffective
- **plant growth:** ineffective
- **purify food and drink:** ineffective
- **tidal wave:** ineffective
- **tsunami:** ineffective
- **wall of water:** ineffective
- **watery sphere:** ineffective
- **wish:** cannot be used to simulate any of the spells on this list, nor can a *wish* create food or water, or improve the environment in any way

The DM is strongly encouraged to add to this list any other spells which would allow characters to, for example, conjure food or water, avoid hunger and thirst, create or enhance plant life, or alter weather, from third-party publishers or new D&D releases.

This limitation also applies to clerics' Divine Intervention ability. While in Kalidnay, it cannot mimic any spells or effects that are ordinarily prohibited within the domain.

The same conditions apply to magic items. Any item which offers characters a way to avoid the constant threat of hunger, thirst, or ecological disaster simply will not function while in Kalidnay. You are encouraged to respond to your players' desperate attempts to bypass this rule with delighted cackling that continues just a little too long to be comfortable.

Defiling

Defiling is what made Kalidnay and broke the world from which Kalidnay came. Defiling

refers to the act of drawing power from living creatures, or the land itself, as fuel for arcane magic. It is powerful, easy, and terribly dangerous. A single powerful spell can kill a human, and land that is so Defiled is dead forever.

The deaths of thousands of people in Kalidnay, when the city transitioned to Ravenloft, was an expression of Kalid-Ma's powerful defiling magic. Now that Kalidnay is within the mists, defiling is even more dangerous. The destruction of a single stretch of fertile land could jeopardise the food supply of hundreds, even thousands, of people.

Any mage can be a Defiler; even if they've spent their whole life as a 'Preserver' (one who does not use defiling magic), temptation or fear could overcome them at any time. For this reason, Thakok-An does not suffer arcane magic users to live in her domain.

Defiling in Play

Defiling magic is an option available for any arcane spellcaster (wizards, sorcerers, and bards). It is a choice that must be made whenever a magic-user casts a spell more powerful than a cantrip.

Any spell cast with Defiling magic uses a spell slot one level lower than normal:

2nd level spells are cast with 1st level slots; 3rd level spells with 2nd level slots, etc.

Spells can still be cast using higher-level slots than necessary, with whatever benefits this conveys for the spell (e.g. an *invisibility* spell can be cast with a 1st level spell slot - or cast with a 2nd level slot for an extra target).

1st level spells still require at least a 1st level spell slot, but the spell takes effect as if cast using a 2nd level slot.

However, the consequences are dire:

Defilers can choose whether to defile the land, or other living creatures. Either:

- The Defiler despoils an area of land immediately around them, in a circle five feet in radius, plus five feet per level of the spell slot used (so a total radius of 15 feet for a second level spell slot), or
 - The Defiler draws power from the nearest living creature within 30 feet, with this creature taking 5 points of necrotic damage plus an additional five points per level of the spell slot used (so a total of 15 hit points for a second level spell slot).
- If the damage exceeds the creature's current hit points, the

remaining damage is applied to the next nearest creature, and so on.

- This damage cannot be healed in any way except by a long rest.
- If there are no living creatures within 30 feet, the Defiler draws power from the land instead (as above).

Player characters are absolutely at liberty to use Defiling magic while in Kalidnay. In fact, DMs are encouraged to offer them the option every time they cast a spell. If they are ever caught, or even suspected, they will be immediately reported to the Templars (or denizens of the domain might mete out their own 'justice'). Killing their friends and loved ones, and destroying the world, is not the only risk, however. The Dark Powers take notice of Defilers and provoke Dark Powers checks (see Appendix XX).

Appendix C: Psionics

Psionic talent is a way of life in Kalidnay. Every man, woman, and child has some wild talent but only a few are able to refine their gift into something more powerful. These talented individuals are akin to sorcerers in other lands; focused on a relatively small set of techniques, with a lot of skill in how they manage their power, making them adaptable and flexible.

REPRESENTING PSIONICS

In mechanical terms, psionics is a variant branch of sorcery, and the Psionicist is presented here as a Sorcerer subclass. The key difference is a substantially revised - and smaller - spell list to represent classic psionic powers like *telekinesis* and *telepathy*.

The flexibility of sorcery and the guarantee that it will 'play well' with other game rules make it a solid choice for representing psionics without inventing entirely new subsystems. You can, of course, use the ruleset of your choice (e.g. the Unearthed Arcana: Mystic) to represent psionics in your Kalidnay adventures

Psionic 'Spellcasting'

Psionicists cast spells similarly to other sorcerers. They use verbal, somatic, and material components as listed in a spell's description. However, they are flavoured rather differently. Verbal components are not spells but mantras and chants repeated to channel their thoughts, and somatic components are simple, focused, gestures rather than arcane hand-waving.

Psionicists differ from other casters in that they cannot use material components: they must use an arcane focus. Components with a gold piece value are still required if stated in a spell's description: they are assumed to be used as a different 'focus' for that particular psionic power

Psionicist (Sorcerer Subclass)

Psionicists' innate 'magic' comes from the power of their mind. This is so common in Kalidnay, a land relatively barren in terms of other magics, that very few ever consider its origin and outsiders' lack of psionic talent leads to mild pity.

Thakok-An would like to think that all of the truly gifted psionicists in Kalidnay are in her service as Templars and advisers, but there are a number of self-trained individuals outside her influence. Ironically, while psionics make a person very valuable to Thakok-An and her regime, they also make practitioners self-sufficient, well suited to surviving outside Kalidnay City.

Psionics Features

Sorcerer Level	Feature
1st	Variant Spell List, Awakened Mind, Intellectual Superiority, Mind Over Matter
6th	Dominion of the Mind
14th	Bodily Resilience
18th	Reserves of Power

Variant Spell List

Your trained mind gives you access to radically different techniques from others with innate power. When you take this subclass at 1st level, you replace the normal Sorcerer spell list with the Variant Spell List presented here.

Awakened Mind

Starting at 1st level, you can touch the minds of other creatures. You can telepathically speak to any creature you can see within 30 feet of you. You don't need to share a language with the creature for it to understand your telepathic utterances, but the creature must be able to understand at least one language.

Intellectual Superiority

You have refined your mind to ignore magics that attempt to shape your thoughts. When you take this subclass at first level, you cannot be spoken to telepathically unless you permit it, and you gain proficiency in Intelligence saving throws.

Mind Over Matter

Your disciplined mind extends to discipline over your body. At 1st level, your hit point maximum increases by 1, and it increases by 1 again whenever you gain a level in this class.

Dominion of the Mind

Starting at 6th level, your thoughts can't be read by telepathy or other means unless you allow it, and you have advantage on saving throws to resist being charmed or frightened.

Bodily Resilience

At 14th level, you gain the ability to push your body far past its normal levels of endurance. As a bonus action, you can remove from yourself a number of levels of exhaustion equal to your Constitution modifier (minimum 1).

You cannot use this ability again until you complete a long rest.

Reserves of Power

At 18th level, when you roll for initiative and have no sorcery points remaining, you regain 2 sorcery points.

Psionicist Variant Spell List

Cantrips

Blade Ward,
Chill Touch
Control Flames
Friends,
Mage Hand
Message
Minor Illusion
Primal Savagery
Shocking Grasp
True Strike
Vicious Mockery

1st level

Absorb Elements
Animal Friendship
Beast Bond
Cause Fear
Charm Person
Command
Detect Poison & Disease
Disguise Self
Dissonant Whispers
False Life
Hideous Laughter
Inflict Wounds
Jump
Longstrider
Mage Armor
Sanctuary
Silent Image
Sleep
Speak with Animals
Zephyr Strike

2nd level

Alter Self
Arcanist's Magic Aura (Nystul's
Magic Aura)
Barkskin
Beast Sense
Blindness/Deafness
Blur
Calm Emotions
Crown of Madness
Darkvision
Detect Thoughts
Enhance Ability
Enthrall
Hold Person
Levitate
Magic Mouth
Mind Spike
Pass Without Trace

Protection from Poison
See Invisibility
Spider Climb
Suggestion
Zone of Truth

3rd level

Aura of Vitality
Blink
Catnap
Clairvoyance
Counterspell
Enemies Abound
Fear
Haste
Hypnotic Pattern
Life Transference
Locate Object
Major Image
Nondetection
Protection from Energy
Sending
Slow
Tongues
Vampiric Touch
Water Breathing
Water Walk

4th level

Charm Monster
Compulsion
Confusion
Divination
Freedom of Movement
Greater Invisibility
Hallucinatory Terrain
Locate Creature
Phantasmal Killer
Stoneskin

5th level

Antilife Shell
Arcane Hand (Bigby's Hand)
Awaken
Commune
Contagion
Destructive Wave
Dominate Person
Dream, Enervation
Far Step
Geas
Hold Monster
Mislead
Modify Memory
Synaptic Static
Telekinesis
Telepathic Bond
Wall of Force

6th level

Circle of Death
Eyebite
Globe of Invulnerability
Heroes Feast
Harm
Mass Suggestion
Mental Prison
Move Earth
Programmed Illusion
Scatter
True Seeing

7th level

Crown of Stars
Divine Word
Force Cage
Mirage Arcane
Power Word Pain
Project Image
Sequester
Teleport
Whirlwind

8th level

Antimagical Field
Antipathy/Sympathy
Dominate Monster
Glibness
Mind Blank
Power Word Stun
Telepathy

9th level

Astral Projection
Foresight
Invulnerability
Power Word Kill
Psychic Scream
Time Stop
Weird



APPENDIX D: MONSTERS

Overview

In this chapter, you will find stat blocks and game information for a host of creatures unique to Kalidnay.

While many monsters are new, most NPCs use pre-existing stat blocks, for the DM's ease of reference. To better reflect the harsh nature of Kalidnay, you are strongly encouraged to give every NPC, especially humanoids, the maximum possible hit points instead of the average presented in the stat block. Creatures adjusted in this way pose a greater challenge to characters.

Remember also that if you are using a living human or elf in Kalidnay, you should add a Psionic Talent (see Kalidnay commoner) to their stat block. This has been done for you for new creatures presented here (e.g. Templars), but obviously not for any stat block to be drawn from existing game sources.

Thakok-An

Medium humanoid (half-elf), neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (magical breastplate, Dexterity)

Hit Points 160 (20d8 +70)

Speed 30 ft..

STR 10 (+0) **DEX** 14 (+2) **CON** 16 (+3)

INT 16 (+3) **WIS** 20 (+5) **CHA** 18 (+4)

Saving Throws Constitution +7, Intelligence +7, Wisdom +9, Charisma +8

Skills History +7 Insight +9 Intimidation +8 Investigation +7 Persuasion +8

Damage Resistances Bludgeoning, Piercing, or Slashing from non-magical weapons, Psychic

Damage Immunities Necrotic

Condition Immunities Charmed, Frightened, Stunned

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Truesight 30 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Draconic, Elvish

Challenge 15 (13,000 XP)

Telepathic Communication. Thakok-An can telepathically speak to any creature she can perceive within 30 feet of her. She doesn't need to share a language with the creature for it to understand her, but the creature must be able to understand at least one language.

Intellectual Superiority. Unless Thakok-An allows it, she cannot be spoken to telepathically, and her thoughts can't be read by telepathy or other means unless she allows it.

Legendary Resistance (3/day). If Thakok-An fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

Spell Breaker. When Thakok-An restores hit points to herself or an ally with a spell of 1st level or higher, she can also end one spell of her choice on that creature. The level of the spell ended must be equal to or lower than the level of the spell slot used to cast the healing spell.

Potent Spellcasting. Thakok-An adds 4 points to the damage dealt with any cantrip.

Spellcasting. As a powerful psionist and a cleric of Kalid-Ma, Thakok-An casts spells as a 10th level spellcaster. Charisma is her spellcasting ability (saving throw DC 17, +9 to spell attacks).



Cantrips (at will): *blade ward, guidance, mage hand, message, minor illusion, resistance, thaumaturgy*

1st level (4 slots): *absorb elements, bane, bless, command, cure wounds, detect magic, dissonant whispers, inflict wounds, magic missile, sanctuary, sleep*

2nd level (3 slots): *blindness/deafness, calm emotions, crown of madness, detect thoughts, hold person, invisibility, magic weapon, mind spike, nystul's magic aura, silence, spiritual weapon, zone of truth*

3rd level (3 slots): *aura of vitality, clairvoyance, counterspell, hypnotic pattern, dispel magic, enemies abound, fear, haste, magic circle, sending, spirit guardians, tongues*

4th level (3 slots): *arcane eye, compulsion, confusion, death ward, greater invisibility, leomund's secret chest, locate creature, phantasmal killer*

5th level (3 slots): *antilife shell, dominate person, far step, planar binding, scrying, synaptic static, teleportation circle*

Thakok-An also has higher-level spell slots which she can use, though she knows no spells of these levels.

6th level (2 slots): none

7th level (2 slots): none

8th level (1 slot): none

9th level (1 slot): none

Actions

Banish. Thakok-An can destroy undead, and banish fiends, fey, and celestials from her domain indefinitely. Creatures of CR 2 or lower are automatically destroyed/banished by this ability. Creatures with a higher CR must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw to avoid being destroyed/banished.

Reactions

See *Magic Items*

Lair Actions

While in the palace or ziggurat in Kalidnay City, Thakok-An can take Lair Actions as long as she is not incapacitated. Her Lair Actions call on the power of the sleeping sorcerer-king beneath the city.

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Thakok-An can take one of the following lair actions, or forgo using any of them in that round. She cannot use the same action in two consecutive rounds:

Kalid-Ma moves in his sleep, causing an earthquake that is centred on Thakok-An (but does not affect her). All creatures within 30 feet of her must make a DC 14 Dexterity save. Those who fail fall prone, are Stunned, and take 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage. Those who succeed take half damage, and are neither Prone nor Stunned.

Kalid-Ma senses the presence of powerful creatures in his palace and reaches out to claim their life force. 1d4 creatures of Thakok-An's choosing must make a DC 14 Charisma save, taking 14 (4d6) necrotic damage, or half as much damage on a successful save).

Kalid-Ma's dreams of apocalypse and power briefly leak out, causing fear and confusion. 1d4 creatures of Thakok-An's choosing must make a DC 14 Intelligence saving throw or lose their next action. Creatures affected can still use bonus actions, reactions and any additional actions (e.g. from *haste* or Action Surge) as normal.

Legendary Actions

Thakok-An can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Thakok-An regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

Move. Thakok-An moves up to her full movement without provoking attacks of opportunity.

Cantrip. Thakok-An casts a cantrip.

Spellcasting (Costs 2 actions). Thakok-An casts a spell of 1st or 2nd level.

Psychic suppression (Costs 3 actions). Thakok-An intensifies her own presence to impede another spellcaster's abilities. She chooses a spellcaster that she is aware of within 30 feet. That spellcaster receives -2 to spell attack rolls, and their targets receive +2 to saving throws against the spellcaster's magic, until the start of Thakok-An's next turn.

Psychic static (Costs 3 actions). Thakok-An emits psychic interference that impedes victims' concentration. All creatures within 30 feet that Thakok-An chooses make Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saves, as well as Constitution saves to maintain concentration on spells, with disadvantage until the start of Thakok-An's next turn.

Magic Items

Ceremonial Armor

Uncommon

Thakok-An's carefully crafted, leather and bone armor counts as a *breastplate +1*.

Staff of Kalid-Ma

Staff, legendary, requires attunement by an evil spellcaster

The ceremonial bone staff Thakok-An carries holds 8 charges. It allows her to cast the following:

- As a Reaction: *shield* or *counterspell*.
- Casting *shield* expends one charge.
- Casting *counterspell* as a 3rd level spell expends 2 charges.
- Additional charges can be expended to cast *counterspell* at a higher level (1 charge per additional level).

The staff regains all charges at dawn.

ASTAREH

Astareh is the predatory, cannibalistic overseer of Artan-Ak. She appears human; indeed, she is a spectacular beauty, with an hourglass figure, full, blood-red lips, shining hair, and bright, perfect teeth. Appearance is where her similarity to humanity ends.

Astareh

Medium aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 75 (10d10+20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 21 (+5) **DEX** 12 (+1) **CON** 13 (+1)

INT 14 (+2) **WIS** 14 (+2) **CHA** 15 (+2)

Skills Deception +5, Perception +5, Persuasion +5

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 15

Languages Common

Challenge CR 6 (2,300 XP)

Charm. One humanoid Astareh can see within 30 feet must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed for 1 day. The charmed target obeys Astareh's verbal commands. If the target suffers any harm or receives a suicidal command, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on a success. If the target successfully saves against the effect, or if the effect on it ends, the target is immune to Astareh's Charm for the next 24 hours.

Actions

Multiattack. Astareh makes three attacks: one with her bite and two with her claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (3d6 + 5) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (3d6 + 5) piercing damage.

Crushing Hug. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 36 (9d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 15) if it is a Medium or smaller creature. Until the grapple ends, the target takes 36 (9d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage at the start of each of Astareh's turns. Astareh can't make claw attacks while grappling a creature in this way.

BONE RUNNER ELVES

The elves of Kalidnay are not like the elves of other worlds. They are perfect survivors. They are tall, fleet-footed hunters, members of a tight-knit, insular community who protect one another at all costs, and synonymous with disaster and deceit to everyone who is not an elf.

Like most elven tribes in the world from which Kalidnay was plucked, the Bone Runners are nomads. Before the Silt Sea surrounded Kalidnay they were mostly rumours; they kept to themselves and meeting a group of elven hunters was as noteworthy as it was lethal. With less territory to roam and fewer creatures to hunt, the Bone Runners are now a constant threat to anything that sets foot outside the settlements of Kalidnay City and Artan-Ak. When times are especially harsh, they even raid human settlements. Elf raids are efficient, vicious, and deadly. The only saving grace is that they don't take slaves. Nothing but an elf can keep pace with them.

Humans only ever see the worst side of the elves. Amongst themselves, they are passionate, loving, and fiercely loyal. They are great creators, masters of dance and song, tellers of tales, and lovers of life. The Bone Runners live in the moment, to the point that they almost venerate 'the now'. Life in Kalidnay is short and harsh, and Bone Runner philosophy holds that the only thing that really matters is to live as fully and brightly as possible in that short time.

Desert Runners. Elves are built to run. Their stamina is legendary and put to good use. The Bone Runners can run for days without tiring, even entering the traditional elven trance as they run.

Short-lived. Elves in Kalidnay don't live as long as their kin elsewhere. Their lifespan is comparable to a human's. Of course, this is rarely apparent; almost no one dies of old age in Kalidnay.

Bone Runner Elf

Medium humanoid (elf), any alignment

Armor Class 15 (leather)

Hit Points 37 (5d8 + 15)

Speed 40 ft.

STR 11 (+0) **DEX** 18 (+4) **CON** 16 (+3)

INT 11 (+0) **WIS** 10 (+0) **CHA** 11 (+0)

Skills Acrobatics +7, Nature +3, Perception +3, Survival +3

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Elven

Challenge CR 2 (450 XP)

Elf Run. A Bone Runner elf can run continuously for a number of days equal to their Constitution modifier (minimum 1), covering 60 miles each day. They can use their **Trance** ability while running. When the **Elf Run** ends, the Bone Runner elf cannot use it again for a full day.

Fey Ancestry. Bone Runner elves have advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and cannot be put to sleep by magical means.

Trance. Bone Runner elves do not sleep. Instead, they meditate, semi-conscious, for 4 hours per day. They may do this while on an

Actions

Multiattack. The Bone Runner elf makes two attacks with their longbow.

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

BURROWER SERPENTS

There aren't a lot of animals in Kalidnay. The ones that are still there are well-adapted to a murderous environment and too mean to be hunted.

And that's how you get burrower serpents; snakes that dwell beneath the desert, chewing and burrowing through rock and sand, carving tunnels that eventually, inevitably, collapse and plunge unwary travellers into a pit of angry, offended, serpents.

At least they're not poisonous.

Burrower Serpent

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 37 (5d10 + 10)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 40 ft.

STR 15 (+2) **DEX** 14 (+2) **CON** 15 (+2)

INT 1 (-5) **WIS** 10 (+0) **CHA** 3 (-4)

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Tremorsense 60 ft., Passive Perception 10

Languages -

Challenge CR 1 (200 XP)

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Constrict. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 14). Until this grapple ends, the creature is restrained, and the snake can't constrict another target.



KALIDNAY COMMONER

Kalidnay is a hard environment. Even everyday farmers, tradespeople, and merchants have to be tough to survive there.

Psionic Talent. Almost everyone in Kalidnay has some degree of psychic talent. Those without are regarded as lacking something essential.

Kalidnay Commoner

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 16 (3d8 + 3)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 12 (+1) **DEX** 12 (+1) **CON** 13 (+1)

INT 10 (+0) **WIS** 10 (+0) **CHA** 10 (+0)

Skills Survival +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge CR 1/4 (50 XP)

Psionic Wild Talent. The Kalidnay commoner has a **Psionic Wild Talent** (roll on the table below) which they can use a number of times equal to their Intelligence modifier (minimum 1) per long rest. Their spellcasting ability for this is Charisma (save DC 10, +2 to spell attack rolls).

Actions

Fire Ray. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) fire damage.

Psionic Wild Talents

Roll 1d100.

d100	Wild Talent
01-08	Blade Ward
09-16	Chill Touch
17-24	Control Flames
25-32	Friends
33-40	Mage Hand
41-48	Message
49-56	Minor Illusion

57-64	Primal Savagery
65-72	Shocking Grasp
73-80	True Strike
81-88	Vicious Mockery
89-94	Powerful Wild Talent: roll 2 more times
95-00	No wild talent

MRIX

These gigantic caravan-pulling lizards are rare, expensive, and bred only by the Oled'ar family of Bleak Knoll.

Mrix

Huge beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armour)

Hit Points 95 (10d12 + 30)

Speed 50 ft.

STR 22 (+6) **DEX** 9 (-1) **CON** 17 (+3)

INT 2 (-4) **WIS** 11 (+0) **CHA** 5 (-3)

Senses Passive Perception 10

Languages --

Challenge CR 5 (1,800 XP)

Trampling Charge. If the mrix moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a gore attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the mrix can make one stomp attack against it as a bonus action.

Actions

Gore. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 24 (4d8 + 6) piercing damage.

Stomp. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one prone creature. *Hit:* 22 (3d10 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

KALIDNAY MUMMY

Those who die in Kalidnay City do not decompose. They dry out and wither, but no more than that. Sometimes death doesn't even slow them down. They continue to exist, migrating to the Empty Districts, and carrying on a relatively peaceful routine there.

Kalidnay Mummy

Medium undead, lawful neutral

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)

Speed 20 ft.

STR 16 (+3) **DEX** 8 (-1) **CON** 15 (+2)

INT 10 (+0) **WIS** 10 (+0) **CHA** 12 (+1)

Saving Throws Wis +2

Skills Deception +7 History +6 Insight +7 Intimidation +7 Persuasion +7 Performance +7

Damage Vulnerabilities Fire

Damage Resistances Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks

Damage Immunities Necrotic, Poison

Condition Immunities Charmed, Exhaustion, Frightened, Paralyzed, Poisoned

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 10

Languages those it knew in life

Challenge CR 3 (700 XP)

Psionic Wild Talent. The mummy has the **Psionic Wild Talent** it had in life. Roll on the **Psionic Wild Talents** table (see Kalidnay Commoner), or choose from *chill touch*, *mage hand*, or *true strike*.

Actions

Multiattack. The mummy can use its **Dreadful Glare** and makes one attack with its **Rotting Fist**.

Rotting Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with mummy rot. The cursed target can't regain hit points, and its hit point maximum decreases by 10 (3d6) for every 24 hours that elapse. If the curse reduces the target's hit point maximum to 0, the target dies, and its body turns to dust. The curse lasts until removed by the *remove curse* spell or other magic.

Dreadful Glare. The mummy targets one creature it can see within 60 feet of it. If the target can see the mummy, it must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or become frightened until the end of the mummy's next turn. If the target fails the saving throw by 5 or more, it is also paralyzed for the same duration. A target that succeeds on the saving throw is immune to the **Dreadful Glare** of all mummies (but not mummy lords) for the next 24 hours.



IF YOU ARE WELL VERSED IN
THE ART OF NECROMANCY
(AND I PASSED THE ACADEMY
AT THE TOP OF MY CLASS)
YOU LEARN TO NOTICE
SUPERIOR SPECIMENS WHEN
THEY WALK IN FRONT OF YOU
AND TRY TO STEAL YOUR
HAT. I STILL DISINTEGRATED
THEM, OF COURSE, BUT
I TOOK A MOMENT TO
APPRECIATE THE HANDIWORK
FIRST

PALIK

Palik is a thrax - one of the most dangerous creatures found in the world that gave Kalidnay to the Mists. Blood and flesh are common enough in Kalidnay; a thrax feeds on something far rarer and more precious: water. A thrax can suck every drop of moisture from a human body in ten minutes.

Palik is the only thrax in Kalidnay, and that is the only good thing that can be said about him. Even so, the thousands of inhabitants of Kalidnay City are too small a herd for him to be able to feed safely and unobtrusively. He starves himself, feeding only when the drive to do so is overwhelming, and then gorging himself on entire families or on big, strong, men like the gladiators in Thakok-An's arena.

Palik knows that if the living residents of Kalidnay realise they have a thrax amongst them, let alone identify him, they will destroy him. He needs to get out. He has met enough outsiders to know that there are other realms surrounded by mist, and that some of them have hundreds of thousands of people and whole oceans of water. He also knows that none of those places have the faintest idea of what a thrax is. He wants out.

This desire to escape can make Palik an unlikely ally for an adventuring party in Kalidnay. He knows a lot of what goes on in Kalidnay City - he has to, to make sure there are no rumours of his presence. Palik has travelled every square foot of the domain.

Almost Human. From a few feet away, Palik looks like any living humanoid. Tall, well-built, with the kind of muscles that could choke the life out of a person, including an assortment of geometric tattoos. His sharp ears point at a heritage that is not uniquely human. All that really gives him away close up is the way his fingers terminate in disturbing suckers.

Shadow Hunter. Palik can switch between corporeal form and **Shadow-Form**. In shadow form, he cannot be perceived except by magical means; he cannot enter or cross brightly lit areas.

Palik

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 82 (11d8 + 33)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 20 (+5) **DEX** 13 (+1) **CON** 17 (+3)

INT 12 (+1) **WIS** 14 (+2) **CHA** 11 (+0)

Skills Deception +3

Damage Resistances Cold, Fire, Lightning, Poison; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks

Condition Immunities Charmed, Frightened

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 12

Languages Common

Challenge CR 5 (1,800 XP)

Regeneration. Palik regenerates 20 hit points at the start of his turn, unless he took radiant damage since his previous turn.

Shadow Form. Palik may use his action to transform into a shadow. In this form, he cannot take actions, speak, or manipulate objects. He is weightless, has a flying speed of 40 feet, can hover, and can enter a creature's space and stop there. The shadow can pass through a solid object, but can't cross areas of bright light. It has advantage on Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution saving throws, and it is immune to all non-magical damage.

Unnatural Power. Palik's unarmed attacks count as magical for the purposes of overcoming resistances.

Legendary Resistance (3/day). If Palik fails a saving throw, he may instead choose to succeed it. He can do this up to 3 times before a long rest.

Actions

Multiattack. Palik makes two unarmed attacks.

Cause Decay. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. In addition, non-magical armour worn by the target is partly dissolved and takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to the AC it offers. The armour is destroyed if the penalty reduces its AC to 10.

Unarmed Attack. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage. On a successful hit, the target must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, Palik attaches his suckers to the target's skin. The creature is grappled.

Water Drain. When Palik successfully grapples a target, he immediately begins to drain the water from its body, dealing (7) 2d6 points of necrotic damage each turn.

PSIONIC SANDSTORM

Most sandstorms are simply dangerous, not actively malevolent. But there is at least one - perhaps more - that has transcended mere lethality to become cruel and predatory.

Granular intelligence. A psionic sandstorm is an entity created from all of the lives lost within it. Its intelligence degrades over time; without more food, it will disperse into harmless grains of sand. It must, therefore, keep feeding on the intellect of sentient creatures to maintain its own sapience. This is why the psychic sandstorm whirls endlessly on, desperate to perpetuate its existence.

Ruthless Intruder. A psionic sandstorm can enter any space accessible to a single grain of sand. It snakes and slithers and pries to find its way through the smallest crack in a wall, gap in a door, drawn inexorably to the presence of intelligent creatures.

Psionic Sandstorm

Huge elemental, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17

Hit Points 82 (11d8 + 33)

Speed 40 ft.

STR 7 (-2) **DEX** 16 (+3) **CON** 16 (+3)

INT 6 (-2) **WIS** 14 (+2) **CHA** 18 (+4)

Damage Resistances Cold, Fire, Lightning, Poison, Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing

Condition Immunities Blinded, Deafened, Grappled, Poisoned, Restrained, Paralyzed, Prone

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Blindsight 60 ft., Passive Perception 14

Languages -

Challenge CR 7 (2,900 XP)

Granular. The sandstorm can occupy another creature's space, and vice versa, and can move through any opening large enough for a grain of sand. The psionic sandstorm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Scouring Presence. Creatures who start their turn in a space occupied by the psionic sandstorm take 11 (2d10) slashing damage, halved on a successful Constitution save.

Actions

Subsume. One creature of the psionic sandstorm's choice, that shares a space with it, must make a DC 16 Intelligence saving throw. A creature who fails takes 18 (4d8) points of psychic damage and its Intelligence is reduced by 2 (1d4) points; a creature who succeeds takes half the damage. Creatures who lose Intelligence from this attack regain 1 point each time they complete a long rest.

I DISLIKE SAND AT THE BEST OF TIMES. IT GETS ALL IN YOUR FEET, AND OTHER PLACES, AND IT'S THE DEVIL TO GET RID OF. MY DESPAIR WHEN I DISCOVERED THAT THE SANDSTORMS IN KALIDNAY WERE NOT ONLY FREQUENT BUT SENTIENT WAS SOMETHING TO BEHOLD.

I KILLED MY HORSE IN RAGE.

PSIONICIST

While most Kalidnay natives have some degree of psionic talent, a few choose to dedicate themselves to developing their gifts to their fullest potential. Psionics are often either respected, influential, members of society or solitary desert hermits.

Psionicist

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 12 (15 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 40 (9d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 10 (+0) **DEX** 14 (+2) **CON** 11 (+0)
INT 12 (+1) **WIS** 12 (+1) **CHA** 17 (+3)

Saving Throws Constitution +3, Charisma +6

Skills Insight +6, Persuasion +6

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common, telepathic within 30 ft.

Challenge CR 6 (2,300 XP)

Dominion of the Mind. The psionicist's thoughts cannot be read by telepathy or other means unless they allow it, and they have advantage on saving throws to resist being charmed or frightened.

Heightened Spell (1/day). When the psionicist casts a spell that forces a creature to make a saving throw to resist its effects, the psionicist can spend 3 sorcery points to give one target of the spell disadvantage on its first saving throw made against the spell.

Spellcasting. The psionicist is a 9th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). The psionicist has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *control flames, mage hand, message, vicious mockery*

1st level (4 slots): *disguise self, mage armor, sanctuary, sleep*

2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts, hold person*

3rd level (3 slots): *clairvoyance, haste, vampiric touch*

4th level (3 slots): *confusion, phantasmal killer*

5th level (1 slot): *telepathic bond*

Actions

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) piercing damage or 4 (1d8) piercing damage if wielded with no hands.

PSYCHIC MIRAGE

In Kalidnay, if something appears too good to be true, it most certainly is. For example, an oasis in the distance might be a mirage... or it might be a predator in a cunning disguise.

A Peaceful Demise. A psychic mirage lulls observers into a false sense of security, building up trust and charming them into approaching and resting. When they do, drifting into an enchanted sleep, the mirage strikes, devouring them thought by thought.

Symbiotic Bonds. Other creatures often hunt around psychic mirages, dealing with the remains of the mirage's victims. Desert shrikes, burrowing serpents, or undead - including **Paalik** - frequently wait nearby to take advantage of the mirage's unconscious prey.

Psychic Mirage

Gargantuan aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 287 (25d20 + 125)

Speed -

STR 20 (+5) **DEX** 0 (-) **CON** 20 (+5) **INT** 20 (+5)
WIS 15 (+2) **CHA** 0 (-)

Saving Throws Intelligence +10, Wisdom +7

Damage Immunities. Necrotic, Poison; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks

Damage Resistances Cold, Fire, Lightning, Thunder

Senses Blindsight 60 ft., Passive Perception 14

Languages -

Challenge CR 12 (8,400 XP)

Inert. The mirage cannot move, and automatically fails Dexterity and Charisma saving throws.

Illusion of Safety. The mirage presents an illusion of fertile land, shady trees, and cool water. The illusion functions as per the *arcane mirage* spell, with an indefinite duration.

Insidious. Creatures believe the illusion implicitly, with all of their senses. They will eat of the nutritious-looking plants and drink of the water, meaning that they are consuming ounces, if not pounds, of sand. Two hours after "eating" or "drinking" characters become sick and dehydrated, taking two levels of exhaustion and becoming Poisoned for 1 hour. Characters gain another level of exhaustion every

hour until they rehydrate, drinking at least a half-gallon of water and succeeding on a DC 12 Constitution save (to keep it down).

Legendary Resistance (3/day). If the mirage fails a saving throw, it may instead choose to succeed it.

Actions

Tranquil Repose. The mirage exerts a powerful sense of peace and comfort. Those who spend at least one minute in the mirage must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or fall asleep over the course of 10 minutes. The mirage then drains 2 (1d4) points of the sleeper's Intelligence every two hours they are asleep. A sleeper wakes after 8 hours of sleep or when woken by another creature's deliberate efforts. A creature dies if its Intelligence is reduced to 0 by this effect.

TEMPLAR

Thakok-An's Templars are a mixture of clerical devotion and psionic talent. They are all loyal to her because, so far, only her ruthless dedication has kept Kalidnay functional since it was stranded in the Silt Sea. That loyalty does not stop them scheming against one another, however; in fact, it is almost a requirement for a promotion.

Cruel, But Not Corrupt. Thakok-An's Templars believe in her laws and her word. She protects Kalidnay, and disobeying her might jeopardise the land's fate. They are particularly committed to rooting out any signs of defiling, or of spellcasters who might become defilers. They are brutal in their 'justice', and almost all take pleasure in exercising their power, but they know which lines not to cross.

Travel In Packs. Although individual Templars are powerful, enough angry citizens could overwhelm them. They usually move in patrols of 3-6 (1d4+2), or even more outside Kalidnay City. Each patrol includes 1 Templar Sergeant.

Templar

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 13 (studded leather)

Hit Points 16 (3d8 + 3)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 13 (+1) **DEX** 12 (+1) **CON** 12 (+1)

INT 10 (+0) **WIS** 14 (+2) **CHA** 10 (+0)

Saving Throws Wisdom +4

Skills History +2, Perception +4

Senses Passive Perception 14

Languages Common

Challenge CR 1/2 (100 XP)

Psionic Talent. Roll on the **Psionic Wild Talent** table or choose from *blade ward*, *friends*, or *true strike*.

Spellcasting. The Templar's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12, +4 to spell attack rolls). The Templar can cast the following spells:



At will: *bane, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*
4/day: *command, detect magic, shield of faith*
2/day: *silence, zone of truth*

Actions

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage, or 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Templar Sergeant

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 14 (breastplate)

Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 16 (+3) **DEX** 13 (+1) **CON** 14 (+2)

INT 10 (+0) **WIS** 16 (+3) **CHA** 10 (+0)

Saving Throws Wisdom +6

Skills History +3, Insight +6, Perception +6

Senses Passive Perception 16

Languages Common

Challenge CR 4 (1,100 XP)

Channel Divinity (1/day). As an action, the Templar sergeant presents their badge of office, and each creature of their choice that can see or hear them within 30 feet of them must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw. If the creature fails the saving throw it is charmed by the templar until the end of the Templar's next turn or until the charmed creature takes damage. The Templar can also cause any of the charmed creatures to drop what they are holding when they fail the saving throw.

Psionic Talent. Roll on the **Psionic Wild Talent** table or choose from *blade ward, friends, or true strike*.

Spellcasting. The Templar sergeant's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14, +6 to spell attack rolls). The Templar sergeant can cast the following spells:

At will: *bane, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*
4/day: *command, cure wounds, detect magic, shield of faith*
2/day: *silence, spiritual weapon, zone of truth*
2/day: *dispel magic, spirit guardians*

Actions

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands.

URAN-TOR

Uran-Tor is an elven banshee who haunts the region around Artan-Ak. While Kalid-Ma ruled Kalidnay, Uran-Tor served Thakok-An loyally as her second in command. Thakok-An, however, never trusted her. No one in Kalidnay trusts a Bone Runner, even, perhaps especially, when they have elven blood themselves, as Thakok-An does.

The now-Darklord made absolutely sure that Uran-Tor was out of the way when she performed her ritual to empower Kalid-Ma and hasten his transformation into a dragon. The elf was out in Artan-Ak, breaking up the latest resistance ring when it took place. Even so, the ritual drained her life force, the Dark Powers extending her special notice, perhaps aware that Thakok-An would be delighted to see her rival perish.

While Uran-Tor died screaming as her life was sucked from her, her spirit did not disperse. She roams the desert even now, driven by hatred and her thirst for vengeance on Thakok-An. She cannot enter Kalidnay City, or Kalid-Ma will quite unconsciously consume the last traces of her, so Uran-Tor haunts the desert as a semi-solid, screaming, spectre, preying on any Templars unfortunate enough to cross her path.

Unfortunately, the banshee's ability to recognise a Templar is imprecise, and she will often substitute 'any humans with weapons' for her preferred prey.

Uran-Tor

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16

Hit Points 84 (13d8 + 26)

Speed 40 ft. (hover), walk 0 ft.

STR 1 (-5) **DEX** 14 (+2) **CON** 10 (+0)

INT 12 (+1) **WIS** 11 (+0) **CHA** 18 (+4)

Saving Throws Wisdom +4, Charisma +8

Skills Deception +7 History +6 Insight +7 Intimidation +7 Persuasion +7 Performance +7

Damage Resistances Acid, Fire, Lightning,

Thunder; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks

Damage Immunities Cold, Necrotic, Poison

Condition Immunities Charmed, Exhaustion, Frightened, Grappled, Paralyzed, Petrified, Poisoned, Prone, Restrained

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge CR 5 (1,800 XP)

Detect Life. Uran-Tor can magically sense the presence of creatures up to 5 miles away that aren't undead or constructs. She knows the general direction they're in but not their exact locations.

Incorporeal Movement. Uran-Tor can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. She takes 5 (1d10) force damage if she ends her turn inside an object.

Legendary Resistance (3/day). If Uran-Tor fails a saving throw, she may instead choose to succeed it.

Actions

Anti-Magic (3/day). As a reaction, Uran-Tor may counter any spell cast within 30 feet of her by a creature that she can see. If the spell is of 3rd level or lower, it fails and has no effect. If the spell is of 4th level or higher, Uran-Tor makes a Charisma check. The DC equals 10 + the spell's level. On a success, the creature's spell fails and has no effect.

Corrupting Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (3d6 + 4) necrotic damage.

Horrifying Visage. Each non-undead creature within 60 feet of the banshee that can see her must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. A frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, with disadvantage if the banshee is within line of sight, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to Uran-Tor's **Horrifying Visage** for the next 24 hours.

Nemesis. Uran-Tor reserves a special hatred for Thakok-An and her Templars. She may use her **Anti-Magic** ability at will against these enemies, exceeding her usual limit of 3 times per day).

Wail (1/Day). The banshee releases a mournful wail, provided that she isn't in sunlight. This wail has no effect on constructs and undead. All other creatures within 30 feet of her that can hear her must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, a creature drops to 0 hit points. On a success, a creature takes 10 (3d6) psychic damage.



THE DARK POWERS HAVE A STRANGE SENSE OF HUMOUR. SOME OF THEIR JOKES ARE CENTURIES IN THE MAKING. I LIKE TO THINK THAT URAN-TOR WILL HAVE THE LAST LAUGH.

APPENDIX E:

DARK POWERS CHECKS

Overview

In this chapter, you will find stat blocks and game information for a host of

Consider using **Honor** in your Ravenloft campaign as a way of determining the sway the Dark Powers have over any character as a result of their actions. Honor is a barometer for how tightly the dark powers cling to any particular soul. If creating new characters for a Ravenloft campaign, you may allow characters to roll an extra ability score/spend some of their points on increasing their starting Honor score. See the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, Chapter 9: *Dungeon Master's Workshop* for rules on Honor.

In Ravenloft, an Honor Saving throw is called a **Dark Powers check**.

Consider having a character make an Honor saving throw when:

1. They give in to a dark impulse or temptation
2. They commit a murder, theft or another act of pre-meditated evil
3. They intentionally contribute to the suffering of other

Set the DC in accordance with the severity (by your estimation) of the moral transgression.

On a failure, reduce that character's current Honor score by 1. If a character shows exceptional moral fibre, mercy or compassion in the face of evil, consider increasing that character's Honor score by 1.

A character's current Honor score affects how they are affected by and influenced by Ravenloft's fell magic. If a character falls below a certain Honor score, the Dark Powers begin to mold them externally to suit their inner darkness. These afflictions cannot be removed by any means short of regaining Honor. Rising to a higher Honor score can remove dark traits gained in this way

Honor Score	Title	Effects
14+	Pure	The character is a bright flame in the darkness. They have advantage on Dark Powers checks. Undead creatures can sense their location from up to 1 mile away.
10-13	Clean	No change,
6-9	Tainted	The character has gained the attention of the Dark Powers. They gain one Minor change.
4-6	Corrupted	The character has slipped further towards their own destruction. They scare animals and children. They gain one Moderate change and lose a Personality Trait from their character sheet.
2-3	Cursed	The character sours milk and small plants wither at their approach. They gain one Moderate or Minor change, and lose any Bond from their character sheet.
1	Monster	The character is openly and obviously imbued with supernatural evil. They gain one Major change, and lose any Ideals from their character sheet.
0	Soulless	The character becomes an NPC under the Dungeon Master's control. They are wholly a creature enslaved to their own evil, and the Dark Powers have claimed them for Ravenloft.



MINOR CHANGES

1d6	Minor Changes
1	The character gains Darkvision out to 60ft., and Sunlight Sensitivity
2	The character gains +4 Strength, but gains the flaw "what I can't fix, I break"
3	The character's hearing becomes acute, giving them advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks based on sound, but they become vulnerable to thunder damage
4	The character gains +4 Intelligence, but has frequent headaches and gains vulnerability to psychic damage
5	The character's skin toughens, giving them a natural armor class of 13, but gains disadvantage on Dexterity based ability checks
6	The character gains +2 to Strength, Dexterity and Constitution, but a -2 to Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma

MODERATE CHANGES

1d6	Moderate Changes
1	The character grows claws, increasing their unarmed strike damage to 1d4. The character gains disadvantage on ability checks requiring fine manual dexterity.
2	The character grows a forked tongue, and gains advantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks, but loses the ability to speak 2 languages that they know.
3	The character gains blindsight out to 60ft, but their eyes become catlike and bright yellow, even in total darkness.
4	The character can scale walls as if under the effects of a spider climb spell, but grows octopus suckers all over their skin.
5	The character's saliva is highly acidic, allowing them to cast the acid splash cantrip requiring no components by spitting at things. The character can no longer eat without specialist equipment to funnel food directly down their throat.
6	The character's appearance turns grotesque and deformed, granting them advantage on Charisma (Intimidation) checks but disadvantage on all other social interaction.

MAJOR CHANGES

1d6	Major Changes
1	The character grows thick scales all over their body, gaining a natural armor class of 18, but granting them disadvantage on Dexterity based ability checks, attack rolls and saving throws.
2	The character's skin becomes deathly pale, and their unarmed strikes deal an additional 2d8 necrotic damage on a hit. Direct sunlight deals 10 radiant damage to them at the start of their turn.
3	The character regenerates 10 hit points at the start of every round. The character cannot enter a residence unless invited by the owner.
4	The character sprouts reptilian wings, granting them a fly speed of 40ft. The character gains the following flaw "I do not understand metaphor, or jokes"
5	The character grows a scorpion-esque tail. This tail can perform an unarmed strike as an action, dealing an additional 22 [4d10] poison damage on a hit.
6	The character's devolves into a savage beast. Their Strength, Dexterity and Constitution scores increase by 6, and their Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma scores drop by 6 (to a minimum of 2).



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