# .Prologue (1825)

The intention of Prologue is to build up the sense of **mistrust** toward turcomans and Muslim natives. So that players would continue to question themselves if they should trust the natives’ actions or motives. Such feeling to keep the players at suspense.

### Story

The Napoleonic Wars took its toll. The effects of ravaged infrastructures and the Continental System were putting strain on Russian economy. Tsar Nicholas I needed money. He needed new stream of revenue, British India, the Crown Jewel. To tap into Indian market, he needed Central Asia. By annexing Khiva, Nicholas could not only exploit the market and resources of Central Asia, but also procure exotic luxuries for both the domestic and European markets. Beyond that, he might be able to get his hands on the gold of British India.

Luckily, Nicholas had been approached by the Khan of Khiva. The Khan offered to become his vassal if Nicholas helped him to suppress unruly Turcoman tribes near Khiva. This was the opportunity for Nicholas. The possession of Khiva would provide him with the staging point he needed to reach India. Without hesitation, Nicholas decided to send a heavily armed expedition to Khiva to take up the Khan’s offer. Chosen to lead this expedition was a Muslim prince from the Caucasus, Prince Alexander Bekovich. His party consisted of 4,000 men and 500 horses.

After celebrating the Russian Easter, Bekovich and his party set sail from Astrakan. Bekovich’s principal obstacle was the dangerous stretch of Karakum desert, more than 500 miles wide. Not only that, but marauding tribesmen would also harass them in the desert. But Emperor’s word was the law. Determined to bring the mission to success, Bekovich continued to Khiva.

In the middle of June, as they headed eastward toward Khiva, things already started to go south. Men were beginning to suffer from the extreme heat and thirst. Soon, men were dying due to heat-stroke and other sickness. Supplies were running out rapidly. At the same time, they to fight off the attacks of marauding tribesmen determined to prevent their advance and take Russian gold. The party stoically struggled towards Khiva. In the middle of August, they finally reached Khiva.

Bekovich sent couriers ahead bearing lavish gifts for the Khan. Hopes of successfully accomplishing the mission looked promising when the Khan himself came out to welcome Bekovich’s party. After exchanging courtesies, and listening to the mission’s band together, Bekovich and the Khan rode on towards the town. As they approached the city gates, the Khan explained to Bekovich that it would not be possible to accommodate so many men in Khiva. Instead, he proposed that Russians split up to several groups so that they can be properly housed and entertained.

Agreeing to split up :

Anxious not to offend the Khan, Bekovich agreed and told Major Frankenburg, his second-in-command, to divide the men into into five parties and send to assigned quarters. Frankenburg objected strongly. But Bekovich overruled him and insisted that his order be obeyed. If not, he would be court-martialed. The troops were then led away in small groups by their hosts. This was just what the Khivans had been waiting for.

Everywhere they fell upon the unsuspecting Russians. Bekovich was among the first to die. He was seized, stripped of his uniform, and brutally hacked to death. His head was severed, stuffed with straw, and displayed to the jubilant mob. Russian troops were being systematically slaughtered. Only 40 or so Russians managed to escape the bloodbath. When it was over the Khan ordered them to be lined up in the main square for the execution. Rest of the Russians was either dead or sold into slavery. But even the live ones would meet a grim fate as they had to travel back across the desert toward the Caspian.

Disagreeing to split up :

Bekovich instinctively knew that something was off. Major Frankenburg, his second-in-command, also agreed with him. Bekovich politely refused. The Khan’s face had a hard time hiding his anger and disappointment. But he politely accepted and said Bekovich’s force would have to camp outside the walls. Bekovich nodded and ordered to set up camp.

The night fell, Bekovich was sitting in his tent writing out orders. Suddenly, the alarm bell started to ring. Surprised, Bekovich grabbed his pistol and went outside of his tent. Right in front of him, he saw the swarms of torches descending upon his camp. Canon shells blasted Russian tents. It was Khivan ambush. In amidst of chaos, Bekovich and Frankenburg formed the square to resist Khivan onslaught. But there were too many of them. Wounded were being slaughtered in their beds. Scattered Russian troops desperately fought back but were soon hacked to death by Khivans.

Finally, the Khan approached Bekovich who stood by his remnants of his troops. The Khan smiled and remarked that Russians fought bravely. He was willing to spare the rest of the troops if Bekovich surrendered himself to be paraded throughout the streets. Bekovich complies and lonely moves forward toward Khan. As soon as he reached the Khan, however, the entire Khivan army swarmed the troops. The Khan stabbed Bekovich and remarked, “pathetic Russian….”