# 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.

//Maybe the game shouldn’t be about carrying the army, but only the character and NPC travelling together.

### 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 Bekovski. His party consisted of 4,000 men and 500 horses.

After celebrating the Russian Easter, Bekovski and his party set sail from Astrakan. Bekovski’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, Bekovski 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.

Bekovski 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 Bekovski’s party. After exchanging courtesies, and listening to the mission’s band together, Bekovski and the Khan rode on towards the town. As they approached the city gates, the Khan explained to Bekovski 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, Bekovski 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 Bekovski 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. Bekovski 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 :

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

The night fell, Bekovski was sitting in his tent writing out orders. Suddenly, the alarm bell started to ring. Surprised, Bekovski 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, Bekovski 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 Bekovski 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 Bekovski surrendered himself to be paraded throughout the streets. Bekovski 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 Bekovski and remarked, “pathetic Russian….”

### Krasnovodsk

The port of Krasnovodsk is not that different from that of Astrakan. But you realize that this city is the last bit of civilization you will taste before venturing out into the endless desert. But mission is mission. You firmly continue marching to the outside of the city.

As you travel through the streets, you find Turcoman woman in mid 40s sitting sluggishly on the streets. When she sees you, she crawls to your feet and starts begging. You do not fully understand but are pretty sure she is asking for money. Perhaps, out of sympathy or superior sense of noblesse oblige, you take out some coin and try to give it to her. As your coin reaches out to her, a British man shouts and tries to stop you. “Oi! Mate! You don’t wanna give that to her!” You ask him why. He answers that most Turcomans pretend to be beggars and try to cheat you out of money. You hesitate but give the money to her. She grabs the coin like a snake and quickly turns and runs away. You feel robbed. Adding insult to injury, the British man says, “I told you so, mate.”

Major Frankenburg tells you we don’t have any more time to waste. You proceed to the outside of the city. Passing the gate, you feel the sudden rush of sand and heat hitting your face. It is Karakum Desert. You can feel the force of mother nature as the sea of sands expands in front of you. Khiva is 500 miles away. You take your first step into the desert.

### Normal Encounter 1: Turcomans passing by

Every step you take, your foot sinks into the dry sand. You can feel the sand filling your shoes a little at a time. Across the desert, you see the silhouettes of people marching in a column. You squint your eyes. You see men with turbans and camels. Major Frakenburg grabs your shoulder and stops you, “Turcomans…! Be ready, your highness. They might be armed.”

* Do you see any weapons?
* Get your pistol ready Major.

You keep your focus on them and try to see if they are any threat. But they are too far to see any weapons. You can make out their gestures. You see a man figure talking to his buddy next to him while his finger pointed at you. The man next to him shrugs. It seems like they are arguing.

* What are they doing?
* Take out your pistol and fire it in the air.

Brief moment later, they slowly march away in a good order. You take a sigh of relief.

As you take a step, you find Major Frankenburg staring at the group. You ask him to come. Frankenburg turns toward you. His face is filled with disgust but also fear. He tells you the truth, “Your highness, they were carrying slaves…. Men, women, … even children.”

### Negative Encounter 1: Strong heat causing thirst

You keep walking. You have no idea how far you’ve walked. Karakum desert just seems endless. Suddenly, you feel thirst creeping up your throat. You already find yourself reaching for the water bag. Major Frankenburg grabs your hand to stop you. “Your highness, we are still miles away. Drinking now won’t bode well for us later on.”

* Drink
* Do not drink -> Trigger the event that you suspect Major Frankenburg stole the water.

The night fell. You built a small campfire to warm yourself. Cold wind is cruel. It bites your skin every time it hits you. Small but significant crackling fire is the only thing we can rely on. Major Frankenburg volunteers to be the first watch. A moment later, you fall into a deep sleep.

A few hours passed. You wake up to the sound of rustling. There, you see Major Frankenburg holding a large water bag with his back turned.

* What are you doing?

Major turns around spooked. He quickly tries to defend himself, “I… was doing some inventories, your highness.” You quickly get up to see the supplies for yourself. You find that Major Frankenburg drank some of the water. Feeling of betrayal rushes into you. You question your lieutenant about this situation. “Of course, I drank some, your highness. But just one little sip. It wasn’t much, I swear.” You remember the time he stops you from drinking. Perhaps, he did that to save water for himself. “Your highness… This is outrageous! I didn’t drink all day until now. And I only drank a sip!” You have a hard time believing it. Major Frankenburg is disgruntled. “I have always been loyal to you, your highness. Whether you believe me or not is up to you. If you can’t believe me anymore, you can take my watch.” Major Frankenburg immediately goes to his bunk, turning his back on you. Still feeling suspicious, you stay up until dawn.

### Negative Encounter 2: Meeting a thirsty Turcoman

Dawn breaks. You and Major Frankenburg break camp and start walking. The desert is still the same as yesterday, but more brutal. The unending heat is shining on your face. The strong heat haze causes the vision to shimmer in front of you. Beyond the heat haze, you see a small silhouette of a person. It was a Turcoman male collapsed on the sand. His lip was so dry that cracks were all over it. He opened his eyes. Unable to speak, he weakly raised his hand and pointed at your water bag. You hesitate if you should give your precious water to this man or not.

* Give water
* Walk away

You give a sip to the dying man. He greatly wets his lips with pure water. He smiles and says something to you. Probably, a thank you. But since you can’t do anything else to help this man, you slowly walk away, leaving the man to his fate.

You barely have enough for yourself. The man’s hand falls and hits the sand. There is nothing you can do to help his man. With an uncomfortable feeling remaining in your heart, you slowly walk away.

### Negative Encounter 3: Turcoman bandit raid

In your instincts, you feel something uneasy. A soldier’s instinct tells you that danger is coming. Suddenly, you see bands of Turcoman bandits riding horses and camels coming toward you. “Your highness! Bandits!”

Draw your pistol

Bandits surround you and ride in a circle. You and Frankenburg are standing back-to-back, aiming your pistol at them. Amongst the bandits, the leader comes forward. He was an elderly man with white beard covering his mouth and neck. “Christians! You have two choices. Surrender or die.”

“We are just the patrol unit. The whole Russian army is within 20 miles!” (Bluff)

“I know your tribes value freedom. Why enslave us?”

“Do you not have any honor? I saved one of you!” (Only available if you gave water to the dying Turcoman)

“How about you take some of our money and let us by?” (Bribe)

Option 1: Turcomans not fooled

The leader grins. “You take me for a fool? This desert is my home. There is no help coming for you. Take them away!” The bandits swarm you and rip you out of your clothes. You resist but are helplessly restrained and carried away by them.

Option 2: Persuasion

“You speak of freedom? You Christians continue to invade us and take our lands and people!”

“We are not invaders. We are just doctors studying oriental medicines.” (Lie)

“Then Consider what you are about to do. Harm us, our country will scorch this place.” (Threaten) -> Fail

“You earned your freedom. I am asking you to extend that favor to us.” (Persuade) -> use this? Give another chance.

(Choice 1) Turcoman leader asks why you are carrying weapons. You simply answer you need means to defend yourself for your own freedom. You emphasize how you escaped your oppressive family for freedom and help those in need. They would be impeding your freedom of helping others. The leader hesitates. He sighs and lets you go. He fell for your lies. You thank him and hurriedly move along with your lieutenant.

(Choice 2) You can see the anger rise in him. “Your country is already scorching us with your heretical belief! Take them away!” The bandits swarm you and rip you out of your clothes. You resist but are helplessly restrained and carried away by them.

(Choice 3) “Why should I extend my favor to you? You would never do the same to us!”

Option 3: Bribe

Apparently, Russian currency is highly valued here. The leader is satisfied and lets you go. You quickly turn and walk with your lieutenant.

### Negative Encounter 4: Extreme heat – dangerous

The heat is becoming more and more unbearable. The unrelenting sun keeps burning your skins. Your body is screaming for more water.

Drink water

Save water

### Negative Encounter 5: Oasis Mirage

Far away, you see something very faintly. Palm tree… Pond… It’s an oasis!

Run towards it

It could be a mirage. Let’s walk away.

You milk last ounce of strength to get there. You just hope that this isn’t a mirage.

Keep walking

Should I stop? Is this worth the risk?

You are stumbling as you take one step at a time. But you keep walking for the faint hope. However, the oasis isn’t getting closer than it already is. You stop, fall to your knees.

### Negative Encounter 6: Major Frankenburg verge of death

Behind you, Frankenburg collapses on the sand. You quickly turn around and check his condition. His mouth is dried and cracked. “Your highness… Water…. Please…”

Give water

Barely have enough for my own. Save water.

Major Frankenburg doesn’t say anything. He slowly closes his eyes. You grab his dog tag and close his eyes. You lay him down. You quickly turn around and go on your way.

### Positive Encounter 1: Turcoman selling supplies

You see a lone Turcoman with camel. The camel was packed with supplies and goods. The Turcoman greets you with big smile. He starts to barter. “Christian! Desert bad! You need water! Water ey? Food too!”

Purchase supplies.

Leave the merchant.

### Positive Encounter 2: Discovering oasis

Far away, you see something very faintly. Palm tree… Pond… It’s an oasis!

Run towards it

It could be a mirage. Let’s walk away.

You milk last ounce of strength to get there. You just hope that this isn’t a mirage.

Keep walking

Should I stop? Is this worth the risk?

You are stumbling as you take one step at a time. But you keep walking for the faint hope. You start to pick up the smell of water. It’s getting closer. Jubilant, you start running towards the oasis. You sink to your knees and start drinking fresh water.