

Freedom

A Dark Sun Campaign Adventure

Players' Book

by Zeb Cook

Sample file

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One: How to Use this Book

What you hold in your hands is one of two books for the **DARK SUN™** adventure ***Freedom***. This ***Player's Book*** provides all the maps, illustrations, and descriptions the players will need to reference.

If you are a player, though, resist the urge to flip through this book: your character may have psionic talents, but reading the DM's mind in this fashion will only ruin the adventure for everyone. Even so, some players cannot resist a prohibition. For their benefit, the maps and illustrations in this book appear in random order, and some of the material will likely not be used by a specific DM. Finally, remember—as in true Athasian politics—DMs can simply kill off characters who seem to "know too much."

If you are the DM, read the ***DM's Book*** with this book close at hand to familiarize yourself with the people and places your party may encounter. The ***Player's Book*** helps you referee by providing the players with the maps, illustrations, and descriptions they need. When you run an encounter, the ***DM's Book*** will indicate the page number of relevant material for the players to flip to. Remember, though, that the players should only have access to the ***Player's Book*** during a role-playing session: at the end of an evening, make sure to take the ***Player's Book*** with you.

At the back of this book, five pre-generated characters appear. Each character takes the front and back of one card. If a player chooses to use one of these characters, the card should be photocopied or carefully removed from the binder. If players have already generated their characters, the pre-generated characters can be used by the DM as potential NPCs, either during the course of this adventure or in future adventures.

Sample file

Two: Quick Guide to Tyr

For over a millennium, Tyr has stood.

During the past thousand years, the city has labored beneath the oppressive eye of Kalak, Tyrant of Tyr. Under the fearful shadow of his defiling magic, Tyr has festered from a small oasis settlement to a sprawling and corrupt metropolis. Renown for wealth, power, and a steady though meager production of iron, Tyr is perhaps the most decadent city state in a decadent land. Here, where human life counts less than a drop of water, a person can buy anything and suffer any fate. All but the poorest Tyrians own slaves, and nobles tend vast plantations by the lash. Indeed, slaves outnumber freemen two-to-one within the brutal city of Tyr.

As you approach the city, you pass through verdant plantation lands where crops receive more water than the unnumbered slaves who tend them. These fortress plantations belong to the city's nobles and garner great wealth for them by providing nearly all of Tyr's food. Standing armies fiercely guard each plot of land.

Once within the gates of Tyr, the throng of odd caravans, tang of exotic foods, and heady rattle of strange dialects unsettles you: Every Athasian city state follows unique laws and customs. Those unfamiliar with the ways of Tyr may run afoul of its templars or, worse yet, Kalak himself.

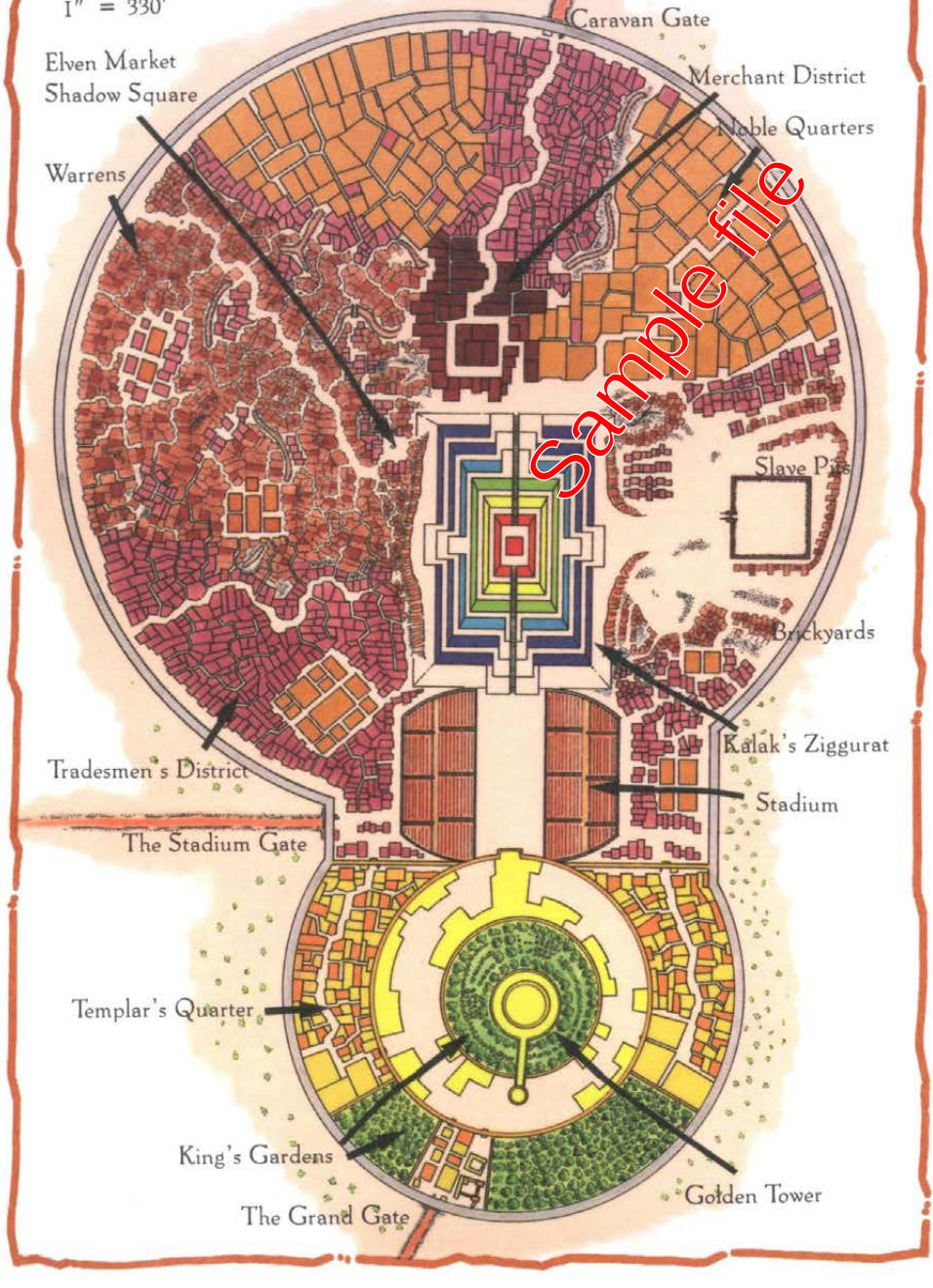
King Kalak, Lord Kalak, Tyrant of Tyr—he goes by many names. Defiant Tyrians mock their lord (when shielded from his psionically-enhanced senses) with the title "Kalak the Diminutive," for Kalak's ancient body is horribly wizened—gaunt, emaciate, and puny. This dry husk of flesh, though, channels unimaginable power: Kalak holds Tyr in an iron grip. His mind is said to roam the city, dealing death for the slightest offense.

As in most Athasian cities, the sorcerer king leaves day-to-day business to templars—his faithful. On the streets, the black cassocks and imperious manners of templars set them apart from other Tyrians. These men and women wield great power, checked only when their actions might offend Kalak, a superior templar, or a noble. Tyrians generally avoid templars, who, on the slightest whim, can imprison slaves and citizens alike. Of late, the templars of Tyr have been preoccupied, spending their careers upon Kalak's massive public works.

Indeed, for the past 20 years, the templars' lives have centered on a huge stack of stone—King Kalak's ziggurat. Dominating the center of the city, the square-stepped tower rises in sharp-edged splendor over the neighboring slums. Only now, after 20 years of construction, does the ziggurat near completion. For two decades, lash-striped slaves have borne massive blocks into place and mortared them together with their own blood. Now the streets and markets of Tyr ring with rumors that King Kalak has commanded his templars to finish the tower—finish it before month's end. No rumors tell why dread Kalak is building the ziggurat and dark looks dissuade those who may ask.

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Three: The City of Tyr



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Four: Quick Guide (Continued)

Beside the ziggurat stands a familiar sight—a gladiatorial arena. Here Kalak holds epics of blood-sport, and on rare occasions comes himself to hear the sanguine roars of the populace. A box seat at one end of the arena allows King Kalak to view the battles, well removed from the filthy rabble. Most of the time, though, Kalak remains hidden deep within his Golden Tower.

This tower lies off the arena's other side (opposite the Ziggurat), rising from the center of Kalak's palace. Lush gardens crowd the tower's base—a green paradise from which Kalak's defiler magic leeches its power. Beyond the gardens lies a clutter of buildings and colonnades where only King Kalak and his six high templars may walk. Few others summoned here ever emerge again.

On the outer periphery of the sorcerer king's grounds rests the templar quarter. Templars dwell in happy seclusion from the populace, both to signify their privilege and to safeguard their lives. Greatly feared and little loved, if templars lived among the people, murder and riot would become commonplace. For their own protection, the templars draw together in pampered security. The best foods, goods, and services can be routinely had in the Templar's Quarter. You only a fool-hardy or dazzling thief would dare tread within the compound.

The details of the Golden Tower and the templar quarter, however, come to you only through rumor. Any steps you tread in those high halls may well be your last. Rather, the sights and sounds and smells of Tyr that work upon you come from the massive gates, bustling markets, bawdy streets, vermin-ridden slums, crowded merchant houses, and polished noble quarters.

You enter Tyr through the caravan quarter, where strange outlanders and plodding merchant caravans clog the streets. The main avenue, called Caravan Way, winds toward Kalak's ziggurat and supports caravansaries, outfitters, beast traders, inns, merchant houses, and wine shops. The assortment of goods and services here is good, though they come at a premium price. The caravan quarter bustles both night and day and is well patrolled; merchants pay the templars dearly for protection.

The caravan quarter butts up against the noble quarter. Here, nobles keep small, walled citadels, complete with slave quarters, gardens, guardhouses, and private apartments. Most of the nobles wisely contribute generous sums to the city coffers: those who do receive preferential protection from the half-giant patrols of the templars. Few nobles actually reside within the city walls, where their private armies are forbidden, preferring to pass their time on estates outside the walls.

A few townhouses lie scattered in other areas of Tyr. Some such villas were constructed by rising sons of old families while others have been relocated by Kalak, himself, to chastise particular noble houses. Whatever their origin, these islands of wealth provide prime targets to thieves and thugs.

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Tradesman reside in the next lower niche in Tyrian culture. Tradesmen's districts spread across various sections of the city, home to most of the Tyrian citizenry. Tradesmen occupy the uncomfortable cusp between slaves and freemen: though bound to a particular noble house and occupation, they possess minor rights to property and protection. A street in a tradesmen's district will house the practitioners of a single craft or the craftsmen of a particular noble. These districts are Tyr's monetary badlands—they hold little to steal and even less to buy or trade.

You can hardly spend a day in Tyr without passing sometime through the warrens—the slum quarter, which gives Tyr much of its infamy. This vast crumbling sprawl houses the impoverished, the desperate, the outcast, and the enslaved. Many residents of the warrens work as day laborers, setting out each morning to seek work on the plantations. More desperate occupants might even sell themselves at the slave market near the dust-choked wadi. Others turn to theft or murder for hire. Those incapable of work—even illegal work—beg door-to-door. One way or another, these oppressed people glean enough food and water to live another day. What little extra they might own comes from hard labor in sweatshop shanties at night. Life in the warrens is brutal and unforgiving.

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The darkest section in the warrens is the elven quarter. Treated as near-criminal outcasts by the rest of Tyr, the elves have settled their own portion of the slums, closer to the base of the ziggurat than others would find comfortable. Here they live, little bothered by templars or nobles, who consider them inconsequential vermin. Runaways, rebels, and murderers all find shelter in the narrow streets of the elven quarter. When the templars stage their rare incursions into the elven quarter, they go heavily armed, with a squad of half-giant guards at their heels.

The elven quarter gives the slum its true notoriety. Here, you can literally buy or sell anything—if you have the coin or charisma to do so. Elven merchants boast that they will someday sell even the bones of your grandmother on a back street of the elven market. Indeed, they may already have.

This trading acumen both sustains and justifies the elven quarter. The canny elves bring in exotic and sometimes priceless items from the ruins in the wilderness, items prized by Tyrian nobles. Even so, a deal struck in the elven quarter is anything but sure, for thieves, muggers, renegade wizards, and swindlers abound. A 50% markdown little compensates a buyer who loses his life.

Now, armed with knowledge gleaned in an hour upon the Tyrian streets, you set out to explore the brutal city of Tyr. Of course, much of the knowledge came in rumor rather than fact.