

# GUIDEBOOK : KAL-A-NAR

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## FORWARD

Here we are with another book being released and as we wind down to the final few in the kickstarter, I had some thoughts to share. First, thank you to all the backers. Your patience and support have been absolutely amazing and all of us have been excited to tackle each book as it comes along to make it the best product we can for you.

The Justice & Life community (www.shaintar.com) and the backers who purchased pledges that allowed the creation of a bloodline, town, castle or country have been fun to work with. In this book, you'll find Essal's Keep along with other information provided by Betty Law Morgan as part of her pledge.



## FOR THE EMPIRE

*"The Kal are strong, stronger than steel, fiercer than a storm. We are HER fire, Ceynara's War Cry is our Cry, and it will be heard!"*

~ Astrid kes Bjorn ~ Daughter of the Blade

## THE KAL-A-NAR EMPIRE

This is the largest and one of the most powerful states in Shaintar, ruthless, brutal, and yet, not without charm. The Kalinesh are consummate warriors, fearless in battle, will not compromise, wicked to their enemies, and comprise one of the most lethal fighting forces on the continent. Within the pages of this book, you'll discover more of their history, learn what makes these people tick, and find out more about some forbidden magical rituals.

You'll also learn about the Unchained, Essal's Keep, and other locations in the Kal-A-Nar Empire which are important foci for events to come.

As might be expected, there are also some new Edges, Hindrances, Fighting styles, and gear. There are also some monsters that have been created from their demonic magic and some adventure shards that help form a greater arc.

Welcome to the northwestern part of Shaintar, where Ceynara's power is strong, and the men and women of the Empire worship demons and conduct rituals of Flame, and worse.

## FACTS IN BRIEF

**Capital:** Kal'Zaketh

**Population:** Over 15 million (mostly human)

**Dominant religion:** Worship of Ceynara as the Goddess of War and Might, with other Demon Lords acknowledged as demi-gods.

**Government:** totalitarian Empire that controls the northwestern portion of the main continent. Very much a military autocracy, with strong feudal practices.

**Society:** Warlords rule over all with a mighty and feared army, and true societal distinction can rarely be achieved outside of military service. A caste



system exists; it is somewhat fluid at the higher levels, becoming stricter the lower one goes. Slavery is legal and widely practiced.

**Economy:** Heavy focus on mining and manufacture for war. Kalinesh mercenaries are hired throughout Shaintar as they are excellent at protecting or attacking others for money.

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE EMPIRE

The Kal-A-Nar Empire is strong, ruthless and brutal, yet steeped in age-old traditions and with a powerful army at its back. Nothing in the Kal-A-Nar Empire is done without reason, and war is their lifeblood.

The Capital of the Empire, Kal'Zaketh is a dominating city fortress the likes of which is rare in Shaintar. It's massive, brooding, dangerous, and the cornerstone of the Kalinesh worship of Ceynara in her guise as the Goddess of War. Her Demon Lords are considered demi-gods by the Kal, and shrines and small altars can be found all across their land.

"Might makes right!" ~ **Battle Cry, source unknown**

The culture revolves around the belief that 'might makes right', and battle is the grease with which their war machine's wheel turns. This Empire is an autocracy, with strongly bonded feudal practices. It's a warrior society where the strongest rule--in this case, the Kal-A-Nar Warlords and their feared armies.

So deep is their reliance on war that there's very little advancement without military service. There are rare exceptions when the warlord requires certain non-military skills. There's a caste system governing the population of 4.5 million, comprised mostly of humans. In the higher strata of society, the caste system is fluid, but the lowest rarely advance out of poverty.

Slavery is widely practiced in the Empire, and that's about as low as you can get in a caste society. If you're non-human in Kal-A-Nar, you're automatically considered a slave or a pet and can have no other role.

## Liner Notes: The Empire

The Kal Empire is the classic "Empire of Bad Guys," in the truest sense of the word. Their leaders worship the Queen of Hell as their Goddess of War. They don't start wars because they're in need of new land, or someone is in need of being put into their place. They start them because they love war. This Empire is expansionist yes, they want to rule all of Shaintar, but honestly they just like drawing steel and charging in to battle for the fun of it. Imagine something akin to the Picts, Vikings, and Gauls of old, gathered under one very powerful and chaotic ruler, who has carved out a huge territory. Now, imagine they just keep on growing in power and influence, using magic and demonic hordes to supplement an already formidable army.

Sean's said a few times that the Kalinesh are a fantasy-version of the Klingon society from Star Trek melded with the most chaotic elements of Norse mythology. It's a pretty good way to look at them, combining the good and the bad; the honorable, clever, strong warrior-heart aspects, with factions inside the Empire that espouse a nobler, if somewhat coarse demeanor, and the demon worshipping, cruel 'take your teeth and make them into a necklace for an ally' Kalinesh.

The bad news for your heroes is that the latter are the driving force in the Kal-A-Nar Empire and are the ones you're likely to see as they come roaring over the hill, chanting and screaming in Ceynara's name all covered in spiky armor.

Yet for all its harshness, the Kal Empire is a place of raw beauty and incredible wealth in terms of nature and raw materials. Fortunately for them, they have their own sources for the perfect ores to turn into weapons of war. Their forge fires are bright, with the smiths and slaves working day and night to make arms and armor for the Kal troops.

Kal-A-Nar tend to be bound to Houses ruled by strong men, with women in lesser roles. This society is not progressive at all, they cleave to old rules and traditions laid down centuries ago - if a woman rises to the top of the proverbial power-heap in the Empire, then she's truly impressive, and dangerous - she'll have the eyes of every Kal Warlord and the Emperor to contend with. Some of these Kal Houses offer their troops as mercenaries to bring money into their coffers, and ultimately into the Empire itself, if you ever meet a female mercenary in charge of a warband - run.



## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

How did the Kal-A-Nar Empire come to be? It's a good question, and one which can be answered by looking back into the very annals of the past at the mighty Jolokas ki Grilnas. There may not be many events which are chronicled, but the most poignant in Kalinesh history is the one which follows:

### ONE SHALL LEAD

There are leaders, there are followers, and there are slaves. Over 2000 years ago, the barbaric human tribes far to the north began to coalesce into groups of something different, a militaristic society ruled by several powerful chieftains along with their clan elders. As time passed these chieftains came to be called warlords and took control of more people and territory, subjugating those weaker within their borders and building even more powerful armies.

They enslaved the dwarf population of the Everwall Mountains after a difficult war, and were then able to obtain better armor and quality forged weapons, again increasing their capacity and capability for war immensely. Again they waged war, and fought amongst themselves, continuing to gain more power, more slaves, and more land until 700 years had passed and one man shone forth in both ability and reputation. Vos-Dair-Az (Grand War Marshall) Jolokas ki Grilnas.

Jolokas' brilliance overshadowed his peers. There was none cleverer and his grasp of tactics left his fellows in the dust and blood. He won every battle he fought - whether against friend or foe - and his charm helped him to forge a nation. He turned his brilliance into stirring words, and swift action, and ultimately created the Eleran m' Kal-A-Nar, which became the Kal-A-Nar Empire.

He took the throne as Emperor, for it was only fitting, and led the "People of Glory." For that is truly what Kal-A-Nar means.

### WAR OF IDEALS

Being brilliant and installing himself in power was only part of the battle - what followed for the first Warlord of the Kal-A-Nar people was a period of war. This war was waged against any who opposed the Kalinesh and their new Emperor, it was bloody, brutal, and left countless dead in its wake.

The result?

Expansion into territory after territory, through the vast distances that now made up the Kalinesh Empire and it began to dominate in every way. The Empire's coffers brimmed over with coin, their prisons with slaves taken from the countless battles in the war, and their reputation spread.

### KAL-A-NAR TODAY

Most of the northern part of the continent of Shaintar is dominated by the Kal-A-Nar Empire today, they have a new Emperor (who we'll discuss later) and entire societies have been swallowed within the Empire's control. Many of these societies have been turned into slave cultures, including the Everwall Dwarves; the Fae of the Forever Forest; countless Goblins, few of whom are permitted to live in gathers; and more.

At one time the Kal-A-Nar Empire included much of the Eternal Desert along with attempts to enslave the Volin Aradi as well.

For good or ill, the Empire is thought to be the cradle of human civilization. This is where it all began, though during the Great Exodus many fled the Kal Empire's tyranny, forming the Kingdoms of Olara and Galea, the Malakar Dominion, the Freelands, and the Prelacy of Camon as they spread out and away from their former masters.

### ARCHITECTURE

The watch-word for Kalinesh architectural design is defense; they have little time for fancy curlicues and delicate arches. They definitely appreciate art, of course. They just prefer their buildings to be useful, places where they can train in combat, wrestle, beat each other black and blue, and pray to the Goddess of War in private sanctums, as well as sleep, eat, and administer their lands.

Kalinesh cities are impressive to see, with splashes of color and life within their stonework. There's often at least some red or orange in their brickwork, in order to please (or placate) the Queen of Hell, Ceynara, and show total loyalty to the Flame of War. In addition, homes have a tendency to carry the worship of Ceynara throughout with niches for statuary and a fire pit set in a room for worship and sacrifice.



There's little wood used in the main construction of their buildings - due to the risk of fire, and the fact that wood is weaker than stone.

Villages are built around a central hub, a circle of such buildings with doorways pointing inwards toward a well, or gathering place, can easily be protected from attack, allowing the village warriors to turn an attack. This focus in building style has won many a battle before it got started.

Many an overconfident enemy force has been decimated when Kal warriors came pouring out of their homes, armed to the teeth. Even those who managed to enter a home find the women and children armed and prepared to defend their home most aggressively.

In exchange for slightly better living conditions, some favored slaves have imparted building techniques to the Kal builders, allowing them to create incredibly strong town and city walls, along with other defenses.

After learning that triangles are strong when interlinked, a quite sophisticated design for bridges came to be. Circles are also a solid structure, so many of homes are circular - with everything on the ground floor in segmented spaces set aside for specific tasks. They've even developed basic sewer work, and ventilation techniques for their homes, installing chimneys to suck away the smoke from fires.

Of course their buildings lack true artistry on the outside, but no dwarf would be caught dead saying this to their Kal masters. Inside, homes are insulated and warm. Many people have genuinely warm relationships within family and a few close and bonded friends.

## KALINESH NAMES

**Notes:** Kalinesh is trickier than normal: It's got a Scandinavian flavor with variation in the consonants. There's a heavy emphasis on the "hard" consonants, like D, T, G, and K, with a good deal of J and V sounds as well.

### Examples

#### Male

Algot, Arvid, Azor, Bergen, Bjorn, Boril, Dag, Dorgan, Dozir, Egil, Espen, Frenne, Fridjolf, Galar, Grimm, Haken, Harrak, Ilian, Ivar, Johar, Jurd,

Karzan, Kezarin, Leiv, Linnar, Marrik, Nokvi, Odvar, Olav, Ragnar, Rolf, Sigmar, Sarrin, Thalomin, Torvald, Ulf, Velam, Vidkun, Zekol

#### Female

Alvrida, Astrid, Botilla, Brynja, Dagmar, Daisa, Famke, Frodis, Gerda, Gotilda, Helga, Hilma, Ilianna, Ingifrid, Jorun, Kira, Kjella, Lissken, Lovtena, Odgard, Olga, Ragnild, Sigrid, Svala, Thyri, Tova, Vala, Vigdis, Ziva, Zulya

#### Surnames

Kalinesh surnames are almost universally patronymics, starting with "ki" (son of) for men and "kes" (daughter of) for women. For example, if a man named Zekol has a son, Marrik, and a daughter, Dagmar, the son will be called Marrik ki Zekol, and the daughter Dagmar kes Zekol.

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

These people are broad shouldered, sturdy, and built for battle. They work to maintain their abilities, and when they're not training, they're out maintaining their personal defenses. The older men show echoes of their former glory days, and still display muscle and warlike ability.

Women serve the men, but they've strength in their features, beauty, dynamism, and they work just as hard to make their homes strong for their family. There are a few women who take to the training and become warriors themselves.

Both men and women have very long hair, usually kept braided or otherwise bound. Hair colors range from light brown to black with red hair showing up in both genders. This is often thought to be a mark of the Goddess's favor, and those born with fire-red locks are favored.

Their skin tones are somewhat darker than elsewhere - very few Kal are born with pale skin. The Kal have medium to dark eye colors, with coppery or reddish hues being the rarest - and considered by the priests of Ceynara to be mark of the Queen of Hell's favor, though no one knows if this is true or not.

## CLOTHING

When not clad in frightening, bloody, spiky armor, the Kal men and women of all social strata have a variety of clothing. Slaves are expected to wear the



chosen clothing of the house, and woe-betide them if they bring shame upon their house when so attired. It's easy for a Kal to recognize the slave of another house in this way.

Kal commoners wear thick boots, heavy trousers, sturdy shirts, and vests when unarmored. Often a long leather coat is used in colder weather, trimmed with fur. If there's any jewelry, it's often made of red metal, usually copper or rose gold. These clothes have the extra benefit of providing protection as well as keeping the weather at bay. Clothing styles vary for those in the upper caste, with tunics, breeches, soft shoes, and elegant long coats becoming popular amongst the elite, and elegant dresses with flowing or trailing capes for the women.

The colors of these clothes are vibrant and use red, orange, black and other rich colors that are considered unlucky to the rest of Shaintar. The Kal like bright oranges, yellows, reds and ambers. These colors affirm their connection to Ceynara. Jewelry tends to be set in red gold or copper, with rubies, citrine, garnet, or amber, any fire colored gem will do. Opals are very rare and command quite the price due to the fire they seem to contain within.

The Kal are not adverse to borrowing clothing and styles from other cultures though, especially in terms of arms and armor.

## FOOD

An old army saying states "you can't make war on an empty stomach". The Kalinesh know this and know how to fill their bellies. Meat is on the menu in Kal-A-Nar, with a variety of dishes cooked and roasted over open fires. There are meals created around pig, lamb, cow, and venison on the home dinner plates, served in large portions, with simple vegetables in thick gravies made from the juices of the meat.

Nothing goes to waste here. They're not overly fond of desserts, and they don't usually break their meals into delicate courses - they go right for the communal eating concept and eat directly from troughs set along the center of the table. If there's a desire to cleanse the palate after a meal, folks dive right into a strong basted and flavored apple, or sip brandy and port - flavored from berries found to the north.

Game birds are often served in wine reductions and, whilst their other fare is usually given a dash of beer or something stronger for flavor.

If they do have any kind of dessert it's usually made with fruit and fermented milk - along with Keyr, a yoghurt-like substance.

## DRINK

Drink has become more important than food. The Kal have embraced alcohol in a ritualistic way, with drinks central to their love of battle. This has given rise to the oft heard phrase: "If there's one thing you should fear more than a Kalinesh warrior in battle, it is a Kalinesh warrior in battle who's had a skinful."

There's something about alcohol which provides the Kal greater focus, rather than dulling their mind. They're already fearless, but when they've had a drink or two, they're suddenly capable of bravery that leaves mouths agape. There's even a ritualistic drink which is brewed in secret. Ceynara's Fire, as it's called, is a heady mix of herbs, spices, and alcohol and tastes glorious yet knocks even the most ardent dwarf into a deep daze. Imbibing Ceynara's Fire requires a Vigor check (-6). On a success, the character suffers a Fatigue. On a raise, the character suffers no ill effects. Failure results in 2 levels of Fatigue; whereas a critical failure means instant Incapacitation (Fatigue). The effects are cumulative and characters must roll vs Fatigue with each pot of brew consumed. Lands have been lost over who passes out first.

On these people, though, and those trained for war it has the opposite effect; it ignites an intense battle lust. For this reason it's brewed only by priests, and given to warriors before battles, and kept in special jars due to its unstable nature.

Higher born Kalinesh drink wine as well, though this is a recent thing after trade brought it in from Camon and Galea. They prefer full bodied wines, in red varieties, and find the lighter sparkling varieties that are clear to be weak and thus unappealing.

There's also a heated drink made from goat or cow milk, with the addition of cinnamon or other spices that's used in the winter months for warmth. They also make a huge variety of meads from local honey sources, and have elevated mead-making into an art form.