

The Hunt

Freedom – A Dark Sun Site



Introduction

The PCs come across the small, fairly isolated village of Taamak. The village's inhabitants are terrified because of a series of mysterious deaths and the abduction of a girl which was supposed to be delivered to the Villichis next summer. Of course the villagers fear the wrath of the Villichis as well as the return of the deadly "spirit". If the PCs agree to hunt the kidnapper they soon realise that many strange things are going on in the place called Athas...

The adventure is based on the novel 'Wild Seed' by Octavia Butler.

Background

Telek is a twisted ancient psionicist who is obsessed with the creation of a race of perfect psionics. Over the centuries or even millennia he has had several "breeding villages". So far he has not had much luck: a few villages were prematurely discovered by slavers, some he destroyed because the people he brought were beyond his control, some villages perished because the inhabitants killed each other, because they could not control or abused their psionic powers, some raised suspicion of outsiders and were attacked...and some failed because of the interactions of a pyreen - Inaiya - with whom he has been having a strange love-hate relationship for almost as long as he can think. Over all this time he has continually been abducting and breeding people with special "promising" psionic

abilities. Most of his abductions he could perform without causing much havoc at all, but, with age, he becomes more and more careless. He now almost entirely lacks respect for any kind of life. This also has to do with his little "problem": the reason why he is still alive is that he can transfer his mind/spirit to new host bodies - or rather he has to. Under normal circumstances Telek needs a new host body "only" every few months, but under strain he needs a host more often, for example, when exhausting the body with psionics or combat. Telek also uses his ability to kill people.

All of his life, Telek has travelled Athas in search of new breeding material. The majority of his victims have been poor people, especially children. Some agreed to follow him voluntarily, others he forced by threatening to take over their bodies. He is reluctant to take "material" from the higher classes - although this has happened a few times - of fear of being discovered and hunted. He particularly fears the Sorcerermonarchs. In this adventure he abducts a young Villichi, the daughter of one of his experiments, who is supposed to join to the convent soon. When passing through the village of Taamak, Jaladra, the Villichi girl, immediately caught Telek's attention. He had always toyed with the idea of making a Villichi his host body - but this Villichi was particularly special. His senses told him that she was fertile - his experiment had succeeded. Would the legend of the child whose mother is a Villichi come true?

Telek is the main adversary in this adventure - at least at first. The DM can make him as powerful as s/he wants. He could even be one of the first psionics. As a consequence he would probably have only limited or strong "wild" psionic abilities, a fact that he, of course, will try to cover up. Luckily, his presence makes his host bodies extremely charismatic, a side-effect which he uses to appear more powerful. Witnesses of his transformations say that his posture, expressions, gestures and "his" eyes betray his presence in the body. Telek always likes to give himself an air of superiority and invincibility, but despite his cruel, calculated strategy and arrogant behaviour, he is fairly naïve, impulsive and disorganised. On the one hand, it makes him an even more dangerous opponent since he is hardly predictable. On the other hand, he is so eccentric that he ends up doing things that not only endanger his mission, but himself.

The other important person in the adventure is the Pyreen Inaiya. Telek first met Inaiya, when he tried to abduct people who stood under her protection. The Pyreen confronted the intruder and immediately knew she was faced by someone or rather something extremely special. Because of their respective longevity and their extreme charisma the two were fascinated by each other, although their opposed alignments made them fight one another from the start. When Inaiya heard about Telek's ambitions, she was at first appalled and bent on exterminating him. But then she had second thoughts: if Telek could manage to breed a person, or even several people, with extreme talents or special abilities,

it might allow them to confront the Sorcerermonarchs and their minions. The two eventually made a pact, in which Inaiya not only promised protection for his villages, but even agreed to provide her own body for his experiments. In addition, she secretly started her own breeding villages, albeit with different ethics. Despite this pact, however, Inaiya and Telek severely disagreed over the means of participation in Telek's experiments, and especially Telek's level of fanaticism. Occasionally, Inaiya would secretly take suffering people away from Telek while he was on his travels to find new "material". Sometimes, she used them for her own purposes (the DM can decide whether the Villichis themselves were created that way. No matter whether the Villichis are Inaiya's "children" or not, they will stand under her protection in this adventure). Telek is aware of Inaiya's patronage of the Villichis, but, in this adventure, he is willing to take the risk of falling out with his partner-in-crime. As a result, Inaiya is extremely furious (a thing that does not happen very often to Pyreen...) when she finds out about his audacity.

Neither the villagers in the adventure, nor the PCs are aware that anything like a "breeding project" is going on. The PCs only stumble into the situation, and uncover the shocking truth bit by bit.

PART 1 – Taamak

Part 1 is set in the Village of Taamak where Telek has kidnapped the Villichi girl Jaladra. The village is located at the foot of the Black Spine Mountains approximately 35 miles east of Nibenay. It is a small community situated roughly between Fort Inix and Fort Cromlin (see map from Ivory Triangle Boxed Set). The villagers provide services to travellers, including entire caravans. Taamak is surrounded by a 15 ft wall made from stone chippings. The buildings are also fashioned in the same way. Gates and doors are made from imported agafari wood to protect against intruders. Travellers wishing to stay in Taamak have the option between obtaining a room in the Mountain Well Inn or setting up tents on a campsite within the walls.

There are many possibilities of getting the PCs to the village. Here are some examples:

- The PCs are friends of the local healer Ninyas or the caravan guide Kadras, both former adventurers or fellow workers. They are either in the area for a visit, or he sends them an animal messenger.
- The PCs are on the way back from an assignment.
- The PCs are escaped slaves and have ended up in this area.
- The PCs are traders and have dealings with Taamak.
- The PCs ran into a field of wild magic (though your players might be tired of the Magical Mystery Sandstorm Tour)
- The PCs are on the way to deliver a Villichi themselves.
- The PCs bump into a psionist who has been tracking strange phenomena in the area – what he believes to be a powerful psionic parasite (Telek). Or they have been noticing strange deaths amongst a caravan or at a trade post.
- The PCs are mercenaries looking for a job.
- The PCs are Templars who investigate strange phenomena.
- The PCs' caravan got robbed, and the nearest village was Taamak.

The Journey to Taamak

The PCs come across a dead person (killed by Telek) who shows no sign of either dehydration, physical violence or internal damage. It is a traveller from Gulg. His face shows a blissful smile.

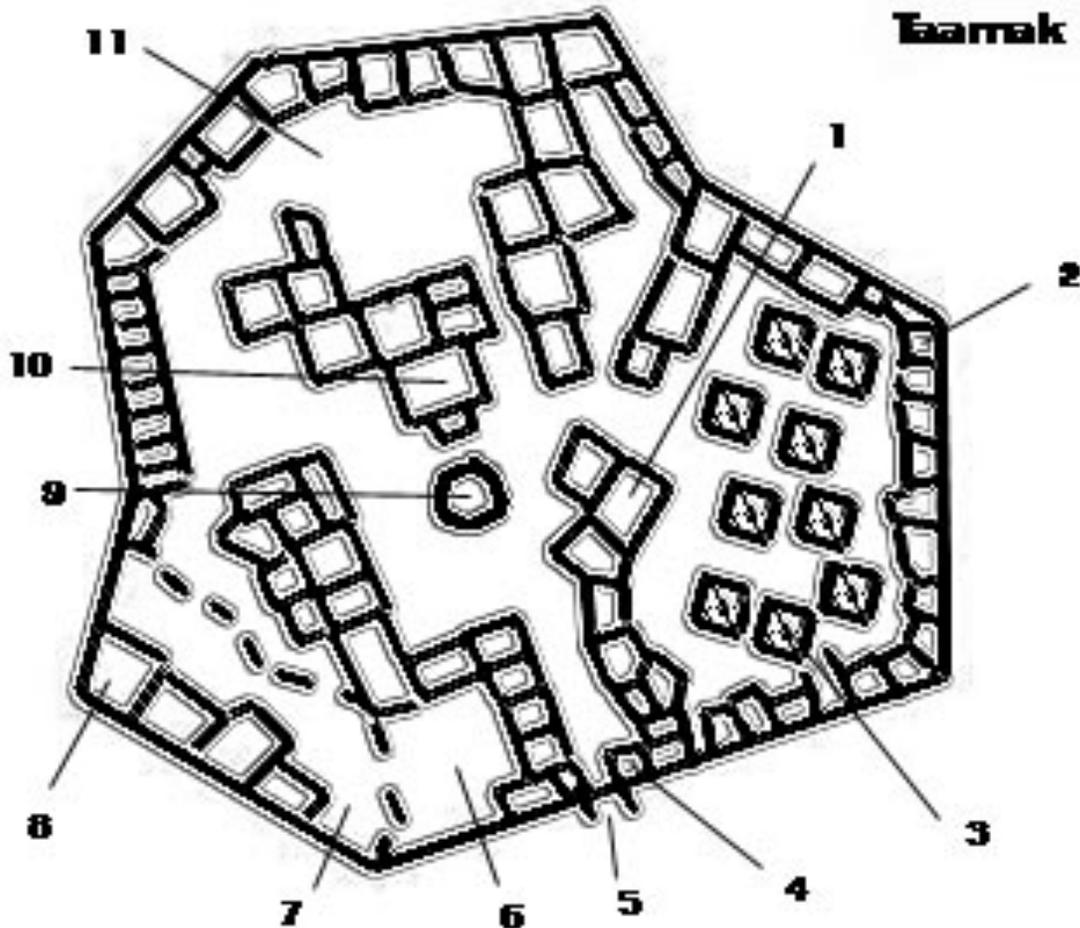
On the way to the village the PCs may have some other encounters, but this is at the DM's discretion. Here are some proposals:

- The PCs encounter a monster. It could behave strangely because it had a previous encounter with Telek.
- The PCs' animals (if they have any) seem to feel immense fear for a moment. After a while they calm down. The PCs cannot see or detect anything.

Arriving in Taamak

On arrival the PCs will notice that the guards are acting strangely. They are very nervous and insecure. They have problems dealing with the PCs and are very unprofessional. They do not really want the PCs in their village, especially when one or more of the PCs looks a bit mysterious or intimidating. But eventually, they will let them in (make it as easy, awkward or tough as you want).

Taamak is a village of mostly human inhabitants. It is fairly self-sufficient, but also trades with other the surrounding forts, tribes and other communities. Some people say, Taamak is so boring they just trade for the sake of entertainment.



Map legend:

- 1 - Mountain Well Inn
- 2 - Accomodation for caravan travellers and kank stalls
- 3 - Tents
- 4 - Gatekeepers
- 5 - Gate
- 6 - Garden of local Earth cleric
- 7 - Cordlu run
- 8 - Animal pens
- 9 - Well
- 10 - House of village chief
- 11 - Market

Immediately the PCs will sense the strange depressed atmosphere in the village. They will notice that the people are not terribly willing to talk to them. Some are in poorly disguised mourning dress. With some observation skills (or intimidation skills?) the PCs should be able to find out that people are making concealed funeral preparations.

If they approach people some of the following answers are possible, depending on how the PCs relate to the person in question:

- "Yes, somebody has died. Sad, but happens... doesn't it?"
- "There have been deaths."
- "People were killed by a strange disease."
- "People died. Very unfortunate. They were quite young. But that sometimes happens. Not to worry..."
- "Get away as long as you can! The village is possessed by an evil spirit. I can't say no more!"
- "I cannot tell you anything. You have to speak to the village chief..."
- "You must help us! They will kill us if we cannot find her!" If the PCs ask "Who?" The person says: "The girl!" He begs them to see the leader of the village.
- "You should leave. This is not a good place for anybody to be at the moment."
- Man/woman approaches them and performs a quick gesture to ward off evil spirits.
- "Six people have died in 2 days. That is a week ago now. Two more people have disappeared."

The Saviours?

If the PCs do not approach the village chief himself, he and a delegation of others will approach them. They flatter the PCs with comments such as: "We see that you are experienced travellers/mercenaries/wise clerics who can handle difficult situations etc." They appear to beat about the bush a little. After a while they are getting more direct. The adventurers are asked if they would perform a little service for the village. If they seem interested, they are told that the matter requires extreme discretion. "You will see why..."

Then the village chief Marduk gives them the whole story:

"Something happened about a week ago: 6 people died. The first victim was the son of a farmer. He was only 19 high suns old. He did not come back from the field so we went looking for him. The next day we found him dead behind some bushes. There was not much left of him. The animals had already fed on him. When we came back to the village we heard that people found that animals were behaving strangely. A day later, the village healer, his wife and their young son were found dead. But they were not the only victims: a village guard and a traveller were found dead as well. Unfortunately this is not all: the daughter of the healer and a friend of the traveller are missing. We need your help!"

The PCs might sense that there is something else that makes the matter so urgent and makes the people behave so secretive: the girl is a prospective Villichi and would soon be collected by the sisterhood. If they find out the girl was abducted or is dead, then the village will feel their wrath. They should have protected her.

The village will offer the PCs almost everything they possess if only they save them from the wrath of the Villichi.

NPCs

Azra Hephstidis, Village Chief

Azra Hephstidis is not exactly the best person for the job he is doing. He basically only does it because no one else wanted to be the chief, and his father was the previous chief. Jaladra's abduction is certainly more than he can handle, and he will be grateful for any help offered. He trained as a fighter, but gave up training after not proving very adept. He also trained as a trader, but is easily intimidated by the powerful merchant houses and their demands.

The name of the Traveller is M'akis Amkhar. He was a geographer working for a Urikite merchant house. He was in town on the way to mapping a new trade route. His friend and 'bodyguard' was called Amman.

Investigating the deaths

The PCs, if they are interested in finding more about the victims or think, that the village has something to hide, they could come across the following information:

All of the victims have a serene smile on their face. No one shows signs of physical violence.

1) The boy who was found was a herdsman. His parents are farmers, and he is the oldest of 6 children. Your "ordinary village lad" who likes to stroll a bit further than he is supposed to. His body is mutilated beyond recognition, because hungry animals found him first.

2) The healer was an ex-Urikite psionist called Ninyas. At least that what he officially told people (he is one of Telek's people who managed to get away - at least for a while). He used to be a travelling healer, but fell in love with the daughter of the Mountain Well Inn keeper and decided to stay in Taamak. At first everybody encountered him with suspicion, but after he used his psionic ability to help with all sorts of problems in the village, people began to trust him. He and his wife Ridala had two children: the boy Raheel and a girl called Jaladra who was born with the signs of the Villich: she is very tall and strong for her age, extremely sensitive to sunlight and showed signs of psionic abilities at an early age. The family was believed to be very happy. Occasionally, adventuring friends or people with strange conditions (people from Telek's breeding stock) would visit Ninyas. The four of them lived in a small house. There are signs of a fight in the main room (Jaladra trying to stop Telek from killing her family with the help of her parents' weapons and psionics). Not only is furniture and crockery broken, but there are also signs of attacks of psionic nature (e.g. ballistic).

3) The guard went away from his fellow guardsman after hearing some kind of noise.

4) Last but not least there is the fellow traveller of the man who was abducted with the girl. He went straight after the kidnapper. The villagers do not know what has become of him. He took all his possessions with him.

The village was not threatened by anybody, nor was the girl stalked by anybody. Most inhabitants of the village, especially the village chief, believe in an evil spirit (of which there are many on Athas) that is so powerful that it does not have to fear the Villich and is punishing the village for some past incident. The PCs hear the following rumour(s) in town (roll 1d6 or choose):

- 1 The evil spirit acts on behalf of a man who was in love with Ridala. He swore to take revenge, when she decided to marry Ninyas. (What the villagers don't know: the man already died trying to steal a magical artefact from a tomb.)
- 2 The evil spirit wanted to punish Ninyas and the whole village for catching and killing an evil defiler who once threatened the village.
- 3 The evil spirit wants to punish the village for the benefits they have enjoyed through Ninyas' psionics.
- 4 The evil spirit regularly visits the village after long periods of absence since some unknown wrong-doing.
- 5 The evil spirit punishes the village for having been built on an old battlefield.
- 6 Roll again twice.

The village chief, on the other hand, thinks that it is a punishment for himself... (1d6)

- 1 for opening a spell-book that he found and played around with (he could be an amateur mage)
- 2 for cheating some inhabitants out of their money
- 3 for judging in favour of a merchant who sexually assaulted a village woman, just because he was afraid that the man would cease trade with Taamak and the village would lose profit
- 4 for thinking negatively of the Villichi.
- 5 from Hamanu, because the village took Ninyas in. He always suspected that he was wanted in Nibenay!
- 6 for all above mentioned reasons.

You may want to elaborate on this and lead your players on the wrong track. You could make them believe that the event is somehow linked with things that happened in the village... but don't frustrate them too much...

Taking up the trail

The villagers will provide the PCs with food, water and reasonable equipment... and some moderate advance funds (so that they don't get tempted to run off).

The direction, in which the "spirit", the traveller and the girl have left, is towards the mountains. The kidnapper seems to have been very careless. There are enough signs pointing into the direction the girl and the traveller have left. For PCs with tracking ability, psionics or spells, it should not be too difficult to follow them, even in the rocky terrain. They might even notice that there are only tracks of three people (since Telek has taken over the body of the traveller).

Again, the PCs could have some ominous encounters on the way that could function as further "markings" that the three or four (there are only tracks of three people since Telek has taken over the body of the traveller) have taken (see below). At this point the PCs might even suspect that the traveller has kidnapped the Villich.

Again, the PCs might have some ominous encounters on the way that could function as further hints or diversions.

Telek, Psionicist, Neutral evil

STR (depending on host body) he sometimes amplifies his strength with psionics

DEX 17

CON (depending on body) the "better" the body, the better his psionic powers

INT 17

WIS 19 (fairly low considering his age, but he ignores a lot of facts)

CHA 23 (does not depend on host body)

Telek is probably the first true psionicist that was born on Athas, together with Taridnay of Raam. Unfortunately, he was born with a strange genetic mutation: he has to transfer his body to other bodies every few months/years.

Telek is obsessed with the idea to create a race of perfect psionicists. (see "Background" for more details)

PART 2 - Following the Trail

In this part the PCs are following Telek and Jaladra to one of Telek's breeding villages: lamh [pronounce: *ee-am*]. Eventually Telek notices that he is followed and sends some of his “failed experiments” (anyone who either turned out too ordinary or too monstrous) to get rid of the PCs.

Into the mountains

It seems as if the kidnapper has not even bothered to try to fool possible followers. He/she/it is heading for exactly the direction that they have taken from the village. The PCs will notice drops of blood (the girl bit or cut herself on the stones while climbing to draw blood and leave a track) and occasional places where a fight has taken place (between the girl and the possessed traveller. The players might not know that the traveller is actually possessed. Maybe this gives them a hint.)

The terrain gets more difficult to climb over time, and the PCs will have to make regular climbing checks.

Use the mountain/rocky terrain encounter table from the Monstrous Compendium to throw in a false attack – the PCs should think that it's the “monster” they are after, rather than a comparably innocent monster...

Example encounters:

- If the PCs are taking a rest during the night, some kes'trekel fly over them but decide not to do anything. Suddenly, the sky is darkened by a massive Roc.
- The PCs are attacked by an undead creature that drains victims in a similar manner to Telek.

An important thing in this scene is to make the PCs a little paranoid. Sensitive PCs will have the feeling that they are being watched by somebody or something from the mountains. Occasionally, there is a bird or winged reptile flying over them. The PCs might find this suspicious. Try to make them as uncomfortable as possible...

They PCs might actually be watched by inhabitants of Telek's village, either to inform Telek's hunters or to see if the PCs can maybe save them from the village.

Visions

The nearer the PCs come to the village, the more frequently they will receive visions (from Tandi'i in Telek's village, see part 3). Tandi'i is a six-year old girl whose enormous powers are prematurely unfolding and getting out of control. Tandi'i will first try to gently contact the PCs telepathically. If the PCs don't allow the contact, Tandi'i will later force some visions upon them. The visions can be the following:

1. The PC/s see a scene of village life in lamh.
2. The PCs see Telek.
3. The PCs see Telek and the girl
4. The PCs see a little girl's hands playing with a strangely shaped toy made from animal hide. Her hands and arms are covered in blood.
5. The PCs remember an scene from their past where a friend needed help.
6. The PCs hear the laughter of a child.

(feel free to invent others)

Finding the Traveller

The PCs come across the (half-eaten) body of a man. It is the traveller that was abducted with the girl. Again, animals (or a nearby hungry cactus) found him first. He was a psionist (Telek prefers to take over the bodies of psionists) and still has 1d4 minor psionic items on him (one might even be life-shaped).

Telek has abandoned the body of the traveller for the body of the traveller's friend who weakened the host body in a fight with Telek. The PCs will see that a fight has taken place. There might even be a bloody stone or two (the Villichy girl will have seized the opportunity to fight Telek).

Strange Encounters

This is, where the weirdness truly starts. One night, the group is attacked by weird humanoids with strange psionic powers. They were sent by Telek to kill the PCs before they reach the village.

Telek prefers to send out men, because women are harder to come by for his breeding experiments. He also does not want to lose any of his more "valuable material" in combat, so he will mainly send out "failed experiments" or other "expendables".

The DM can decide how many of them, how powerful and what abilities/looks they possess. All they have to have in common is that they are all clad in black. Here are some sample attackers:

Talako (elf)

Appearance: Tall, pale skin, long white hair (tied back as a pony-tail) and almost white, pale blue eyes. Creepy, chilly aura. He is clad in black cloth trousers, a long black tunic and beetle skin armour.

Abilities: Freezes everything he touches and tries to psionically shatter them afterwards

Weapons: None other than himself. Can be changed at the DMs discretion. For additional bizarreness he might also fight with icicles.

Alignment: lawful neutral

Role-playing: Imagine him like Sub-zero from Mortal Combat. Talako is fiercely loyal to Telek.

Namid (human)

Appearance: short black hair, tanned skin, dark eyes and a well-groomed short beard.

Abilities: disappears and re-appears to confuse his opponent.

Weapons: short piercing weapons and a leather rope for strangling

Alignment: neutral evil

Role-playing: arrogant, determined. Namid's true loyalties do not lie with Telek. Namid secretly supports Kharon, a former member of Telek's village who got thrown out of the community and seeks revenge

Reeak (half-elf)

Appearance: short brown hair, dark skin and vivid green eyes.

Abilities: fast regeneration. Once he is wounded he heals in seconds unless his brain is somehow damaged so that he is killed.

Weapons: poison darts with poison that causes pain and paralysis

Alignment: chaotic evil

Role-playing: cruel, mocking. Reeak kills and tortures for pleasure.

Osahr (no one knows)

Appearance: shaven head, grey eyes and grey skin. Rather small, athletic figure.

Abilities: can quickly extend and re-shape body parts

Weapons: obsidian knives (of the 'disposable' kind (they break off inside the body)

Alignment: chaotic neutral

Role-playing: annoyed. Likes inflicting pain on "normal" people, but would rather have a good night's sleep.

Kesayah (dwarf)

Appearance: long black hair, brown skin, short statue.

Abilities: extremely powerful psionic attacks.

Weapons: knife, but only fights with psionics until no other option.

Alignment: lawful neutral

Role-playing: Kesayah does not like fighting. He just seeks to protect the village.
He likes killing even less.

Yaril (human? half giant?)

Appearance: short white hair, pale skin and grey eyes. Huge statue.

Abilities: drains life and PSP

Weapons: Throwing axe. Yaril needs hand or eye contact to drain life or PSP.

Alignment: lawful evil

Role-playing: not very intelligent, will make many miscalculations in combat.
These will make him angry.

Tuarik (human shifter)

Appearance: short brown hair, grey eyes, wild look.

Abilities: can shape-shift into a kirre. You can also make him a "Kirren", a race created by Angantyr (raptor2@brookings.net) at The Dragon's Sanctum. If the site still exists, the Kirren are under "Miscellaneous".

Weapons: claws

Alignment: chaotic neutral

Role-playing: quite wild and uncontrolled, predatory

If there are dead bodies, the PCs will probably search them: Apart from their weapons they have not many valuables on them. The only thing each of them might possess is body decoration such as stone/obsidian/wooden/leather jewellery, tattoos or a carved figurine.

If the PCs aim to defeat the men without killing them, or have one or two survivors, they may want to question the men. Unfortunately, they won't give them much information, even if the PCs torture them. The most they will get out of them will be:

"He/Telek will kill you all!!!"

"You do not stand a chance against all of us!"

"We will be avenged..."

or even: "Uuh, I quite enjoy this..."

If the PCs are good "inquisitors" or manage to "scan" the hostages, the information they extract will be at the DM's discretion.

If successful in defeating their attackers, the PCs may want to follow their tracks to the village or follow the teleport. Only the shapeshifter will have come "on foot" - all others will have teleported or been teleported.

If the PCs are defeated, their opponents will want to kill them. In this case there are a few options for the benevolent DM how to avoid the killing (and the sudden end of the adventure?).

- Inaiya helps the PCs and asks them to get Jaladra. She does not necessarily reveal that she is a Pyreen. She pretends to be a normal druid who needs a bit of help (Inaiya cannot get personally involved because of her contract with Telek).
- Tandi'i helps the PCs by breaking the concentration of the attackers.
- The PCs have interesting characteristics and Telek turns up and rescues them, because he wants them as breeding stock. Telek will disable their psionic abilities with a special necklace and has them taken to the village.
- The PCs are taken to the village as host bodies for Telek or as "canon fodder" Tandi'i's transition (see Part 3).

In any event, Inaiya will have heard about the abduction of Jaladra, in whose creation she might have had a hand. She will want her back, but cannot do this so easily, so she has to rely on the PCs. She will try to be as subtle as possible with her assistance, but will show herself and talk to the PCs if need be. She might also inform the Vilichi in order to use them as a backup force. Again, she is reluctant to bring her own people into the conflict and would rather use (and sacrifice) others.

Inaiya, Pyreen, Neutral good

STR 16
DEX 19
CON 24
INT 19
WIS 24
CHA 23

Inaiya usually lives the secluded life of a Pyreen. The only time she gets out of her isolation is when Telek causes trouble. Telek used to be her lover, and they had many children together over the centuries. This is partly the reason why Inaiya cannot kill him – he has been a part of her life for a very long time.

PART 3 - The Village of lamh

In this part the PCs will witness the transition of Tandi'i, one of Telek's experiments. Tandi'i is the young daughter of the shapeshifter Laara (a descendent of Inaiya) Awaan (a descendent of Telek). Telek loved her from the beginning. He visited the village more regularly, just to see her.

Most psionics on Athas undergo a transition in mild form, when their psionic ability manifests for the first time. Most of the psionics in Telek's breeding programme undergo an especially violent transition, partly, because of the strong powers they exhibit, and partly, because of an inherited genetic trait that Telek cannot seem to breed out of his experimental subjects. The next person in the village to transition is Tandi'i. At six years old, Tandi'i is way too young to transition, but her enormous powers have already started to manifest. Telek is expecting an extremely violent transition and needs a suitable transition medium, as well as 'cannonfodder' near her, in case she goes on a psionic rampage and that cannot be contained so easily. Telek wants to sacrifice "unimportant" people, not his best "stock".

Entering the Village

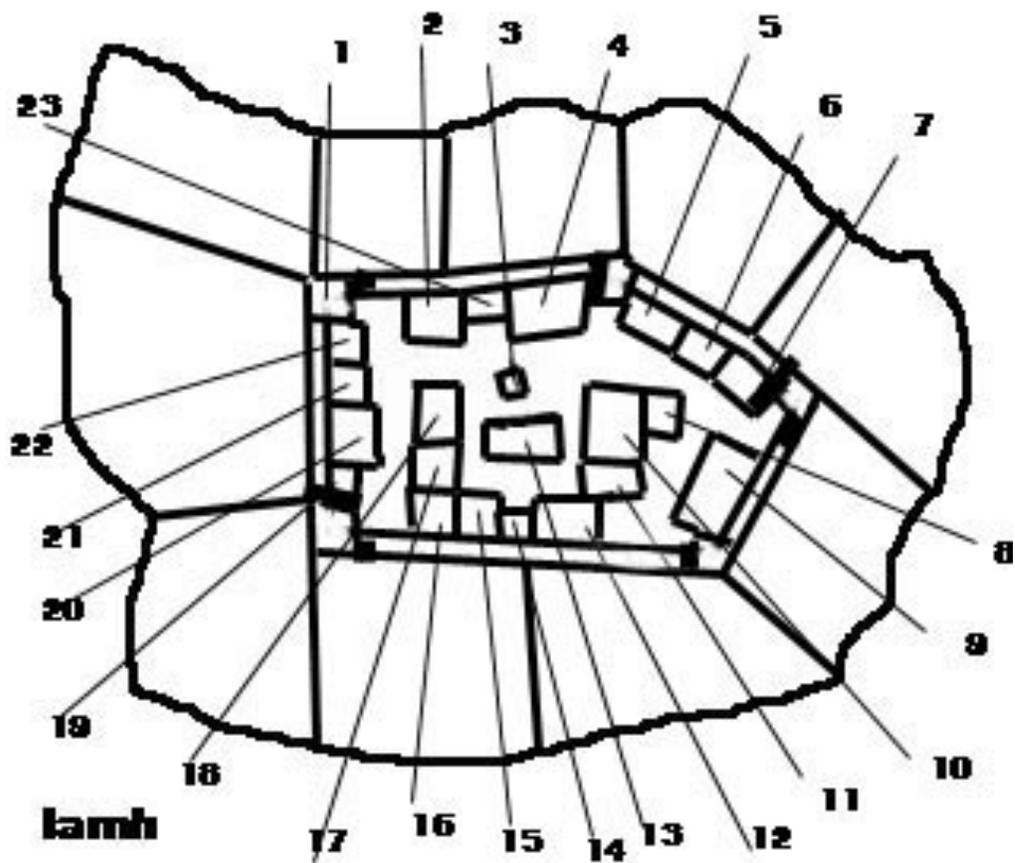
Telek's village is situated on a little mountain plateau surrounded by fields. To reach it, the PCs will probably have to climb up, if they were not taken prisoners in the last scene. Currently there is nobody in the fields. The village is guarded by several mechanisms:

- The plateau is surrounded by a tough psionic shield which only has one 5 ft x 5 ft entry at about 3 ft above the ground. In front of this shield is an illusion that gives people the impression that they are facing another mountain wall leading up to a peak. Earth clerics will be able to feel that the stone wall is fake.
- Once through the illusion, the PCs will see fields with up to waist high crops are growing. In the distance they will see another smaller plateau on top of which they can spot a wall and some watch towers: Telek's village.
- The walls of the plateau on which the village sits are modified: the natural ridges have been deepened and made sharper and smoother so that it would resemble trying to climb up the edges of large obsidian swords.
- The village itself, built on the ruins of an old fortress, is surrounded by a 15 ft. high stone wall with 5 watch towers. Another invisible bubble shaped psionic shield starts from the foot of the stone wall. Currently, two guards are posted on each post at the five corners of the wall to observe the gates. Four others are patrolling the village on the inside. Telek and his guards are very confident that they are superior, so the patrols are a little careless.

It should not be in the capabilities of the PCs to overcome all of these obstacles. After all, they are dealing with an ancient psionist who has been shielding his villages for (literally) ages. This is where the PCs are contacted by Tandi'i again. She can see and feel the PCs and is curious about them. She has never been allowed outside of the village and wants to meet the PCs without people doing them harm. She already feels the power that the transition is giving her and will create fluctuations in the field that will allow the PCs to get through.

In addition, there are some more options for the PCs to enter the village, including:

- The PCs set the fields on fire and wait for people to come out of the village. Indeed, some higher level fighters/psionists than the previous ones will come out and deal with the PCs and the fire...
- The PCs climb up to the village. Telek and his off-spring are watching them. By day, they will be spotted easily, unless they somehow manage to hide or cast an illusion around them. Illusions created with the help of magic will less likely be spotted than psionic illusions. By night the PCs might have a chance of escaping the villagers' view.
- Inaiya, the Pyreen intervenes and prevents the PCs from being spotted. You can also introduce the PCs to Inaiya at this stage, if they need help.
- Tandi'i is entering the first fit of her transition. She kills and mutilates lots of people in the village just by not being able to control her telepathic powers and therefore transmitting the physical and mental pain she feels to other villagers. The PCs will, for example see that a guard is falling dead (or paralysed by pain) over the wall. At the same time the field will have its first fluctuation.



Map Legend:

- 1 - Watchtower (all corner buildings are watchtowers)
- 2 - Kesayah (male human psychic warrior), Tibor (female half-elf psychic warrior) and their three small children.
- 3 - Well
- 4 - Garl (weaponsmith with super-human strength and some psychic abilities related to his work), Ariil (female half-elven beast-master) and their son Rwen. Ariil mainly works with large birds who occasionally land on top of the house.
- 5 - Tuarik and his schizophrenic wife Elana.
- 6 - Reeak and Uthos, a human ex-gladiator who can influence storms.
- 7 - Namid
- 8 - Phrias the hermit. A druid.
- 9 - Tools and kanks
- 10 - Khamraan, the psion. Teaches psionics.
- 11 - Yaara, Telek's latest acquisition. She is a shy 16-year-old half-elf ex-slave.
- 12 - Tuarik, Osahr and a human woman called Dherana.
- 13 - Telek's residence (stands empty during his absence)
- 14 - Yaril

15 - Hal (male human psion), Reela (human Changed psion) and 6 children.
16 - Laaren (female human psion), Kareel (male human psychic warrior) and 4 children.
17 - Ulara (female human healer) and Sheqwuna (female half-elf Changed psychic warrior), Ulara's 3 children and Sheqwuna's 2 children.
18 - Building of Tandi'i's family. Tandi'i's mother Laara was the village's transition medium.
19 - Raaki (female half-elf ranger)
20 - Tuarik and his partner Kaari and 3 children.
21 - Targas (male human psychic warrior) and his son Maok.
22 - Osahr, Maladra (female human Changed) and 2 children.
23 - Talako's hut
The black marks are gates to the fields.

Inside the Village

Once inside the village, the PCs can see that it consists of 21 stone buildings (see map below). The population is mostly made up of humans, but a few half-elves can be found as well (see plan). The majority of the people look fairly normal and have no obvious mutations or special gifts. There is an almost equal number of men and women with a slight surplus of men. What the PC might notice is the fact that, in the village, there are no old people. Telek regularly kills people if they are too old to breed or do not make good foster-parents any longer. On a normal day, the village is fairly busy: most of the people are practising their crafts, tend to the fields nearby, build additional houses or shelters and see to the animals. Everybody seems fairly happy, although the atmosphere is a bit strange and sometimes a bit tense if "things" have happened. This strangeness is not obvious at first sight. At night the village seems very quiet at first, but, after a period of close listening, suppressed moans and screams can be heard (people having vivid nightmares).

If the PCs do not enter so stealthily (e.g. by night or with the help of illusions), but cause major havoc, the most vulnerable people will have fled to the community hall, and the remaining villagers try to fight them.

In case the PCs managed to get in unnoticed they might witness the following scenes:

- Two men who are helping to build a house just levitate the stones on top of each other. It does not seem to be the slightest effort for them and they carry on shifting stones for a long while until they do something else. Alternatively the PCs might witness the two men getting more stones by simply blasting them off a rock (again, with seemingly effortless psionics).

- A few kids are helping their parents clean the animal shelters. One kid starts throwing dung at another kid. The result is a fight during which the offended kid hacks the other kid's hand off (with an axe or with psionics). After a few seconds the missing body part grows back. The brutal kid is simply told off by his father.
- Animals are sedated with psionics before being slaughtered. (Very strange idea for your average Athasian).
- Water and cooking stones are heated with psionics for lack of wood.

The Transition

At the point, the DM can decide how to use Tandi'i's transition, perhaps depending on how the PCs have entered the village and what situation they are in. Tandi'i's transition should kick in at a crucial "dramatic point" in the PCs' situation.

If they have come in just after Tandi'i started her transition they will find the village unnaturally quiet. Not a soul seems to be in the whole place. If the PCs cast a detect life spell they will notice that most people are in the community building and only a few people in other buildings (Tandi'i and some severely wounded people).

If they approach one of the buildings with people in them they will find themselves surrounded by warriors, and after a while Telek himself will speak to them. He did not expect Tandi'i to go into transition so soon and she has just killed the only capable transition medium in the village. Also, Tandi'i is more powerful than he expected. He does not believe that she can survive her early transition, but he wants to give her a chance. However, he cannot help her himself as, when she attacks him, his instinct will be to take over her body. If the PCs are either psionicists, clerics, monks or druids or have a high constitution and a calm mind he is prepared to spare the PCs' life for the sake of Tandi'i. She is Telek's most promising subject to date, and he would go quite far to help her, even if it costs the life of other villagers/lovers/favourites.

If the PCs have been taken prisoners or have somehow managed to get in unnoticed they will witness how a woman (the healer Ulara) comes running towards Telek (who wears the body of the friend of the traveller). It will happen whether the PCs arrived in Telek's custody or not. "Telek, it is Tandi'i! You must help! She has entered transition!" Telek will answer: "That this is not possible. She is too young." But he follows the woman and looks very concerned. If the PCs are with him, he will drag them along with him.

If the PCs or one of the PCs witness this scene, they might either want to follow him or decide to seize this opportunity to look for Jaladra. If they are prisoners they might see a chance of fighting or escaping Telek.

If the PCs are caught at any point in the village, they will be engaged in combat, and if they lose, they will be brought to Telek. He will throw them in with Tandi'i as "cannon fodder".

If the PCs surrender without a fight, Telek will ask their help. He will tell them that there is a very gifted girl who is currently going through her transition phase (where her powers manifest). The transition came unusually soon, and she is reacting extremely badly to it. Telek asks their assistance to help him calm Tandi'i down without going too much into the details (although he will when prompted). If the PCs manage to do this, he will spare them (at least he says that, he usually does not keep his promises, he finds promises a very naïve thing).

If the PCs manage to defeat the attackers, they have the following options:

- follow Telek and the woman
- keep on searching the village for the girl
- expose themselves to more opponents
- flee the village and make a new plan

Cannon-fodder

The woman leads Telek to one of the larger stone houses. She stops in front of it and refuses to go inside. Telek asks where the foster parents are, and the woman replies that they are inside with the girl. Telek enters the house and immediately senses the girl's immense power - and her madness.

Tandi'i is building a mental link with everybody in the village (that includes the PCs). Everybody has to endure what she is experiencing whilst sometimes getting glimpses of each other's memories. This might cause one or two other villagers to go into transition, too, in case the DM needs more stuff happening to occupy the PCs.

From experience, Telek knows that there is a chance that if the girl exhausts herself from a killing spree, and she might calm down. Only then, it will be safe for anyone, even him, to go near her - and kill her if she cannot be cured of her madness. Without any warning, the PCs might suddenly find themselves being teleported into the room with the girl.

If the PCs are in some random other place in the village, they see how two villagers scream and fall down. They hear a horrible cracking noise as if all their bones are broken by some strange force. Blood shoots out of their noses and ears. A few seconds later, they hear other screams. Tandi'i is now running amok with her powers. Everyone in the village could be her next victim.

Jaladra will be one of the people affected. She has been contacted by Tandi'i and has been able to escape to her house in the chaos. The PCs will hear Jaladra scream. If they are in the same place they will feel at the same time how something is reaching out to them.

Tandi'i will start to inflict pain on the PCs and send them nightmares. The PCs might want to get to the source of pain before it gets them entirely. They can either fight Tandi'i or try to calm her down...

What will they do if they find out that the evil psionist is actually a little girl?

If the PCs try to flee. Tandi'i will use her power to hinder them, e.g. by breaking one PC's leg(s) or causing them pain in the head. If they cannot do anything, they may get saved by Inaiya.

If the PCs are near the Tandi'i's house: Tandi'i is "just a little girl" crying for help. The PCs might feel the urge to help her, and then realise that she is the source of psionic havoc in the village.

If the PCs were not captured, but followed Telek, or just approached the house by pure chance, they suddenly feel a strong presence. It is Tandi'i contacting them. She can use her extreme powers in a wide radius without having to be face to face with the PCs (or anybody else in the village). She can feel and see them. Their minds are open to her.

If the PCs were looking for the Jaladra, they will find her in a room with a human girl with brown, intricately braided hair. She wears a dark red dress that matches the desert sand in the area. Normally brown-skinned, she looks deadly pale and clings to a furry toy in her arms that resembles a jozhal. She sits on a bed and looks at the PCs with her deep brown eyes. Her body is trembling slightly. She is covered in sweat.

Jaladra

2nd level fighter/3rd level psionist, chaotic neutral (so far)

STR 14

DEX 17

CON 16

INT 15

WIS 13

CHA 16

Jaladra is the daughter of Ninyas, one of Telek's experiments. She never knew about her father's connection to Telek.

Jaladra used to be a shy and insecure girl, but in the months leading up to her abduction, she started to become more fierce and assertive. This is why she caused Telek so much trouble en route to the village. Telek believes that she will have trouble fitting into Villich society as he senses her deeply chaotic nature.

Jaladra heard Tandii's call, and tried to calm her down, having gone through a similar transition herself fairly recently. At first she seemed pretty successful. But then she started to experience difficulties. If her concentration on Tandii is somehow disrupted she will face Tandii's anger. If not, she has a good chance of calm the girl down with the help of the PCs. What Tandii mainly needs is assistance in channelling and controlling her new powers. This can be done by entering her mind and helping her with suitable 'imagery' to counteract the maddening imagery that currently goes around in her mind. It can also be done without psionics, by verbally getting through to her and 'feeding' her instructions. Or the PCs could try to find a target that will exhaust her, such as the mountain or even Telek. If Tandii attacks Telek, he will try to fight against his instinct to take her body over, because she is so valuable to him. This struggle, plus whatever else the PCs do to support Tandii, could help her.

To her left is a half-open door that leads to another room. A trail of blood leads into it. The scene in the room is quite gruesome: two mangled bodies (Tandii's mother Laara and her current partner Aku) hover under the ceiling. Blood is dripping from many slashes. An obsidian dagger is hovering in the air as well and is pointing at the PCs who entered the room. At first it seems frozen in the air, but then it starts to slash at an incredible speed and shoots towards the PCs. They suddenly notice that they cannot move their feet. There is, however, a willpower save against this, although it is quite difficult (-5).

The PCs cannot leave the house unless they are quite powerful. If PCs stay with Tandii, they should be able to distract her (break her concentration for a while) and interfere with her control of the dagger. If the PCs fail their checks (the PCs against the skill or stat that they are most competent in: Dexterity, Wisdom, Intelligence, Intuition etc. Reward creative role-playing above all.), Tandii may turn against them. This can be in the following ways:

- She lets the PC's internal organs or bones burst one by one (working her way up to the brain).

- She amplifies the PC's deepest fears and lets him/her suffer from them in, what the PCs think is the real life. He/she is about to get mad or die from fear.
- She sets a PC on fire.
- She distorts the PC's body.
- She continuously smashes him/her against the wall(s) with telekinesis.
- Tandi'i creates illusions around the PCs. They have to fight against opponents they have fought against in the past.

If the PCs have no means of calming the girl down, Inaiya will intervene, not caring any longer about the contract. Telek should (and will) be grateful for her intervention at this point.

Once someone can calm Tandi'i down, healers will approach to look after the girl as well as any people around her who need help.

Resolution

Whether the PCs manage to get out unharmed or not, Inaiya will appear - in human form. She became enraged when she saw what the girl was going through. The PCs will witness her having a loud, public argument with Telek in the village square. If they haven't seen Inaiya before, they will see a charismatic dark-haired woman in a long brown robe arguing with Telek in an ancient language they may or may not be able to understand. They will certainly understand some words, including the following: villich, experiment, Lalali-Puy (Inaiya reminds Telek of the time where he nearly got their project discovered by the Oba). This may give the PCs the wrong idea. Of course, the PCs can interfere in the argument or ask for explanation. Telek will always be rather arrogant towards them, whereas Inaiya be annoyed by their intrusion, but not be as condescending.

At the end of the argument, Inaiya will push for a decision on what to do with the PCs. How much do they know and what should be done with them? Inaiya will want the PCs to go free and take Jaladra back to the village. Telek will grudgingly give in, but the PCs can maybe tell that he hasn't quite given up on Jaladra yet. When they leave, Jaladra will shout at Telek that he will regret it if he ever lays hands on her again.

At the DM's discretion, something freaky may have happened to Jaladra, for instance, that she and Tandi'i have a permanent psychic link now. The PCs also won't know how Tandi'i develops. Will she ever be truly sane? Throw as much creepiness as possible at the PCs.