

tales of the

# Caliphate Nights



Aaron Infante-Levy



# Adventures in the Islamic Empire

*Inspired by the One Thousand and One Nights*

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## Part 1: Introduction

### *The Caliph's Decision*

As the sun rose over the battlefield north of Adana, the three generals were worried; reports had just come in that Harun al-Rashid, Commander of the Faithful, had been taken captive by the Romans. Amir Adin al-Safih stroked his beard; he was younger than the other two generals, and had only met the Caliph, this leader who men followed to their deaths despite never having drawn his own sword, but once. Adin received the news with bitterness; the Caliph was no warrior and had no business in the field of battle. The first rays of light filtered through the clouds, causing the gilded general's tent to glimmer in the sun. Adin splashed cool water on his face, performing the necessary ablutions after battle, and entered the tent still in his armor.

"Ah, the general of Safih! How does your people's tradition of the general leading the charge feel now?" asked Amir Umar ibn-Abdallah. Umar began this campaign confident that they would topple the walls of Constantinople. The fact that they had instead intercepted a small force of Romans just north of Syria offended his sensibilities. That the Caliph's army outnumbered the Romans three-to-one and the battle had gone on for several nights without resolution angered Umar beyond reckoning.

"The enemy you can look in the eye is better than the one you never see," quipped Adin, walking over to the large map that was at the center of the room. "What are the latest reports regarding the Caliph?"

Amira Dassouse al-Damaski leaned over the general's map, her hands spread wide across the table. Her hard stare, which could level mountains, hid an unfailing devotion to the Caliph, though she was not above reproaching him. "My scouts confirm that he has been taken by the Romans. They say he was trying to rescue a fallen comrade, most likely Masrur." She added with a grin, "That fool!"

Umar smiled grimly. "That doesn't sound like my Caliph. Risking his life for a eunuch slave?"

"Oh, really?" asked Amira, a hint of an edge in her voice.

"Are we certain it's not one of the decoy soldiers we sent disguised as the Caliph to draw the Romans out?" Umar asked impassively.

Adin shook his head, "They're all dead."

Dassouse looked up in shock. "Even Aziz?" She fought back the tears at the news of her brother's death. Pushing Adin's hand away, Dassouse refused to meet his eyes and instead fixed her gaze to the battlefield map.

"These Romans are unlike any other. Their banners are irregular; their weapons shoddy, I'd reckon half of them are mercenaries. Yet they fight as if possessed," said Umar, as we stood away from Dassouse,

our voices growing low.

"It's stranger than that," Adin whispered, drawing forth a nappy clump of black and white hair. "From one of the soldiers I faced in battle while trying to reach the Caliph." Breathing upon the hair, Adin held forth his hand; slowly the hair began to writhe around his fingers like a snake. "It is ghul hair, the soldiers say, the work of Iblis, made from smokeless flame."

Recoiling, Umar was shaken. "It must be destroyed. Send it from whence it came!" he said, pointing to a lit brazier nearby.

Adin hesitated for a moment, and then thrust his hand into the fire. The hair curled about Adin's fingers, as if trying to escape the flame then rapidly burned away. Withdrawing his hand before it burned, Adin turned to Umar as suddenly the brazier exploded in a shower of sparks knocking Adin to his knees.

Of all the world's fell and hideous creatures, the beast that stood before them was the most terrible. A tall woman with wrinkled gray skin, a fanged maw, sharp hairy ears, and burning red eyes stood before them in her battle garments, a clump of her long stringy black and white hair missing. A heavy axe in one hand, she held a chain in the other which was about the neck of a severely beaten soldier dressed in the golden armor of the Caliph. She was a ghul, depraved in her majesty, and horrific in countenance.

Adin, seeing Umar frightened beyond reason and Dassouse uncharacteristically frozen by terror, drew his sword in defense of the other two generals. The ghul opened her mouth and fiery light emerged from within, "I have bound your Caliph, surrender this lost cause and bow before me, for I ride to the gates of Baghdad. No mortal can withstand me; I am of the blood of Az-Karagh, first among his daughters!"

The efforts of the guards outside to aid their commanders were repulsed by hungry flames. Adin averted his eyes, but held fast to his sword. No stranger to fear, Adin knew that courage was not the lack of fear, but action in the face of it. "Bint Az-Karagh, you are gravely mistaken; I will finish the fight I started!" Roaring, Adin lunged at the ghul. He was stopped in the middle of his stroke by a savage kick to the gut. As Adin sprung to his feet, the beast launched her collared captive through the air, knocking Adin aside with the soldier's body. The soldier tugged at the collar, determined not to be used as a weapon again.

Adin, dazed by the vicious assault, could only watch as the ghul rested her axe on his neck. "Your judgment is between you and your Lord. I shall oblige Him and arrange your meeting," said Bint Az-Karagh as her axe rose in the air.

From the threshold of the burning tent came a woman's strong voice, "Stand, ghul!" Leaping into the flames, a second Amira Dassouse appeared scimitar in hand. "That you have threatened my liege is insult









enough, but that you think us stupid enough to expose the Caliph to filth such as you is a double insult!”

Realizing the soldier she had captured was not the Caliph; the ghul screamed her rage and swung her axe in a mighty blow. Dassouse deftly parried the blow and the women did battle as the flames drew near. At last Amira bound Bint Az-Karagh with the very chain with which the ghul sought to bind the Caliph. Then, as suddenly as it had begun, the fight ended with Dassouse’s blade of damascus steel at the neck of the beast. Dassouse dragged the ghul from the burning tent as the others followed. They were soon surrounded by the Caliph’s guards. Dassouse yanked the chain around the ghul’s neck. “If you do not know the one who is sitting before you, I shall introduce him...”

The false “Dassouse” peeled away his mask and removed his cloak. There stood Caliph Harun al-Rashid in his sovereign raiment! The shocked soldiers bowed before him.

“You are in the presence of the seventh son of Abbas, al-Rashid, son of al-Mahdi son of al-Hadi and brother of al-Saffah, son of Mansur! Speak only when spoken to, do not look him in the eyes, and tell the truth and nothing but the truth, and do not lie, for you should be truthful even if the truth sends you to the Hell-Fire.” Dassouse said elegantly, a memorized introduction used only by the elite secret agents of the Caliph.

Harun al-Rashid wiped the soot from his hands. First he addressed his own double, ordering guards to remove the collar from his neck. Harun held a whispered conference with the man, listening to his report while keeping one eye on the ghul. A handsome leader, Harun looked much as other men, but his eyes were haunting, the kind of eyes that are never forgotten.

Circling the chained ghul, Harun al-Rashid appraised his opponent. “We meet at last Bint Az-Karagh. I had thought only the patriarchate of Malik Sayoun used men as mounts for your tricks of sihr. What did you think to gain from marching on my city? Do you not know that Baghdad is the most defensible city in the world and that I have banners of jann who have sworn bay’ah to me? Who sent you, your father?”

The ghul remained silent, glaring at the Caliph with hatred.

“I may not be able to compel you are a sha’ir might, Bint Az-Karagh, but I do have my methods, one you will find impossible to resist.” Harun leaned close to the ghul’s face, evidencing no fear of her. “You have fallen prey to my ploy to lure you out, my decoy has reported upon the weaknesses of your army learned while behind your lines, and death is imminent for you. Do you still wish to remain silent?”

Spitting at the Caliph, the ghul snarled, “How will you make me talk little man, bore me to death? You are but a speck of blood, soon swallowed by the boundless sand of the desert!”

Dassouse tightened the chain about the ghul’s neck and several guards leveled their swords at the ghul’s

throat. “How dare you speak to the Commander of the Faithful that way?” demanded Dassouse.

“Stay your blades,” bade Harun. “What would you say if I could grant you freedom from your father? To break your oath and remake it anew?”

“Impossible!” The ghul hissed, writhing in her chains. “I have sworn in the name of Kashkash – there is no greater oath.”

“Ah, but you would consider it?” asked Harun, arching his brow, regally insistent. The ghul mutely nodded. Caliph Harun al-Rashid said to the recently freed soldier, “Bring me the Prophet’s sword.”

A murmur passed through the assembled soldiers and the generals shared pained looks of dread. Surely the rumors of the Caliph’s madness were exaggerated. Surely he would not attempt to bind the ghul. Dark clouds rolled over the Caliph’s camp, wind moved through the tents, and the first bolt of lightening pierced the sky. Dhu al-Faqar, the holiest sword in all Islam, was paraded through the camp. Merely the sight of it caused soldiers to weep and fall to one knee. The reverence of the sword had been forged in blood; when Ali ibn Abu Talib returned from the Battle of Uhud, where he wielded Dhu al-Faqar, he was covered with blood from his hands to his shoulders. To the Shi’a it was a representation of everything Ali embodied. To the Sunni it was a sacred relic. And to Caliph Harun al-Rashid it was a sword with which to subjugate the disbeliever.

Holding the blade over the ghul’s head, the caliph demanded she swear a bay’ah to him, but the ghul refused. Agony wracked the ghul’s body. “Swear! Swear as you have sworn to your wicked ancestor! Swear that you will serve me loyally; swear upon the name of God, the Almighty and Merciful!” Lightning flashed in the sky above. It was too much for the younger soldiers to bear, the regal glory, the wrathful piety of the Caliph unveiled before their very eyes. They looked away while his generals looked on, bearing witness to the binding.

At last, sobbing, the ghul swore the oath, and as she did, the breastplate she wore cracked and the chain about her neck was sundered. Dhu al-Faqar shined with holy light. Bint Az-Karagh belonged to the Caliph now. Looking up with tears streaming from her eyes, no longer burning red but colored as a mortal’s would be, Bint Az-Karagh gazed at the Caliph, her sovereign. “What would you bid of me, Commander of the Faithful?”

al-Rashid sheathed the holiest of blades, and performed ablutions to avoid the stain of evil. Having finished he spoke, his voice was like the sun emerging from behind the clouds. “You must obey the commands of God and follow the example of the Prophet, peace be upon him.”

“Yes, what more?” asked the defeated ghul in a pleading tone.

“Second,” said Harun, his face becoming sinister, “tell me of your father, of Malik Sayoun, Jinnistan, and about the Romans. Tell me what they know. Tell me everything...”





## Chapter 1: The Arabian Adventure

*"In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, in Him I trust. Praise be to God, the Beneficent King, the Creator of the world and man, who raised the heavens without pillars and spread out the earth as a place of rest and erected the mountains and made the water flow from hard rock. I praise Him the Supreme Lord for His Guidance, and I thank Him for His infinite grace. To proceed, I should like to inform the noble reader that the purpose of writing this agreeable and entertaining book is the instruction of those who peruse it, for it abounds with edifying histories and excellent lessons, and provides opportunity to learn the art of discourse, as well as what happened to kings from the beginnings of time. This book abounds also with splendid biographies that teach the reader to detect deception, to protect oneself from it, as well as providing delight and diversion when the reader is burdened with the cares of life and the ills of this world. It is the Supreme God who is the True Guide."*

- Foreword to the *Arabian Nights*

The Golden Age of Islam was a time of both piety and tyranny that produced the first written copy of the *One Thousand and One Nights*. Just as the stories of the *Nights* were interpretations of history and folklore, there are many interpretations of the world of the *Nights*. Most fantasy role-players are familiar with common stories of the *Nights*. We know about Aladdin and Ali Baba, about flying carpets, and bottled djinni – imagery now common in our media. But what lies beneath the surface? What is the meaning of the *Nights* in all their divine, comical, and bloody glory?

**Tales of the Caliphate Nights** is a role-playing game about meaningful adventure. Heroes may rescue a princess from the clutches of a ghul, but the reason *why* they're doing it is every bit as important as the actual adventure itself. **Tales of the Caliphate Nights** merges the fantasy of Arabic folklore, the thrill of Hollywood's Oriental Romance, and the rich religious traditions of medieval Arabia into a dynamic landscape where belief and faith can move mountains.

### *The Caliphate*

Caliph means "successor to the Prophet Muhammad." It was the title taken on by his Companions and his family who assumed leadership of the emerging Muslim state. This state was called the "caliphate" and the Caliph was its temporal and spiritual leader. The caliphate was the center of philosophical, theological, and scientific discourse and discovery between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Christian centuries. While Europe was mired in the Dark Ages, Baghdad flourished as scholars and artists from across the world gathered there under the Caliph's patronage.

### *Heroes of the Nights*

The heroes of the *Nights* are deeply flawed but amazingly lucky, aided by fate throughout their quests, often certain that they will arrive on the other side safe and sound. However, it is up to their cunning and faith to avoid immense suffering along the way, and to do so with style! They engage in *jihad* in the truest sense of the word – an inner struggle to transform themselves and the society they live in for the better. Muhammad, peace be upon him, said: "*The best jihad [struggle] is by the one who strives against his own self for God, the Mighty and Majestic.*" Though they may be called to do this with swords, just as often, they will require the sharp edge of cunning wit and poetry, the parry of unshakeable faith, and the riposte of temperance and mercy. While the heroes and heroines may be flawed, they are ultimately a force of good that fights for the emergence of the Golden Age of Islam.

### *Origins of the Nights*

In Mecca, before the advent of Islam, a poetry festival brought scores of wandering storytellers from near and far. One of the competitors, a spirited old man in colorful robes, entered the circle of eager listeners, tugged at his beard, and began his tale with a smile: "Now there was a donkey who lived in a stall next to an ox..." The storyteller's name was Lokman, and by tradition he was the first great figure of Arabic literature – the Aesop of the days when songs and stories were handed from one generation to another by word of mouth. His fable of "The Donkey, the Ox, and the Laborer" is important not only because it would be recounted as the first tale of the *Arabian Nights*, but also because it represents just how the stories of the *Nights* were collected – piece-by-piece from the mouths of many storytellers. They have no concrete date of creation, instead having circulated orally for centuries. Arab historians of the 10<sup>th</sup> century like al-Mas'udi and ibn al-Nadim refer to an Arabic work called *The Thousand Nights*, a translation from a Persian work entitled *Hazar Afsana*. Though both these texts are now lost, many historians agree that the *Hazar Afsana* provided the title and frame story of the *Nights*. Other scholars believe the *Nights* originated with the *Jataka* of India, which purportedly relates to previous incarnations of the Buddha. Whatever their origin, the *Nights* are not merely Arabian, instead they belong to many cultures, Islamic and otherwise.

### *About this Book*

This book is a guide to the world of the *Nights*, both the historical and the fantastic, both the sacred and the profane. Interspersed through the book is an ongoing narrative of Yusuf ibn Halil, a physician returning home from his studies in Persia. Yusuf's tale illuminates how frame stories work; it can be found in Chapters 2, 7, 12, and 17.



### *Raising Issues*

**Tales of the Caliphate Nights** raises tough questions about Prophets, faith, history, race relations, women's rights, and the nature of government. Before playing it's a good idea to set any boundaries with your group about what issues they feel comfortable including in the game.

### *Race*

Many racial minorities are stereotyped and mistreated in the pages of the *Nights* just as they were during the caliphate, and just as they are today. **Caliphate Nights** presents the Abbasid caliphate as it was idealized in the more enlightened stories of the *Nights*. All races are respected, and are free to practice their traditions, name their children in their native language, and reap the same benefits of citizenship as the conquering Arab. Of course, the historical truth was far uglier. A mature group can include race relations as a theme in their games by looking at the cost of racial discrimination.

### *Religion*

Islam is the Faith of the *Nights*. This book is predominantly written from the perspective of a devout Muslim scholar. However, other voices are included who don't paint such a pretty picture of the caliphate. It is left up to the group to decide the role the Caliph and the Islamic orthodoxy play in the game. The caliphate can be portrayed as a corrupt hidebound institution or an enlightened civil society, depending on one's perspective. As this book focuses on the Islamic world, there is little information on other prominent faiths (Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism). Instead, the competing sects and theological schools of Islam are explored in detail.

### *Women*

Historically, women were denied legal rights and social benefits that men enjoyed, and women were often reduced to servant status. In **Caliphate Nights** this gender role is only in the background. Exceptional women follow in the footsteps of the female Companions of the Prophet, some taking up arms, others philosophy, some both. Women in the *Nights* are powerful and complex – they are not pigeonholed into a simple gender stereotype. What a woman can do and what she believes in are just as important to a heroine's identity as her place in society.

### *Historical Accuracy*

If you are unfamiliar with Islamic history, running a pseudo-historical game can seem intimidating. The key is *verisimilitude*, or the appearance of reality. **Tales of the Caliphate Nights**, while strongly based in history, is not historical simulation – it is pure fantasy. For example, the House of Wisdom wasn't created until

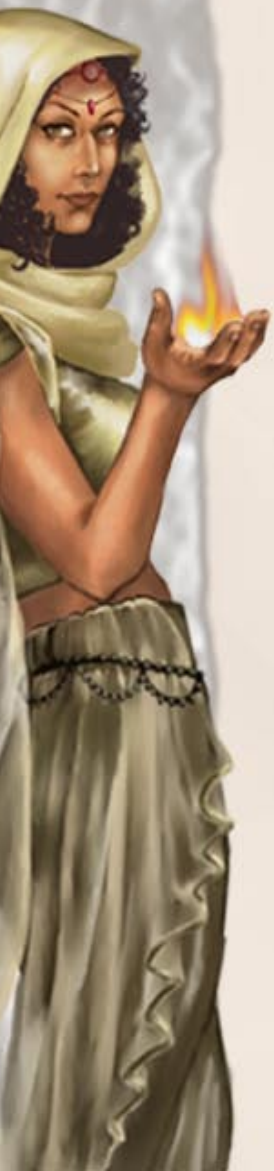
### *The Cunning Damsel*

The Damsel-in-Distress may be the oldest female archetype; she is always beautiful, vulnerable and in need of rescuing by a paternal male. The Cunning Damsel, a female archetype found throughout the *Nights*, throws this archetype out the window. She doesn't feel helpless, she isn't looking for all her needs to be met through marriage, and she certainly doesn't want rescuing (and may aggressively refuse it)! Like Sharazad, she bravely puts herself in danger's way, beguiling men around her by pandering to their persistent belief in "the Damsel in Distress." Confident in her abilities, she works for the betterment of all women, starting with herself. Perhaps she was kidnapped deliberately to lure an annoying suitor into a dangerous trap. Perhaps she faces grave danger in order to save a foolish male relative or spouse. Or perhaps she takes responsibility for a task where only her feminine wiles can save the day.

Harun al-Rashid's son al-Mamun took the throne, the Assassins didn't become a major political force until the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and coffeehouses weren't established until the 16<sup>th</sup> century! In order to make the setting more interesting these elements have been included in an earlier era. Whether or not you decide to do further research depends on your group; if the players all have doctorate degrees in Islamic history, then you'll need to do more research than a group whose knowledge of the era comes entirely from this book and the movies. Regardless, players can change the course of history; if the characters depose Harun al-Rashid or create their own Imamate, Mythic Arabia changes with them.

### *The Tapestry of Truth*

You are embarking on a journey which will take you through lands where every facet of history is contested, where the orthodox and the heterodox fight for the hearts and souls of the public. Rather than offer a definitive word about ethnicities and cultures, this book presents options and viewpoints from the perspective of fictional characters. When you take issue with something within this book – and it is likely that you will – consider that history is like a tapestry woven by many different hands. Often the winner weaves their version of "truth" and suppresses competing versions. While this certainly occurred in the Abbasid caliphate, there was *so much* rich political dissent and activity that the rulers were forced to come to terms with competing accounts of what truly occurred. Ultimately, the answers are left to you and your group; within you will find questions, mystery, wonder, and possibilities. You, however, must weave the tapestry as you see fit.







## Resources

### Books

- \* *The Noble Qu'ran*
- \* *Arabian Nights*, translated from Mahdi's version by Husain Haddaway (1995). This plain English version covers the original *Nights* stories. Haddaway also produced *Arabian Nights 2* which deals with those stories we are most familiar with like Aladdin, Ali Baba, and Sinbad.
- \* *The Arabian Nights: A Companion*, by Robert Irwin (2004). This is a wonderful book using the stories of the *Nights* as a key to the social history and counter-culture of the medieval Near East.
- \* *Arab Folktales*, by Inea Bushnaq (1987). Excellent collection of 130 stories from Morocco to Iraq organized into useful categories.
- \* *A History of the Arab Peoples*, by Albert Hourani (1991). While much of the history concerns later periods, the sections on the Caliphate are essential, and the cultural and religious information is superb.
- \* *Daily Life in the Medieval Islamic World*, by James E. Lindsay (2005). A useful academic resource, this book covers many aspects of urban life.
- \* *When Baghdad Ruled the Muslim World*, by Hugh Kennedy (2005). An intriguing popular history filled with stories of love, sex, violence, corruption, and sibling rivalry - Essential for a game of court intrigue.
- \* *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*, by Jack G. Shaheen (2001). Dissecting the Hollywood stereotype of the "evil" Arab, this book offers a passionate look at over one thousand films.

\* *The House of Wisdom*, by Florence Parry Heide & Judith Heide Gilliland, Illustrated by Mary Grandpre (1999). This beautiful children's book tells the story of Ibn Ishaq and his journey across the world to gather books; it is a celebration of study and wonder.

\* *Al-Qadim: Arabian Adventures*, by Jeff Grub and Andria Hayday, published by TSR, copyright Wizards of the Coast (1992). A wonderfully researched role-playing setting in the magical land of Zakhara, based on Arabian folklore.

### Movies

\* *The Message* (1976). Directed by Moustapha Akkad, starring Anthony Quinn and Irene Papas, the film tells the compelling story of the beginnings of Islam. While it can overlook parts of history and the acting is a little cheesy, it is overall an excellent film, and it has the approval of the Al Azhar Mosque to boot!

\* *Destiny* (1998). Set in 12<sup>th</sup> century Andalusia, *Destiny* tells the story of the philosopher Averroes whose beliefs are considered heretical by the fundamentalist caliphate. Directed by Youssef Chahine, this Egyptian film is distributed through Cinema Village.

\* *Arabian Nights* (1999). A refreshing portrayal of the *Nights* directed by Steve Barron that follows the text closer than any other such films to date. The film originally aired as a Hallmark television mini-series.

\* *Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet*. (2002) A biographical film by Kikim Media & Unity Productions Foundation, it tells the compelling tale of Muhammad's life and how he impacts the lives of Muslims today.

\* *The Keeper* (2005). Written, produced, and directed by Kayvan Mashayekh, this film looks at the life of Omar Khayyam, the 11<sup>th</sup> century Persian astronomer, mathematician, and poet. The website for the theatrical release schedule at independent movie theaters can be found at: [www.greatomar.com](http://www.greatomar.com)

## The Art of Storytelling

"The reality of the other person lies not in what he reveals to you, but in what he cannot reveal to you. Therefore, listen not to what he says but rather to what he does not say."

- Khalil Gibran (1883-1931), Lebanese mystical poet, philosopher & painter

Know, O reader, that whether you intend to be a player or Narrator, the knowledge of how to tell a good story is as essential as water in the desert. A good story captures the imagination, causes you to weep and laugh, illuminates your own life, and leaves you speaking of it for a long time after. If you've witnessed the artistry of a professional storyteller, their story may have seemed effortlessly delivered. Do not be fooled! Delivering a story is worthy and difficult task regardless of whether you're a Narrator providing the adventure or a player telling your character's tale. The following are five steps with which to tell a story your friends will never forget.



### 1. Know Your Audience

An old proverb goes: “A story is told with the ears, not with the tongue.” The key to telling a great story lies in knowing your audience. Consider the age, gender, and outlook of your fellow players, and especially their response to the game. Listen to the other players in the group – you will learn from them what stories need to be told. Whether playing with friends or strangers, you want to identify each player’s preferred gaming style. What kinds of stories do they like?

### 2. Opening Lines

A storyteller must grab the audience’s attention with his or her very first words. Often this is done with a hook, for example: “That was the night I beat Death.” Right away, several questions spring to the listener’s mind. Who is the narrator? Is Death a metaphor for a dangerous situation or an actual being? How did the narrator beat Death? The opening lines set the tone for the rest of the tale. Shahrazad herself first coined the term “once upon a time”! A common method of beginning a tale in the *Nights* goes: “It is related, O King that there once lived...”

### 3. Delivery

The two key elements to delivery are what you say with your voice and what you say with body language. Your voice creates the atmosphere and level of tension in the story according to your tone, pitch, volume, and articulation. If you are comfortable with using different voices to represent certain characters, your delivery will benefit. Even silence can be used to your advantage by creating dramatic pauses. Variety catches and holds attention. All professional storytellers make use of vivid facial expressions, gestures, and posture. This not only heightens the drama of a scene, but also helps distinguish each character you portray enough so they’re easily told apart. When portraying two characters talking together, use “cross-focus”, making each one face a different 45-degree angle.

### 4. Stock Phrases

The *Arabian Nights* are filled with stock phrases, a repetition technique Arab and Persian storytellers used to help them memorize long epics. Coming up with such witty and loquacious expressions can be difficult. After all, very few are gifted with poetic tongues and can weave intricate stories at the drop of

### Role-Playing and Children

Playing a fantasy role-playing game with children requires you to set very clear boundaries about the rules from the beginning. There is no heckling or making fun of others. When listening to another person be attentive. There is no physical touching or make-believe fighting. An adventurous Narrator might try using the quick and easy diceless narrative rules in **Chapter 8**. There are three pointers that help when running a game for children:

- \* Take frequent breaks
- \* Reward cooperation, encouragement, and socialization.
- \* Don’t include adult content or language

a hat. Before beginning your story you may want to gather a collection of stock phrases that are suited to your tale. These need not be direct quotations from the *Nights*, but rather lyrical or over-the-top statements that characters in the game could make. The Narrator might jot down a couple stock phrases for supporting characters and phrases that will simply be narrated. Players might jot down or memorize signature phrases for their heroes. Here are some examples:

“There is no power and no strength, save in God, the Almighty, the Magnificent.”

“If there is any virtue in me, none of it is mine, and all belongs to you.”

“She was like one of whom the poet said...”

### 5. The Invisible Audience

It helps to think of the adventures you role-play as a performance for an invisible audience. While the most important thing is to have fun with your friends, there is a lyricism, propitious sense of timing and panache to the *Nights* that is essential. Capturing this feel is made easier by thinking about your “performance” from the perspective of an imaginary audience. Ask yourself: What is dramatically appropriate now? Is this character or story internally cohesive? Is the audience at the edge of their seats right now? Are they laughing themselves to tears?

### New Uses for Conviction

In *Caliphate Nights*, Conviction represents the undeniable power and mercy of God as much as a character’s own faith and determination. There are new uses for Conviction that give players greater narrative control, including framing and weaving. Ultimately, it is the Narrator’s decision whether to

A ubiquitous expression in the *Nights* is “Insha’llah”, meaning “God willing.” Just some of the uses for this handy phrase include asking about the weather (“Do you think it will rain tomorrow? Insha’llah, we need it!”), avoiding an invitation you don’t want to accept (“We’d love to have you over for dinner!” “Insha’llah, I will be there”), to finding out about travel arrangements (“Is the caravan going to Medina today?” “Insha’llah!”), and expressing piety or frustration when things don’t happen as you planned.





allow or restrict certain uses of Conviction depending on the amount of preparation he or she has done for a game; in this case the Narrator must let the players know beforehand. Additionally, several feats provide heroes with new ways in which to use Conviction.

## **Activate Virtue**

Heroes of the *Nights* embody Islamic virtues. They may spend a Conviction point to activate their virtue gaining one of these benefits:

**Acknowledged Virtue:** A subject (or everyone listening to the hero) immediately recognizes one virtue that the hero possesses. For example, an Honest hero whose testimony is questioned could convince everyone that she is telling the truth.

**Strength of Virtue:** The hero resists an effect compelling

her to act in opposition to one of her virtues. For example, an Honest hero could resist an adept's Dominate attempt to make her lie about something.

**Virtue's Reward:** Each virtue provides a unique way to spend Conviction; the virtues are described in **Chapter 3**.

## **Framing**

A player can spend a Conviction point to initiate a framed story. When this occurs, the player describes the basics of what he or she would like to explore (e.g. How did the Sultan come by his magic dove?). Immediately, the entire group adopts new roles as appropriate and plays out the side story with the player who spent the Conviction point acting as Narrator. In general, the new story should last

## **Regaining Conviction**

In **Caliphate Nights** a hero can regain Conviction by achieving the turning point for a Complication. In addition, a hero with the Devout feat can regain Conviction in one of several ways by adhering to their faith, and certain Virtues provide new ways to gain Conviction.

## **Limiting Recovery of Conviction**

The Narrator may wish to restrict characters from recovering Conviction every day. By making Conviction a rarer commodity, it allows for storylines in which action takes a back seat, or where action scenes are separated by many days. In addition, it encourages players to think about how they can restore their character's Conviction, forcing them to think about their virtue and vice. In the morally charged setting of **Caliphate Nights**, this helps to emphasize the constant tug of war between piety and ignorance.

## **Positive Story Elements (+1 each)**

Story caters to the audience or listener very well, such as playing off of a weakness (e.g. for flattery), an interest (e.g. horses), or an ideal (e.g. slavery is never justified).

Entire gaming group decides the storyteller did a wonderful job.

Story involves a cunning poem, joke, riddle, double entendre, song, etc.

The listener is favorably inclined toward the storyteller (e.g. you're both in a foreign land but are of the same nationality).

Story has another related story framed within it which elucidates the main purpose of the story. No more than three stories can be framed within a story before the listener loses track (+1 for each story).

The storyteller handles unlikely actions by a player character in stride, remarkably tying them into a seamless whole.

The storyteller makes a reasonable excuse for how they came to hear the story and from whose lips it was passed down to them.

The storyteller presents proof that corroborates their story as true (e.g. "Look at the wall today, touch the brick; is it not burnt and inlaid with gold?").

## **Negative Story Elements (-1 each)**

Story insults or offends the listener in some way

The listener is hostile or unfriendly toward the storyteller (e.g. you've lied to him before, you stole from his stall, you secretly married his beloved).

Entire gaming group decides the framed story rambled and didn't achieve its purpose

Storyteller is given a time limit, and doesn't wrap the story up in time.

Story involves an outright lie or something seemingly impossible (-1 for white lies that most wouldn't recognize, -2 for big lies that are hard to miss, -3 for over-the-top, fantastical, or ridiculous exaggerations)



# Chapter 1: The Arabian Adventure

## Handling Multiple Narrators

When a player frames a story, the current Narrator (along with the other players) takes on the role of a character in the story. To clarify that the Narrator has changed, you may wish to designate a certain seat at the gaming table as the “Narrator’s Seat”. Each time a player frames a story, they gain the Narrator’s seat until their story has ended, whereupon the regular Narrator returns.

## Going Diceless

During a frame story you may wish to use simplified rules that encourage role-playing and don’t slow down play. Diceless rules can be found in **Chapter 8**.

no more than an hour, or some other agreed upon time. A framed story can serve several purposes, and many stories serve more than one purpose: (1) Leverage to convince someone to take (or avoid) a certain course of action. (2) Provide history to a situation, and impart knowledge of some truth. (3) Improve the listener’s attitude toward the storyteller. (4) Comic relief.

A framed story provides a bonus on the appropriate skill check; often this will be Diplomacy, though Bluff, Intimidate, and Perform (oratory) are all appropriate. Arabian sorcerers are well known for weaving magic into their stories. A framed story can also be used in conjunction with *another* character’s skill, such as distracting a sultan while a thief smuggles horses out of the royal stables. Of course, a poorly told story can result in a penalty to the check instead.

## Example: Rafiqi’s Tale of the Princess

Jarett’s character Rafiqi is found by the prince after having broken into the prince’s own harem. Hoping to avoid a painful death at the prince’s hands, Rafiqi spins a quick yarn to explain his presence, and decides he will play off the prince’s prodigious lust for beautiful women. Jarett decides to spend a Conviction point to relate a story about the beauty of a princess from Rafiqi’s homeland. Rafiqi intends to convince the prince to pursue the princess and spare his life as a reward. Jarett temporarily becomes Narrator, and all the other players take on roles of various characters in the princess’ story – wicked djinn, jealous step-mother, high-brow suitor, and her true love. After 30 minutes of role-playing, Jarett decides the tale is complete, and hands the story

back to the main Narrator. Rafiqi’s attempt receives the following modifiers: +1 (caters to prince’s lust for foreign women), -1 (prince is hostile), +1 (gaming group felt Jarett did a great job), +1 (the story involved a name-guessing game with a djinn), +1 (Rafiqi claims to have heard the story through his uncle who serves in the princess’ court). The net bonus Rafiqi receives on his Bluff check is +3. Since it is a believable bluff, the prince rolls an opposed Sense Motive check. Rafiqi wins the check, but only barely. The Narrator rules that the prince has decided to investigate the truth of Rafiqi’s word and visit the princess for himself. In the meantime, Rafiqi is kept captive in the palace. If he should be caught in a lie, the prince promises Rafiqi that he will permanently initiate him as a harem guard – more precisely as a eunuch.

## Weaving

Some stories bloom from one mind, and others are woven by several hands. Weaving give a player the chance to influence what their character learns when rolling a Gather Information, Knowledge, Notice, Search, Sense Motive, Track, or power check. Instead of making the check as normal, the player simply declares whatever she expects the truth to be and rolls a d20, consulting the weaving table below to determine who narrates what happens. Depending on the result of this roll, the player may or may not have to spend Conviction. The Narrator always decides whether a given story allows players to use Weaving. For example, a Narrator who has painstakingly prepared an adventure might forbid Weaving altogether.

Result	Player Narrates	Narrator Narrates	Spend Conviction?
1	–	No, and...	No
2-4	–	No	No
5-10	But...	No	1 Conviction point
11-16	Yes	But...	1 Conviction point
17-19	Yes	–	1 Conviction point
20	Yes, and...	–	2 Conviction points
“Yes” means the truth is as the player expected it to be.			
“No” means the truth is other than what the player expected.			
“But” means there’s a complication or caveat that changes the situation.			
“And” means that the failure or success is truly disastrous or spectacular.			







**Example:** Rafiqi is listening to a group of guards conversing on the other side of a door. Jarett (Rafiqi's player) has an inspired idea and spends a Conviction point to attempt narrative control. He wants the guards to be arguing about the upcoming wedding between the sultan and Arasteh. Jarett makes a weaving check and rolls a 12; thus, Jarett narrates (the "Yes" result from the table) but the Narrator adds a complication (the "But" result for the Narrator). The guards are split regarding the wedding, half believing their pay will be reduced with the sultan fawning over his new wife, and half who are truly impressed with the sultan's bride to be. *But*, the guards decide to spy on the sultan to learn more, pushing through the door Rafiqi hides behind!

## Cultural Acclimation

Upon arriving in a foreign culture, characters are at a disadvantage – they may not know the language, the laws, or the traditions of the new land. The following Knowledge specialties cannot be used regarding culturally specific events and things until the character is acclimated: Art, Business, Civics, Current Events, History, Nobility, Popular Culture, Streetwise, and Theology & Philosophy. Which specialties function normally, and which require acclimation depends on the specific cultural context. An acclimation check is a d20 roll that may be made at any time, though a character can only make one check per day. Each day spent in the culture provides a +1 bonus. If successful, one Knowledge specialty is acclimated for every margin of 5 by which you succeeded the check. If the check fails, reduce any bonus from days spent in the culture to +0. A character may take 10 on an acclimation check, but they may not take 20.

Difficulty	Type of Culture
15	Many similarities to your culture; neighboring province or a minority group
20	Remote similarities to your culture; neighboring nation or conquered enemy
25	Distant culture halfway across the world; a bizarre sub-culture
30	Radically different culture; non-human or totally opposing values

For example, a character from Medina arrives in Isfahan. While many people speak Arabic, the customs of this Persian city are unfamiliar. After eight days, the character makes an assimilation check; the Difficulty is 15. She rolls a '13', for a total of '21', which means two of her Knowledge specialties are now acclimated and she may use them normally in Isfahan and major Persian cities.

Ranks	Proficiency	Description
0	Unfamiliar	You cannot understand or recognize the language.
1	Smattering	You can't really speak the language, but you always recognize it when you hear it or see it written. You know a few words. When communicating you may only use one or two word phrases. To understand normal conversation you must make a DC 15 check.
2	Competency	You know enough of the language and mannerisms of the culture for simple conversation. If you wish to say or understand something complicated, you must make a DC 15 check.
3	Fluency	You speak the language fluently. When people talk to you fast or with an unfamiliar accent you must make a DC 10 check to understand them. Likewise, when you are trying to understand an unusual expression or technical vocabulary you must make a DC 10 check. You may be able to recognize common written words on a DC 15 check.
4	Mastery	You are literate, and have full command of the language. This level of proficiency is required in order to take the Scholarly feat and several other feats.
5+	Eloquence	You understand subtle nuances of the language. This level of proficiency is required in order to take the Author feat.



# Chapter 1: The Arabian Adventure

## Language & Literacy

Perhaps one day all will be gifted with literacy, alas, literacy is not common in the caliphate. Fortunately, the memories of tribal lore-keepers are astounding. Such *rawun* routinely memorize long poetic epics, and the tradition of memorizing the Qur'an is carried on by those who bear the title *hafiz*. Muhammad himself was illiterate and recited the angel Gabriel's message by heart. At the same time, the largely illiterate society is surrounded by a multitude of languages. Though Arabic is the dominant trade tongue, numerous languages are spoken at home, in ethnic tribunals, and abroad.

Reflecting the diversity of languages spoken in the caliphate, and the rich cultures they were born from, the Language skill works differently in **Caliphate Nights** than in **True20**.

## Language

*Intelligence, Trained Only, Requires Specialization*

All non-Arab characters begin with 3 ranks in their native language and 3 ranks in Arabic. Arab characters just begin with 3 ranks in Arabic. If a 1<sup>st</sup> level character is trained in the Language skill, they gain 4 skill ranks which may be spent among various languages as they desire. In order to learn a language beyond 2 ranks you must become acclimated to the language's culture.

**Literacy:** First-level characters are assumed to be illiterate unless they are trained in the Language skill. 4 skill ranks are required for literacy.

**Try Again:** Usually no. The Narrator may allow another Language check if a character gets access to a translator.

**Action:** A Language check can be a reaction when trying to understand another. Otherwise it requires a standard action to speak, or a full-round action to read a brief passage. Reading a book usually requires several days.

You can take 10 when making a Language check, provided it's not in the middle of combat or other intense action. You can take 20 only if you have access to a competent translator or research materials.

Languages of the caliphate are described in detail in **Chapter 15**.

## Explanation of Game Terms

**Alternate:** A supporting character often controlled by one player, especially when the player uses that character regularly.

**Frame Story:** A story told within the context of a longer tale. In the *Nights* this is often one of the characters within the tale telling a story either about their history or to illustrate a point. Creating a frame story is called "framing."

**Stock Phrase:** An often quoted phrase that epitomizes the feel of the *Nights*. It may be a proverb, but more often it is a repeated bit of poetic language.

**Tapestry of Truths:** The idea that there are multiple competing versions of truth, and that all of them are a piece of The Truth.

**Verisimilitude:** Internal consistency creating the appearance of reality.

**Weaving:** A dramatic device that allows players to influence what their characters learn when they are faced with a mystery.

Task	Required Level of Proficiency	Difficulty
Use the "high" or "low" form of a language that you know to reduce station penalties by one	Smattering	10
Understand another dialect of a language you know	Competency	10
Pronounce a language with a borrowed script of another language that you know	Mastery	15
Read a complex text	Mastery	15
Puzzle out the gist of an archaic form of the language	Eloquence	15
Communicate in another dialect of a language that you know	Competency	20
Understand the gist of a pidgin speaker whose language borrows from a language you know	Competency	20





## Chapter 2: Wherein the Tale Begins

*Forgive him who wrongs you;  
Join him who cuts you off;  
Do good to him who does evil to you;  
And speak the truth even if it be against yourself.*  
- Inscribed on Muhammad's sword

### *The Physician's Tale*

There is a man I am sworn to kill and to whom I owe a life debt. My unhappy fate came to pass after meeting the three noble sons of Sheikh Ibrahim al-Nisr. During my absence from my family while I studied medicine at the Academy of Gundishapur in Persia, my father had assisted the sheikh's sons in their covert travels to Damascus, providing them with horses, provisions, and all travel documents necessary for the journey. Along the way, the three sons were waylaid by bandits and murdered. Sheikh Ibrahim was a fearsome man, whose anger knew no bounds. When the sheikh learned his sons had been killed and ten thousand dinari stolen from him, he swore he would execute all those involved. He threatened my father and my entire family unless my father revealed where the three sons had fled to. Yet my father's honor kept him from telling the sheikh, for he was sworn to secrecy. Thus, the sheikh resolved to break my father's will, and forcibly moved into my father's home for a month, getting to learn what sort of a man my father was, in the hopes of burying his sons' bodies, recovering his stolen treasure, and putting the murderous thieves to rest. All this did occur without my knowledge of it, for I was a student in distant lands

My name is Yusuf ibn Mushaqir al-Kufa, and this is my tale.

In the province of Khuzestan, every year there is held a *chowgan* (polo) competition. My friends and I had trained greatly for the event, as there was a substantial rivalry between the students there. In particular, I hoped to beat my rival, a Christian student studying ophthalmology named ibn Masawaiyh. As I sat feeding my mare figs and cleaning her ears, my servant Aheyyad entered and began teasing me. "How shall you defeat the great mares of the Persians, oh sahib, which sweat blood and hellfire?"

Laughing, I threw a fig at my servant. "My father sent me among the Bedouin for two years as the Prophet, peace be upon him, had done. Their sheikh gave me this mare of purest blood as a parting gift. Her ancestry can be traced to God the Almighty. Can the Persians say so much?"

"Among the Bedouin? You smell too perfumed for it to be true!" And with my servant's words we took to rough housing and wrestling in the hay, whereupon a messenger walked his weary steed into the barn.

I leaned close to Aheyyad and whispered: "Let us have a bit of fun with this messenger by hiding in the haystack." And so we hid ourselves.

The messenger put his horse away and gave her a salt lick, before prying off his boots to pour sand from them. Just as he stretched back to take reprieve, I gave the signal and we burst forth from the haystack. Startled out of his wits, the messenger fell off his resting place and into the watering trough for the horses. Laughing, my servant and I clapped each other on the backs, but presently we noticed the man had risen and was wroth with us. Flinging his cap at me, the man yelled that I was the son of a jackal, but as he became more incensed at our laughing his wet hair fell from the cap it had been tucked under, revealing long black tresses. This was no man at all!

"Peace, O worthy messenger!" I said. "Each time you shout your hair gets longer! If you don't keep quiet, I fear you'll be smothered by it."

Realizing that her disguise had been ruined, the woman eased herself onto a bail of hay and began weeping. Aheyyad moved to her side to comfort her, while I, in my state of delirium, said, "Verily, men are known to change gender after a difficult time in the saddle."

My servant glared at me in such a way that, had I been a cruel man, I would surely have had him whipped. Aheyyad growled, "Go outside."

Grudgingly, I did as my servant bid me, though I was fuming inside, and began planning how I would teach him a lesson in loyalty. Peering through a crack in the stables I witnessed Aheyyad holding the sobbing woman in his arms. She only said one word over and over again. *Akhi. My brother.* Her crying would have moved the hearts of angels. I felt embarrassed and sat down to watch the sunset, my thoughts turning to my own family whom I had not seen for over a year, and my beautiful fiancé who awaited me back home.

When they emerged from the stables, I immediately went up to apologize, but the woman brushed me aside, walking off toward the academy's harem. I began to follow her, but Aheyyad caught my shoulder. "Her brother died so that you could receive this message." He handed me a piece of parchment sealed in the name of my family.

Trembling, I opened the document of sorrow and stood transfixed as I read, my gut dropping out from under me:

*My beloved Yusuf,*

*This is the hour of lamentation for you family. Your mother suffers from a fever which none of the physicians can treat, inflicted on her by a passing witch who took offense at something your father said. Soon she will be at the brink of death, and I do not think she will live past the summer. Return home as quickly as you can. She calls your name at night and thinks that you've died. I have given her some of the tea you brought back last year, and it helps her pain some, but she suffers from terrible visions.*

*Your betrothed, Hawra Bint-Hanif*







My eyes watered when I read of my dear mother's suffering and I was seized by longing to see my family. The dreams I had of winning the *chowgan* competition faded like the rain clouds on the horizon.

"Come, you need to get some rest. I'll make the plans for travel in the morning." Aheyyad guided me toward my bedchamber in the academy, bending over me like a weeping tamarisk tree.

Never in my life have I had a more fitful sleep. Rain slapped the window of my room and thunder boomed above. When I woke in the morning I learned that Aheyyad, along with the other servants, had helped bail out a flooded room all night, and this morning he had readied our camels for the trip to Kufa. My heart swelled at the devotion of my servant, but my sorrow kept my tongue quiet. After explaining the circumstances of my departure to my teachers, I entrusted my worldly belongings to my friends. As I finished packing my camel, ibn Masawaiyh approached me, no doubt to make some repartee. Mounting my camel, I nearly trampled him as I left the academy behind me, Aheyyad at my side.

We rode late into the day and camped at sunset underneath a rock face. As we prepared our evening coffee, we heard someone approaching. Aheyyad reached into his pack and drew forth a sheathed sword, resting it in his lap, and signaled me to seek cover. A great black camel entered our encampment, its face terribly scarred and a heaving sound issued from its belly. Atop the camel was a woman clad all in black. "There are bandits about. Douse your fire."

Recognizing the woman's voice as the messenger from yesterday, Aheyyad did as she bid and waved the smoke with a blanket. Silence fell over us. The messenger dismounted and quieted her camel. Voices penetrated the night's stillness. Above us I could hear camels moving about. My ears became so sharp I could have heard a mouse sneeze. Creeping up to the ledge I peered over and I saw a woman of terrible majesty and beauty, whose face was like the one of whom the poet said:

If one glance can turn the heart to ice  
There is no fear for suffering longer than a spell,  
But in her eyes the world's crimes are reflected  
And her eyes pierce my heart like the sword of hell.

Six men with seven camels at the ready spoke with her about payment for completing their service. A young man, bruised and bound, lay at the terrible woman's feet. Giving them a sack of coins, the woman cautioned that they must not kill the man. "I have never killed a man, and I do not wish to start. Consider this money an insurance policy for his life...and for yours."

Looking the bound man over disdainfully, the chief of the Daylamis gave her a hard stare. "Eventually, you must decide whose side you are on, sha'ira. There is

no room in heaven for the woman who cannot make up her mind."

Before my very eyes, the woman seemed to grow a full four hands in height and she glowered at the chief. "Do as you will with him so long as you don't kill him, and leave me out of your politics. If you come to my house, expect a greeting with swords." With that, she threw her cloak over herself and vanished in a whirlwind of dust. As the six men went to work, the noble young man on the ground looked up and spied me. I held my finger over my mouth to hush him.

Ducking back down, I grabbed Aheyyad's arm, "We've got to help this young man. He was a lamp dealer of Kufa who worked closely with my father."

The messenger hissed at me. "It's our funeral if we get involved. Those are assassins, trained since they were young men to kill, and their leader is none other than a sorcerer working for the Old Man of the Mountain. Their captive is as good as dead. Leave his fate to God."

Aheyyad looked away, "She is right, there is nothing we can do."

My heart sank and I looked back up to see them taunting the young man. Then their chief seized him and threw him over a camel. The six men mounted their camels and, riding with three in front of their captive and three behind, they set off toward the north. If we did not do something, this young man might be killed or tortured. If we did not do something soon, the wind would obscure the tracks and make them impossible to follow the next morning.

Turning to the messenger, I pleaded with her. "O messenger, I treated you poorly, and I am truly sorry. I know that you have sacrificed much to tell me of my mother, but she is old and surrounded by loved ones who will care for her. This young man has nobody, and he has a bright life ahead of him. Surely, God enjoins us to help our fellow Muslims and trust that God will guide us and keep us safe?"

Like a lioness on the attack, the messenger shook her finger at me. "And the Prophet said that the truest sign of faith in a man is seen in how he treats his family. Think of your mother who gave birth to you, and for whose sake my brother died. Forget this man and come to your senses."

I did not wish to or I could not hear her. Something possessed me to take action, and I could not stop what I had begun. "This man is my flesh by Adam as you are my flesh by Eve. What would my mother think of me if I left my brother to die alone in the desert? How should she like to depart this world knowing her son had no honor?"

"You dog! Don't tell me about honor! My brother carried the message from your family until he was murdered in cold blood, and I have carried it to you. And for what? So that you can throw your life away trying to help a stranger? He may be a criminal. It may be a blood



# Chapter 2: Wherein the Tale Begins

feud. Who knows?"

"When I entered the Academy of Gundishapur I swore an oath that I would look upon other men as my own brothers. I know this man and I must help him, but I cannot track him. You are a Bedouin, you can."

She narrowed her eyes at me. "If those assassins learn what tribe I belong to, or who your family is, they will use them against us. What you are suggesting is suicide! And moreover, it puts our families in harm's way."

I opened my mouth but no words came out. The messenger was right. I drew my *aba* tight and walked to my tent, closing the flap behind me. I heard the messenger groan in exasperation and lead her camel away to retire for the night. Aheyyad's silhouette was visible through the lambskin tent lit by the moonlight; he sat down outside my tent's entrance. "Ibn-Mushaqir, your heart is too big."

"Did you see that poor man, Aheyyad? They were going to—"

"That is not what I meant. You roll over everyone in your way with your heart. The messenger had nowhere to go in your argument. Your ideals and caring about your fellow man left no room for her thoughts and beliefs. Your heart was so big that there was no room for her."

My mood darkened, and I heard my best friend's word as betrayal. "What are you saying?"

"You must learn to listen."

Aheyyad had caught a rabbit and was cooking it when I awoke the next morning, the smell of coffee filling my nose. We greeted each other with the broad smiles of two who know that the past is past. "Eat quickly," he said, pouring me a cup of coffee.

"Why, what's the hurry?"

"Don't you wish to catch the messenger before she gets herself killed?"

I blinked in amazement. "You mean she went after them by herself?"

"She has a one hour head start on us, and she is a Bedouin after all, which means our chances for catching her are slim to none." He said this with a smirk on his face, as if he was goading me.

"You forget, Aheyyad, I lived among the Bedouin for two years, and they taught me how to ride camels of the purest blood faster than the north wind."

"Among the Bedouin, sahib?" Aheyyad grinned. "You have gained so much weight since then."

We caught up with the messenger after four hours of hard riding only because she turned around to meet us. Hunkering behind a dune

while the assassins rested, the three of us peered over the edge. "An elephant would have been less conspicuous than you two. Where did you learn to ride anyhow?" She asked me.

Aheyyad laughed as I answered her question obtusely, "From relatives of yours. I thought we were leaving his fate to God?"

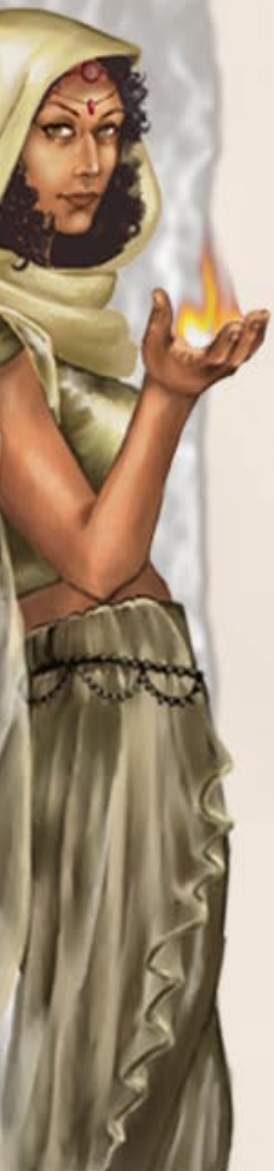
The messenger adjusted the bow slung across her back. "Even God needs helping along sometimes, physician. Look! There is a trained falcon circling the area that answers to their chief. When it returns to him it will cry out once if it has seen danger and twice if it has seen someone familiar. If it passes over us I intend to deny it that opportunity."

"Will you persuade it with arrows?" asked Aheyyad.

"No, my tribe is sworn never to harm raptors. Instead, I have a friend in the sky who I have freed to act in the manner according to her nature." She pointed above us to a large black eagle soaring among the clouds. "Her name is Fajera. A wicked disposition that eagle has. Don't look at her too long or she's likely to peck your eyes out."

We were three shadows lurking at the far edge of the horizon, relying on the messenger, whose name was Ghunayya bint-Kinana, to follow the assassins' tracks. Our camels groaned and rebelled at our traveling in the full heat of the sun, but we prevailed until we reached the caravanserai at Ahvaz. Ghunayya's eyes were sharper than mine and she watched the assassins' movements in the caravanserai even though it was a moonless night. Aheyyad and I talked in hushed voices about the amenities of Gundishapur that we'd left behind us. Ghunayya whistled to us that it was safe to enter the caravanserai. We rode in while the small town was asleep. The boy on guard duty recognized Aheyyad and I from last year when we'd stayed at Ahvaz, and he waved us in, cautioning us, "There are six dangerous men staying in the south rooms. If you value your lives, don't bother them. They threatened my aunt and uncle if they told anyone the men had come through."

Aheyyad thanked the boy, and gave him some sugared dates from our bags before taking our camels to the stables. I went to relieve myself after the long journey, and walked over to a ditch where another fellow had the same idea. Nodding solemnly to the man I took my place at the ditch, when the awful realization dawned on me that this was one of the assassins. Out of the corner of my eye I studied his chiseled face and intense eyes, twin wells of impenetrable darkness. Finishing his business, he leaned close to me, "My chief wants to speak with you."





Chills ran down my spine. "Let me talk to my servant first so that he knows not to wait for me."

Tapping the jambiya at his side, he smiled sinisterly, jagged lines of shadow spilling over the corners of his mouth. "Please, my chief would be honored by your presence...now."

I was led to the bedchambers where the assassin's chief was staying. I remembered what Ghunayya had said about him: *He is a sorcerer working for the Old Man of the Mountain*. We arrived at the door, which was guarded by another assassin, who knocked and entered, holding a brief muffled conversation, before I was pushed within.

A single candle lit a table, but it seemed to produce the effects of a mirage, distorting the table dressings and the steam rising from the silver plated coffee pot. The chief was a simple looking man in his late thirties, slightly shorter than me, wearing the plain brown aba of a pilgrim. His brows were thick like soup, his nails long like knives, and his cheeks flushed like a rooster's crown. "Is this the man you saw?"

"That's him," came a voice from the shadows. As my eyes adjusted I saw the very young man whom the assassins had taken captive step forward.

His eyes locked on me, the chief poured a cup of coffee. "Do you have any traveling companions you'd like to tell me about?"

I struggled for my voice. "Yes, I have a Berber servant, and we were led here by a Bedouin woman."

As soon as the words left my mouth, I heard two assassins leave the room and hurry down the hall. The chief poured a second cup of coffee. "Why don't you sit down and join us for a drink, ibn-Ibrahim," he said to the young man.

"You said you'd free me. You promised—" began the young man, frustration and fear in his voice.

"Did I? Very well, if that's what you wish," said the chief, drawing a knife, "then I'm willing to oblige you and free your soul from its mortal coil."

Laughing nervously, the young man, ibn-Ibrahim, sat down across at the end of the table. "Please," said the chief, indicating for me to sit. I took a seat directly across from the chief, eyeing ibn-Ibrahim warily. The chief served us coffee, and took the first sip himself. "Tell me, what is your professional trade?"

"I am studying medicine, ophthalmology in particular, at the Academy of Gundishapur. What do you intend to do with us?"

The chief stroked his moustache. "You are both my captives, and you will be taken to Alamut where you, physician, will tend to the sick, and you, ibn-Ibrahim, will be trained as a *fedayeen*." The young man swallowed his coffee with a look of terror.

"What about my servant?"

At that moment, Aheyyad was dragged into the room with a terrible gash on his forehead. One of the assassins, who now had a swollen eye, made as if to kick him while he was down but the chief yelled at them to stop. "The Bedouin woman?"

"She got away on her mare, chief. Faster than lightning they were."

"No matter! I don't expect she'll follow us anymore. There's no livelihood to be made in tracking strangers into the desert." Eyeing Aheyyad, the chief pointed at him. "Does your servant have any skills of note?"

"I cannot perform medicine without him. His knowledge of Latin and Greek is better than any physician."

"Very well. You will call me al-Hajj during our travels. Your needs will be provided for by my men, and if you are cruelly treated you are to report directly to me. However, should you attempt escape or attempt to warn anyone we meet that you are our captives both your lives will be forfeit."

Glaring at ibn-Ibrahim who had tried to win his freedom by selling out his would-be rescuers, I asked that he should tell his story. "If we are to be traveling companions, I should like to know how you came here and who the woman that sold you to these assassins was."

The chief assassin, "al-Hajj", agreed that it would be interesting to learn how it was that ibn-Ibrahim came to be in this unique predicament.

"My name is Ahmed ibn-Ibrahim, and I am the youngest son of my father who is a noble sheikh..."

Herein a frame story begins. As Ahmed is a supporting character, any player could spend a Conviction point to narrate his story. What does the future hold? Find out in **Chapter 6**.



## Chapter 3: A Hero of the Nights

*The lion who breaks the enemy's ranks is a minor hero compared to the lion who overcomes himself.*

- Mevlana Jelalludin Rumi, Sufi Mystic (1207-1273)

O noble player, yours is the fortune to breathe life into a hero of the *Nights*! But it is not for your own edification alone you undertake this worthy venture; your hero will dazzle your friends, and provide them with many nights of inspiration, laughter, and reflection. Read on, the adventure awaits!

Heroes and heroines of the *Nights* are larger-than-life characters who, despite their fundamental flaws, are devoutly faithful people blessed with good luck. They are quick to praise God, skilled with poetry, and always have an interesting story to tell. They live inside a spiritually and politically charged fairy tale.

### *Inside the Fairy Tale: The Player's Agreement*

At their heart, the *Nights* are a collection of Arabian fairy tales. However, these fairy tales are not the ones we heard as youth; they often contain very adult themes. Heroes and heroines in the *Nights* are expected to fall in love with their enemies, be enchanted by the splendor of Caliph's court, grieve the death of their friends, rub a lamp out of curiosity, make mistakes, and otherwise be human. As a player, think of your character as actually being inside a fairy tale. You "win the game" by providing your friends with an entertaining, inspiring, and thought-provoking tale. There are three steps you can take to establish your character as a hero or heroine of the *Nights*; consider these an unspoken agreement you have with the Narrator and other players in a *Caliphate Nights* game.

### *1. Speak Like a Hero of the Nights*

The protagonists of the *Nights* are often gifted with poetic tongues. They use flowery praise for their rulers, friends, and lovers. When they are carried through a dangerous situation and emerge on the other side, they rejoice and give thanks. When recalling a tale, they use poetic forms of addressing their listener, such as "oh auspicious sheikh" or "commendable young lion!" Their speech is slightly reminiscent of bygone days, and when something strikes them as terrible or wondrous, they are quick to use metaphors. For example, a battle might be described as "the raven's game", "kissing swords", or "courting death." Innuendo, such as veiled threats or hidden messages, is commonly used, as are proverbs (see **Glossary**). Many heroes quote poets or the Qur'an. A hero of the *Nights* is recognizable right away by how he or she speaks.

### *2. Have a Story & Deliver it Well*

All characters in the *Nights* have an interesting back story, which explains their current predicament. In fact, it's common for an experienced or well-traveled character to have several stories in their repertoire. These stories are always entertaining and often reveal some piece of the character's history. For example, a rogue describing his beloved might give the listener an idea about how beautiful she is by calling her "a diamond in the rough, full of humility in the midst of arrogance, and eyes that sparkle like the very stars upon which I swore my love." Every *Nights* character – sultan, slave, human, or djinni – cannot resist a good story. Refer to **Chapter 1** for advice on storytelling.

### *3. Remember the Theme*

Nearly every story in the *Nights* has a theme; often this is the "absolute mercy and sovereignty of God", but others themes can be found, ranging from the sublime to the political. It is your responsibility as a player to create a *hook*, the reason why taking action is important for your hero, that is pertinent to the theme. For example, being close friends with a wise ruler who is unaware of an assassination plot against him would be a good hook for a story looking at the theme of loyalty. Keep in mind that this is the world of the *Nights*. Nobody slips on banana peels. There is a grand design behind everything that happens. As a player you shouldn't worry whether your hero will survive combat, but whether he'll win *with style* or die *nobly* (or be improbably rescued from certain death with *panache*... and praise for the mercy of God, of course!).

### *Creating a Nights' Character*

There are several steps to creating your hero or heroine of the *Nights*. If you wish to follow a structured character creation process use these guidelines:

1. Come up with a concept.
2. Choose or create an archetype.
3. Chose a virtue.
4. Choose a background and social station.
5. Choose one or more allegiances.
6. Choose a starting complication.
7. Create a back story for your character.
8. Create a name for your character.
9. Decide amongst your fellow players if your characters know each other yet, and if so, how.

### *Step #1: The Concept*

Inspiration for your character can come from many sources. If you don't already know what kind of hero you'd like to play, here are some ideas to get you started.





## *A Piece of Yourself*

Mature players who want a challenge might choose to anchor their character's concept in some aspect of themselves. For example, if you have a fear of being caught in a lie, you can incorporate this into your character's creation. Perhaps he carries a secret he believes will destroy him but is in reality harmless; it is only in his mind that it is dangerous. Or perhaps she is a princess in a court which plans her father's overthrow; she must tread carefully, ever afraid of saying too much... or too little. The deeper you can delve into yourself for this starting point for your character, the more authentically you will be able to role-play him or her (and the more you will learn about yourself). However, there's nothing stopping you from incorporating lighter parts of yourself into your character's concept; of course, your character will be less "real" but not any less enjoyable to play. For example, if you are afraid of dogs, you might create a burglar who is deathly afraid of mice. It is this spark that breathes life into your character.

## *Creating Characters as Group Art*

If the group sits down to create characters together, you may try this technique to sharpen your imaginations; it is especially helpful for players new to role-playing and for younger players. Each player does a quick sketch of their character using colored pencils or markers. Then each player passes their sheet to the player on their right, and everyone writes down something about the character or draws in an additional element. Then the character sketches are passed around, and this process repeated until each sketch returns to its original player. The player then incorporates everything that was added into a final pitch before following the character generation process. This technique creates a crisper idea of what a character is about, gives you a visual reference, and also gives each player a say in the character creation process.

## *Work in Progress*

You might start your character at the very beginning of his or her career. While this often takes up an entire adventure, it can prove very rewarding. Each player picks or is given a background, and then the adventure starts. As play goes on the young characters gain a virtue and vice, complications, and eventually a role and archetype. As players get familiar with the game, they create the kind of character they'd like to play. This is most appropriate when beginning a long game with a consistent group.

## *Step #2: Archetype*

Arabian Adventures are rife with archetypal heroes and heroines. These archetypes are a combination of Arabian folklore, Islamic history, and Hollywood's interpretations. An archetype not only describes what a character is capable of, but also gives an idea of what principles he or she represents, and what sort of challenges suit the

character. However, an archetype is just that – a mold on which to base your character. Feel free to modify or even break the mold. Each of the three character Roles has 7 archetypes which are described in this chapter.

## *Step #3: Virtue*

In *Caliphate Nights*, a character's nature, particularly their virtue, plays a great role in the game, and characters with the Virtuous feat may even have multiple virtues. Islamic virtues are discussed in this chapter.

## *Step #4: Place in Society*

How does your character fit into the larger world of the Caliphate? While a character's archetype defines what sort of hero or heroine they are, there are two major factors in defining a character's relationship to society: *Background* tells the story of what your character did before the first game session begins. *Station* is a measure of how wealthy and influential the family your character was born into is and indicates which circles of society your character is comfortable working and carousing in. Both background and station are discussed in this chapter. If you wish to play a non-Arab, refer to **Chapter 15** for descriptions of various ethnicities and nationalities.

## *Step #5: Allegiance*

Heroes of the *Nights* are committed to others. Of course, a hero may start off being a selfish rogue, but inevitably, he will grow to care about those around him and the society he lives in. The pinnacle of such commitment is the oath of loyalty, called the *bay'ah*. Swearing such an oath gives a character a cause to fight for, beliefs to defend, and a group of allies to fall back on in times of strife. Various allegiances are described later in this chapter.

## *Step #6: Complication*

Heroes and heroines never lead uneventful lives. Thus, each character must choose one starting complication from **Chapter 10** which propels them on the heroic path and gives them a reason for leaving home.

## *Step #7: Back Story*

Every character has an uplifting, tragic, magical, unresolved, or otherwise fascinating story which explains how they've gotten where they are now. Heroes and heroines of the *Nights* belong to a greater society, and even if they are orphans, they may have been raised in a *madrasah*, taken care of by a surrogate parent, enslaved as a *mamluk*, or otherwise made a member of society. Arabian culture deeply values the bonds of family, and a character's mother, father, siblings, or even distant relatives can have a great impact on their back story. When writing a back story, it's useful to think of how your character would relate the information. One way of writing a back story that distinguishes between things you know as a player but your character doesn't is to write the



back story as if your character (or another who knows your character well) were telling it to an audience, and in the margins include notes about things your character is unaware; such margin notes can become great plot hooks, making the Narrator's job easier and guaranteeing your character a more intimate connection to the game.

### Step #8: Name

A name can be a great source of pride for a hero of the *Nights*; it describes not only their family ties but also their position in society. Arabic names are discussed at the end of this chapter.

### Step #9: Show and Tell

Perhaps the most important step is presenting your character to the group. Each player spends a few minutes describing their character to the other players, perhaps even dropping into their character's voice for a bit. After each player shares their character, it's time to share input. For example, you might see a connection between your character's past and another character in the group. The Narrator introduces any plot threads that need to be woven into your back stories, and once everyone feels complete, it's on to the adventure!

### Archetype

Feats and powers marked with an asterisk (\*) are unique to the *Caliphate Nights* setting and appear in **Chapter 4** and **Chapter 5** respectively.

### Adept Archetypes

All adepts must choose an *arcane philosophy* as described in **Chapter 5**.

### Astrologer

Some claim that man is bound to the present, but the astrologer knows better, seeing the influences of the past, the call of the future, and the invisible connection between all things. While astrology can be very profitable, the Islamic government tends to frown on its practice, advocating faith over fortune-telling. Ironically, many astrologers are devout, knowing they will never be omniscient...

**Feats:** Astrometry\*, Powers (Find the Path\*, Nature Reading, Visions)

**Skills:** Concentration, Knowledge (earth sciences), Knowledge (supernatural), Knowledge (theology and philosophy)

**Suggested Feats:** Horary Astrology\*, Inception\*, Medical Astrology\*, Meteorological Astrology\*, Natal Astrology\*

**Suggested Powers:** Celestial Shaping\*, Heart Reading, Light Shaping, Object Reading, Scrying, Second Sight, Suggestion

### Dervish

An initiate in Sufi mysticism, the dervish walks a sacred path called *tariqah*, experiencing union with God while one is alive. Sufism is the surrender to God over and over again, and the embrace of one's consciousness as gifts and manifestations of God. Some dervishes retreat from society to practice asceticism, though just as many become political activists. Dervishes give up many worldly belongings, often becoming ascetics, in their quest for gnosis.

**Feats:** Dedicated, Powers (Body Control, Dream Shaping\*), Quotable Wit\*

**Skills:** Concentration, Knowledge (theology and philosophy), Perform (dance), Survival

**Suggested Feats:** Centering\*, Esoteric\*, Mind Over Body, Self-Realized Teacher\*, Spiritually Fireproof\*, Whirling Dervish\*

**Suggested Powers:** Bliss, Mind Touch, Mystic Imbuement\*, Nature Reading, Psychic Shield, Spirit Sense\*, Supernatural Speed, Visions

### Elementalist

Referring to themselves with grand titles – “brother of the north wind” or “lady of the ocean waves” – elementalists are colorful characters, both elitist and shamanic. Though elementalists favor wind-wracked mountaintops and other desolate areas, they are often found in the desert tribes and cities of Arabia serving princes and sheikhs while seeking out mystical knowledge.

**Feats:** Power (Elemental Strike, Wind Shaping, Nature Reading), Wind Finesse\*

**Skills:** Concentration, Knowledge (earth sciences), Knowledge (supernatural), Survival

**Suggested Feats:** Earth Finesse\*, Elemental Focus\*, Fire Finesse\*, Nature's Avatar\*, Water Finesse\*, Wind Finesse\*

**Suggested Powers:** Earth Shaping, Elemental Aura, Elemental Resistance, Fire Shaping, Sandstorm Shaping\*, Water Shaping, Weather Shaping, Wind Walk

### Hakima

Those who perceive the truth are revered in Arabian society. In legend this is often a young woman of deep faith called *hakima*, though men can be equally talented truth-seers, taking the title *hakim*. Often, the hakima lives in small villages where she serves as a wise woman, though sometimes a hakima can be found serving in a noble's palace or a qadi's court.

**Feats:** Powers (Heart Reading, True Seeing\*, Truth-Reading), Subtle Powers

**Skills:** Concentration, Knowledge (supernatural), Notice, Sense Motive

**Suggested Feats:** Deduction\*, Innocuous Adept\*, Read Character\*, Sense Destiny\*, Sense Heritage\*,







Sense Nature\*, Subtle Power, True Faith\*

**Suggested Power:** Dispel\*, Enhance Senses, Fate Sight\*, Second Sight, Sense Minds, Visions

## Natural Philosopher

The consummate pious magician, the natural philosopher is an early scientist, learning about the laws of human nature through deep inquiry. Equal parts alchemist and theurgist, he sees the potential in what a thing could be instead of what it is. Rigorous investigation of the truth through all means is the natural philosopher's hallmark; his "magic" is that of angelic revelation, Qur'anic verses,

and the power of language tempered by a critical eye and shrewd reason.

**Feats:** Alchemic Purification\*, Imbue Item, Powers (Enhance Senses, Pattern\*)

**Skills:** Craft (alchemy), Knowledge (physical sciences), Knowledge (supernatural), Knowledge (theology and philosophy)

**Suggested Feats:** Analyze Device\*, Esoteric\*, Experimental Philosophy\*, Skepticism\*, Subtle Power, The Philosopher's Stone\*, True Faith\*

**Suggested Powers:** Cure Blindness/Deafness, Cure Disease, Cure Poison, Dispel\*, Energy Shaping, Protection\*, Ward

## Saint

According to dominant Muslim belief, Muhammad was the last of the true prophets (*rasul*), the last to be given knowledge of a holy text from the mouth of God. However, there are still many saints (both Muslim and non-Muslim), those who live lives of utter religious devotion and can perform miracles. In fact, people worship at shrines of saints almost as often as they do in mosques. A saint always bears a message from God, often driving the saint's adventures.

**Feats:** Powers (Baraka\*, Cure, Cure Disease), True Faith\*

**Skills:** Concentration, Knowledge (theology and philosophy), Sense Motive, Survival

**Suggested Feats:** Devout\*, Divine Sustenance\*, Friend of God\*, Liberator\*, Miracle\*, Succor\*, Tongues\*, True Faith\*, Virtuous\*, Word of God\*

**Suggested Powers:** Body Control, Calm, Cure Blindness/Deafness, Cure Poison, Dispel\*, Imbue Life, Phase, Protection\*, Truth-Reading, Visions

## Sha'ir

The *sha'ir* (*sha'ira*) summons forth djinni to do his bidding, often for accumulating personal power, but sometimes for benevolent or even pious reasons. They are often feared figures in the Islamic empire, bartering with spirits for mysterious reasons. Many *sha'ir* praise Suleiman bin Daoud as the first of their kind, and consider their art to be of great religious significance.

**Feats:** Apprehend the Djinni's Hand\*, Powers (Djinni Binding\*, Djinni Summoning\*, Second Sight)

**Skills:** Diplomacy, Knowledge (supernatural), Knowledge (theology and philosophy), Sense Motive

**Suggested Feats:** Ambassador to the Djinni\*, Djinni Prison\*, Etiquette\*, Gracious Host\*, Master Wish-Maker\*, Secrets of Jinnistan\*

**Suggested Powers:** Apport, Ghost Touch, Oath-Binding\*, Object Reading, Plane Shift, Protection\*, Scrying, Spirit Sense\*, Ward



Expert Archetypes*Assassin*

Religiously and politically motivated killers, assassins often belong to the Kharijite or Ismaili sects, though other groups are known to have assassins too. They are not only masters of the silent kill, but also of undermining the beliefs of the faithful, sowing discord, and inspiring doubt. An assassin must be resolute in faith, terrifying in action, and masterful in rhetoric. Some assassins have rebelled against their former comrades, and are hunted by those they once served.

**Feats:** Dedicated, Fearless\*, Inspire (fear), Sneak Attack

**Skills:** Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise, Intimidate, Knowledge (behavioral sciences), Knowledge (theology and philosophy), Sense Motive, Stealth

**Suggested Feats:** Amoral\*, Benefit (alternate identity), Benefit (hideout)\*, Contacts, Da'is\*, Deceitful Aura\*, Fearless\*, Hide in Plain Sight, Improved Critical, Instill Panic\*, Messenger of Death\*, Read Character\*, Silent Step\*, Sleeper Agents\*, Sow Distrust\*

*Barber*

The roguish barber is a tradition in Arabian folktales. Part storyteller, part thief, and part lunatic, the barber is only telling the truth about half the adventures he has been on, but who would know which are lies? Equally comfortable in the company of beggars and kings, the barber cuts through all social boundaries to ply his trade.

**Feats:** Fascinate, Grooming\*, Well-Informed, Universal Appeal\*

**Skills:** Bluff, Disguise, Gather Information, Knowledge (popular culture), Knowledge (streetwise), Medicine, Perform (oratory), Sense Motive

**Suggested Feats:** Barber of the Grand Bazaar\*, Captive Audience\*, Connected, Contacts, Costume Maker\*, Emperor's Mirror\*, Guide Conversation\*, Inspire (complacency), Jack-of-All-Trades, Layman's Medicine\*, Medical Science\*, New Look\*, Read Character\*

*Beggar-Thief*

Beggars are at the bottom rung of society, yet everyone thinks twice before harming them. It might be the Caliph in disguise after all! Or what if it is the legendary Beggar King? Overall, most beggars fade into the background, eking out a living on scraps and charity. Above all else, the beggar dreams of making it big some time and never having to beg again.

**Feats:** Blend In\*, Contacts, On the Run, Plausible Deniability\*

**Skills:** Bluff, Climb, Escape Artist, Gather Information, Knowledge (streetwise), Notice, Sleight of Hand, Stealth

**Suggested Feats:** A Fool and His Money\*, Beggar's Savvy\*, Contacts, Escape Route\*, Evasion, Improved Evasion, Inspire (pity)\*, King of Beggars\*, Mark\*, Monkey Companion\*, Move-by Action, Read Character\*, Run, Set-up, Shadowing\*, Taunt, Urban Tracking\*

*Explorer*

"A stranger is an ignorant man," goes the proverb, and the explorer is no stranger to the lands of Arabia. From the Maghreb to Hindustan, the explorer wishes to see the world and has the means to do it. A fearless master of travel, the explorer is at home captaining a ship, trading horses for camels in the desert, finding hidden cities – all these are the explorer's birthright. It is not enough to hear or read about the fascinating lands at the edges of the Islamic empire and beyond; the explorer must see it for himself!

**Feats:** Endurance, Etiquette\*, Safe Passage\*, Trailblazer

**Skills:** Climb, Diplomacy, Knowledge (earth sciences), Notice, Ride, Search, Survival, Swim

**Suggested Feats:** Al-Hajj\*, Benefit (diplomatic immunity), Citizen of the World\*, Connected, Contacts, Cultural Familiarity\*, Faithful Steed\*, Fascinate, Fearless\*, Horse Savvy\*, Linguist\*, Mountaineer\*, Navigation\*, Sailor's Lore\*, Track, Surveyor\*, Wealthy

*Hakawati*

The professional storyteller, or *hakawati*, performs in coffee houses, marketplaces, and at caravanserais when traveling. Storytellers are of very low social status and usually belong to the *Banu Sasan* caste. Storytellers are not known for being true to the original source, and often twist a story to make it more appealing to the crowds. The storyteller is not a historian by any stretch of the imagination.

**Feats:** Affect the Masses\*, Eidetic Memory, Fascinate, Master Storyteller\*

**Skills:** Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, Knowledge (popular culture), Knowledge (streetwise), Notice, Perform (oratory), Perform (stringed instruments)

**Suggested Feats:** Between Imagination and Memory\*, Favored Audience\*, Great Inspiration\*, Hafiz\*, Hidden Lesson\*, Inspire, Mass Suggestion, Poetic Soul\*, Quotable Wit\*, Rumor-monger\*, Ruthless Cliffhanger\*, Street Preaching\*, Suggestion, Well-Informed







## Merchant

Straddling the fence of the law, the merchant walks a delicate balance between usurer and pioneer. A skilled merchant can sell water to a man in a fountain, and sand to a man in the desert. Merchants motivate exploration in their search for new markets, and if they spread enlightenment at the same time, so much the better.

**Feats:** An Offer You Can't Refuse\*, Contacts, Dishonest Law\*, Evaluate\*

**Skills:** Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, Knowledge (business), Knowledge (civics), Knowledge (streetwise), Notice, Sense Motive

**Suggested Feats:** Alas My Children May Starve\*, Analyze Device\*, Benefit (write of passage)\*, Benefit (write of trade)\*, Business\*, Buying Power\*, Connected, Contacts, Cooking the Books\*, Cultural Familiarity\*, Etiquette\*, Gracious Host\*, Honest Law\*, Illicit Venues\*, Mark\*, Master Plan, Read Character\*, Trading Empire\*

## Mullah

Learned theologian, teacher, scholar, legal advocate – a mullah is all these things. Holding a respected position in his community as an authority on temporal and divine law, the mullah often becomes involved in the Islamic clerical hierarchy, and stands to advance to positions of great power.

**Feats:** Honest Law\*, Informed Citizen\*, Scholarly\*, Well-Informed

**Skills:** Diplomacy, Knowledge (civics), Knowledge (history), Knowledge (theology and philosophy), Language, Notice, Perform (oratory), Sense Motive

**Suggested Feats:** Al-Hajj\*, Author\*, Beautiful Calligraphy\*, Benefit (sheikh)\*, Connected, Devout\*, Eidetic Memory, Exemplary\*, Gracious Host\*, Historiography\*, Hafiz\*, Inspire (critical thinking)\*, Institutional Education\*, Legal Scholar\*, Quotable Wit\*, Researcher\*, Revisionist Historian\*, Theologian\*, True Faith\*, Virtuous\*

## Warrior Archetypes

### Amir

A commander of battle, the noble amir is most comfortable when planning from the safety of his fortress or campaign tent, but when the call to battle goes out, the amir fights at the head of his army. Conqueror, leader, strategist, and soldier, the amir is all these things, ready to pay the ultimate price to protect the interests of his family, the nobility, and sometimes even the greater Caliphate.

**Feats:** Armor Training, Benefit (noble title)\*, Command\*, Weapon Training

**Skills:** Diplomacy, Knowledge (physical sciences), Knowledge (tactics), Ride

**Suggested Feats:** General's Conference\*, Exemplary\*, Fearless\*, Innocuous Combatant\*, Landed\*, Leadership, Master of the Battlefield\*, Mounted Combat\*, Read Character\*, Siege Warfare\*, Tactician, Unparalleled Skill at Arms\*, Veteran\*, Weapon Focus

### Cherkaji

He is the dashing son of a sheikh raiding the city's caravans. She is an urbane princess with a stable of the finest horses in Arabia. They both are *cherkaji* ("wheelers about"), the most skilled of all horsemen and women; these horseback heroes are the undisputed masters of the



# Chapter 3: A Hero of the Nights

saddle. Strong in both faith and valor, the *cherkaji*'s true pride is his or her horse, a drinker of wind, a dancer of fire, a gift from the Almighty!

**Feats:** Horse Savvy\*, Mounted Combat, Move-by Action, Weapon Training

**Skills:** Handle Animal, Intimidate, Ride, Survival

**Suggested Feats:** Animal Empathy, Benefit (sheikh)\*, Call Mount\*, Drinker of Wind\*, Faithful Steed\*, Heartening Laugh\*, Horse Breaking\*, Horseback Stunts\*, Improved Mounted Combat\*, Poetic Soul\*, Quotable Wit\*, Spirited Charge, Sword Dancing\*, Warrior's Steed\*

## Corsair

Masters of the Mediterranean, corsairs are a mixed lot of privateers and pirates. While some scoundrels follow the strictest code of honor, others are willing to sell anyone into slavery for a bit of coin. A daring combatant and legend on the high seas, the corsair is often a hunted criminal, and just as often a dashing heroine. She can't be trusted farther than a knife's throw, but no one knows the ocean like she does.

**Feats:** Corsair Savvy\*, Navigation\*, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Training

**Skills:** Acrobatics, Climb, Jump, Knowledge (earth sciences)

**Suggested Feats:** Ambidexterity, Endurance, Free Diving\*, Heartening Laugh\*, Intimidating Reputation\*, Knife-Fighting\*, Lasting Intimidation\*, Leadership, Legend of the Seven Seas\*, Sailor's Lore\*, Sea Dog\*, Taunt, Two-Weapon Defense, Weapon Bind, Weapon Break, Weapon Focus

## Duelist

When a *diyya*, or blood debt, must be paid, it often falls on the shoulders of the duelist to pay it. The duelist may be a sword-saint, only accepting honorable duels and fighting for those who can't defend themselves, or be little better than a mercenary assassin, charging a stiff fee while playing both sides of the fence. In either case, the duelist thrives on finesse in a battle of one-on-one where the better warrior takes all. Often the duelist views himself as a pacifying presence that keeps the blood debts from escalating into violent feuds.

**Feats:** Assessment, Issue Challenge\*, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Training

**Skills:** Bluff, Intimidate, Sense Motive, Sleight of Hand

**Suggested Feats:** Adaptive Fighting\*, Ambidexterity, Benefit (pardon of the state)\*, Merciful Combatant\*, One Against Many\*, Riposte\*, Saint of Swords\*, Two-Weapon Defense, Weapon Bind, Weapon Focus, Weapon Specialization

## Ghazi

Literally, the term *ghazi* means "forgiver", and that is often the role that a ghazi takes, tempering formidable violence with mercy and absolution. This holy warrior is charged with defending the Islamic faith from foreign nations. Ironically, the ghazi is often the first to oppose the militant expansion of corrupt caliphs. She is a thoughtful warrior who chooses battle as a last resort.

**Feats:** Armor Training, Merciful Combatant\*, Rage, Weapon Training

**Skills:** Intimidate, Knowledge (tactics), Knowledge (theology and philosophy), Ride

**Suggested Feats:** Battle Cry\*, Champion of the Faith\*, Devout\*, Exhortation\*, Favored Opponent (heretic), In Whose Hands is My Life\*, Inspire (courage), Inspire (fury), Inspire (penitence)\*, Lion of God\*, On Hallowed Ground\*, Pardon of the State\*, Smite Opponent, True Faith\*, Virtuous\*

## Guard

Often, guards in Mythic Arabia belong to prestigious military or police groups appointed to guard the palace, the city, a harem, or as bodyguard to a noble. At the bottom rung are the caravan guards who are often youth who hardly know how to swing a sword. The guard is a loyal professional who will go down fighting if it means his charge stays safe.

**Feats:** Armor Training, Defensive Attack, Eye for Treachery\*, Weapon Training

**Skills:** Concentration, Notice, Search, Sense Motive

**Suggested Feats:** Bonded Ward\*, Captain of the Guard\*, Dedicated, Diehard, Fearless\*, Guard Duty\*, Improved Disarm, Improved Grab, Interpose\*, Night Vision, Read Character\*, Seize Initiative, Stalwart\*, Tireless, Tough, Upon My Life\*, Urban Tracking\*, Weapon Lock\*

## Mamluk

While the officers of the Islamic army might be nobles, the cavalry are slaves from across the Caliphate and beyond. The mamluks have their own culture, one in which a person of any social status can rise to great fame, eventually earning freedom. Mamluks belong to specific hierarchies, identifying their leader and allegiance with flags, emblazoned shields, and even tattoos.

**Feats:** Armor Training, Military Rank\*, Mounted Combat, Weapon Training

**Skills:** Intimidate, Knowledge (civics), Knowledge (tactics), Ride

**Suggested Feats:** Cleave, Dedicated, Formation Tactics\*, Heroic Charge\*, Improved Mounted Archery\*, Improved Mounted Combat\*, Mounted Archery\*, Mounted Combat, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Spirited Charge, Terrifying Charge\*, Tireless, Ustadh\*, Veteran\*







## The Virtues

*"Lo! This Qur'an guideth unto that which is straightest, and giveth glad tidings unto the believers who do good works, that theirs will be a great reward."*

- The Noble Qur'an

While adepts rely on mystical power, experts on skills and connections, and warriors on strength at arms, there is a greater ally to a hero still – their virtue. Virtues in *Caliphate Nights* represent traditional Islamic values. Islamic society considers the common good, called

*istehsan*, more than the individual good. Thus, virtues like "free-spirited" or "daring" might actually be better described as a "rebellious" or "reckless" vice.

As embodiments of virtue, heroes in *Caliphate Nights* can spend Conviction to activate their virtue (see **Chapter 1**). Heroes with the Virtuous feat may earn multiple virtues, gaining the reward of each virtue they possess.

Each virtue has a reward, typically a bonus feat and a new way to use Conviction. However, if a character repeatedly fails to act according to their virtue, the Narrator can strip the virtue's reward from them.

### Contentment

*"In no wise covet those things in which God has bestowed His gifts more freely on some of you than to others: to men is allotted what they earn, and to women what they earn: but ask God of His bounty." (4:32)*

You are satisfied with your lot in life, and are confident you will make do with it. Your aspirations are to be happy with what you have and not to begrudge others when they have more than you.

**Reward:** You gain the Improvised Tools feat. When you find the good in an otherwise difficult situation and are content with what you have, you may spend a Conviction point to double a benefit you already have for a scene. For example, a hero is content that, though their camels have been stolen and they are stranded, there is a full canteen of water between them; the hero is able to ration the water so that it works like two full canteens.

**Opposed Vices:** Envious, Prosaic, Uninspired

### Courage

*"The truly brave are those who lose not their hearts but stand firmly and behave patiently under ills and hardships and in battles – those are they who are true (to themselves) and those are they who guard themselves against the displeasures of their Lord." (2:177)*

More than acts of bravery, courage is a mindset utterly opposed to oppression. You stand firm against your fears, whether they are embodied by an enemy or a difficult situation, and aspire to transcend fear altogether.

### Vice in Caliphate Nights

While it is the characters' commitment to virtue which makes them heroes and heroines, it is their wrestling with vice that makes them human. Vice works as normal in **True20**. Typical vices found in the Qur'an include arrogance, despair, discrimination, envy, greed, denial, scheming, and worshipping false gods (*shirk*). Each virtue presents opposed vices that characters may themselves have or struggle against; an opposed vice represents a lack of the virtue, the virtue taken to a distorted extreme, or its moral or ethical opposite.



# Chapter 3: A Hero of the Nights

**Reward:** You gain the Fearless feat. You may spend a Conviction point when revealing your true beliefs under dire circumstances in order to gain respect from everyone present, even your enemies. Everyone who witnesses your profession of belief must make a Will save (Difficulty 10 + your level) or they cannot bring themselves to physically harm you. Also, you may spend a Conviction point to gain access to the Inspire (courage) feat regardless of your Role; treat your total levels as Expert levels for the purpose of using Inspire (courage).

**Opposed Vices:** Faint-hearted, Foolhardy, Reckless

## Courtesy

*"When a greeting is offered you, meet it with a greeting still more courteous, or at least of equal courtesy. God takes careful account of all things."* (4:86)

You are polite and well-mannered even when in an argument or dealing with your enemies, and you always defer to those older than you or of higher station. You strive to be respectful of the privacy, needs, and feelings of others.

**Reward:** You gain the Etiquette feat. You may spend a Conviction point to take 10 on a Diplomacy check when under pressure, or to take 20 on a Diplomacy check provided you have enough time.

**Opposed Vices:** Flirtatious, Ingratiating, Rude

## Discipline

*"O man! Surely you must strive (to attain) your Lord, a hard striving until you meet him."* (84:6)

You are assiduous in your endeavors, making a steady and persistent effort to complete those tasks appointed to you. Attending to the smallest detail, you train yourself through virtuous endeavors to attain moral and mental development.

**Reward:** You gain either the Mind Over Body or the Skill Focus (Concentration) feat. You may spend Conviction to apply yourself to a task; provided you are uninterrupted you may take 20 on a check that you normally could not take 20 on or you may retry a check you normally aren't allowed to retry.

**Opposed Vices:** Lazy, Pedantic, Perfectionist

## Firmness

*"How many of the Prophets fought, and with them large bands of godly men? But they never lost heart if they met with disaster in God's way, nor did they weaken nor give in. And God loves those who are firm and steadfast."* (3:146)

Once you are committed to a course of action, nothing can sway you from your goal, come hell or high water. You aspire to strengthen your will, never losing hope, inspiring others to overcome their hardships and hold fast to their faith.

**Reward:** You gain the Dedicated feat in regard to a goal; alternately, you may wait to declare the object of your dedication until after or during the first game. You may spend a Conviction point to change the object of your dedication. However, you may only do so once you have succeeded in the goal of your initial dedication.

**Opposed Vices:** Indecisive, Narrow-minded, Stubborn

## Forgiveness

*"And verily whoso is patient and forgives, Lo! That verily is the steadfast heart of things."* (42:43)

You avoid extremes of "an eye for an eye" or "turning the other cheek", transcending both to find it in your heart to forgive even the worst offenses. Though you are not indiscriminate in your forgiveness, when someone repents in earnest, you know how to forgive and forget.

**Reward:** The golden reward of forgiveness is subtle yet pervasive. By keeping resentment at a distance, you are never afflicted by the following Complications unless you choose to be: *blood feud, envious rival, haunted, and inner conflict*. Your forgiveness is absolute and has no strings attached; you may spend a Conviction point when a grudge or resentment is resolved with your help in order to make the resolution permanent. Nothing can cause that particular resentment or grudge to resurface again.

**Opposed Vices:** Indiscreet, Manipulative, Resentful

## Frugality

*"Eat not up your property among yourselves in vanities."* (4:29)

Watching what you spend and how you spend it, you always make sure your portion is the smallest and exhort others to reduce their consumption. You aspire to live simply and save your resources for when they are truly needed.

**Reward:** You gain the Evaluate feat. You may spend a Conviction point to avoid losing wealth on a wealth check, provided your purchase is practical and not frivolous.

**Opposed Vices:** Fearful, Ostentatious, Parsimonious

## Generosity

*"By no means shall you attain righteousness unless you give of what you love."* (3:92)

You have a charitable and generous heart, freely giving of what you have in unostentatious ways, donating to the poor, providing for strangers, and never trying to undercut a merchant's fair price. You aspire to give without thought of reward.







**Reward:** You gain the Devout feat with regard to almsgiving. You may spend a point of Conviction to receive assistance from someone you've helped in the past, or someone who observed the help and was moved by your generosity.

**Opposed Vices:** Indulgent, Stingy, Treacherous

## Gratitude

*"God does not like ingratitude from His servants: if you are grateful, He is pleased with you."* (39:7)

You are grateful for small things, even in the face of overwhelming adversity. You aspire to be grateful for everything that comes your way, transforming your ingratitude through deeds and words of appreciation.

**Reward:** You gain the Dedicated feat, reflecting a person you are grateful to. You may spend a Conviction point to recall a good deed done to you, gaining that benefit again; this good deed must have been a sacrifice for another. For example, a hero recalls being fed by a poor fisherwoman while regaining his health, and he gains the benefit of warm meal.

**Opposed Vices:** Gullible, Naïve, Ungrateful

## Honesty

*"Cover not Truth with falsehood, nor conceal the Truth when you know it."* (2:42)

You act with integrity, are scrupulously honest in your dealings, admit when something is beyond you, are transparent in your motives, and are impeccable with your word. If you should ever you break a pledge, you go to great measures to make restitution.

**Reward:** You gain the Upstanding feat, though the true

reward of honesty is deeper than recognition and inspires deep listening and appreciation. When you are speaking the truth in a debate you may spend a Conviction point to gain 3 debate points (see **Chapter 8**).

**Opposed Vices:** Duplicitous, Perfectionist, Unreliable

## Hope

*"Here is a plain statement to men, a guidance and instruction to those who fear God. So lose not heart, nor fall into despair. For you must gain mastery if you are true in Faith."* (3:138-139)

You remain confident in your expectation of divine blessing and eternal life with God, even when faced with dire circumstances. More than an idle hope, you commend your soul to God, knowing He will deliver you.

**Reward:** You gain the True Faith feat. When you are faced with a difficult situation, you may immediately spend a Conviction point to set a condition under which you will regain all your Conviction later. A condition is not success itself (e.g. "being freed from prison"), but suggests impending success, such as "when our ally breaks into the prison." When the condition comes to pass, you regain all your Conviction. However, if the condition doesn't come to pass, your hope may have been in vain. You may set only one such condition at a time.

**Opposed Vices:** Despairing, Naïve, Resigned

## Hospitality

*"And when he had furnished them with their provisions, he said: Bring to me a brother of yours from your father; do you not see that I give full measure and that I am the best of hosts?"* (12:59)

You are hospitable to even your worst enemies, and provide anyone seeking lodging with a place to stay for up to three nights. As a host, you always seek to keep your guests as comfortable as they can be.

**Reward:** You gain the Gracious Host feat. You may spend a Conviction point to extend the duration of any salt bond you are party to by an extra day. If you are the host you may do so indefinitely until your guests decide to leave. If you are the guest, the Narrator may declare a limit on how long you can extend the salt bond.

**Opposed Vices:** Aloof, Pushy, Spiteful

## Humility

*"The servants of God Most Gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say, 'Peace!'"* (25:63)

You know your true worth, side-stepping praise and taking earnest criticism to heart, thereby creating an atmosphere of confidence. You observe the rules of chastity, dress, proper conduct around the opposite gender, and you refrain from speaking highly of yourself or suggesting that you know more than you actually do. Tempering your words, you know the true reward is with God, not in the recognition of others.



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**Reward:** You gain the Low Profile feat. True humility is created by self and God; no man can ever humiliate another. When you declare your lowliness or submissiveness, you may spend a Conviction point to negate effects which turn others against you or cause you to lose Reputation.

**Opposed Vices:** Arrogant, Coy, Self-deprecating

## Joy

*"No soul knows what joys are kept hidden for them as a reward for their deeds." (32:17)*

You are fascinated by the mystery of life. Even if you have a simple life, you are filled with wonder at how the sun rises, and which bush the ringdove flies from. When faced with hardship, you hold your head high, a twinkle in your teary eyes, and rejoice. For who truly knows what hidden gifts there are in tribulation?

**Reward:** You gain the Heartening Laugh feat, for your laughter makes the angels rejoice. When you encounter something which delights you or is a joy to behold, you may spend a Conviction point to gain inspiration whenever you gaze upon that thing; henceforward, you regain Conviction whenever you look upon the object of your joy after a period of separation. Also, you may spend a Conviction point to gain access to the Fascinate feat, regardless of your Role.

**Opposed Vices:** Depressed, Melodramatic, Moody

## Justice

*"God loves those who judge in equity." (5:42)*

Whether you believe in a retributive justice or a restorative justice, you are committed to acting from impartiality, regardless of someone's past history, any bribery they may offer you, or threats made against you. You also know when it is your place to judge and when judgment rests with God alone.

**Reward:** You gain the Deduction feat. You may spend a Conviction point to prevent one character from using any interaction skills on you whatsoever for a scene.

**Opposed Vices:** Capricious, Partisan, Unfair

## Kindness

*"Do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbors who are of kin, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer, and what your right hand possess." (4:36)*

You are committed to creating richness and beauty in relationships through kindness, especially with those closest to you and the needy, even if you have to go out of your way. Others are frequently in your prayers, especially when they are sorely testing your patience.

**Reward:** You gain the Dedicated feat in regard to helping those in need. When you go out of your way to help someone, you may spend a Conviction point to increase the base reaction towards you by one step for a scene (e.g. from Indifferent to Friendly).

**Opposed Vices:** Caregiver, Insensitive, Prying

## Moderation

*"Commit no excess, for God loves not those given to excess." (5:87)*

Between the extremes of excess and denial there is a middle path – it is this path of temperance that you walk. Tragedies and triumphs will come and go, but you do not invest your happiness in the outcome of such things. Rather, you find your inspiration in the stillness and patient listening.

**Reward:** You gain the Skepticism feat reflecting your even temperament. However, you are not bound by a code of skepticism, and you may spend a Conviction point to allow yourself to gain the benefit of an ally's Power or Inspire feat. You may also spend a Conviction point to take 20 on a Concentration check provided you have already adjusted to the environmental condition. For example, after several hours on the deck of a storm-tossed ship, you are then able to take 20 on all Concentration checks for the purpose of dealing with violent motion.

**Opposed Vices:** Austere, Indulgent, Wanton

## Peace

*"And when they hear frivolous discourse which they might lead to some quarrel, they do not listen to it, but pass on with dignity, and do not pick up quarrels on trifling matters." (25:72)*

You are committed to peace and the stability which it provides, settling your disputes in a conciliatory fashion; so long as the injuries done are not extreme, there is always a peaceful way for you.

**Reward:** You gain either the Challenge (combat diplomacy) or Skill Focus (Diplomacy) feat. If you can speak with a subject, you may spend a Conviction point to delay their hostile action until you have attempted an interaction check to convince the subject to lay down their arms. If you do not make an interaction check with the subject in a certain period of time (determined by Narrator), they resume hostilities.

**Opposed Vices:** Conciliatory, Ignorant, Parochial

## Perseverance

*"What is with you must vanish, what is with God will endure. And we will certainly bestow, on those who patiently persevere, their reward according to the best of their actions." (16:96)*

You are slow to judge a situation, and even when faced with great suffering you grimly forge ahead.





You aspire to be patient and pious in the face of adversity of any kind, no matter how great or how small.

**Reward:** You gain the Iron Will feat, reflecting your patience. You may spend a Conviction point to take 20 on Constitution checks and Fortitude saves versus environmental factors like drowning, hot weather, or starvation.

**Opposed Vices:** Desperate, Judgmental, Obstinate

## Prudence

*"If a wicked person comes to you with any news, ascertain the truth, lest you harm people unwittingly, and afterwards become full of repentance for what you have done." (49:6)*

Though not suspicious by nature, you seek to know the truth of another's motives before becoming involved in their affairs. By close examination of what others say and do, you aspire to prevent conflict and disaster.

**Reward:** You gain the Read Character feat. You may spend a Conviction point to gain access to the Sense Nature feat regardless of your Role. You may also spend a Conviction point to take 20 on a Sense Motive check when you have plenty of time to observe and interact with someone.

**Opposed Vices:** Doubtful, Naïve, Petty

## Purity

*"God loves those who keep themselves pure and clean." (2:222)*

You abstain from wine, drugs, unlawful sex, and avoid contact with impure things or people. You perform ablutions every morning and evening, and whenever you are in a state of physical or spiritual impurity. Through your purity, you aspire to grow closer to God.

**Reward:** You gain the Immunity (disease) trait. You may spend a Conviction point when you perform ablutions to cleanse yourself of a sin committed unknowingly, against your will, or with great reservations. All effects that depend upon the state of your soul (e.g. the Baraka, Curse or Oath-Binding powers) ignore the sin you have cleansed yourself of.

**Opposed Vices:** Lascivious, Obsessive, Slovenly

## Repentance

*"See the forgiveness of your Lord, and turn to Him in repentance; that He may grant you enjoyment, good (and true), for a term appointed." (11:3)*

You know your human frailties will cause you to sin, but you aspire to repent time and time again. When you wrong someone, you will make it up to them ten times over, and if they are not available you will either seek them out to make amends or make an act of sacrifice for the good of the community.

**Reward:** You gain the Inspire (confidence) feat. If you are abject in your repentance gain the Inspire (pity) feat instead. As repentance requires understanding one's

own ignorance, you may spend a Conviction point to immediately identify why another is angry with you and what it would take to make amends, or what mistake you have made that led to the current situation and what it will take to repair the situation.

**Opposed Vices:** Ingratiating, Masochist, Narcissistic

## Responsibility

*"Whoever recommends and helps a good cause becomes a partner therein: And whoever helps an evil cause, shares in its burden." (4:85)*

There are many responsibilities in this world, and you seek to fulfill all your duties to family, business, God, and your community. By actively expanding and balancing your responsibilities, you seek to contribute to a responsible society.

**Reward:** You gain the Upstanding feat. You may spend a Conviction point in a *duties* complication you have; from then on you regain Conviction when fulfilling your duty.

**Opposed Vices:** Boring, Irresponsible, Resigned

## Restraint

*"For such as had entertained the fear of standing before their Lord's (tribunal) and had restrained their soul from lower desires, their abode will be the Garden." (79:40-41)*

Even when you are sorely tempted, you restrain yourself from impious acts. Even when wicked deeds are being committed left and right by others; you lower the sword of your vengeance and temper the lust of your victory.

**Reward:** You gain the Merciful Combatant feat. You may spend a Conviction point to resist being compelled to act in any wicked manner.

**Opposed Vices:** Carnal, Repressed, Wanton

## Sincerity

*"Fear God, and make your utterance straight forward that He may make your conduct whole and sound." (33:70-71)*

You speak the hard truth, even when it isn't popular or could land you in dire straits. Avoiding petty criticism, your insights cut to the heart of a matter and pierce the lies or social niceties that only serve the abuse of power.

**Reward:** You gain the Inspire (critical thinking) feat, treating your total levels as Expert levels. While your frankness may shock others, it often allows you to get to the heart of a matter quickly. When you make a Diplomacy or Intimidate check and the subject's adjusted attitude is "indifferent" or better, you may spend a Conviction point to get the subject to jump to the point. They stop mincing words, and explain everything pertinent that they know in simple language. No further interaction checks are needed to get information from them about the topic at hand.

**Opposed Vices:** Critical, Deceitful, Unabashed



# Chapter 3: A Hero of the Nights

## Spirituality

*"Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day – these are indeed Signs for men of understanding, men who celebrate the praises of God, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth, (with the thought) 'Our Lord! Nor for naught hast Thou created this! Glory to Thee!'" (3:190 – 191)*

Your heart day and night seeks God's grace. While you perform your prayers with great ardor, you know that the true expression of spirituality resides in how you remember God in your day-to-day affairs.

**Reward:** You gain the Devout feat and you may spend a point of Conviction to add another object of your devotion (thereby gaining a new way to regain Conviction) instead of taking the Devout feat multiple times. If something causes you to lose faith, you lose one object of devotion.

**Opposed Vices:** Distant, Parochial, Worldly

## Tolerance

*"If it had been your Lord's Will, they would have all believed, all who are on earth! Will you then compel mankind, against their will, to believe?" (10:99)*

You do not hold against a person their age, background, gender, race or creed; you are even apt to overlook impious deeds if the person has a good heart. Through your tolerance you aspire to generate goodwill, understanding, and civility between all peoples.

**Reward:** You gain the Universal Appeal feat. As tolerance is founded on awareness of others, you may spend a Conviction point to get an insight about someone's age, background, gender, race, or creed. For example, while dealing with a stable hand a hero wonders why the stable hand is poorly treated; the hero spends a Conviction point to get an insight about the stable hand's background, learning that the stable hand is a reformed thief.

**Opposed Vices:** Conciliatory, Decadent, Prejudiced

## Trust

*"God does command you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due." (4:58)*

You aspire to trust others who merit your trust, despite the wrongs that have been done to you in the past. Likewise you aspire to be a trustworthy person who people feel they can rely on. You always repay your debts whether material or spiritual.

**Reward:** You gain the Inspire (confidence) feat, treating your total levels as Expert levels. You may spend a Conviction point to declare a person, community, or organization has earned your trust; you gain the Dedicated feat in regard to the subject. If you or the subject breaks the trust, lose the benefit of this feat.

**Opposed Vices:** Gullible, Unreliable, Suspicious

## Unity

*"Hold fast, all together, by the Rope which God (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude God's favor on you, for you were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, you became brethren." (3:103)*

You work to keep your friends and community unified in heart and mind by creating dialogue with those who dissent and imploring the powerful to listen, whether through word or deed.

**Reward:** You gain the Connected feat and you may spend a Conviction point to expand your network of connections after making a new friend or ally. If you have a falling out with your ally, lose the benefit of the Connected feat in regard to them.

**Opposed Vices:** Domineering, Intolerant, Selfish

## Wisdom

*"Invite all to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious." (16:125)*

Though quietly observing your faith is a virtue, even beyond this is sharing the lamp of your wisdom with others. You are the consummate teacher, and aspire to guide others on the virtuous path.

**Reward:** If you teach by example gain the Exemplary feat. If you teach by ordering others around gain the Inspire (competence) feat instead. If you teach by preaching gain the Street Preaching feat instead. You may spend a Conviction point to teach a group of people a skill (they gain 4 ranks) or feat (they must meet the prerequisites) that you possess for one scene.

**Opposed Vices:** Controlling, Patronizing, Withholding

## Background

The *Nights* were stories told in cities for city-dwellers by city-dwellers. Characters from the city live amidst the teeming masses, the glittering palaces, and the dark alleyways, working in conditions that a nomad could scarcely believe. All characters besides the Nomad are assumed to be urban folk (*hadhari*) and thus get access to the Hadhari feat group. However, certain backgrounds may lend themselves to a nomadic character as well. Imagine a young Djinn-Touched Bedouin boy or a wheeling and dealing Tuareg woman who works as a Caravan Driver for her tribe. In these cases, the player may choose whether to have access to Nomad feats instead of Hadhari feats; a character only gets access to one group (either Hadhari or Nomad), reflecting their background.







## Acrobat

Every day you tempt death and the crowd cheers you on. You are equal parts juggler, tightrope walker, tumbler, and martial artist – you are a *bahluwan* (“champion”). You live for the thrill of the physical challenge, all the more so if you can shock or amaze people at the same time. When crowds gather around, you will always be found at the center of attention.

**Bonus Skills:** Acrobatics, Escape Artist

**Bonus Feats:** Canny Dodge, Improved Initiative

**Favored Feats:** Acrobatic Bluff, Slow Fall

## Animal Trainer

The bazaars are filled with snake charmers claiming to have learned their art in the land of Sind, larcenous monkeys serving equally dubious masters, and even owners of donkeys and goats who claim their animals are relatives transformed by a wicked spell. During lean times you act as a sort of public health official, finding troublesome animals and carrying them safely out of homes. And rarely you are summoned to a noble’s court to perform.

**Bonus Skills:** Bluff, Handle Animal

**Bonus Feats:** Animal Empathy, Fascinate

**Favored Feats:** Fascinate, and choose one: Familiar or Monkey Companion\*

## Aristocrat

You were born in the lap of luxury, the child of a noble house. The commoners’ far fetched tales of life behind palace walls have a kernel of truth; your life was indeed wondrous...if a bit political. While you were surrounded with the best teachers, stunning entertainers, and untold wealth, you also struggled with domineering elders, fiendishly orchestrated arranged marriages, and competition to secure your rightful inheritance.

**Bonus Skills:** Choose two: Diplomacy, Knowledge (nobility), Perform (oratory), or Ride

**Bonus Feats:** Benefit (noble title)\*, Wealthy

**Favored Feats:** Information Network\*, Presence\*

## Assassin-in-Training

Since your youth, you were groomed to be the perfect instrument of terror, learning to use fear as a weapon and to master your own fears. Your mentors convinced you that you were performing the will of God, and sent you out on your first mission. Everything changed after that. Either you have become an assassin or you have escaped by the grace of God. If you escaped indoctrination, then you may be hunted by those who trained you.

**Bonus Skills:** Intimidate, Knowledge (theology and philosophy)

**Bonus Feats:** Fearless\*, Improved Critical

**Favored Feats:** Fearless\*, Inspire (fear)

## Bureaucrat

A civil servant of the Caliphate, you ensure the vast empire doesn’t collapse under its own weight. You might be responsible for running the neighborhood bathhouse, acting as a messenger for the local qadi, collecting census information, enforcing moral standards in the *souk*, keeping track of a schedule of visiting dignitaries, or any other bureaucratic endeavor. Your contribution may be small but, as anyone who has interacted with your office knows, you take great pride in serving.

**Bonus Skills:** Knowledge (civics), Language

**Bonus Feats:** Honest Law\*, Scholarly\*

**Favored Feat:** Honest Law\*, Well-Informed

## Caravan Driver

You grew up tending camels, mules, and other pack animals on behalf of the great caravans. As you grew older you traveled to seasonal trade fairs and began bartering with neighboring nomads and oasis dwellers. You know the desert better than other city folk, and you also have a keen business sense. Few Bedouin drive a hard bargain like you can.

**Bonus Skills:** Diplomacy, Knowledge (earth sciences)

**Bonus Feats:** Herder\*, Thick-Skinned\*

**Favored Feats:** Evaluate\*, Safe Passage\*

## A Character with Multiple Backgrounds

What if you want to play a character whose life until today has been more dramatic? Such as a Noble-in-Hiding who joined a Sufi commune and became a Mendicant or a Repentant Rogue turned Porter? In these cases, the easiest approach is to replace the favored feats of your earlier background with the favored feats of your later background. The Narrator has the final say over which backgrounds may be combined this way. Such mixed backgrounds would be recorded with the later background in parentheses, such as: “Noble-in-Hiding (Mendicant).”



*Coffeehouse Proprietor*

You are used to all sorts of disreputable men, whether unemployed storytellers, or drunken off-duty soldiers. While many theologians criticize you for serving an intoxicant, their motions to ban coffee and hashish, if they become law, are always quickly overturned. Besides, the locals love to talk philosophy, complain, play chess, and unwind at the coffeehouse. The coffee in your establishment flows just like the information you broker – dark and bittersweet.

**Bonus Skills:** Gather Information, Sense Motive

**Bonus Feats:** Connected, Contacts

**Favored Feats:** Business\*, Well-Informed

*Courtesan*

Skilled in song, dance, poetry, debate, massage, and the sexual art, you are a consummate companion. You are a cut above the average prostitute, and are often found in the company of courtly figures. Indeed, you may have at one point been a harem slave or worked at a brothel, but you have created a new life for yourself, aspiring to greater power and self-determination. Before you were a slave, now you choose your suitors – Who knows what the future holds?

**Bonus Skills:** Bluff, Perform

**Bonus Feats:** Attractive, Fascinate

**Favored Feats:** Fascinate, Favored Audience\*

*Craftsperson*

You number among the tailors, carpenters, and smiths who ply their trade from small shops in the *souk*. Business has been up and down, and you may have a minor patron or commission you are currently working on. You are dedicated to simple principles: The raising of a family, observing the five pillars, staying out of trouble, and of course making a handsome profit. Most of your adventures begin: One day you were sitting at your shop when suddenly...

**Bonus Skills:** Craft, Diplomacy

**Bonus Feats:** Challenge (Craft, masterwork), Skill Focus (Craft)

**Favored Feats:** Business\*, Evaluate\*

*Djinn-Touched*

You are touched by magic. Perhaps you are the grandchild of a beautiful *peri* who disguised herself in human form to woo a handsome warrior. Perhaps you were under a djinni's enchantment for many years and have only recently escaped. Or perhaps you entered the wondrous land of Jinnistan and no longer behave or age as other mortals. Whatever the case, your presence is enchanting and perhaps a little fearful.

**Bonus Skills:** Diplomacy, Knowledge (supernatural)

**Bonus Feats:** Choose two of the following feats that you meet the prerequisites for: Apprehend the Djinni's Hand\*, Attractive, Dashing\*, Deceitful Aura\*, Enchanting Beauty\*, Fascinate, Inspire (awe), Inspire (fear), or Secrets of Jinnistan\*. Unlike other backgrounds, this disregards the rule that you normally may not choose bonus feats forbidden by your Role.

**Special:** You may replace one of these bonus feats with either a *djinni boon* or with a Djinni feat with the Narrator's permission. See **Chapter 10** for descriptions of *djinni boons*.

*Engineer*

Engineering flourishes during the Golden Age of Islam. Many a Moorish mosque, Persian bridge, irrigation tunnel, ablution fountain, waterwheel, and minaret has been erected by your hands and oversight. Your work evokes the infinite power of God through its repeated designs and conveys the wealth of the Caliphate. You are also a visionary, seeing beyond the veil of current design practices; your vision is one of innovation and wonder tempered by practicality.

**Bonus Skills:** Craft, Knowledge (physical sciences)

**Bonus Feats:** Analyze Device\*, Skill Focus (either bonus skill)

**Favored Feats:** Analyze Device\*, Surveyor\*

*Freed Slave*

Some say that Arabia is at the crossroads of the spice trade. It is also at the center of traffic in human beings. You were a non-Muslim slave of the Caliphate, either captured in battle, kidnapped, or born into slavery. After many difficult years you have gained your freedom. Your experience as a slave was most influenced by your gender.

*Male Slave*

You constructed bridges and government buildings, worked in salt mines and sugar plantations, did other hard labor, and may have been impressed into military service. You have been near death many times.

**Bonus Skills:** Choose any one skill

**Bonus Feats:** Iron Will, Thick-Skinned\*

**Favored Feats:** Diehard, Tough

*Female Slave*

You worked as a domestic servant, cleaning the house, shopping at the *souk*, helping to raise the children of your old household, and you may have been coerced to act as a concubine. You have developed a shrewd eye for detail.

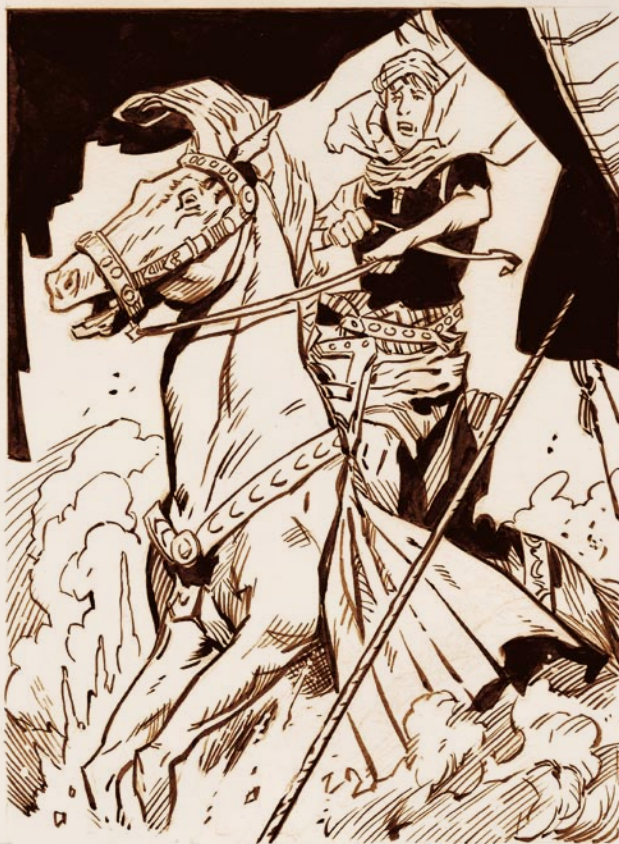
**Bonus Skills:** Choose any one skill

**Bonus Feats:** Eidetic Memory, Iron Will

**Favored Feats:** Deduction\*, Evaluate\*







## Mendicant

While Islam officially has no ascetics, the traditions of Eastern Christian clergy, Hindu holy men, and Buddhist monks have influenced many. You have sworn a vow of poverty (willingly or not), and deny yourself creature comforts, gossip, sex, and at times even food...at least in principle. You often rely on charitable donations to survive, preaching to those who will listen. Rarely is one born into the life of a mendicant; usually tragedy or fleeing the authorities precedes one's decision to enter this difficult way of life.

**Bonus Skills:** Concentration, Knowledge (theology and philosophy)

**Bonus Feats:** Low Profile, Thick-Skinned\*

**Favored Feats:** Mind Over Body, Street Preaching\*

## Noble-in-Hiding

Whether fleeing for your life after a palace coup, hiding from an undesirable marriage, or voluntarily leaving the palace life in deference to your siblings, you have turned your back on your royal heritage. You may seek to return to palace life or you may simply seek to create a new life for yourself among the common folk. Traveling in disguise, you lend credence to the myth about kings and queens disguised as beggars.

**Bonus Skills:** Disguise, Knowledge (nobility)

**Bonus Feats:** Benefit (noble title)\*, Low Profile

**Favored Feats:** Blend In\*, Escape Route\*

## Nomad

Many nomads are Bedouin, but others are Kurds, Tuareg, Turks, or Gypsies. You live at the mercy of fate, enduring sand storms, eating a meager handful of dates, and traveling distances that would make a city-person crumble just to reach an oasis spring. In your eyes, the true beauty of life is living beneath the celestial carpet of the Almighty's stars. Your people may be fully nomadic, working the deep desert caravan routes, or they may practice transhumance, traveling to lowland valleys with their herds during summer and returning to their villages in winter. Your tribal identity is essential to you, as important as your own life if not more so.

**Bonus Skills:** Choose two of the following: Handle Animal, Perform, Ride, or Survival.

**Bonus Feats:** Choose two of the following: Animal Empathy, Connected, Eidetic Memory, Faithful Steed\*, Gracious Host\*, Horse Savvy\*, or Mountaineer\*. Also, you may select bonus feats from any of the Nomad feats.

**Favored Feats:** Choose two of the following: Evaluate\*, Fascinate, Horse Breaking\*, Horseback Stunts\*, Jack-of-All-Trades, Mimicry\*, Mounted Archery\*, or Safe Passage\*. The Narrator may approve other feats depending on your tribe's traditions.

**Special:** You do not gain access to Hadhari feats; instead you can choose feats from the Nomad feat group.

## Oasis Dweller

A native of the Hejaz or one of the many oases that lie along the trade routes of the Caliphate, you grew up in a verdant pocket amidst a sea of sand. You have been a farmer, supplementing your income by bargaining with Bedouin and travelers passing through the oasis. With such a small population life in the oasis was simpler, though often fraught with poisonous animals, sandstorms, raiders, and diminishing arable land. Though your travels may take you far from home, the oasis is always in your blood.

**Bonus Skills:** Knowledge (earth sciences), Survival

**Bonus Feats:** Hometown Advantage\*, Tough-Skinned\*

**Favored Feats:** Evaluate\*, Jack-of-All-Trades

## Pearl Diver

Though you recover precious gems from the mouths of giant oysters, you know you'll never see more than a couple dinari. And then it's back to work the next morning, to face avaricious bosses, brutal conditions, and possible death at the ocean's floor. What for? The thrill of the dive, testing the body's limits, a mad disregard for your own life, a sense of camaraderie, and love of the underwater world are likely reasons. Of course (though you'd never admit it) palming a fat pearl can be quite tempting too.

**Bonus Skills:** Search, Swim

**Bonus Feats:** Endurance, Free Diving\*

**Favored Feats:** Defensive Roll, Evaluate\*



*Physician*

You stand at the forefront of Greek and Persian medical knowledge. Studying at one of the prestigious institutions of medicine, you returned to begin your own practice. However, you find your practice is beleaguered with charlatans, parochial clergy preaching the power of faith over science, and entrenched barbers trying to protect their careers. Confident in the powers of reason and science, you have pressed ahead, blind to the magic around the next corner.

**Bonus Skills:** Knowledge (life sciences), Medicine

**Bonus Feats:** Institutional Education\*, Wealthy

**Favored Feats:** Author\*, Medical Science\*

*Porter*

You endure the treatment as a “beast of burden” by others with infinite patience, carrying the bags of shoppers in the *souk*, unloading cargo from ships, and serving as a doorkeeper to the wealthy. Sometimes you even serve treasure hunters by tending to their pack mules. While you may let slip with a jealous word for those of higher station, on the whole you are filled with wonder at city life and are comfortable in all social circles...if a bit overwhelmed.

**Bonus Skills:** Gather Information, Knowledge (streetwise)

**Bonus Feats:** Universal Appeal\*, Urban Tracking\*

**Favored Feats:** Burden Bearer\*, Jack-of-All-Trades

*Repentant Rogue*

While your younger days were filled with scams and daring thefts, you had a profound change of heart. This may or may not have been the result of getting caught and losing a hand or undergoing a mock execution. Every day is a struggle to put your thieving ways behind you and though you have found a well of faith, old habits die hard. The fact that many of your old roguish allies consider you a sell-out and the authorities still keep tabs on you doesn't help.

**Bonus Skills:** Bluff, Knowledge (theology and philosophy)

**Bonus Feats:** Canny Dodge, True Faith\*

**Favored Feats:** Mark\*, Well Informed

*Royal Child*

Fairy tales are notorious for royal children being hidden or improbably rescued by simple peasants. You are such a child of royalty, raised among common shepherds, fishermen, and craftspeople. There was always something different about you, however, which troubled your foster parents to no end. Your impeccable manners, comely features, and superior bearing make you stick out like a sore thumb.

**Bonus Skills:** Diplomacy, Knowledge (popular culture)

**Bonus Feats:** Attractive, Etiquette\*

**Favored Feats:** Presence\*, Universal Appeal\*

*Ruffian*

Baghdad and other cities of the Caliphate are no stranger to the *ayyarun* – armed gangs of thugs. You are (or were) such a ruffian, operating a protection racket for your neighborhood, protecting them both from corrupt police and rival gangs. Your vows of brotherhood to your fellow rogues are stronger than blood. You drink as you please, draw your knife when the mood strikes you, and go out of your way to make trouble for the authorities.

**Bonus Skills:** Intimidate, Knowledge (streetwise)

**Bonus Feats:** Connected, Quick Draw

**Favored Feats:** Intimidating Reputation\*, Lasting Intimidation\*

*Sailor*

Each voyage you swear is your last, but the sea calls you back every time. Whether serving in a merchant marine, on a fishing boat, exploring uncharted islands, or seeking to make a fortune in trade, you spend more time at sea than you do at your home port. You're salty, adventurous, and prone to exaggeration – all the makings of a good captain...or a corsair.

**Bonus Skills:** Gather Information, Knowledge (earth sciences)

**Bonus Feats:** Endurance, Sailor's Lore\*

**Favored Feats:** Fascinate, Sea Dog\*

*Scribe*

In an era when the greatest Greek and Persian works are being translated, when paper is just becoming more popular than parchment, and only the clergy and nobility are literate, there is a great need for skilled calligraphers. Your work as a scribe may involve wearisome hours, but you are confident knowing you are codifying the wisdom of the greatest empire ever to exist upon the earth. At least, if you have a dissenting view, you're not writing about it.

**Bonus Skills:** Craft (manuscript), Language

**Bonus Feats:** Beautiful Calligraphy\*, Scholarly\*

**Favored Feats:** Author\*, Beautiful Calligraphy\*

*Sharper*

Nobody likes to be taken advantage of, but everyone loves a tale about a cunning *shatir*, or con artist. Confidence scams are your specialty. You have a broad range of tricks ranging from bogus saint acts and conjuring to playing the part of the gate-crasher (an uninvited guest) or phony horse salesman. Either you will be caught and executed, reform your ways, or join the ranks of legendary criminals like Mercury Ali and Crafty Dalilah.

**Bonus Skills:** Bluff, Sense Motive

**Bonus Feats:** Read Character\*, Set-up

**Favored Feats:** Inspire (complacency), Mark\*





## *Soldier*

You serve in the military of your province, defending the borders of the Caliphate, and conducting raids against enemy outposts, but more often you tend to more mundane tasks. The digging of trenches, transport of military gear, construction of forts, performing drills and parades – these things occupy more of your time than combat. During times of war you are hailed as a boon to the nation, during times of peace scorned as a detested parasite on society.

**Bonus Skills:** Knowledge (tactics), Survival

**Bonus Feats:** Thick-Skinned\*, Weapon Training

**Favored Feats:** Formation Tactics\*, Military Rank\*

**Special:** If a soldier takes a level as a Warrior, they may replace the Weapon Training feat that normally comes as part of being a Warrior with Armor Training.

## *Talentless Youth*

Your parents rebuffed you continuously for your laziness and your incompetence. You would never amount to anything. Once you tried to become an apprentice, but your mentor kicked you out after precipitating disaster through your daydreaming. Everyone has a gift, and it would seem yours is for talking and squirming your way out of tight spaces...which, of course, you get yourself into in the first place.

**Bonus Skills:** Bluff, Sense Motive

**Bonus Feats:** Lucky, Taunt

**Favored Feats:** Beginner's Luck, Jack-of-All-Trades

## *Waif*

The mean streets of the city were your mother and father, and they taught you to make a living for yourself through begging, thieving, and scavenging the refuse of the upper classes. You were surrounded by the mass of poor who made up the *Banu Sasan*. Few know the city like you do, and even if you've grown beyond your roots, there is part of you that has never left the streets.

**Bonus Skills:** Knowledge (streetwise), Sleight of Hand

**Bonus Feats:** Benefit (hideout)\*, Canny Dodge

**Favored Feats:** Blend In\*, Beggar's Savvy\*

## *Station*

Every person in the Caliphate is aware of where they stand in the social hierarchy. Those of lower status avert their gaze from those of higher status, extend greetings first, and never slander those above them...at least, not publicly. While it is a form of caste system, there are ample opportunities for upward mobility. Station is a function of wealth, how one makes a living, the family one is born into, what lands (if any) one possesses, and the company one keeps. One's station is apparent unless hidden via Bluff or Disguise. Station is recorded as a descriptor and a number, for example: "*Banu Sasan* (1)."

In Mythic Arabia, beggars cavort with princesses, and princes are welcomed in the homes of poor laborers. Nobody questions that such things happens – it is the will

of God and blessed be the fortunate ones! Station doesn't imply a separation of social classes, but rather the difficulty in communicating across social boundaries. Heroes of the *Nights* rise to this challenge.

Station comes into play when interacting with those of different social status. For every level of difference in station, both sides suffer a -1 penalty to Diplomacy and Gather Information. Those of lower station gain an equal bonus to Bluff, while those of higher station gain an equal bonus to Intimidate.

For example, a *Banu Sasan* conversing with a prince would suffer -4 on Diplomacy and Gather Information checks, while he would get +4 on Bluff checks to convince the prince he knows nothing and is but a poor beggar.

When choosing your character's Station keep the following points in mind:

- All characters have a base Station of either 0, 1 or 2 (player's choice). Certain feats require a character to have a Station 1 or lower.
- Any character who begins with Station 0 automatically begins with a starting Complication; this fulfills the requirement that all characters must begin with a Complication.
- In order to access a Station of 3 or higher, a character must have certain prerequisite Benefit feats, like heir, noble title, or sheikh.

## *Station 0*

### *Untouchable*

This caste includes gravediggers, dung-shovelers, lepers, the hideously deformed, and anyone else who is utterly rejected by society. Such individuals are considered beyond salvation by all save the most enlightened scholars and saints. It is often a crime for members of the Untouchable caste to look at anyone of higher status than *Banu Sasan* in the eye, touch them, or even to touch their possessions as society fears being spiritually contaminated by the Untouchables.

**Starting Wealth:** +0

**Belongings:** Possibly a cramped leaky hovel in a cemetery, beggar's rags

**Starting Complication:** Destitute

### *Criminal*

Criminals include those heretics, thieves and murderers who have been imprisoned or who are still at large and hunted by the law. Life in prison is often grueling, with the possibility of death lurking at every turn. Life on the run is likewise terrible, as the criminal must constantly be on guard against those who would turn them in.

**Starting Wealth:** +0

**Belongings:** Peasant's outfit, dagger

**Starting Complication:** Outlaw



# Chapter 3: A Hero of the Nights

## Station 1

### *Banu Sasan*

The *Banu Sasan* are the lower class of beggars, urchins, storytellers, and common slaves that make up much of the peasantry in cities. The origin of the name “Children of Sasan” is lost today, but the *Banu Sasan* are still thriving. They labor in fields, operate small market stands, and perform in the bazaar. There is an unspoken camaraderie among the *Banu Sasan*, and even if a fellow can’t be helped, he certainly will be given a bowl of soup or told a story before being sent on his way.

**Starting Wealth:** +2

**Belongings:** Communal housing, beggar’s rags or peasant’s outfit, and tools suiting their trade (beggar’s bowl, musical instrument, farm tools)

### *Dhimmi*

While the status of Christians and Jews (*dhimmis*) is far better than that of religious minorities elsewhere, they are forbidden from building or repairing churches or synagogues, they must observe their faith indoors, they have to wear identifying clothing, they cannot sell unapproved goods to Muslims, and were further restricted (and protected) by the Pact of Umar. While technically barred from public office, the reality is many *dhimmi* attain positions of leadership despite persecution.

**Starting Wealth:** +4

**Belongings:** Modest family home, artisan’s outfit, trade tools, and a *zunnar* (a belt identifying one as a *dhimmi*) or turban colored according to their religion.

### *Second Class Slaves*

These include prized slaves and mamluks. Such slaves are nearly always from other cultures. Their unique skills make them highly valued. Often this includes slaves with a talent for performing, warfare, medicine, or with keen knowledge of several languages. Such slaves have the capacity to rise to great positions in society.

**Starting Wealth:** +4

**Belongings:** Communal housing, peasant’s outfit, trade tools. A mamluk would have a short bow, 20 arrows, a spear, studded leather, and a horse.

## Station 2

### *Commoners*

The middle class of craftsmen, soldiers, and merchants is quite large, having grown greatly since the founding of Baghdad and the rule of caliph al-Mansur. Commoners often have a love-hate relationship with the Islamic state which

provides excellent free medical care and patronage, yet restricts travel and fails to fully appreciate the talents of its middle class.

**Starting Wealth:** +6

**Belongings:** Family house, artisan’s outfit. Craftsmen have artisan’s tools. Soldiers have a short sword, chain armor, a shield, and a spear. Merchants have a merchant’s scale and a mule.

### *Performers*

Arabian society loves its performers, whether they are poets reciting religious odes outside the mosques, musicians performing at local coffee houses and caravanserais, or tribal dancers exciting crowds around a fire. Most professional storytellers, however, are *Banu Sasan*.

**Starting Wealth:** +6

**Belongings:** Family house, entertainer’s outfit, free night’s stay at an inn, and a musical instrument.

## Station 3

### *Elder*

**Prerequisite:** Benefit (sheikh)

Any Islamic community has those who are highly respected, such as senior citizens, councilors, and *muezzin* who call the faithful to prayer. Such wise men and women are considered pillars of the faith, and are responsible for calling town meetings, representing their neighborhoods in local courts, and supporting the spiritual and material needs of their community.

**Starting Wealth:** +8

**Belongings:** Large family house, copy of the *Qur’an*, cleric’s vestments or scholar’s outfit

### *Tribal Leader*

**Prerequisite:** Benefit (sheikh)

Like the elders of a city, a tribal leader is responsible for the welfare of his or her community. In the desert this means defending the tribe from raiders, prejudiced laws of the city, storms, and most importantly from internal dissension. A tribal leader is often viewed as the voice of the tribe, competent to make deals on behalf of the entire tribe.

**Starting Wealth:** +8

**Belongings:** Desert outfit, herd of camels, light warhorse

## Station 4

### *Lesser Nobility*

**Prerequisite:** Benefit (noble title)

Lesser Arabian nobility includes the Sayyid (lord), Sitt (lady), Faris (knight), Mu’allim (master), and Qadi (judge). Such nobles are a mix of those who







have inherited their titles and those who have earned their high status. Though they have fewer responsibilities than other nobles, they also are less influential.

**Starting Wealth:** +14

**Belongings:** Small estate, courtier's outfit, jewelry, light horse

## High Ranking Nobility

**Prerequisite:** Benefit (heir), Benefit (noble title)

High-ranking nobles include the *nasquib* (viscount), *satrap* (ruler of an outlying province), and *vizier* (royal advisor) among others. They attained their high status both through nepotism and through political maneuvering. Their responsibilities involve administering their lands.

A high-ranking noble always stands to inherit a sizeable fortune or position of great power.

**Starting Wealth:** +18

**Belongings:** Large estate, noble's outfit, jewelry, stable of horses

## Station 5

### Royalty

**Prerequisite:** Benefit (heir), Benefit (noble title), Descendant of the Prophet

Princes, princesses, *mushir* (military generals), sultans and sultanas – these are the offices of royalty. Though responsible for fulfilling the affairs of state, members of the royalty spend much time enjoying life and educating themselves.

**Starting Wealth:** +24

**Belongings:** Small palace, stable of horses, royal outfit, jewelry, and pretty much anything else one could ever desire.

### Heads of State

**Prerequisite:** Benefit (heir), Benefit (noble title), Descendant of the Prophet;

Not accessible to players without Narrator permission.

The Caliphs, Emirs, and Imams of Mythic Arabia are dictators; at their whim they may marry any woman, kill any man, take whatever they wish, and issue any law. The impious are tyrants who dishonor the great religious heritage that accompanies their title, while the pious are revered as living saints. Some Imams are very poor yet hold a great position in the community; they are religious and political figureheads even though they live in relative poverty.

**Starting Wealth:** +32 and possibly greater

## The Pact of Umar

A body of limitations and privileges entered into treaty between the Muslims and conquered non-Muslims that was scribed in 637 by Umar I after the conquest of Christian Syria and Palestine. This pact first extended the concept of the *dhimmi*, a "non-Muslim person of the Book" who paid a tax in return for protection and exemption from military service. The *dhimmi* had to observe several taboos:

- They are forbidden from holding public office
- City gates are to be open, and Muslims are given food and lodging for 3 nights
- Non-Muslim children shall not be taught the Qu'ran nor adopt Muslim customs
- Non-Muslim holy symbols and idols shall not be displayed
- Kinsmen shall be allowed to adopt Islam as their faith if they desire so
- Refrain from manifesting their religion publicly nor convert anyone to it
- Non-Muslims are outlawed from carrying arms without a license
- Non-Muslims won't take any slave that has been previously owned by a Muslim
- Non-Muslims will not sell wine to Muslims
- Whosoever strikes a Muslim with deliberate intent shall forfeit the protection of this pact



*Allegiance*

*"Lo! Those who swear allegiance unto thee, swear allegiance only unto God. The Hand of God is above their hands. So whosoever breaketh his oath, breaketh it only to his soul's hurt; while whosoever keepeth his covenant with God, on him will He bestow immense reward."*

- Qur'an 48:10

Paying allegiance (*bay'ah*) is an old Arab practice which is carried out in important matters such as kingship and religion. Once allegiance is sworn, it is considered as if a character has taken a solemn oath, the breaking of which is forbidden by the *Sharia*, and a sign of disgrace for not just the character but for everyone involved. A declaration that is acknowledged by both the one swearing the oath, and the one to whom it is sworn, *bay'ah* is often made with witnesses who are responsible for informing the recipient of the *bay'ah* if the one undertaking the oath ever breaks it. Likewise, witnesses may inform the one who has sworn the oath of actions by the recipient which justify dissolution of the *bay'ah*. However, most believe that once a *bay'ah* is sworn it endures for life, and that the breaking of a *bay'ah* is one of the worst sins a person can commit.

A hero may have any number of allegiances so long as he or she can balance and integrate the duties and philosophies of all the allegiances. A hero may have allegiances to any of these things:

**Belief System:** This includes religions, sects, schools of thought, philosophies, or political leanings, both orthodox and heterodox.

**Person or Group:** This includes a leader or superior, a child, the hero's family or tribe, a band of adventurers, a discrete unit within a larger organization, or someone whose safety the character has been entrusted with.

**Nation or City:** This may or may not be the nation the hero currently resides in. It may be where the individual was born or where the hero resides after immigrating to a new home.

**Organization:** This may be a gathering of like-minded individuals, a brotherhood or sisterhood, a secret society, a branch of the military, a university, an employer, or an otherwise established authority.

*Without Allegiance*

A character without an allegiance is looked down upon – a man without religion, family, or sovereign is not treated as a man at all. Such characters are often selfish rogues who are denied rights of citizenship, receive no representation in the courts, and are preferentially rounded up by authorities.

Even belonging to a heretical secret society, while it may mark you for persecution, is a sign that a person believes in *something* higher than him or herself. In the Arabian mind, to have a defective religion is better than to be a disbeliever, since there is an element of truth in every religion. Players who begin without an allegiance should explain why their hero has none, and should think about an allegiance which might suit their hero down the road.

*General Benefits of Swearing Allegiance*

Swearing allegiance provides you with the rewards of belonging to a group; whenever you interact with someone with the same allegiance you gain a +2 on all interaction checks. Many allegiances also provide various services such as information, advice, employment, healing, protection of family members, a network of contacts, and a restful sanctuary.

*Apostasy*

It is possible for a character to change allegiance, though this often involves a great loss of honor. While most sects encourage converts, they shun those who attempt to leave the faith; the ramifications for converting to a new religion or sovereign may range from being denied previous rights to outright murder. Only in extreme cases are apostates killed to avoid a stain on the honor of their old allies.

*Common Allegiances**Family*

While honoring and remaining loyal to one's family are crucial to every person in the caliphate, you are particularly devoted to your family's safety and interests. You obey the rulings of your family's sheikh, pay back any debts owed by your family, seek justice against those who wrong your family, and protect your family's honor. In extreme circumstances, this may require you to "cut an offending part" from the family, particularly in the case of amorous impropriety. For some, "family" is a looser term that includes adopted children, old friends, loyal allies, or people of a similar background, though blood relations always remain the most important.

*Love*

You have sworn your love to another. This is often a romantic partner, but in rare cases may be a spiritual master who has provided you with guidance. Tempering your fiery love through poems, discipline, and faith, you eagerly await the day that you and your love will be united. One who swears a *bay'ah* for love seeks to perform as one unit with





their beloved, striving together to reach God. When one falters, the other is always there to support their beloved. In the *Nights* another view of love is presented – the fiery passionate love of young lovers who have been smitten with one another at first glance. While the views of the older orthodox parents and the tempestuous young lovers can be at odds, the true oath of love seeks to reconcile them. Through tenderness, bliss, patience, and temperance, love is earned, a love that transcends desire and all the world.

## Religion

There is no person in the caliphate who professes no religion, but there are varying degrees of piety. You are especially loyal to the patriarchs (or matriarchs) of your faith, and endeavor to live your life according to the principles outlined by your faith. Having entered into a sacred covenant with God, you commit to follow the way of the Prophets, to live purely, to walk in a sincere and truthful way. One does not need to consider whether or not God's verse is true but whether one is true to God's commands.

## Sovereign

In the history of the faith, it was common for each person to individually swear allegiance to their Caliph or Imam. Today, only a few do so. You are one of these loyalists, who would lay down your life and belongings for your sovereign. You have personally met your sovereign and sworn your allegiance, and you have been given a task. In some cases this is as simple as “serve me faithfully by tending your fields”, though more often it is difficult, such as “hide my two illegitimate sons in your household until I return.” When you pray, you always pray for your sovereign. When in his (or her) presence, you always prostrate yourself and address him with respect according to his station. In rare cases, you may swear allegiance to someone you deem worthy of being sovereign who hasn't achieved the throne yet, but is vying for it. Swearing an oath to your sovereign does not mean you need to approve of his reign; indeed, the dissenting voice is the one most likely to win the ear of kings.

### The Madhhabs

The strict Hanbalite school leaves little room for personal judgment. The Malikite school is similar to the Hanbalites, though it allows personal judgment as a last resort when the Qur'an and Sunnah do not give a clear judgment. The Hanafite school, while the most literal is also the most flexible to reasoning and to creating new norms through personal judgment.

## Belief Systems in Islam

### Al-Athariyya (Textualists)

The followers of the smallest school of Sunni Islamic theology strictly follow a textual interpretation of the Qur'an, denying all claims that parts of the Qur'an are meant to be taken metaphorically. Atharis avoid purely rational debates and theological speculation; instead their discussion revolves around the Qur'an and the Tradition.

### Falasifa (Philosopher)

Philosophy is the study of truth through rigorous investigation, rather than accepting it on another's authority. Scholars and scientists who pledge allegiance to Truth or to an oath of their profession (e.g. the Hippocratic Oath), are called *falasifa*. They study not only the natural causes of events and the world, but attempt to use reason to discover the nature of God and His activity in the world. Theologians (*mutakallimun*) who reject the philosophy of natural causes argue that events occur as a result of God's direct intervention. Both sides accuse the other of believing in chaos, yet both sides strongly believe in an underlying meaning to life which can be discovered through the application of reason. While some philosophers take an extremely rationalist view, and argue away the omnipotence of God, most are genuinely pious men and women.

### Fuqaha (Jurists)

A *faqih* is an expert in Islamic jurisprudence and is often a member of, or closely aligned with, the *Ulema* (see **Chapter 12**). Every *faqih* belongs to a Sunni *madhhab*, a traditional school of jurisprudence, which has its own methodology to reach legal rulings. In the early 9<sup>th</sup> century there are three *madhhabs* which are very cohesive and cooperative with one another. Being a *faqih* implies not only that one is knowledgeable and loyal to the Caliph, but also that one values the *Ulema* as equals or near-equals to the Caliph.

### Ibadiyyah (Conservatives)

The Ibadis are conservatives native to Oman who revere their own imam. Originally, they were part of the Kharijites who had once aligned with the Shi'a but separated with Ali's acceptance of arbitration at the Battle of Siffin. They believe that one who commits as grave sin is ungrateful of God's blessings, but not deserving of death or exile. As long as a sinner remains a monotheist, mutually beneficial relations are possible. Unlike the Kharijites, the Ibadis believe that fighting is only justified in self-defense; they maintain it is not an obligation (as the Kharijites believe) to fight an unjust ruler, and they believe that religious dissimulation, *taqiyyah*, is justified when one's life is threatened.



***Isma'iliyyah (Followers of Isma'il)***

Ismailis are Shi'ites who claim that Ismail, the eldest son of Imam Jaffar, and not Ali Al-Rida, is the rightful ruler of all Muslims. They are also known as the "Seveners", because Imam Jaffar was the seventh and, according to them, the last Imam. They emerged during a dispute over the successor to the sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq. The Ismaili position is that the eldest son has always inherited the right to rule, but they also have important doctrinal differences from the majority Shi'a. They believe in a hidden Imam, the *Mahdi*, who will reappear one day to lead the faithful; the *Mahdi* will render all religions, including Islam, obsolete. According to the Ismailis, the *Shari'ah* is an illegitimate code of law, and they do not obey the obligations of prayer, fasting, or the hajj; instead they observe a mystical spirituality. They possess considerable strength of arms, perhaps enough to challenge the Abbasids for the caliphate.

***Jabriyyah (Determinists)***

God has decreed everything, good or bad, and man has no choice to do anything except what God has planned for him. Humanity doesn't have a choice to even deny fate – it is undeniable. Uneducated people of faith often are Jabrites, and are recognizable by their optimistic fatalism.

***Kharijites (Secessionists)***

Kharijites exist independently of the Sunnis and Shi'ites. During the reign of the third caliph Uthman, many tribes accused him of nepotism and tyranny, and he was assassinated. After Uthman's death the Prophet's cousin Ali became the fourth caliph; he was opposed by Uthman's nephew Mu'awiya, the governor of Egypt, who rebelled against Ali. In the midst of battle he could not win, Mu'awiya ordered Qur'ans mounted on the lances of his soldiers, proclaiming he wanted the issue of who should be caliph decided using it. Ali agreed. Several tribes disagreed with the use of human arbitration and rebelled against both Mu'awiya and Ali; they became known as the Kharijites, "those who leave." The Kharijites believe that truth is forged with the sword; however, not having sufficient military power to threaten the Abbasids, they resort to assassination and intimidation tactics. They believe that good works must accompany faith, that faith may be vindicated through the sword, only the pious may rule, and it is justified to overthrow a poor ruler.

***Muhaddithin (Traditionists)***

The scholars of the Tradition are known as *Muhaddithin*. They busy themselves with authenticating the Hadith and Sunnah, as well as refuting sayings falsely attributed to the Prophet. Muhaddithin study the *isnad*, the chain of narrators, behind every saying or teaching attributed

to the Prophet. However, they do not claim fallibility of judgment and thus debate frequently.

***Murji'ah (Postponers)***

In opposition to the Kharijite doctrine, the Murjites believe in "delayed judgment." Only God can judge who is a true Muslim and who is not; claiming another is an infidel is impossible because there is no way to know. Therefore, all Muslims should consider each other as faithful believers. The Murjites proclaim tolerance of converts and heretics. Originally they were Sunnis, but the Murjites have separated for they proclaim that no Muslim, regardless of any sins he commits, will enter the hellfire. While they do not pose a military threat to the Abbasids, they are poorly treated in theological debates, and are often roughed up or otherwise threatened to keep their beliefs quiet.

***Mu'tazilah (Rationalists)***

Man is utterly free, and God is obligated to reward the good and punish the evil. God may assist, but it is man who creates his deeds himself. God is completely unknowable to man, utterly beyond anthropomorphism. Thus reason, and not revelation, is the sole pathway to truth. Mu'tazilites are commonly aristocrats to whom the philosophy appeals for its sense of personal empowerment.

***Qadariyyah (Libertines)***

Evil and injustice cannot be blamed on God, but are the result of man's choices. Everyone is responsible for their actions. Educated elites trained in sciences and philosophy tend to become Qadarites. They maintain it is God's will for man to fight disease and ignorance instead of simply accepting one's fate.

***Shi'a (Followers of Ali)***

Shi'a simply means "supporter", and was a term used to describe the family of the fourth Caliph, the prophet's cousin and son-in-law Ali. The Shia refute the legitimacy of the Caliph's rule; they argue that the true Caliph must belong to *Ahl al-Bayt*, the family of the Prophet. Instead, the Shia revere the Imam as a living saint, believing that his divine authority is infallible. They believe the Imam is a hereditary position, that saints deserve veneration, are rigorously critical in which versions of the Hadith they accept, and condemn the first three "Rightly Guided Caliphs" as usurpers. All Shi'a acknowledge the caliphate as a corrupted institution, and most want nothing to do with it.

***Sufism (Mystics)***

The Sufis are ascetics and mystics whose name derives from their wool garments. They seek to attain an ecstatic state, a dissolution of their self identity



and complete absorption in God; they have often been accused of blasphemy for claiming their own divinity. Sufism developed in reaction to the worldly outlook of the Ummayyads; men like Hasan al-Basri preached a rejection of the world and a return to the pure values of the Prophet and the Qur'an. Sufis have a master-disciple relationship and all their teachings are transmitted through this master, who is called a *murshid*. Sufis have an elaborate cosmology, both internal and external – a framework in which they understand the mysteries of creation.

## Sunni (Loyalists)

*Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* is the formal name by which the majority caliphal loyalists, the Sunni, are known. The name comes from “the year of the jamiyah”, the year the civil war between Hasan Ibn Ali and Mu'awiya ended. Sunnis accept the Caliph's rule, believe the Caliph should be elected by the *Ulema*, that sovereignty is not hereditary but a trust that must be earned, and that the veneration of saints is a form of *shirk*, or worshipping of false gods. They revere the Companions of the Prophet and believe in all the Caliphs. Though some Sunnis acknowledge the current government is corrupt, they believe it is their sacred duty to remain loyal, hoping that by staying in connection with the Caliph they may guide his policies toward that which is wise and that which is just.

## Naming Your Hero

“Among people living in this world there are no and ever shouldn't be one who's nameless. When born, everybody – noble or miserable – with name like a sweet gift is endowed.”

- Homer

When naming their children, Arabs are concerned not only with an appropriate name, but with how the name *sounds*. Do the syllables flow well? Is the name poetry on the ears? An Arabic name often consists of five parts: A personal name (*izm*), an honorific surname (*kunya*), a patronymic (*nasab*), an epithet (*laqab*), and a byname (*nisba*). Thus, how a hero presents him or herself, or how a hero is addressed, depends upon the situation. A hero's epithet and byname in particular speak volumes about his or her identity. It is common for the various names to be organized in the following way:

Honorific + Personal name + Epithet + Patronymic + Byname

In addition to, or instead of, an Arabic name heroes from other cultures may have names originating in their own cultural (see **Chapter 16**).

### 1. Personal Name (*Izm*)

An *izm* is a personal first name such as *Harun* or *Zubaida*. Adults are rarely called by these names, and it is considered an insult to address an elder or someone of higher station by their personal name. Only the closest of friends refer to each

other by their *izm*. Here is a list of personal names.

### 2. Honorific Surname (*Kunya*)

The *kunya* is an honorific surname as the father or mother of someone, such as *abu Ma'mun* (“father of Ma'mun”) or *umm Muhammad* (“mother of Muhammad”). Married ladies are called by the honorific associated with their first son. The *kunya* precedes the proper name, as in *Umm Muhammad Zubaida* (“the mother of Muhammad, Zubaida”). As most character will not have children to begin with, they do not have a *kunya*.

### 3. Patronymic (*Nasab*)

The *nasab* is a patronymic, as in the son or daughter of someone, such as *ibn Muhammad* (“the son of Muhammad”) or *bint al-Mansur* (“the daughter of al-Mansur”). The patronymic comes after the proper name, as in *Harun ibn-Muhammad* (“Harun, son of Muhammad”) or *Zubaida bint al-Mansur* (“Zubaida, daughter of al-Mansur”). In this case, while Zubaida is al-Mansur's granddaughter she might deliberately identify herself as a relative of al-Mansur in order to gain prestige. Nearly ever character possesses a *nasab*, though orphaned characters might not have one.

### 4. Epithet (*Laqab*)

A character may have a *laqab* which is an epithet that appears after the proper name, such as *al-Rashid* (“the Rightly Guided”). A common pattern is based on *abd* (“servant of”) plus one of the 99 names of God, such as *Abd al-Rahman* (“Servant of the Merciful”). The feminine form of *abd* is *amat*, as in *Amatullah* (“Servant of God”). Sometimes an epithet is used instead of a proper name, and some poets even make up epithets.

### 5. Byname (*Nisba*)

Finally, some characters also have a *nisba*, or byname, that follows the proper name; it is based on occupation, tribal or familial descent, place of birth or residence. If the name contains a *nasab* then the *nisba* usually follows it. For example *al-Abbas* (“of the family of Abbas”) would be an appropriate *nisba* for *Harun al-Rashid* as well as for *Zubaida*, though they are sufficiently removed and distant relatives for their relations to be acceptable. Likewise *al-ar-Raqqah* (“of ar-Raqqah”) or *al-Khalifa* (“the Successor”) could be used to describe *Harun* who established his imperial palace in ar-Raqqah, away from the administrative centers of Baghdad.

Thus, while the full courtly name used for addressing the Caliph is *Ameer al-Mumineen* (“Commander of the Faithful”), he might describe himself as *Abu Ma'mun Harun ibn-Muhammad al-Abbas* (“The father of Ma'mun, Harun, son of Mohammad of the family of Abbas”). Zubaida might be called *Umm Muhammad*, *al-Sayyida Zubaida*, *bint al-Mansur* (“Mother of Muhammad, The Lady Zobeida, daughter of Al-Mansur”).



# Chapter 3: A Hero of the Nights

## Noble Titles

Noble titles appear at the very beginning of the name. If the noble is landed, their title may be followed by “al-“ and the place name. When addressing a noble it is proper to precede their title with the word “ya” which means “my.” So when addressing the king of Aksum one would say “Ya al-Malik al-Aksum.”

Male Name	Meaning	Female Name	Meaning
Abdul	Servant	Ahlam	Witty
Ahmed	Highly adored	Akilah	Intelligent
Ali	The excellent	Alia	Exalted
Amin	Faithful	Amineh	Faithful
Badr al Din	Full moon of the faith	Asiya	Healer
Bashar	Bringer of glad tidings	Badriyyah	Resembling the moon
Da’ud	Beloved	Farida	Precious pearl
Diya al Din	Brightness of the faith	Fatima	Accustomed
Fahad	Lynx	Ghaliyah	Fragrant
Faruq	Distinguishes truth	Halima	Gentle
Halim	Gentle	Hayam	Deliriously in love
Hamzah	Lion	Huma	Bird bringing joy
Hassan	Handsome	Ilham	Intuition
Haytham	Young hawk	Izdihar	Flourishing
Imad al Din	Pillar of the faith	Jayla	Clarity
Irfan	Thankfulness	Kalila	Sweetheart
Jabir	Consoler	Lamya	Darkness of lips
Jawhar	Jewel	Ma’isa	Walking proud
Kadir	Verdant	Maymunah	Aspiration
Khalid	Eternal	Na’ilah	One who succeeds
Majid	Glorious	Najibah	Of noble birth
Mas’ud	Fortunate	Nazirah	Equal
Muhammad	Praised	Rabi’a	Spring garden
Mu’awiya	Young fox	Rasha	Young gazelle
Nazih	Pure	Rima	White antelope
Numair	Panther	Sabirah	Patient
Omar	Long life	Safiyah	Serene
Qasim	Distributor	Shahdiyah	Singer
Rafiqi	Kind friend	Suhailah	Flowing
Sabir	Patient	Suhaymah	Small arrow
Seif al Din	Sword of the faith	Tahirah	Pure and chaste
Sharif	Honest	Umayma	Little mother
Talib	Seeker of truth	Wardah	Rose
Ubaid	Faithful	Wijdan	Ecstasy
Wasim	Graceful	Yamha	Dove
Yasir	Wealthy	Yaminah	Proper
Yazid	God will increase	Zahirah	Luminous
Zahid	Self-denying	Zubaidah	Excellent

Byname	Meaning	Byname	Meaning
Al-Abrash	The leper	Al-Kabir	The elder
Al-Asturlabi	The astrolabe maker	Al-Katib	The writer
Al-Attar	The druggist	Al-Madina	Of Medina
Al-A’war	The one-eyed	Al-Maghribi	Of the Maghreb
Al-Badawi	The Bedouin	Al-Makki	Of Mecca
Al-Baghdadi	Of Baghdad	Al-Misri	The Egyptian
Al-Basri	Of Basra	Al-Nabil	The honorable
Al-Darir	The blind	Al-Najjar	The carpenter
Al-Daylami	Of Daylam	Al-Nasrani	The Christian
Al-Dimashqi	Of Damascus	Al-Rahib	The monastic
Al-Falasifa	The philosopher	Al-Rumi	Of Constantinople
Al-Hashimi	Of the Hashim tribe	Al-Sufi	Of the Sufi sect
Al-Hasib	The respected	Al-Tayyib	The generous, the good
Al-Hejazi	Of the Hejaz	Al-Uqlidsi	The student of Euclid
Al-Hindi	The Indian	Al-Zarqa	The blue-eyed



Names of God	Meaning	Names of God	Meaning
Allah	God	Ba'ith	Raiser of the Dead
Rahman	All Beneficent	Shahid	Witness
Rahim	Most Merciful	Haqq	Truth
Malik	Sovereign	Wakil	Dependable
Quddus	Most Holy	Qawiyy	Strong
Salam	Peace and Blessing	Matin	Steadfast
Mu'min	Guarantor	Wali	Protecting Friend
Muhayin	Guardian	Hamid	All Praiseworthy
Aziz	Almighty	Muhsi	Account Taker
Jabbar	Powerful	Mubdi	Originator
Mutakabbir	Tremendous	Mu'id	Reinstater
Khaliq	Creator	Muhyi	Giver of Life
Bari	Maker	Mumit	Bringer of Death
Musawwir	Fashioner of Forms	Hayy	Ever Living
Ghaffar	Ever Forgiving	Qayyum	Self Subsisting Sustainer
Qahhar	All Compelling Subduer	Qajid	Finder
Wahhab	Bestower	Majid	Illustrious
Razzaq	Ever Providing	Wahid	Indivisible
Fattah	Opener	Samad	Impregnable
Alim	All Knowing	Qadir	All Able
Qabid	Restrainer	Muqtadir	All Determiner
Basit	Munificent	Muqaddim	Expediter
Khafid	Abaser	Mu'akhhir	Delayer
Rafi	Exalter	Aqqal	First
Ru'izz	Giver of Honor	Akhir	Last
Mudhill	Giver of Dishonor	Zahir	Manifest
Sami	All Hearing	Batin	Hidden, All Encompassing
Basir	All Seeing	Muta'al	Self Exalted
Hakam	Judge	Barr	Most Kind and Righteous
Adl	Utterly Just	Tawwab	Ever Relenting
Latif	Subtly Kind	Muntaqim	Avenger
Khabir	All Aware	Afuww	Pardoner
Halim	Forbearing	Ra'uf	Compassionate
Azim	Magnificent	Malik al Mulk	Owner of All Sovereignty
Ghafur	All Forgiving	Dhu al Jalal wa al Ikram	Lord of Majesty and Generosity
Shakur	Grateful	Muqsit	Equitable
Ali	Sublimely Exalted	Jami	Unifier
Kabir	Great	Ghani	All Rich
Hafiz	Preserver	Mughni	Enricher, Emancipator
Muqit	Nourisher	Mani	Withholder, Shielder
Hasib	Reckoner	Darr	Distressor
Jalil	Majestic	Nafi	Propitious, Benefactor
Karim	Bountiful	Nur	Light
Raqib	Watchful	Hadi	Guide
Mujib	Responsive	Badi	Incomparable
Wasi	Vast	Baqi	Ever Enduring, Immutable
Hakim	Wise	Warith	Heir, Inheritor of All
Wadud	Loving	Rashid	Rightly Guided, Infallible Teacher, Knower
Majid	All Glorious	Sabur	Patient, Timeless

Male Titles		Female Titles	
Title	European Equivalent	Title	European Equivalent
Malik, Sultan	King	Malika, Sultana	Queen
Emir	Prince	Emira	Princess
Mushir	Duke	Mushira	Duchess
Qadi	Count, Justice	Qadiya	Countess, Justice
Nasquib	Viscount	Nasquiba	Viscountess
Faris	Knight	Farisa	Knight
Mu'allim	Master	Mu'allima	Mistress
Sayyid	Lord	Sayyida, Sitt	Lady



## Chapter 4: Feats

*Dwell not upon thy weariness.*

*Thy strength shall be according to the measure of thy desire.*

- Arabian proverb

Background Feats	Summary
<b>Hadhari Feats</b>	
Hometown Advantage	You have the upper hand in your hometown.
Informed Citizen	You have a broad knowledge of organizations.
Institutional Education	You studied at a prestigious university.
Madrasah Studies	You studied at a school for the poor.
Upstanding	You are above slander and a superb witness.
Urban Tracking	You can find people in urban areas.
<b>Djinni Feats</b>	
Beyond Mortal Reason	Attempts to read your mind are hazardous.
Djinni's Boon	Grant a <i>djinni's boon</i> to a mortal.
Djinni's Curse	Your curses defy human morality.
Enlarged Ego	Your egomania is reflected in your physical size.
Hideous	Frighten others with your visage.
Hidden Path	Others cannot follow you into Jinnistan.
Supernatural Beauty	Mortals are instantly <i>love struck</i> by you.
Supernatural Duplicity	Your lies are completely undetectable.
Wish Granting	Gain any single power when granting a wish.
Wish Fulfillment	Gain any and all powers when granting a wish.
<b>Nomad Feats</b>	
Born to Ride	You can ride bareback without a bridle or halter.
Desert Hawk	You are accustomed to traveling in the desert.
Favored Region	You are intimately familiar with a certain region.
Herder	You know how to deal with herds.
Nomad Tracker	Your skills at tracking are uncanny.
Thick-Skinned	You get along easier in the wild desert.
Tribal Lore-Keeper	You are a repository of your tribe's wisdom.
Miracle	Use The Talent to simulate <i>any</i> power.
Natal Astrology	Learn about a person from their birth chart.
Nature's Avatar	You are the embodiment of the wild.
Secrets of Jinnistan	You know how to enter and conduct yourself in Jinnistan.
Self-Realized Teacher	You have attained mastery of your self.
Sense Destiny	Sense whether a subject is destined.
Sense Heritage	Sense a subject's true family.
Sense Nature	Sense a subject's Virtue and Vice.
Skepticism	You are immune to mind-influencing powers and effects.
Spiritually Fireproof	You resist the negative effects of using powers.
Succor	You can make many out of one thing.
Sympathetic Adept	You can benefit from arcane connections.
The Philosopher's Stone	You have attained a state of perfection.
Tongues	Speak and understand all languages.
Water Finesse	You've developed control over water into an art.
Whirling Dervish	Make extra effort to use The Talent.
Wind Finesse	You've developed control over wind into an art.

### Classifying Feats

Inevitably, cases will arise in your game where a player will want to select feats from another Role, claiming they are within their character's concept. The Narrator should consider compromising with the players on this matter, as there is a certain arbitrariness in classifying feats. For example, a scholarly adept might be allowed to take the Author feat, whereas an Expert described as a "sneaky assassin" wouldn't be allowed to. As a rule of thumb, if the character has most of the prerequisites for a feat, there's a good chance the feat will fit their concept.



General Feats	Summary
Al-Hajj	You benefit from the <i>baraka</i> of holy sites.
Behind the Veil	You know how to use a veil to your advantage.
Benefit (courier)	You are a messenger for the Islamic postal service.
Benefit (heir)	You are a powerful member of the royalty.
Benefit (heirloom)	Begin with a family treasure.
Benefit (hideout)	You have a secret hiding place.
Benefit (noble title)	You are a petty noble.
Blood-Bonded	You are extremely close to one or more of your allies.
Benefit (sheikh)	You hold a respected position in your community.
Corsair Savvy	Perform tricks when captaining a vessel.
Cultural Familiarity	You are totally comfortable in a foreign culture.
Dashing	You do things with style.
Deceitful Aura	Failed attempts to learn about you yield misinformation.
Destined	You have an undeniable destiny.
Descendant of the Prophet	You are a living relative of the Holy Prophet.
Devout	You regain Conviction by following your faith.
Enchanting Beauty	Romantic interests are <i>love struck</i> by you.
Etiquette	You can repair the damage done by words.
Exemplary	You lead by example.
Faithful Steed	You possess a steed of unsurpassed grace.
Family Djinn	You can call upon a bound djinni ally.
Flying Carpet Savvy	You are an expert maneuvering flying carpets.
Free Diving	Dive to depths others cannot.
Gracious Host	None will break the bond of salt with you.
Hafiz	You have memorized the Holy Qur'an.
Heartening Laugh	Your laughter encourages your allies.
Horse Savvy	You have an eye for a good horse.
Layman's Medicine	Quicken a patient's recover.



# Chapter 4: Feats

General Feats	Summary
Mountaineer	You know how to stay alive in the mountains.
Navigation	Navigate the ocean without a compass.
Poetic Soul	Capture the essence of a subject in poetry.
Quotable Wit	Your one-liners are imminently clever.
Read Character	Pick up details by interacting with a person.
Sailor's Lore	Pick up rumors at sea.
Scholarly	You are immersed in the world of books.
Servant of Fate	Fate smiles upon you in dire straits.
True Faith	Your faith keeps evil away from body and mind.
Virtuous	You may gain multiple virtues.
Well-Traveled	You adapt easily to foreign cultures.
Expert Feats	Summary
A Fool and His Money	Convince a subject to part with a treasured item.
Affect the Masses	You fascinate, inspire, and taunt large crowds.
Alas, My Children May Starve	Leave customers thinking they've got a bargain.
Amoral	It is impossible to catch you in a lie.
An Offer You Can't Refuse	Get a subject to agree to an unlikely deal.
Analyze Device	Determine the properties and function of a device.
Author	Compose <i>authoritative corpora</i> .
Barber of the Grand Bazaar	Your skills with the razor are legendary.
Beautiful Calligraphy	Your masterwork manuscripts are fascinating.
Beggar's Savvy	You know the tricks of the beggar's trade.
Benefit (muhtasib)	You are entrusted with overseeing the market.
Benefit (writ of trade)	You are authorized to trade with other nations.
Between Imagination and Memory	No one can tell the truth from fantasy in your stories.
Business	You operate a lucrative business.
Buying Power	Take out a loan equal to your Reputation.
Captive Audience	Keep a customer trapped with a meandering tale.
Citizen of the World	You are known near and far, and always are well received.
Cooking the Books	Evade taxes with a forged account ledger.
Costume Maker	Create costumes for others.
Da's	Influence the policies of the Assassins.
Deduction	Make amazing leaps of logic.
Dishonest Law	Manipulate the <i>Sharia</i> to your own advantage.
Emperor's Mirror	Make an unreasonable suggestion appear reasonable.
Escape Route	You are an expert at getaways.
Evaluate	Evaluate objects, coins, or a business deal.
Favored Audience	You know how to work a particular crowd.
Great Inspiration	Improved use of one type of inspiration.
Grooming	Increase a subject's Charisma temporarily.
Guide Conversation	Get a subject to reveal sensitive information unconsciously.
Hidden Lesson	Conceal a hidden moral in your stories.
Historiography	You are an expert at analyzing reports and texts.
Honest Law	You are well versed in the <i>Sharia</i> .
Illicit Venues	You have easy access to criminal markets.
Information Network	Your informants encompass a large area.
Inspire (confidence)	Get a subject to give you a chance.
Inspire (critical thinking)	Empower subjects to shake off mental influence.
Inspire (penitence)	Compel guilty subjects to reveal their sins.
Inspire (pity)	Disarm enemies and gain friends with pity.
Instill Panic	Cause a crowd to panic.
King of Beggars	Beggars look up to you like a sovereign.



Expert Feats	Summary
Knife-Fighting	You are an expert with a knife.
Legal Scholar	Influence court rulings, decisions, and policies.
Linguist	You are gifted with languages.
Mark	Size up suitable victims and fellow thieves.
Master Storyteller	You sense what your audience wants.
Medical Science	You're versed in cutting edge medical practices.
Messenger of Death	You can appear as Death incarnate.
Mimicry	You can mimic sounds and voices.
Monkey Companion	You have a trained monkey.
New Look	Overhaul a subject's appearance.
Plausible Deniability	You are overlooked by the authorities.
Presence	You are calm and graceful in conversation.
Revisionist Historian	Redefine established historical accounts.
Rhythmic Prosody	You can communicate through music.
Rumor-monger	Sway public opinion about a person.
Ruthless Cliffhanger	Leave your audience thirsty for more.
Safe Passage	You and your companions travel easier.
Shadowing	You are an expert in trailing others.
Silent Step	No penalty to Stealth checks when moving.
Skepticism	You are immune to mind-influencing powers and effects.
Sleeper Agents	You have spies in the homes of your enemies.
Sow Distrust	Turn people against each other, or even God.
Street Preaching	Extol a Virtue or condemn a Vice.
Surveyor	You know everything about maps and mapping.
Theologian	Introduce new ethical and moral interpretations.
Trading Empire	Influence business and trade policies.
Universal Appeal	You suffer no penalties due to Station.
Veiled Threats	You may intimidate without consequences.
Martial Feats	Summary
Adaptive Fighting	You adapt to your opponent's fighting style.
Battle Cry	Your battle cry resonates with the fury of your faith.
Battle of Focus	Your battles begin in the mind first.
Benefit (pardon of the state)	You can pardon unbelievers.
Bonded Ward	You are sworn to protect someone.
Burden Bearer	You may take on the burdens of others.
Captain of the Guard	You are in charge of security.
Champion of the Faith	You are loved by followers of your sect.
Command	Issue commands to your troops.
Drinker of Wind	You are a masterful horseman or woman.
Exhortation	Preach to your troops about a virtue.
Eye for Treachery	Recognize the tell-tale signs of betrayal.
Fearless	You resist fear and intimidation.
Formation Tactics	Provide your allies with cover from your shield.
General's Conference	Study and influence an opposing commander.
Heroic Charge	Riding through your enemies you strike them all.
Horseback Stunts	Perform dazzling stunts with your horse.
Improved Mounted Archery	You are an expert using a bow from horseback.
Improved Mounted Combat	You are an expert at horseback melee combat.
In Whose Hands is My Life	Your soul is guaranteed Paradise.
Innocuous Combatant	You are overlooked on the battlefield.
Interpose	Intercept attacks meant for others.
Intimidating Reputation	Even the stories about you are fearsome.



# Chapter 4: Feats

Martial Feats	Summary
Issue Challenge	Those who don't fight you lose face.
Knife-Fighting	You are an expert with a knife.
Landed	You can impress peasants to fight.
Lasting Intimidation	Your enemies remember your threats.
Legend of the Seven Seas	You are a legend among sailors and corsairs.
Lion of God	When raging, you are possessed by the Divine.
Master of the Battlefield	You are a highly effective commander.
Merciful Combatant	Those surrendered to you, take no action against you.
Military Rank	You belong to an organized military unit.
Mounted Archery	Use a bow from horseback.
None Shall Pass	Bar attackers from getting to a subject.
On Hallowed Ground	You are empowered at sacred sites.
One Against Many	Perform maneuvers against multiple foes.
Riposte	Take advantage of a poor attack.
Saint of Swords	You are known as a defendant of the people.
Sea Dog	You are skilled at fighting on ships.
Siege Warfare	You are conversant in siege tactics.
Stalwart	You resist overrun, rush, and trip attempts.
Tactician	You are conversant in battlefield tactics.
Terrifying Charge	Intimidate many opponents on a mounted charge.
Unparalleled Skill at Arms	You excel at tests of arms.
Upon My Life	Your oath keeps even death at bay.
Ustadh	You are the leader of a mamluk unit.
Veteran	You are no stranger to the wounds of battle.
Vicious Attack	You inflict grievous wounds on your enemies.
Warrior's Steed	You may extend yourself for your steed.
Supernatural Feats	Summary
Alchemic Purification	Create <i>alchemic substances</i> .
Ambassador to the Djinni	Receive an audience with djinni rulers.
Analyze Device	Determine the properties and function of a device.
Apprehend the Djinni's Hand	Recognize the djinni and their works.
Astrometry	Determine distances and timing of celestial events.
Centering	Use Concentration for Will saves.
Deduction	Make amazing leaps of logic.
Divine Sustenance	You live off of prayer, eschewing other needs.
Djinni Prison	Create a prison to trap a djinn.
Earth Finesse	You've developed control over earth into an art.
Elemental Focus	Your powers increase at a natural site.
Esoteric	Integrate disparate belief systems.
Experimental Philosophy	Transcend the limits of conventional philosophy.
Fire Finesse	You've developed control over fire into an art.
Horary Astrology	Answer specific questions via astrology.
Inception	Determine the ideal time for a course of action.
Innocuous Adept	Your magical capabilities are often overlooked.
Liberator	Free the unjustly imprisoned.
Master Wish-Maker	Take 20 on Diplomacy checks when wishing.
Medical Astrology	Perform remote healings.
Meteorological Astrology	Predict natural events via astrology.
Word of God	When preaching your words bear the mark of truth.



## Background Feats

There are three categories of background feats: Hadhari feats, which are accessible only to characters native to a city, or characters who have assimilated to urban life; Djinni feats, which are only accessible to the djinni (though some are accessible to characters with the Djinn-Touched background); and Nomad feats, which are accessible only to nomadic characters or characters who have assimilated to tribal life.

### Hadhari Feats

#### Hometown Advantage (Hadhari)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Knowledge (popular culture), Must be taken at 1<sup>st</sup> level

Everyone in your hometown knows about you and welcomes you home with open arms, tending your wounds, providing you and your companions with room and board, even taking risks to protect you. You can use Knowledge (popular culture) in place of Bluff, Diplomacy, and Intimidate in your hometown. Gain the benefit of these feats when in your hometown: Connected, Contacts, and Well-Informed.

#### Informed Citizen (Hadhari)

You have a broad knowledge of institutions. You may use any skill you are trained in to identify organizations connected to that skill (e.g. Knowledge (tactics) could use used to learn about a military company, while Craft (weapons) could be used to learn about an arms smuggling outfit). When doing so, you use Intelligence instead of the normal ability modifier for the skill. If the organization is very exotic or complex increase the Difficulty by +5, and if the group is highly secretive increase the Difficulty by +10.

New Uses for Any Skill	
Difficulty	Information
10	The beliefs and open agendas of the organization, as well as its symbol.
15	Headquarters, sphere of influence, and recent leadership.
20	Public supporters and enemies, and basic history.
25	Sects and leadership, secret supporters and enemies, hidden agendas.

#### Institutional Education (Hadhari)

**Prerequisite:** Wealth +8

You studied in one of the great institutions of the Islamic world, such as the old Academy of Gundishapur, Baghdad's newly created House of Wisdom, or in the court of a master scholar in Al-Andalus. You are trained in any three of the following skills: Knowledge (any), Language, and Medicine. In addition, if you don't already have 4 ranks in the Arabic language, you do now.

**Special:** Hafiz, Historiography, Honest Law, and Medical Science become favored feats for you. At the Narrator's discretion different feats may be substituted reflecting a non-standard curriculum.

#### Madrasah Studies (Hadhari)

You were trained in a *madrasah*, one of the private Islamic schools for orphans and the poor. You are trained in Knowledge (theology and philosophy), and may make any Knowledge check untrained. However, the *madrasahs* are run by religious scholars who often teach a theological doctrine that ignores or simplifies political realities. Anytime you fail an untrained Knowledge check by 5 or more, you receive misinformation instead, which you consider truth. In addition, if you don't already have 4 ranks in the Arabic language, you do now.

**Special:** Hafiz becomes a favored feat for you.

#### Upstanding (Hadhari)

You are an upstanding member of society, considered to possess good morals, and in a court of law you are considered an *adl*, an irreproachable witness whose testimony is always honored in court. You are above reproach; slander and lies spread about you have a +8 DC to catch on. Likewise, powers that manipulate people to turn them against you (e.g. Dominate or Heart Shaping) suffer a -2 penalty on their power checks.

#### Urban Tracking (Hadhari)

You can find and follow the trail of people traveling in cities by asking around. Make a Gather Information check. The Difficulty of the check is determined by the amount of time that has passed since your target was in the area.

Time	DC
5 minutes	5
1 hour	10
6 hours	15
1 day	20
1 week	30

Other conditions can also affect the base Difficulty. Some of these modifiers can apply to either you or to the target; the first value is for you, the second for the target. Bribes are based on the general wealth of the area; in a slum, a dinari might be enough to buy you a lot of friends, while in a merchant district it might be negligible. Intimidation can be used to bully people into helping you or to frighten them into covering your tracks – but if you use Intimidation too much you will quickly become disliked in the area.



Condition	DC
Every three creatures in the tracked group	-1
Target is distinctive (unusual nationality, dress)	-2
Excellent description available (portrait)	-2
Vague description available	+5
No description available	+10
Target involved in minor incident (brawl, argument)	-2
Minor bribe or Intimidation (DC 10)	-2/+2
Major bribe or Intimidation (DC 20)	-4/+4
Disliked in the area	+3/-3
Well-liked in the area	-5/+5
Target involved in major incident (inciting a riot)	-5

**Retry:** The Gather Information check takes a certain amount of time based on the population of the area you are searching as showing on the following table. If you fail the check, you can try again, but as time passes the trail is harder to find.

Population Size	Time Required
Caravanserai or Monastery (20-80 people)	20 minutes
Palace (81-400 people)	40 minutes
Village (401-900 people)	60 minutes
Small Town (901-2000 people)	90 minutes
Large Town (2001-5000 people)	2 hours
Small City (5001-12,000 people)	3 hours
Large City (12,001-25,000 people)	4 hours
Metropolis (25,001+ people)	6 hours

It is possible to search a subsection of a community. You may be in a metropolis, but if you are only searching in a single district only the population of that district is considered when determining time.

Without this feat you can use Gather Information to find people in a city only if the Difficulty is 10 or lower.

### Djinni Feats

#### **Beyond Mortal Reason (Djinni)**

An adept using powers to read the djinn's mind sees images that defy reason in their enormous history, awesome beauty or terrible atrocity. Such powers include Dream Shaping, Heart Reading, Mind Probe, Mind Reading, Mind Shaping, Mind Touch, and Sense Minds. In order to use such powers on the djinn, the adept must take the following challenge.

*Know the Unknowable:* The power check's Difficulty increases by +5. If it succeeds, the power works as normal but the adept's mind is overwhelmed. If it fails the adept's mind is overwhelmed. If it succeeds by 5 or more the power works normally and the adept is safe. When overwhelmed, the adept suffers one (or more) of the following effects chosen by the Narrator:

- Dazed for one round and shaken for the rest of the scene.
- Gains a complication like Grief-Stricken, Love Struck, or Madness.
- Learns misinformation as if it were truth.
- Frightened or awed by that djinn from now on.
- Unable use powers or skills that require concentration or maintenance.

If the adept is not aware they are targeting a djinn, they do not realize they are making this challenge, and instead make it automatically.

#### **Djinni's Boon (Djinni)**

The djinn can bestow a boon upon a worthy mortal. Doing so is fatiguing. The maximum number of boons the djinn can bestow in its lifetime is equal to either its Wisdom or Charisma (whichever is higher). See **Chapter 11** for a description of different *djinni boons*.

#### **Djinni's Curse (Djinni)**

**Prerequisite:** Curse

When the djinn lays curses it isn't restricted by human morality. Instead of using a Difficulty based on the mortal's guilt, the mortal must make a Will save to resist the effects of the curse; the Difficulty is determined as normally for powers. In addition, the djinn's curses cannot be broken by adepts (e.g. via Dispel) but only by the loophole initially woven into the curse.

#### **Enlarged Ego (Djinni)**

The djinn's egomania is reflected in its physical being. The djinn can increase its physical size, becoming Large as a standard action; if the djinn makes an extra effort it becomes Huge. This size change lasts for one scene. However, anyone pandering to the djinn's ego can trick the djinn to "monologue" by making a Bluff check opposed by the djinn's Sense Motive; the djinn spends the round gloating its power and inevitable victory. Each round, a new Bluff check may be made until the djinn succeeds its Sense Motive check. While gloating, the djinn is distracted, allowing others to use the Stealth skill even while observed.

#### **Hideous (Djinni)**

**Prerequisite:** Must belong to the Ghul or Ifreet tribe, May not possess the Attractive, Enchanting Beauty, or Supernatural Beauty feats.

The djinn's visage is terrifyingly hideous. Anyone gazing upon the djinn is shaken unless they make a DC 20 Will save. Additionally, when the djinn successfully intimidates a subject the subject is frightened of the djinn for the scene.



## Hidden Path (Djinni)

The djinn knows a way into Jinnistan that no one else can follow. Swirling sands cover all footprints, and bitter winds bar the way. When the djinn uses the Path to Jinnistan core ability, other djinn are unable to follow, and it cannot be magically located via Find the Path or followed with Plane Shift. Uses of the Find the Path power simply reveal the djinn is in Jinnistan and nothing more.

## Supernatural Beauty (Djinni)

**Prerequisite:** Attractive, Enchanting Beauty, Charisma +5, Must belong to the Jann, Jinn, or Marid tribe.

Mortals who would normally be attracted to the djinn's gender are instantly *love struck* (as per the Complication) upon gazing upon the djinn if the djinn so wishes. Other djinni who would be romantically inclined must make a DC 20 Will save or become Love Struck.

## Supernatural Duplicity (Djinni)

**Prerequisite:** Amoral, Trained in Bluff, Must belong to the Ghul or Shaitan tribe.

Lies told by the djinn are completely undetectable, it is immune to Truth-Reading, and it may take 20 on all Bluff checks, even when under stress.

## Wish Granting (Djinni)

The djinn knows its inextricable bond to humanity and either seeks to pursue its enlightenment through servitude or else to trick humanity for its own benefit. The djinn can use any single power when fulfilling the wishes of a mortal (the wisher must be sincere and spend a Conviction point).

## Wish Fulfillment (Djinni)

**Prerequisite:** 5<sup>th</sup> level, Wish Granting

The djinn can fulfill even the wildest dreams of a mortal who makes a wish. To fulfill the wish, the djinn may call upon any and all powers for one scene.

### Nomad Feats

## Born to Ride (Nomad)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Ride

You take no penalty when riding without a saddle, without a bridle, harness and tack, or when riding an unfamiliar mount that you have not trained on.

## Desert Hawk (Nomad)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Survival

You are accustomed to traveling in desert lands; you always see thru a mirage, always avoid quicksand, and are never lost in the desert. On a DC 10 Survival check you can determine the route to a nearby oasis. This oasis is 7 days away. For every 5 points by which you succeed the Survival check the oasis is one day closer (minimum of one day's travel).



## Favored Region (Nomad)

You are intimately familiar with a certain region; this is always a geographical region (the Syrian Desert) and not a political one (Damascus). While in your favored region, you always know which direction you are traveling and are never lost. You may also make a Difficulty 15 Survival check to predict the immediate weather conditions that day in the region. In addition you gain a +2 bonus to the following skills in your favored region: Knowledge (Geography), Knowledge (Nature), Stealth, and Survival. All track attempts against you are at -2 in your favored region.

## Herder (Nomad)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Handle Animal

You know how to deal with large herds. By picking out the leader of a herd, any Handle Animal checks you make on the leader affect the entire herd who follow suit. In addition, you may make a Difficulty 15 Handle Animal check to predict which direction a moving herd will go.

## Nomad Tracker (Nomad)

**Prerequisites:** Track, Trained in Survival

Your skills at tracking allow you to gain uncanny information. For every margin of 5 by which you succeed on the Track check learn one of these facts:

- The subject's species (if an animal) or ethnicity (if a human being)
- Whether you've seen these tracks before (if you've positively identified them before, you recognize them again)
- Gender and age of the subject
- Condition of the subject (e.g. wounded, lost, encumbered)

For example, if you succeeded by a margin of 10 you might learn that the person you are tracking is an encumbered woman; you might deduce she is pregnant. In addition, you know how to leave signs that only other trackers can pick up on.



**Thick-Skinned (Nomad)**

You gain a +4 bonus on Fortitude saves to resist heat/cold, starvation/thirst, scouring sands, and high wind. You are not fatigued after traveling all day. You qualify for any feats which require Endurance, such as Diehard or Tireless.

**Tribal Lore-Keeper (Nomad)**

**Prerequisite:** Eidetic Memory, Trained in Knowledge (history) and Perform (oratory)

You are a *rawun* charged with preserving the rich oral traditions of your tribe. Anytime you spend a Conviction point to frame a story of your tribe, you may also perform *weaving* at the same time provided it is tied to your story. Your storytelling check acts as your *weaving* check in this case. For example, imbedded in your story might be the location of a secret watering hole. Because tribal lore is rife with superstitions, any time you fail an untrained Knowledge check by 5 or more, you learn misinformation as if it were truth.

**General Feats****Al-Hajj (General)**

Having performed the Hajj to Mecca after a long journey and great suffering you have earned the honorific title *Hajji* (if male) or *Hajjah* (if female), proving yourself a devout pilgrim. You may don a green turban to signify your status. Gain +1 Reputation. In addition, you may benefit from the *baraka* at sacred sites by praying there; usually one day and one night of prayers suffices to benefit.

**Special:** Sacred sites like the tomb of a saint or the place of a prophet's martyrdom often are infused with the Baraka power, which can only benefit those whose spiritual channels have been properly awakened. For Muslims this entails the Hajj. If this feat is selected by non-Muslims it might be titled "Devout Pilgrim." Usually a character is limited to benefiting from those sacred sites recognized by their religion. However, a character may sacrifice the Reputation bonus the feat provides, instead gaining the benefits of *baraka* at all sacred sites regardless of religious affiliation.

**Behind the Veil (General)**

**Prerequisite:** Woman

When wearing a veil, you can use subtle eye movements to convey innuendo. You gain a +4 bonus on your Bluff checks to convey innuendo, while anyone listening in gets a -4 penalty.

**Benefit, Courier (General)**

**Prerequisite:** Endurance *or* Thick-Skinned, Trained in Ride

You are employed by the *barid*, the Islamic postal service, as a courier, delivering messages between cities. You begin with a horse. Wherever you travel, you are authorized to get a replacement horse if yours is too tired or injured to go on. In the meantime, your former horse is treated well and cared for until you return. However, you also gain the *duties* Complication.

**Benefit, Heir (General)**

**Prerequisite:** Benefit (noble title)

You are an heir to the royal family – you number among the most powerful people in the caliphate. You have a Station of 5 and Wealth of 24. You also gain +1 Reputation. In addition, you gain an extra Complication of your choosing; *blood feud*, *duties* and *envious rival* are very appropriate.

**Benefit, Heirloom (General)**

**Prerequisite:** Benefit (noble title)

You possess an inherited family heirloom. This is always the finest example of the treasure, such as a masterwork weapon, a royal stable, or a grand library. You may choose one of the treasures from **Chapter 10**. The Narrator has the final say over which treasures are suitable heirlooms. If you lose your heirloom, you suffer -2 Reputation until you make restitution to your family.

**Benefit, Hideout (General)**

You have a secret hideout that only you and your closest allies know how to find. Anyone attempting to shadow or track you to your hideout suffers a -5 penalty on their check. While in your hideout you gain the benefit of one feat that reflects your advantage. For example, you might be able use Inspire (fear) when in your hideout. This bonus feat must be approved by the Narrator.

**Benefit, Noble Title (General)**

You hold a hereditary title which marks you as a member of the nobility. You have a Station of 4 and Wealth of 14. Select or create a title for yourself; see **Chapter 3** for examples.

**Special:** If you do not take this feat at 1<sup>st</sup> level and wish to take it later on, usually you must have all the appearances of noble office (e.g. plenty of wealth, servants, resplendent clothes), and either marry a noble or be vouched for by a noble and gain the confidence of kings.







## Benefit, Sheikh (General)

You are a respected voice in your community, wise beyond your years, a venerable elder, or otherwise able to command attention. You are empowered to act as a voice for whatever community you represent, whether a family, a neighborhood, a village, or a tribe. You have a Station of 3 and a Wealth score of 8. You also gain +1 Reputation. If you are a woman your title is *sheika*.

**Special:** In order to take this feat after 1<sup>st</sup> level, you must prove your wisdom to the community that you live in.

## Blood-Bonded (General)

Choose one or more of your fellow heroes who also have this feat. You have grown close to, trust, and would sacrifice for one another. So long as the heroes can interact with each other they can spend Conviction on each other's behalf. In addition, should one of you die, all the surviving heroes gain the Dedicated feat with respect to one of the most cherished values of the deceased, reflecting their commitment to carry on the fight. Alternately, a character might become driven by revenge. The Dedicated feat lasts until completing the mission the deceased died pursuing, or brining their killer to justice.

**Special:** This feat is only useful if multiple characters possess it. Characters are expected to act as close friends; if they falter in their friendship this feat may be lost temporarily or permanently.

## Corsair Savvy (General)

**Prerequisite:** Navigation, Trained in Knowledge (earth sciences)

You may use your Knowledge (earth sciences) skill for new purposes when near a coast. You can find a hidden

cove, allowing you to use your Knowledge (earth sciences) as per the Stealth skill to keep your entire ship hidden from others, opposed by the Notice check of the captain following you. You can also lure those following you (or drive those you're pursuing) onto reef or a shoal, allowing you to use Knowledge (earth sciences) as per the Bluff skill, opposed by the Sense Motive of the captain following you. When in fog, rain, or darkness you can use your Knowledge (earth sciences) skill as the Stealth skill to sneak up on another ship.

## Cultural Familiarity (General)

Choose a non-Arab nationality whose culture you are familiar with. You are totally comfortable in this culture. All your Knowledge skills are already assimilated there, and you have 2 ranks in two languages of the region. Alternately, you may choose to have 4 ranks in just one language.

## Dashing (General)

**Prerequisite:** Attractive, Charisma +2

You are stylishly dressed, confident, and full of bravado. You may spend a Conviction point to minimize a failure such that your image doesn't suffer, or to counter an effect which would reduce your Reputation. In addition, you may take the following challenge on any attack or skill check:

*Done with Style:* By increasing the check's Difficulty by +5, you gain a +2 bonus to your next Charisma-based or Reputation check if you succeed. Alternately, you may use the Fascinate or Inspire feat in conjunction with the action.



**Deceitful Aura (General)**

Rumor and mystery surround you; no one can separate the fact from the fiction.

Anytime someone makes an attempt to learn about you (Reputation check, Gather Information, Knowledge, Scrying) and fails their check by 5 or more, they instead learn misinformation as if it were the truth.

**Descendant of the Prophet (General)**

**Prerequisite:** Must be taken at 1<sup>st</sup> level

You belong to *ahl al-Bayt* ("people of the house"), and there exists indisputable proof that you are of Muhammad's ancestry. You may or may not realize this to begin with. You are eligible to become Caliph, Imam, or any other post that requires someone to have Muhammad's blood. When your family ancestry is publicly revealed you gain +2 Reputation.

**Destined (General)**

You are destined for a great future. Choose one of the destinies described in **Chapter 10**. You may take this feat multiple times.

**Devout (General)**

You are devoted to your religion, and take inspiration from observing its sacred tenets. You can recover Conviction in a new way. Either choose one method from below or create one with your Narrator's approval. This feat may be taken multiple times.

*Observing the Holy Month:* During the month of Ramadan you regain two Conviction points each day instead of one.

*Performing the Hajj:* When you perform pilgrimage to Mecca regain all your Conviction points, not just one.

*Praying at a Shrine:* When you pray at a sacred site considered holy by your sect regain Conviction. Alternately you may specify a specific type of *haram* (holy site), such as the tombs of saints, palace mosques, or mountaintop Sufi retreats.

*Sacrifice:* When you willingly make a great personal sacrifice to further the goals of your sect regain Conviction. What matters is that at the time you believe you will suffer for your beliefs and adhere to them regardless, not that you actually suffer.

*Tithing:* When you donate 25% of your Wealth to your sect or community you regain Conviction. Reduce your Wealth score by one.

**Enchanting Beauty (General)**

**Prerequisite:** Attractive, Charisma +2

No one can take their eyes off you. Poets do your beauty injustice. You know no suitor who is worthy of your affections. Anyone who would normally be romantically attracted to you must make an opposed Charisma check upon meeting you. If they fail you gain a +4 bonus on all Charisma-based checks with them. If they fail by 5 or more they are smitten by you and are treated as being *love struck* (see Complications). You may only affect a number of people this way equal to your Charisma score. If they succeed, nothing happens. However, should they succeed the opposed Charisma check by 10 or more, you become *love struck* with them; at last you have found your equal!

**Etiquette (General)**

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Diplomacy

You never need to make a Diplomacy check when dealing with foreign customs. In addition, you may spend a Conviction point to undo any damage of a friend's social blunder the round after it occurs by deprecating your friend and showering your host with flowery praise.

**Exemplary (General)**

You lead by example, a shining beacon to those around you. Once per game session you may use this feat to allow the rest of your group to use one of your skill ranks during a shared activity, such as sneaking past enemy lines. One check is made for the entire group. If the group is excessively large, the Narrator may impose a penalty on the skill check. You may spend a Conviction point to use the feat an additional time.

**Faithful Steed (General)**

Never has there been a more noble and faithful steed. If you take this feat at first level, you begin with a trained horse. If you take this feat after first level it applies to a steed you already have. Your steed gain the following benefits:

Level	Abilities	Tricks	Special
1-2	+1	1	Bonus steed trait, Psychic recognition
3-5	+1	2	Devotion
6-8	+2	3	Bonus steed trait
9-11	+2	4	
12-14	+3	5	Bonus steed trait
15-17	+3	6	
18-20	+4	7	Bonus steed trait

*Level:* Your steed gains benefits according to your total level. The steed's combat bonus and saves are the same as yours.



*Abilities:* This is a bonus to any three of the steed's abilities: Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma. You choose which ones.

*Tricks:* These are additional tricks your steed learns in addition to any you might teach it using the Handle Animal skill; they don't count against the normal limit of tricks known by an animal.

*Bonus steed trait:* Choose any one virtuous trait or unique breed trait for your steed. You may choose whether these are inherent in the steed or only exist as a result of your unique connection with the steed.

*Psychic recognition:* The steed is attuned to you, and can use the Heart Reading power as a 1<sup>st</sup>-level adept in regard to you only. Both you and your steed get a +4 bonus on checks to correctly identify each other. For example, you might gain this bonus when tracking your steed's footprints or spotting your steed though painted by thieves, while your steed might gain this bonus to realize you are still its master even though you've been turned into a pig.

*Devotion:* Your steed gains a +4 bonus on Will saves against any effect influencing its mind or emotions.

## Family Djinn (General)

**Prerequisite:** Narrator's approval

Your family is served by a djinni slave bound by an old relative. By speaking a command word known only to a few of your relatives, you may conjure forth your family's djinn. The djinn is compelled to obey whatever you wish for, within its power. In addition, your family may set certain limits on using the djinn, such as never against the family, only in a dire emergency, etc. If you improperly treat the djinn or use it for selfish reasons, your family may strip you of the command word. Severe infractions will result in losing your family's name, all wealth associated with the family, and your name being publicly slandered. In addition, anytime the djinn commits a crime (even if it was commanded by a distant relative), you will be suspected by the authority. Create the family djinn as a 1<sup>st</sup> level djinni of any tribe.

## Flying Carpet Savvy (General)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Pilot

You know how to ride flying carpets to optimize their maneuverability. After spending one minute riding a flying carpet, you become familiar with that particular carpet; when you pilot it, the carpet's maneuverability increases one rank and it acts as if it had the Wingover feat.

## Free Diving (General)

**Prerequisite:** Endurance, Trained in Swim

Leaping from perilous heights, you plunge into the ocean, diving to depths that would make a land dweller's lungs burst. You are always considered to be deliberately

diving when falling into water while conscious. You gain +4 on all Acrobatics or Swim checks to avoid damage from a dive. In addition, the effects of deep water accrue against you less than others; you gain +4 on all Fortitude saves against water pressure damage. You may spend a Conviction point to put off drowning for one minute.

## Gracious Host (General)

You are well known in your community for your generosity and hospitality. Even your enemies will honor the bond of salt with you and would never violate the sanctity of your home by stealing from you or harming you... at least, so long as they are your guests. Gain +1 Reputation. Also you get +3 on Diplomacy checks with guests in your home. If you ever break the laws of hospitality you lose access to this feat until you make proper restitution.

## Hafiz (General)

**Prerequisite:** Wisdom +1, Eidetic Memory, Trained in Knowledge (theology and philosophy)

You have completely memorized the Holy Qur'an, which contains wisdom so clear, so apparent, that it is accessible to all readers and its wisdom can be applied to every field of study. The illumination the Qur'an provides you is only limited by your spiritual progress. Gain a bonus to all Knowledge skills equal to your Wisdom. Also, gain +1 Reputation and you may use the title *hafiz* ("guardian") with your name.

## Heartening Laugh (General)

**Prerequisite:** Charisma +2

Your laughter warms your allies' hearts and stirs their souls. Once per game session, when you spend a Conviction point, you may apply the benefit to all nearby allies. This is accompanied by a loud laugh in the face of danger.

## Horse Savvy (General)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Handle Animal

You have an eye for telling a good horse. Just by looking at a horse you immediately know its breed, gender, and one trait it possesses (e.g. balker, biter, willing). By making a DC 15 Handle Animal check with the horse in question and spending 10 minutes with the horse, you can learn any other traits it possesses. You can estimate a horse's market price if you know all its traits. Also, you can train a horse to either mimic or conceal a trait (not both at once) on a DC 20 Handle Animal check. Lastly, you know how to breed horses and can selectively breed in or out certain traits on a DC 20 Handle Animal check. You gain a +2 or greater bonus to breed horses if you are in possession of a royal stud book.



**Layman's Medicine (General)****Prerequisite:** Trained in Perform (oratory)

You can use entertaining stories and jests to quicken a patient's recovery. When administering to a patient make a Perform (oratory) check against a Difficult according to how injured the patient is: Hurt (DC 10), Wounded (DC 15), Disabled (DC 20). If successful, your distracting stories and jests allow the patient to make a recovery check in less time. A Disabled patient gets their next recovery check in an hour, and a Wounded or Hurt patient in a minute. You may only use Layman's Medicine on a given patient once per day. In addition, your voice keeps patients undergoing surgery or some other painful process conscious if need be.

**Mountaineer (General)**

You acclimate quickly to high altitudes and are never fatigued from altitude sickness, always identify avalanche hazards if you take the time to look, and you can lead a team that is roped together. You may take 10 on Climb checks even when under pressure. You also have a sixth sense about alpine storms; when such a storm is brewing make a DC 10 Survival check. If you succeed, you have 10 minutes warning before the storm. For every 5 points by which you succeed you have an hour's preparation before the storm hits.

**Navigation (General)****Prerequisite:** Trained in Knowledge (earth sciences)

You know how to use a captain's *diwan* (log and ocean map) and to navigate across the ocean without a compass. When traveling at sea, you may use your Knowledge (earth sciences) skill to get from one point to another via the most reasonable course. The Difficulty is determined by how far you are traveling. If you fail this check, the journey takes twice as long as anticipated as unfavorable winds and currents slow you down. If you fail by more than 5, you travel halfway to your destination at which point you become lost. You may make a DC 20 Knowledge (earth sciences) check to regain your path once every 12 hours.

Length of Trip	DC
Short (a day or two)	15
Moderate (up to a week)	20
Long (several weeks)	25
Extreme (more than a month)	30

**Poetic Soul (General)****Prerequisite:** Trained in Perform (oratory)

Your scintillating words transport your listener; they can actually taste the honey you describe. On

a successful DC 15 Perform (oratory) check you capture the subject you are describing so exquisitely that one feat or trait of the subject affects the audience. When conveying something magical, you can never capture the full effect, only a faint shadow of it. For example, by describing a beautiful prince, you affect the audience with his Enchanting Beauty feat; women who would normally be attracted to him may become *love struck* just from your description. Alternately, if you had just heard a magic song which caused you to become younger you could convey it to the audience if you were trained in Perform (singing), and they would grow slightly younger. You must have witnessed the subject in order to use this feat. The Narrator has final say over what feats or effects may be described in this way.

**Quotable Wit (General)****Prerequisites:** Intelligence +2 (secular), or Wisdom +2 (pious)

You are an endless source of witty repartees and proverbs. When you say a witty one-liner, you may spend a Conviction point to designate it as a piece of "quotable wit." A piece of quotable wit grants a +2 bonus to any related situation in which it is used. A maximum of three pieces of quotable wit may be used in any game session per character with this feat. Likewise, only those characters which heard its original use may benefit from the quotable wit. Your enemies may not hi-jack your quotable wit; only your allies may benefit.

*For example, Rafiqi the charming rogue, while facing a band of midget robbers quips: "My mother always told me bad things come in small packages." His player designates this as quotable wit, spending a point of Conviction. Rafiqi gains a +2 bonus to rolls facing the dwarves that take advantage of their size. Later, Rafiqi's fiancé Arasteh acquires a magical box with an ominous skull on the front. Tempted (a magical charm effect) to open it she muses: "I'd better not. Bad things come in small packages after all." Arasteh gets +2 on her Will save to resist opening the box.*

**Read Character (General)****Prerequisite:** Trained in Sense Motive

You've got a keen eye for sizing other people up, getting a sense of their capabilities and motives from subtle cues. The way they hold the spoon might reveal they're a commoner or have peasant upbringing. A swagger and hard eyes might reveal a veteran soldier. You know what to look for, and more importantly, how to interpret it. You can determine a character's Role, allegiance, station, and experience by observing them. This requires a Sense Motive check, using the DC specified below.







You may make one check in each category for each target you deal with; no retry is allowed. Each check requires at least 10 minutes of observation. An impulsive check is possible after a single round, but increases the DC by 10. The Narrator should make all checks secretly. If the check fails by 5 or less, you simply can't form an opinion. If the check fails by more than 5, you misinterpret what you're seeing and receive incorrect information. You may take 10 on this check, but you may not take 20.

Task	DC
Determine Role	15
Determine station	20
Determine experience	25
Determine allegiance	30

**Allegiance:** You get a feel of the target's main allegiance. This is in broad strokes only, such as "loyalist to the throne" or "revolutionary." At the Narrator's discretion this might include the name of a nation, organization, sect, or person. An adept can identify another adept's *arcane philosophy* this way.

**Experience:** You gauge the target's rough level of experience: Amateur (1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> level), Moderately skilled (5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>), Highly skilled (9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>), Expert in their field (13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>), Legendary (17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>).

**Role:** The target's highest level Role. If you beat the DC by 5 or more, you also have a sense of the target's Archetype. If you beat the DC by 10 or more, you know all the target's Roles if they have multiple Roles.

**Station:** You pick up on clues that give away the target's station. If the target is disguised, you must first penetrate their disguise or the Illusion. If you succeed by 5 or more, you also have a sense of the target's Background.

**Special:** Your target may make an opposed Sense Motive check to pick up that you're paying undue attention to them. Once your target is aware of what you're up to, they may attempt to counter with Bluff.

## Sailor's Lore (General)

When you come to a new area at sea you may make a level check modified by your Wisdom to see if you know any rumors. The Difficulty of this check is 10 for common rumors, 15 for uncommon rumors, and 20 to 30 for obscure rumors. Typical rumors of the sea include shipwrecks, ghost ships, buried treasure, bounties, uncharted islands, sea monsters, mermaids, and good fishing.

## Scholarly (General)

**Prerequisite:** 4 ranks in one language

Immersed in the world of books, you can determine the location of a book pertaining to a topic covered by any Knowledge skill you are trained in. The Difficulty is 15 for books within your home kingdom, 25 for books within the Caliphate, and 35 for books outside the empire. Likewise you may use any appropriate Knowledge skill instead of your Intelligence when making a Reputation check to recognize someone. For example, you might use Knowledge (tactics) to recognize a famous general.

## Servant of Fate (General)

You accept what Fate gives and takes away, knowing that whatever comes to pass has been fore-ordained. In spite of (or because of) your fatalism, Fate seems to favor you! When you are in dire straits (e.g. cornered by a hungry tiger, falling from a cliff, lost in the desert) you may spend a Conviction point to make a miraculous escape. For example, a hero about to be killed by a demon might be saved by three passersby who each tell the demon an amazing story in exchange for one-third of the claim on the hero's life. Each time a miraculous escape is made, the Conviction cost for the next escape increases by one. So the second time it takes 2 Conviction, the third time it takes 3 Conviction, and so on. Eventually, Fate flees even the most fortunate.

**Special:** After this feat has been used several times, the Narrator may allow the hero to replace it with the True Faith feat.



**True Faith (General)**

You are a sincere believer in your faith. You may take 10 on Will saves to resist any suggestion or mind control attempt to make you act against your faith. In addition you may spend a Conviction point to call upon your faith in the following ways:

- Automatically succeed your saving throw against blasphemous magic.
- Repel all vice-aligned djinni, demons, and undead for a scene as per an automatically successful use of the Protection power.
- Identify an angel, a person with True Faith, or a holy person with Baraka.
- A subject instantly recognizes you as a person of true faith.

If you ever break a major tenet of your faith, you lose all benefits of this feat till you atone; however, you permanently lose one way of calling upon your faith (e.g. the ability to repel evil beings) even after atoning. This is determined by the Narrator.

**Virtuous (General)**

You are a hero in an age when too many men are jackals. During your adventures, you may gain additional virtues, provided you have adhered to the new virtue despite great danger or sacrifice; the Narrator decides when this occurs or you may spend a point of Conviction to declare when you gain the new virtue. You may gain two additional virtues. Increase the number of additional virtues you may possess by your Wisdom score, and also by one for each of the following feats you have: Al-Hajj, Devout, Hafiz, and True Faith. Thus a character with Wisdom +3 and True Faith could gain 6 additional virtues.

**Well-Traveled (General)**

**Prerequisite:** Etiquette, Trained in Diplomacy

You adapt to foreign cultures more readily than others. You gain a +5 bonus on any cultural acclimation checks you make. In addition, you may spend a Conviction point to acclimate three Knowledge skills to any culture, reflecting your past travels there.

*Expert Feats***A Fool and his Money (Expert)**

**Prerequisite:** Plausible Deniability, Trained in Bluff

On a successful Bluff check (opposed by Sense Motive), you convince a person to part with something they ordinarily would never sell. You must succeed the roll by 5 or more for favored or exceptional items, and by 10 or more for heirlooms or treasured gifts. The person is convinced you need

it more than them, but shortly after giving you the object, they regain their wits and realize they've been tricked. However, getting the object back may be socially improper and difficult (because you've since left the scene). You may not trick the same person more than once, unless you are using a disguise.

**Affect the Masses (Expert)**

**Prerequisite:** Fascinate, Inspire, or Taunt, Trained in Perform

You may affect any number of people listening to you who are within earshot when using Fascinate, Inspire, or Taunt.

**Alas, My Children May Starve (Expert)**

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Bluff and Diplomacy

Even while you gouge a naïve customer with high prices, you leave him thinking it was a steal. You could sell a camel its hump and convince the beast it was getting a fair price! Every 5 points by which you win in haggling situation, you may increase the price of the good you are selling by 50% (instead of 25%), or you may improve the customer's attitude toward you by one step (e.g. indifferent to friendly).

**Amoral (Expert)**

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Bluff

It is nearly impossible to catch you in a lie. You may take 20 on Bluff checks opposed by a Sense Motive check when on a mission for your cause. In addition, anyone using Heart Reading, Mind Probe, Mind Reading, or Truth-Reading on you must first succeed an opposed character level test. The adept rolls d20 + level + Wisdom, and you roll d20 + level + Charisma. Only if the adept wins the check does the power reveal the truth, a check being made as normal. Otherwise, your nature appears to be vague and benign.

**An Offer You Can't Refuse (Expert)**

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Diplomacy

On a successful Diplomacy roll to haggle with another, you can convince them to agree to a deal they ordinarily would never acquiesce to. You must succeed the roll by 5 or more for deals involving something precious to them, and by 10 or more for deals involving a beloved person or place. The base price for the item is 100% higher than normal, but haggling can bring this down.

**Analyze Device (Expert or Supernatural)**

Through careful study and testing, you can determine the function and properties of a device. To analyze a device make a Knowledge check that pertains to





the device; for example, both a mechanical bridge and a potion would require Knowledge (physical sciences). If the check succeeds, you may make another check after studying the object for the listed time; you may continue making checks until you fail. Each successful check determines one function or property of the device. The amount of time and Difficulty of analyzing depends on the complexity of the device.

Device	DC	Example	Study Time
Mechanical, Simple	10	Average lock	5 rounds
Mechanical, Complex	15	Clockwork mechanism	5 minutes
Mechanical, Very Complex	20	Ancient irrigation system	10 minutes
Magical and Mechanical	25	A brass golem	20 minutes
Completely Magical	30	A flying carpet	1 hour

## Author (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** 5 ranks in one language, Trained in Craft (manuscript)

Once you have written at least two masterwork texts on the same subject, you can create an authoritative corpus, a collection of your works which provides illumination on a certain field of Knowledge. In addition, at the Narrator's discretion you can provide access to a unique feat through the reading of the corpus, relating to the theory you propound. The maximum bonus you can impart is related to the number of works you've written and your ranks in the pertaining Knowledge skill. Use the

average maximum bonus, rounded down. For example, a scholar with 16 ranks in Knowledge (theology and philosophy) who has written a series of 10 books could impart a maximum bonus of +2. If you are writing about a subset of knowledge, you may increase the maximum bonus by +1.

# of Works	Max Bonus	Knowledge Skill Ranks	Max Bonus
2-10	+1	4-7	+1
11-20	+2	8-11	+2
21-30	+3	12-15	+3
31+	+4	16+	+4

## Barber of the Grand Bazaar (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Captive Audience, Emperor's Mirror, Fascinate, Grooming, Guide Conversation, Inspire (complacency), New Look, Suggestion, Universal Appeal, Gather Information 8 ranks, Medicine 8 ranks, Perform (oratory) 8 ranks

You are the best barber in the city, your skills with the razor unparalleled, your gift at gab extraordinary, and your humility never in question. Noble and wealthy clients regularly contract your services, and you may be invited to their palaces. You hear everything, from street gossip to royal scandals. You always know some legends or rumors about everyone and everything you encounter. You may spend Conviction in several new ways:

*Exquisite Haircut:* You may spend a Conviction point to take 20 on your Expert level check when using the Grooming feat.

*Harmless Barber:* When you are speaking about yourself, you can spend a Conviction point to convince everyone that you are hysterically funny (even if you're acting seriously), and that you're utterly harmless.

*Pertinent Legend:* Usually you know trivia, but you may spend a Conviction point to recall critically pertinent information about a subject.

## Beautiful Calligraphy (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** 5 ranks in one language, Trained in Craft (manuscript)

You may deliberately increase the Difficulty of a manuscript by 5 in order to make it a truly stunning piece. If you succeed your Craft (manuscript) check, your work is considered fascinating as per the Fascinate feat. Any person looking upon it for the first time is affected. The effect is maintained for a number of rounds equal to your Craft (manuscript) skill. You gain a +1 bonus on all professional skill checks made with Craft (manuscript) to increase your Wealth.



**Beggar's Savvy (Expert)**

**Prerequisite:** Blend In, Trained in Bluff, Disguise, and Knowledge (streetwise)

You are versed in the traditional skills of begging: conning others, a range of pitiful disguises, and getting by on scraps. When attempting a suitably pitiful disguise you may take 20 on your Disguise check; examples of pitiful disguises include being crippled, blind, senile, etc. When lying to another, you may take 10 on your Bluff checks even when rushed, threatened, or distracted. When in an urban environment you never need worry about starving or dehydrating as you have learned to get by on the scraps of others; you may even make a Knowledge (streetwise) check to scrounge enough for others to eat and drink as if you were using the Survival skill. When moving through a familiar city you may take 20 on your Knowledge (streetwise) checks to find your way.

**Benefit, Muhtasib (Expert)**

**Prerequisite:** Honest Law, Trained in Knowledge (civics), 4 ranks in one language

You are entrusted by the state with the maintenance of public morals, especially in the marketplace. You are authorized to detect and punish immorality, including the use of false weights and measures, the adulteration of wares, or poisoning the water supply or the fields, and generally to enforce the rules of honesty, propriety, and hygiene. However, you gain the *duties* complication.

**Benefit, Writ of Trade (Expert)**

**Prerequisite:** Business, Trained in Diplomacy, Wealth +12

You have acquired rights from the Caliphate to deal with other nations. You may buy and sell foreign goods without fear of reprisal from the authorities, unless such goods are obviously blasphemous (e.g. copies of a pagan text). You may also use your writ of trade as cover within another nation. On a successful Bluff check you can use your writ of trade to gain access to normally restricted areas of a foreign culture. The Difficulty depends on how protected the area is: DC 10 for a port city or a capital, DC 20 for a remote area or one which requires passing through an off-limits zone, and DC 30 for a secret military fort or a sacred site.

**Between Imagination and Memory (Expert)**

**Prerequisite:** Affect the Masses, Fascinate, Great Inspiration (awe), Hidden Lesson, Inspire (awe), Master Storyteller, Ruthless Cliffhanger, Charisma +1, Perform (oratory) 8 ranks

You deeply understand that place between

imagination and memory, where the dreams of humanity become indistinguishable from historical accounts. You may be an exquisite historian, but you know the limits of history. "Truth" is in the eye of the beholder. Instead you weave stories that give meaning to life. You may spend a Conviction point to establish something you told in one of your stories as fact or fiction. For example, after telling a story about a buried treasure, you could, upon finding the entrance to a cave, spend a point of Conviction and reveal that this is the very same treasure cave in your story. Alternately, if a group of thieves had gone to dig up this so-called buried treasure, you could spend a Conviction point, revealing that there really is no treasure (or that the treasure isn't material but spiritual). Additionally, when you are telling a story it is impossible for anyone to tell if it's true or false; at best powers like Truth-Reading reveal it as "improbable" or "likely."

**Blend In (Expert)**

**Prerequisite:** Belong to the *Banu Sasan* (Station 1)

You look like others of your station, and pursuers find it hard to distinguish you.

You may make a Disguise check without any preparation when among others of your station (and wearing clothing of your station), nor do you suffer any penalty for not having makeup or props. In addition anyone who fails their Notice check to find you by 6 or more has chosen the wrong person. At the Narrator's option, others of equal or lesser station aren't affected by this feat.

**Business (Expert)**

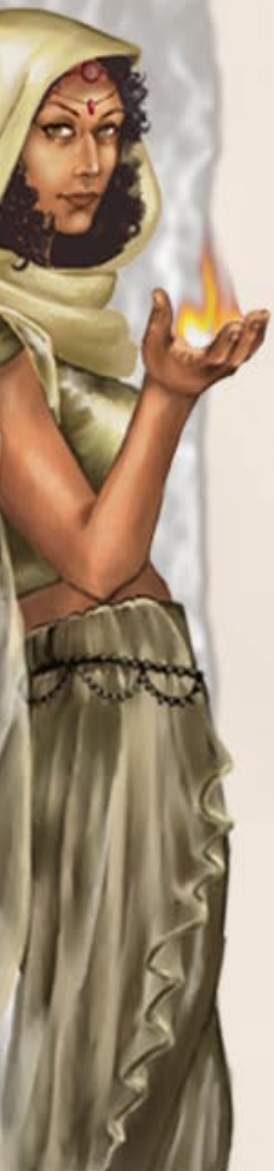
**Prerequisite:** Trained in Diplomacy, Wealth +6

You own and operate a business. You may make a professional skill check to improve your Wealth score every *game session* instead of every level gained. However, when doing so without gaining a level you run some risks. For every 5 points by which you fail the check, your Wealth score decreases by one. Alternately, if you haven't taken any risks in between levels, you may take 10 on your next professional skill check when you gain a level for "playing it safe." If you are the chief manager of accounts, you must take the *duties* complication; otherwise you have appointed a steward to oversee day to day affairs.

**Buying Power (Expert)**

**Prerequisite:** Business, Trained in Diplomacy, Reputation +1, Cannot have been convicted of a crime or be publicly indebted

You are known for paying back loans. When you seek to acquire a loan for a purchase, you may increase your Wealth score by an amount equal to



your Reputation. When you pay back your loan, you lose an amount of Wealth equal to your Reputation +1. If you are unable to pay the loan back you become indebted. You must pay back your loan within a number of months equal to your Reputation score at the time the loan is made.

## Captive Audience (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Perform (oratory)

You can keep an initially willing subject trapped as you tell long meaningless stories, each which digresses into another tale. You make a Perform (oratory) check opposed by the subject's Diplomacy check. If you succeed the subject is unable to politely excuse himself for one hour for every 5 points by which you won the opposed check (minimum of one hour). Of course, he may get up and leave, but this is always rude and makes a scene – he loses a Reputation point. In addition, any successful use of the Fascinate or Taunt feats during this time lasts for the entire duration (provided the subject doesn't walk out). If you fail by 5 or more, the subject becomes unfriendly toward you and will never contract your services again.

## Citizen of the World (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Connected, Etiquette, Linguist, Safe Passage, Trailblazer, Diplomacy 8 ranks, Knowledge (earth sciences) 8 ranks, Survival (8 ranks), Reputation +3, Speak 5 Languages

Your extensive travels abroad have earned you a good reputation. Whenever you travel to a new place you may spend a Conviction point to be well received. Either you have been there before or your reputation precedes you. All your Knowledge skills are acclimated, and you are able to find someone who speaks your language. You and all your companions receive free room and board. You also find restrictions on travel, curfews, weapon permits, and other minor laws eased up. Slight infractions against the law are overlooked. You are given help pertaining to your travels, such as ship repairs or choice of fine steeds from a stable.

## Cooking the Books (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Dishonest Law, Trained in Knowledge (business) and Knowledge (civics)

You make a convincing ledger that creates a false impression of a business' earnings. When you (or someone you're working for) must make a Wealth check to pay your taxes, make a Knowledge (business) check against a DC equal to your (or your employer's) Wealth score. For every 5 points by which you succeed, reduce the Difficulty of all taxes by one for a month. However, if you fail by 5 or more, you (or your employer) comes under investigation. If you fail by 10 or more, a dramatic failure occurs and a warrant is put out for your arrest (and your employer).

## Costume Maker (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Disguise

You may use the Disguise skill to make costumes as per the Craft skill. Like the Craft skill this requires a Wealth check, and extra time. The Craft Difficulty becomes the Difficulty of any Notice checks to see through the costume. The costume is made for a specific person who doesn't need to be trained in Disguise to use it; however if they are, they increase the Difficulty of the Notice check to see through the costume by +2. If a person who the costume wasn't meant for wears it, they suffer the penalties listed under the Disguise skill.

## Da'is (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Amoral, Deceitful Aura, Dedicated, Fearless, Inspire (Fear), Instill Panic, Secrets of Alamut, Sleeper Agents, Sow Distrust, Bluff 8 ranks, Diplomacy 8 ranks, Gather Information 8 ranks, Intimidate 8 ranks, and Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 8 ranks, Charisma +1, Must have sworn allegiance to the Assassins

You have been elevated to the status of *da'is*, missionaries working directly under the guidance of the Old Man. You are responsible for finding and training new recruits, collecting debts, passing on missives to the rest of the *fedayeen*, directing counter-espionage, keeping the secrets of Alamut safe, and disseminating propaganda. You may attempt to influence the Old Man's decisions about who is slain or threatened, thereby condemning new targets to death or minimizing the damage done to targets you are sympathetic towards. Doing so requires a Diplomacy check. The DC is 15 for popular rulings or policies in line with the Old Man's goals, DC 25 for unpopular rulings or policies divergent from the Old Man's goals, and DC 35 or more for rulings or policies which are overwhelmingly partisan, self-motivated, or contrary to current goals. Failing by 5 or more prevents you from using this feat for several months. Failing by 10 or more results in your being labeled as a traitor; access to this feat is suspended until you restore your good standing.

## Deduction (Expert or Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** Wisdom +2

*Firasa* is the ability to make inferences from just a little information, a form of physiognomic divination. Your skill at deduction is truly amazing, and borders on magic. You may spend a Conviction point to extrapolate upon what you already know or gain access to out-of-character knowledge.

**Extrapolate:** Choose a skill appropriate to the information you are seeking. For example, if it is information regarding a crime scene, you might rely on your Search skill. The Narrator must agree with your choice of skill to make a deduction check. You may not take 10 or take 20 on this check.

**Deduce out of character knowledge:** You may make use of out-of-character knowledge, provided you offer



Deduction: Firasa and Deduction		
Check Result	Information	Example (Searching horse stables)
15	Review pertinent information	The princess usually wears sandals and you found bare footprints her size in the stables.
20	Discover a minor overlooked clue	None of the saddles have been taken off the rack, and judging by the footprints it would seem the princess went for a bareback ride last night.
25	Discover a major new clue	Judging from the impressions left in the hay, the intertwined hair, and scattered articles of clothing you deduce the princess had a torpid affair with the musician in the stables.
30	An inspired revelation!	The princess's illicit suitor is actually a djinn disguised as a horse!

a convincing way your character deduces it. For example, you might deduce that an ally has been captured by knowing your friend's psychology and guessing they went ahead of the group already.

### Dishonest Law (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Knowledge (civics)

You know how to manipulate the *Sharia* to your own advantage. You may use Knowledge (civics) to perform cunning legal tricks.

### Emperor's Mirror (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Fascinate, Grooming, Suggestion, Trained in Perform (oratory)

By holding up a mirror to your customer after finishing a haircut, you may make an unreasonable suggestion relating to their appearance. For example, you might suggest they would look far better with some ridiculous haircut, that they are the most beautiful person in the kingdom, that you have splendid robes which will suit their new look (even though the robes are tattered), etc. This is resolved as a normal Suggestion attempt.

### Escape Route (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Blend In, Trained in Stealth

When fleeing from pursuers in a city or town, once you are out of sight and have cover, you may spend a Conviction point to take 20 on a Stealth check as you slip through back alleyways and crowded streets, utterly confounding your pursuers. If you are trapped in binds or a prison, you may instead take 20 on an Escape Artist check to free yourself, or a Search check to find a secret way out.

### Evaluate (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Knowledge (business)

Your business acumen allows you to evaluate the value of objects, coins, and business deals. This requires an Intelligence check and at least one minute. A common object requires a DC 10 check, whereas a rare object or a wedding dowry might be DC 15, and a complicated deal involving multiple merchants might be DC 20. Failure means you have erred within 25% of the object or deal's value. For every 5 full points by which you failed the check, this margin of error increases by a further 25%. If you have a suitable tool such as a merchant's scale or a book on mercantile law, you gain a +2 bonus on your check.

Dishonest Law: New Uses for the Knowledge (civics) Skill	
DC	Task
10	Avoid close inspection within city (not palace) or avoid police harassment
10	Get around the <i>riba</i> – a law preventing the charging of interest
15	Get minor charges dropped or find a biased <i>qadi</i> to try a case
15	Waive minor taxes and fees
20	Create delays (paperwork mismanaged, trials put off)
20	Move wealth between cities or even countries (e.g. from Baghdad to Cordoba), smuggle goods, or convert illicit goods to silver standard.
25	Find a loophole in the <i>Sharia</i> or make paperwork disappear. Such a loophole may only be used once and may incite the faithful.
25	Secretly channel money into a “heretical” business or cause

**Opposed Skill Check:** Create a contract with loose ends. Create/detect a forged legal document. This is opposed by anyone with Craft (manuscript) or someone with the Dishonest or Honest Law feat on a Knowledge (civics) check. You must be literate and have Craft (manuscript) in order to forge a document.

## Favored Audience (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Fascinate, Trained in Perform

You specialize in performing to a particular type of audience, such as an ethnic group (Turks), a social class (kings), or even a type of djinn (Ifreeti). You must speak the native language of your favored audience. Gain a +2 bonus on all Fascinate, Inspire, Suggest, and Taunt checks with your favored audience, as well as a +2 bonus on all Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, Sense Motive, and Perform checks with them. You also gain a +2 bonus on your story modifier when spending a Conviction point to frame a story before your favored audience.

## Great Inspiration (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Inspire (any), Charisma +1

Choose one type of inspiration in which you are trained. You may use that type of inspiration an extra time per day (so a 6<sup>th</sup> level Expert specialized in awe can Inspire three times per day and use awe one additional time per day). When used on willing subjects, the effects of the inspiration are doubled. Unwilling subjects must make a Will saving throw (Difficulty 10 + your level + your Charisma). In either case, the effects of the inspiration last for a number of minutes equal to your expert level.

**Special:** This feat may be taken multiple times, once for each type of inspiration.

## Grooming (Expert)

Your skills at making others look their best are well-appreciated by all, though rumors do circulate that you're quite mad with your razor. All the better to keep your clientele still! You may groom another given an hour. Make an Expert level check against a DC of 10 + your subject's Charisma. If successful, your subject receives a +1 bonus to Charisma, and for every 5 points by which you succeed, your subject gains an additional +1 Charisma. This lasts until the next sunrise.

**Special:** If you don't have razors, scissors, and perfumes you take a -4 penalty on your grooming check.

## Guide Conversation (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Inspire (complacency), Trained in Gather Information

You know how to get people to talk about what you want to hear, without them realizing they're being manipulated.

When you successfully use Inspire (complacency) on a target, you may make a Gather Information check opposed by the target's Sense Motive check. The target receives a bonus based on the importance of the information you are trying to obtain:

Importance	Example	Target's Bonus to Sense Motive
Trivial	What's your name?	+0
Significant	Why did the Caliph arrest the Imam?	+5
Secret	Where is the Caliph keeping him?	+10
Top Secret	Do they plan to murder him? How?	+20

If your Gather Information check is successful, your target reveals the desired information without realizing it. If you fail the check by 5 or more, your target realizes that you were manipulating him or her and becomes hostile. You may only make one check for each use of Inspire (Complacency) on the target. You may not take 20 on the Gather Information check when guiding a conversation. Your Narrator may give you a bonus or penalty to your check according to your role-playing the situation.

## Hidden Lesson (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Bluff and Perform, and must have two of the following feats: Fascinate, Inspire (any), Suggest, or Taunt.

You may conceal a hidden lesson in your stories and songs, such as an indictment of a king's taxation policy hidden amidst flowery prose, or praise for an unsung hero disguised as rhetoric against traitors. When you perform, you may use two of these feats simultaneously: Fascinate, Inspire, Suggest and Taunt. The majority is affected by one of these feats, and a minority which you designate is affected by another.

## Historiography (Expert)

**Prerequisites:** 4 ranks in one language, Trained in Knowledge (history)

*Ilm ar-rijal*, or the "science of biography", developed after Muhammad's death. Islam began to divide into factions and it became important to trace narrators to the source, investigating their reputation and reliability. This study is also known as the science of the *Hadith*, or the sayings and life of Muhammad. With access to a document or a report in question, you may use Knowledge (history) to analyze it and confirm its authenticity.

Historiography: New Uses for the Knowledge (history) Skill	
DC	Information
10	Is the author a reliable reporter? Could these individuals have met given where they were in time and space? Is it likely the author would have access to the information he wrote about?
15	Is the report logically consistent? Does the reported information agree with other historical accounts? Who is the intended audience?
20	What is the motive of the author? Is he of sound morals or is he motivated by politics, ideology, money, or factional concerns? What sources were privileged or ignored?
25	Does the report linguistically reflect the words of its supposed author? Does it use vocabulary consistent with its supposed date of authoring? If the author is unknown, who is a likely author?



**Honest Law (Expert)**

**Prerequisite:** 4 ranks in one language, Trained in Knowledge (civics)

You are well versed in the letter and spirit of the *Sharia*, and you're committed to using such knowledge for the good of your community and nation. You may use Knowledge (civics) in new ways.

**Illicit Venues (Expert)**

**Prerequisite:** Business, Trained in Bluff and Diplomacy

You know how to get in touch with "questionable" elements of society, and you gain access to normally restricted areas in your city of operations, such as gambling dens, thieves' guilds, smugglers, and slavery rings. You know any secret codes involved, and you can vouch for a small group of guests. You always have access to illegal goods when in a city.

**Information Network (Expert)**

**Prerequisite:** Contacts, Trained in Gather Information

You have a network of informants who keep you up to date on events in your demesnes. You may make Gather Information checks for an area in which you aren't immediately present but your informants are. You can take 10 on this check, but you cannot take 20. This feat may be taken multiple times to enlarge your network's area.

1<sup>st</sup> feat = A city (check takes one day)

2<sup>nd</sup> feat = A province (check takes one week)

3<sup>rd</sup> feat = The entire caliphate (check takes 2-3 weeks)

4<sup>th</sup> feat = The entire known world (check takes 1-2 months)

**Inspire (Expert)**

**Prerequisite:** Charisma +1

Characters can select the following new effects for the Inspire feat.

**Confidence:** You inspire a subject to put their confidence in you and give you a chance; this may be choosing you for a dangerous mission, giving you a chance to atone for a sin, or entrusting you with important information. To what extent the subject confides in you depends on their base reaction to you.

**Critical Thinking:** Subjects feel more able to think for themselves, and you empower them to shake off the effects of mental influence. Make an Inspire check with a Difficulty equal to the check result of the mind-affecting feat or power which influenced the subject. If you succeed, that feat or power no longer affects the subject. This does not remove permanent effects like a Curse, heal damage caused by a psychic attack, or undo the effects of Mind Shaping. You may not retry using this feat on the same target still under the influence of the same feat or power.

**Pity:** Subjects are filled with pity for you or for one of your allies. If they are hostile or unfriendly, the subjects hold off from harming you (or the object of pity) in word or deed for the duration of the inspiration effect. If they are indifferent, the subjects are filled with pity for you, lament your fate, and exhibit symptoms of sympathetic suffering (e.g. a lame beggar inspiring pity would leave his audience with dull pain in their legs, perhaps reducing their movement by -5 temporarily). If they are friendly or helpful, the subjects only want to provide for you (or the object of their pity); gain the benefits of the Connected feat with the subjects for the duration.

**Penitence:** You can inspire a guilty subject to confess their wrongdoing. If the subject is a member of a differing religion you suffer a -5 penalty on your Inspire check. If he is a member of the same sect you get a +2 bonus. If he fails, he confesses a petty sin. If he fails by 5 or more, he confesses to a greater sin. If he fails by 10 or more he confesses to

**Honest Law: New Uses for the Knowledge (civics) Skill**

DC	Task
10	Prompt reply for minor request (application, license, permit, visa)
10	Knowing which official to approach and the best time
15	Find an unbiased <i>qadi</i> to try a case
15	Get backup for a specific legal task. Typically this includes a number of 1 <sup>st</sup> level characters equal to your Expert level who are assembled in one day. You must be able to communicate with a mosque or honest government official to get backup. Using backup negligently or manipulating them for extra-legal activities is a criminal offense.
20	Get access to normally secret government documents if they in some way pertain to your current case.

**Opposed Skill Check:** Design a contract with no loose ends. Track illicitly gotten wealth. Defend/prosecute a court case heard by a council (not a dictator). Detect a forged legal document (see Dishonest Law).





a terrible sin. Of course, if he has committed no terrible sin he will not confess, but instead begs for an act of penance from you. Appropriate penance might consist of seeking forgiveness from the person he wronged, going on pilgrimage, or performing a charitable deed.

## Instill Panic (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Inspire (fear), Trained in Intimidate and Stealth, Charisma +1

You may cause a crowd of people to panic. Usually this involves killing someone publicly, but some assassins prefer to create panic first and strike second. After performing a suitable terrifying action in a crowded place, you cause the crowd to work like partial concealment and total cover for you. Others in the crowd do not have concealment and receive only partial cover. In addition, by spending a standard action frightening the crowd, you subject anyone in the path of the crowd or inside the crowd to both a rush and trip attempt (Strength +2, Attack +2). After 10 rounds (1 minute) the crowd disperses.

## King of the Beggars (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** 6<sup>th</sup> level, Beggar's Savvy, Blend In, Contacts, Leadership, Mark, Plausible Deniability, Read Character, Shadowing, Urban Tracking, Bluff 8 ranks, Disguise 8 ranks, Gather Information 8 ranks, Sense Motive 8 ranks, Sleight of Hand 8 ranks, Wisdom +1

You've become a banner to whom beggars and other *harafish* (urban layabouts) flock, and you provide for their protection in return for tribute – a choice cut of the profits they make from their panhandling, scams, and thieving. It is your responsibility to speak on the behalf of your beggars with the authorities, and you are authorized to speak before a qadi. In most cases short of murder, the authorities will defer to you and allow you to handle the miscreant as you see fit. However, if you do not administer justice, the authorities will move in and are less likely to defer to you in the future. You may spend Conviction in new ways:

*Decoy:* When someone thinks they've caught you, it turns out it's one of your beggars instead if you spend a Conviction point. Alternately, you can have some object be a decoy, reflecting your and your beggars' sleight of hand.

*Word on the street:* You can spend a Conviction point to make a Gather Information check instantly and to take 20 on it.

## Knife-Fighting (Expert or Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Sleight of Hand, Weapon Focus (dagger)

Called the "art of dogs" by high-brow nobles, knife-fighting is practiced in every major city by slum-dwellers, rogues, murderers, and prize fighters. You can use a dagger in a grapple or pin. When wielding a dagger, you may feint as a move action instead of a standard action. When resisting being disarmed or parrying with a dagger, you may use Dexterity instead of Strength.

## Legal Scholar (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Benefit (sheikh or noble title), Eidetic Memory, Hafiz, Historiography, Honest Law, Informed Citizen, Well-Informed, Diplomacy 8 ranks, Knowledge (civics) 8 ranks, Knowledge (history) 8 ranks, and Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 8 ranks, Reputation +3

You have been accepted into the *Ulema*, the clerical body that dispenses justice, elects the Caliph and guides him in statecraft. You may attempt to change the outcome of court cases, influence *qadis*, and even influence the Caliph's policies. Doing so requires a Diplomacy check. The DC is 15 for popular rulings or policies in line with the target's current beliefs, DC 25 for unpopular rulings or policies divergent from the target's current beliefs, and DC 35 or more for rulings or policies which are overwhelmingly partisan, self-motivated, or contrary to current policies. Failing by 5 or more prevents you from using this feat for a month. Failing by 10 or more results in your being labeled as a heretic; access to this feat is suspended until you restore your good standing.



**Linguist (Expert)****Prerequisite:** Speak 5 languages

You have a gift for languages. You suffer no penalty on interaction checks when the subject doesn't speak the same language as you. You automatically understand dialects of any language you are trained in, though you must make a DC 10 Intelligence check to successfully communicate in the dialect. When you are confronted with an unknown language, make a DC 10 Intelligence check to understand the gist of what is said by one source; if you are trying to communicate in the unknown language, the DC is 15. If you can read and write 5 languages as well, this feat also applies to the written word. Note that you only learn the rough idea, not subtle nuances like hidden biases, poetry, or innuendo.

**Mark (Expert)****Prerequisite:** Read Character, Trained in Sense Motive, Wisdom +1

You can size up suitable victims of your trade, and can readily identify fellow thieves. As a full action, you may size up a character as either a victim or a fellow rogue (chose one). You may use this feat a number of times per day equal to your Wisdom.

*Marking a Victim:* You learn the target's total skill ranks for Notice and Sense Motive.

*Identifying a Thief:* You learn the target's total skill ranks for two skills. You must choose these two skills from the following list, unless your Narrator allows otherwise: Acrobatics, Bluff, Climb, Escape Artist, Intimidate, Sleight of Hand, and Stealth.

**Master Storyteller (Expert)****Prerequisite:** Trained in Perform (oratory)

Your stories are always enchanting, well crafted, and leave the audience hungry for more. When using a Conviction point to frame a story, you gain a bonus to your story modifier equal to half your Expert level. You never suffer a penalty for not finishing your story within a certain time limit, provided you can end with a cliffhanger. In addition, you are so expressive that you can use Fascinate, Inspire, Suggest, and Taunt even with those who don't understand the language you are speaking.

**Medical Science (Expert)****Prerequisite:** Institutional Education, Trained in Medicine and Knowledge (life sciences)

You are trained in the most advanced medical techniques known in your day. You can take this feat multiple times. Each time, you acquire a new medical specialty. References to Difficulties in parentheses refer to new uses of the Medicine skill. Each time you take this feat, choose one of the following specialties, provided you meet any additional prerequisites:

*Bacteriology:* You are conversant with principles of infection and contagion. You are authorized to examine the dead and to enter a plague quarantine. Determine if a disease is contagious (DC 10). Determine if an article of clothing, a corpse, food or water is (or recently was) a disease carrier (DC 15). With a sample, determines the effects of a disease, how it spread, and its origin (DC 20). If you are trained in Craft (alchemy) you make devise an antidote; this requires achieving a Difficulty equal to the disease's strength.

*Internal Medicine:* You are conversant in the functioning of the body's inner organs. Your skills are in such demand that you are often waived through when visiting restricted areas, such as an enemy's camp, a prison, or a harem. Administer artificial feeding tube, recuperating a starving or dehydrating patient who can't eat or drink (DC 10). Perform gastric lavage in case of poisoning, thereby removing the poison entirely from the patient's system (DC 15). Resuscitate a victim who is suffocating or suffocated within the last minute by introducing a tube directly into the lung (DC 20).

*Ophthalmology:* You are conversant in the study of optics and eye disorders. By looking into a patient's eye you may determine if they are blind or have a vision disorder, if they have Dark Vision or Night Vision, and whether they are seeing something that others cannot, like an illusion or a djinn (DC 10). Remove cataracts or treat disease-induced blindness (DC 15). You can devise a way to pinpoint exactly where something (or someone) is which is hidden by invisibility or optical illusion; this requires a DC 20 Notice check, your complete attention, and you may move no more than 5 feet per round.

*Pharmacology: (Prerequisite: Trained in Knowledge (earth sciences):* You are conversant in the medicinal uses for herbs and creating drugs out of them. You are authorized to investigate apothecaries and request samples if you are suspicious they are adulterating drugs. Determine the effect of an unknown drug, herb, or potion (DC 10). Determine whether a drug will actually do what it is purported to or if it's a fraud (DC 15). Reverse engineer a drug or potion to determine how it was made (DC 20).

*Psychology: (Prerequisite: Trained in Knowledge (behavioral sciences):* You are conversant in treating mental diseases through dialogue. You are authorized to enter mental asylums to visit any patient, request case histories, and you can send a mentally ill person there provided the person is willing, tricked, or they've committed a crime and







the presiding *qadi* agrees with your diagnosis. You can detect subtle or deliberately hidden madness on a Sense Motive check (DC 20 or opposed by the target's Bluff skill). Treating madness is a long, complicated affair (DC 20+) and may involve additional steps beyond those you were formally trained in.

**Surgery:** You are conversant in performing advanced operations. You are authorized to perform autopsies on the recently dead. Perform minor surgery like extracting an arrow, removing a rotten tooth, or repairing light burn damage (DC 10). Perform an autopsy of a corpse to determine time and cause of death (DC 15 + 2 per day after death). Perform a complex surgery like amputation, tracheotomy, removing a tumor, or major cosmetic surgery (DC 20).

## Messenger of Death (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Dedicated, Fearless, Hide in Plain Sight, Improved Critical, Inspire (fear), Instill Panic, Silent Step, Sleeper Agents, Surprise Attack, Gather Information 8 ranks, Intimidate 8 ranks, Stealth 13 ranks, Charisma +1. When you wish, you are seen as Death incarnate. You may choose whether you appear as Death to only your target or to everyone. When you appear as Death, you automatically Inspire (Fear) and Instill Panic, if applicable, as a free action; the target suffers a -5 penalty on their Will save. Furthermore, when you do strike, you may take 20 on any surprise attacks you make against your designated target, automatically scoring an improved critical hit.

## Mimicry (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Bluff

You are able to mimic a variety of sounds. Make a Bluff check. The DC is 10 for basic animal calls, 15 to imitate voices and accents, 20 to imitate unnatural sounds, 25 to throw your voice as a ventriloquist, and 30 to imitate another sound *and* use ventriloquism. If you fail your check your effort is immediately recognized as a sound created by a person. If used in conjunction with a disguise you gain a +2 bonus on your Disguise check.

## Monkey Companion (Expert)

You have a trained monkey who follows you around, helps you beg and maybe to steal, does some neat tricks, and occasionally has run-ins with the law.

MONKEY COMPANION			
Level	Abilities	Tricks	Special
1-2	+0	1	Monkey Feat, Monkey See Monkey Do, Usual Suspects
3-5	+0	2	
6-8	+1	3	Monkey Feat
9-11	+1	4	
12-14	+2	5	Monkey Feat
15-17	+2	6	
18-20	+3	7	Monkey Feat

**Abilities:** This is a bonus to the monkey's Dexterity, Intelligence, and Wisdom scores.

**Bonus Tricks:** This is the total number of tricks the familiar knows, in addition to any you might choose to teach it using the Handle Animal skill. These tricks don't require any training time and don't count against the normal limit of tricks known by an animal.

**Monkey Feat:** Your monkey gets a bonus feat at levels 1, 6, 12, and 18 selected from this list: Acrobatic Bluff, Blend In, Dodge, Escape Route, Evasion, Far Shot, Fascinate, Hide in Plain Sight, Improved Evasion, Improved Initiative, On the Run, Point Blank Shot, Set-Up, Skill Focus, Skill Training, Slow Fall, Surprise Attack, Talented, Taunt, Uncanny Dodge. You Narrator may approve other feats.

**Monkey See Monkey Do:** You know how to show a monkey what you want, often making a fool out of yourself. You can handle or push your monkey as a free action even if you aren't trained in Handle Animal. You can convey complex messages to your monkey through simple pantomime. You get a +4 bonus on interaction checks with your monkey.

**Usual Suspects:** Unfortunately, the law doesn't look kindly on monkeys; in fact, you are often preferentially rounded up when there has been a theft. You are held responsible for any crimes your monkey commits.



**New Look (Expert)****Prerequisite:** Grooming

You can totally overhaul someone's look on a successful Grooming check, provided they are willing. Choose one of the following new looks:

*From Rags to Riches:* For beggars who have become princes (and can pay like they're princes too). Provided the newly made noble can act the part, he appears to be lesser nobility (Station 4). If you succeed your Grooming check by 10 or more you can make him appear to be greater nobility (Station 5).

*From Riches to Rags:* For nobles who wish to hide as commoners. Provided the newly made peasant can act the part, she appears to be a *Banu Sasan* (Station 1), and if you succeed your Grooming check by 10 or more you can make her appear to be untouchable (Station 0).

*Hidden/Redeemed Villain:* For villains with a bad reputation they're trying to beat. Eliminate a notorious villain's +10, +5 or +2 Reputation check modifier. This lasts so long as the villain doesn't commit a crime.

*Innocuous Hero:* For heroes who are tired of the limelight or who need to keep their activities secret. Eliminate a notorious hero's +10, +5 or +2 Reputation check modifier. This lasts so long as the hero doesn't take a heroic action.

**Plausible Deniability (Expert)****Prerequisite:** Belong to the *Banu Sasan* (Station 1)

No one ever suspects you due to your low status in the community. Whenever the authorities or elders look for a culprit or question people involved in a situation, you are always the last person they think of. You may claim "I'm but a simple beggar." This is always good enough for them unless they have testimony or evidence of your wrong-doing.

**Special:** At the Narrator's permission, a noble character might be allowed to take this feat, representing being above reproach and always having numerous alibis.

**Presence (Expert)****Prerequisite:** Belong to at least the lesser nobility (Station 4), Charisma +2

The way you carry yourself marks you as a noble of impeccable grace. Conversation stops when you enter the room, and people whisper about you for hours after you leave. You may take 10 on Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, and Perform checks even when under duress. Anytime you succeed by 5 or more at one of these checks, you have such stunning flair that it affects not only the person you were targeting but everyone present in their retinue. However, you suffer -2 on Disguise checks when attempting to appear as a commoner.

**Revisionist Historian (Expert)****Prerequisite:** Historiography, 5 ranks in one language, Knowledge (history) 8 ranks

As any true scholar knows, history is written by winners. You are able to come up with alternate theories of what went down, and to provide heretofore lost evidence that strengthens your claim. This requires a Knowledge (history) check with a Difficulty according to how much the Caliphate resists your version of history. The DC is 20-25 for versions of history that fit well in the establishment, DC 30-35 for histories that are divergent from current beliefs, and DC 40 or more for histories that clash with the Caliphate's version or attack popular heroes. If you succeed in establishing your claim, you win a small following of believers. You must use Diplomacy (or Bluff if it's all a hoax) to convince society at large. However, if you fail by 5 or more, you lose 1 point of Reputation, and if you fail by 10 or more you are accused of heresy and may be arrested.

**Rhythmic Prosody (Expert)****Prerequisite:** Trained in Perform (any music)

You have a gifted ear for musical timing and can communicate messages through your music. When you use your Perform specialty, you may choose to follow one of these rhythms:

- *Additive Rhythm:* When using the Fascinate, Inspire, Suggestion, or Taunt feats, you may extend the duration of whatever feat you used by making a Perform check, so long as the subject is still affected. It now lasts for as long as it normally would.
- *Divisive Rhythm:* When using the Fascinate, Inspire, Suggestion, or Taunt feats you may choose to delay the effects by up to your level in rounds, and you may choose to affect specific targets at different times before then, or to affect a target for less than the feat would normally last.
- *Polyrhythm:* You may use two of the following feats simultaneously: Fascinate, Inspire, Suggestion, or Taunt. Both feats affect everyone listening.

You may make a Perform check to pick up when someone is using one of these rhythms. Also, you may use your Perform skill to make an innuendo as you would with Bluff; the recipient must make the same Perform check as you made to pick up the innuendo.

**Rumor-Monger (Expert)****Prerequisite:** Affect the Masses, Fascinate, Trained in Perform (oratory)

You are skilled at biting satire as well as effulgent



praise, and you can change public opinion towards a desired target. Make a Perform (oratory) check against a DC of 15 + your target's Reputation. When satirizing the target, for every 5 points by which you succeed, the target loses one point of Reputation. However, if you fail by 5 or more you lose one point of Reputation as others reproach you for your slander. When praising the target, for every 5 points by which you succeed, the public's opinion toward the person improves by one step (e.g. Indifferent to Friendly). You may not use this feat on the same target more than once per month. If you are trying to convince more than 100 people (such as an entire city or tribe) you must spend a Conviction point.

## Ruthless Cliffhanger (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Fascinate, Master Storyteller, Trained in Perform (oratory), Charisma +1

You know how to manipulate your audience. When you end a story with a cliffhanger, your audience mulls over what might happen next. Even after the story ends, whatever feat you were using in telling the story (e.g. Fascinate, Inspire, Suggest) continues to affect that audience for a number of rounds equal to your Perform skill rank. During the intervening period between when you leave off and when you finish the story, the audience discusses your story and anticipates its resolution. You may automatically activate the feat you were using (Fascinate, Inspire, or Suggest) when you resume telling the story to the audience again, without needing to make a roll, assuming the audience is still willing to listen. You can break a story up into a number of additional parts equal to your Charisma before losing this advantage.

## Safe Passage (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Survival

When traveling you and anyone traveling with you get along more easily. You may perform any one of the following actions without having to reduce your movement (i.e. you may move at your full speed).

- Get along in the wild by foraging and hunting (Survival).
- Protect yourselves from dangerous weather (Survival).
- Travel in darkness or fog.
- Avoiding encounters with dangerous animals or enemy patrols.

**Special:** You may take this feat multiple times. Each time, you may perform an additional action while traveling without reducing your speed.

## Shadowing (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Blend In, Plausible Deniability, Trained in Bluff and Stealth

You are a master at the art of trailing others. When in a crowded street, you may take 20 on Bluff checks to convince someone you are trailing with Stealth that your

presence is coincidence or otherwise irrelevant. You may not use shadowing in other environments, such as the desert or the sultan's palace.

## Silent Step (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Stealth 13 ranks

You can make Stealth checks at no penalty when moving, even when attacking, moving all out, or charging. Like normal, you still need cover or concealment to hide and cannot make Stealth checks while being observed.

## Skepticism (Expert or Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** Intelligence +2 and Wisdom +2

You question your own faculties and motives constantly, knowing the senses are easily swayed by falsehood. You are immune to all mind-affecting powers and effects, including the Fascinate, Inspire, and Suggest feats, as well as the Dominate, Heart Shaping, Illusion, and Suggestion powers. However, you also cannot be inspired by allies or receive benefit of powers like Imbuement. You must uphold rigorous standards of scholarship, confer with others about their observations of you, and always seek to learn the truth or else you risk losing this feat.

## Sleeper Agents (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Master Plan, Trained in Gather Information

You have "sleeper" agents planted in the households of your prospective enemies just in the event they might ultimately be needed. These agents rarely kill – a knife or note left by an enemy's bedside usually serves to achieve your objectives. You have a number of agents equal to your Charisma, though you may leave where they are planted open-ended until the need arises, reflecting your foresight. Once a sleeper has been matched to a household, they cannot be reassigned for at least one year (to keep their identity secret). Sleepers are always ordinaries. A sleeper can make skill checks in regards to the target you are keeping tabs on, but they cannot attack or kill.

## Sow Distrust (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Inspire (fear), Trained in Bluff, Knowledge (theology and philosophy), and Perform (oratory), Charisma +1

Through rhetoric and false analogy you can turn one person against another or even spark a crisis of faith in a faithful Muslim. You must spend at least a minute in conversation with the target. The target makes a Will save opposed by your Perform (oratory) check. If the target fails, her attitude toward the other person worsens one step for every 5 points (or fraction thereof) that you win the test (friendly turns to indifferent, indifferent to unfriendly, etc). You may continue sowing distrust in subsequent rounds until the target makes her Will save. If the target becomes hostile, she usually won't attack outright, rather she'll begin plotting the downfall of her



“enemy” out of self-preservation. A successful Will save doesn’t restore previous attitudinal shifts, but it does render the target immune to further attempts to sow distrust.

Alternately you may instead opt to spark a crisis of faith. If you win the test by 5 or more the target gains the *inner conflict* Complication. If you win the test by 10 or more the target also loses access to any powers or feats that are based on faith, and begins to question her religion and its clerics; she may even seek you out demanding explanation or seeking guidance.

### Street Preaching (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Perform (oratory)

You know how to play on the guilty consciences and heart-strings of your audience. When you preach against a vice (or in favor of a virtue) for at least one minute, anyone listening must make a Will save against a Difficulty of 10 + half your Expert level. Anyone who fails the save finds their conscience won’t let them indulge that vice (or requires them to act in accordance with that virtue) for a number of days equal to your Expert level.

### Surveyor (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Craft (cartography), Knowledge (earth sciences), and Knowledge (physical sciences)

You know if an area has been mapped before, roughly how long ago, and which library to visit to find a copy of the map. If the area is highly guarded, long since forgotten, or a secret, you must spend a Conviction point to gain this benefit. You know how to read archaic maps, use a compass and how to survey land for a building project. As long as you keep a record of your travels, you may create authoritative maps of any place you’ve traveled to (as per the Author feat).

### Theologian (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Eidetic Memory, Hafiz, Honest Law, Diplomacy 8 ranks, Knowledge (civics) 8 ranks, Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 8 ranks, Wisdom +1, Reputation +3

You are widely recognized as an expert in jurisprudence, ethics, and philosophy. If you belong to the Shi’a sect you are given the title Ayatollah (sign of God). Your views influence not only the public, but also public policy. You can introduce new ethical and legal interpretations into Islamic discourse, and you can attempt to transform heresies into mere differences of doctrine, thereby saving the believers from persecution. First, you must formulate your doctrine. Make a Knowledge (theology and philosophy) check. The DC is 20-25 for beliefs that

fill well in Islam, DC 30-35 for beliefs divergent from current thought, and DC 40 or more for beliefs that clash with core Islamic values. Once you formulate your doctrine, you must spread it through oratory. Make a Diplomacy or Perform (oratory) check opposed by those listening; those who fail are converted to your doctrine and begin to spread it. Eventually you will be invited to argue before the *Ulema*; during this debate you gain +1 on your check for every 100 people you’ve converted or for every political figure you’ve swayed. If your views hold out, your work will enter the canon of currently debated theology. You may be invited to meet with the Imam or the Caliph and if you can convince him, your doctrine will become an accepted practice of Islam, or at least your sect of Islam. However if the check fails by 5 or more, you cannot use this feat for a month as the scandal simmers down, and if you fail by 10 or more you are accused of heresy.

### Trading Empire (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Benefit (writ of trade), Business, Buying Power, Contacts, Connected, Dishonest Law, Evaluate, Diplomacy 8 ranks, Knowledge (business) 8 ranks, Knowledge (civics) 8 ranks, Wealth +16

Either you are the heir to a vast trading empire or you have built one through hard work. Your network consists of several cities with your agents, a couple ships and numerous caravans. No more than 25% of your assets can ever be taken from you as they are so diversified. You may attempt to control the price of a certain good in a certain area, altering its price by 25% for every 5 points by which you exceed DC 20 on a Diplomacy check. You may never adjust the price of a good lower than 25% of its original price, though there is no upper limit to how expensive you can make it. You can even influence trade policy with a Diplomacy check, outlawing a good, or making a previously outlawed good permissible; the Difficulty ranges from 25 to 40 depending on how the good is viewed by the authorities, merchants, royalty, and society at large. In addition, you have the power to declare an embargo on another merchant or family.

### Universal Appeal (Expert)

Used to working with people from every station in society, from beggars to princes, you do not suffer the normal penalties of speaking with those outside your station, though you do retain the benefits (intimidating those beneath you, bluffing those above you). However, if you persist in using your social station to your advantage in this way, you may very well lose this feat at the Narrator’s discretion.





## Veiled Threats (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Intimidate

You know how to disguise your attempts at intimidation with poetically poignant prose. You may retry your Intimidate checks so long as you fail by 4 or less; the target doesn't become firmly resolved to resist. Even if your Intimidate check fails by 5 or more, the target does not do the opposite of what you wanted. Observers must make a Sense Motive check opposed by your Intimidate check to realize that you were attempting to intimidate.

## Martial Feats

### Adaptive Fighting (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Assessment, Intelligence +1

You can match the style of your opponent with mathematically precise postures and moves. For every 2 rounds you fight an opponent you gain one of these benefits:

- Adjust Defense: +1 dodge and you are immune to a single maneuver from your chosen opponent for the remainder of the encounter. Choose one maneuver such as Combined Attack, Demoralize, Disarm, Feint, Finesse, Rush, or Trip.
- Counter: Negate a single combat feat (any martial feat or general/expert feat with combat application) they possess in regards to you only.
- Find Weakness: +1 initiative, attack, and damage.

The maximum number of benefits you can get is equal to your Intelligence score.

### Battle Cry (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Rage, Trained in Intimidate, Charisma +1

Your battle cry resonates with the fury of your faith. When making a battle cry, make an Intimidate check. If successful, your opponents are not only shaken, but suffer an additional penalty to attack rolls, checks, and saving throws (except Toughness saves) equal to your Charisma modifier. Your foes' Will saving throws are modified by +1 for each of their allies you are trying to intimidate. In addition, if they fail the save by 5 or more, they lose the benefit of one Command, Exhortation, or Inspire feat they were benefiting from (your choice). If they fail by 10 or more, they lose the benefit of all Command, Exhortation, and Inspire feats they were benefiting from. The Narrator must decide whether it is possible to intimidate just part of a large group. You may only use this feat once per battle.

**Special:** Your allies can join you in your battle cry if they are under the effect of Inspire (fury) or Exhortation, or they have the Rage feat. Each ally joining your cry adds a +1 bonus to your Intimidate check.

### Battle of Focus (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Concentration

You know that the real battle is being fought in people's hearts and minds, and that crossing swords is only the outward expression of a deeper conflict being played out. Before beginning an anticipated battle make an opposed Concentration check with your opponent (or the leader if facing multiple opponents). If you succeed, your opponent senses that you have already won the mental game and is more likely to seek a peaceful resolution. However, if they still seek to fight you, you gain a +10 bonus on your first attack roll.

### Benefit, Pardon of the State (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Merciful Combatant

You are authorized to pardon a non-Muslim or a rebel who you have fought in combat. This promise of safety is referred to as *aman*, and is legally binding to all Muslims. *Aman* guarantees safe passage to a destination that you name. It may be given at the cessation of hostilities or, more commonly, to a non-Muslim visiting the Islamic empire for a time. You are authorized to collect *diyya* from anyone who hurts or kills your protected charge.

### Bonded Ward (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Dedicated, Trained in Notice

You have sworn an oath to protect someone and you have a sixth sense that alerts you when the subject is in danger. You gain the *duties* complication. If you sense danger, you usually cannot be surprised by it. This feat may be taken multiple times; each time it is selected the oath covers more people:



1. *Individual:* When you are adjacent to the subject they gain a +2 bonus to Defense. You make a Wisdom check to sense whenever the individual is in danger. If you succeed by 5 or more you have a general sense of the type of danger.
2. *Family:* When you are adjacent to any member of the family they gain a +2 bonus to Defense. You make a Wisdom check to sense whenever any member of the family is in danger. If you succeed by 5 or more you know exactly who is in danger. If you succeed by 10 or more you have a general sense of the type of danger.
3. *City/Sect/Tribe:* When you are adjacent to any member of the city/tribe/sect they gain a +2 bonus to Defense. You make a Wisdom check to sense whenever the city/sect/tribe is in danger. If you succeed by 5 or more you know exactly who is in danger. If you succeed by 10 or more you have a general sense of the type of danger.

Difficulty	Immediacy of Danger
10	Imminent threat to the subject within one or two rounds.
15	Impending threat to the subject within a few minutes.
20	Distant threat to the subject within a few hours.

### Burden Bearer (Martial)

You can take on the burdens that others are not strong enough to bear. By spending a Conviction point you may transfer another's Complication to yourself provided you could feasibly take action to do so (e.g. transferring another's shame is possible, but not their missing hand). Also, treat your Strength as 2 points higher for the purpose of carrying and lifting.

### Call Mount (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Faithful Steed, Trained in Handle Animal

With a whistle your horse appears in one round, as long as it could have been reasonably close by. If you are separated from your horse, such as having gone to Jinnistan without it or the horse was knocked overboard during a storm, you may spend a Conviction point to gain this benefit; fate has smiled upon your worthy steed and brought you two together again.

### Captain of the Guard (Martial)

**Prerequisites:** Bonded Ward, Dedicated, Defensive Attack, Defensive Stance, Eye for Treachery, Read Character, Upon My Life, Notice 8 ranks, Search 8 ranks, Sense Motive 8 ranks

You have been appointed to the vaunted post of captain of the guard. Most cities have five such positions, for the caravanserai, the city watch, the ruler's harem, the palace, and the prison. Thus your title might be "Captain of the Harem Guard" or "Royal Bodyguard of the Sultan." You are always considered to be taking 20 on your Notice, Search, and Sense Motive checks, unless you are flat-footed or distracted. You may spend a Conviction point to keep an eye on someone who you're suspicious of; before that person takes any action against whom or whatever you are guarding, you may make a Sense Motive check to realize their intention in advance (you can't take 20 on this check).

### Champion of the Faith (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** True Faith

People revere your faith and prowess. Anywhere you travel, devout laypeople will give you lodging and food, and mosques will provide you with healing and guidance. Among believers of your same sect you gain +4 on all Diplomacy checks. You may be called upon by religious authorities to redress attacks against the faith; failing to act in this regard may result in loss of this feat.

### Command (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Intimidate, Charisma +1

You know how to command large numbers of troops with your intimidating voice. When issuing commands, make an Intimidate check to determine how many soldiers obey your commands. Player characters with warrior levels who choose to follow your commands also gain the benefits of your commands. Adepts and experts only benefit from your commands if they have some value in battle and have trained with you. You can affect any number of subjects who can hear your voice. You can use Command once per day per two Warrior levels (rounded up).

Difficulty	Percentage of Troops Obeying Commands
10	25% of untrained force (50% of trained force)
20	50% of untrained force (75% of trained force)
30	75% of untrained force (100% of trained force)

You may give the following commands using a move action:

*Ambush:* Provided all your troops are hidden from the enemy, you give a cry which causes your troops to attack at the same time. Your troops share your initiative during the surprise round.



**Charge:** Your troops share your attack roll on a charge. In addition, they also share either your Overrun or Rush check, if you command them so.

**Defense:** Your troops share your Defense for either a dodge or parry roll.

**Rally:** Your troops share your Will save on a single roll. If resisting an Intimidate attempt, you may share your Intimidate check instead.

**Retreat:** For one round, your troops maintain their dodge bonus while moving all out. In addition they gain partial concealment that round, using the terrain to their advantage.

**Special:** Inspire becomes a favored feat for you.

## Formation Tactics (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Shield Training

When standing next to another person with this feat, you may confer the defense bonus from your shield to your ally. When performing the Aid action in combat on behalf of an ally with this feat, you automatically grant your ally either a +2 attack bonus or +2 Defense bonus without needing to roll. If you are in a line with multiple ranks bracing for a charge and you successfully strike the charging enemy, your ally behind you gets a +3 bonus to attack; if you miss your ally gets to attack (without the bonus) as normal.

## Drinker of Wind (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Animal Empathy, Call Mount, Faithful Steed, Horse Savvy, Horseback Stunts, Improved Mounted Combat, Mounted Combat, Warrior's Steed, Handle Animal 8 ranks, Ride 8 ranks

You are a legend among those who know about horses and watching you ride is like poetry in motion. No one will ever willingly harm your horse, and even your enemies will take good care of it and will consider returning it to you (though they may ransom it at an exorbitant price). Wherever you go, your horse always receives the best care. Your horse gains the Attractive feat and either the Dashing or Enchanting Beauty feat. If its Charisma is less than +2, increase it to +2. Furthermore, your horse gains the benefits of any virtues you possess, when applicable. When you ride your faithful steed, your horse may make an extra effort to perform any of the following maneuvers. At the Narrator's discretion you may create new maneuvers.

**Faster than the wind:** When galloping, your mount can make an extra effort to move at x10 its base speed for as long as it continues to gallop until it tires. During this time, you gain a +4 bonus to Defense and you suffer no damage when charging through fire or smoke. If you are running on loose earth or sand, you may kick up a cloud of dust in a line behind you that acts as fog for a minute and can be seen for a mile.

**In mountains or at sea:** Your horse may make an extra effort to make a Climb or Swim check as if it had 4 ranks in that skill. The horse spring, strains, and carefully picks its way up a steep slope with astounding grace, and it swims through even fierce waves with determination.

**Jump the spawning gap:** Your mount may make an extra effort when making a running jump to gain a +10 bonus on its Jump check.

## Exhortation (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** True Faith, Charisma +1

Your words inspire the faithful who fight alongside you, allowing you to transfer certain feats to the valiant fighters you lead. Choose one of the feats you possess to preach the virtues of. After speaking for one minute make a Diplomacy or Perform (oratory) check with a Difficulty according to the chart below.

Difficulty	Faith of the Troops
10	Most possess the Dedicated or True Faith feats and are devout Muslims
20	A few very pious men lead a more secular group of Muslims or dhimmi
30	Impious, unruly, pagan, politically splintered, or otherwise difficult group



If you succeed, the troops gain the feat. Only those troops who meet the prerequisites of the feat gain its benefit (as if they had spent a Conviction point). If other heroes are among those listening they must make a Wisdom check against a Difficulty of 30 minus your Diplomacy check in order to benefit from your exhortation. The bestowed feat lasts for one scene as determined by the Narrator; you may only bestow one feat at a time.

**Special:** You gain Inspire as a favored feat.

### Eye for Treachery (Martial)

You have a penchant for identifying the tell-tale signs of betrayal. You gain a +2 bonus on all checks to detect concealed weapons and poison. You are entitled to a Search check to notice concealed weapons as if you were actively looking, so long as you are within 60 feet of the person and you can see them (though you do not gain the +2 bonus when searching this way).

### Fearless (Martial)

You resist fear and intimidation. Effects that would result in you being “panicked” are reduced to being “frightened”, “frightened” results are reduced to “shaken,” and “shaken” effects are ignored.

### General’s Conference (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** 6<sup>th</sup> level, Leadership, Read Character, Tactician, Trained in Knowledge (tactics) and Sense Motive

When you meet with an opposing army’s commander on the eve of battle, you may attempt to learn what they’re planning or even to influence them. However, because this involves sharing information in order to learn more, even if the other commander doesn’t have this feat, they can benefit from it if they beat you at an opposed interaction check as described below.

*Anticipate battle plans:* Make a Sense Motive check. If successful, you learn one piece of information. For every 5 points by which you exceed their Bluff check you learn an additional piece of information. Information you might learn includes:

- Time of day troops will deploy
- Direction of main offensive; which flank will be attacked
- Which troops will be fielded and condition of those troops
- Who will be leading the attack
- How you can identify the opposing commander in battle

*Influence battle plans:* Make a Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check, depending on the situation. If successful, you can make one of the following changes to the commander’s plans. For every 5 points by which you win the opposed check you can make an additional

change. Ways you might influence the plans include:

- Delay battle by up to one day or until better weather
- Agreeing to move the battlefield to a different site
- Guarantee withdrawal of badly wounded troops
- Secure the release of a key prisoner of war
- Pressure the commander into making an immediate offensive

### Heroic Charge (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Mounted Combat, Move-by Action, Spirited Charge, Ride 8 ranks

Riding through your enemies you strike them all down. While moving at an accelerated pace while mounted you may strike any enemy adjacent to your movement, whether or not they attempt to block you. You make one attack against each opponent who you ride past. When blocked by an opponent you may make a melee attack instead of a trip attack; if you succeed by 5 or more on the attack, you continue your movement as normal, otherwise your charge is blocked. Using this feat is a full-round action.

### Horse Breaking (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Animal Empathy, Trained in Handle Animal and Ride

You know how to tame wild horses. You may use your Ride skill as a grapple check when attempting to mount a wild horse. If you succeed in pinning the hostile horse you may use Handle Animal on the horse as an extra effort. You must grapple the horse several times in order to completely break it, after which it may be trained as a normal horse.

### Horseback Stunts (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Acrobatics and Ride

You can perform death-defying maneuvers on horseback. You may perform any of these challenges with the Ride skill:

*Fistful of Reins:* Increase the Difficulty by +5 to get up to three additional animals to perform the same riding maneuver as you provided you hold the reins and are mounted. You may take this challenge multiple times, each time increasing the number of animals by three.

*Stand:* You can stand on your mount by increasing the Difficulty by +5. You can increase the Difficulty by +10 to stand on two horses at once and ride them.

*Swooping Grab:* You can pick up an object or willing person and swoop them into your saddle by increasing the Difficulty by +5. If the person is unwilling you must have the Improved Grab and Move-by Action feats, and succeed at a grapple check.

*Wheeling Charge:* While moving all out you can change direction by up to 180 degrees when moving all out by increasing the Difficulty by +5.



## Improved Mounted Archery (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Trained in Ride

The penalty you take when using a ranged weapon while mounted is halved: -0 instead of -2 if your mount is taking a double move, and -2 instead of -4 if your mount is running. In addition, you may fire at any point during the move, not necessarily at the halfway point, and you may fire in a 360 degree circle around you even while galloping.

## Improved Mounted Combat (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Mounted Combat, Trained in Ride

For every 4 levels you have as a Warrior (round up), you may use the Mounted Combat feat one additional time per round. In addition, add your mount's Defense to your Ride check to negate a hit.

## In Whose Hands is My Life (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Champion of the Faith, True Faith

Your immortal soul is assured Paradise, and you are immune to any effects which target your soul, such as an undead creature's energy drain, or the Drain Vitality and Imbue Unlife powers; however, you are also immune to Imbue Life. When you fight in battle, you are completely immune to fear and intimidation. All allies fighting alongside you who have the True Faith feat are inspired by your valor in the face of death and gain the temporary benefits of the Fearless fate. Should you die in battle, you become a martyr for the faith.

## Innocuous Combatant (Martial)

You blend into the background of large battle. Others overlook you as long as you aren't taking offensive action. Your enemies must make a Notice check to target you specifically. The base Difficulty is 25 – your Reputation. There must be at least 10 combatants involved to use this feat. The Difficulty is increased by one for every 100 combatants involved. In addition, the Difficulty is decreased by 2 for each of the following conditions you meet: You are on horseback, you are bearing a standard, you are issuing commands or you are in the midst of battle, instead of on the outskirts. Once you have taken violent action, or otherwise clearly identified yourself as a target, this feat no longer aids you in the battle.

## Interpose (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Seize Initiative

You can place yourself between an ally and an attacker, saving their life while risking your own. When you are adjacent to a target you may declare you are interposing yourself as a reaction before the attack is rolled. If the attack misses the target by 5 or more it hits neither of you. If the attack just misses or hits the target, you are hit instead. If the attack hits the target by 5 or more, it bypasses you and hits the target as intended.

## Intimidating Reputation (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Lasting Intimidation, Trained in Intimidation, Reputation +1

Even stories about you are fearsome. You may spend a Conviction point to have a member of the supporting cast on your enemy's side relay a story of just how terrifying you are. This acts as an Intimidate check even if you are not there; make an Intimidate check modified by your Reputation. If successful the enemy is automatically shaken upon encountering you for the first time. Furthermore, when you actually meet your enemy they become frightened for one scene if you manage to successfully intimidate them.

## Issue Challenge (Martial)

You may issue a challenge to a person who is either present or within the same city or province as you. If they are not physically present, they hear about the challenge within 1-4 weeks, depending how far away they are. Failing to respond to the challenge or outright refusing the challenge results in the loss of a Reputation point. You may only issue a challenge against a given opponent once; subsequent challenges against the same opponent require you spend a Conviction point. Challenges must be spaced at least one month apart.

## Landed (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Benefit (noble title)

You possess lands which you must oversee, protect, and gather taxes from; you gain the *duties* Complication. You have the right to impress peasants on your land to fight in your battles and you have the right to confiscate the property held by a free tenant found guilty of committing a crime. When impressing peasants, make either a Diplomacy or Intimidate check; the Difficulty of this check is according to how popular your cause is. Using Diplomacy implies that you will share the spoils with the people whereas using Intimidate risks driving some families away (thereby lowering your effective Wealth score the next time you try to impress peasants). The Narrator may modify this check by up to +/- 5 according to the circumstances, like your chance of victory or having an ally muster popular support. You gain a number of 1<sup>st</sup>-level Warriors equal to your Wealth score as a base. For every margin of 5 you beat the check by, you gain an additional number of 1<sup>st</sup>-level Warriors equal to your Charisma. Each additional time you attempt to impress peasants within the same year, the Difficulty increases by +5.

Difficulty	Popularity of Cause
10	Immensely popular cause with broad support
20	Somewhat supported cause that benefits the peasantry
30	Partisan or questionable cause lacking popular support



**Lasting Intimidation (Martial)****Prerequisite:** Trained in Intimidate

When you intimidate an enemy, your name is burned in their minds for a long time. You may make one demand of the target's future behavior, such as not revealing that they saw you, not attempting to waylay travelers on the bridge anymore, etc. Before violating your demand for the first time, the target must make a successful Will save against your Intimidate check. The target may attempt to violate your demand once per day. After they succeed their Will save, the force of your intimidation fades.

**Legend of the Seven Seas (Martial)****Prerequisite:** Corsair Savvy, Deceitful Aura, Intimidating Reputation, Lasting Intimidation, Leadership, Navigation, Sailor's Lore, Sea Dog, Acrobatics 8 ranks, Climb 8 ranks, Intimidate 8 ranks, Knowledge (earth sciences) 8 ranks, Reputation +2

Your name is whispered with dread and awe on the high seas. You gain ownership of your own boat if you don't own one already; typically this is a finely crafted dhow whose crew recently lost their captain. You may make a Gather Information check to learn about corsair contracts being offered by the various emirates, imates and kingdoms, as well as the caliphate. You gain a +5 bonus on your checks to recognize other corsairs. You may secure a contract from a government on a successful interaction check (Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate). The Difficulty ranges from 25 to 40 depending on your past allegiances, your past successes or failures, how desperate the target is, and the general trends of trade and piracy. If you succeed, you gain a contract which guarantees you the right to keep what you steal provided you only target the ships of the government's enemies.

You may spend a Conviction point to take 20 on your Intimidate checks. In addition, you may spend Conviction on behalf of your ship.

**Lion of God (Martial)****Prerequisite:** Battle Cry, Champion of the Faith, Exhortation, In Whose Hands is My Life, Inspire (courage), Inspire (fury), Merciful Combatant, Rage, True Faith, 8 ranks in Diplomacy and Intimidate, Charisma +1, Must have a *code of honor*

The spirit of God enters you when you are fighting on behalf of your faith. When you enter a rage, you may spend a Conviction point to replace the normal Rage benefits with the following: +4 Constitution, +4 Damage, +4 Defense, +4 Dexterity, +4 Initiative, +4 Strength, +4 Fortitude, Reflex, Will and Toughness saves. The spirit of God usually enters you with a battle cry. In addition, the round after the

**Islamic Laws of War**

The following acts are forbidden according to medieval Islamic jurists based upon the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and books of Fiqh and Jihad:

1. Killing of non-combatants
2. Executing prisoners of war, except under very rare circumstances
3. Mutilation of corpses
4. Burning or otherwise cruelly murdering people or animals
5. Destruction of crops or wanton destruction of property

spirit of God enters you, your closest companions are affected by Inspire (courage) and Inspire (fury) without you needing to take any action; follow the normal Inspire guidelines with the exception that their inspired state lasts till the end of the battle. Unlike a normal rage, you can use skills or powers requiring concentration and you may take 10 or take 20 on checks. The spirit of God lasts until the end of the battle at which point you become exhausted; you must recover from this fatigue normally.

**Master of the Battlefield (Martial)****Prerequisite:** 6<sup>th</sup> level, Command, Exemplary, General's Conference, Innocuous Combatant, Leadership, Read Character, Siege Warfare, Tactician, Intimidate 8 ranks, Knowledge (physical sciences) 8 ranks, Knowledge (tactics) 8 ranks, and Sense Motive 8 ranks

Vast armies are yours to command; you are at home acting as a commander whether from the sidelines or in the heat of battle.

When in battle, you are impervious to missile fire so long as you wear armor, cannot be grappled by minions so long as you are armed, and can never be attacked by more than three opponents at a time when fighting alongside allies.

When directing a battle from the sidelines, make an opposed Knowledge (tactics) check with the enemy's commander. If you succeed, you gain one of the following *commander's boons*. Additionally, for every 5 points by which you succeed, you gain an additional *commander's boon*.

- Double the number of times you can use the Command feat in the battle.
- Use the Exemplary feat an additional number of times equal to your Charisma.
- Double the degree of your success on a Knowledge (physical sciences) or (tactics) check for the purposes of using the Siege Warfare feat.
- You may use the Tactician feat a number of times equal to your Warrior level during the battle.







## Merciful Combatant (Martial)

Though you may kill, you do so quickly and humanely, offering to spare the lives of those you fight if they surrender. Your mercy radiates about you and others cannot help but to see the earnestness in your offer. Those who surrender to you will not take action against you (directly or covertly) while surrendered. If you (or an ally) ever break the Islamic laws of war, you must make atonement or lose this feat.

## Military Rank (Martial)

You belong to an organized military unit. Though you must obey the commands of higher-ranking officers, you can issue commands to those soldiers beneath you in rank. In general, if a member of your unit outranks you by 3 levels or more, their orders are to be obeyed immediately and without question. Of course, this also applies to those beneath you in the chain of command. You may requisition military equipment from your unit. When doing so, treat your Wealth as 4 points higher for the purpose of Wealth checks made to requisition arms, armor, supplies, camels and horses. During a requisition check, add the cost of all the items together – don't make a check for each item individually. You are expected to return all requisitioned equipment when you are finished. If you repeatedly destroy equipment, your rights to requisition will be revoked.

## Mounted Archery (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Mounted Combat, Trained in Ride

The penalty you take when using a ranged weapon while mounted is halved: -2 instead of -4 if your mount is taking a double move, and -4 instead of -8 if your mount is running.

## None Shall Pass (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Dedicated, Interpose, Stalwart

When you place yourself between a subject and an attacker, the attacker has no way to get to the subject except through you. The subject may flee or stay nearby, but so long as they don't engage in battle, they may not be harmed by the attacker. Only once you are dealt with can the attacker pursue or target the subject. Certain powers, such as Wind Walk, may disregard this feat. You can protect the subject from up to three attackers in this way, but no more.

## On Hallowed Ground (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** True Faith

When fighting near a sacred site (such as a mosque or saint's tomb), you gain the following benefits: Your weapon and shield cannot be sundered, you always resist a rush or overrun attempt, and you cannot be surprised. Furthermore, when resting in a sacred site you gain a +2 bonus on your Constitution checks to recover from damage and fatigue. You also get a +5 bonus to Diplomacy to convince others not to fight during the holy months or within the sacred territories of Mecca and Medina.



**One Against Many (Martial or Expert)****Prerequisite:** Weapon Focus, Dexterity +1

When fighting against a group of opponents with your chosen weapon, you may make any special maneuvers (disarm, feint, trip, rush) simultaneously against a number of extra people no greater than your Dexterity score.

**Riposte (Martial)**

You can spot the weaknesses in your opponent's offense created by their blundering attacks. Whenever an opponent's attack misses you by 5 or more, you may make an immediate attack against them as a reaction out of turn.

**Saint of Swords (Martial)****Prerequisite:** Adaptive Fighting, Assessment, Flexible Style, Issue Challenge, One Against Many, Riposte, Weapon Focus, Weapon Specialization, Dexterity +1, Intelligence +1, Must have a *code of honor*

You have an uncanny knack for being at the right place at the right time, always ready to defend the honor of those who cannot defend themselves. Among the masses, you are known as something of a folk hero, and they will conspire to aid you when you're fighting in their interests. They will always give you room and board, seek to hide you, retrieve your horse for you, etc. By rallying the masses, you can also pressure rulers to grant you the right to collect *diyya* from a normally untouchable person (e.g. governor or prince). This requires an Intimidate check against the authority figure you want to capitulate; you must not only intimidate the authority, but you must attain a certain Difficulty depending on the authority's attitude toward the subject you wish to bring justice to. The DC is 15 if the subject is on shaky terms with the authority, DC 25 if the subject is on good terms with the authority, and DC 35 or more if the subject is the authority's own flesh and blood.

Also, you may spend a Conviction point to deprive an opponent of one of these things during one scene that you face them, provided you come up with a plausible explanation:

- Their Dexterity bonus (attack, dodge, initiative)
- Their Strength bonus (parry and damage)
- A single feat you know they possess

**Sea Dog (Martial)****Prerequisite:** Trained in Acrobatics and Climb

You know how to fight on a ship. You are not flat-footed while climbing. You gain a +10 bonus on Jump checks made on a ship, as you swing around on ropes. When two ships are broadside, you can make an immediate attack when boarding the other ship

with a grappling hook. Also, while on a ship you are always treated as having partial concealment.

**Siege Warfare (Martial)****Prerequisite:** Trained in Knowledge (physical sciences) and Knowledge (tactics)

You are conversant in the art of preparing and defending a siege. You may perform the following maneuvers:

**Fortification:** You fortify the area you are protecting. Make a Difficulty 10 Knowledge (physical sciences) or (Knowledge (tactics) check. For every point you succeed by, you gain a bonus point which you may apply to Fortitude saves for objects. Once the pool of bonus points is exhausted, your fortifications have been overcome.

**Trench:** You dig a trench to stop oncoming troops. Make an opposed Knowledge (physical sciences) or Knowledge (tactics) check with the general (or key advisor) leading the siege. For every point by which you succeed you can delay the battle one day.

**Lay Siege:** Using siege weapons you attack a fortified area. Make a Difficulty 10 Knowledge (physical sciences) or Knowledge (tactics) check. For every point you succeed by, you gain a bonus point which you may apply to Damage inflicted by siege weapons. You may apply no more than 1 point per 10 rounds of battle, though you may wait several minutes and build up several bonus points for a massive offensive. Once the pool of bonus points is exhausted, your siege continues as normal.

**Stalwart (Martial)****Prerequisite:** Dedicated

You stand your ground. Gain a +2 bonus against all attempts to overrun, rush, or trip you when working on behalf of whomever or whatever you are dedicated to.

**Sword Dancing (Martial)****Prerequisite:** Weapon Focus (scimitar), Trained in Acrobatics, Intimidate and Perform (dance)

Many tribes throughout the caliphate practice some form of sword dance, a highly ritualized mock combat with music, in celebration of victory. By spending a full round showing off with your sword you gain a +4 bonus to Intimidate. Any sword you wield gains a 5 foot range increment if used as a range weapon. In addition, while performing a sword dance to an unsuspecting audience that is fascinated (as per the Fascinate feat), you can draw a sword without ending the fascination on a Difficulty 10 Perform (dance) check. Once your sword is drawn you can automatically surprise any fascinated person watching you.



## Tactician (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Knowledge (tactics)

You know how to plan large scale battles, taking advantage of the terrain, exploiting weaknesses in your enemies, and knowing when to retreat. In order to use this feat you must have familiarity with or maps of the battlefield, and scouts who can report on the enemy's numbers and position. When you have time to prepare for a battle in advance, you gain one of these benefits at any time during the battle, reflecting your advanced tactical mind:

- *Cover:* You are able to find cover.
- *Firing into melee:* Ignore the -4 penalty on your attack roll when making ranged attacks against an opponent engaged in melee with an ally.
- *Imbedded commands:* Having planned for this eventually before battle, you can issue two commands as a move action, either both to the same group or each to different groups.
- *Negate opponent's advantage:* Attackers lose one advantage they have, such as the +1 attack bonus from higher ground or from being mounted.
- *Ready full action:* You can ready a full round action.
- *Wait it out:* When both you and your enemy are delaying and trying to go after each other, you get to go last, no matter whose initiative is greater.

This bonus is contingent upon some plan that you must explain; for example an aerial perch for archers might explain the *firing into melee* benefit. If this advantage is compromised, say by warriors raiding the perch, then the benefit is lost. You may apply this benefit to another using the Aid Another action, or you issue it to your troops using the Command feat. At the Narrator's discretion other benefits might be allowed.

**Special:** You may take this feat multiple times, allowing yourself to gain multiple benefits in a single battle. Master Plan becomes a favored feat for you.

## Terrifying Charge (Martial)

**Prerequisites:** Mounted Combat, Trained in Intimidate and Ride

You shake the resolve of even large groups of enemies when charging into battle on horseback. When you declare a mounted charge, make an Intimidate check to demoralize your foes as a free action. You affect a number of enemies equal to your warrior level plus your Charisma or Reputation (whichever is greater) instead of just one. If successful, your enemies are shaken for one round. You may not use this feat on the same foe more than once per encounter.

## Unparalleled Skill at Arms (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Weapon Focus, Weapon Specialization, and special

Whenever you are put to a test with your chosen fighting style, you may take 20 on your attack roll for the purposes of passing the test only. For example, if you are specialized

in archery, you could take 20 on your attack roll during a test to snuff the flame of a candle with an arrow. In addition, you gain a benefit according to your fighting style, provided you have the required feat:

Fighting Style	Required Feat	Benefit
Archery	Point Blank Shot	You may take 10 on your attacks with your chosen ranged weapon.
Melee	Weapon Specialization	You may take 10 on attacks with your chosen melee weapon.
Unarmed	Improved Strike	You may take 10 on your unarmed attacks.
Wrestling	Improved Grab	You may take 10 on your opposed grapple checks.

## Veteran (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Combat +3

You have fought in many battles and are no stranger to the wounds of war; indeed, you often resort to combat as a last resort. You are not stunned after becoming *wounded* and you suffer no penalty using Heal on yourself. You gain +2 on Diplomacy checks to avoid violence.

## Upon My Life (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Dedicated

You may swear an oath upon your life provided you are following the directions of the person or organization you are dedicated to, or else trying to protect them. Anyone hearing you swear this oath has no doubt as to its veracity. If necessary, this allows you to temporarily change the target of your dedication (e.g. if your lady asks you to protect a man, you must do so). Furthermore, when protecting your ward, or acting in their interest, you may take standard actions while *disabled* without falling unconscious. Instead when you become *disabled* add another *hurt* result to your condition monitor and you are stunned for one round. However if you charge or move all out, you fall unconscious and begin dying the next round. Additionally, if you are no longer working to protect your ward you suffer the normal penalties of being *disabled*.

## Ustadh (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Dedicated, Formation Tactics, Leadership, Military Rank, Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Shield Training, Spirited Charge, Veteran, 8 ranks in Intimidate and Ride

You have earned the title of *ustadh*, or "master", and you are authorized to buy and sell other mamluks, who look up to you as a father figure. All your mamluk followers gain the Dedicated feat reflecting their intense loyalty to you. Their loyalty is never in question, and they remain loyal to you even if transferred to another unit. You may also



train your mamluks personally. When you begin training, choose one feat which you will focus the training on; generally this is a feat which provides a bonus, such as Weapon Focus. After 60 hours of training, your troops increase the bonus conferred by the feat by +1, and after 120 hours of training, they increase the bonus conferred by the feat by +2. Of course, only those followers who possess the feat may benefit from the training. You cannot oversee two training programs at once, nor may a unit of mamluks benefit from more than one of your trainings at a time. In addition, you may spend a Conviction point to allow all your followers within earshot to take 20 on a Will save.

### Vicious Attack (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Strength +2

When you attack you may take the following challenge:

*Severing Blow:* By taking a -5 penalty on your attack you may inflict one of the *maimed* Complications on an enemy if you hit (e.g. eunuch, gouged eye, hideous scars, missing ear, severed arm/hand, or severed leg/foot).

### Warrior's Steed (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Faithful Steed, Trained in Ride

You can assume the penalty for a challenge your horse faces while you are mounted; this penalty applies to your next Ride check. You may use Determination (the warrior's core ability) on behalf of your horse.

## Supernatural Feats

### Alchemic Purification (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** Imbue Item, Trained in Craft (alchemy), Knowledge (physical sciences), and Knowledge (supernatural)

You know how to use an alembic, to distill solutions, and how to interpret the writings of alchemists. You can make *alchemic preparations* which function similarly to charms, however you do not need to possess the power you are investing the preparation with. Instead, you make an extra effort, representing

long hours in the laboratory. The complexity of the *alchemic preparation* is based on what powers you are imbuing. Crafting an *alchemic preparation* that can be used multiple times requires taking the *masterwork* challenge, as does crafting an *alchemic preparation* that is a maintained use of the power.

### Ambassador to the Djinni (Supernatural)

**Prerequisites:** Apprehend the Djinni's Hand, Connected, *Djinni Binding*, *Djinni Summoning*, Etiquette, *Protection*, Secrets of Jinnistan, Diplomacy 8 ranks, Knowledge (supernatural) 8 ranks, Must speak Djinni

You may receive an audience with the rulers of djinni-kind, as they recognize you as a force to be reckoned with. Such rulers can answer questions, issue rulings on the actions of their tribe, and advise those who wish to deal with djinni. Once a month you may inform a djinni messenger of your intention, and within a week a procession of djinni will find you and escort you to audience with their lord or lady. Usually you may decide where the meeting takes place, in a desolate earthly location or in the djinn's palace in Jinnistan. As long as you are in good standing with the djinni noble in question you may choose a spokesperson to act in your stead. The ruler will treat you as your reputation demands; a cruel sha'ir who has imprisoned many djinni will be seized or otherwise met with hostility, whereas a beneficent sha'ir will be treated to a great feast in his or her honor. After your audience (assuming all goes well), the ruler will send an entourage of djinni to escort you back home.

### Apprehend the Djinni's Hand (Supernatural)

You can recognize the magic of the djinni, and even sense the direct results of a djinn's granted wish automatically upon seeing them. In addition, you always get to make an opposed Notice or Sense Motive check to detect a disguised, invisible, or shape-changed djinn. Upon meeting a djinn (and realizing it's a djinn) you may make a Difficulty 15 Knowledge (supernatural) check to identify its tribe and master (if any).

Alchemic Preparations: New Use for Craft (alchemy)		
Complexity	Imbued Powers	Examples
Simple	Specific use of one non-fatiguing power without prerequisites	A mood stone (Heart Reading) Potion of feign death (Body Control)
Moderate	Special use of a power without prerequisites (e.g. fatiguing use of a non-fatiguing power, or a feat which expands a power's capabilities)	A truth serum which reveals the subject's lies for several minutes (Truth-Reading) A fire-extinguishing powder (Fire Finesse)
Complex	Specific use of one power with prerequisites	Potion that turns you into a fish (Self-Shaping) A small hot air balloon (Wind Walk)
Advanced	Specific use of two related powers combined	A panacea which heals both poison and disease (Cure Disease, Cure Poison)



## Astrometry (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Knowledge (earth sciences) and Knowledge (supernatural)

Practiced by the Magi of Persia, astrometry is the study of the position and movements of the stars. It is used to determine the distance between locations and to locate places. You may use Knowledge (earth sciences) in new ways.

The familiarity modifiers for powers also apply to astrometry. Use an average of the familiarity modifiers of the two locations. For example, if an astrologer in his hometown (present +0) is trying to determine where a fortress described in a book is (slightly familiar +25), the average would be +12.

## Centering (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Concentration

You are trained in meditative techniques to center and ground yourself. Whenever you make a Will save, you may make a Concentration check instead if you could “take 10” on the roll (i.e. not distracted, rushed, or threatened).

## Divine Sustenance (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** *Baraka*, True Faith

You no longer need food, drink, or sleep. Instead you live off of prayer and the breath of God filling your lungs.

## Djinni Prison

**Prerequisite:** *Djinni Binding*, *Djinni Summoning*, Imbue Item, *Ward*, Trained in Craft

You can make a vessel (bottle, lamp, seal ring) which can trap a djinn. If the djinn is allied with Iblis the vessel must be made of iron, and if the djinn is allied with God it must be made of copper. Brass is often used when binding djinni who have not yet made their choice. Once crafted, the vessel must be physically carried to the location of the target djinn, or else you must summon the djinn. When the djinn is nearby, within 100 feet or so, it must make a Will save (Difficulty 10 + your level + your Charisma). If the djinn’s Will save succeeds, it will take action against you. If its save fails, the djinn is drawn into the vessel and trapped. It will remain imprisoned within until released by you, or the vessel is shattered or opened. Alternately, you may set a condition upon its imprisonment, such as an astrological event, or until a certain type of person finds the vessel. Often, sha’ir demand the djinn swear an oath to secure its freedom. An imprisoned djinni may not interact with the outside world, save to speak with someone who holds the vessel in a faint whisper. As there is nothing djinni hate so much as imprisonment, such an oath secured under coercion is always compelling. Some acceptable conditions are:

- The djinn becomes your servant for 1001 days. You may determine how the djinn is called forth from the vessel (e.g. rubbing the lamp, speaking its name, opening the bottle).
- The djinn promises to refrain from a certain action, and repents of its wicked ways in earnest.
- The djinn will grant three wishes to the next person who summons the djinn from the vessel (assuming it has wish-granting feats).

## Earth Finesse (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** *Earth Shaping*, *Elemental Strike*

You have developed your control over the earth into an art, allowing you to create localized earth effects with specific targets. You may perform new techniques of finesse when using your Earth Shaping power. Some examples include, but aren’t limited to:

Astrometry: New Uses for the Knowledge (supernatural) Skill	
DC	Task
10	Determine how far it is from where you are now to another place
15	Determine the timing of a celestial event or location of a star
15	Determine the direction of travel get to a place from where you are now
20	Determine how far it is between any two points
25	Determine the direction of travel to get from any place to another



*Aspect of the Quake:* (Difficulty 30) You cause only one element of an earthquake to affect a targeted area. Possibilities include: Avalanche, cave-in, collapse building, crumble cliff, open ground, drain lake, etc.

*Conceal Tracks* (Difficulty 10) You cause the tracks of one person, mounted or on foot, to vanish behind them as the earth covers the tracks. Increase the DC by +1 per additional person affected. This is a maintained use of Earth Shaping; at the point you stop concentrating the tracks resume, though tracks already concealed remain so.

*Earth's Expulsion:* (Difficulty 10) You free someone trapped in quicksand and they are spat out on safe ground. Increase the DC by +5 per size category larger than Medium, and per additional target. Performing this action out of turn also increases the DC by +5.

*Passwall:* (Difficulty 25) You and others can pass through a wall. The earth or stone slips around your skin, molding back to its natural form as soon as you've passed. The changes occur rapidly, adapting to you as you move, but you may not move more than your half your base speed as you feel like you're walking in molasses. The Difficulty increases by +1 per additional person affected. This is a maintained use of Earth Shaping.

*Quicksand:* (Difficulty 15) As per *soften earth*, except that you cause an area of sand to become quicksand. A DC 8 Survival check is possible to detect a patch of quicksand, but a character running or charging doesn't have a chance to detect it before blundering in. Characters in quicksand must make a DC 10 Swim check every round to tread water in place. If a character fails this check by 5 or more, he sinks below the surface. He may swim back to the surface on a DC 15 Swim check, +1 DC per consecutive round of being under the surface. To rescue a character trapped in quicksand requires a tool that enables the rescuer to reach the victim with one end of it. The rescuer must make a DC 15 Strength check to pull the victim, and the victim must make a DC 10 Strength check to hold on. If the victim fails, he must immediately make a DC 15 Swim check or sink beneath the surface. If both checks succeed, the victim is pulled to safety.

*Stepping Stones:* (Difficulty 15) You cause small rocks to become temporarily buoyant or pillars of earth to rise from beneath a shallow body of water. While one effect fades and the others endures, the result is the same: a way across the water. For every 25 feet traveled, the Difficulty increases by +5. Likewise if you are doing this in a rush (such as while running), the Difficulty increases by +5. This technique may not be performed at sea, except by a rocky coast.

If you fail your Earth Shaping check by 5 or more, you lose control of the earth's forces. An earthquake may be unleashed on the entire area, or a more specific Narrator-determined backlash might occur.

## Elemental Focus (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** *Nature Reading*

Your powers are heightened at some natural site or during a natural event. Choose a general region/event, such as waterfalls, sandstorms, mountaintops, or a region like the Nefud Desert. When within this region/event you gain +2 on all power checks and the save Difficulty for your powers increases by 2. Additionally, pick a specific location within a region that exemplifies this type of natural site (e.g. an enormous waterfall along the Euphrates); here the bonus increases to +3 and you may gain access to the Empower or Widen Power feats through extra effort. If you have these feats, or spend a Conviction point to gain access to them, you do not increase the fatigue Difficulty of using a modified power at this site. A modified power is one which is used in conjunction with one of these feats: Empower, Quicken Power, Subtle Power, or Widen Power.

## Esoteric (Supernatural)

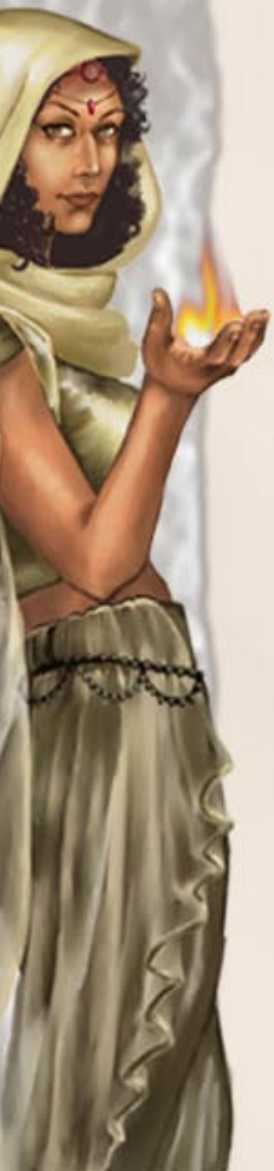
**Prerequisite:** Trained in Knowledge (supernatural) and Knowledge (theology and philosophy)

You have been exposed to Hebrew Kabbalah, Christian Gnosticism, Vajrayana Buddhism, Trika Shaivism, and many other esoteric philosophies – these are just different emanations of the same Divine message. Treat your Knowledge (theology and philosophy) and Knowledge (supernatural) skills as assimilated no matter which culture you go to, as your familiarity with the mystical practices there allows you to also extrapolate the traditions of the dominant faith, and vice versa. You can gain *arcane philosophies* that are usually limited to secret societies. Additionally, you can hold multiple *arcane philosophies* without spending feats so long as you can philosophically reconcile them.

## Experimental Philosophy (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Knowledge (supernatural) and Knowledge (theology and philosophy)

You take an inquisitive approach to ethics, morality, magical theory, and perhaps even religion. Shunning extremist positions, you make compromises that fly in the face of orthodox thinking; you are willing to try any new approach or perspective once. You are treated as having the Dedicated and True Faith feats for the purpose of meeting feat prerequisites (e.g. you could take Devout or Spiritually Fireproof). You can



change your *arcane philosophy* without spending a point of Conviction. Additionally, you can create your own *arcane philosophy*, using the existing ones as guidelines. Once you are identified as an innovator, however, others in your sect or secret society may turn against you.

**Special:** The Theologian feat is favored for you.

## Fire Finesse (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** *Fire Shaping, Elemental Strike*

You have developed your control over flame into an art, allowing you to create localized fire effects with specific targets. You may perform new techniques of finesse when using your Fire Shaping power. Some examples include, but aren't limited to:

*Back Draft:* (Difficulty 15) You may enchant a fire in an enclosed space to explode when that space is penetrated (such as by opening a door), creating a dangerous back draft. The first person(s) to enter the area are hit by an Elemental Strike of fire as if you had just cast it upon them. In addition, the concussive blast acts throws them back 5 feet per wound level inflicted, and knocks them off their feet. A Reflex save is allowed for half damage.

*Diminish Fire:* Exactly like *increase fire*, except the DC is  $10 + 1$  per square foot of decrease. Every two square feet of decrease diminish the fire's damage potential by -1. This is a maintained use of Fire Shaping. The fire is diminished as long as you maintain concentration. If it is not put out within this time, then it will not spring back into life when you stop concentrating.

*Heat Aura:* (Difficulty 20) Anyone within 5 feet of you acts as if they have *heat metal* used upon them. Every melee attack against you makes the *heat metal* act as if it had affected the character for an additional turn. This is a maintained use of Fire Shaping.

*Heat Metal:* (Difficulty 15) A metal object the size of a shield or sword begins to heat up. On the first round it becomes painful, requiring a DC 12 Will save to maintain one's grasp, and on the second round it burns the hand of its wielder, inflicting +1 fire damage that round and each round thereafter. This is especially devastating to heavily armored opponents who can't rid themselves of their arms quickly. The DC increases by +5 if the metal object is a suit of armor, and by +10 if it is Large-sized. This is a maintained use of Fire Shaping.

*Sirocco:* (Difficulty 20) You create shimmering waves of heat in a 10 foot area. Everyone affected must make a Fortitude check each round against a Difficulty equal to your ranks in Fire Shaping or become fatigued. Fatigued characters become exhausted, exhausted characters fall unconscious. Prolonged exposure can kill. You may extend the area of effect by an additional 10 feet for every +1 DC increase. This is a maintained use of Fire Shaping.

*Smokeless Flame:* (Difficulty 5) A camp fire ceases to emit smoke. You may affect a larger fire, up to 10 feet

greater per +5 Difficulty increase. This is a maintained use of Fire Shaping.

*Walking through the Flame:* (Difficulty 20) You cause the flames of a fire to subside around you or another. The Difficulty increases by +1 per additional person protected from the fire. The flames come close, but stop just short of hurting those who are protected. This is a maintained use of Fire Shaping.

If you fail your Fire Shaping check by 5 or more, you lose control of the flames. The fire may be unleashed on the entire area, or a more specific Narrator-determined backlash might occur.

## Friend of God (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** *Baraka, Devout, Divine Sustenance, Miracle, True Faith, Upstanding, Virtuous, Word of God, 8 ranks in Knowledge (theology and philosophy), Reputation +3*

You are widely recognized as a *wali*, one of the friends of God, among all sects of Muslims. Even the orthodoxy acknowledges, perhaps grudgingly, that you are a living saint. Wherever you go public reaction to you is friendly, and if you publicly reveal yourself as a saint you are automatically recognized, gaining the benefits (or hindrances) or your Reputation. When you spend a Conviction point to use the Miracle feat, you may describe exactly what you wish to have happen. You must also explain what your motive is. If the rest of the group unanimously agrees that your motive is pure, then the miracle takes place as you described it, without a need for a power check. In addition, you may attempt to influence policies toward other holy men and prophets. On a Diplomacy check you may convince the *Ulema* or a *mihna* to grant clemency to a religious heretic. The DC is 15 for those accused of phony or trumped up charges, DC 25 for those who actually believe a heretical view, and DC 35 for those who have taken violent or treasonous action in the name of their heretical beliefs. If you fail by 5 or more, the orthodoxy chastises you and will not help you for the rest of the year. If you fail by 10 or more you may be temporarily imprisoned or labeled a heretic along with the person you were trying to defend. When you die, your burial place becomes a site of veneration, and you may appear to others in dreams and visions.

## Horary Astrology (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** *Inception, Natal Astrology, Trained in Knowledge (physical sciences), Knowledge (supernatural), and Sense Motive*

You can attempt to answer a question by drawing up an astrological chart for the *exact* time and place at which the question came to mind or was asked. In addition, you must have access to the birth charts of anyone involved in asking the question.



Horary: New Uses for the Knowledge (supernatural) Skill	
DC	Results
20	Get a simple “yes” or “no” answer to the question. If the question wasn’t worded in such a way as to get a yes/no, the answer is inconclusive and uncertain.
30	Learn the decision the principal actor is most likely to make and how this will influence the answer to the question.
40	Learn the reasons why the actor will make that decision, and any other alternatives the actor will consider.

### Inception (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Knowledge (physical sciences), Knowledge (supernatural), and Sense Motive

You can determine the ideal time to initiate an important action, when cosmic forces are aligned to maximum benefit; this is known as the *inception*. Make a Knowledge (supernatural) check. The base Difficulty for determining the inception is 20; this avoids bad luck (bad weather, thieves, disease, poor timing) as long as the activity is begun on a specific day within the month (determined by Narrator). For every 5 points by which the check succeeds, you may either add a +1 bonus to the activity or make the starting time more flexible. The bonus applies to any single action (e.g. attack rolls or Diplomacy checks) for anyone involved in the activity until the inception ends. Making the starting time more flexible takes advantage of celestial conjunctions, requiring the main actor(s) to observe a taboo determined by the Narrator. Breaking this taboo curses everyone involved! Each time the starting date is made more flexible, the actor(s) has a 2 day window both before and after the Narrator’s declared starting time.

### Innocuous Adept (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** Subtle Power

Your magical capabilities are often overlooked. When you are in a place where you are not known as an adept, you are not recognized until you make public use of your powers. Even then, you may spend a Conviction point to pass it off as simply

being keenly observant and perhaps a little wise. The Narrator may rule that use of certain powers cannot be concealed this way. People interacting with those under the influence of one of your powers do not get a Sense Motive check to detect the supernatural influence.

### Liberator (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** *Baraka*, True Faith

You can free anyone unjustly imprisoned simply by walking into their prison and leading them to freedom. Doing so requires spending a Conviction point. No guard raises a hand against you, no magic stops you, gates and locks open before you, etc.

### Master Wish-Maker (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** Etiquette, Trained in Diplomacy

You are versed in how to word a wish such that djinni are compelled to obey its spirit. You may take 20 on Diplomacy checks when petitioning a djinn for a wish. This only applies to those wishes you make by spending Conviction, not negotiations.

### Medical Astrology (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** Natal Astrology, Trained in Medicine and Knowledge (physical sciences)

You can diagnose and treat a patient using the Heal skill or any curative power (e.g. Cure, Cure Blindness/Deafness, Cure Disease) without actually being physically present as long as you (or a messenger) can communicate with them and you have access to their birth chart.

Meteorology: New Uses for the Knowledge (supernatural) Skill	
DC	Results
15	The most important natural event and a bit of detail (e.g. meteorite strikes by midnight).
20	General details about related events (e.g. fishing is disrupted for weeks)
25	Full detail as if you had gotten a report from someone after the event.
30	The exact pattern and fallout of an event. More than an individual involved in the event itself would know.

Natal Astrology: New Uses for the Knowledge (supernatural) Skill	
DC	Information Gained (cumulative)
15	Role, archetype, and virtue(s).
20	Background, nationality, station, and vice.
25	Rough sketch of personality and likely trends in their life, as well as their level.
30	Detailed account of the subject’s history and personality.



## Meteorological Astrology (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Knowledge (earth sciences) and Knowledge (physical sciences)

You can predict natural events, provided you know the time and place for which the prediction is to be made, regardless of whether they occurred in the past or will occur in the future. When performing meteorological astrology you must declare a specific time and place (e.g. Baghdad next year). You may look into the future or past a maximum number of years equal to your age.

## Miracle (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** *Baraka*, True Faith

God intercedes on your behalf. When you spend a point of Conviction to use The Talent, you may ignore all prerequisites of the power (e.g. you could access Weather Shaping or Fate Sight) so long as you use it piously. This use of the power cannot cause another being harm, and generally is used to prove to the disbeliever that you are truly a saint.

## Natal Astrology (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Knowledge (physical sciences) and Knowledge (supernatural)

You can construct a birth chart for a person provided you know the exact date, time, and place of their birth. Constructing a chart takes four hours. Armed with this information, you can make a Knowledge (supernatural) check to learn about the person.

## Nature's Avatar (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** Elemental Aura, Elemental Focus, Elemental Resistance, *Elemental Strike*, *Nature Reading*, 8 ranks in Knowledge (Nature) and Knowledge (Supernatural). In addition, you must have 3 of the following: *Earth Finesse*, *Earth Shaping*, *Fire Finesse*, *Fire Shaping*, *Sandstorm Shaping*, *Water Finesse*, *Water Shaping*, *Weather Shaping*, *Wind Finesse*, or *Wind Shaping*.

You are one with the natural world, and have been appointed steward over some sacred place, such as a windswept desert mosque, ever-burning Zoroastrian flame, or on oasis spring with curative properties. When at this site you are aware of everything that happens there, even if you are not physically present. You are immune

to storms and other natural disasters, and the natural world itself acts to protect you, such that you always can find cover or concealment so long as you are in the wilderness. You may spend Conviction to produce any of the following effects.

*Blessing of the natural world:* Because you act in concert with the natural world, you may spend a Conviction point to avoid death from natural causes, such as drowning in quicksand. Instead you are miraculously rescued by the natural world itself.

*Power of the elements:* You may spend a Conviction point to boost your elemental focus feat for one scene while immersed in any element which you have the shaping ability for. For each round you are immersed you may make a recovery check to heal wounds (not fatigue), and you gain a cumulative +1 bonus on your next power check when using a shaping power related to that element.

*The path revealed:* When you are trying to find something or someone in the natural world, such as a criminal hiding in a cave or a safe place to ford a river, you may spend a Conviction point to take 20 on your check.

## Secrets of Jinnistan (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** Apprehend the Djinni's Hand

You know how to find a way into Jinnistan and when you are there you never break prominent djinni laws, breach customs, nor make courtly faux pas. Entering Jinnistan is described in **Chapter 17**.

## Self-Realized Teacher (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** *Body Control*, Centering, Dedicated or True Faith, Mind Over Body, *Mystic Imbuement*, Sheikh, Spiritually Fireproof, Concentration 8 ranks

You have witnessed the essence of your soul, gazing upon the record and scheme of your life written on the pages of fate. Upon taking this feat you are immediately aware of your place in the universe; you may take the Destiny feat for free if you so choose. You also become aware of all your current complications, learning how they came to be, who created them, and what you are supposed to learn from overcoming them. Other spiritual seekers, especially

### Self-Realized Teacher Benefits

Complexity of Teaching	Comprehension Difficulty	Study Time Required	Bonus to Wisdom-based Checks
Simple	8	1 hour	+1 for one day
Moderate	12	12 hours	+2 for one day or +1 for one week
Intricate	16	24 hours	+3 for one day, +2 for one week, or +1 for one month
Sublime	20	60 hours	+4 for one day, +3 for one week, +2 for one month, or +1 for one year

fellow Sufis, recognize you as a *Murshid* ("teacher").



Anyone who swears allegiance to you (a *bay'ah* of love) can benefit from your teachings. Choose a complexity of teaching from the table below. All students who study with you for the length of the teaching required make a Wisdom check against the teaching's Difficulty. If successful, they gain a bonus to Wisdom-based checks according to the complexity of the teaching. The benefits of your teachings are not cumulative; thus if a student who once understood a moderately complex teaching then understood an intricate teaching, the benefits of the intricate teaching would replace the moderate teaching's benefits. If you role-play a particularly convincing spiritual lesson, your students may gain a +2 bonus on their Wisdom check to comprehend your teaching.

In addition you may spend a Conviction point to take 20 on any Wisdom-based check, such as a Concentration skill check or a Will save.

### Sense Destiny (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** Read Character, Trained in Sense Motive

By studying a character for one minute you learn if they have a great destiny. Make a Difficulty 10 Sense Motive check; if you succeed you learn whether the subject has the Destined feat. If you succeed by 5 or more, you learn what their destiny is, and if you succeed by 10 or more you learn what trigger activates their destiny.

### Sense Heritage (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** Read Character, Trained in Sense Motive

By watching an individual eat and drink, you instantly know what family they belong to (and hence their true station), the name of one ancestor (living or dead) and their relationship to the individual, seeing through all disguises. Even if they've been cursed into animal form, you still can use this feat. Alternately, you may choose some other action (instead of eating and drinking) by which you can tell someone's heritage (e.g. riding a horse).

### Sense Nature (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** Read Character, Trained in Sense Motive

By studying a character for one minute you learn their true nature. Make a Sense Motive check opposed by the subject's Bluff check or against Difficulty 15 (whichever is greater). If you succeed you learn their virtue, and if you succeed by 5 or more you learn their vice.

### Spiritually Fireproof (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** Dedicated *or* True Faith

Those unprepared who dance too close to the flame of God may be consumed, but not you. Your steadfast commitment to your spiritual path allows you to spend weeks, even months, in prolonged contact with the deepest recesses of your being, gazing into the awesome truth of your identity. Choose one of the following benefits:

- Gain a +2 bonus on all Constitution checks to recover from fatigue induced by using powers.
- For one power of your choice there is no increase in fatigue save Difficulty for subsequent uses of the power within an hour.
- For one power of your choice that has consequences ignore the possibility of a mishap entirely; you have learned to use the power safely.

This feat may be selected multiple times, taking a different benefit each time.

### Succor (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** *Baraka*, True Faith

You can make many out of one thing, such as clothing, food, or even weaponry, as long as you have one item to start with. Doing so requires spending a Conviction point. The copies are permanent objects, and if food is multiplied it is nourishing. The original object always remains. This ability cannot be used with unique items, such as a flying carpet.

Sympathetic Magic - Laws of Familiarity	
Arcane Connection	Power Check Modifier
Bodily fluids (blood, feces, genital fluid, sweat, urine, spit, etc.)	+4
Hair or shed body items (teeth, nail clippings, umbilical cord, etc.)	+2
Unwashed clothing, foot track lifted from dirt, mask	+0
Family member by blood, something created by target	-2 on its own
Someone who wounded the target, Something the target owned	-4 on its own

## Sympathetic Adept (Supernatural)

Sympathetic magic is based on the manipulation of symbols. By imitating a desired effect, or by doing something to an object associated with a person, you can affect a person. In order to use your powers you must perform a symbolic action that represents what you're doing; for example, if you wanted to use Weather Shaping to calm ocean waves, you might take a bowl of water and place a wax model of a ship in the bowl while pouring water from the bowl. You may benefit from using objects that are connected with your target; such objects are known as *arcane connections*. Each *arcane connection* modifies your power check; the maximum bonus you can get from *arcane connections* is +8. When using an *arcane connection* that has a negative modifier with one that has a positive modifier, ignore the penalty. So long as you have an *arcane connection* you may use powers at a distance even if they normally require touch or the target to be immediately present; doing so follows the laws of familiarity.

## The Philosopher's Stone (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** Alchemic Purification, Analyze Device, Enhance Senses, Esoteric, Experimental Philosophy, Pattern Sense, Skepticism, Craft (alchemy) 8 ranks, Knowledge (physical sciences) 8 ranks, Knowledge (supernatural) 8 ranks

You have attained the elusive goal of the alchemist – the mastery of transformation of matter, both material and spiritual. Each time you select this feat, choose one of the following benefits, provided you meet the prerequisites.

*Metallic Transmutation (Prerequisites: Knowledge (earth sciences) 8 ranks):* You can turn base metals like iron and lead into gold. This requires a Craft (alchemy) check against Difficulty 25.

*Panacea (Prerequisite: Medicine 8 ranks, Cure Disease):* You have learned the secret to creating the long sought after “panacea”, a remedy which cures all disease and prolongs life indefinitely. Anyone imbibing the panacea is cured of all disease and is blessed with longevity. The imbiber appears to age at half the normal speed, can live up to twice as long as normal, and they find the normal effects of aging minimized. The imbiber gains a +10 bonus on saving throws against disease that fades at the rate of -1 bonus point each year. However, the panacea has a side effect of causing sterility. Each panacea is unique to its imbiber, thus a panacea made for one person is ineffective for another. Making the panacea requires a Craft (alchemy) check to create an advanced masterwork alchemic preparation (Difficulty 35).

*Spiritual Transformation:* You have learned how to change your nature, merging your soul and body into one form. You no longer need to spend a Conviction point to change your virtue or vice; instead, you do so at will. In

addition, you gain 3 ability points to distribute amongst your Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma as you see fit. *Takwin (Prerequisite: Knowledge (life sciences) 8 ranks, Imbue Life)* You have unlocked the secrets of life and are able to artificially create new life. This requires a Craft (alchemy) check taking the *masterwork* challenge; the results of this check are determined by the table below.

DC	Result
20	You have created a parody of life that dies in the laboratory. You must find a way to dispose of the body without arousing suspicion.
25	You have created an animal no larger than a dog. It has no skills, and suffers from the <i>infirm</i> Complication.
30	You have created an animal, construct or supernatural beast no larger than a horse.
35	You have created a human being with a -3 Intelligence and -3 Charisma. It is genderless (and hence it cannot reproduce) and has the <i>ineptitude</i> Complication.
40	You have created a human being who has the memories and abilities of a deceased person you once knew. Whether your creation is actually a deceased spirit reincarnated or a djinn's trick is left up to the Narrator.

## Tongues (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** Baraka, True Faith

You can speak and understand all languages for a scene by spending a Conviction point. If you are literate, you can read and write all languages as well. When others hear you, they hear you speaking fluently in their native tongue.

## Water Finesse (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** Elemental Strike, Water Shaping

You have developed your control over water into an art, allowing you to create localized water effects with specific targets. You may perform new techniques of finesse when using your Water Shaping power. Some examples include, but aren't limited to:

*Deep Waters:* (Difficulty 15) You cause a ten foot area of water to simulate the pressure and cold of far deeper waters. Anyone underwater within the area suffers +2 water pressure damage and cold. A Fortitude save is made once per minute if the water was not deep before, and once per round if the water was already deep. A successful Fortitude save (Difficulty 15, +1 per previous check) means a diver takes no damage. If the diver fails the save he receives a fatigue level from cold and suffers water pressure damage. Additional failed saves cause further levels of fatigue. This is a maintained use of Water Shaping.



**Murky Waters:** (Difficulty 10) You cause silt at the bottom of a river or shallow coast to be churned up, making it impossible for anyone to see in or through the water. Anyone within the water is blinded and gains the benefit of concealment. This is a maintained use of Water Shaping. After you stop concentrating, river water instantly becomes clear and lake or ocean water becomes clear in three rounds.

**Part Waters:** (Difficulty 15) You cause a 10 foot deep body of water to create a path for you along the riverbed or ocean floor. This channel is wide enough for a mounted person to cross in single file, and is 50 feet long. You may increase the depth by 10 feet per +1 DC. You may increase the length by 50 feet per +1 DC. This is a maintained use of Water Shaping.

**Pressurized Sphere:** (Difficulty 15) A ten foot sphere of air forms around you or another which prevents damage from pressure beneath the waves and allows you to breathe normally. You may increase the size of the sphere by 10 feet for every +5 DC increase. This is a maintained use of Water Shaping.

**Thining:** (Difficulty 15) You cause rain or fog to temporarily thin in your line of sight, reducing the concealment it provides by one step (complete to partial, partial to none) for purposes of your vision alone, or anyone adjacent to you looking in the same direction as you that you willingly extend the power to. You can also see twice as deep/far as normal when gazing into the water's surface or when underwater. This is a maintained use of Water Shaping.

**Tidal Wave:** (Difficulty 30) A violent onrushing tide forms along the coast, bombarding the shore with a massive tidal wave. Anyone caught in the tidal wave takes +2 lethal damage, suffers a fatigue level, is swept off their feet, loses anything in their grasp, and is pulled out to sea unless they make a Fortitude save (against your power rank). Buildings and objects in its path are destroyed, and large objects like ships or boulders can be carried several miles inland. The tidal wave affects a coastline whose length equals your adept level in miles. For every +5 DC increase, the tidal wave affects another 10 miles. This is a maintained use of Wind Shaping.

**Water Gout:** (Difficulty 10) One target in a fast-moving river or stormy water is spat out onto the shore or a boat. Increase the DC by +5 per size category larger than Medium, and per additional target. Performing this action out of turn also increases the DC by +5.

If you fail your Water Shaping check by 5 or more, you lose control of the waters. The water may be

unleashed on the entire area, or a more specific Narrator-determined backlash might occur.

### Whirling Dervish (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Concentration and Perform (dance)

By performing a sacred dance for half an hour you may use the Talent (the Adept's core ability) by making extra effort instead of spending Conviction to gain a mystical power; the Narrator has the final say over what powers can be gained through the dance. See the animism *arcane philosophy* described in **Chapter 5** for ideas about suitable powers.

### Wind Finesse (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** *Elemental Strike, Wind Shaping*

You have developed your control over the wind into an art, allowing you to create multiple wind speeds and directions in the same area, as well as localized wind effects with specific targets. You may perform new techniques of finesse when using your Wind Shaping power. The listed Difficulties assume light winds are prevalent, though in stronger winds the Difficulty decreases. Some examples include, but aren't limited to:

**Catch the Falling:** (Difficulty 35) You may use winds to allow someone or something that is falling to land safely by creating a cushion of wind beneath them. You must generate a Windstorm in order to do this for Small targets, Hurricane-Force Wind for Medium targets, and a Tornado for Large targets. You may also attempt to reverse the direction of their fall, hurling them up into the sky; this requires that you beat the DC of your Wind Shaping check by 5. Performing this action out of turn increases the DC by +5. Catching multiple objects/creatures increases the DC by +2 per additional object/creature.

**Dust Devil:** (Difficulty 35) You can create a miniature tornado which you can direct to attack your opponents. You can bring one dust devil into creation by creating Hurricane-Force Winds. For every 5 points by which you exceed the DC to create Hurricane-Force Winds, you may create another dust devil. The target must succeed a Reflex or Fortitude save to avoid or resist an attacking dust devil. If the target fails their save they are sucked within and whirled around for 1-4 rounds, taking +4 non-lethal damage per round, before being violently expelled (falling damage may apply). While the subject is within the dust devil, you may move them up to 100 feet per round trapped. If you do not maintain the dust devils or fail a Concentration check to distraction, they move about randomly (and are liable to suck up friends or bystanders).





**Flying:** (Difficulty 25 for one person) You may create winds beneath a person which allow them to fly. You must create Severe Winds to propel one person, a Windstorm to propel six people, and a Hurricane to propel a dozen people. Only Suleiman was able to command more powerful winds, able to transport his entire entourage. You gain a +2 bonus on the power check if you use a suitably lightweight object with a large surface area, such as a kite or a carpet. This is a maintained use of Wind Shaping.

**Protective Whirlwind:** (Difficulty 30) You can create a wall of rotating wind around an area or person that

protects any within from ranged fire. You must create a Windstorm in order to establish the protective whirlwind. Ranged weapon attacks are impossible, and everyone within the whirlwind gains concealment against melee attacks and partial concealment against siege weapons. Adepts using Elemental Strike must beat you in an opposed Wind Shaping check. The base area protected is a ten foot circle; increase the DC by +2 for every 10 feet you wish you expand the circle by. This is a maintained use of Wind Shaping.

**Volley of Arrows:** (Difficulty 30) Though you cannot manipulate an object, you may cause projectiles, such as arrows or sling stones to hurtle through the air. By creating a Windstorm, you can cause up to a dozen arrows to fire. These arrows travel in a general direction, but cannot be given a specific target; thus, a Medium target may only be hit by one arrow, a Large target by 2, a Huge target by 3, and so on, though these tactics can be devastating against armies. Make a normal ranged attack check, using your Intelligence in place of Dexterity, with a -4 penalty due to the difficulty in controlling such a fine object with mighty winds. The arrows deal their normal damage. For every 5 points by which you exceed the DC to create a Windstorm, you may double the amount of arrows you can unleash.

If you fail your Wind Shaping check by 5 or more, you lose control of the winds. The winds may be unleashed on the entire area, or a more specific Narrator-determined backlash might occur.

## Word of God (Supernatural)

**Prerequisite:** *Baraka*, True Faith

The divine truth of God resonates in your voice, and you can be heard over any noise. When preaching, you cannot be interrupted through word or through action. Animal and birds gather to listen to you preach. When speaking the truth, everyone believes you and takes what you say to heart, though some may deny what you say. If you are saying something which you believe to be true, but in reality isn't, you don't gain the benefits of this feat.



## Chapter 5: Magic

*"O father, there was with me from childhood a wily and treacherous old woman who was a witch. She taught me witchcraft, and I copied and memorized seventy domains of magic, by the least of which I could within the hour transport the stones of your city beyond Mount Qaf and beyond the ocean that surrounds the world."*

- The princess in "The Tale of the Envious and the Envid"

Magic features so strongly in the *Nights* it could be said to be a character unto itself. Wondrous and mysterious, awesome and terrible, magic is both a sign of extreme piety and sinful arrogance. Often, it brings miraculous windfalls, but just as often wrecks what it has created or becomes tainted by the scheming of immoral men and women. It lowers kings and beheads the prophets who dare speak ill of them. It tempts the pious magician and drives the wild-eyed mystic to the edge of sanity. Orthodox clergy believe magic was taught to mankind as a test by the fallen angels Harut and Marut; to avoid magic, they maintain, is virtuous and a sign of true faith. Mystics and philosophers embrace magic in one breath and fear it in another; they believe it is a force sent from God the Almighty for mankind's deliverance, a force all too often used for impious ends. Amidst this raging debate, an adept needs a place to take a stand.

### Arcane Philosophies

Adepts are quick to attribute their powers to God when pressed by orthodox clergy, but when serious arcane conversation emerges between adepts, their true views on the matter emerge. An *arcane philosophy* reflects an adept's attitude toward magic and the source of their powers; all adepts must begin with one. An adept can change their arcane philosophy by spending a point of Conviction, losing any advantages of their old philosophy and gaining the advantages of the new philosophy.

Arcane philosophies are divided into those that are common and those limited to secret societies.

### Merging Philosophies

An adept may choose to follow more than one arcane philosophy, though each philosophy after the first must be purchased as a feat (unless they have the Esoteric feat). In addition, the adept must be able to reconcile the two views philosophically. For example, a natural scientist might perform rituals just as his deceased grandfather did, believing that his long vigils in the laboratory will lead his grandfather's spirit to guide his hand. Often, the adept with multiple philosophies exists in a state of inner conflict regarding the role of his or her powers, and may even switch back and forth between two competing philosophies until one wins out.

### Secret Philosophies

The Narrator may decide to limit an adept's selection of arcane philosophies by requiring membership in certain organization or secret societies to gain access to different arcane philosophies. Here are some ways the Narrator might do this according to secret societies: Architects of Divinity (Sacred Architecture), the Assassins (*Khadulu*), Brethren of Purity (Audible Life Stream), the Hand of Fatima (*Ilm Shem Yah*), and the Society of Revelation (*Nuzul al-Qadar*).

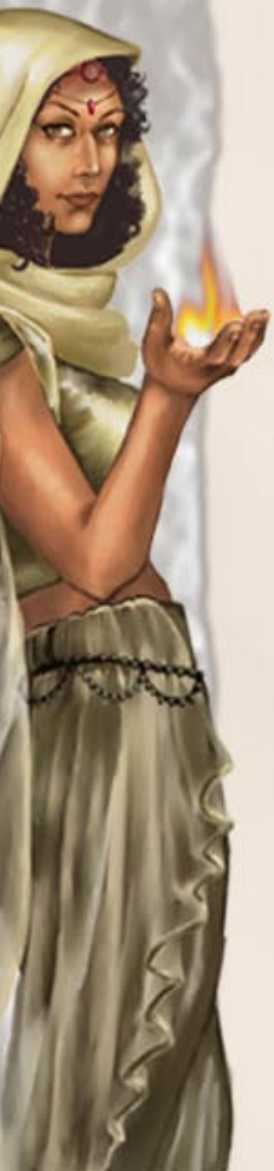
### Power Lists

Each arcane philosophy is associated with certain powers. These are not restrictions but rather suggestions to evoke a certain feel of magic. For example, while a fire shaping saint is certainly possible, a saintly character whose magic comes from faith is expected to perform miraculous healings and benedictions. A Narrator who wants a stricter system of magic might limit an adept to those powers associated with their philosophy.

### Animism

By attaining altered states of consciousness you have tapped into psychic powers most people are

Arcane Philosophy	Main Tenet
Animism	The unseen spirit world is the source of magical power.
Audible Life Stream	Harmonizing with the word of God channels miraculous magic.
Bay'ah al-Mufariqat	A pact with a mighty spirit grants you your powers.
Faith	Your miraculous powers come from unwavering faith in God.
Ilm Shem Yah	By learning True Names you gain power over creation.
Khadulu	Before belief, before the inhaled breath, is magic power.
Nuzul al-Qadar	Power is being able to see causation and possibility.
Ritual	Time honored traditions purify your soul for magic to enter.
Sacred Architecture	The act of creation is inherently imbued with magic.
Science	Power comes from understanding natural phenomenon.
Trickery	Magic is the playing off of pre-existing superstitions.
Unfettered	The Higher Soul is the source of power, accessed by will and focus.







unaware of. You believe your powers come from the unseen spirit world. By spending a day fasting in the wilderness you can gain access to any of the following powers by making an extra effort (instead of spending a Conviction point): Nature Reading, Scrying, Spirit Sight or Visions. However, you must follow strict guidelines of the spirits; you gain the *taboo* Complication. Should you break this taboo your powers stop working until you make atonement to the spirit you have wronged.

Mystical powers commonly include Beast Link, Bliss, Body Control, Dream Shaping\*, Fertility\*, Ghost Touch, Heart Reading, Mystic Imbuement\*, Nature Reading, Psychic Reflection, Psychic Shield, Scrying, Second Sight, Spirit Sense\* and Visions.

## Audible Life Stream

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Perform (song)

*Shabd* is a Sanskrit word that means “the sound current vibrating in all creation”, or “the audible life stream.” In Islam it is known as the *kalam*. Adepts of the Brethren of Purity are awakened to this primordial sound – the word of God – by special teachers within the Brethren. Once awakened, the adept can produce sounds that vibrate in consonance with the audible life stream, producing miraculous results. You must speak to use your powers. Any time you use a power that requires concentration or maintenance you may spend a Conviction point to harmonize your voice with the audible life stream.

Thereafter, the power is maintained by subtle forces and you do not need to maintain it; the power will last for up to 1 minute for each round that you maintained the power previous to “releasing” it to the audible life stream.

Powers commonly associated with the audible life stream include Bliss, Body Control, Cure Disease, Cure Poison, Enhance Other, Enhance Self, Enhance Senses, Mind Touch, Mind Shaping, Phase, and Ward.

## Bay'ah al-Mufariqat

The *bay'ah al-mufariqat* means the “oath of separated beings.” Some adepts enter into pacts with spiritual beings in order to gain supernatural powers. Such beings may be djinni, deceased ancestors, Prophets and saints, angels, dragons, or even celestial bodies once worshipped by pagans. Such powerful beings often are inaccessible to mortals, and their mere presence is too much for the mortal mind to bear. Thus, the adept relies on an intermediary, a minor spirit which the adept takes on as a familiar (gaining the Familiar feat for free), to commune with the greater patron. As long as the adept knows about or has witnessed a power, he or she can request the familiar to petition their patron for access to that power. The familiar disappears and must audience with the patron for one round per rank of power desired. A Charisma check is made (using either the adept's or the familiar's, whichever is greater) against a base Difficulty of 10, and modified according to this table:



Check Modifier	Circumstance
-1	Each rank of power sought beyond the maximum power rank of the adept (3 + the adept's level).
-2	Repeating a failed search attempt in the same day (cumulative). If a repeat attempt fails by 5 or more, the patron strips the adept of the ability to use powers for a day, keeps the familiar hostage for a day, or otherwise inflicts a minor punishment for the adept's audacity.
+2	The familiar brings a gift to the patron, such as a rare treasure or a promise from the adept to perform some action, or a piece of news that pleases the patron (cumulative).

If successful, the familiar returns with the formula for the power the adept requested. Otherwise, the familiar returns and makes great apology for its failure. However, upon making a compact with the patron, the adept loses the ability to use powers on their own without their familiar's help. The adept may use any powers they had prior to the oath, but may not use powers they learned after the oath is sworn.

### Faith

Your miraculous powers come from the divine blessings of God (*keramat*), earned through your deep well of faith. You gain one of the following bonus feats: Devout, True Faith, or Virtuous. However, your powers stop working (and you may lose this bonus feat) if you commit a sin against your faith, or you attempt to use your powers in a sinful manner. Regaining your powers requires undergoing an adventure of atonement.

Powers commonly attributed to faith include Baraka\*, Body Control, Calm, Cure, Cure Blindness/Deafness, Cure Disease, Cure Poison, Dispel\*, Imbue Life, Phase, True Seeing\*, Truth-Reading, Visions, and Ward.

### Ilm Shem Yah

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Knowledge (theology and philosophy)

*Ilm Shem Yah* is the "Study of the Divine Name" as practiced by the Hand of Fatima; it is based on angelic names, properties of the 99 names of God, Qur'anic surahs, and the power of the

Arabic language. Adepts of the Hand of Fatima use knowledge of True Names to power their magic; an adept is assumed to know the True Name of a thing in which she has a corresponding skill of at least 4 ranks. For example, an adept attempting to use Weather Shaping would need to have at least 4 ranks in Knowledge (physical sciences). If the adept doesn't have at least 4 ranks in an associated skill she does not know the True Name and can't use her powers on the subject. When targeting people, adepts practicing *Ilm Shem Yah* must know the name given to the subject at birth otherwise their magic fails. If the adept manages to learn the True Name of a person, they gain immense power over the subject. Learning another creature's True Name is a very difficult task which should require a challenging adventure be undertaken. An adept may use a True Name in the following ways:

- Command the subject to perform a service for you (no save), or forbid the subject from taking a certain action.
- The subject fails their saving throws against your powers.
- Instantly learn some fact about the subject of your choosing.
- Free the subject from mind-altering effects by speaking its True Name.

Powers associated with *Ilm Shem Yah* include Calm, Cure, Cure Blindness/Deafness, Cure Disease, Cure Poison, Dispel\*, Protection\*, Psychic Shield, and Ward.

### Khadulu

**Prerequisite:** *True Seeing, Truth-Reading*

The *Tajir* occultists of the Assassins have developed their own philosophy of magic, advocating the abandonment of dogma and fixed beliefs, allowing one to see reality as it truly is. *Khadulu* literally means "forsake", and the adept does indeed forsake their old beliefs, sloughing them like a snake does its dead skin. You must abandon any *code of honor* you have, and any feats that require you to adhere to a code of conduct (e.g. Merciful Combatant) or swear allegiance to anyone including the Assassins (e.g. Dedicated). You may no longer benefit from swearing oaths. However, when using the Truth-Reading power you can detect half-truths, lies of

Khadulu: New uses for True Seeing	
DC	Task
10	See how committed someone is to a philosophy or position. You do not learn what their views are, however.
15	See whether someone has one of these feats: Dedicated, Devout, True Faith, or any other feat implying allegiance. You also learn if they have sworn a <i>bay'ah</i> .
20	See who or what someone has sworn a <i>bay'ah</i> to or is otherwise dedicated to.
*	See through a disguise. The Difficulty is the Disguise check of the subject.

omission, or things the subject believes are true (even if they are not). You may also use True Seeing in new ways, reflecting your expanded awareness of reality.

Powers commonly learned by practitioners of *Khadulu* include Body Control, Combat Sense, Dominate, Enhance Ability, Enhance Senses, Find the Path\*, Heart Reading, Heart Shaping, Mind Probe, Mind Reading, Mind Shaping, Mind Touch, Psychic Blast, Psychic Shield, Psychic Trap, Scrying, Second Sight, Sense Minds, Sleep, Suggestion, Supernatural Speed, True Seeing\* and Truth-Reading.

## *Nuzul al-Qadar*

**Prerequisite:** *Visions*

Adepts who attempt to gaze upon the Web of Fate can predict the possible outcomes to their actions with uncanny accuracy. You gain the Deduction feat. However, attempting to gaze upon what God has written down in the Preserved Tablet (*al-Lawhu l'Mahfuz*) can overwhelm the human mind. When failing a power check with one of the powers associated with *Nuzul al-Qadar*, you suffer a terrifying revelation. This revelation may have any of these effects (as decided by the Narrator): A spontaneous vision, being stricken blind, gaining the *fated*, *grief stricken* or *madness* Complication, dazed for a round, or be afflicted with an inexplicable prohibition.

Powers associated with *Nuzul al-Qadar* include Find the Path\*, Mind Touch, Object Reading, Pattern Sense\*, Scrying, Sense Minds, and Visions.

## *Ritual*

You achieve magical power through your knowledge of arcane rituals. Ritual adepts have varying views on the nature of magic, though most maintain their rituals help purify their souls so that they can use their powers. You gain Empower as a bonus feat; for each effective rank you add to a power, increase the fatigue Difficulty by +1 instead of +2. You may not empower a power by more than +10 ranks. However, each rank of a power you wish to use requires a full-round action, whether or not you choose to empower it, during which you must speak, gesture, and have suitable components handy. If you spend one minute for each power rank (instead of one round), you may include other ritual magic practitioners; each additional adept adds a +2 bonus to the power's rank or reduces the fatigue save Difficulty by 2. Each adept must share in the fatigue. A maximum of five adepts can help in this way.

Powers commonly associated with rituals include Curse\*, Djinni Binding\*, Djinni Summoning\*, Find the Path\*, Imbue Life, Imbue Unlife, Plane Shift, Protection\*, Visions, Ward, and all shaping powers.

## *Sacred Architecture*

**Prerequisite:** Imbue Item

God is the Architect of the Universe, sometimes called *Arche-tehton*. All attempts to emulate God must involve creation, whether of life, architecture, or social institutions. Adepts of the Architects of Divinity are able to invest their creations, whatever they may be, with magic. This requires being involved with the creation from its very beginning, and spending a Conviction point. The creation is now permanently imbued with a power. You may only invest any creation you make with one power, though multiple Architects can work together, each investing one power into their mutual creation. From hence forward, you are psychically linked to the creation as if it were your familiar (like a use of the Mind Touch power). If your creation is ever destroyed, you suffer the effects listed under Mind Touch for *deathcry* and you permanently lose 1 Constitution point.

Powers commonly associated with sacred architecture are Apport, Baraka\*, Earth Shaping, Find the Path\*, Illusion, Manipulate Object, Move Object, Nature Reading, Object Reading, Pattern Sense\*, Phase, Protection\*, Scrying, Second Sight, Teleport, and Ward.

## *Science*

Your so-called "magic powers" are simply the result of your understanding of natural phenomenon and their connection to the human condition. You believe your powers are scientific capabilities that anyone who applies him or herself can learn. Your powers are not fatiguing and cannot be targeted by other powers like Dispel or Ward so long as you use them in a believable way that is consistent with reason and logic. For example, you could use Cure Disease if you had prepared an herbal tea, but not by laying on hands. However, you cannot use your powers in illogical or "supernatural" ways without spending a Conviction point (though you'll try to rationally justify this later); if you do this often your Narrator can force you to abandon this philosophy.

The Narrator has the final say over what powers could reasonably represent scientific knowledge, but some powers commonly associated with science are Body Control, Calm, Cure Blindness/Deafness, Cure Disease, Cure Poison, Enhance Ability, Enhance Other, Enhance Senses, Heart Reading, Light Shaping, Nature Reading, Object Reading, and Pattern Sense\*.



**Trickery**

Most adepts take their art very seriously, but not you. You know that magic is rooted in superstition, and you are happy to oblige the superstitions of fools. Others revile your art as *sihr*...which is exactly the point. You believe all magic is illusion, thus you can never use magic on yourself, and when another tries to use magic on you for your benefit you are always considered unwilling (you must make a saving throw) and you gain a +5 bonus on your saving throw to resist their “helping hand.” All your powers can be seen through if a character studies the result of your power carefully or interacts with your manifested power in some way (see the Illusion power in the **True20** core book); if a character sees through your power it ceases to affect them. Unlike normal illusions, however, your trickery can produce real effects. Those powers that require a Will saving throw function normally, while those powers that require a Fortitude or Reflex saving throw also require a Will save. Using powers is not fatiguing for you as you’re simply playing off of pre-existent superstitions and fears.

Powers commonly associated with trickery include Blink, Curse\*, Dominate, Heart Shaping, Illusion, Light Shaping, Psychic Shield, Sleep, and Suggestion.

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Concentration

You cast magic spells, which require painstaking precision and will to take effect. According to your philosophy, magic comes from the will of the adept; thus every act with intention behind it is magical. Among those who believe in free will, it is assumed that there are limits to mankind’s freedom imposed by reality. However, through your preternaturally strong ability to focus and your commitment to act consciously, you have dismantled the normal boundary between freedom and impossibility. You have contacted the Higher Soul within you and you have learned to communicate with it through images generated by active visualization. You gain Skill Focus (Concentration) as a bonus feat. However, if you fail a power check by 5 or more, your lower self (your vice) somehow colors the power’s use. For example, a suspicious character who fails a True Seeing check might see an enemy behind a curtain that isn’t really there.

Those adepts who become unfettered commonly learn the Apport, Cure, Manipulate Object, Mind Probe, Mind Reading, Mind Touch, Move Object, Teleport, True Seeing, and all shaping powers.

**Powers**

Powers marked as *Consequence* have dangerous effects on a failed power check; the effects are increasingly dangerous the more dramatic the failure is. Where multiple consequences are give, the Narrator picks one.

**Unfettered**

Power	Summary
Baraka	Confer spiritual blessings upon others.
Celestial Shaping	Change the course of celestial events.
Curse	Afflict the guilty with curses.
Dispel	Counter powers in effect or coming into effect.
Djinni Binding	Bind a djinn to do as you bid.
Djinni Summoning	Summon a djinn for negotiations.
Dream Shaping	Communicate through and control dreams.
Fate Sight	See the seal of fate written upon others.
Fertility	Manipulate and detect birth and pregnancy.
Find the Path	Find the way to a specific subject.
Mystic Imbuement	Temporarily awaken powers in others.
Oath-Binding	Afflict a creature that breaks an oath.
Pattern Sense	Find order in apparent chaos.
Protection	Bar creatures from approaching an area or person.
Sandstorm Shaping	Create and control sandstorms.
Spirit Sense	Identify spirits and their fetters.
True Seeing	Determine the truth behind what you see.



## Baraka

### Prerequisite: True Faith

You exude spiritual energy. Anyone coming in contact with you is blessed. In order to use this power, you must adhere to the strictest of religious codes, taking vows of poverty, celibacy, humility, right conduct, etc. Should you sin, you immediately lose access to Baraka (and all dependent feats) until you confess and atone. Anyone you touch is blessed until they next sin. This blessing confers a +1 bonus to one kind of roll (e.g. professional skill checks, saving throws, Diplomacy checks) that you choose. The Difficulty is determined by the current state of sin of the recipient. For every 5 points by which the check exceeds the Difficulty, you may increase the bonus by +1 or extend the bonus to another kind of roll. If you fail the check by 5 or more, no blessing is conferred and the subject has bad nightmares about you and is fraught with doubt. A person who is already under the effect of your blessing cannot be blessed again.

DC	Victim's Guilt
10	A person with very few sins (e.g. a monk or devout scholar)
20	A person of moderate sin (e.g. most peasants and rulers)
35	A great sinner (e.g. an executioner or a tyrant)

**Time:** Baraka is a standard action.

## Celestial Shaping

### Consequence, Fatiguing

**Prerequisite:** Astrometry, *Find the Path*, Horary Astrology, Inception, Meteorological Astrology, Natal Astrology, *Nature Reading*, *Visions*, 8 ranks in Knowledge (earth sciences), Knowledge (physical sciences), and Sense Motive

A master of astrology, you can change the course of events in the celestial sphere. If any destinies or prophecies are tied to a celestial event that comes to pass through use of this power, they will come to fruition. Make a power check with a Difficulty according to what you are attempting.

Celestial Shaping	
DC	Event
15	Cause dawn to break or night to fall an hour earlier or later
20	Cause a minor celestial event like a full or new moon, shooting star, or solar alignment to occur out of place.
25	Cause a change to occur in the tides,
30	Cause a major celestial event like a meteor shower, a star going out, planetary conjunction, equinox, solstice, or eclipse to occur out of place.

Using this power always involves risk as it manipulates what is traditionally the exclusive realm of God.

Consequences	
Fails by	Result (cumulative)
1-4	You cannot use any astrology feats (Horary Astrology, Inception, Meteorological Astrology, Natal Astrology) for a week.
5-9	You cannot use the following powers for a week: Find the Path, Heart Reading, Nature Reading, Object Reading, Pattern Sense, Second Sight, Scrying, and Visions.
10+	You are cursed with the Evil Eye and no magic can remove it.

**Time:** Celestial Shaping is a full-round action.

## Curse

### Fatiguing

You have the power to lay curses. You might cause your target to become blind, deaf, infertile, turn them into an animal, or inflict any number of misfortunes upon them. Every curse must include at least one way in which it may be broken; this must be within the victim's power, though the adept need not inform their victim. For example, an appropriate loophole for a thief cursed with the evil eye would be to return his most valuable stolen treasure to the rightful owner.

Make a power check against a DC according to your victim's guilt and the appropriateness of the curse; this DC is modified by the rules for familiarity. If you have something which once belonged to the target, you gain +2 on your power check, and if you have a piece of the target (fingernail clippings, blood, hair) you instead gain +5 on your power check. Any adept attempting to Dispel to end the curse must win an opposed power check against your Curse check. Someone who is cursed gains the *accursed* complication.

DC	Victim's Guilt
10	Deserving of the curse and curse is tailored to their crimes
20	Curse is disproportionate to the victim's sins or not tailored to their crimes
30	Undeserving of the curse and overall a person with few sins
Modifiers:	
+5	The victim has at least one of these feats: Devout, True Faith, or Virtuous
-5	The victim is superstitious, a criminal, or has been cursed by you before

## Sample Curses:

**Bad Business** – The victim falls into a state of financial ruin, ranging from total poverty to failure in a critical business venture. It can affect a small shop or even a large factory, but never a vast trading empire.



**Beast Form** – The victim turns into an animal, though they retain their human intelligence. Each day in animal form they must make a DC 20 Will save or lose one point of Intelligence. If they reach -4 Intelligence, the victim is completely indistinguishable from a normal animal.

**Eat No More** – Used against gluttons and greedy thieves, this curse causes anything the victim eats to provide no sustenance. Either they seem to have an impossibly high metabolism or food turns to ash when it touches their lips.

**Evil Eye** – The victim suffers a terrible streak of bad luck, suffering -4 on all attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, and skill checks. Others avoid the victim when they can, fearing the Evil Eye is contagious.

**Get Out of Town** – Used to drive people out of town, this curse often involves tracing the route you wish to have the victim take during the cursing. You can determine how much pain and suffering will be involved in the curse, ranging from the minimum possible to destroying their reputation and family life.

**Hush** – Useful when you need someone to shut up, this curse causes the victim to stutter uncontrollably, fail to remember events clearly, even to have seizures. When attempting to speak about the topic, the victim suffers amnesia, confuses facts, and convulses.

**Illness** – This curse causes the victim to fall ill and may be used in an attempt to kill them. The disease's virulence equals your power check; it may not be treated with the Heal skill, though the target can recover as normal by making two successful Fortitude saves in a row. Anyone using Cure Disease on the victim must beat you in an opposed Curse power check.

**Troubled Sleep** – The victim is prevented from getting to sleep through unlucky circumstances, and even if he does get to sleep (through use of the Body Control or Dream Shaping powers), he has nightmares and tosses in fits. If the victim fails to sleep he awakens fatigued.

**Time:** Curse is a standard action.

## Dispel

### Fatiguing

You can counter the use of powers already in effect or coming into effect.

**Dispel Magic:** You bring a maintained power or supernatural effect to a premature end. The Difficulty is 20 + the opponent adept's level. If you succeed, the power ends immediately.

**Counterspell:** You can dispel a power after it is used but before it takes effect. In order to attempt counterspelling, you must ready an action or spend a Conviction point if reacting out of turn. Make an opposed Dispel check against the opponent adept's power check. If you succeed the power is cancelled and does not take effect.

**Retry:** No.

**Time:** Dispel is a standard action.

## Djinni Binding

### Fatiguing

You can bind a djinn to do as you command. Suitable tasks can include prohibitions, banishing a djinn back to Jinnistan, guard duty, or servitude. The djinn makes a Will save. If the binding is particularly suited to the djinn (e.g. teaching humility to an arrogant djinn who insulted your name) the djinn suffers a penalty of -1 to -4 on the save, depending on the nature the binding. If the binding is ill-suited

### Curses in Islam

Neither in Arabic tradition or in Islam is it forbidden or discouraged to curse another. In fact, cursing is rarely understood as inflicting evil on another, rather it is the logical withdrawal of God's blessings as punishment for wicked behavior. Many believe that cursing another simply requires speaking "*Lan'anatullah*", which means "May they be deprived of God's blessings." However, in some cases it is clear that a curse is intended to cause another harm, and not to strip them of God's favor. In such cases, especially if the adept using the curse isn't himself a pious individual, the curse may have consequences if the check fails.

Consequences of Irresponsible Cursing	
Fails by	Result
1-4	A slight headache. One of your eyes bulges. You are nauseated for a round. You gain the Haunted complication for the rest of the day.
5-9	Your victim is immediately aware someone tried to curse them. You are sickened for a day. You lose the ability to curse for a day. You must pray to God in repentance.
10+	Your curse backfires on you, or another suitable curse falls upon you for your presumption. Your visage grows hideous and hag-like. You become paranoid and insular; gain the Madness complication. Your victim immediately realized it was <i>you</i> who tried to curse them. You lose the Curse power until restitution is made.

to the djinn (e.g. forcing a pious djinn to commit wicked deeds), the djinn receives a bonus of +1 to +4 on its save. When using this power, you may not bind a djinn which is already bound to another through an oath, though you may attempt to “counter bind” a djinn which has been affected through this power by making an opposed power check against the adept who first bound the djinn, though you still must beat the djinn’s Will save. If you beat the adept’s power check but not the djinn’s Will save, the djinn is set free from all bindings! There may be consequences depending upon how badly you treat the bound djinn.

**Time:** Djinni Binding is a full-round action.

## Djinni Summoning

*Consequence, Fatiguing*

You can summon djinni, those Arabian spirits born of smokeless flame. This requires a power check with a DC equal to 10 + twice the djinn’s level. If you know a djinn personally, you may call upon it by name, otherwise you must specify which djinni tribe you are summoning a djinn from. You may only summon one djinn at a time. Upon being summoned, the djinn will negotiate with you. The djinn may or may not do your bidding, depending upon what you’re offering, your past relationship, and the situation at hand. The djinn, if it accepts your offer, may stay as long as it pleases.

Consequences	
Fails By	Result
1-4	No result other than a shimmering curtain of light, a bit of supernatural laughter, being knocked prone or stunned, crackling sound of flame, etc.
5-9	A mischievous djinn of the opposite type you intended to summon answers your call. It may disguise itself and attempt to trick you, or it may go about wrecking havoc, in which case it’s your responsibility to un-summon the djinn. Alternately, the djinn you summoned is free to do as it pleases.
10+	You have offended a noble djinn who may send a djinn servant to punish you, conjure you to her court to demand an explanation, curse you, throw your ship off course, drop you in the middle of the desert, etc.

**Time:** Djinni Summoning is a full-round action.

## Dream Shaping

You can communicate through and exert control over dreams. Make a Dream Shaping check, with the Difficulty determined by the task.

*Message:* You can send one way messages to a sleeping person. The base Difficulty is 10, modified by familiarity. An unwilling subject gets a Will save to avoid contact. If you do not want the subject to know the message is sent

by you, you can make a separate opposed Dream Shaping check against the subject’s Sense Motive, Second Sight, or Psychic Shield check (whichever has the highest bonus). If you win the subject is unaware of your attempt (whether you succeed or fail in actually sending the message). As long as the message is simple, it transcends all linguistic barriers. However, complicated messages require that you know the language of the subject, and the subject must make a Knowledge (supernatural) check to interpret. A complicated message is a fatiguing use of Dream Shaping.

*Nightmares:* You create fearful dreams which hinder sleep. The subject(s) resists with an opposed Will save. If the subject fails, they gain no benefit from sleep and awaken fatigued. If you beat the subject’s Will save by more than 5, they are shaken for one scene if they encounter the source of their nightmare in waking reality; for example, encountering the knife that killed them in the dream. This is a fatiguing use of Dream Shaping.

*Restful Dreams:* You create peaceful dreams which allow others to recover faster. The base Difficulty is 10. Either halve the time needed to get a full night’s rest (4 hours instead of 8), or double the rate of natural recovery from damage and fatigue. Any attempts to induce nightmares or attack the subject(s) in their sleep must win an opposed test against your Dream Shaping check. You may also make an opposed Dream Shaping check to rid someone of nightmares.

**Retry:** You can retry Dream Shaping, but retries on the same subject on the same night are fatiguing.

**Time:** Dream Shaping is a full round action. It requires concentration to maintain.

## Fate Sight

*Fatiguing*

**Prerequisite:** Deduction, Read Character, *Second Sight*, Sense Destiny, Sense Heritage, Sense Nature, *True Seeing*, *Truth-Reading*, *Visions*, Notice 8 ranks, Sense Motive 8 ranks

You can see destiny from eternity foreordained written on the foreheads of those you meet, and you know what fate has in store for them. When using this power, you declare the fate that is in store for a target; this fate always comes to pass. This power can effectively allow you to “discover” a latent destiny (bestowing the Destined feat or the *fated* complication). Make a power check against a Difficulty according to the specificity of the target’s fate. Just because you learn something doesn’t mean you must share it, though convincingly withholding what you’ve seen requires a Bluff check.



Difficulty	Specificity of Fate	Example
15	Ambiguous	"Your son will overcome a dangerous enemy of our nation."
20	Somewhat Specific	"Your son will turn against you out of love for his country."
25	Very Specific	"Your son will stand by the son of the Imam you have imprisoned and together they will overthrow you."
30	Precise	"Your son will challenge your persecution of the Imam upon reaching adulthood and either you will be deposed or you will become an ascetic."

Modify your power check according to when the declared fate comes to pass, as well as according to the rules of familiarity.

Modifier	Timing of Fate
-8	The hour is upon you! Occurs within several days.
-4	Occurs within several weeks.
+0	Occurs within several months.
+4	Occurs within several years
+0	Conditioned to occur under certain circumstances
-4	Conditional circumstance is common
+0	Conditional circumstance is uncommon
+4	Conditional circumstance is rare

For example, Kalilah, an 8<sup>th</sup> level Adept with Wisdom +3, takes this power. Her power check is +14 and she rolls a '10' for a total of '24'. Knowing she wants to declare a very specific fate (DC 25) during her audience before the king, she decides that the king's fate will occur within several months (+0), and that it will come to pass when he enters the city of Basra flying on an ebony horse (+4 for

a rare condition); thus her check result increases to 28, allowing her to declare a very specific fate: *The king's wicked vizier will perish in a fire and the king will marry a young Bedouin woman of the Banu Hussim tribe.*

**Special:** This power allows a player direct control over another's fate to simulate their character's knowledge of what will come to pass. If it is used on another player's character, that player may determine their character's own fate using this power as the adept would. The adept sees the fate the character's player establishes.

**Retry:** Yes. While you can build on a previously declared fate, especially less specific omens, you can never "overwrite" something that has already been foreordained, for such is the will of God.

**Time:** Full-round action.

## Fertility

### Fatiguing

You can manipulate and detect pregnancy and birth, as well as sterility and barren soil. Make a Fertility check with the Difficulty determined by the task.

*Sight of the Goddess:* You automatically can tell if a person or place is fertile, pregnant, or sterile; this is not fatiguing and requires no check. If the target is enchanted, make a Fertility check with a Difficulty equal to the check of the power used to enchant the person or place's fertility. If you succeed, you determine the nature of the power affecting the subject, and if you succeed by 5 or more you know who or what is responsible for the enchantment.

*Hands of the Goddess:* You can make changes in the fundamental fertility of a target, whether it is in an embryo or the soil. The Difficulty is based on the extent of the change you wish to make.

**Time:** Full-round action.

Hands of the Goddess	
Difficulty	Alteration
10	Avoid birth complications or induce labor. Improve target's sexual prowess, or increase the probability to conceive or bear fruit (by 25%).
15	Provide strength to an unborn seedling or baby, preventing it from injury or death within the womb/embryo. The land or mother requires more nutrients or the unborn babe/seedling will suffer.
20	Make fallow ground able to produce life, or make a sterile man or woman able to conceive children. Alternately, make a fertile target unable to bear fruits/children. In either case, you may set a specific condition which, if met, bypasses your enchantment temporarily or permanently (you decide).
25	Control the outcome of a birth, determining the child's gender, whether there will be twins, or the time during the day the child is born. Hide the child's true heritage or give the child features reminiscent of a different ethnicity from its parents.
30	Store a seed (whether from a plant or a man's sperm) in a natural receptacle such as a lake or leather pouch, indefinitely. You may set a specific condition which, if met, causes the natural receptacle to plant its seed or impregnate a woman, respectively.
40	Allow two incompatible beings to have offspring (e.g. djinni and a mortal). Ensure that a child of two designated parents fulfills a prophecy set forth by someone with the Visions power.



### Find the Path

*Fatiguing, Maintenance*

You can find the way to a specific subject. The Difficulty depends on the task.

*Find a person or object:* Take an average of the familiarities for both the subject and their location. For this purpose only you may seek a subject in an Unfamiliar location, adjusting the Difficulty by +30. This average is the base Difficulty to determine which direction the subject is in. If this is all you desire, then the use of the power is not fatiguing. Attempting anything more than this risks fatigue even if this base level is all that is obtained.

If the roll is made by 5 or more, you learn the most direct route to the subject. While danger may be involved, it must be physically possible for you to follow. If the subject is dead or destroyed, you also learn this.

If the roll is made by 10 or more, you are pointed along the most efficient route. This may take longer than the most direct route, but it will be safer. You also learn if a dead subject has any living relatives, or whether a broken object is scattered in multiple places.

If the roll is made by 20 or more, you are guided around whatever dangers infest the route to the subject. You do not gain awareness of the nature of the threat, but are simply guided along a course which circumvents them.

The Narrator should make this roll secretly so that the adept is not sure what level of finding has been attained. Of course, the adept can always just settle with knowing which direction the subject is.

*Find your way when lost:* When you become lost, you may make a non-fatiguing power check to retrace your steps. The Difficulty is determined by how difficult path-finding in the terrain is. Areas that are easy to navigate are DC 10. Difficult areas, such as a windswept desert are DC 20. Truly convoluted areas, like an underground cavern complex are DC 30. An environment which is magically enchanted could have an even greater Difficulty. If you succeed, you find your way out. Something significant must occur while orienteering yourself in order to make another power check; for example, you find the journal of a long-since dead adventurer. So long as you are lost you may not use Find the Path to find a person or object.

**Time:** Find the Path is a full round action.

### Mystic Imbuement

*Consequence, Fatiguing*

You can temporarily awaken powers in others. This requires leading the subject(s) in a guided meditation for at least thirty minutes or staying by their bedside for an hour while they sleep. At the end of this time make a power check. The Difficulty is equal to 20 minus the subject's key ability score (Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma, whichever you use for your powers). If successful, they gain access to one of your powers for one scene, using it as if they were an Adept of half their character level. At the end of this time, they anticipate the power leaving them several rounds before it does. You may not recover fatigue from using any power which you have imbued until the imbue ends. For example, an adept who imbues an ally with Cure doesn't recover fatigue induced by using the Cure power until the scene ends. If somehow you manage to trick an unwilling subject into being imbued with power, they get a Will save to resist. The Narrator may decide that certain power cannot be imbued.

For every 5 points by which you succeed on the power check, you may opt to add one of these effects to the imbue:

- Imbue an additional power in the subject(s).
- The imbued power lies dormant until a pre-determined trigger at which point it becomes available to the subject for one scene.



- You absorb the fatigue of any imbued powers the subject(s) uses; you may recover from this fatigue as normal.
- You can trigger the imbued power in the subject at will. However, you gain no special awareness regarding the subject when you are apart. If the subject tries to resist the power and bring it under their control, you must win an opposed Will save test.
- The subject is unaware of possessing an imbued power.

However, awakening others' minds is dangerous, and risks driving the subject mad.

Consequences	
Fails By	Result
1-4	The subject gains the power but has absolutely no control over it. During periods of stress the subject must make a Will save against a Difficulty of 10+ half their total level. If the subject fails, they are stunned and the imbued power activates in some inconvenient way.
5-9	The subject is dazed for a minute. Depending on their attitude to you, the subject may become addicted to the <i>Imbuement</i> power. Alternately, the subject may become frightened, and refuses to ever let you work magic on them again.
10+	The subject is driven mad (gain <i>madness</i> Complication).

**Retry:** You must wait 24 hours before trying to use Mystic Imbuement with the same subject(s).

**Time:** Mystic Imbuement requires at least half an hour of meditation.

### Oath-Binding

You can enforce oaths that others swear to in your presence, binding them to make good on their word. The subject must agree to an oath willingly, or else be caught making an oath of their own (e.g. "I swear I'll never let him out of my sight again!" "Really? I'll hold you to that!"). If the subject is compelled into agreeing, the oath is not binding. If the subject is sincere, they are oath-bound. Make a power check to determine the maximum affliction you can create should the subject break the oath. If the subject ever breaks the wording or spirit of the oath they are thus afflicted. You may use this power to bind two parties to a contractual agreement between them.

Difficulty	Maximum Affliction
10	You know when the oath is broken.
20	The subject is automatically affected by the <i>Curse</i> power (no save or power check needed); this curse cannot be removed until the oath is fulfilled or restitution is made.
30	The subject's soul has been marked as an oath-breaker; the subject's credibility is utterly ruined and no one takes the subject's testimony or vows seriously. The subject gains the Not Taken Seriously complication. In addition, anyone using the <i>Curse</i> or <i>Oath-Binding</i> powers on the subject gets a +5 bonus on their power checks.

**Time:** Oath-Binding is a full round action.

### Pattern Sense

**Prerequisite:** *Enhance Senses*

You are able to find order in apparent chaos and you see God's hidden hand in everything. Whenever you are confronted with something you believe exhibits a pattern of some kind, make a power check. How deeply into the pattern you can see depends upon your check result.

Check Result	Information Gained	Example
10 or less	You know whether there is a pattern.	By studying the police reports you learn there is a pattern to the killings, but you're not sure what it is yet.
20 or less	You know how often the pattern occurs.	The murders seem to take place during riots so they can be disguised as mob violence.
30 or less	You know the exact pattern it follows.	The murderer is killing officials who condemned the Imam to die; he makes his victims read the official arrest order for the Imam first.

In addition, you may use the *Enhance Senses* power to increase a single Knowledge skill provided you have sufficient time to observe the phenomenon. Depending on the phenomenon this could be an hour, a day, or a week. After studying the phenomenon you can make an *Enhance Senses* check. For example, an adept studying a criminal's pathology



might make an Enhance Senses check to gain a bonus to Knowledge (behavioral sciences) for a scene involving the criminal.

You may attempt other tricks, but these uses of Pattern Sense are fatiguing:

**Decipher:** You can understand a secret code or complex mathematical problem. A basic code is DC 10, a difficult code is DC 20, while a truly convoluted one is DC 30. You can also decipher archaic writing if you are trained in Knowledge (history), bureaucratic legalese if you are trained in Knowledge (civics), and obtuse arcane writing if you are trained in Knowledge (supernatural); you must be able to read the base language in question, or at least a related language.

**Reconstruct:** With just a few scraps of an object, you can understand what the whole object itself was. Thus, you can extrapolate the contents of a badly burned book, understand the steps needed to re-create a shattered sword, or see a mosaic as if it were whole even though it is in many pieces on the ground. The Difficulty depends on the condition of the object. Increase this Difficulty by +5 if you are trying to reconstruct just part of a larger object.

Condition	Difficulty
The object is mostly intact, but is missing a key part or suffered cosmetic damage.	10
The object is badly damaged, burned, shattered, and beyond repair.	20
The object is past the point of recognition or only a small piece of it remains.	30

**Reverse Engineer:** By examining an object of unknown composition you can make a DC 15 power check to determine its ingredients or constituent parts. For example, you could determine the components of a potion.

**Retry:** You must wait 1 hour until retrying.

**Time:** Pattern Sense is a full round action.

## Protection

*Fatiguing, Maintenance*

You can bar a certain type of person or creature from entering a protected area or approaching a protected person with magical force. For example, you could bar all living beings, djinni, ifreeti, undead, automata, animists, Franks, armed soldiers, etc. Subjects attempting to enter the protected area or approach the protected person must make a Will save or be repelled from entering the protected area or approaching the protected person.

**Protecting a person:** The Difficulty for protecting a person is 15 for a willing subject and 30 for an unwilling subject; the Difficulty is modified by your familiarity

with the subject.

**Protecting an area:** When you establish the protected area, you must decide whether there is a special way to bypass the protection (e.g. a magic password). Make a Protection check with a Difficulty according to the size of the area you are protecting; the Difficulty is modified by your familiarity with the area.

Difficulty	Size of Area Protected
15	Small (A door, a small room, a treasure chest)
20	Medium (A dining room, a well, a hut)
25	Large (A garden, a modest home, stables)
30	Gargantuan (A palace, a prison, an oasis)

**Triggered power:** You may cause one of the other powers you know to trigger when a subject violates the protected area or person. This increases the fatigue save and power check Difficulty of the Protection power by +2 per power that will be triggered. The power(s) activates instantly upon the protection being violated; it flares to life as a reaction. If offensive in nature it targets the trespassing subject, while if defensive it targets the person or area protected.

**Retry:** Yes, but you must wait at least 24 hours before attempting to protect the same area or person again.

**Time:** Protection is a move action.

## Sandstorm Shaping

*Fatiguing, Maintenance*

**Prerequisite:** Earth Shaping, Wind Shaping

You can shape the terrible sandstorms of the desert. A use of Sandstorm Shaping affects an area with a diameter in miles equal to your adept level, centered on you. The smallest area you can affect is one mile. It takes (30 – power rank) minutes for the sandstorm to manifest.

You can dictate the direction and intensity of an existing sandstorm. If you change the direction or intensity of the storm, it takes 10 minutes for the change to gradually occur. The sandstorm continues after you stop maintaining it, lasting for a number of minutes equal to your adept level times 10. You may attempt other tasks, with the Difficulty depending on what you attempt.

**Cease Sandstorm:** You can diminish or do away with other sandstorms entirely (naturally occurring or otherwise). This requires an opposed Sandstorm Shaping check if the sandstorm is magical in nature; the storm ends suddenly. If the sandstorm is naturally occurring, make a Difficulty 20 Sandstorm Shaping check to end the storm in (30 – power rank) minutes. For every 5 points you succeed, you may end the storm 5 minutes sooner. This requires that you stand exposed within the sandstorm while using Sandstorm Shaping.



**Path in the Sandstorm:** (Difficulty 25) If you have Earth and Wind Finesse, you can carve a swath through a sandstorm, protecting you and your companions from scouring sands, powerful winds, and allowing you to see normally. This is a maintained use of Earth Shaping.

**Wicked Storm:** (Difficulty 10) You make an existing sandstorm difficult to hide from. The Survival check Difficulty increases to 25, and increases an additional +1 for every 5 points you exceed the Difficulty.

**Time:** Sandstorm Shaping is a full round action.

### Spirit Sense

You can sense spirits normally invisible to humans, such as incorporeal djinni, the dead, or guardian angels. Make a Spirit Sense check to detect spirits in your vicinity, or to detect fetters important to a spirit.

**Sense Spirit:** The Narrator makes a Spirit Sense check for you in secret as a reaction whenever a spirit is nearby. The base Difficulty is 10 + the spirit's level, and the Difficulty increases by +1 for every 10 feet between you and the spirit. A successful result means you sense a spirit is nearby, you know roughly what direction it is and how far away, and you are able to hear the spirit speaking to you and you can speak to it in return. If you succeed by 5 or more, you can pinpoint the spirit's location and tribe (e.g. Jinn or Ifreet, angel or demon, the family of the deceased, etc.). If you succeed by 10 or more, you can identify the spirit by name, if it is known to you. Djinni and demons that have taken visible physical form cannot be detected as spirits with this power; however, if they are using a power to turn invisible while embodied, you *can* sense them.

**Sense Possession:** You can sense a spirit possessing a person. Make a Spirit Sense check against a Difficulty of 10 + the power rank of the spirit's possession power (e.g. as per the Dominate power for a ghost using *malevolence*). If you win, you realize the victim is being possessed.

**Sense Fetter:** If you also have the Object Reading power, you can sense a fetter. A fetter is something vitally important to a spirit's essence, such as a ghost's grave, or the lamp a djinni is bound to. You may make a Spirit Sense check when you attempting to identify a spirit's fetter. The base Difficulty is 15 to detect a fetter, 20 to determine when the spirit was last there and the spirits general nature (e.g. djinni, demon, etc.). It is Difficulty 25 to know exactly which spirit belongs to the fetter. This is a fatiguing use of Spirit Sense.

**Retry:** No

**Time:** Sensing a spirit or a possession is a reaction. Sensing a fetter requires a full-round action.

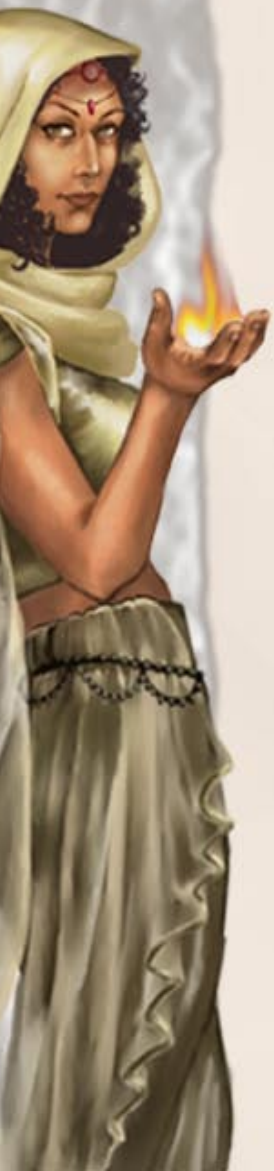
### True Seeing

*Fatiguing*

You sense the truth in what you see, piercing concealment and magic. You make a power check based on what you are attempting to see through.

DC	Task
10	See through partial concealment (no miss chance). See through a mirage.
15	See a concealed object like a hidden weapon or a secret door.
20	See through total concealment (no miss chance).
*	See through an illusion, see something that's invisible, or determine the true form of something that's shapeshifted.
* Requires an opposed Power check	

**Time:** True seeing is a move action.



## Chapter 6: The Ungrateful Son

### *The Young Brother's Tale*

My name is Ahmed ibn-Ibrahim, and I am the youngest son of the noble and valorous sheikh Ibrahim al-Nisr. My two brothers, Fatin and Hisam, and I loved to go hunting in the hills outside of town, and so one day we set out with our mares, their tails held high, their carriage proud, each with a red birthmark on its shoulder. To each of my brothers a boar was killed, but each time I fired by bow and arrow I missed and I began to grow frustrated, but my two elder brothers just laughed at me. Gazing into the woods I spied a great stag and gave chase. Charging through the trees which slapped at my hands and face, I came to a clearing where the stag had stopped. I drew back my bowstring, and for a split second I thought I saw a look of peace come across the stag's face. Taking aim, I slew it with one arrow. I boasted of my kill to my brothers for the rest of the night while we prepared our catch, but as our fire burned bright there appeared a woman from the woods whose features were as porcelain and countenance noble. This was the very same witch you saw, but then I did not see the truth of her soul and I was young and easily fooled by a pretty face. My brothers started at her sudden appearance across from us at the fire, but she raised her hand and pointed at me. "You have killed my stag."

Hastening an apology, I said, "Forgive me lady, for we knew not these lands were yours. My father is a great sheikh who will reward you with three even greater than this stag in compensation."

"This was the most prized stag in all the country. Its horns were made of pure ivory and its pelt was lined with silver, but when you shot it the magic left the stag and now it is as any other corpse."

"Pardon me, lady, but I knew not," I said. "I will bring you thirty stags!"

Her eyes flashed anger, but her demeanor was cool and collected. "Is that so? Shall I have the pleasure of you bringing these stags to me in person, my lord?"

"On my honor I shall come to your palace in three weeks. If you find my gift pleasing, will you consider taking me for a husband?"

A tear rolled down her face, and my brothers and I sighed. "Alas, my husband has recently perished, and I cannot think of love, but come in two fortnights and we shall see." With that she whistled and a great white horse came from the woods and carried her away into the night.

No sooner had she departed than my brothers chastised me for promising that which I could not deliver, but I saw that they were jealous of my good fortune to meet such a beautiful and wealthy woman. I bid them keep their peace, and the following morning we returned to our father's dwelling, where I told him what had befallen me. I asked him for my third of the inheritance so that I might afford this expensive dowry. No sooner had

he said "Take it, it is yours, my son," I took my men with me to find thirty stags and bring them alive to the witch. We traveled to mountain meadows, stormy steppes, and palatial pine forests and we gathered 29 stags, each bound by a collar and leash to the other. As my money began to run out, I began to worry that I would fail my venture so close to its completion. That night as I walked to clear my mind I came upon an old stag weeping over a man's body which had been felled with an arrow through the heart. I could not fathom how a stag should weep, but then my mind turned to the witch and I thought that I might win her hand with such a rare treasure. The old stag offered no resistance and I easily wrestled it to the ground and collared him. With the promised 30 stags captured, I set forth for the witch's palace.

We came to a bright field of flowers which overlooked a valley where lay the witch's city, its people working industriously like no people I have seen. I ordered my men to make garlands of the flowers and anoint the stags with them, but no sooner had the first man cut a flower than I heard him yell in surprise. Coming over to him, I found what had horrified him – blood oozed forth from the flower's stem. "We have killed all manner of prey together, shared in its skinning, and you shy from a bleeding flower?" So berated, my men set forth to the task, though they were ill at ease, whispering that foul spirits were at play.

The city was surrounded by a circular stream of water that, contradictory to all reason, flowed constantly. Spanning this stream was a bridge wrought of gold and platinum. The witch appeared at this majestic entrance to her city with thirty doe-eyed female servants, each bearing a chalice filled with wine. "O happy day that you have come to my great city, son of Ibrahim. If there is anything you desire, you shall receive it."

"Here are the thirty stags I promised you," I said, calling my men forward with the stags. Before I mentioned the special the elder stag, the witch ran her hands over the stag's back as if in reverie. I was shocked that the stag seemed to look frightened.

"Bring this one inside – we shall save it for our wedding night feast," she directed her servants. Then, taking my hand, she asked, "Will you stay with me, you and your men, and enjoy the fruits of my city?"

"I find it most agreeable," and, thanking my good fortune, took her by the arm for a tour of her city. "I find it most amazing how hard-working your citizens are. In one hour they accomplish what it takes my men one day to complete."

She winked at me. "They are singular in their devotion to me, and they are greatly rewarded for it. Each year I hold a contest. The person, youth or elder, man or woman, who brings me the most extraordinary gift is freed of their duties and lives a life of luxury for the remainder of their days. Why, I have received speaking baboons, jeweled birds, spinning minaret towers..."



# Chapter 6: The Ungrateful Son

I laughed at her, and she frowned. "Don't you take me seriously?"

"I do not," I confessed. "But there are many things in this world that I did not think possible and I have been proved wrong. I did not think that there existed women more beautiful than those of my tribe until I saw you."

Calling her servants over, the witch blushed as they fanned her with great palm leaves, and then she spoke these words of poetry:

"Man is no different from the beasts in word  
For beautiful speech is the song of the bird  
And in witty banter the hyena is more gifted,  
In horse's neighing my heart is more uplifted."

Such coquettish words would not dissuade me, however, and I insisted that we take a walk through her gardens where all manner of creatures dwelt, each looking up at me as I passed as if paying solemn respects. "Your words must be those of a broken heart who suffered a suitor lacking in graces or art. Think of the poet, who says:

A sage's young ringdove that sat on display  
Thought day and night of escaping her cage  
But as she grew older she became content  
And found wisdom in surrendering dissent.  
For man has risen to mastering rank,  
And all beasts obey him, to God giving thanks,  
No handsomer a messenger in this day and age."

Laughing, the witch led me to the entrance of the palace, where she invited me in for dinner. On her veranda overlooking the city, she said these words of poetry:

"Who is yoked the ox or its master?  
Who, the horse or the rider, is faster?  
Who is more clever, the bee or its keeper?  
Who, the fish or the fisherman, is the eater?"

My head swam with longing for the witch at hearing her exquisite wit. The dishes were then served before us, mountains of lamb stuffed with rice and honeyed apples, boar dressed with orange glaze, filets of fish cooked in walnut oil, and in the center of the table was the meat of one of the stags I had brought her. Whereupon I set upon the food with ravenous hunger, with the witch serving me the choicest cuts with the daintiest smile until I could eat no more. Then she bid me good evening, and I retired. So we passed the next week in revelry until I began to wonder how my men fared and wished to know if they received similar treatment. She assured me that they did, but refused to let me see them. One night, I snuck out of my window and into the

hall where my men were staying. To my amazement there was no sign of them, and wild animals filled the room – monkeys, ostriches, pigs, geese, oxen and donkeys. Making a terrible noise the animals rushed toward me. I would have drawn my sword to defend myself had not one monkey showed me the seal ring of my greatest friend Abdul-Quddus. Looking upon the monkey and then upon the ring, I perceived this monkey bore great resemblance to my friend Abdul-Quddus and each animal's appearance was like unto one of the men who had traveled with me. Lamenting their sorry fate, I cried with them, and swore that I would restore them to their human state. So as not to draw the witch's suspicion, I returned to my room before the sun rose.

The following day we made merry as we had before, but when she ordered her servants to fetch us animals to slaughter for dinner, I pleaded that I was becoming sick from eating so much rich food, and I asked for vegetables to be served for dinner. The witch agreed to my request, and again we sat down after exchanging poetry and promises of love. Thereupon the dishes for the night were revealed, plates of cinnamon rice steeped with apricots and almonds, green salads with bright red radishes, and bowls of peppered squash stew. After I had eaten my fill, the witch called forth her servants to bring one more dish.

"Lady, I could not possibly eat another bite," I said.

"O my lord, this is a very special dish prepared just for you," she retorted. Then the servants brought a large silver platter out and set it before me. With flourish, they lifted the lid and steam burst forth, revealing the body of my friend Abdul-Quddus with an apple in his mouth. Crying out in horror, I fell back, calling for my sword, but then I remembered how my men had been transformed. The witch ordered her guards to seize me. "Yet when the visage was more pleasant you ate with relish! Know that the stag you slew was my lover transformed, and the flowers you picked when you came into my city were my daughters. For your murderous crimes, I have served you each of these nights one of your brutish men who slew my lovely daughters." I grew sick as I heard her words, and her guards held me fast with ease. "I have never killed a man, even one who has wronged me as greatly as you have. Now take your soul's bestial form!" Yelling, she cast her magic upon me and I became as a jackal. Her guards carried me to the menagerie where the remainder of my men, transformed though they were, received me and bemoaned my sorry fate.

Days passed, and each time the witch would visit and take one of my transformed men



for her meal. However, my presence must have brought her great agony, and she often ordered me beaten by the guards. At long last I learned that she intended to carry me outside the city and to kill me. Though I knew I would perish, I sought to save my friend Abdul-Tawwab who had been transformed into a thrush. Abdul-Tawwab gingerly stepped into my mouth and I closed it upon him ever so gently so that he was carried within. Then the witch and her guards came and collared me and marched me from the city. "You very sight reminds me of my lost love and my daughters, and I grow sick with each day you are in my city. Therefore, I will sell you as a slave. Now take your soul's human form!" I shook violently and became a man. As I did so I spat Abdul-Tawwab from my mouth and he flew high into the sky, escaping. Outraged that I had deceived her, the witch ordered her guards to beat me and I endured what they could dish out, for I knew I had saved one man.

Here the story shifts back to the *Physician's Tale*, as told from Yusuf's perspective.

I was tied to the back of a camel and the witch brought me to the meeting place with you, o Chief of Assassins.

"Did you learn the witch's name?" Asked the assassin chief.

"Yes, it was Anbar al-Darir, the Perfume of the Blind," said Ahmed ibn-Ibrahim.

"How is it that you saved Abdul-Tawwab's life then and you betrayed us, who would rescue you? Has your nature changed that much since your time with the witch?" I asked, glaring at Ahmed ibn-Ibrahim, who I was sure lied about his story. He had no answer for me.

The assassin chief sent us to bed, and so I retired with Aheyyad, tending to the wound on his head. "You put up a good fight, Aheyyad."

"I fought as hard as Ghunayya the messenger fled. Perhaps she was the wiser of us," he said, wincing as I bandaged the cut on his forehead. All at once the messenger's black eagle Fajera appeared at the window sill with a small pouch tied to her talon. Drawing close, I avoided the eagle's attempts to nip my hand and took the leather pouch. "What is it?"

"Pistachios," I said, feeling around inside the pouch. Fajera turned and flew off into the night. "Something tells me Ghunayya hasn't forgotten about us."

Then sleep overtook us, and come morning we packed our camels and followed the assassins into the desert. Ahmed ibn-Ibrahim tried to escape many times, and each time he was beaten so severely I thought he would lose his senses. It became my task to care for his wounds, though he never once said "thank you" or expressed gratitude. As we walked, I ate the pistachios, dropping the shells on the ground so that Ghunayya could follow us. Nights became days, and the sands about us

shimmered as we trekked on, our camels groaning and heaving at the long journey. At last we arrived, parched and weary, in the kingdom of Daylam, entering through a great stone archway that leads into the ancient mountains behind which pagan gods are worshipped.

We passed flowered hills, ochre violet dun and umber, where fruit grows wild on the trees. The Daylamis were very kind to us and gave us water and offered gifts wherever we went. Soon, the assassin chief had us, his prisoners three, blind-folded during the day so that we would not learn the secret route into Alamut. When at last my blind-fold was removed I beheld the most dazzling fortress in all the world. Rock-cut steps, like hidden serpents, traced their way to a vast golden gate trimmed in red wood, with one hundred slit-windowed towers and crenellations above from which countless archers gazed upon us. Water pours into the city through canals and irrigations works creating an artificial oasis in the valley. We were led within that impregnable fortress, ascending the stone steps as the first shafts of morning sunlight like an unsheathed scimitar fell upon us through the minarets of Alamut.

Within, I found a society like no other, living amidst a garden that is hidden by terror, deceit, and false beliefs. The people of Alamut enjoy their heresy amidst pomegranate and persimmon trees, watercress streams, Shirazi roses, and weeping willows. We were quickly separated, and I was sent to meet immediately with a *da'is*, one of the missionary princes of the assassins, who suffered from severe cataracts that threatened to blind him. The chief assassin, my courteous and ruthless kidnapper, told me the rules of etiquette when meeting with the *da'is*. I should not look him in the eye any more than I needed to perform a cursory examination, nor should I sit higher than him, and I may not discuss theology or philosophy, nor question him. When the visit was concluded, he instructed me to knock thrice on the door. I was escorted within the chambers, which smelled of ambergris and incense. The door closed behind me, and a shudder went up my spine. Here I was a physician sent to treat a man whose slightest word could spell death for anyone without fear of retaliation.

"Step forward," came the whispered frail voice. I did as the *da'is* bid me, stepping into the candle light of the dimly lit room. Rising from his bed, the *da'is* staggered toward me, cane in hand to guide him as he walked. His eyes were nearly white, the cataracts had become so severe, and I was astounded that the man appeared to be no more than 60 years of age. I gave him a brief examination, and then the *da'is* asked me, "What is your prognosis?"

"You will lose your vision in a month if the cataracts aren't cut away. In someone your age, I have never seen such a bad case. In fact, yours is the worse case of cataracts I have ever seen," I said frankly. I then described the tools I would need to perform the procedure and I explained the risk that was involved.



# Chapter 6: The Ungrateful Son

The da'is interrupted me. "I must thank you for bringing my son to me. Ahmed is the joy of my liver. Though he has squandered his wealth pursuing a woman, I have forgiven him and I will hold a feast celebrating his safe return home. However, there is something I must ask of you." His voice dropped and I felt my skin begin to crawl. "The witch Anbar al-Darir cast a spell upon him and he forgets that he is my son. I wish for you to speak with him and heal his deluded mind."

Lies came from the mouth of the da'is like honey, and I was tempted to believe him. Every question I asked had a reasonable and convincing answer. How was it that I had seen Ahmed in Kufa selling lamps? The da'is explained that it was a cover for an assassination Ahmed was planning to commit. Why did his men beat Ahmed on the way to Daylam? The da'is explained that these were Ahmed's rivals and promised they would each receive 80 lashes for mistreating his son. Every little question I threw in to catch the da'is in a lie was answered with effortlessly, gracefully. I began to wonder if Ahmed was indeed an assassin; that would explain the ease with which he betrayed us, and the rivalry between the assassins and the witch. At last I consented to do the bidding of the da'is, inwardly committing myself to find out the truth of Ahmed's past.

While the assassins forged the tools I would need to perform the operation on the da'is, Aheyyad counseled against meeting with Ahmed. "They have taken him to a tower where not but screaming, like that of a madman, can be heard. Don't do any favors for this ibn-Ibrahim; he is the one to blame for our captivity!"

I calmed my servant, and informed him that I would need his help operating on the da'is. "Aheyyad, these men are misguided heretics, but I do not think they are cruel. I will tend to Ahmed, in the hopes that I might gain our freedom."

Then I went to the tower where Ahmed stayed. Going within, I found Ahmed huddled in one corner, half out of his wits. Lighting a candle I examined his eyes, and realized that he was having hallucinations. He sobbed and grasped my collar, "I have no family! My father is dead!" Then he threw me to the ground and ranted like a madman, brandishing his fist like he would strike me.

Suddenly an idea came to my mind, and rising I strode to him and struck him twice in the face. "Shame on you for mistreating your father like that! How should I call a lunatic like you my son?"

Ahmed gazed at me with the look of a wild animal, and asked "Father?"

"Look into your father's eyes, Ahmed. Would you strike your own flesh and blood? Are you not my son?" I persisted in this vein until Ahmed

began to treat me as his father. When it became late I departed and returned the next day, and the next.

After two weeks of seeing Ahmed, I came up to talk to him and play chess. "Ahmed," I said, "tell me my name."

Looking at me from across the table, Ahmed blinked and tears came to his eyes, "You are my father Ibrahim al-Nisr." Then he fell to the floor wailing, and I held him, revealing the plan of the da'is to brainwash him and how the da'is had tried to gain my complicity in driving him mad. Giving Ahmed a fierce hug, I bid him keep quiet and feign belief that the da'is was his father until I came up with a plan of escape.

The next day, the da'is called me to his chambers to perform the operation, the tools being finished. My hand shook and beads of sweat covered my brow, but I managed to make the right incision and remove the cataracts. As the da'is recovered, he congratulated me. "You have done well, physician. Ahmed has been restored to his senses, and my vision has been healed. Ask me any boon, and I shall grant it if within my power."

"O da'is, my servant and I long for our home. Please give us food and provisions and camels for the journey, and grant us our freedom." Thus, the da'is agreed, and our camels were made ready. Aheyyad and I secretly gathered Ahmed and strapped him underneath one of the camels, covering him with a fake belly made of camel hide. Then the da'is himself rode with us out the gates and into the fields of Daylam, where he bid us good journey. Before we mounted our horses, however, a horn sounded out and three riders approached, yelling that Ahmed had escaped. No sooner than the words left their mouth than Ahmed dropped from the camel and mounted it. Grabbing the reins of the camels Aheyyad and I intended to use, Ahmed charged off, leaving us at the mercy of the assassins.

Furious, the da'is fell upon me and Aheyyad with his whip, "Think yourself virtuous? This is the reward for those who lie to me!" Then we were bound and taken as captives, where we were led to a minaret at the edge of a cliff which overlooked a raging river. The da'is explained that it is the custom of the Old Man, ruler of Alamut, to impress visiting dignitaries by ordering his "fanatic followers" to cast themselves to their deaths in the river below. With a wry smile, the da'is informed us we would have the pleasure of being those sacrificial lambs today. Aheyyad and I looked at each other in anguish, and surrendered our fate to God. From across the chasm there came a sign. We raised our hands in prayer and then we were cast over the edge of the cliff and swallowed by the hungry river.









## Chapter 7: Narration

*A single word can brighten the face of one who knows the value of words.*

*Ripened in silence, a single word acquires a great energy for work.*

*War is cut short by a word, and a word heals the wounds,*

*And there's a word that changes poison into butter and honey.*

*Let a word mature inside yourself. Withhold the unripened thought.*

*Come and understand the kind of word that reduces money and riches to dust.*

*Know when to speak a word and when not to speak at all.*

*A single word turns the universe of hell into eight paradises.*

- Yunus Emre, Turkish Sufi Poet (1238-1320)

O Narrator, to you is given the blessed task of lighting the lamp of your player's imaginations! Your stories will inspire wisdom and laughter, wonder and lamenting. They will teach the players how to discern virtue from vice, to face their fears, and to work together for the common good. It is a challenging path, but stay the course, and you shall receive great reward.

### *Lighting the Lamp: The Narrator's Agreement*

**Tales of the Caliphate Nights** is set in a world where even demons can be pacified with a story, animals give lessons in ethics, and beggars are invited to dine with kings and queens. Magic and everyday life are as intertwined as verse and prose to make a more believable and entertaining story. As Narrator, it is your job to convincingly balance the fantastic and the mundane. Herein you shall read how to accomplish this with the utmost grace and mastery.

### *A Sense of Wonder*

Consider for a moment what you wonder about, or what you wondered about as a child. Your story must arouse awe and admiration, and create a memorable experience for everyone. Magic gimmicks are the least of your tools in creating this sense of wonder, and vivid description and expressiveness are the greatest of your tools. When beginning as a Narrator, focus your descriptions to one aspect of the subject you are describing, such as the way a citadel's minarets are hidden by the clouds. Once you feel comfortable with this, you may expand your descriptions to include multiple senses. Other ways you can evoke a sense of wonder are using voices for different characters, mixing the historical with the fantastic, and creating

stories for supporting characters to relate.

### *Taking a Voice*

As the Narrator, you play a very intimate role in **Caliphate Nights**; instead of taking the role of an abstract voice who strings the players along on a mystery, you speak with the voice of a character within the story recounting a tale. Thus, a Narrator might begin a story in the following way:

My father was not always an old man, the village elders tell me. They say he used to have no beard, and that in those days he was a keeper of camels. He named me after a man who was very dear to him, but who went on to meet God. This is the story of how my father befriended the man with no family...

While the Narrator hasn't identified whose voice he is speaking with by name, there are many clues dropped in these opening lines. Of course, the Narrator could take a more direct route and say "My name is...and this is my tale." Both methods work equally well. When concluding the tale, or when performing a voice over during a period of inaction, always remember to come back to this character. This provides a sense of authenticity, delights the players when they meet the narrator in the story, and puts you right into the action.

### *Players as Co-Creators*

Players should be encouraged to introduce storylines and plot hooks. After all, at any point a player could become a storyteller for a framed scene (by spending Conviction, see **Chapter 1**). Ways you can involve the players include asking for help creating supporting characters, getting their input after an adventure, moving quickly between separated parties of characters using cut scenes, and giving players rewards for great plot hooks (see **Chapter 10**).

### *Storytelling Techniques*

There are several techniques a Narrator needs to know to successfully capture the right feel to the **Caliphate Nights** setting. There is no such thing as "over-doing it" when it comes to using these techniques. Indeed you can scarcely turn a page of the *Nights* without coming to a cliffhanger, framed story, poetic verse, or punch line.

### *Ambience*

Though we all have fertile imaginations, some people have very active ones, and can see the glimmering palaces of the caliphate in their mind's eye. Others can use some encouragement. Thus, a Narrator is wise to set the mood of the gaming area. First of all make sure the group sits in a circle; not only is this traditional in Persian storytelling, but circles help to establish everyone as equals and allow everyone to see each other. You may wish to dim the lighting slightly, or to have a couple candles lit. To make the gaming area



feel like an Arabian palace or Bedouin's tent, you might roll out a carpet and have the group sit on cushions on the floor. Arabian, Egyptian, Indian, Persian, and Turkish music can all help to evoke the ambience of the *Nights*. Turning on music is a great way to begin a game session. Indeed, when originally told, almost all stories of the *Nights* were accompanied with music.

## *Beginning at the End*

A common trick in many of the *Nights*' stories is for a storyteller to relate a story in flashback, narrating the events which led them up to the situation (wondrous, terrible, or double-edged) they are in now. It is easier for a Narrator to do this, though an adventurous group may allow a player to provide the framework for the adventure. Perhaps the position is shared on a rotating basis, or it is given as a reward for a player doing lots of preparation work for the game. The only caveat is that whatever is described in the "end scene" must come to pass. For example, a player might narrate: "Sit down, weary traveler, and I shall reveal to you how I came to possess this palace and what prevents me from leaving." Thus, sometime during the adventures, it will be revealed how the character came into ownership of the palace and why she can't leave.

## *Cliffhangers*

Always end your sessions with a cliffhanger until you come to the end of the tale. This increases the suspense of the players, making them eager for the next game, as well as making it obvious when a tale comes to completion. Pick some noticeable phrase to end your game session on, such as "then he sat up, taking a sheet of paper and said..." Later, when you resume the tale, you might say "Ali ibn-Bakkar sat up and, taking a sheet of paper, said to Abu al-Hasan, 'Hold the letter open before me.'" This recapping of the events of last game provides a sense of continuity and immediately grabs the players' attention.

## *Comedic Coincidence*

The *Nights* relies on several types of comedy, especially incredible coincidences and unlikely heroes. One of the great things about the Arabian Adventure genre is that no coincidence is unrealistic. If the three princesses living together welcome a beggar into their home, then blessed be God! And if they also welcome three traveling mystics, then thanks and praise to God! And if later that night the Caliph in disguise knocks on their door and is invited in, then all hail the Merciful and Compassionate! Coincidence is a Narrator's ally and a powerful tool for comedy. When supporting cast characters are affected by a coincidence, it is best to role-play their response with great exaggeration and flourish.

## *Creating a Title*

By creating a title for each tale, you further establish that the group's adventures might be some ancient fairy tale just

now being illuminated. It provides a sense of cohesion, and is an excellent way to organize a log of the game. A title gives insight into what happened during that game session at a glance. Story naming conventions in the *Nights* are simple and evocative, such as "The Tale of the King's Son and the She-Ghoul". Sometimes, a story is named based upon who told it, such as "The First Dervish's Tale"; this is most common when dealing with frame stories. Finally, a story is rarely given a metaphoric title which hints but doesn't give anything away, such as "The Tale of the Envious and the Envied." An over-worked Narrator may even experiment with allowing his or her players to come up with names for each tale after it's completed. Naming a tale in advance is a great way to introduce foreshadowing of what is to come.

## *Frame Stories*

The stories in the *Nights* are like pieces of a puzzle consisting of interlocking arguments and examples, each proving a point while providing entertainment. This process of hiding stories within stories is known as "framing." A Narrator can use framing in a variety of ways. It can be used when a character relates some piece of their (or another's) past. Alternately, framing can be used by one character to convince another to avoid or take a certain course of action. When the Narrator initiates a framed story, he or she must decide whether to simply tell the tale (if it's short), or else to have the players take on rolls of minor characters and run it as a mini-adventure (if it's a major element to explaining the current story). Players can frame a story too by using Conviction (see *Chapter 2*).

## *Pacing*

Persian storytellers employ a technique known as *naqqali*, speeding up their pacing when a story is in a period of heightened tension, often accompanied by a drum. Using this idea, a Narrator is not bound to a constant flow of time in his or her games. There are three different paces a Narrator can have the story move at, like a rider changing the pacing of a horse.

*Flying pace:* The story takes on an epic feel as days, weeks, months, even years go by in a flash. Everything in this scene is poetically described, but is also truncated; a year of labor in salt mines becomes a paragraph describing "the salt in my wound, the price of my Caliph's betrayal." This is appropriate when dealing with warfare, birth of an infant, maturity of a child, a prophecy, epic travel, a character studying, or a repetitive action.

*Mixed pace:* Also known as "montage" storytelling, a story moving at *mixed pace* deals with an extended period of time, such as a period of several hours or several days. There are moments of inaction which are glossed over in poetry as in *flying pace*, but the main interesting scenes are played out as in *easy pace*. This is appropriate for investigative footwork, minor travel, entertaining



guests, endurance horse racing, court hearings, etc. *Easy pace*: The scene is described blow by blow, and the flow of time approximates the real world. Ironically, *easy pace* often deals with the most challenging moments in the characters' lives; rather, it is \*easy\* for the player to slip into this mode of playing. Often this scene corresponds to traditional *naqqali* as the moment of heightened tension. This is appropriate for sword fights, furious chases, riddle contests, pleading your case before a Caliph, wooing your beloved, etc.

### Poetic Verse

The *Nights* are unique for their use of poetry interspersed through the narrative. Characters seem to spontaneously burst into poetry or even song! Poetry is used in three ways in the *Nights*: (1) To express powerful emotion, such as two courting lovers or grieving the death of a friend; (2) Add color to a description, such as when describing a calligrapher's stunning work or an illustrious palace; and (3) Emphasize the story's theme. The use of verse gives the feeling that the characters are in a fairy tale and increases the emotional impact of the story. You can introduce poetic verse either through the mouth of a character, or simple prefacing what you say with "the poet says..."

### Props

The most important prop you can have is a colorful piece of cloth used to simulate a veil, allowing more communication to be done through body language and the eyes – very appropriate when in a mosque or among orthodox or conservative communities. Another option is to simulate the hand language of Arabian pearl merchants. This involves placing the cloth over the hands of the merchant (who would buy the pearls) and the pearl boat captain (who'd sell them). The merchant would grab the captain's fingers, with each finger representing a different amount, starting at the pinky which is one dinari and ending at the thumb which is 10,000. Whether being used to simulate an elaborate tablecloth or a princess' dropped handkerchief, a colorful piece of cloth will greatly add to your storytelling.

### Suspense

The "Story of the Three Apples" builds suspense in a particularly dramatic way in describing a chest found in a fisherman's net:

When they broke it open, they found inside a basket of palm leaves sewn with a red woolen thread. Cutting the basket open, they saw inside a piece of carpet and, lifting it out, saw a woman's cloak folded in four. When they removed the cloak, they found at the bottom of the chest a girl in the bloom of youth, as fair as pure silver. She had been slain and cut to pieces.

### Character Hooks & Group Unity

A *hook* is what lends a sense of urgency and makes the players feel that what their characters accomplish is important. The easiest approach is to let the players brainstorm their own reasons for being involved and working together. It's also likely that characters will have multiple reasons for taking action, or that their reasons will change. For example, a rogue who starts off wanting to make a quick profit may fall in love. Provided there has been sufficient downtime since the last game session, a character can be slightly modified to fit his or her new hook, with the Narrator's permission.

By providing a sense of repetition and vivid imagery, the story makes the revelation of the murder that much more shocking. This technique of layering descriptions can also be applied throughout a story by interspersing recognizable phrases that signify to the players they are getting deeper into the mystery.

### Using Arabic Words

A light sprinkling of Arabic words here and there goes a long way to establishing that this is the world of the *Arabian Nights*. In addition, many Arabic words have specific connotations. For example, a householder who breaks a *fatwa* (command) issued by their Imam can be tried in their neighborhood court, even though others might not recognize the legitimacy of the *fatwa*. Likewise, calling magic "*sihr*" often carries negative connotations of devil worship and greed. See the **Glossary**.

### Diceless Narrative

**Caliphate Nights** can be run without dice at all. This is most useful when running a frame story and not wanting to invest a lot of energy into the rules, but it also can serve a group which has forgotten their dice, or only has a limited amount of time to play. While these rules may diminish the complexity and sense of advancement that players enjoy, they sacrifice none of the suspense, and are quick and easy to use.

### Characters

During a diceless narrative, characters are described in a short paragraph. Based on this introductory paragraph, 6 points are spent in traits by either the Narrator (if the characters are made in advance) or the player (if the characters are being made on the spot). A trait must be based on the character's short description. In addition, each character may have a fate; this suggests the direction in which the player attempts to steer the character over the course of the adventure. The Narrator may wish to keep traits secret to make conflicts more suspenseful.



## Sample Story

**The Tale of the Fisherman's Wife:** The fisherman's wife relates a story to the villain who the heroes have just captured, warning him of the perils of deceiving the righteous in an attempt to escape a just punishment. It takes place on the shores of Basra, far from the city.

## The Story

The Narrator describes the story in a short paragraph. This should focus on setting the scene and tone of the story, not on scripting a pre-determined outcome.

## Conflict

Whenever a conflict occurs between two characters, or a character and some other element of the story (e.g. a force of nature), the conflicting traits are compared. The character with the higher trait wins, and that player gets to narrate what their victory looks like. When there is a tie, the Narrator decides who wins, and the Narrator narrates what the victory looks like.

However, the disadvantaged character may choose to make a *sacrifice* in order to temporarily increase their trait. Sacrificing may only increase a trait by 3 points, each point indicating a greater level of sacrifice. Thus, a character with a +2 trait could only hope to tie a character with a +5 trait, and wouldn't have a chance against a character with a +6 trait. The suspense in sacrificing rests in that when a character sacrifices they *always* are attempting to win at any personal cost. Players cannot state they're making a certain degree of sacrifice – they will always sacrifice as much as needed to beat their opponent. While the exact nature of a sacrifice is left up to the players and the Narrator, here are guidelines:

**Minor Sacrifice:** When a sacrificing character is tied with another, they make a minor sacrifice to gain +1 to their trait. A minor sacrifice affects the character for that scene only, or in regard to one other character only.

**Major Sacrifice:** When a sacrificing character's trait is 1 point less than their opponent's, they make a major sacrifice

to gain +2 to their trait. Major sacrifices affect the character for the rest of the game session, or until the frame story ends.

**Extreme Sacrifice:** When a sacrificing character's trait is 2 or more points less than their opponent's, they make an extreme sacrifice to gain +3 to their trait. In rare cases, a character can make an extreme sacrifice without winning the contest, if their opponent's trait is particularly high. Extreme sacrifices generally take a character out of the story.

## Breaking A Tie

When two characters' traits are tied during a contest and both players have decided to sacrifice (or neither decided to sacrifice), a tie-breaker occurs. Either player has the option of "bowing out" and allowing the other to win; the player who bows out gets a +1 bonus on their next conflict as compensation, and doesn't suffer the penalty for making a sacrifice.

If no sacrifices are being made, then the players must add related traits onto their existing trait, adding the values together. The character with the highest total wins the conflict.

Otherwise, the players enter into a *contest of sacrifice*. Each is offered a change to back out at each degree of sacrifice (minor, major, extreme). A player who backs out of making a minor sacrifice, suffers no sacrifice. A player who backs out of making a major sacrifice, suffers a minor sacrifice. A player who backs out of making an extreme sacrifice, suffers a major sacrifice.

If no player back out, then the players must add related traits onto their existing trait. Each trait that ties in with the current conflict adds its value to the original trait. However, bringing other traits to bear imposes a -1 penalty on those traits when they are next used.

The character with the highest total wins the conflict. The Narrator may place a cap on the sacrifice that can be made in such a conflict, such as limiting players to a major sacrifice in a story with only two character. After all, if both characters sacrifice themselves out of the story, there's not much of a story left!

## Sample Diceless Characters

**Fisherman:** A simple fisherman of Basra, he is devoted to his wife and God, composing off-beat songs in their praise while working early in the morning.

*Traits:* Faithful husband +2, Devout Muslim +2, Song-writer +1, Industrious +1

*Fate:* He will become fabulously wealthy.

**The Marid:** The youngest daughter of a djinni sheikh, this marid enjoys disguising herself as a shipwrecked maid, seducing a sailor, and then stranding him on a desert island. She was recently imprisoned in a lamp by a sha'ir she failed to seduce, and the lamp was cast into the sea.

*Traits:* Disguised as mortal +2, Seductive +2, Tired of imprisonment +1, Magic +1

*Fate:* She will either reform her ways or endure eternal imprisonment.



*Conclusion*

In a diceless game, the Narrator has the final say over when the story ends. In the case of a framed story this might be a period of time, such as half an hour. Alternately, it may occur when one or more character meet their fate, or a character exhausts all their traits by making sacrifices.

*Example of a Diceless Game*

Vishal has just become Narrator by spending a Conviction point to initiate framing. Taking on the role of an *alternate* he decides to tell “The Tale of the Fisherman’s Wife”, hoping to convince a villain the heroes have recently captured not to attempt any trickery. Anna takes on the role of the marid, and Jarett takes on the role of the fisherman. Vishal decides to heighten the suspense of the meeting by having them keep their traits and fate hidden from each other.

**Vishal (Narrator):** One brisk morning, my husband went to that place underneath the sea cliffs that only he knows, to cast his fishing nets. It being a lazy morning, he soon dozed off. When he awoke the sun was high in the sky, and there was a gentle tugging on the line...

**Jarett (Fisherman):** I get to work hauling up the line. What would my beloved wife think if I were to return home with no supper after sleeping on the job?

**Vishal:** Hauling up the line, you discover a few sardines gaping for breath, and a large clump of tangled seaweed wrapped around a rotting wood box trimmed with rusted copper. On the top is the faint depiction of a pentagram.

**Jarett:** Uh oh! I make the sign against the evil eye, and cast the accursed box back in the water where it came from!

**Anna (The Marid):** Hey! I’m in that box! I use my “seductive” trait to convince the fisherman not to be so hasty.

**Jarett:** Ok, I’ll oppose with my “devout Muslim” trait. I may be a simple fisherman, but I’ve heard stories about what happened to sailors who consorted with djinni!

**Vishal:** You are tied here. Do either of you want to sacrifice?

**Anna:** I’ll sacrifice to make sure that I win; after all, I’m not about to wait another one hundred years to get tangled in a fisherman’s net!

**Jarett:** No, I’ll wait and see what happens.

*Sample Conflict*

The fisherman is attempting to convince the marid to help him with his nets, which are so full of golden fish that he can’t lift them on his own. He decides to compose a song about the marid’s beauty, hoping to flatter her into helping. Unbeknownst to him, the marid is resisting with her trait “tired of imprisonment +1”; she doesn’t want to serve anybody ever again! However, he does know that his trait “song-writer” is a measly +1, so he decides to make a sacrifice to win (he knows that he’s at least going to get a tie). In order to beat the marid, he must increase his trait by 1, thus he makes a minor sacrifice. For example, he might exhaust his meager song-writing skills in regards to the marid, who is unimpressed by his paltry song.

**Vishal:** This is a minor sacrifice for the marid. In order to convince the fisherman to listen she has to reveal a secret about herself and promise something, such as granting a wish.

**Anna:** Hmm. An ingratiating voice issues forth from the box: “O master! I am in your debt for rescuing me! You have but to ask and I shall deliver a great bounty of fish to you and make you fortunate in every way!” The fisherman is skeptical, but the voice carries on: “I am the marid of the lamp! Cast aside this wretched box and gaze upon my miniature palace!” Against his better judgment, the fisherman decides to open the box, and therein he discovers a brass oil lamp. (Anna chooses to give up the “disguised as mortal” trait in regards to the fisherman – this is her minor sacrifice)

**Jarett:** “Such trickery is not virtuous oh marid of the lamp! For what you call your palace is actually your prison, and I fear you’ll trick me to release you.”

**Anna:** “A prison? Hah! My walls are adorned with tapestries of pure alpaca, my bed is a great floating lily covered in roses, and thirty women wait on me hand and foot. It is you who are imprisoned, for my every desire is met within this lamp, while you must toil day and night for your bread.”

**Jarett:** Hmm. I’m going to try to convince this marid of the virtues of hard work with my “industrious” trait.

**Anna:** Hard work? Hah! I’ll oppose with my “magic” trait. If I can just conjure it into being what need do I have for hard work?

**Vishal:** Do either of you want to make a sacrifice?





**Jarett:** Yeah, it's my duty to teach this djinni a lesson.

**Anna:** Hmm. I want him to think that I'm falling for the ruse, but I don't actually want to be made into an industrious marid. I'll sacrifice. I've had enough of mortals telling me what to do!

**Vishal:** OK, you're both sacrificing. This is a tied contest, so one of you will have to bow out or you'll enter a *contest of sacrifice*.

**J**

**arett:** I'm staying my course.

**Anna:** There's now way I'm bowing out!

**Vishal:** You're both making a minor sacrifice, and you are still tied. Do you want to make a major sacrifice?

**Jarett and Anna:** Yes!

**Vishal:** Ok, now you'll need to bring in other traits to bear. (Vishal has limited the contest to major sacrifices, as extreme sacrifices would end the story)

**Jarett:** I'll use my "devout Muslim" trait, and if that's not enough I'll use my "song-writer" trait to compose an enchanting ditty to accompany my work, hoping that will lure her in.

**Anna:** I'm bringing in my "seductive" trait to bluff him into thinking he's got an angle on me. I don't want to bring in any other traits to bear; I've already sacrificed my mortal disguise dealing with this irritating fisherman!

**Vishal:** Well, it looks like the fisherman has won the contest. Jarett, you'll take -1 on your next use of both your "devout Muslim" and "song-writer" traits. Anna, you'll take a -1 on your next use of your "seductive" trait. You both must make a major sacrifice.

**Anna:** The marid realizes that this fisherman is no common sailor and he's not fooled by her wiles. She'll have to try a different tact to get out of this lamp. (Ana chooses to sacrifice her "seductive" trait in regards to the fisherman)

**Jarett:** "Ah the virtues of hard work. Each night I come home, my bones aching and my fingers raw, and I lay my head on my wife's lap and she sings me the most soothing lullaby meant only for me." The fisherman shares a lullaby so tender it would melt the heart of a hardened criminal. He speaks of the pride he takes knowing that he feeds his family with his own hands. The marid is spell-bound by his faith, and slightly afraid, for it reminds her of the sha'ir who imprisoned her one hundred years ago. "Therefore, knowing that with God is great reward, I enjoin you to help me cast my nets and to draw them up again until the day is through." (Jarett sacrifices his "song-writer" trait for the rest of the frame story; he has exhausted his creative ability)

**Anna:** "I will gladly share in your work, O wise fisherman, but first you must read the words on this lamp. For without a proper invitation in my native language, I am forbidden from appearing before men..."

The story goes on, with the marid attempting to trick the fisherman. However, she only has two traits left to work with, "tired of imprisonment" and "magic." Eventually, the Narrator decides when and how to bring the story to a conclusion.

## Converting True20 Characters

Any **True20** character can be converted to use in a diceless frame story. Characters have a number of points to spend among traits according to their level. All characters begin with 6 trait points, and gain an additional one every 6 levels as they would ability points (e.g. at 6<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> level). In addition, the maximum number of points a character can have in any one trait is limited to 4, though this increases by +1 every 6 levels.

Level	Trait Points	Maximum Trait
1-5 <sup>th</sup>	6	4
6 <sup>th</sup> -11 <sup>th</sup>	7	5
12 <sup>th</sup> -17 <sup>th</sup>	8	6
18 <sup>th</sup> +	9	7

Places you can derive inspiration from a character's traits include their role, archetype, background, station, virtue, and back story. In general traits shouldn't recreate specific skills, feats or powers, unless one of these is integral to



the character's concept. Note that it is not necessary to have the same traits from tale to tale; for example, a romance tale might focus on a different aspect of character than an action tale. A trait of "magic" is appropriate only for djinni or very high-level adepts; in general a descriptor is required when describing a magical trait. The player chooses a fate for their character that suits the story. For example, a player converting a 6<sup>th</sup> level djinn-touched sha'ir with a Courteous virtue and an Ingratiating vice might do so as follows:

*Traits:* Ingratiatingly courteous +2, Djinni summoning +2, Protective magic +1, Undetectable bluff +2

*Fate:* Cure the djinni's madness.

### Theme

A *theme* is a reoccurring moral, question, or emotional overtone which colors the adventure. The very first scene of an adventure should leave no question in the minds of the players as to what the theme will be. There are eleven common *Nights*' themes presented here, but you may come up with others. It's far more cohesive and entertaining to stick to one theme per adventure.

### Action Tale

Daring chases, furious sword-fights, shape-shifting duels, and close calls are always around the next corner in this adventure. The time for diplomacy has ended and now the characters' fate will be decided. While all **Caliphate Nights** games involve some level of action, an action-based adventure barely gives characters room to breathe. Action-based adventures are tense, with an ever rising level of suspense as the final showdown approaches. Rest periods are few and far between, and there is often a time pressure built into the adventure, such as riding on a burning flying carpet, palace gates which close by nightfall, or a poisoned ally near death. An action tale is always used sparingly, usually as the climax of a tale.

### Comedy

In "The Lame Young Man From Baghdad and the Barber", a barber visits a sick man and, after painstakingly consulting his astrolabe, concludes that it is a favorable time for cutting hair. After pestering the man with story after ridiculous story, the barber audaciously claims:

"Am I not the one whom, because of my taciturnity, people call the Silent One? My eldest brother is called the Prater, the second the Babblor, the third the Gabbler, the fourth the Stone Mug, the fifth the Braggart, the sixth the Noisy, while I, because of my taciturnity, the Silent One."

When told to Arabian crowds, this story always evoked peals of laughter as the storyteller switched roles

### Acting to the Theme

At the Narrator's option, anytime a character acts in line with the theme of the adventure, they regain a Conviction point. For example, during a comic adventure, a character might regain Conviction when the player provokes a situation that has the other players doubled over in laughter.

between the irritating nasal barber and the desperate hobbling young man. Like the storyteller, the Narrator striving for humor walks a delicate line between being too offensive and not being offensive enough. Comedy depends on a person's tastes, which range from crude slapstick humor to scathing political commentary. It strips away pride, arrogance, and complacency, and leaves behind humanity.

### Epic

In traditional Arabian folklore, the war epic, or *sira*, is a long and serious narrative, spiced with frequent poetry, centering on a heroic figure and his allies. Three of the most famous were the *siras* of Abu Zayd (dealing with Hilali Arabs victories over the Berbers in the 11<sup>th</sup> century), al-Zahir Baybars (about the eponymous sultan's battles against Crusaders and the Mongols in the 13<sup>th</sup> century), and Antar (about a pre-Islamic warrior-poet). The characters in an epic embody national, cultural, or religious ideals, and upon their shoulders rest the fate of their people. Running an epic is only appropriate for long campaigns.

### Fable

The fable is a thinly veiled morality play, the consummate short story with a moral. Most fables in the *Nights* feature a speaking animal character who serves as a symbol for some aspect of the moral. For example, a jackal might be used to represent subverting the strict order of society. When speaking animals aren't available, other thoroughly stereotyped characters can be used instead. Fables abound with religious maxims and deeply moralistic messages. Pious characters often steal the show when starring in a fable.

### Intrigue

Powerful foes compete against each other in the shadows, neither side wishing to commit to a costly all-out war. Nobles jockey to establish their sons and daughters as kings and queens, and to diminish rival claimants of the throne.

Intrigue focuses on leadership, lies, cunning, and the daring-dos of the characters in the political arena. To successfully run an intrigue-based adventure, the characters should be allowed to choose from multiple factions, perhaps even opposed ones. Nobles often outshine others in these types of adventures, and make good use of their high station.



## Mystery

Inconvenient corpses, bizarre rituals, convoluted schemes, terrifying revelations, mistaken identities, and suspenseful court cases are all part of this adventure. The characters are faced with a mystery that they must solve, either to clear their names, prevent others from solving it first, bring a criminal to justice, or to accomplish some other goal. To this end, characters go about Interrogating witnesses, solving puzzles, studying the evidence, asking around town, or concocting cunning plans. The classic mystery tale of the *Nights* is the “Tale of the Three Apples” in which Ja’far, the royal vizier, must discover a girl’s murderer. Guards and police officers have an advantage over other characters in this type of adventure. However, not all mysteries involve formal investigations; indeed, many mysteries are based on a vow of secrecy (see *Abstract Adversaries* in **Chapter 10**).

## Rogue’s Tale

Medieval Arabia had an obsession with crime stories, especially ones involving colorful rogues, ingenious exploits, the bizarre and comical criminal underworld, or some horrible murder. At its best, a popular crime was *ajib*, as marvelous to hear about as a river of blood or a man with a forked tongue. This cult of cunning tricksters is pervasive in Arabic literature, and it elevated the urban criminal to the status of folk hero. A rogue-based adventure involves one or more rogues who are always successful in thumbing their noses at the law, whether they are the protagonists or adversaries.

## Romance

Many *Nights* stories feature lovers who, after a separation and unbearable period of longing, are at last united in conjugal bliss. Adventures focused around romance require one or more players willing to role-play love interests. The few scenes that the lovers do interact with each other are highly dramatized; poetry is exchanged, vows are made, tears of longing shed, betrayals uncovered, and secret marriages presided over. In a society which rarely acknowledges love,

frowns upon lust, and most marriages are arranged, such lovers often become renegades and may become hunted by their respective families. A rare few gain the blessing of their parents.

## Tragedy

The *Nights* provide a cheery ending to most stories, at least until death “the breaker of ties and destroyer of delights” overtakes the protagonists. However, nearly all of the folktales on which the *Nights* were based end tragically. A tragedy is more than suffering. It is a conflict with a higher power (the law, an army, a demon) that is fated to end badly for the hero or heroine, yet they still endeavor to defeat or change this antagonist. The nobility and dignity of the heroes compels them to do the right thing, knowing that they will fail. Such fatalism is commonly encountered in the world of the *Nights*. Tragic adventures grab the heart strings of the players, inspiring them to empathize with the plight of their heroes.

## Transformation Tale

A young rogue repents of his crimes and becomes a member of the clergy, just when the old *mullah* who tutored him becomes fed up with the corrupt government and becomes a masked avenger. Transformational stories in the *Nights* usually depict characters overcoming their vices, renewing their faith in God, or abandoning a previously shackling ideal. Such fundamental changes in a character’s nature require great willpower and faith, but are the stuff that legends are made of. The inner dimensions of the characters’ struggle are explored through moral dilemmas and dramatic role-playing. At the end of such an adventure, the Narrator may allow a player who role-played dramatically to change their character’s virtue or vice without spending Conviction.

## Wonder Tale

Enchantments, magic passwords, impetuous djinni, multi-dimensional palaces, terrible monsters, and divine salvation abound in this adventure. While supernatural elements are common to all **Caliphate Nights** games, this adventure

## Montage Scenes

A montage scene is used to advance the plot quickly while the characters do footwork to uncover a mystery. It prevents your secrets from being revealed prematurely. A montage consists of a table with information which must be learned in a specific order. The first player to make a check which attains a partial success learns the corresponding information on the table. Subsequent skill or power checks increase the initial roll’s result by +2. Checks which could reasonably provide a character access to information further along in the montage (or the final reveal itself) can be vetoed by the Narrator; instead such checks just provide a +2 bonus. However, in exchange the character whose check was vetoed regains a Conviction point; Conviction gained in this way may exceed the normal level limits. Here is a sample montage scene table. Notice that all the Difficulties are spaced 2 points apart.

Check Result	Sample Information
15	The Imam was on good terms with the murder victim.
17	Several times the victim relied on the Imam to protect him from the authorities.
19	In their youth, the Imam went to jail in the victim’s stead on charges of recklessness.
21	The Imam swore an oath to the victim’s sister to save his roguish soul.



showcases the most awesome, the most captivating marvels. These elements of the supernatural are always unique and surprising; for example a *wak-wak* tree which grows human-headed fruit serves as the hiding place of a jar-riding witch. Descriptions of magic are detailed and often mysterious or poetic, and magic may have unforeseen consequences, for good or ill. Adepts thrive in wonder tales, and easily steal the spotlight.

### Story Qualities

*Story qualities* are a combination of dramatic devices borrowed from Hollywood and ancient techniques of Arab and Persian storytellers. They change the rules slightly and give the players an idea of what to expect during the adventure. Usually the Narrator chooses *story qualities*, though a player may be rewarded by being allowed to choose a *story quality*. As a rule of thumb, an adventure shouldn't have more than six *story qualities*. Each *story quality* may only be selected once for a given adventure, unless the Narrator gives permission otherwise. When a new adventure begins, the Narrator selects *story qualities* from scratch again. Generally, the Narrator informs the players about what *story qualities* the adventure has.

### Big Stakes

The adventure has major consequences that can shape the campaign at its very core, changing the political scene, how magic works, or some other game element for adventures to come. Usually it should be made clear to the other players what the stakes are; the greater the risk the greater the reward. During this adventure people can die permanently, the Caliph can be assassinated, Baghdad can be trapped in a bottle, an angel can appear on earth, etc.

### Cameo

A player's *alternate* makes an appearance alongside the player's main hero for a scene, often to give critical aid, repay a debt, provide advice, or tell a story. The player may temporarily take on two roles, or give another player or the Narrator control over the *alternate* for the scene.

### Creative License

The players are free to make minor changes to the game's reality, assumptions based on the nature of the place the action is taking place. Instead of saying "is there an alley nearby?" a player can simply assume that

there is and describe what their character does from there. If the assumption is too much, the Narrator can always change what the player has stated. Weaving is encouraged, and may even be free at certain points in the adventure.

### Dramatic Monologues

Characters can fit long poems and complicated puns into a single breath. A minute long speech could occur in the space of 5 seconds if it is entertaining enough. During the adventure, a player may spend a Conviction point to gain a dramatic monologue. During the monologue, their character cannot be interrupted until they are finished.

### Edge

All characters in the group share one bonus feat or favored feat in common, provided all the characters meet its prerequisites. For example, a group of heroes in a marketplace intrigue might temporarily be appointed as market inspectors, gaining the Benefit (*muhtasib*) feat. Alternately, a group of pious character defending a heterodox belief system before the Caliph might gain Theologian as a favored feat which they can now access by spending a Conviction point.

### Episodic

The adventure is narrowly crafted around a single story, and events that have happened in the past have little impact. The adventure has no bearing on any larger plots, and nothing permanent happens to any character. No rewards last, nor do any Complications, and nobody dies (at least, not permanently). Thus, the focus is on the action that is happening right now. This is helpful when adjusting a new player to an on-going game, or getting a breath of fresh air from an epic storyline.

### Flashback

Delving into the pasts of the characters, the adventure returns to the present by its end with some new revelation or explanation for why things are the way they are now. The players run characters at the level they were when the flashback takes place. In addition, nothing can occur during the adventure which contradicts the present game circumstances. Clearly, heroes can't die during a flashback if they're alive in the present to talk about their past adventures.

### Thematic Conviction

While Conviction might represent the growing dedication and faith of heroes, and perhaps even their favor in the eyes of God, it can also be used to support a certain style of play. By making Conviction independent of level, you can establish how cinematic a game is. For example, in a gritty game of intrigue characters might have Conviction set at 4, while a thrilling game of high-seas adventure might have Conviction set at 8 or more.



## High Magic

Magic features prominently in this adventure and is widely used. Most of the characters will have something supernatural about them, and they will have access to powers. Magic may be used in state proceedings and some clergy are holy men and women capable of magic. Even the skeptical must believe in magic when they are faced with princesses born from pumpkins and three-headed dragons chained under the mountain. In this fairy tale world, the Narrator may include any element of fantasy, such as talking animals or a city of sorcerers. Magic is particularly wondrous, and any power check which succeeds (or fails) by 5 or more has an unintended side effects. For example, an adept using the Visions power might be able to Inspire (fear) with a dreadful prophecy on a dramatic success, or she might gain the *haunted* complication after witnessing a terrible vision on a dramatic failure.

## In the Shadows

Movers and shakers may choose to lurk in the shadows. In this case, an increased Reputation score reflects the character's ability to influence contacts to keep quiet about their goals; underlings go to great effort to clear their master's name. Thus, their Reputation actually *increases* the Difficulty of a Reputation check for such shadowy characters. Each character decides whether Reputation works in this way for them or not.

## Low Magic

Supernatural elements are extremely uncommon, and none, or only a few, of the characters have access to magic. Anyone whose magical abilities are recognized is viewed as either a demon or a saint. Magical creatures are truly fearsome and there may be no one powerful enough to stop them. Adepts cannot use their powers during this adventure unless they spend a Conviction point, which allows them to access one power for a scene. In compensation, adepts gain +2 on all checks involving the ability score which they normally use for their powers.

## Magical Realism

Supernatural elements appear in an otherwise realistic adventure. Often these are not controlled by any character, but rather represent magic infused in daily life, or exaggerations of otherwise normal things. For example, the desert catches on fire one day. Is it because the passion of two separated lovers is so strong? Or is it simply an unusually hot summer? Pearls wash up from a flooded river and a city becomes fabulously wealthy overnight and stops paying its taxes. Are the pearls a marid's trick to turn the populace against the governor or just a stroke of good fortune? Magical realism leaves players wondering whether to believe the *magical* interpretation or the *realist* interpretation.

## Maqamat

The *maqamat* is a lyrical adventure, described best with a short anecdote which serves as a pretext for the display of the Narrator's wit and eloquence. The *Nights* perfected this genre: Aladdin, Ali Baba, Sinbad – each is the hero of a *maqamat*. During the *maqamat* adventure, metaphors, puns, parallelisms, alliterations and *hapax legomena* (using a rare word only once) are commonly encountered. Any character making a good display of grammatical trickery gains a +2 bonus on the task they are attempting. It may be handy to have a dictionary nearby.

## Metaphorical Heroes

Each hero has a metaphorical counterpart in the game, not only related to the hero, but also shedding new light on the hero. For example, a cunning and handsome hero's metaphor might be a white stag; the stag represents how the hero is attractive to others, yet he can never be subjugated or caught by them. If something harms the metaphorical counterpart, the hero is likewise harmed, and vice versa. For example, a hero whose metaphorical counterpart is a mosque would become ill if the mosque's sanctity was violated. Once the hero acknowledges their connection with the metaphorical counterpart, and learns whatever lesson it offers, this connection dissolves or transforms into something else entirely (e.g. perhaps the hero gains a familiar).

## Panegyric

Everyone praises one character throughout the adventure, offering a highly discriminatory view of the character. All the character's bad deeds go overlooked, and the slightest good deed is exaggerated. Often this character is a war hero, a ruler, or religious authority. This creates comedy if the players happen to know the truth behind the character's inflated reputation.

## Parable

The adventure has a moral which remains unknown to the players at the start. Over the course of the adventure, any character acting against the moral automatically fails, and any character acting in favor of the moral automatically succeeds. At some point, the moral must be discovered by the players. Often, the moral is directly expressed in the words of a character or anonymous poet. The first hero whose actions reveal taking the moral to heart and who explains the moral (usually in a pithy way) regains Conviction. However, if a player's explanation of the moral is off the mark, their character either loses a Conviction point or else they can no longer guess at the moral.

## Reality Filter

Information is presented in a skewed way, perhaps reflecting the storyteller's bias, off-screen action, or an altered state of the heroes (e.g. dreaming or poisoned). For example, the Narrator might present the scenes unconnected chronologically, and leave the players to figure out how the scenes fit together.



*Red Herring*

A plot thread appears in this adventure that is intended to mislead. Anyone who explores the red herring may be afflicted with any Complication the Narrator desires that is appropriate with the story. For example, a thief attempting to unveil an old woman (the red herring) might be cursed by a sorcerer's spell.

*Rough Start*

The heroes begin at a disadvantage, such as disarmed and in prison, lost in the desert, under a magical charm, or being betrayed by a former ally. In way of compensation all the players gain one bonus point of Conviction (even if it exceeds their normal maximum).

*Rule of Three*

The *rule of three* is a universal theme: three brothers set out, three attempts are made, three riddles are asked. When you see two things in the adventure, it's guaranteed that there's a third lurking somewhere, and if there are four things, it's a good bet one of them is a fake.

*Swashbuckling*

This adventure features characters performing daredevil stunts that defy the laws of physics. Whenever a character performs the *simultaneous tasks* challenge, multiple related actions are consolidated into a single roll. The Narrator decides what the main result of the stunt is, and sets a Difficulty according to the main result (not all of its component actions). If the check succeeds by 5 or more, an extraordinary success occurs, while if the check fails by 5 or more, a disastrous failure occurs. For example, a player might say: "*Knocking over the brazier, I clutch the wounded prince to me, and grabbing the nearest curtain I swing over the guard's heads and out the window.*" Normally a Narrator might rule this would require an attack check with the brazier, a Jump check to use the curtain, and a Toughness save to resist breaking through the glass. Instead, the Narrator decides the roll that matters the most is the Jump check to swing across the room.

*Tapestry of Truths*

The same adventure is played out from two or three different perspectives. For example, from the perspective of the heroes, the perspective of the villains, and the perspective of the djinni in the background. After each tale ends, each player writes down one piece of "the Truth" on the same piece of paper called "the Tapestry." These truths can be pure speculation or something their character learned in

the game. Once all the stories are complete, the players go back to the Tapestry and begin linking the different truths with lines. Normally, each player gets to make one such connection, though in a large group you might allow each player to make two. The Narrator starts by declaring one truth as a starting point. Each player then draws a line to a related truth; they may do this in any order they like. Once all the players finish, the Narrator draws a final connecting line. Any truths which do not get linked together turn out to be falsehoods or are forgotten by history, while those which do get linked together are "the Truth", at least as it will be remembered.

*The Fate We Are Given*

Before the adventure begins, each player writes down three possible fates on the same piece of paper or index card. These fates should be related to each other: One fate is good, another bad, and the third is a mixed blessing. A fate must be general enough that it could apply to most characters. For example, a player might come up with these three fates:

- *Good*: "The hero rides off into the sunset with their beloved at their side."
- *Bad*: "The hero is betrayed by the one who they love the most."
- *Mixed*: "The hero's beloved swears their love, but cannot marry the hero."

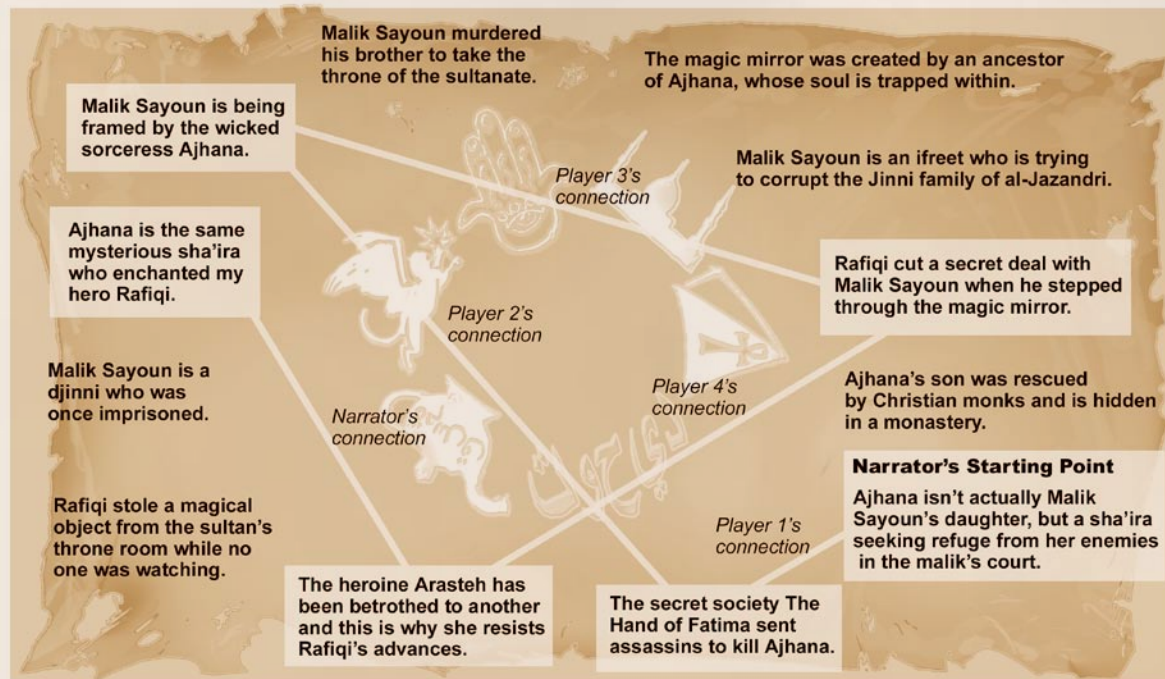
When finished, the players reveal their cards to each other, and each player chooses the card with the fates that most suit their character. It is possible for two players to choose the same card. At some point during the adventure, the Narrator picks one of the three fates listed on each player's card – this fate befalls their character.

*Campaign Ideas**Children of the Sand*

Born into the same tribe, the heroes are nomads who have gone their separate ways. Some have stayed with the tribe, and some have been lured by the luxuries of city life. When slave raiders attack their tribe, the heroes find themselves as the few who managed to escape, or else just weren't there. The children have been sent to work in a clothing factory, the women have been sold into the harem of a wicked sorcerer, and the men have been sent to labor in the salt mines of the Maghreb. Not only must the heroes track down the slavers, and convince their fellow tribe members to plan a revolt, but they must contend with fearsome raiders and uncover the ugly political agenda behind the raids.

**Story Qualities:** Blood-Bonded, Rough Start





## For Love of Jinnistan

All the heroes possess ties to a djinni court. Some are sha'irs or have blood relations to the djinni, others have a djinn of the court bound to their family, and still others have been kidnapped for the djinni king's amusement. A sorcerer born into the Abbasid family and the king's daughter have absconded into the desert. The Caliph makes it his personal mission to punish the "vile temptress" while the djinni king swears he will have the head of the "devious sha'ir." The heroes know one or both of the lovers, and realize that the two sides may come to a clash, permanently damaging delicate relations between the caliphate and the djinni king's court. They must find the lovers and manipulate the Caliph and djinni king into a truce, along the way uncovering duplicitous shaitan, imprisoned sorcerers, and a plot to bring down the djinni's court.

**Story Qualities:** High Magic, Magical Realism

## House of Wisdom

The heroes are employed by the House of Wisdom as adventuring scholars. Countless treatises and scientific works are at risk of being lost to poor archiving, warfare, robbery, book-burning, and plague. Sent to the farthest reaches of the caliphate and beyond, the heroes must obtain permits of safe passage, negotiate with foreign monks and rulers, and find a way to transport thousands of books back to Baghdad for translation. At times they will have to work under the cover of night, as secret agents of the Roman Empire and secret societies attempt to stop them or bandits attempt to waylay their caravan. If they succeed in their task, they receive a candle-lit procession which guides them through the streets of Baghdad as they return champions of knowledge and scholarship.

**Story Qualities:** Low Magic, Patron

## The Eternal Isles

Far to the west, in the Bahr al-Zulamat, there are said to lie six islands, each with a bronze statue warning voyagers to turn back. The only records come through Ptolemy and the scattered accounts of sailors; the islands are known as the *Jaza'ir al-Khalidat*, The Eternal Isles. As corsairs and explorers, the heroes have decided to find these isles, which have been discovered and lost throughout history. They may seek them for the glory of discover, rumors of treasure, or for more enlightened reasons. However, a rival corsair queen has learned of their plans, and organizes her own voyage to discover the islands. Along the way they will be chased by the corsair queen, betrayed by treacherous allies, get stranded on islands inhabited by all manner of strange creatures, visit the city of the Sea-Born, and endure fearsome storms, all for a chance at going down in history.

**Story Qualities:** The Fate We Are Given, Swashbuckling

## The One Hundredth Name of God

At the heart of Islamic mysticism is the question of the 100<sup>th</sup> name of God, which is said to open the gates of Paradise for the believer. Arab folklore tells that only the camel knows the secret of the name, and for this reason he holds his head proudly in the desert, silent in his knowledge. Others claim that the name does not exist, or is unknowable by humankind. The heroes belong to the same *tariqa*, the same Sufi mystical school. Their mentor has sent them out as the chosen few to find the 100<sup>th</sup> name of God. Will they succeed at the impossible? Little do they know that a former knight of the Franks turned "sheikh of raiders" has come seeking their mentor to kill him as a false prophet. The story alternates between the



students of the mentor and the fallen knight and his companions. One of the groups is misguided, but only Fate knows who holds the truth.

**Story Qualities:** Metaphorical Heroes, Reality Filter, Tapestry of Truths

### *One Hundred Arabian Adventure Hooks*

1. A nutty sultan makes petty and arbitrary rules, watching the populace of his capital with binoculars from his palace window. His guards arrest anyone he sees breaking his rules.
2. The heroes commit a mortal sin according to djinni law unknowingly, and they are cursed to grant a powerful djinni 3 wishes.
3. A local ruler sends the characters on a missionary expedition to a town of bull-worshippers. Upon arriving, the characters find that an “enlightened” zealot threw a bull’s head in the town’s well. Now nobody can drink the water unless they convert to Islam. With the character’s arrival, they may be implicated.
4. One of the Jinn claims to have been contacted by the same angel which spoke to his tribe’s progenitor Al-Yazid in the Sacred Mountains of Asir. As the Jinn begins to announce a new meeting, Ifreeti, Ghuls, and Shaitan surely seek to stop him.
5. The characters enter a New Year’s competition to recover the most wondrous pearl from the depths of the ocean. A rival competitor hires pirates to thwart the characters, but the pirates have their own agenda.
6. A local ruler has received the components for a flying device. At least that’s what the ruler thinks it is. In fact, the device is a trap from a rival. The ruler asks for the heroes’ help putting the device together.
7. The heroes’ foolish liege attacks a well-fortified city and is taken captive by a terrible ifreet warlord. If they do not rescue him, they must do something about the vacant throne...before somebody else does.
8. A local qadi is soon to meet with his future wife, who he has heard terrible stories about. Fearing the worst, he asks the characters to pretend to be him (and his entourage) and receive the noblewoman.
9. One of the heroes happens to look just like a famous thief. Bumping into the character in the bazaar while disguised with a veil, the thief decides to use this amazing circumstance to his or her advantage. The thief’s bumbling sidekick gets confused by the mix-up, thinking the character is his master.
10. Three brothers were cursed as animals by a witch.

The two older brothers became a jackal and bear, while the younger become a rooster. The younger brother has been picked on by his siblings his whole life, and this is just fuel to the flame. He asks the heroes to help set up a situation in which a rooster can prove himself better than either a jackal or a bear.

11. An old witch is losing her touch. She used to be a master of cursing, but her powers seem to be fading. She hires the heroes to get her really angry so that she’ll have the motivation she once had in her youth.
12. A young prince receives the call from God, and, abandoning his fiancé at the wedding night, joins a community of Sufis. The princess is convinced he is testing her faith, and decides to sneak into the Sufi’s mountain retreat to prove her love. She needs the heroes’ help to do it.
13. A noble’s daughter is captured by the assassins who intend to indoctrinate her. There is a captured assassin awaiting punishment in the sultan’s dungeon, but dare they rely on a treacherous ally to rescue the daughter?
14. Certain hadith collections refer to *suras* that do not exist in the Qur’an. What if a young nomad finds one of these missing *suras*? When the find is authenticated how does Islamic society react? What is the *sura*’s message?
15. Having been wrongly accused of stealing a sultan’s prized jewel which he was to present to his beloved, the heroes are given two weeks to find and return the jewel or it’s off with their heads.
16. The heroes are hired by a prince in love with a foreign princess to woo his beloved on his behalf. However, the princess is actually a disguised beggar! Do they woo her on behalf of the prince regardless or reveal the truth to him?
17. A man accused of treason awaits execution and appears to have repented of his ways and genuinely reformed while imprisoned this past week. His wife advocates for his sentence to be reduced and his life spared, and has contacted the heroes to give the Caliph proof of the man’s sincerity.
18. A traveling *hakawati* is spreading exaggerated tales about the heroes’ exploits. At first the fame is welcome, but as more and more improbable deeds are attributed to them, others (who really did said deeds) get angered, and citizens begin asking for them to call on powers they do not possess.
19. A community of cursed people living in the mountains trades with two tribes for sustenance. When a feud erupts between the tribes, the community is caught in the middle. Do the heroes end the curse or end the feud?



20. An enlightened teacher descends from his mountain cave to begin teaching powerful meditative practices to the masses. The clerical hierarchy scrambles to smear his name and dissuade people from listening to the so-called "madman." Which side do the heroes take? Is there a legitimate concern about what the enlightened teacher is offering?
21. Seeking shelter from a sandstorm, the heroes arrive at a caravanserai run by a madman. When a voice pleads for sanctuary from the storm, the madman claims it is a djinn and forbids them opening the gates. It is up to the characters to show the madman the light of reason and save the poor soul trapped outside.
22. Three conmen run a scam on other thieves by sneaking into their headquarters and eavesdropping on secret information, then consulting the watchmen to decide who is telling the truth. The thieves ask the heroes to out-con the conmen and reveal their scams to the public.
23. The heroes are assigned by a cleric to reform a duplicitous shaitan captured during a raid on a pagan den. They'll need to check in with the *ulema* regularly so the cleric can be certain the shaitan hasn't "converted" them.
24. A rivalry between two corsairs dominates the Mediterranean Sea, and the heroes are attacked while sailing or forced into service by a press gang while at port. Can they play the corsairs off of each other?
25. Disguised as an irritating old man, a djinn becomes indebted to one of the heroes and determines to pay off his debt. However, the djinn bungles every wish they make, filling in the "gaps" as he feels appropriate.
26. The son of a Persian Shah has become possessed after being captured by a band of cannibals and has been assimilated into the tribe. His brothers, each who lost a thumb and a toe rescuing him, ask the characters to help cure the prince of his warmongering and bloodlust.
27. Though she is a beautiful scholar, the vizier's daughter is also a chronic trickster, and she delights in seducing men and dressing them up as devils only to trick them into appearing before a crowd and being shamed and beaten.
28. A woman claiming to be Lady Zubaida's relative has been abducted by the secret police during a raid on an Ismaili hideout. The heroes might get involved with the situation trying to establish the woman's claim, or they may be asked by the Caliph to distract his wife Zubaida with a suitable gift.
29. A hero's piety is called into question by religious scholars, and after a hearing before the *Ulema* the character is instructed to perform the *hajj* and his friends are sent with him to report on his conduct.
30. An inconvenient corpse ends up in the heroes' home, and they are led to believe (either through trickery or accident) that they are responsible for the person's death.
31. Two insane brothers decide to play a jest on the heroes, getting them drunk then dressing them as the chief advisors of the elder brother. However, the younger brother gets jealous at their success managing the affairs of state and decides to do them in.
32. After a violent coup, several girls on the cusp of womanhood find themselves parentless and their only living relative is in distant lands. Will the heroes adopt the girls as their own or seek out their last living relative?
33. An elephant has swallowed a gourd which contains a cat which jumped in to catch a fish. The owner of the elephant is beset by the owner of the cat and the owner of the fish who are anxious to get their animals back.
34. When a river floods, dozens of magic pearls are left scattered in the fields along its banks. After local towns stop paying their taxes, the caliphate assembles a team of soldiers, scientists and interviewers in response.
35. A note is left by assassins upon the entrance to the town's mosque, promising bloodshed unless the man who killed their youngest recruit is turned over.
36. Three couples are unwittingly cheating on each other, and each husband begins spying upon his wife, condemning her sin while failing to mention his own.
37. An annoying barber won't leave the heroes alone until one of them agrees to marry his "most beautiful and worthy" daughter.
38. The caliphate issues a warrant for the arrest of a notorious corsair said to be working for the Umayyads. However, if the corsair is brought in her testimony could be used as justification for warfare by warmongers in the Caliph's court.
39. Rumors are that the Beggar King of Baghdad is actually Harun's stepbrother who seeks to usurp the throne and seize the Caliphate for himself. To quell the rumors, Harun plans to execute an innocent man mocked up as his "wicked stepbrother, king of beggars."
40. A venerable scholar has protected one of the largest magical libraries in Alexandria for the last sixty years. However, the state is threatening to cut funding. With all the imprisoned djinni and powerful magic objects in the library, this could be a disastrous move.
41. A storytelling and poetry contest will be held, and the call for the best entertainers goes out. Can the heroes find one story to rule them all until the contest next year?
42. An enclave of polytheists have been discovered in the highest levels of society and a pogrom begins to route them out. There is more going on than meets the eye, as the government wants to keep the polytheists quiet about the unlawful secret trial of a saint.
43. In a distant city, the people never see their gods, except for once a year when the idols are paraded in a shrouded shrine through the city.
44. A wild and loud-mouthed prophet preaches against the practice of usury. None of the merchants are willing to raise a hand against this supposedly holy man, and





- instead wage a smear campaign.
45. When a short military campaign erupts in the Maghreb between the Emirate of Cordoba and the Caliphate of Baghdad, the Caliph summons old allies. However, this is a battle to kill off so-called allies, thereby leaving the one who committed the least resources to the battle in a position of power.
  46. Two djinni have a bet between them about which of the two can win the hand of one of the characters. Each djinni attempts to outdo the other. Scorning either djinni's love wins them an enemy for life.
  47. Three horse hairs will cure a sick sheikh, but the horses whose hair is needed are owned by a sinister bandit chieftain who was insulted by the sheikh who denied the bandit his daughter's hand in marriage.
  48. Three sisters under the enchantment of a foul sorcerer have buried their brother alive. Now free of the enchantment, they are grief-stricken and cannot remember where their brother is. Soon his air will run out.
  49. The heroes find a family of magic carpet weavers secretly living in the basement of their house to avoid the persecution of the state. After a friendship blossoms, one day guards knock on the door.
  50. A fleeing horse thief insults a prince, hoping he'll give pursuit. The thief is actually a kidnapper who one of the characters recognizes as a crook. Can they catch the prince before he falls into the trap?
  51. City guards have come to collect a merchant's debt from an old tailor; unable to pay the Christian tailor is to be enslaved. However, his son insists on going in his stead. To save his son, the tailor is made to pass three tests proving that he is fit to be a laboring slave.
  52. A young elephant keeps the city up at night with its trumpeting. Upon investigating the heroes find the elephant terrorizing the inner courtyard of a mosque.
  53. A cunning Persian dragon has gone into hibernation at the headwaters of a creek, cutting off the critical flow of water to a village downstream.
  54. Palace attendants receive a sacred *vrahan* fire as a gift from the Barmakid family. As the Caliph and others begin having visions the heroes are called in along with a team of physicians to root out the "cursed sickness."
  55. Finding an apple, one of the heroes takes it home only to find a gorgeous *peri* emerge from the apple at night and beg him to rescue her sister from a terrible demon. The *peri* appears only for her beloved.
  56. A terrible sphinx has a cult of worshippers around her who attempt to convince the nearest city's ruler to sacrifice the greatest criminals and traitors to the sphinx.
  57. When a Nubian queen hears that she was insulted by scholars in Baghdad, her agents mistakenly capture the heroes. The queen offers the characters their freedom if they can beat her in a chariot race.
  58. Raiders descend on the caravan, capturing the heroes so they won't be able to warn the town the raiders plan to plunder. As the "honored guests" of the raiders, the characters find themselves making friends even as they plan their escape.
  59. An epidemic of the plague breaks out, and the heroes' families are within the area quarantined. To rescue their families, the characters must get the antidote recipe from an imprisoned alchemist then sneak past the quarantine.
  60. In the wake of a police crackdown on a conspiracy among notable alchemists, astrologers, and sages, the city is at a loss for intellectuals. A new education program begins, abducting people off the street to train them as teachers. Of course, the curriculum they're *supposed* to teach is extremely biased.
  61. A wicked hag haunts a cavernous well the characters need access to, delighting in sending men to their deaths in the desert. She uses illusion and ventriloquism to split the group once some are inside the cave with the well. She lies that she was once a young maid within the cave, but that the magical waters there caused her to age.
  62. Everyone knows the royal scribe's mother is mad. However, she has recently returned from a doctor in Cathay, claiming to have her sanity restored. She is convincing, but when the heroes discover her performing evil magic rituals naked on the beach, will anyone believe them?
  63. Guards are forbidden from admitting a man with a wyvern tattoo on his hand into the city. This man was prophesied to bring the king's ruin. One day, *twelve* men with wyvern tattoos on their hands are arrested by the guard. The king wants them all killed, but the captain of the guard asks the heroes to help him prove which of the twelve is the man of prophecy, thus sparing lives.
  64. Every year a herd of ghostly horses terrorizes a tribe, whose people have retreated into the mountains to evade the malign spirits. Legends tell of a djinn whose voice can soothe any beast or spirit, and the tribal elders send the characters on a quest to find the djinn.
  65. The heroes are mugged by a band of robbers led by a ghul, have their wounds packed with salt, and are left to die in a basement. Miraculously





recovering, they learn that the ghul and her robbers have taken up residence in a brothel and lure unsuspecting victims there.

66. Inheriting a geomantic tablet, the heroes learn the location of a fabulous treasure buried in a ruined desert mosque. As they secretly make plans to go dig it up, a geomancer claiming to be a friend of a character's father arrives; he claims they are misinterpreting the tablet and offers to help.
67. A monkey steals a jewel during a circus act, and the performers are threatened with death by the chief of police whose wife was the victim; he gives the performers one week to recover the jewel. Meanwhile the monkey has been found by the unsuspecting characters, after several other misadventures in between.
68. After a terrible storm, an alarm is sounded that survivors of a shipwreck have washed ashore. Once the rescue is finished, a lottery is drawn and the heroes are assigned a house guest. However, this guest overstays her welcome and has a dread of returning home.
69. While shopping at the *souk* the heroes come across an alleyway that is mysteriously silent. At the end of the alley is a handsome merchant selling the most wondrous goods from across the world. His prices are strange: Return to this place in one year's time. Bring me the breath of a man who was never alive. Give this ring to the blacksmith's son.
70. A herd of animals runs wild through the town, wrecking havoc on shops. One of the animals is actually from the Enlightened Isles where animals can speak; it was captured by sailors and brought to the Caliphate. This enlightened animal (a vegetarian) witnessed Muslims eating meat and grew enraged, thus gathering the herd to punish the sinners.
71. An irresponsible sha'ir is going around extorting djinni to provide him with information about a way into Jinnistan. Soon the djinni courts will hear about this and strike him down. The heroes wouldn't care if it wasn't for...
72. Overhearing a man speak a magic word and transform a hapless victim into a rooster, the heroes discover this sorcerer has many such victims. What the heroes do not know is that he is the royal executioner who turns wrongly accused or virtuous victims into animals out of pity. If the king finds out of this leniency, it'll be the executioner's head!
73. A young pagan priestess harbors a dangerous murderer as her new lover. The priestess herself is guilty of several crimes against her Amazonian peoples' ways. By gathering leverage against her, the heroes can force her hand to turn over the murderer to them in the tribal arena games.
74. While staying at a hostel run by Christian monks who have taken vows of silence, the heroes take on a rogue's dare (actually a disguised djinn) to get one of the monks to break his vow.
75. The heroes' former ship captain turned out to be a conman who robbed dozens of investors blind. His ship has been seized, but the captain is nowhere to be seen. The authorities find a convenient scapegoat in the heroes, and attempt to build a case against them.
76. A group of children have been enchanted by a talking narwhale, and go to visit the City Under the Sea every week for increasingly longer periods of time. What secrets do the Sea Born hold?
77. Through unlucky circumstance the heroes end up surrounded by thieves, when a cloaked man comes to their rescue. However, their rescuer is not what he seems. An infamous rogue, he uses young children to commit his crimes by convincing them he is a long-lost older sibling.
78. Name-guessing with a djinn for the right to pass through "her" lands, the heroes learn that should they utter the djinn's name she will be freed from the binds Suleiman placed upon her. They cannot walk away now, as the djinn claims they owe her for trespassing. Captivity for a year should suffice as punishment, according to a loose interpretation of djinni law.
79. A famous philosopher is put on trial at a *mihna* which quickly gains great public attention. The heroes are hired as bodyguards for the philosopher and his family.
80. A physically misshapen adept deceives the faithful by giving them drugs, taking them to his hidden palace and convincing them they've died. He claims they are to be sent to Hell, but may redeem themselves by doing a service for him – overthrowing the Caliph. His appearance parallels predictions of the *Dajjal*, "the





- deceiver” who is prophesied to appear before the Last Day.
81. The last plum from a famous theologian’s tree was stolen from his porch and the pit left in its place. In a fit, the theologian cut off the hand of a passing waif, and sent him to the dungeon. But who really stole the plum and why?
  82. As a crime for their amorous impropriety, a young man and woman are put in separate wells for thirty days. A local wise man predicts flood rains in the next week – the young lovers will surely drown unless someone helps them. The village authorities hide behind a smug fatalism.
  83. A band of corsairs has washed ashore. Claiming they have found God, they make large religious donations and begin to worm their way into a local mosque. Everyone treats them like honey, and no one suspects a thing.
  84. The heroes can’t get rid of a djinn they rescued, who attempts to fulfill their every wish, and ends up misinterpreting or overdoing it every time.
  85. An Islamic sect has taken over a town, preaching a doctrine that permits women to have multiple husbands. Sent to convince the sect to return to the fold, the heroes are required to marry to enter the community. Are they up to the dual challenge of dealing with a spouse while doing their duty?
  86. A ruthless raider known as the White Deev terrorizes caravans; stories are soon exaggerated: A terrible white-furred dragon with eyes like pools of terror has been sent by God to punish the unworthy! The raider propagates the myth for his own reasons.
  87. Frontiersmen report they have found the ruins of the Library of Alexandria but are attacked by mysterious raiders. A lone survivor collapses before the characters with a message for the Caliph.
  88. Three unworthy princes are to inherit their father’s kingdom. He seeks help creating a test of his sons’ characters to determine who is least likely to ruin the kingdom.
  89. While cleaning their camels’ stalls, the heroes find a rukh egg buried in the hay. Did one of their servants hide it there? Are they being framed by an enemy or is this just an amazing coincidence?
  90. After a year of drought, poor business, and personal tragedy, the final straw comes when the heroes are tax audited by a miserly and sinister agent of the Caliph.
  91. A group of gypsies are denied entry into a town and decide to camp at the gates of the town. Trade flourishes and the people freely intermingle, but the town’s authorities harbor old grudges against the gypsies and refuse to let them into the town even when a sandstorm is about to hit.
  92. Buried up to their necks in sand by a mischievous conman, the characters encounter a Bedouin merchant who doesn’t want to get involved with their problems...unless they spin a good story for the sick daughter he is visiting.
  93. A group of *Ansar* warriors who fought under the first Caliph stumble out of the desert one day, in the prime of health, speaking an old dialect and utterly confused by the customs. Where did they come from?
  94. Buying a treasure map from a seedy merchant, the heroes hope to strike it rich, but discover that bandits have set them up and the treasure is not gold.
  95. A curse hangs over the heads of grave robbers and anyone who helps them, or helps those who help them. Soon the curse takes on a life of its own, and the only person who can break it has gone into retreat in an isolated mountain cave after being slandered by the community leaders.
  96. Dreams of a leopard haunt the characters and an interpreter informs them that soon they will kill someone, themselves be killed, or else change their fundamental natures before the next full moon.
  97. While hosting a mysterious young artist on pilgrimage, the heroes discover the artist has human bones in his bags! The artist is carrying these sacred bones of his grandfather who was a *pir* (miracle-worker) to restore them to their ancestral burial place in Medina.
  98. Captured by a scholar of the Jinn, the heroes are trained to act as his scribes and servants. However, another servant (a disguised Shaitan) tries to convince the characters to flee with him.
  99. The forced resettlement of Christian peasants causes an unlikely alliance between them and local Bedouin *matruds* (exiles), and the Christians attempt to reform the *matruds* while the *matruds* attempt to train and arm the Christians to face the governor’s armies.
  100. Caliph Umar established several warning beacons, a “wall of fire”, along the Zagros Mountains before the decision to invade was made. He hoped to separate the Arabs and Persians peacefully this way. Now the beacons have become the hideouts for fugitives fleeing orthodox persecution.

## Chapter 8: Dramatic Conflict

*“As for myself, when I saw the men, fearing that they were the caliph’s officers who came to seize me and my mistress forthwith and take us to our ruin, I and the two maids fled over the rooftops from place to place until we took refuge with some people who took pity on us and helped us reach our place early in the morning, in the sorriest of plights.”*

- The maid in “The Story of Nur al-Din and the Slave Girl”

Conflict is at the heart of all great stories. In addition to combat, there are two other kinds of dramatic conflict in **Tales of the Caliphate Nights**: Chases and Debates. A chase involves two groups (the pursuer and the prey) struggling to control the terrain in order to hinder the other. A debate involves a battle for the political will of a nation or religious sect, the mind of a madman, the favorable judgment of a presiding *qadi*, or the support of a crowd.

### Chases

Headstrong horses charge neck to neck, matted manes and flashing eyes, sweating hell for leather. Palace guards ransack clay jars looking for a young pickpocket moments before the pickpocket taunts them from the rooftops. Two flying carpets dance around the minarets like courting doves before plummeting into the bazaar below like eagles. The players are on the edge of their seats as a chase has begun...if the Narrator has done his or her job.

Before starting a chase, the Narrator needs to create a sense of suspense and urgency. The players need to feel what they are doing is important. Thus, just as extra attention is paid to the opening lines of a story, a chase begins with a “kicker” – a poignant scene which describes the situation just before the chase breaks out. A good “kicker” is brief, clearly informs the players a chase is about to begin, describes the environment, sets up both a pursuer and prey, and provides a hint at the end-game goals. For example:

*A dirham and a bit of thread were a lousy way to make a living thought Arnawaz the pickpocket as she counted her latest earnings from the souk. “You there, stop thief!” Came the shout of a guard pressing through the morning crowd toward her. There’d be interrogation if she was caught, and they might even learn about Rafiqi’s plan. The thieves’ district was only around the corner; the guard wouldn’t dare follow her there!*

### The Chase Scene

When a chase begins, determine how crowded the overall

scene is. This will give you a *starting distance* between the pursuer and the prey, as well as an *end game distance* at which the prey escapes. It is this chase distance that the Narrator keeps track of. There are five chase conditions: Open, Close, Tight, Congested, and Point-Blank. When determining the scene the Narrator should also consider if there are any special obstacles or maneuvers unique to that scene, or if certain obstacles/maneuvers aren’t available.

### Chase Rounds

Each round of a chase, just like a round of combat, lasts six seconds. Everybody acts in the following cycle:

1. Roll initiative as normal. From order of lowest total to highest, each character declares whether they’re moving all-out, jogging, or standing still.
2. Make opposed obstacle checks and decide upon obstacles.
3. Make necessary control checks in response to obstacles.
4. Decide and resolve maneuvers.
5. Make opposed speed checks modified by what just happened. Any characters not moving all-out take standard or full-round actions in initiative order.

### Moving in a Chase

There are three degrees of movement in a chase, and then there’s standing still. Certain conditions, such as a cramped building or deep sand might limit the maximum degree of movement characters can take during the chase, as might other factors like a discrete chase while walking through a bazaar.

**Speed:** How fast you choose to move during that round.

**Defense Bonus:** The bonus you gain to your defense due to your speed.

**Check Penalty:** The penalty you suffer to all checks, including obstacle and control checks.

**Concentration Difficulty:** If you are moving at “holding back” or “all-out” you must make Concentration checks to perform certain actions as described under that skill.

**Moving All-Out:** You are sprinting, moving at 4 times your base speed (5 times if you or your mount has the Run feat). Moving all-out is considered violent motion (DC 15) for the purposes of a Concentration check.

**Holding Back:** You are holding back in order to focus on an action or because you’re feeling cautious, moving at 2 times your base speed. Holding back is considered vigorous motion (DC 10) for the purposes of a Concentration check.



# Chapter 8: Dramatic Conflicts

**Walking:** You are moving at your base speed.

**Standing Still:** You are standing still in order to perform a full-round action (besides moving all-out or charging) or a standard action and a move action. You may be able to perform certain maneuvers while standing still, but this is at the Narrator's discretion. Your speed check is treated as a '0'.

## Initiative

Initiative is rolled for a chase just as it would be for combat.

## Obstacle Checks

A chase consists of the pursuer and prey attempting to control the terrain of the chase by avoiding obstacles while herding or tricking one's opponent into an obstacle. For example, a thief on foot being pursued by riders on horseback might attempt to lead his pursuers indoors or towards uneven terrain that the horses would have trouble negotiating. Usually a skill reflecting a character's familiarity with the environment is used, though a character can always default to a Notice skill check.

Making an obstacle skill check is a free action, and only one such check may be made per character per round.

The pursuer and prey make an opposed check using their respective skills. Whoever wins the check decides what obstacle they will face. For every 5 points by which a character wins they may also do one of the following:

- Avoid one obstacle that round.
- Guide your allies in the chase so that they avoid one obstacle.
- Force opponent to face the same obstacle as you.

## Obstacle Checks by Terrain

Aerial	As per the terrain
City	Knowledge (streetwise)
Desert	Survival
Ocean	Knowledge (earth sciences)

## Control Checks by Mode of Transportation

Flying Carpet	Pilot (an adept can also use Wind Shaping)
Horseback	Handle Animal or Ride
On Foot	Varied (Acrobatics, Climb, Escape Artist, Jump, etc.)
Ship	Drive

If they tie, both pursuer and prey keep the same obstacles as last round, or, if this isn't possible, their obstacles are randomly determined. A character that doesn't avoid or determine their obstacle that round, such as a pursuer refusing to follow the prey into a certain environment, has their obstacle determined by the Narrator (who may choose it randomly). Each character may choose each obstacle only once; during a chase variety is essential!

## Control Checks

Characters in a chase frequently risk losing control, especially when confronted by difficult obstacles. A control check consists of a skill check that depends on the type of chase (see sidebar). The Difficulty of the control check, and the consequences of failing, depends on the specific obstacle. In addition, when moving through crowded or hazardous conditions, the Narrator may rule that every 50 feet of speed one is moving at imposes a -1 penalty on the control check.

Chase Conditions	Description	Starting Distance	End Game Distance
Open	Streets with little traffic, open ocean, flat desert	1000 feet	1500 feet
Close	Moderate traffic, rough desert, forest, vast mosque, reef/shoal	600 feet	1000 feet
Tight	Crowded street, jungle, alleyways, mountains, bazaar, rooftop	300 feet	600 feet
Congested	Interior of a crowded building, alleyway	100 feet	300 feet
Point-Blank	Characters begin right next to each other	10 feet	100 feet

	Speed	Defense Bonus	Check Penalty	Concentration Difficulty
<b>All-Out</b>	4 x base speed (5 x if you have the Run feat)	+4	-4	15
<b>Holding Back</b>	2 x base speed	+2	-2	10
<b>Walking</b>	Base speed	+0	+0	-
<b>Standing Still</b>	Speed check is treated as 0	+0	+0	-







## Speed Checks

During a chase, a character's speed (or the speed of their horse, ship, or flying carpet) is translated into a modifier by dividing it by 10 and rounding up (e.g. 150 becomes +15). This becomes the character's maximum speed modifier for the scene, though the character can choose to move slower (see "Moving in a Chase"). Each round the pursuer makes an opposed speed check against the prey by rolling d20 + speed modifier; the one who wins changes the distance according to the result of their speed check.

Speed Check	Winner Chooses Result
Tie	Distance unchanged
Succeeds	Distance changes by winner's base speed
Succeeds by 5 or more	Distance changes by 2 x winner's base speed
Succeeds by 10 or more	Distance changes by 3 x winner's base speed
Succeeds by 15 or more	Distance changes by 4 x winner's base speed

## Ending a Chase

A chase comes to an end when the pursuer reduces the chase distance to 0, the prey increases the distance to the end game distance, or one or both sides decide to end the chase. In some cases, a chase ends after a certain distance is covered (e.g. the prey is trying to reach a safe location), or after a certain amount of time has elapsed (e.g. the prey is trying to bring a remedy to a rapidly ailing ally). To simulate this sense of urgency, you might impose a limit

of 5 to 10 rounds on the length of the chase. For example, if the pursuer fails to catch the prey in this time, the prey reaches the safe location. Alternately, if the prey fails to evade the pursuer within this time, their poisoned ally may perish. The exact results depend on the nature of the chase. However the chase will end, the conditions should be made clear to all the players at the very beginning.

## Chase Maneuvers

During a chase characters make various maneuvers. Each character is limited to one maneuver per round.

### Brace

You prepare yourself for the next obstacle you will face, granting you a +2 bonus on your Control checks against your next obstacle, whether you face it during this round or the next.

### Charge Through

You charge through difficult terrain; the following round you may overcome the limits the chase scene imposes upon your maximum speed. However, you must make a Control check (Difficulty 15) or you crash; your speed check is treated as 0 and you may suffer damage.

### Create Obstacle

The character makes life difficult for their opponent who is forced into an obstacle of the character's choosing. For example, a rogue disguised as the prince convinces the palace guard to stop the "imposter" pursuing him, creating a Moving Crowd obstacle for the prince in pursuit. Make a skill check depending on the action; when in doubt make the check against the obstacle's Difficulty.



# Chapter 8: Dramatic Conflicts

## Cry for Help

The character attempts to involve others in the chase. For example, a character evading assassins might call upon a cowardly servant to fetch his scimitar; an Intimidate check is made as normal. The skill used depends on the character's approach: Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate. When attempting this maneuver to call upon the city watch you must attain a Difficulty according to the section of town you are in. One guard enters the chase, beginning at the starting distance according to the scene conditions. For every 5 points the character beats this Difficulty either another guard is added or the guard begins 50 feet closer. A guard never begins closer to the prey than the pursuer. Remember to add your station modifier on this roll. Additionally, members of the guard get a +5 bonus on this check. Certain areas of town, such as thieves' dens or prison may make it impossible to call on guards for help.

DC	Area of City
10	Mosque, Noble's district, Palace
15	Civic district, Wealthy residences, Privately guarded warehouses
20	Average residences, Souk, Public gathering place
25	Caravanserai, Docks and waterfront, Ghetto and slums
30	Cemetery, Red light district, Under city

## Find an Object

You may make a Notice check to find a useful object appropriate to your current surroundings. The Difficulty depends on what you are looking for:

DC	Useful Object
15	Simple melee weapon or small object that wouldn't cost anything
20	A martial weapon or a somewhat valuable object
25	A mount, flying carpet, or some other extremely valuable object

Of course, stealing the object can create all kinds of trouble. Fortunately, the merchants of Baghdad have a special deal for heroes on the run – it's called the 200% or leave it deal.

## Hard Stop (Prey only)

You make a sudden stop when your pursuers are within one round from you and moving all-out, hoping they will overshoot you. Make an opposed Control check with your pursuer. If you succeed, your speed check is treated as 0 and your pursuer rolls their speed check as normal. If their total exceeds the current distance between you, they go flying by the remainder.

## Pace

By matching the speed of your pursuer or prey, you make it easier for your passengers to make attacks. If the opposition doesn't react, the maneuver automatically succeeds; otherwise an opposed Control check is required. If successful, Defense bonuses and check penalties become zero for passengers on both sides attempting actions that involve the two sides pacing. The modifier remains at zero until one side succeeds a maneuver other than pace.

## Perform an Action

You attempt to take a standard action, such as using a ranged weapon, while moving if you must make a Control check against a Difficulty according to the chase conditions.

Chase Conditions	Difficulty
Open	Speed modifier
Close	Speed modifier +5
Tight	Speed modifier +10
Congested	Speed modifier +15

## Seek Cover (Prey only)

You seek cover to lose your pursuers. Make a Control check opposed by your pursuer's Notice check. The chase conditions provide a modifier to your check:

Open	-10
Close	+0
Tight	+5
Congested	+10

If you succeed you find cover and you may make a Stealth check. If you succeed the Stealth check, the chase ends and your pursuers must try to find you.

## Shortcut

Taking a shortcut, you attempt to either lose your pursuer or catch up to your prey. The Narrator determines what skills may be used to find a shortcut; generally the check Difficulty is 20. A shortcut has different effects depending on which side attempts it: *Prey*: The pursuer may choose to follow if they succeed on a DC 20 Control check as a reaction. If the pursuer fails to follow or chooses not to, the chase distance increases by the prey's based speed x 4 in feet.

*Pursuer*: If the pursuer succeeds, they reduce the chase distance by their base speed x 4 in feet. If this is enough to overtake the prey, the pursuer may attempt a Stealth check in order to surprise the prey.

**Special:** Each subsequent time a character attempts a shortcut, whether or not the check was successful, the Difficulty for any subsequent shortcuts for that character increases by +10.

## Random Urban Obstacles

1	Alleyway	11	Herd of Animals
2	Bath House	12	Irrigation System
3	Bridge, Pontoon	13	Moral Dilemma
4	Caravanserai	14	Mosque
5	Cemetery	15	Palanquin Traffic
6	Crowd, Moving	16	Red Light District
7	Crowd, Stationary	17	Rooftop
8	Dangling Things	18	Souk
9	Gap	19	Stables
10	Garden	20	Tenement Housing

### Zig-Zag

You weave to and fro, making it hard to target you and shaking off any passengers. Take a penalty on one primary Control skill, then make a Control check (Difficulty 10), taking that penalty into account. If successful, you gain a Defense bonus equal to the penalty you took. Any passengers must make a Acrobatics check (Difficulty 10 plus the penalty you took) or fall prone.

### Urban Obstacles

The city streets provide endless obstacles during a chase. The obstacles presented here are the most common, but will quickly become old after a few chases in a city; thus the Narrator is encouraged to create new obstacles. Certain obstacles don't logically go together; for example, you won't find a red-light district right next to a mosque. The Narrator is the final word about which obstacles can be used when during a chase.

### Alleyway

A narrow alleyway twists and turns between buildings. Beggars sit in the corners of the alley and clotheslines hang overhead. Maximum speed is reduced to "holding back". While within the alley, any character attempting the *seek cover* maneuver treats the conditions as congested (+10).

### Bath House

The public baths were social centers, with barbers plying their trade, rivals discussing politics...and heroes fleeing for their lives. All characters must make a Dexterity or Acrobatics check (Difficulty 10) or lose their balance, effectively "taking 5" on their speed check. If a character fails the check by 5 or more, they fall into the baths and their speed check is reduced to 0. Fortunately, they're surrounded by good company. The fragrant steam provides any character attempting the *seek cover* maneuver within the baths a +5 bonus.

### Bridge, Pontoon

Baghdad is famous for its pontoon bridges, chains of boats covered with a wooden walkway spanning the river. However, rapid motion across a pontoon bridge can cause it to sway. Each character crossing the bridge must make a Reflex save (Difficulty 10) or lose their balance and

fall prone, "taking 5" on their speed check. If a character fails by 5 or more they fall into the water and their speed check is reduced to 0. In addition, excessive weight (e.g. an elephant) can cause the boats to submerge. A wily character choosing the *create obstacle* maneuver can attempt to untie the bridge, though this requires cutting through the thick ropes binding it together. If successful they can end the chase (unless their pursuers can take to the air or water), though the authorities are likely to seize the character for sabotaging public works.

### Caravanserai

The caravanserai is a dead-end, though here one can find horses, trade goods, information, and guards (though they may be privately employed). Any character led into a caravanserai is trapped unless they mount a camel, attempt to climb the walls (Difficulty 15), or *seek cover*. However, as it's a public place, there will be many witnesses.

### Cemetery

The dangers of running through a cemetery include thieves, ghuls, and disease, and, more pertinently, open graves. During daylight characters can make a Notice check (Difficulty 10) to avoid open graves altogether. However, during the night characters get no such benefit and must make a Jump check (Difficulty 10) or fall into a grave. Their speed check is treated as 0 for that round and for the next round as they climb out.

### Crowd, Moving

A moving crowd presses against the character; this may be fleeing (or angry) peasants, a funeral procession, or people leaving a performance. During the first round, the character must make an Escape Artist check (Difficulty 10); for every point they fail by, reduce their speed by that amount. Each additional round they are moving against the crowd the Difficulty increases by +4. If their speed becomes negative they are swept along with the crowd in a direction determined by the Narrator.

### Crowd, Stationary

Stationary crowds include folks listening to preachers, shoppers, chess players, and street performers. The maximum speed a character can move through a crowd



# Chapter 8: Dramatic Conflicts

without knocking people over is “holding back.” In addition, an Escape Artist check (Difficulty 10) is required to press through the crowd. A failed check indicates that the character is stuck somewhere within the crowd; they must “take 5” on their speed check until they succeed the Escape Artist check. A character may instead may a Diplomacy check (Difficulty 15), which requires a full round of conversation and reduces a character’s speed check to 0, or an Intimidate check (Difficulty 20).

## *Dangling Things*

Clotheslines, diaphanous curtains, banners, drying pots, chimes, hanging meat and other dangling things might get in the way. Characters must make a Reflex save (Difficulty 10) or become entangled, reducing their speed modifier by half. An Escape Artist check (Difficulty 10) or a Strength check (Difficulty 20) allow one to break free.

## *Gap*

A gap might be a canyon, the edge of a rooftop, or any other obstacle that needs to be jumped over. Characters must make a Jump (or Ride) check against a Difficulty according to the gap’s length as determined by the Narrator (e.g. Difficulty 15 for a 10 foot gap). If a character fails, they suffer falling damage.

## *Garden*

The gardens of the caliphate are breathtakingly beautiful, and also treacherously difficult to navigate. Maximum speed is “holding back.” All characters in gardens gain a +5 bonus on *seek cover* and *zig-zag* maneuvers. In addition, each character must make an Intelligence check (Difficulty 10) or reduce their maximum speed to “walking” as they navigate the gardens. Any character failing the Intelligence check by 5 or more becomes Fascinated by the gardens for one round; their speed check is 0 as they stand in awe of the garden’s beauty.

## *Herd of Animals*

A herd of animals comes down the street aiming right at the character. A Handle Animal check (Difficulty 10) allows you to clear a path though you are reduced to “walking” speed; however, if you attain a Difficulty of 15 you may redirect the herd and continue running. Alternately, you can jump on top of the backs of the animals, making an Acrobatics or Jump check (Difficulty 10), though when doing so your maximum speed is “holding back.”

## *Irrigation System*

Waterwheels, *qanats*, *shadhuf*, canals, and other waterworks are masterfully designed within the caliphate. Generally, traversing an irrigation system

requires characters move no faster than “holding back.” At least two of the following checks must be made (Difficulty 10): Acrobatics, Escape Artist, Jump, or Swim. Any character failing one check reduces their speed by half. Any character failing both checks reduces their speed check to 0 as they flounder in the water.

## *Moral Dilemma*

Faced with a choice between what is right and what is easy, the character must make a snap decision. The Narrator might allow the player only six seconds to decide. If the character does what is right, their speed is reduced by half for that round. If the character does what is easy, their speed is unaffected, but they may have to deal with the social repercussions of what they’ve done later.

## *Mosque*

Passing near a mosque, the characters must make a Knowledge (theology and philosophy) or Wisdom check to make the appropriate greeting to the mosque elders and to show proper respect to God. The Difficulty for this check is 10. A character who fails this check is reduced to “holding back” as they flounder trying to explain themselves and make the appropriate gestures. This can easily become a moral dilemma if the call for prayer goes out during the chase – not to mention a really funny chase scene!

## *Palanquin Traffic*

A palanquin is a covered sedan chair carried on four poles. Entire streets were set aside in larger cities for the movement of palanquins bearing nobles. Rushing upon the scene, a character must decide whether to go over the tops of the palanquins, arousing noble ire but gaining an excellent vantage point, or underneath the palanquins, risking getting kicked by a porter but possibly hiding from view.

*Going over:* A character must make a Jump check (Difficulty 15) in order to jump across the tops of the palanquins. The character gains a +2 bonus on their next opposed Obstacle check. However, nobles may send their guards after the character to join the chase!

*Going under:* A character must make an Escape Artist check (Difficulty 15) to duck under the palanquins and weaves through the porters’ legs. The character gains a +5 bonus on any *seek cover* maneuvers, but is subject to an unarmed attack (attack +0, damage +2 non-lethal) from an angry porter.

## *Red Light District*

The tangled streets of the *budayeen*, the red light district, are difficult to navigate. Characters must make a Knowledge (streetwise) or Intelligence check (Difficulty 15) to wind their way through. If a character



fails they are restricted to moving at a “holding back” pace, and if they fail by 5 or more their opponent is allowed an immediate maneuver out of turn. The opponent chooses the maneuver.

## ***Rooftop***

The chase takes to the rooftops. If the roofs are flat, not to worry, but if they have an angled surface, a Dexterity check or Acrobatics check (Difficulty 10) is required or else the character falls off or is left dangling to the edge. Each characters must make a Jump check (Difficulty 15) in order to jump from rooftop to rooftop. Any character who fails falls and may take damage.

## ***Souk***

While in a busy souk, characters gain a +5 bonus on all *find an object* and *cry for help* maneuvers. Additionally, various stalls may get in the characters way unless they reduce their speed to “holding back”; otherwise, they must make a Dexterity or Acrobatics check (Difficulty 10) or crash into a merchant’s stall, suffering one of these conditions: Blinded, Bruised, Entangled, Flat-Footed, or Nauseated depending on the circumstances. Alternately, a character may make a Fortitude save (Difficulty 15) to barrel through the stall, melons and all.

## ***Stables***

Any character attempting the *find an object* maneuver to find a horse within stables gains a +10 bonus. However, swinging barn doors, finicky horses, and ropes create hazards for characters moving at high speeds. Unless a character reduces their speed to “holding back” they must make a Reflex save (Difficulty 10) or be knocked prone, reducing their speed check to 0.

## ***Tenement Housing***

Tenement housing includes multi-storied homes made of mud and brick that are very difficult to navigate and offer ample hiding places. Characters attempting the *seek cover* maneuver gain a +10 bonus while in tenement housing. However, if the characters wish to remain inconspicuous they must reduce their speed to “holding back”, otherwise someone is likely to report them to the authorities. Characters

### ***Obstacles in Other Environments***

Inevitably, characters will lead chases in non-urban conditions. The obstacles described here are a guideline for the Narrator to create his or her own. Here are some other obstacle ideas:

***Aerial Obstacles:*** Flock of birds, minarets, storm clouds, updraft.

***Desert Obstacles:*** Anvil, dunes, oasis, quicksand, river bed, salt flat.

***Ocean Obstacles:*** Coral maze, cursed place, fickle winds, kelp beds, narrow strait, precipitation, reef or shoal, swell.

must make a Knowledge (streetwise) check (Difficulty 10) to find their way through the housing. If a character fails, their speed is reduced to “walking” and if they fail by 5 or more, their speed check is reduced to 0 and they are stuck inside the tenement housing next round.

## ***Debates***

Theologians shake their fists at an arrogant noble accused of sorcery who smugly casts aside their slander with incisive jabs at their own consulting of astrologers. A physician pays nightly visits to an imprisoned beggar convinced he is a king to cure his delusions; little does the prisoner know that the physician has been threatened with death by the scheming queen should he fail in brainwashing the deposed regent. The courtroom is awash with shouts of slander as the crook on trial reveals his fellow thieves are among the crowd. People flock to the bazaar to hear dueling poets, each claiming their beloved outshines their rival’s in beauty and grace a thousand fold. A debate has begun, and words will win the day where might cannot.

## ***Debate Rounds***

Debates are broken up into rounds in which each character gets one full-round action or two standard actions per round. Rounds are abstract units of time, and may represent minutes, hours, or even longer periods of debate.

## ***Initiative***

At the beginning of a debate the character who represents the majority viewpoint, has vastly greater power, or is of higher station always decides who goes first. If characters are equally matched (or equally unequal) then an Intelligence check is made to determine who goes first.

## ***Debate Points***

In a debate, each side has a certain number of debate points. During an election or political debate these represent political clout. When trying to cure a madman these points are an abstract representation of successfully restoring sanity. During a court case, these points indicate how close you are to achieving a verdict in your favor. When engaged in a poetry or storytelling contest, they represent your sway over the crowd.

Each character involved has a certain starting number of debate points equal to their Charisma plus their Station. All characters start with at least one debate point. When a character has no points left they are out of the debate.

## ***Defense***

Defending yourself in a debate means different things according to the nature of the debate; it may represent political savvy, an entrenched mental illness, skill at jurisprudence, or astounding improvisational ability.



In politics, a character's defense is 10 + their bonus in an interaction skill. Appropriate skills include Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Perform (oratory).

A mentally ill character's defense is usually 20 + their Charisma, though a lucid madman may use any interaction skill as per a political debate.

In the court room, a character's defense is 10 + their bonus in an appropriate Knowledge skill for that case. Usually this is Knowledge (civics) or Knowledge (theology and philosophy).

In a poetry or storytelling contest, a character's defense is 10 + their Perform skill. Opponents usually must use the same specialization of Perform.

### Attacks

"Attacks" in a debate are an attempt to reduce your opponent's debate points by attacking their false beliefs, cherished institutions, character flaws, or simply by making your own argument or performance unbeatable. Most of the maneuvers available in a debate lead to attacks. Each maneuver specifies the skill involved in making the attack.

### Damage

When resolving an attack, the character chooses a target opponent then makes a skill check against a Difficulty equal to the target's Defense. If the attack is successful, the opponent must make a Will save; the Difficulty of the save is equal to the attacker's skill bonus plus the damage bonus of the maneuver. If the opponent fails the Will save, he loses one debate point. If he fails the Will save by more than 10, he loses an additional debate point. Keep track of how many debate points of damage each side causes as well as those that individual characters lose – the information may be important for determining a winner.

### Critical Hits

When you make an attack in a debate and get a "natural 20" you succeed regardless of the target's Defense. The Difficulty of your opponent's Will save increases by 5 and they lose an additional debate point if the save is failed.

### Ending a Political Debate

There are several ways a debate can end, depending on the type of debate. A political debate usually ends when only one side still has debate points left. This simulates talking until the group comes to a consensus. In this case, one character convinces all the others of his view. Generally the character of higher station can choose to end the debate at any time.

### Role-playing the Attack

Any player may declare her character's maneuvers as abstract actions, but it's far more entertaining to have the player role-play a particular position or rhetorical flourish. If a player presents her character's maneuver with an entertaining description or speech, the Narrator may award the player a +2 bonus on the skill check for that maneuver. This bonus doesn't apply when framing a story.

### Healing Madness

When healing a madman, there may or may not be a time limit on the debate, such as your imminent execution. Usually, healing madness is a long drawn out affair; each round represents at least one week's time, and more likely represents a month or even a year. If you win, the madman's mental illness is cured and he returns to his senses. Alternately, if you are actually trying to drive the subject mad, then you have succeeded; the subject gains the *madness* Complication. If you lose, the patient slips further into madness and may blame you for their worsened condition. Alternately, the patient resists your attempts and discovers you've been poisoning their mind all along. When healing madness, it is not necessary to devote every waking hour to the healing process; several two-hour meetings per week are sufficient.

### Resolving a Court Case

All legal cases presided over by a *qadi* end after a set number of rounds, generally from 5 to 10 rounds depending on the *qadi*'s patience. Usually, each round represents an hour, but in a long case might represent days. At the end of this time, the *qadi* makes a decision in favor of the character who won the debate. If this is the defendant, they get off with minor or no punishment at all. If this is the plaintiff, the accused receives harsh punishment according to the law of the land.

### Ending a Debate Prematurely

When all parties agree to end the debate, a character successfully makes a Profound Conclusion, or a character of higher station chooses to end the debate, each side of the debate adds together its remaining debate points and the number of debate points it caused opponents to lose. The side with the highest total is the winner of the debate. However, such victories are never sweeping and often involve compromise.

### Postponing a Debate

Characters may agree to meet in a month, go on adventures, tend to daily life, or adjourn from a court room. In these cases, the debate is suspended. Each character retains his or her current number of debate points until the debate resumes. However, political maneuvering such as assassination, blackmail, or bribery is possible in the interim.



## **Ending a Poetry or Storytelling Contest**

During a poetry or storytelling contest, the competitors may not use social feats on the crowd. The winner of the contest has won the heart of the crowd and may use “social” feats as normal. Social feats include: Fascinate, Inspire, Sow Distrust, Rumor-Monger, Suggest, and Taunt. The winner might even be allowed to use a social feat against an unreachable target, for example, fascinating a prince who hears of her storytelling skill. If the winner is attempting to change public opinion, the Narrator might play out a series of contests over the course of several adventures.

## **Debate Maneuvers**

### **The Big Lie**

*Bluff, Damage +20, Full action*

You fabricate a convincing lie so outrageous that foolish people believe everything you say.

**Special:** If you fail the attack roll, you must figure the damage and make a Will save against that DC. If you fail, you lose debate points instead according to the damage.

### **Build the Argument**

*Standard action*

You methodically establish each point of your argument and defend it with inexorable logic.

**Special:** This maneuver requires no skill check and deals no damage. If your next attack uses the Diplomacy or Perform (Oratory) skill, you gain a +2 bonus. The maximum bonus you can accumulate from successive uses of Build the Argument is +6.

### **Dazzling Rhetoric**

*Perform (Oratory), Damage +10, Standard action*

Your words soar. You paint castles in the sky for your audience, and they’re ready to pack their bags and move in.

**Special:** You may damage two opponents with this attack. If you choose to do so, calculate separate modifiers for each opponent, adding your skill bonus and any other relevant bonuses. Then make a single attack roll and add it to each of the two modifiers to generate two separate results.

### **Distracting Patter**

*Bluff, Damage +5, Full action*

You make a series of quick and nonsensical points, confusing your opponent while you set up your real attack.

**Special:** Whether or not you succeed in this attack, your first subsequent attack that is not Distracting Patter gains a +2 bonus. The maximum bonus you can accumulate from successive uses of Distracting Patter is +6.

### **Expose Flaw**

*Diplomacy, Damage +5, Standard action*

You uncover a flaw in your opponent’s logic.

### **False Authority**

*Bluff, Full action*

You know what you’re talking about and have the evidence to back up your claims. And you know, with just a little bit of stretching it does!

**Special:** Make a Bluff check and add the usual attack roll modifiers. The result becomes your Defense score for the next four rounds beginning immediately.

### **Forceful Interrogation**

*Intimidate, Damage +10, Full action*

You batter your opponent with questions, seeking to disorient and get her to expose important information.

**Special:** If your attack is successful and your opponent fails the Will save, you gain an additional +5 damage bonus to your next attack. If your opponent succeeds this save she gains a +5 damage bonus to her next attack. No matter who gains the damage bonus, that attack must be successful or the bonus is lost.

### **Frame Story**

*Full action*

You weave an enchanting tale which helps to prove your argument.

**Special:** This requires spending a point of Conviction as described in **Chapter 1** under “New Uses for Conviction.” When used in a debate, the story modifier applies as a bonus on either your next skill check or your next damage roll.

### **Gentle Persuasion**

*Diplomacy, Damage +5, Full action*

Using quiet, reasoned arguments, you cajole your opponents and the audience to your side of the debate.

**Special:** If you succeed at your attack roll and your opponent fails his Will save, you gain a debate point in addition to the usual consequences.

### **Hint at Consequences**

*Intimidate, Damage +5, Standard action*

You almost suggest that unpleasantness might result from the foolish course of action that your opponent is suggesting. Not that you’d have anything to do with it, of course.

### **Humorous Jab**

*Perform (Oratory), Damage +5, Standard action*

You bedevil your opponent with a quick joke or witty remark.

### **Invoke Faith**

*Perform (Oratory), Damage +10, Full action*

You connect your argument to God and moralistic ideals.

**Special:** If you are a member of the religious hierarchy or are widely recognized as a saint you may add your character level to the damage bonus.



# Chapter 8: Dramatic Conflicts

## Offer Compromise

*Diplomacy, Damage +10, Full action*

You find a point of agreement between your position and that of an opponent, and then offer to build a greater agreement from that promising beginning.

**Special:** After succeeding at this attack, you may increase the damage bonus by staking debate points. Each debate point you risk adds +5 to the damage bonus. If your opponent succeeds at his Will save you lose the debate points you staked on this maneuver.

## Point of Order

*Perform (Oratory), Standard action*

You question an opponent's protocol or methodology. This confuses the opponent and delays him as he explains how he is observing the correct procedures.

**Special:** If you succeed at your attack roll your opponent loses his next action.

## Present Evidence

*Diplomacy, Damage +10, Full action*

You counter your opponent's arguments with hard facts.

**Special:** You must have some evidence you have gained in order to use this maneuver. Once a piece of evidence is used it may not be used again.

## Profound Conclusion

*Diplomacy, Damage +15, Full action*

You make a firm point that's impossible to argue with.

**Special:** If your attack succeeds and your opponent fails her Will save by more than 10, you may make a Perform (Oratory) check. If the result is higher than the Defense of each of your opponents, you may declare the debate is over. Each side totals its remaining debate points and the damage it caused, and a winner is determined.

## Questionable Conclusions

*Bluff, Damage +10, Standard action*

Having stretched your facts, you weave spurious interpretations into a silken argument.

## Regroup

*Standard action*

You pause to think and prepare your next set of arguments in your mind.

**Special:** You win the initiative for the rest of the debate, unless someone else uses regroup, in which case they act before you.

## Shore Up Defenses

*Standard action*

You anticipate objections, defending against your opponents' arguments by strengthening your own.

**Special:** Your Defense score is increased by your Intelligence (if you're in a political debate or healing a madman) or your Charisma (if in a court case) for the next 2 rounds beginning immediately.

## Sly Insinuations

*Bluff, Damage +5, Standard action*

You undermine an opponent with comments that skate on the edge of insulting.

## Smear Opponent

*Intimidate, Damage +10, Full action*

You attack your opponent directly, suggesting that his morals, motives, knowledge, or authority are tainted or inadequate.

**Special:** If you fail the attack roll, make a Perform (Oratory) check. The Difficulty is equal to your opponent's Defense. If you fail this check lose one debate point.

## Support Ally

*Standard action*

You make a series of minor points that buttress the arguments of another.

**Special:** The character you are supporting receives a +2 bonus on her next skill check. No character may receive more than a +6 bonus from Support Ally for any one attack roll.

## Tantrum

*Intimidate, Damage +10, Full action*

You use your talent for yelling, interrupting, and pounding the table with your fist to prove that you should be taken seriously.

**Special:** In addition to the attack roll make a Perform (Oratory) check against a Difficulty equal to your opponent's Defense. If you fail this check lose one debate point.

## Threat

*Bluff or Intimidate, Damage +15, Full action*

You make an explicit threat to your opponent.

**Special:** If your attack fails or your opponent succeeds at his Will save to avoid damage, you lose one debate point.

## Use Social Feat

*Standard action*

You make use of the Fascinate, Inspire, Rumor-Monger, Sow Discord, Suggest or Taunt feats against your opponent. However, until you win the debate, you may not use these feats on the arbiter, crowd, or judge as your opponent prevents you from doing so.





## Chapter 9: Adversaries

*Then, when he decided to lay hold of the man who was an enemy to both of them, that man said: "O Moses! Is it thy intention to slay me as thou slewest a man yesterday? Thy intention in none other than to become a powerful violent man in the land, and not to be one who sets things right!"*  
- Qur'an 28:19

*Whosoever of you sees an evil action, let him change it with his hand; and if he is not able to do so, then with his tongue; and if he is not able to do so, then with his heart, for that is the minimum that is desirable from a believer.*  
- The Prophet (Hadith of At-Tirmidhi)

Within the caliphate, there are many struggles being fought. At the borders of the land are conflicts and imminent warfare with the Franji and Roman Empires, Cathay, and the Umayyad Emirate. Racial conflicts, sectarian religious disputes, independence movements, and political uprisings wrack the Caliphate from within. From the people's perspective tyrannical government and corrupt bureaucracy plague their lives. Assassins strike in the mosques, djinni tempt mortals with untold power, *mihnas* (tribunals) are called to interrogate purported heretics, nobles scheme to instill their children in the Caliph's throne, corsairs engage in slavery on the high seas, and bandits raid caravans everywhere.

The main adversaries characters will face can be divided into the abstract, assassins, djinni, heretics, magical creatures, nobility & royalty, the state, and thieves. A challenging adversary makes a character face their own capacity for becoming the monster they face.

### Abstract Adversaries

Many of the enemies that characters will face are completely intangible, and cannot be defeated with skill at arms or command of magic. These ephemeral challenges must be met with cunning, wisdom and faith; such abstract dilemmas may be more trying than any battle characters will ever face.

### Mistaken Identity

While fleeing the palace, a cunning assassin disguised as the Caliph shouts at the guards to protect him from the real Caliph who is in pursuit. A drunken beggar is picked from off the street by a crazed king who, as a cruel jest, dresses him as a king and commands his subjects to treat the beggar as they would treat him. Granted an audience with the ifreeti sultana, one of the characters (with the Djinn-Touched background) is mistaken for her cousin. A case of mistaken identity is a chance to add some comedy to the game, especially if the players know the truth of the situation. It can also make for very tense drama if the characters must choose between playing a role which could be advantageous for them or revealing the truth.

### Moral Dilemmas

The clichéd moral dilemma is choosing between the life of a loved one and the lives of many innocents. However, this sort of dilemma should rarely enter the picture in a role-playing game, as it offers the player little choice. Instead, a moral dilemma is something very personal to a character. Am I doing the right thing for the wrong reasons? Am I overextending myself for someone else when I need to be pursuing my own goals first? Is this a sacrifice worth making? What is my responsibility to my family? To society? What is the goal of spirituality? What is the ideal system of government? Why do I live my





life? These philosophical questions are at the very heart of morality. A dilemma should provide several actions a character could take, highlighting different rewards and consequences of each action.

### *Problematic Reputation*

Having a bad reputation is clearly a problem; you may be exiled, stoned, betrayed, or overthrown. However, fame can be equally problematic. Characters who become fabulously famous must contend with pestering peasants, blind followers committing fanatic acts in their name, and inaccurate rumors spreading about their deeds. Enemies may discriminate target the characters due to what they've heard, or perhaps they're too afraid to. In any case, there's not a moment's peace while the crowds chant your name. Evading this reputation may require adopting a secret identity, feigning their deaths, or engaging in a campaign to ruin their own reputations (thereby saving their lives).

### *Vows of Secrecy*

A common element in the *Nights* is a secret which, if explored, condemns the investigator to the same fate as the one who held the secret. When in the role of the investigator, characters may meet someone with a rare deformity, someone who performs a bizarre ritual every night, or several people living in unusual circumstances. Their host(ess) may graciously welcome them, but forbid them from asking about his or her condition or from entering a certain room in the palace. If the characters' curiosity gets the better of them, their host reveals a perilous quest they may undertake to learn the truth. Are they clever enough to avoid the same fate that befell their host? Alternately, characters may be on the other side of the fence, having sworn a secret they are forbidden to share. Under what circumstances will the characters break their silence?

### *Assassins*

A militant occult branch of Ismaili Shiites, the Assassins use terror like a fine blade, effecting political change disproportionate to what their small numbers would normally allow. Their *modus operandi* is to kill a political leader in a crowded mosque, and in the midst of the terror to sit down and begin to pray. By awaiting judgment, they proved they were not bound by fear; thus it is extremely rare for an assassin to commit suicide, unless they have information that cannot be shared. One of the legends surrounding the assassins is that they took hashish prior to these killings, enabling them to conquer fear; hence the name *hashishin*; in reality this never occurs. Their own name for themselves is *fedayeen*, meaning "those ready to die for a cause."

Many fleeing heretics hid in the Alborz Mountains of Persia in the ancient mountain kingdom of Daylam. The Old Man of the Mountains is their absolute ruler and religious authority. Once established in the mountains, he sent his closest missionaries (*da'is*) in all directions. At the same time he pursued a policy of territorial expansion, taking castles by means of propaganda, infiltration, and force, until he had most of the Daylamis paying tribute to him. The Old Man rules from the secret mountain fortress called Alamut.

Rumors abound about the Old Man's recruiting methods. The most persistent is that he drugs a group of young boys before sending them into the fortress' garden. Upon waking, they are surrounded by women, jewels, songs, etc. They receive everything they ask for, so that they would never want to leave, thinking themselves in paradise. Then, while they sleep, the illusion is removed, and the Old Man promises them a return to paradise if they perform a mission for him. So goes the rumor.

The reality is that indoctrination is a complex process involving nine stages – confusion, inspiring dependence on a teacher, debunking religious leaders, heresy, testing, shedding morality (when the assassin becomes known as *da'is*), initiation and physical mastery, "truth" and liberation (or slavery, depending on how one looks at it). This process makes every assassin into a strong debater, who knows how to use false analogy and rhetoric to challenge the views of the faithful. The new assassin has been indoctrinated to believe that Islam, indeed all of the religions, are not vehicles for enlightenment, but enslavement to meaningless ideals. While not atheists, assassins are paradoxically indoctrinated to believe that only their logical reasoning and unfailing devotion to the Old Man will free their souls.

Special assassins called *Tajir* learn the occult art of *Khadulu*, complete abandonment of dogma and fixed beliefs allowing one to see reality as it truly is. Literally *Khadulu* means "forsake", and it relies upon control over one's breath. The *Tajir* is charged with overseeing training of young *fedayeen*, providing behind-the-scenes guidance, and ensuring that loyalties are never questioned. However, by virtue of the very nature of *Khadulu* the *Tajir* occultists are difficult for the Old Man to control.

As antagonists, assassins are honorable. They never target the innocent, though who they consider truly innocent may be a rather small percentage of the population. Assassins are uncompromising opponents who do not even consider death as defeat; if captured an assassin will do their best to use rhetoric to convince others of



the justness of their cause, hoping to either secure their release or even to convince another to finish what they could not. A favored assassin tactic is to place or bribe spies within their enemy's own home, and to wreck havoc within, pitting wives against husbands, children against their parents, and slaves against their masters. Once reconnaissance is gathered, they act decisively; a fortunate target receives a warning, while an unfortunate one is publicly killed in broad daylight. The killer wears white to symbolize their purity and to strike terror into the crowd as the blood of their victim stains the assassin's clothes.

## *Fedayeen*

Expert 3

**Background:** Assassin-in-Training; **Nationality:** Arab; **Allegiance:** Ismaili

**Virtue:** Self-sacrificing; **Vice:** Blind Follower

**Speed:** 30 ft; **Reputation:** +1; **Conviction:** +4

**Abilities:** Str +1, Dex +2, Con +1, Int +0, Wis +1, Cha +1

**Skills:** (6) Bluff +7, Climb +7, Concentration +7, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +7, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (theology and philosophy) +6, Sleight of Hand +8, Stealth +8, Swim +7

**Feats:** Benefit (alternate identity), Dedicated, Fearless, Inspire (fear), Secrets of Alamut, Sow Distrust, Surprise Attack, Weapon Focus (dagger)

**Combat:** Initiative +2, Defense +2

**Melee:** Attack +2 (dagger), Damage +2, Critical 19-20/+3

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +1, Fortitude +2, Reflex +5, Will +4

Selected at birth to become one of the elite *fedayeen*, this young man was trained in philosophy, trickery, and martial arts. Because he had no "bad habits", programming him to obey the Old Man was easier than more independent subjects. He spouts indoctrinated rhetoric off like a fountain.

## *Tajir Occultist*

Expert 3, Adept 4

**Background:** Assassin-in-Training; **Nationality:** Arab; **Allegiance:** Ismaili

**Virtue:** Prudence; **Vice:** Cynic

**Speed:** 30 ft; **Reputation:** +0; **Conviction:** +5

**Abilities:** Str +0, Dex +1, Con +0, Int +1, Wis +2, Cha +3

**Skills:** Bluff +12, Concentration +11, Disguise +12, Knowledge (theology and philosophy) +10, Intimidate +12, Sense Motive +11, Stealth +10

**Feats:** Benefit (alternate identity), Dedicated, Inspire (fear), Literacy, Low Profile, Master Plan, Secrets of Alamut, Surprise Attack

**Powers:** (Charisma, rank 8, save DC 12) Body Control, Mind Shaping, Mind Touch, Psychic Shield

## *Who is the Old Man?*

Mystery surrounds the grandmaster of the assassins. The Narrator can choose one of these secrets, blend them, or make up his or her own.

- 1. Descendant of the Prophet:** He is a cousin of Mohammed with a claim to the Caliphate who was cursed with savagery which was said to have left his face contorted and his appetite thirsty for human blood. To hide their shameful son, his family locked him in a mountain monastery where he donned a featureless gold mask, calling himself the Faceless and Nameless.
- 2. Immortal Sorcerer:** An adept with mastery over illusion who was saved by the Sultana of the Ifreet, he has sworn to repay the Sultana with tribute and harvested souls. His frequent trips to the City of Brass have granted him an unnaturally extended life. However, recently the Sultana has demanded she be given her own cult, something completely antithetical to the Old Man's ideals of religious reform
- 3. Inherited Title:** There is no one "Old Man", rather it is a title that is passed down through the generations of the highest ranking members of the *Tajir*. The current "Old Man", Zain ud-Dawlahni, fears losing his post to internal treachery. He sends his rivals on dangerous missions, hoping they will die in the field, allowing him to save face by not assassinating them outright.
- 4. Servant of the Faithful:** He was a devout servant of Aisha bint Abu Bakr, "Mother of the Faithful", who swore to see her nephew Zubayr put upon the throne. Once Zubayr achieved the throne, the Old Man served his line faithfully until the Umayyad House deposed the old royal family. When the line of Zubayr was assassinated and not a single living soul left, the Old Man swore revenge. His vows were so strong that death could not take him, and some say he will live forever till every ancestor of the assassins are killed. Recently, however, he has learned of three possible descendants of Zubayr!



**Combat:** Initiative +1, Defense +4

**Melee:** Attack +5 (dagger), Damage +1, Critical 19-20/+3

**Ranged:** Attack +5 (light crossbow), Damage +3, Critical 19-20/+3, Range 80 ft

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +0, Fortitude +0, Reflex +3, Will +7

A ruthless occultist devoted to the Old Man, he acts as a leader of other assassins. While one or two of his pupils are favored, the rest are quite expendable. He will stoop to any tactic to achieve his goals, though he favors undermining the beliefs of the Islamic faithful. When called a heretic, he smiles and quotes: "A virtuous heretic shall be saved before a blind follower."

### *Djinni*

A djinn is a being born from smokeless flame thousands of years before the birth of humanity. According to pagan belief they have always existed as nature spirits, while Muslims believe God created them as a test of humanity. In the distant past, djinni were worshipped as gods and took mortals as lovers, slaves, students, and even food. When humanity came into being there occurred a great rift amongst the djinni which they only call "The Choice." The Jinn claim that their sheikh was contacted by the angel Gabriel who spoke on the peak of the Sacred Al-Qaf Mountains. Gabriel offered a choice to all djinni; either they could serve God and bow down to humanity, or rebel and be abandoned by God. At this time, the previously unified tribes of the djinn split. The Jinn and Jann tribes sided with God and submitted to humanity's sovereignty, while the Ghul, Ifreet, and Shaitan sided with Iblis and resented humanity's dominion. The proud elders of the Marid tribe allowed each individual to make his or her own choice. The Choice was not a universal truth – some Ifreet are Muslims and some Jann are renegades – but generally describes the feelings of the various tribes of djinni.

Those djinni which are not bound by magic or an oath often prefer to spend their time in Jinnistan, where they have a society which parallels the Caliphate. When freed an imprisoned a djinn is bound by ancient law which states: *Whosoever of mortal kind frees a djinn from imprisonment shall unto that one a wish be granted.* However, how this law is observed in reality varies considerably. Those djinni which have been imprisoned for centuries might burst forth yelling: "Repentance! O Prophet of God!" Such djinni believe the one who releases them must be the very same prophet who imprisoned them. On the other end of the spectrum is the djinn who is excessively grateful and insists on fulfilling

their every wish...only it turns out in unexpectedly poor ways, always dramatically overdoing it and misinterpreting what was wished for.

As antagonists, djinni make terrifying and cunning opponents. They have a mastery of magic that few mortals can muster, the ability to retreat instantly to Jinnistan, and are particularly skilled at letting a mortal think they've got the upper hand while plotting the mortal's downfall. Most heroes are no match for a djinni in a physical contest, and so they must conspire to outwit a djinni or play off of its weaknesses. As most djinni, even the pious ones, can tend toward egomania, finding and exploiting a djinn's pride is usually the best defense. See **Chapter 16** for more details on Jinnistan and the djinni.

### *Djinn (New Role)*

The djinni are outsiders with their own Role in which they advance.

**Size:** Medium.

**Abilities:** Djinni gain 6 ability points just like humans, though they gain a bonus based upon their tribal allegiance.

**Path to Jinnistan (Core Ability):** The djinn can spend a Conviction point to travel to Jinnistan instantly. However, the djinn has a unique restriction on its travel; for example, it must recite a passage from the Qur'an or it must leap into a fire. Each djinn's path to Jinnistan is different. By making an extra effort on top of spending the Conviction point, the djinn can bring along up to six willing mortals. Any djinn or mortal with the Plane Shift power witnessing the djinn's disappearance can attempt to follow it by spending a Conviction point or making a successful power check, respectively.

**Powers:** Djinni can develop and use supernatural powers as an adept, treating their Djinni levels as adept levels.

**Skills:** Choose 6 + Intelligence score starting skills (minimum of 1). Djinni gain 6 + Int skill ranks per additional level (minimum 1). A djinn begins with 3 ranks in the Arabic and Djinni languages.

**Feats:** Choose 4 starting feats from any feat categories. In addition, Djinni get access to special Djinni feats, and begin with one bonus Djinni feat for free. Djinni can take powers in place of feats.

**Traits:** All djinni, being outsiders, have Darkvision out to 60 feet. In addition, all tribes save the Ghul have Damage Reduction and can become Incorporeal at will. Djinni gain additional traits based upon their tribal allegiance.

**Advancement:** A djinn's combat bonus advances as a warrior. It has good saves in Fortitude, Reflex, and Will. A djinn has a reputation bonus which advances as an expert.

**Damage Reduction:** All djinni tribes save the Ghul





have damage reduction +4 that supernatural weapons may overcome. In addition, the damage reduction is overcome by either copper (if the djinn is allied with Suleiman and the Almighty); such djinni gain the virtue subtype. It is overcome by iron if the djinn is allied with Iblis; such djinni gain the vice subtype. Pagan djinni, or those djinni who have not made their choice yet, are harmed by some unique thing; typically this is a seemingly harmless action, like throwing a plum pit near them.

**Incorporeal:** All djinni tribes save the Ghul can become incorporeal as a standard action. In this form the djinn is completely invisible as well, though dogs, people with the Second Sight power or True Faith feat, and the extremely superstitious can make a Difficulty 25 Notice check to sense something is out of place when a djinn is near.

There are 6 known tribes of djinni, though sha'ir whisper about a mysterious seventh "lost tribe." These tribes are presented below, and are also given a similar treatment as character Archetypes, providing suggested starting feats and skills for a 1<sup>st</sup> level djinn of that tribe.

## Ghul

Ghul are wholly corrupted and were the first cannibals. Though they possess a shrewd intelligence, it is only used to satiate their wicked appetites and dark lusts. Consumed by their passions, Ghul stalk the places of

death and wastelands, attempting to fool travelers by disguising themselves as lost pilgrims or women in distress. Thankfully, they are infinitely superstitious – a trait which the sha'ir is wise to take advantage of.

**Abilities:** +2 Dexterity, +4 Constitution

**Traits:** Darkvision (60 ft.), Immunity (disease, poison), Mimicry, Powers (Dominate, Drain Vitality), Scent, Shapeshift (human, vulture)

**Feats:** Favored Opponent (humans), Hideous\*, Improved Grab, Surprise Attack, Thick-Skinned\*

**Skills:** Bluff, Intimidate, Jump, Notice, Stealth, Survival

## Ifreet

Ifreet, like the fire which they were born from, are angry, moody, and prone to violence. Their palaces are burning citadels where humans serve as their slaves. Driven to seek power in the temporal sphere, Ifreet often interact with demons. It is believed that most of the djinni imprisoned by Suleiman were Ifreeti.

**Abilities:** +4 Strength, +4 Constitution, +2 Charisma

**Traits:** Damage Reduction (4/supernatural), Darkvision (60 ft.), Immunity (energy, fire), Incorporeal, Powers (Elemental Blast, Fire Shaping), Shapeshift (human, dog, serpent, scorpion)

**Feats:** Cleave, Enlarged Ego\*, Favored Opponent (Jann or Jinn), Rage, Weapon Training

**Skills:** Craft (weapons), Intimidate, Knowledge (tactics), Notice, Ride, Sense Motive





*Jann*

Jann are mischievous spirits as comfortable in the shade of an oasis as they are in the roar of a sandstorm. Marked by an individualistic streak only rivaled by the Marid, the Jann are nomads wandering the caravan routes, often serving as messengers and traders amongst the other djinni tribes. More often than not, they side with humanity, but often pranks go hand-in-hand with their aid.

**Abilities:** +4 Constitution, +2 Charisma

**Traits:** Damage Reduction (4/supernatural), Darkvision (60 ft.), Immunity (earth, weather), Incorporeal, Powers (Earth Shaping, Elemental Blast), Shapeshift (camel)

**Feats:** Fascinate, Hidden Path\*, Thick-Skinned\*, Track, Trailblazer

**Skills:** Diplomacy, Handle Animal, Knowledge (earth sciences), Ride, Stealth, Survival

*Jinn*

Jinn are consummate scholars and theologians who enjoy the company of mortals, and are known to invite (or kidnap) prominent human sages to their palaces where the wind never stops blowing. Masters of the desert wind, the Jinn are staunch allies of humanity, and terrible foes of the three rebellious tribes.

**Abilities:** +4 Dexterity, +2 Wisdom, +4 Charisma

**Traits:** Damage Reduction (4/supernatural), Darkvision (60 ft.), Immunity (weather, wind), Incorporeal, Powers (Elemental Blast, Wind Shaping), Shapeshift (eagle, human, lion)

**Feats:** Djinni's Boon\*, Favored Opponent (Ghul, Shaitan, or Ifreet), Literacy\*, True Faith\*, Wind Finesse\*

**Skills:** Concentration, Diplomacy, Knowledge (civics), Knowledge (theology and philosophy), Perform (oratory), Sense Motive

*Marid*

Marid are a small and haughty tribe, but also the oldest, whose records go back before the dawn of man. They are alternately fascinated by mortals and want nothing to do with them. Most Marid live near the coast, as they are masters of the weather. Sailors speak of being taken to cities beneath the sea by Marid.

**Abilities:** +2 Dexterity, +2 Wisdom, +6 Charisma

**Traits:** Amphibious, Damage Reduction (4/supernatural), Darkvision (60 ft.), Immunity (weather, water), Incorporeal, Powers (Elemental Blast, Water Shaping, Weather Shaping), Shapeshift (horse, porpoise, wild elder tree)

**Feats:** Attractive, Enlarged Ego\*, Fascinate, Sailor's Lore\*, Suggest

**Skills:** Acrobatics, Intimidate, Knowledge (earth sciences), Perform (singing), Notice, Sense Motive

*Shaitan*

Shaitan are masters of deception who delight in manipulating both mortals and other djinni to their own ends. Their arrogance, however, is their downfall. Used to having human worshippers in the past, Shaitan are furious at their current state of subservience and plot to overthrow the Caliphate.

**Abilities:** +2 Strength, +4 Intelligence, +4 Charisma

**Traits:** Damage Reduction (4/supernatural), Darkvision (60 ft.), Immunity (mind-influencing effects), Incorporeal, Powers (Heart Shaping, Illusion), Shapeshift (camel, human, jackal)

**Feats:** Amoral\*, Enlarged Ego\*, Master Plan, Read Character\*, Supernatural Duplicity\*

**Skills:** Bluff, Diplomacy, Knowledge (theology and philosophy), Notice, Sense Motive, Sleight of Hand

*Heretics & the State*

That Islam is the one true religion is rarely questioned in stories of the *Nights*, yet there are numerous examples of competing factions within the supposedly unified faith. The political powers of the Caliphate often use the term "heresy" when labeling their enemies yet blanch when the term is cast back on them. Many of the religious sects described in **Chapter 3** label each other this way. The fact of the matter is that divergent beliefs abound in the caliphate, which is both unable to suppress them entirely, and sometimes unwilling to. While it has been over two hundred years since the Prophet united the desert tribes, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and even covert animists continue to exert great influence on the Caliphate. Indeed, a few pagans are counted among the Prophet's own Companions. From a political standpoint, religion in the Caliphate often acts as a social sanction for government. The real question underlying the heresy debates is how do we attain the best system of government humanly possible?

If the characters are labeled heretics, they may have to face the *mihna*, a tribunal before a council of clergy, possibly including the Caliph's vizier or the Caliph himself. Should the *mihna* go poorly, the characters may be sentenced to death, imprisonment, or exile. Characters who manage to evade the *mihna* are hunted down by inquisitors known as the Eyes of the Caliph, the imperial secret police force. Accounts are frozen, unjust taxes levied, minor charges trumped up, *qadis* bought off, key witnesses disappeared, main figures blackmailed, allies roughed up, and that's just what happens while characters are still breathing free air. Once taken captive, they are subjected to numerous methods of torture, both physical and psychological, before being executed in public after a speech about the evils of heresy. Of course, if the captives are willing to spill hideout locations, cohorts, agendas, or leaders they may win themselves life, freedom, and a new job



as a spy for the Eyes of the Caliph which see everywhere. As agents of the Caliph fighting against heresy, the characters will find their most cherished values constantly tested. Do the evils they defeat outweigh the evils they commit in the name of justice? Or are they honest men and women in an overwhelmingly corrupt institution? There are some very wicked people lurking in the shadows of the Caliphate: worshippers of Iblis who macerate their victims in oil and sever their heads as instruments of prophecy, con artists who kill an entire household in order to impersonate its members and lure new in new victims, vile merchants who buy and sell sex-slaves for the decadent aristocracy, and false prophets who brainwash beggar boys into believing in them are just a few of the lurid and despicable characters stalking the streets of Baghdad. Against such resourceful enemies, the characters wield the authority of the Caliph himself, if not the authority of God.

## The Mihna

A *mihna* is a tribunal presided over by an absolute authority, such as a *qadi*, chief of police, royal theologian, vizier, or even a Caliph, Emir or Imam. Only those who attract great public attention, have broad popular support, or have taken treasonous action are brought before a *mihna*. Characters brought before a *mihna* plea their case, but ultimately what will decide their fate are not facts and testimony, but a test. This test varies according to the allegations brought against the defendant, but always involves “damned if you do, damned if you don’t” logic. A merchant accused of using sorcery to curse a noble’s business venture might be called upon to remove the curse he laid upon the noble. If the merchant claims he can’t remove the curse, he is given one last chance to repent before being punished. If the merchant removes the curse, his action proves that he is a sorcerer – he has damned his soul. Punishment by a *mihna* often involves maiming, torture, or execution. However, a character who repents and convinces the presiding judge of their sincerity may be asked a series of philosophical questions. If the character answers these satisfactorily, they will be recruited to act as an agent of the *mihna*.

## Inquisitor-Spy

Expert 4

**Background:** Bureaucrat; **Nationality:** Arab; **Allegiance:** Caliphate

**Virtue:** Perseverance; **Vice:** Close-mindedness

**Speed:** 30 ft; **Reputation:** +2; **Conviction:** +4

**Abilities:** Str +0, Dex +1, Con +0, Int +1, Wis +2, Cha +2

**Skills:** Bluff 6 (+8), Diplomacy 6 (+8), Disguise 8 (+12), Gather Information 8 (+10), Intimidate 6 (+8), Knowledge (civics) 6 (+7), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 6 (+7), Knowledge (supernatural) 6 (+7), Knowledge (streetwise) 6 (+7), Notice 6 (+8), Sense Motive 8 (+12)

**Feats:** Benefit (alternate identity), Connected, Dedicated, Eye for Treachery\*, Honest Law\*, Improvised Tools, Literacy\*, Talented (disguise, sense motive), Well-Informed

**Combat:** Attack +4 (+1 Dex), Damage +3 (mace or light crossbow), Defense +4 (+1 Dex), Initiative +1

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +0, Fortitude +4, Reflex +2, Will +6

When not interrogating pagans, this spy can be found deep undercover in their ranks. Once a low-ranking member of the Uzza fertility cult, she was rescued from “brainwashing” and recruited by the Eyes of the Caliph to fight the tide of heresy. An utterly ruthless inquisitor, she means it when she says: “There is no such thing as an induced confession.”

## Magical Creatures

While magical creatures are rare save in the stories of sailors, Mythic Arabia is home to numerous creatures the adventurous traveler may meet. Here is a catalogue of just a few of these wonders.

## Brass Golem

Some claim mankind was made as a golem, for in the Talmud it is written that Adam was “kneaded into a shapeless hunk” of mud then given form. The brass golem is no such muddy creature, but a glistening example of God’s work through the hands of man. Emblazoned on its forehead is the Hebrew word for truth – *Emet*. Though it cannot speak, the brass golem is capable of formulating complex plans and serves its master unerringly.

According to Jewish lore and alchemical philosophy, a very holy person could learn to create artificial life. However, the golem was a mixed blessing, and keeping it under control or getting it to stop requires great force of personality.

## Brass Golem

**Type:** 9<sup>th</sup>-level construct

**Size:** Medium

**Speed:** 30 ft. (can’t run)

**Abilities:** Str +2, Dex +0, Con +3, Int +0, Wis +2, Cha +0

**Skills:** Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 5 (+5), Knowledge (supernatural) 2 (+2), Language (Arabic) 5 (+5), Language (Hebrew) 5 (+5), Notice 5 (+7), Sense Motive 5 (+7)

**Feats:** Dedicated, Eidetic Memory, Night Vision, Scholarly, Weapon Training

**Traits:** Construct Traits, Damage reduction 5, Darkvision, Supernatural immunity, Weakness

**Combat:** Attack +6, Damage +5 (spear), Defense +6, Initiative +0

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +4, Fortitude +7, Reflex +3, Will +5

This servitor of the Rabbis is a thoughtful creation that has gained a deep sense of self and awareness of its surroundings from watching its scholarly masters.

**Supernatural Immunity:** A brass golem is immune to all powers that allow a saving throw.



**Weakness:** The inscription on its forehead keeps the golem functioning. Any character literate in Hebrew can make a DC 10 Knowledge (supernatural) check to realize that erasing the first letter of *Emet* forms the Hebrew word for death – *Meit*. Doing so deactivates the golem.

Brass may be welded on to the golem to repair damage, and a character with the Imbue Item feat may repair the golem's damage without brass so long as they have access to a fire.

**Adventure Hook:** While rummaging in a place they shouldn't be, the characters come across the brass golem looking for a secret book. The brass golem attempts to dupe the characters that it's simply a dumb automaton. In truth, it was looking for a way to gain its freedom.

### Elder Cobra

While in most lands it is the snake charmer who tames the snake, with the elder cobra it is the other way around. An elder cobra appears as a twenty-five foot long hooded snake, with two eye-like patterns on the back of its hood. They are rare creatures of great cunning that usually keep to themselves. Sometimes a cult forms around the elder cobra and it receives regular sacrifices which are believed to "appease" it; naturally, the elder cobra welcomes the free meals and does nothing to dissuade the superstition. Most respect the name of Suleiman bin Daoud and will not harm a person of True Faith, however they particularly enjoy luring thieves and the arrogant to their doom.

More than one foolish traveler in the rainforests of Hindustan or the tombs of Egypt has met their end in a mysterious manner, purportedly killed by snakes that were once fire-breathers but since lost their ability when they offended the gods. These cobras were purportedly immortal, did not fear fire, and their shed skin bestowed wisdom on anyone eating it.

### Sutothis, Elder Cobra

**Type:** 6<sup>th</sup>-level supernatural beast

**Size:** Large

**Speed:** 20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

**Abilities:** Str +3, Dex +3, Con +1, Int +0, Wis +2, Cha +2

**Skills:** Bluff 2 (+4), Climb 2 (+5), Intimidate 2 (+4), Language (Arabic) 3 (+3), Notice 4 (+10), Sense Motive 2 (+4), Stealth 4 (+7), Swim 2 (+5)

**Feats:** Attack Focus (bite), Power, Veiled Threats

**Traits:** Darkvision, Paralyzing Gaze, Poison, Power (rank 9, Wis, save; Nature Reading +11), Scent

**Combat:** Attack +9 (+1 Attack Focus, +3 Dex, -1 size), Damage +4 (bite, plus poison), Defense +8 (+3 Dex, -1 size), Initiative +3

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +3, Fortitude +6, Reflex +8, Will +4

Sutothis was once a guardian *uraeus*, one of the fire-spitting cobra who guarded the Pharaoh. When he failed his duty and the Pharaoh was assassinated, Sutothis abandoned his post and hid from his fellows, hoping to die in shame. Once a creature of great power, over the years his intelligence has waned, and he becomes more and more like a normal cobra every day.

**Paralyzing Gaze:** Any creature within 30 feet meeting an elder cobra's gaze must make a Will save (Difficulty 15) or become paralyzed. If this is as a result of a gaze action the elder cobra takes, the effect lasts for as long as it maintains eye contact, and the elder cobra can automatically surprise someone it has paralyzed in this manner. If the victim happens to meet the cobra's gaze by accident, they are only dazed for one round.

**Poison:** An elder cobra's bite is poisonous (save Difficulty 14, Initial damage 3 Con, Secondary damage 3 Con).

**Skills:** Elder cobras have a +4 bonus on Notice and Stealth checks. An elder cobra can always take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened. An elder cobra uses its Dexterity modifier instead of its Strength for Climb and Swim checks.

**Adventure Hook:** A treacherous guide promises to take the characters on a shortcut, but in actuality leads them to the lair of an elder cobra whose egg he stole. The guide hopes to create a conflict between the elder cobra and the characters in order that he may return the egg and end the "curse" the cobra put upon him.

### Karkadann

Hailed as the "fierce Persian unicorn" in foreign courts, the karkadann is a fearsome beast; many are the princes who, in seeking its magic horn, have themselves become hunted. A karkadann appears as a massive shaggy unicorn. Their pelts are a variety of colors, ranging from white to dark brown, though their spiraling horn is always jet black. Males have an additional small horn just above their nose, while some females appear to have a reddish marking around their head. Some naturalists have observed the animals have much in common with oxen, a type of deer called an onyx, and the rhinoceros. Karkadann are known to fight off elephants in protecting their territory, which is always based around a grove inhabited by ringdoves. The karkadann seem to enjoy the music these birds provide.

Among mystic circles, it is widely believed that the horn of a karkadann will become discolored if put in contact







with poison. Many kings have hunted karkadann in order to fashion their horns into the hilt of royal swords. Stories tell of kings bringing forth a young maid to sing to the karkadann as a ringdove does, luring it close where the king's huntsmen then kill the beast.

## Young Karkadann Male

**Type:** 5<sup>th</sup>-level supernatural beast

**Size:** Large

**Speed:** 50 ft.

**Abilities:** Str +4, Dex +1, Con +3, Int -4, Wis +0, Cha -2

**Skills:** Notice 8 (+8)

**Feats:** Run, Thick-Skinned\*

**Traits:** Darkvision (60 ft.), Night Vision, Power (Wisdom, rank 8, Cure Disease, Cure Poison), Powerful Charge (+2), Trample, Weakness for Music

**Combat:** Attack +5 (+1 Dex, -1 size), Damage +4, Defense +5 (+1 Dex, -1 size), Initiative +1

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +4, Fortitude +7, Reflex +5, Will +1

The sad truth is that the karkadann's horn gradually discolors after the animal's death, and has little value detecting poisons. In fact, as the animals are being over-hunted, the truth of the karkadann may die with the species: A live karkadann's horn can cure disease or poison with a touch.

**Weakness for Music:** Any woman making music near a karkadann (or a hidden man mimicking a woman's voice) can attempt to lure a karkadann close. This requires a Perform (singing) check opposed by the karkadann's Wisdom. If successful, the karkadann moves within 30 feet of the person singing. If the singer has the Fascinate feat or is a virgin, the karkadann enters a trance for one minute, during which time it is considered helpless. Alternately, a domesticated ringdove can be used.

**Adventure Hook:** Adventures featuring the karkadann focus on the tragic nature of the creature; at first the karkadann is portrayed as evil but quickly it becomes apparent that the true evil lies in the hunter tracking it down. A prince or occultist, this hunter wants the karkadann's horn and is willing to put innocents in harm's way, such as coercing a foolish girl to help lure the karkadann.

## Peri

*"Though you think my present charms great, yet had you seen me in my native raiment, you would have witnessed what beauty and grace the Divine Creator has bestowed upon Peris; for know that we are among the most finished portraits on the tablets of existence. If then, you desire to behold the skill of the divine artist, and admire the wonders of creation, bring the robes which my husband has kept concealed, that I may wear them for an instant, and show thee my native beauty, the like of which no human eye, but my lord's, has gazed upon."*

*Upon donning her celestial robes, she put them on, and then, like a bird escaped from the cage, spread her wings, and crying Farewell, soared into the sky and was seen no more. When the merchant returned from his voyage and found no signs of the rose of enjoyment on the tree of hope, then the lamp of bliss extinguished in the chamber of felicity. He became as one Peri-stricken, a recluse in the cell of madness. Banished from the path of understanding, he remained lost to all the bounties of fortune and the useful purposes of life.*

- Tale of Prince Ahmed and Peri Banou

Spirits of Persian myth, the peri are guides to mankind who appear as radiantly beautiful young women. They illuminate the emotional soul, and free a man from his desires so that he may strive toward enlightenment. Stories say that peri used to rule the world alongside, or even before the djinni, and that they would marry human men who were of noble character or who owned the peri's magic shawl. They are known to take the form of ringdoves and only appear in human form before their beloved.

## Airpolani, Peri Muse

**Type:** 7<sup>th</sup>-level fey

**Size:** Medium

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**Abilities:** Str +0, Dex +3, Con +1, Int +3, Wis +3, Cha +5



**Skills:** Bluff 6 (+11), Concentration 6 (+9), Diplomacy 8 (+13), Knowledge (art) 6 (+9), Knowledge (current events) 6 (+9), Knowledge (history) 6 (+9), Knowledge (supernatural) 6 (+9), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 6 (+9), Language (Arabic) 5 (+8), Language (Djinni) 5 (+8), Language (Pahlavi) 5 (+8), Medicine 6 (+9), Notice 8 (+11), Perform (poetry) 8 (+13), Ride 6 (+9), Sense Motive 8 (+11), Stealth 8 (+11)

**Feats:** Attractive, Eidetic Memory, Enchanting Beauty, Night Vision, Poetic Soul, Shield Training, Weapon Training

**Traits:** Alternate Form (ringdove), Immunity (mind-influencing effects), Muse, Poetic Glamour, Power (Charisma, rank 10, True Seeing +14), Weakness (fragrance)

**Combat:** Attack +6 (+3 Dex), Damage +3 (longsword, 19-20/+3), Defense +8 (+3 Dex, medium shield +2), Initiative +3

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +1, Fortitude +3, Reflex +8, Will +8

Airpolani serves worthy Persian princes as a muse, inspiring them to great and noble acts. Once she was a fearless warrior against wicked djinni, but now she prefers poetry to the sword.

**Alternate Form:** A peri can assume the form of a ringdove as a standard action, and may remain changed indefinitely. However, while she can make this change freely in Jinnistan, she requires a special raiment when in the mortal world. Anyone who possesses her raiment gets a +5 bonus on Intimidate checks against her. Sufficient quantities of iron (like a cage) prevent the peri from assuming bird form to escape.

**Muse:** A peri may choose to bond herself to one person; this requires one month of regular visits. After this time, the person gains a +2 bonus on any creative or spiritual endeavors, such as designing a building or resisting starvation during a fast. In addition, the peri automatically knows when the person is facing temptation and can use the Dispel and Find the Path powers at rank 10 in regard to them only. However, if she uses either of these powers on the subject, the peri can no longer be their muse and may never be so again, according to ancient peri law. Thus peris resort to these powers only in dire straits as they enjoy their mortal companion's company. Anyone who loses a peri as their muse must make a Will save (Difficulty 10 + the peri's level) or be stricken with the *madness* Complication.

**Poetic Glamour:** One who looks upon a peri's native form is unable to describe her in any way save through poetry. To accurately convey any details about the peri to another they must succeed on a Perform (poetry) check. The Difficulty is equal to 10 + the peri's level.

The results of the check are compared to this table:

<b>Fails by 5+</b>	Your poetry is an insult not only to the peri, but possibly the person listening to you as well. They might think you are deriding their own appearance, or perhaps insinuating rumors about their wife's fidelity, or insulting their daughter's beauty. You convey some piece of misinformation about the peri, or no information at all.
<b>Fails by less than 5</b>	You cannot do the peri's beauty justice. You get tongue-tied, your poetry is nonsense, you resort to metaphor and exaggeration that no one can understand. Alternately, no one takes you seriously. You cannot convey information about the peri to others.
<b>Succeeds by less than 5</b>	Your poetry manages to hold a candle to the peri's flame. You may relate basic facts that you know or believe about the peri. Should you speak ill of the peri, no one seems to remember what you say, or else won't take action on it. However, if you speak well of the peri, what you say is always exaggerated. Anyone listening is intrigued, though the superstitious remain so.
<b>Succeeds by 5+</b>	You weave a poem of such beauty that the lamp of bliss is lit in the heart of your listeners. You can relate any facts about the peri you wish, though only in portraying the peri in a positive light. Even if you intend to speak ill of the peri, everyone around you (even those normally suspicious of such beings) interprets what you're saying in the most positive way.

**Weakness (fragrance):** A peri is susceptible to tempting fragrances. An appealing fragrance requires the peri make a Will save (Difficulty 12 or higher) or seek out the source of the scent. However, peris always distinguish between a magically faked fragrance and the real thing. In addition, a peri automatically fails her Fortitude saving throw against gas attacks.

**Adventure Hook:** A beautiful peri only visits her princely lover by night, inspiring jealousy amongst the prince's female relatives who conspire to do the peri in while the prince is away.

### **Rukh**

In the souks of Baghdad, a diligent shopper can find a feather which spans the length of a man. The merchant alleges this once belonged to the *ruk*, a massive bird of prey which can lift a young elephant into the air with its talons. Beware such frauds, for they sell feathers of the Aepyornis, a giant ostrich of Madagascar, or dressed up raffia palm fronds. Such fakes are easily identified, for the true rukh is brilliant white in color, and dwells near glacial lakes and alpine perches. Their nests are in the tallest mountains, where they defend their enormous eggs from predators...including adventurers seeking to raise a young rukh. Such eggs, which can measure up to 50 paces in circumference, command thousands of dinari in private markets.

The rukh goes by many names, representing the same creature dressed in different cultures. In Persia it



is called the *simurgh*, and its feathers are said to heal any wound or bring the dead back to life. Older Persian traditions speak of an immortal bird which shakes ripe fruit from the World Tree; just one of these seeds can grow enough food to feed a village for a year! Hindu legend tells of *garuda*, the incarnation of fire, whose wings blocked the sun.

## Great Crested Rukh

**Type:** 14<sup>th</sup>-level supernatural beast

**Size:** Gargantuan

**Speed:** 20 ft., fly 80 ft. (average), climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft., burrow (in snow only) 10 ft.

**Abilities:** Str +10, Dex +2, Con +5, Int -4, Wis +1, Cha +0

**Skills:** Notice 17 (+22)

**Feats:** Awesome Blow, Move-by-Action, Night Vision, Snatch, Wingover

**Traits:** Darkvision (60 ft.), Frightful Presence (Difficulty 17), Immunity (cold), Swallow Whole

**Combat:** +12 (+2 Dex, -4 size), Damage +12 (claw or bite), Defense +12 (+2 Dex, -4 size), Initiative +2

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +11, Fortitude +14, Reflex +11, Will +5

**Skills:** Rukhs have a +4 racial bonus on Notice checks.

**Adventure Hook:** Both Sinbad and Abd al-Rahman faced the wrath of a rukh who attacked in retaliation for the death of its young. Such an attack is truly awesome, especially if it takes place in the rukh's arctic home. The characters may simply be in the wrong place at the wrong time. In order to chase the angry rukh away, they'll need to find who really killed its young.

## Sea-Born

Suleiman possessed a seal ring with words of power written upon it. According to legend he shared some of these words with fishermen who longed to go to their *pahari* (mermaid) lovers. Over time, the fishermen taught their families and friends this word and a city was born under the sea. The descendants of these pioneers are the sea-born, who, upon their birth, are penciled with khol upon the eyes. Tradition has it this secures Suleiman's protection against drowning or suffocating, or otherwise being harmed by water. In all appearances besides this marking on the eyes, the sea-born appear as men and women of great beauty, with alabaster skin and a tendency to gaze out to the sea when on land. Sea-born live for nearly twice as long as land-dwellers do.

Early in their history the sea-born split into two kingdoms when the sorcerer al-Shamandal created an allegiance with marids who had sworn allegiance to Iblis. Those sea-born who declared al-Shamandal their king fought a bloody civil war which resulted in their pilgrimage to deeper realms of the sea where they founded their own city. The current ruler of the loyalists is King Badr, who was born of a land-dweller king and Queen Jullanar of the sea-born.

*"You should know, O King, that we walk in the sea and see the daylight and the sun and the sky and see the night and the moon and the stars, without being harmed at all. In the sea there are people of all types and creatures of all kind, just as there are on land, and more."*

- The Story of Jullanar of the Sea

## Soldier of the Sea-Born

Warrior 3

**Type:** Humanoid (aquatic)

**Size:** Medium

**Speed:** 30 ft, swim 30 ft

**Abilities:** Str +2, Dex +2, Con +2, Int +0, Wis +0, Cha +2

**Skills:** Intimidate 5 (+7), Knowledge (tactics) 5 (+5), Language (Arabic) 4 (+4), Language (Djinni) 4 (+4), Notice 5 (+5), Perform (stringed) 3 (+5), Swim 4 (+14)

**Feats:** Attractive, Endurance, Formation Tactics, Free Diving, Night Vision, Shield Training, Weapon Training

**Traits:** Amphibious, Immunity (water), Suleiman's Breath

**Combat:** Attack +5 (+2 Dex), Damage +4 (scimitar, 18-20/+3), Defense +7 (+2 Dex, +2 medium shield), Initiative +2

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +2, Fortitude +5, Reflex +3, Will +1

A devout soldier in service to King Badr, this veteran of the war against al-Shamandal and the City of Magicians is mistrustful of land-dwellers. Like most soldiers of the sea-born his training was diverse and included both music and composition.

**Suleiman's Breath:** A sea-born can bestow upon land-dwellers the ability to breathe underwater; a number of land-dwellers equal to the sea-born's level may be affected. This requires making a special mark on the subject (the sea-born must spend a Conviction point). They will be able to breathe underwater until reaching the city of the Sea-Born or for two hours. Only powerful adepts of the sea-born can make this mark permanent.

## Nobility & Royalty

The dangerous world of politics, while unsavory as it may be, may be a necessary part of a hero's journey, especially if they are trying to expose a conspiracy or effect lasting social change. If the scheming of nobles was woven into a tapestry it would be miles long. Nobles are usually concerned with their holdings (that is, the main source of the family's revenues), matters within the family like inheritance or bastard children, and relations with other noble families or royalty. Occasionally an idealistic member of the nobility becomes concerned with issues of social justice. Royalty, on the other hand, contend with issues of controlling their territories, and have a penchant for going mad. Each royal house has its own agenda.



*Abbasids*

The Abbasid bid for power depended upon the support of the Persians and the Arabs of Khurasan. By attacking the secularism, decadence, and Arab supremacy of the Umayyads, the Abbasids were able to rally many minorities to their side. However, once they had secured power, the Abbasids made great enemies of the Shi'a who fled in large numbers to the Maghreb and founded the Idrisid emirate. Struggling for control of its holdings in the Maghreb, the Abbasids also face their traditional enemy, the Romans, in Anatolia. Now, with the sudden turn of events against the Persian Barmakid family, many Persians feel alienated by the Caliph. Supporters for the Abbasids are becoming few and far between; to head off the problem of widespread army desertion, Caliph Harun al-Rashid and his sons have begun sending out raiding parties to capture Turkish boys for the mamluk corps. In theory, these slaves will have only one loyalty – the Caliph. Harun al-Rashid has made a tactical ally of Charlemagne; while Harun stands off the Romans, Charlemagne engages the attention of the Umayyads.

*Aghlabids*

Had it not been for the coming of Islam, the powerful Banu Tamim tribe of the Nejd would have consumed the Arabs. While most the Banu Tamim remain nomads, Ibrahim ibn al-Aghlab has recently become the emir of Ifriqiya. Ibrahim maintains close ties to his tribesmen and will treat any of them as honored guests should they arrive in Kairouan. He is a staunch opponent of the Berbers and has a loose allegiance with the Idrisids. However, Ibrahim is concerned with the growing numbers of non-Muslims who are encroaching upon Kairouan. Like the Arab breeds he has seen become diluted, Ibrahim too fears the traditions of the faith will become mingled with the indigenous beliefs of the Berbers. Unlike most of the rulers of the Maghreb, Ibrahim and his family have close ties to Caliph Harun al-Rashid and are loyal to him.

*Idrisids*

The first Arab dynasty to reach the western Maghreb was founded by a Shi'ite named Idris ibn Abdallah, a distant relative of the fourth Caliph Ali. Facing persecution by the Abbasids, Idris fled to the Maghreb where he was protected by the Berbers. Idris managed to establish a shaky alliance with the Berber tribes which he passed on to his son Idris. The Idrisids strongly support the Shi'a, and have been known to support corsair activity against Abbasid vessels. A long-standing rivalry exists between Idris and Harun al-Rashid.

*Umayyads*

Upon the death of Caliph Ali, the Umayyads claimed the caliphate; though they belonged to the Quraysh tribe they were not scions of the Prophet's blood. The clan the Umayyads came from had once been bitter enemies of Islam, but the Umayyads carved the path for the spread of Islam in the Ridda Wars. Following the overthrow of the Umayyads after the Battle of Zab, most of the family was killed. Abd al-Rahman escaped to Al-Andalus where he founded a new Umayyad dynasty there. The current Umayyad Emir, al-Hakam, is concerned with Charlemagne's advances in the north. While there is a tentative truce with Harun al-Rashid, the fact is that neither side really gives the truce anything more than lip service, and corsairs work for both the Umayyads and Abbasids. To make matters worse for al-Hakam, a series of rebellions are breaking out in the far reaches of his demesnes and his governors are poorly managing their lands.

**Palace Guard**

Warrior 2

**Background:** Soldier; **Nationality:** Various;

**Allegiance:** Royal family

**Virtue:** Restraint; **Vice:** Lazy

**Speed:** 20 ft; **Reputation:** +0; **Conviction:** +3

**Abilities:** Str +3, Dex +0, Con +0, Int +0, Wis +3, Cha +0

**Skills:** Intimidate 5 (+5), Knowledge (tactics) 4 (+4), Notice 5 (+8), Sense Motive 5 (+8), Survival 4 (+7)

**Feats:** Armor Training (light & heavy), Defensive Attack, Eye for Treachery\*, Thick-Skinned\*, Weapon Bind, Weapon Training

**Combat:** Attack +2, Damage +5 (scimitar), Defense +2, Initiative +0

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +4 (chain mail), Fortitude +4, Reflex -1, Will +3

The palace guard is a lazy soldier who hasn't seen combat in years. Either he has spent too much time at the palace gates, or too much time guarding the harem. Though he has grown soft, he will stick to orders and would never betray his royal employers. However, he might be susceptible to a bribe if convinced it won't bring harm to the royal family.

*Thieves*

Arabia is a land of thieves, though no one, not even a thief, would say it to someone's face. An accusation of theft necessarily precludes forgiveness and suggests harsh punishment under the *Shari'ah*. The offending hand is cut off, and everyone lives happily ever after (except the thief). Thus, among the world of thieves there are interesting euphemisms that have emerged to describe their art. "Borrowing" or "re-distributing" are the more prosaic, while "blessed lesson of humility"



or “safe-keeping the cherished from the evil-hearted” are the poetic ways of saying robbing someone blind. Thieves come in many flavors in Arabia: cunning conmen, organized crime, corsairs, and raiding parties.

## Conmen

Legendary criminals are frequent colorful characters in the pages of the *Nights* and Arab folklore. These conmen were purported to be able to steal anything, or even a person. One such master thief, al-Uqab (the Eagle), made a bet with a doctor that within a day al-Uqab could steal anything from the doctor’s house. The doctor stationed guards at every entrance, but they succumbed to al-Uqab’s gift of drugged peaches. Then, positing as an apparition of Jesus, al-Uqab hypnotized the doctor and stole the doctor himself! This was one of the more benign scams. Others would lure their victims into alleyways with prostitutes and then strangle them, at the same time they beat their dogs, so that the barking of the dogs drowned out the screams of the victim. In between the loveable rogue and the despicable murderer were the *tawwabun* or “penitents”, former thieves who joined the police force. While ostensibly they no longer practice thievery, *tawwabun* would often take a cut of the profits that thieves make in return for turning a blind eye to their crimes.

## Corsairs

The great empires of the time – the Romans, the Umayyads, the Abbasids – often sanction piracy against each other. These trade wars would be short-lived without the freelance corsairs, as none of these nations wish to risk their own fleets, let alone their reputation, by starting an escalating war. Thus, the corsairs are their pawns who do what the rulers will not officially condone, killing and dying for the promise of reward. While many corsairs are a ruthless lot of slavers, wanted criminals, and savage sea dogs, some of these pawns aspire to be queened. Corsairs who play their employers off of each other, who refuse to work for anyone save themselves, or who have a strict code of honor are the sorts of adventurous sailors that poets write of. There are several corsair enclaves, most scattered through the Maghreb, where honest merchants and navy ships fear to tread. Here corsairs gather and swap stories and contraband, and may sign up with a new captain or learn who has the highest bounty on their head – a mark of honor among corsairs.

## Organized Crime

While guilds do not exist in the caliphate, there is a brotherhood of crime with its own hierarchy and twisted code of honor. These gangsters were organized into *futuwwa* lodges where they slept, ate, worked, and reveled together. Most who joined were unemployed or bankrupt young men who could not afford to marry; in theory they are devoted to idealistic causes – rescuing people lost in the desert, performing mystical exercises, or teaching each

other trade crafts. In actuality, most *futuwwa* groups were little better than gangs of thugs. The master of a lodge was known as the Sheikh of Thieves, a wise old thief with ties to the city’s government and trade. Some of these old thieves controlled crime in several nearby cities. Often thieves have former members who are on the police force. The cynical refer to the police quarters as the “market of yesterday and tomorrow,” as in what was stolen from you yesterday can be found at the police quarters tomorrow...for a price.

## Raiding Parties

Originally, raiding parties of Bedouin followed rules of engagement that were designed to prevent bloodshed, and thus tribal feuds. However, even those tribes who swore allegiance to the Prophet did not quit their practices, instead directing their raids against the enemies of the new Arab state. Travelers in the vast stretches of desert and wilderness, even though they may stick to ancient caravan routes, must always be on the look out for raiders. Raiding parties are often 20 men strong or more, and will first send out scouts to sabotage, frighten, or deceive a caravan they seek to attack. Usually, raiders will leave a small group of travelers alone unless raiders have been paid off or it is a time of war; after all, the payoff and honor in defeating a small enemy unable to defend themselves is pitiful compared to a rich caravan. Raiding is described in **Chapter 12**.

## Raider of Black Coda

Expert 1, Warrior 1

**Background:** Nomad; **Nationality:** Arab; **Allegiance:** Black Coda

**Virtue:** Prudence; **Vice:** Callous

**Speed:** 30 ft (50 ft mounted); **Reputation:** +1; **Conviction:** +3

**Abilities:** Str +1, Dex +2, Con +2, Int +0, Wis +1, Cha +0

**Skills:** Bluff 4 (+4), Climb 4 (+5), Disguise 4 (+4), Escape Artist 4 (+6), Gather Information 4 (+4), Handle Animal 4 (+5), Intimidate 4 (+4), Language (Arabic) 3 (+3), Language (secret code) 2 (+2), Ride 4 (+6), Search 4 (+4), Stealth 2 (+4), Survival 4 (+5)

**Feats:** Lasting Intimidation, Mounted Combat, Nomad Tracker, Thick-Skinned, Tough, Track, Weapon Training

**Combat:** Attack +3 (+2 Dex), Damage +3 (scimitar, 18-20/+3), Defense +3 (+2 Dex), Initiative +2

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +3, Fortitude +3, Reflex +4, Will +1

Black Coda was one of the most ruthless and vengeful master-thieves in the world of the *Nights*, until he met his untimely end at the hands of Morgiana, Ali Baba’s slave. However, his grand-son has taken the mantle of Black Coda once again, and *matruds* (exiles) of all tribes flock to his banner, hoping to share in the booty and earn a place of honor among thieves. The raider of Black Coda is equally comfortable riding into battle on horseback or infiltrating a city’s defenses to plunder a treasure trove.



## Chapter 10: Just Deserts

*Write bad things that are done to you in sand, but write the good things that happen to you on a piece of marble.*

- Arabian proverb

A hero knows that true rewards are those kept closest to the heart. Good friends, family, virtue – these things are as inseparable from a hero as their breath. However, nearest to their breath are treasures. In **Caliphate Nights** treasures are often ephemeral – oaths of allegiance, writs of trade, permission to marry, and such. Concrete treasures may include prodigious wealth, a fine horse, a collection of books, or even a magic object. Of course, not all rewards are beneficial; “what Fate giveth, Fate also taketh away...”

### Complications

Characters in Mythic Arabia get turned into animals, charmed by genies, fall in love, and run afoul of the law. Complications represent the variety of conditions that may befall a character, making their life difficult or even unbearable. All heroes must begin with one Complication. Each Complication has a *turning point* which represents ways the character can overcome the complication, thereby earning a point of Conviction. If multiple *turning points* are offered, the first one the character meet rids them of the Complication. A character can have any number of Complications in his or her life at any given time, though only one Complication may be chosen by the player at a time; selecting additional Complications adds drama to the player's life! For example, a rogue who starts off as an Outlaw might over the course of an adventure be pardoned by a sympathetic qadi; the rogue's player now decides the rogue has fallen in love with the qadi's daughter and is Love Struck. Of course, the player is under no obligation to choose a new Complication, it is merely an option. The Narrator may impose Complications upon heroes appropriate to the story. In addition, the Narrator may require heroes to have at least one Complication at all times.

### Accursed

You are the victim of a curse placed upon you by a spiteful djinn or sorcerer. See the Curse power for ideas about what this curse might be and ways to end it. However, you can never be killed directly by curses, which instead temper you like steel in an ifreet's furnace so long as you are accursed.

**Turning Point:** Ridding yourself of the curse.

### Ashamed

You think poorly of yourself for a perceived wrong you have done. You are naked, defeated, alienated, lacking in dignity or worth. In many ways, such a state of mind is the result of living in a patriarchal society where humiliation and dishonor are one and the same. You may not take 20 on any checks, nor may you perform any action which you would see as boasting or putting yourself above others. In addition, when confronted with a situation similar to the one that caused you shame, you may become enraged (as per the Heart Shaping power) or paralyzed at the Narrator's discretion.

**Turning Point:** Shame is a nefarious enemy, and success does not offer freedom. Only realizing the true source of your shame frees you. This may be realizing that you did your best, that your superiors aren't actually superior, or discovering something you value more than your honor.

### Blood Feud

Your family is embroiled in a feud. Members of the rival family may insult, taunt, or even attack you unprovoked. Merchants of the rival family will refuse to sell to you, or charge exorbitant prices. You certainly aren't allowed to associate with members of the rival family, lest you incur your family's wrath. If a member of your family is killed in the feud, you may be called upon to avenge them, or at least bring the killer to justice.

**Turning Point:** You make a great sacrifice so that the two families reconcile. You find evidence that a third party is truly responsible for instigating the feud. One side totally defeats the other. You negotiate peace between the families upon being appointed a qadi. Become an ascetic and transcend the conflict.

### Code of Honor

You adhere to a strict code of honor. This may be due to an oath you swore, a personal commitment, religious fanaticism, or even a magical compulsion. This code must include at least 5 points from the list below:

- Fairness: You may not “cheat” in combat (e.g. throwing sand, fighting an unarmed opponent, many fighting a single matched foe, etc).
- Fealty: Unfailing obedience to your lord or temple, tithe 1 point of Wealth each month or when you are rescued from a terrible fate.
- Friendship: You may never abandon a comrade in need.
- Justice: Always bring a criminal to justice, never harbor a criminal, and always observe the holdings of a legitimate court.
- Loyalty: You may never betray your homeland or god in word or in deed.







- **Mercy:** You must defend the weak and offer mercy to the repentant foe.
- **Pride:** You must avenge all insults to your self, family, country, religion, lord, or people under your protection. You can't refuse a challenge.
- **Uprightness:** You may never engage in slander, blackmail, or extortion. You avoid people and places of ill repute.
- **Warrior's Code:** You must honor the request of a dying person, friend or foe.

**Special:** If you fail to uphold your code, you lose a point of Conviction. By adhering to your Code of Honor despite self sacrifice you regain a point of Conviction. The maximum number of Conviction points you may lose or gain in a single session equals the number of tenets your code has. Unlike other complications, a Code of Honor can be abandoned at any point (unless you've been charmed), though you lose all Conviction if you abandon your code. Only an epic quest of atonement allows you to regain your Code of Honor.

## Condemning Secret

You have a secret which, if others learned about you, could ruin you politically, and possibly turn your closest allies against you. At least one person besides you knows about this secret. Your enemies may learn this secret only through extensive research; at least three adventures are required with the enemy investing considerable resources to learn your secret, and somewhere along the way you must be alerted by the Narrator that your enemy is digging around in your past.

**Turning Point:** Your secret is revealed and you deal with the consequences. You seek absolution for your past misdeeds. Everyone who knows your secret is eliminated or otherwise silenced...permanently.

## Destitute

You have lost all your worldly belongings...or you never had any to begin with. You begin with a Wealth score of 0 and cannot make any purchases with a cost of 1 or higher until you reach the turning point; likewise you cannot take 10 or take 20 on Wealth checks. You have no home, are forced to sleep on the streets, and have only one or two belongings. You may resort to begging to survive.

**Turning Point:** Achieve a Wealth score of 4 (and possibly Duties that go with it).

## Duties

You have duties which you must attend to, either a mundane life or an oath.

**Mundane Life:** In the case of raising children and a mundane job, this requires a bit of your time nearly every day – unless you're taking a vacation or on pilgrimage. This restricts your ability to travel, unless you transplant your family and your shop or find a custodian to take care of them. Your family may become a liability if you have a truly wicked enemy willing to attack them to get to you. Increase the Difficulty of taxes you must pay by +2.

**Oath:** In the case of an oath of service, you must spend some time every year with your ruler, djinni, secret lover, etc. Generally, the person to whom you've sworn requires your presence more as your Reputation increases. Make a Reputation check prior to beginning an adventure. If it succeeds, then your presence is requested at an inopportune moment.

**Turning Point:** Refusing your duties (you may earn an Envious Rival or worse). In the case of a mundane life, if your children grow up, you may retire. In the case of an oath, you can be freed only by the one to whom you swore it.

## Ensorcelled

You are under the magical sway of another, whether you know it or not. You claim it is out of free will that you protect them with your life and fawn over them. This djinn or sorcerer may direct you to perform missions, which you have no choice but to obey. In some cases, the ensorcelled victim doesn't even realize they are under another's magical sway.

**Turning Point:** Breaking free of the charm magic.

## Envious Rival

You have earned a rival who wants to one-up you, expose you, humiliate you, defeat you and your people, beat you to the punch, or otherwise prove him or herself superior. Your rival gains the Dedicated and Favored Opponent feats for free (with you as the target).

**Turning Points:** Coming to terms with your rival. Beating your rival once and for all. Your rival finally feels they've become better than you (perhaps by making you Destitute).



**Fated**

You march towards a pre-determined fate, and it's not a pretty one. You gain the Destined (Tragedy) feat. Decide with the Narrator what your character's fate is and whether she knows about it. In either case, your character is frightened when confronted with any circumstances which lead to her fate. For example, if she sees the knife which will be used to kill her, she is terrified of it. This fear is based on dreams you've had or a prophecy you heard.

**Turning Point:** Unless divine forces intervene, the turning point is meeting your fate!

**Grief Stricken**

You have lost someone very close to you – a lover, family member, or even an entire tribe – and the loss devastated you. Alternately you may be grief stricken about a bad situation that you have no power to change. You are shaken. In addition, you do not gain new feats while you are grief stricken; if you advance a level during this time you may gain the feat you earned at a later point once your grief is resolved. Every day you risk becoming despondent; roll 1d20 and if a roll of '1' results then you are totally immersed in your grief for a scene and you find it hard to do anything which doesn't focus on your departed loved one.

**Turning Point:** Coming to terms with the loss (e.g. accepting it wasn't your fault, acknowledging they've gone to a better place, performing a quest your mother's ghost asked of you in a dream); this requires at least several months. Reviving your loved one from death. Changing the situation, leaving it, or accepting there's nothing you can do (or that it's not your job).

**Haunted**

A memory haunts you; this may be a terrible crime you committed, or a loved one who you wronged and never came to peace with. This haunting is known as a *tayf* ("fantasy") or *khayal* ("shadow") – it is the Arabian version of a ghost which exists only in the mind of the haunted one. Whenever you are in a situation which reminds you of the crime or departed soul you must make a Difficulty 25 Will save; the Narrator may declare one such situation per game session. The results of this save depend on your margin of failure or success.

Will Save	Effect of Haunting
Fails by 5+	You are panicked.
Fails by 1-4	You are frightened.
Succeeds by 1-4	You are shaken.
Succeeds by 5+	You act normally, realizing it's all in your mind.

**Turning Point:** You succeed your Will save by 10

or more, effectively mastering your fear of who or whatever was haunting you. You perform a quest to redeem yourself. You have someone perform an "exorcism"; however, this panders to the belief that you actually were haunted by spirits and thus you gain the Superstitious complication.

**Hazardous Friend**

You have a friend who is constantly getting into trouble and dragging you into it. And yet, you keep falling for it time after time. You get dragged into your friend's fights, romantic dramas, debts, and disastrous business ventures. If you do not help your friend when they need it, one of your friend's Complications becomes your own (gain a random Complication).

**Turning Point:** Your friend finally gets killed (chances are you'll become Grief Stricken). You become enemies (your friend becomes an Envious Rival). You part ways for good, and make sure to keep an ocean between you two.

**Indebted**

You owe money or your life to someone.

**Monetary Debt:** In the case of money, the debt is quite large, requiring a DC 30 Wealth check to pay off. If you successfully pay off your debt, you automatically lose all your Wealth save 1. Failing this check means your debtors come knocking; it'll take a successful Bluff or Diplomacy check to convince them that you'll pay soon. The first time you fail this check you get beat up and they steal any Wealth they can get their hands on as collateral (lowering the DC by an equal amount). The second time you fail, they're not so forgiving – death, mutilation, and slavery are all happy possibilities awaiting you.

**Life Debt:** In the case of a life debt, you will not cause the person harm and you would never kill them. Rather, you seek to prove yourself to them. A life debt is virtually impossible to pay off, unless you save their life in return.

**Turning Point:** You pay off your debt or it gets dropped (a qadi rules you were charged unlawful interest rates, your debtors go to prison, the person you owe a life debt to dies and leaves no children behind).

**Ineptitude**

**Special:** May only be taken at 1<sup>st</sup> level

You are totally unskilled, having either squandered your youth or simply having below average intelligence. All your relatives know you as a fool and give you menial errands just to get you out of the way. You may not begin with Intelligence greater than 0, and at first level you start with half the normal number of skills (i.e. 1 for Adepts and







Warriors, 3 for Experts). You may not begin with the Skill Focus, Skill Training, or Talented feats. Whenever you fail a check by 5 or more a disastrous failure occurs with dramatically negative consequences.

**Turning Point:** You are congratulated for possessing a rare virtue that outshines your ineptitude, and receive wide recognition for it. Your family no longer ridicules you for being inept. You pass a difficult test of skill. You perform a feat of great intellect or gain +1 Intelligence.

**Special:** Once the turning point is achieved you no longer make disastrous failures. In addition, if you are an Expert the next level you advance, gain 2 skills as your intellect shines without the shame of your ineptitude burdening you.

## Infirm

You have been crippled by from old age or a wasting disease such as leprosy.

Any exertion causes you to suffer one fatigue level (no save); you may accrue no more than one fatigue level this way per scene. In addition, if you ever make an extra effort, you must make a DC 10 Toughness save or suffer one point of Strength and Constitution drain. In addition, your condition is deteriorating; every level you advance while you still are infirmed you must make a DC 15 Toughness save or suffer -1 Strength and Constitution damage. Should you ever reach -5 in either ability you will die.

**Turning Point:** Your youth is magically restored. Your condition is healed through a quest. Your condition is healed by a DC 30 use of Cure Disease; this constitutes extra effort for the healer.

## Inner Conflict

You are torn between two competing ideals, philosophies, loyalties, or people. This inner conflict must be central to your character. A good example is an adept who struggles between practicing magic for power and considering quitting the practice of magic because it is evil. Whenever you are faced with making a decision between the two competing beliefs, you are dazed for one round and must reflect before taking action. Make a Wisdom check to determine how long you must reflect. You may decide to take action spontaneously before this time, but you are limited according to the results of your Wisdom check. An extra effort reduces the penalty for acting spontaneously by one (e.g. from “not possible” to “nauseated”, or from “shaken” to “no penalty”).

Wisdom Check	Time of Reflection	Act Spontaneously?
7 or less	1 month	Not possible.
8-11	1 week	Yes, but you act as if nauseated.
12-15	1 day	Yes, but you act as if entangled.
16-19	1 hour	Yes, but you act as if shaken.
20+	1 minute	Yes. No penalty.

**Turning Point:** You reconcile the two competing beliefs or decide to uphold one instead of the other. You transcend the conflict entirely by becoming a mystic.

## Love Struck

You’ve fallen head over heels for someone, and you’ll do anything to win her love. Once per character level you must offer a new gift to your beloved, such as a rare magic object you’ve found, a poem you’ve composed just for her, or a prized steed you stole. In addition, you are prone to fits of melancholy when separated from your love; every day you are separated roll 1d20. If you roll a ‘1’ then you are in a fit for a scene as you pine in longing; during this time you find it impossible to do anything besides compose lamenting poetry devoted to your love or bemoan your star-crossed fate.

**Turning Point:** Your love scorns you or she dies (you become Grief Stricken). You and your love consummate your relationship through marriage (most likely gaining Duties).

## Madness

You’ve been touched by madness due to a trauma you witnessed or suffered. You might alternate between stark raving aggression and truly subtle dementia. You may believe certain delusions about yourself or the world around you. You respond disproportionately to all situations resembling the one that drove you mad. Any time you fail a Sense Motive check by 5 or more you



learn misinformation as if it were truth. Additionally, you cannot use feats, skills, or powers that require concentration.

**Turning Point:** Your madness is healed. This is a difficult process requiring at least one other character who attempts to heal you over the course of several months.

### *Maimed*

Whether through punishment by the law or the cruel hand of fate, you have been physically maimed in one of the following ways:

#### *Eunuch*

Your genitals have been removed through a surgical procedure. You are unable to reproduce.

**Turning Point:** A combined DC 15 Cure and Fertility check restores your fecundity. This constitutes extra effort.

#### *Gouged Eye*

One of your eyes was gouged from your head, perhaps as a punishment for spying on someone. You suffer a -4 penalty on all Notice checks that involve spotting. Opponents with cover gain an additional +2 Defense against you, and your miss chance against concealed opponents increases by 2 (15 or higher for partial concealment, and 9 or higher for total concealment). You may not take the Precise Shot feat; if you already had it before you lose it now.

**Turning Point:** A combined DC 15 Cure and Cure Blindness/Deafness check restores your eye. This constitutes extra effort.

#### *Hideous Scars*

You have been mauled by a beast, endured too many battle wounds to count, or otherwise been horribly scarred. You suffer a -2 penalty on all interaction checks, except for Intimidate, in which you gain a +2 bonus. You may not take the Enchanting Beauty feat; if you had it before, you lose it now. Wearing a mask, veil, or other concealing clothing hides your scars temporarily.

**Turning Point:** A combined DC 15 Cure and Fleshing Shaping check heals your scars. This constitutes extra effort.

#### *Missing Ear*

One of your ears was cut off from your head. You suffer a -4 penalty on all Notice checks that involve listening. In addition, whenever someone says something to you during the heat of an action scene, there is a chance that you don't hear what they just said. For example, you might not hear an ally inspiring courage during a battle. Roll 1d20; if

the result is '1-2' you misinterpret what was said, and if the result is 3-10 you didn't hear it at all. You may not take the Uncanny Dodge feat; if you had it before you lose it now.

**Turning Point:** A combined DC 15 Cure and Cure Blindness/Deafness check restores your ear. This constitutes extra effort.

#### *Severed Arm/Hand*

Your dominant hand has been chopped off, possibly as a punishment for theft. You suffer a -4 penalty on all attack rolls, you cannot wield two-handed weapons, nor can you fight with two weapons. In addition you suffer a -4 penalty to the following skills: Climb, Craft, Disable Device, Sleight of Hand, and Swim. You may not take the Two-Weapon Fighting or Two-Weapon Defense feats; if you had either before, you lose it now.

**Turning Point:** A DC 30 Cure check regenerates your hand. This constitutes extra effort.

#### *Severed Foot/Leg*

One of your legs has been severed, possibly to save your life from gangrene. Your base speed is reduced to 10 feet per round and you may not move all-out while on foot, though you may still move at an accelerated pace (20 feet per round) if you have access to crutches. You suffer a -4 penalty to the following skills: Acrobatics, Climb, Jump, Ride, Stealth, and Swim. You may not take the Run feat; if you had it before lose it now.

**Turning Point:** A DC 30 Cure check regenerates your leg. This constitutes extra effort.

#### *Not Taken Seriously*

Nobody seems to take you seriously; this may be because you haven't reached adulthood yet, you are notorious for crying wolf, or you're good name has been smeared. Your Reputation never has positive connotations; if anyone recognizes you by making a successful Reputation check, you suffer -4 penalty on all interaction skill checks. In addition, your testimony is overruled in a court of law, you are denied your proper inheritance, and no one believes you when you report miracles...or impending disaster.

**Turning Point:** Everyone realizes too late that you were right all along. You reach the age of maturity. You perform a great deed which earns you respect and recognition. You put an end to the smear campaign against you and correct the popular negative image people have of you.



## Outlaw

You are at odds with the law. Whether you've been declared an enemy of the state or a simple bounty has been put on your head depends on your Reputation (which only provides you a bonus among criminals and those few who still trust you). Anytime you are recognized (via a Reputation check or otherwise) while you are within lands where you are wanted, you will be reported to the city watch.

**Turning Point:** You are punished according to your crimes. You are given clemency by a figure in power (possibly becoming Indebted to them). All record of your crimes is destroyed and everyone who knows anything is silenced. Your innocence is revealed.

## Persistent Suitor

You are pursued by a suitor who sings you ballads day and night, delivers bushels of roses to your doorstep, gets into fights "on behalf of your honor", and otherwise makes a fool of himself for you. You suitor, while charming, can also be annoying, blowing your cover at critical moments, placing himself unknowingly in harm's way, and otherwise distracting you from the task at hand.

**Turning Point:** Your suitor finally gets that you're not interested in him after several months. You acquiesce to your suitor and get married. You scorn your suitor (gaining an Envious Rival). You convince your suitor to pursue someone else, like a younger sibling.

## Superstitious

**Prerequisite:** May only be taken at 1<sup>st</sup> level

You come from a provincial or backwater area, or grew up in a fanatically religious household. You are utterly superstitious. Whenever you confront a Strange and Fearsome Thing (see table), you must make a Will save. If you succeed, you manage to keep your superstition in check and react (more or less) normally. If you fail, you react negatively. You might avoid the object of your superstition, refuse service or aid to the person, or talk bad about them behind their back. Or, if it is particularly fearsome, you become panicked or lash out violently if it seems you have strength in numbers. In either case, you have a hard time describing what you saw, resorting to comparison, exaggeration and unintelligible gibbering. Enemies who know about your superstition and succeed a Bluff or Intimidation check can increase their fearsomeness by +4.

**Turning Point:** You overcome your superstitions by facing them. This may be done by receiving a patient scientific explanation of your misconceptions, befriending a witch, djinni, dragon, ghost, or foreigner, using a magic object, or breaking a superstitious taboo.

## Taboo

You must observe a set of unusual taboos. This may be due to your culture's belief, necessary steps for you to work magic, or an oath you made to a djinn. The cost of breaking the taboos could be exile or death. These taboos are above and beyond the usual taboos inherent in the character's faith. Possible taboos include (choose at least 6):

- Celibacy, or restriction of sexual activity to certain group of people or one day a year
- Knots, rings, belts, circlets (and anything else like a closed loop) are forbidden
- Required to worship ancestors
- Required to make a pilgrimage every year to a certain holy site besides Mecca
- Required to maintain ritual cleanliness by bathing multiple times a day
- Mistreating a fire or fire source is considered blasphemy
- Reading and learning to read are forbidden
- Must always prepare extra food and set table spot for a djinni spirit
- Can't use/say certain names (dead people, personal names, deity names)
- Can't cut fingernails or hail
- Prohibition against bloodshed
- Prohibition against using technology, especially iron
- Forbidden to interact with a certain group of people
- Forbidden from entering certain area (temples of opposing faith, cemetery)
- A certain secret which cannot be revealed publicly
- Your face must remain hidden to all but your closest allies of the same sex

**Turning Point:** Discovering the taboo was in place to control the population. Leaving your old culture behind. Quitting the practice of magic, or adopting a new arcane philosophy. Being freed from your oath.

Superstitious	
DC	Strange and Fearsome Thing
10	A newcomer in town. Doing something unlucky (or failing to perform a taboo). Unfamiliar, but unassuming technology. Minor magic charms. A wise woman.
14	Illness and death. Unfamiliar and frightening technology. A newcomer with a different appearance (dress, skin color, accent, race, etc). Someone affected by magic.
18	A witch (i.e. an adept). A djinni, ghost, or non-human species (e.g. sea-born). Someone back from the dead. Powerful magic object.
22	A monstrous creature like a dragon, rukh, or zartani. An enchanted or cursed location, such as the lost city of Ubar or Jinnistan.



**Wicked Relative**

You have a relative (often an uncle or step-mother) who is wicked through and through. They will belittle you at every turn, making your life difficult just because they can. Often they have ulterior motives in repressing you. If you should succeed, your relative will surely try to cash in on your wealth and reputation. Your relative may engage in nefarious schemes which you feel obligated to stop, though you'd never bring true harm to them. After all, they *are* family.

**Turning Point:** You discover you're not related. You manage to reform your relative. Your relative is killed by another, and (ironically) it's up to you to bring their killer to justice before a Blood Feud erupts.

**Destiny**

Most heroes have mixed times of woe and weal ahead, but there are a few who have been chosen by God and whose destiny is weighted heavily towards a critical moment. A player can choose a destiny for their hero by selecting the Destined feat; by selecting a destiny, the player sets out a clear direction for their hero, both unavoidable and undeniable. Alternately, you may give a hero a destiny as a reward for uncovering or fulfilling a prophecy.

A hero's destiny is dormant until activated at the moment the hero achieves their destiny; how the destiny will be activated is chosen by the player and Narrator together. In order to build the suspense of the character's destiny up, the Narrator should require the character to obtain a certain number of levels before reaching their destiny; for example a 1<sup>st</sup> level character may be required to attain 6<sup>th</sup> level before their destiny manifests. The exact requirements depend on the rate of level advancement in the game.

**Glory**

You are destined to achieve fame and praise across the land. When activated by performing a suitably glorious deed this feat gives you a +3 bonus to Reputation. In addition, everyone in the region where you performed the glorious deed view you as a manifestation of the Divine or otherwise blessed by heaven. Thus, in that region only you benefit from the Connected feat and base reaction to you is Helpful. In addition, your closest followers gain the Dedicated feat.

**God-Realization**

Even if you are not a believer now, you are destined to gaze upon the glory and majesty of God. This may be a visitation by an angel, enlightenment while fasting and praying on a mountaintop,

meeting loved ones in Paradise during a near-death experience, or some other undeniable evidence of God's existence. When this feat is activated, you have a vision outlining a course of action for you; if you follow these guidelines unerringly you may take 20 on all check, even skill checks that require you to have special training, related to the task. If you do not have it already, you gain the True Faith feat. If you already have True Faith, then you become fully confident in God's plan, handling suffering with the utmost piety, and henceforth you may always take 10 no matter the circumstances.

**Legacy**

You are destined to leave behind an enduring legacy. This destiny may be activated twice, in two different ways:

**Great Deed:** You may designate one use of a feat or skill as a great deed which you will be remembered for. Gain +1 Reputation. If applicable, this feat/skill use endures for months, years, or even decades in regard to a specific situation. For example, you might use Intimidation on an army's general; henceforth your family name is demoralizing to all those of the opposing army who hear it.

**Protégé:** You designate a child, follower, or fellow player character as your protégé; this character must respect you and seek to emulate you. They gain 1 bonus feat and 2 favored feats from the feats that you possess; these feats replace the character's former background. If your protégé ever turns against you, you automatically gain the Favored Foe feat against them and their followers, as you taught them much of what they know.

**Reunion**

You are destined to be reunited with family, a lover, or your companions. When activated this feat has one of the following effects (you choose):

**Long-Lost Family:** A member of the supporting cast turns out to be a long-lost family member who immediately becomes Helpful towards you and seeks to aid you in every way. Your Station may change overnight, and the next time you gain a level you are once again eligible for feats normally only allowed at 1<sup>st</sup> level.

**To the Rescue:** If you are apart from your companions this feat brings you back together in some extraordinary fashion. Furthermore, during the scene of your reunion you gain a +4 bonus on all saves, rolls, and checks. Alternately, if you are the one being rescued, your rescuing companions gain the bonus instead. If you survive this event you grow closer, everyone gaining Dedicated as a bonus feat in regards to all the other player characters.







## Revelation

You are destined to make a great discovery. When activated this feat has one of the following effects (you choose):

*Breakthrough:* You make a breakthrough. You may take 30 on one skill, feat, or power check provided you could take 20. Henceforth anyone who possesses the corresponding skill or power may use its rank in place of their Intelligence on Reputation checks to recognize your name. At the Narrator's discretion you gain access to a new use for that skill, feat, or power.

*Shocking Discovery:* When spending a Conviction point to perform "weaving", you forgo the roll and may narrate exactly what you find, so long as it is something unexpected by the other players. The revelation may be a long-forgotten piece of history, learning a dark secret from your past, uncovering the true intentions of a supposed ally, etc.

## Social Reform

You are destined to make great improvements in the society you live in. This may involve fighting racism, helping orphans, improving women's rights, advocating for better treatment of religious minorities, etc. When activated by making significant accomplishments or sacrifices in the name of your desired reformation, this feat allows you to gain the ear of society at large. Any interaction skills or social feats (like Inspire or Suggest) you possess can be targeted at society on a Difficulty 20 check. If you succeed, the majority in your city or tribe adopts your suggested reforms. If you succeed by 5 or more, the majority in the region/province adopts your reforms. If you succeed by 10 or more, the majority in

the Caliphate adopt your reforms. If you succeed by 15 or more, your reforms have broad reaching implications throughout the known world. The reformation begins among the people you first speak to, then trickles outward over the course of the following months and years.

## Soul Mate

You are destined to meet and bond with a character who becomes nearer to you than your own breath; if this character is player-controlled they also must have this feat and agree to be your soul mate. While you may designate your soul mate when you take this feat, you may also wait, designating your soul mate by spending a Conviction point. When activated, this feat grants both of you the Dedicated feat in relation to each other (you may swear a *bay'ah* of love) and forges a heart link between you.

*Heart Link:* You have a psychic link with your soul mate. The two of you are always in heart contact (like a use of the Heart Reading power), and you always know each others' emotional state; when applicable you gain a +4 bonus on interaction checks with each other. In addition, you may spend Conviction points on each other's behalf even if you are nowhere near each other.

## Sovereignty

You are destined to assume a position of great power according to your skills, regardless of your station in society. For a noble this might represent inheriting the kingdom, while for a beggar it might be a stroke of extraordinary fortune. When activated, this feat establishes you as a head of state (sultan, queen, king, shah), the leader of a secret society, or some other position of power. Your Station increases to 5 and your Wealth score increases to 32. However, you gain the *duties* and *envious rival* Complications. If you ever claim to be above God, you will lose your sovereignty.

## Tragedy

You are destined to make a fatal error, yet also to acknowledge your failure and to boldly go on to meet your fate. When activated by making a grave error according to your vice (e.g. selling your friends out for greed), this feat has one of the following effects (you choose):

*Resolve:* You are determined to atone for your mistake and make things right by those you wronged. You gain the Dedicated feat in regards to whomever you wronged through your mistake. When using extra effort in any situations similar to the one in which you failed, double the bonus usually provided (e.g. +4 on a single check instead of +2, carry four times your capacity instead of twice your capacity, move at four times your speed instead of double, or gain two additional Will saves instead of just one). In addition, you regain 2 points of Conviction for following your virtue instead of your vice from henceforth. However, you gain the *fated* Complication.

*Surrender:* You are resigned to your fate and do little to change it, knowing that it is God's will. You have quit



struggling against God, and accept the universal will. You are in a perpetual state of calm and are never affected by the Fascinate, Inspire, or Suggest feats, fear effects, nor the Heart Shaping or Suggestion powers against your will. In addition, when speaking of your fate you may, at the Narrator's option, inspire fear or pity as per the Inspire feat. However, you gain the *fated* Complication.

### *Witness*

You are destined to bear witness to some great change in society. This may be an upheaval killing many, a wondrous scientific advance, a terrible crime, the birth of your child, etc. When this feat is activated, you witness the event; you may not die before this time. It is up to you to decide what to do with the information you learn. As you have first-hand knowledge of the event, you can testify in court, use the information to blackmail another, preach to people to change their wicked ways, etc. Whatever you decide to do, your witnessing the event lends you authority and you may take 20 on any interaction check revolving around the event.

### *Djinni Boons*

Some djinni possess the ability to grant boons to worthy mortals, manifestations of magic that do not fade but endure for the rest of the mortal's days. Such gifts are considered a sign of great trust and are reserved for heroes who rescue djinni or perform courageous deeds on behalf of one of the six djinni tribes. A djinn must have the Djinni's Boon feat in order to grant boons. In addition, a hero with the Djinn-Touched background may begin with one of these boons in place of a feat, with the Narrator's permission. However, beware! A djinni's boon can be as much a curse as it is a blessing.

### *Best in the World*

There is always an arrogant mortal who demands to be the best at some skill. Of course, djinni usually despise such pretensions and will usually set up the mortal for a hard lesson. The djinn will make the mortal the best there is, possibly allowing them to take 20 on all checks corresponding to the mortal's wish and/or granting them a +10 bonus. However, there is always some complication that goes hand-in-hand with this boon, such as an *envious rival* who opposes the mortal at every turn, or stealing the knowledge from the mortal's allies. Sinister djinni may delight in killing off all the competition.

### *Charm of Summoning*

A truly generous djinn may bestow a worthy mortal with a minor charm containing a bit of the djinn's essence. The charm may be a lock of hair, a ring,

or even a name that must be spoken. Typically this charm may be used to summon the djinn to the mortal; once used the charm falls inert. An alternative charm is one which provides the mortal with a bit of the djinn's powers, provided the djinn has the Imbue Item feat; this charm allows the mortal to access one power of the djinn (rank equal to half the djinn's rank in the power) as often as they wish by invoking the djinn. Usually such a charm is limited to using a power in a particular way, such as using the Curse power to make people's hair fall out.

### *Life Everlasting*

A djinn may bestow immortality upon a mortal, however this is never what it seems. As djinni are inherently long-lived creatures, capable of surviving for hundreds if not thousands of years, they have a very different view of immortality. In fact, each tribe has its own interpretation:

*Ghul:* There is no direct translation of immortality into the Ghul dialect. The closest thing might be "abundance of tasty morsels" or "lack of starvation." If a mortal asks a ghul for life everlasting, the ghul is likely to bring lots of food, mountains of food, or else bring the mortal to a place where food is made, such as a farm, a river, or a butcher. At least most ghuls have the good sense that mortals don't care to dine on other human beings.

*Ifreet:* In the ifreeti mind, life everlasting is glorification in the annals of history as a ruthless champion or uncompromising leader. The hero gains the benefits the *glory* Destiny (see above), and his or her deeds will be written about by historians as commendable and exemplary. Alternately, some ifreet interpret immortality to mean bearing progeny who carry the torch of the family's values.

*Jann:* To the jann immortality is a state of mind, a return to the innocence and playfulness of childhood. They believe that if one can maintain this state of mind, one lives forever in the present moment. The hero gains the mentality of a child and an undying sense of humor.

*Jinn:* According to theologians of the jinn, immortality is the embrace of God. Thus, the hero gains the benefits of the *God-realization* Destiny. Vindictive jinn may define immortality as being in the embrace of God... in the afterlife.

*Marid:* The longest-lived tribe of djinni, the marid use loan words from other dialects of Djinni to describe "immortality", by which they mean a great feeling of empowerment, as if one were an Immortal. At the core of the marid concept of everlasting life



is the feeling of pride and power. The hero becomes devastatingly self-confident and gains a new virtue reflecting his or her new-found pride (e.g. Contentment, Courage, or Firmness).

*Shaitan:* To the shaitan immortality means outliving one's enemies. While most shaitan understand what mortals mean when they say "immortality", no self-respecting shaitan would ever let a mortal have it. The hero will live longer than any enemies they have.

If a djinn has the Wish Granting feat, they make grant a mortal their wish for true immortality, but the mortal has to make sure the djinn understands what is meant by "life everlasting."

## Mark of Two Worlds

A djinn may place a mark upon a mortal's forehead that is visible to all djinni, sha'irs with the Apprehend the Djinni's Hand feat, and adepts using Second Sight. This mark allows the djinn to always know where the mortal is and their general condition. In addition, the mark allows the mortal to pass into (and out of) Jinnistan unmolested. Pathways seem to open before the mortal, and no djinni will intercede, lest they be accused of breaking the sacred laws of djinni-kind. While in Jinnistan, the hero ages at half their normal speed, though upon returning to the mortal world age catches up with the hero.

## Resurrection

If a mortal makes a wish of a djinn (by spending Conviction) for a friend to return from death, a djinn with the Wish Granting feat may use the Imbue Life power on a person who has been dead no longer than three days provided the corpse is intact. The subject returns to life exhausted but otherwise in good health.

## Wealth Everlasting

Gold beyond your wildest dreams. Rubies the size of oysters. Merchants bringing you exotic gifts from far away lands. Perhaps the most common wish of mortals is for wealth everlasting. The mortal gains an increase in Wealth according to what they believe is possible; generally how much Wealth a mortal can dream up is limited by their station. For example, a beggar might conceive of wealth as having enough food, a warm home, and a loving family; thus the beggar would gain perhaps a +4 bonus to Wealth. On the other hand, a prince might conceive of wealth as control over vast territories and a palace with minarets of gold; thus the prince would gain a bonus of +20 (or more) to Wealth. This wealth lasts at least as long as the character lives, and it may even endure through subsequent generations.

## Grants

A grant is an award of land, title, large sums of money, or permission for trade, marriage, or some other endeavor. Grants take many forms, whether formal documents or simple agreements sealed with honor and an oath. A grant may saddle a character with the *duties* complication, but it always provides a hook for a new adventure. Any of these grants may be taken as a Benefit feat, or they may be received as a reward.

## Business

This grant authorizes the bearer to operate a particular business, and states what portion of their profits will be given to the issuing ruler. A business grant is not necessary to run a business, but it is necessary if one wishes to take out a loan, move large amounts of money, buy items in bulk, attend merchants' councils, and have legal recourse in the case of theft. Typically the ruler gets 2.5% of profits, though in some lands this may be more.

## Charter

The bearer has been granted the right to establish a city, mosque, school, hospital, or other non-profit venture. The signing ruler indicates whatever conditions govern the charter, such as any taxes that must be paid to the ruler.

## Diyya

A diyya authorizes the bearer to seek compensation for the death of a relative, friend, or fellow tribe member. Typically the grant is for a certain amount of money as negotiated between the bearer and the family of the murderer. In some cases, a ruler who looks on the bearer with favor, may grant a diyya for an amount according to the deceased's annual income without consulting the family of the murderer. In extremely rare cases, a diyya sanctions a murder of revenge.

## Governorship

Usually, a grant of governorship is given after the fact as a sign of official recognition. In such cases, the bearer is already the *de facto* ruler. However, sometimes a grant of governorship is issued for a noble who wishes to conquer a land or to bring a previously pagan people under Islamic rule. This grant clarifies what the bearer's duties are to their new subjects and what taxes are due to him or her.

## Jihad

This grant authorizes a general to lead troops into battle against a certain foe. If a ruler is worried about the general abusing their power, there may be further provisions governing the conflict, such as terms of surrender, how prisoners are to be treated, when and where the fighting may occur, etc. Most of the time, rulers allows generals considerable leeway in determining how to fight.



**Marriage**

When a political marriage is made, the groom's family often receives a grant acknowledging the groom's privileged access to the bride to be. A grant of marriage also allows people of differing station who could normally not marry the right to do so.

**Money**

A large sum of money is to be awarded to the grant bearer by the signing ruler when the grant is presented in their court. This is more than a typical Wealth reward, and may range from a +6 to a +12 increase in Wealth. Such grants are rarely issued, as cashing them depletes the ruler's coffers.

**Patronage**

A powerful patron supports the hero. Patronage provides not only consistent work and a tax-free standard of living according to the patron's wealth, but also the prestige of being so close to powerful individuals. When the hero gains a level while working for a patron, they gain a bonus to their professional skill check equal to their patron's Station. In addition, the hero may use their patron's name to bolster their own Reputation. This allows them to use their patron's Reputation for a scene. However, doing so also means that the patron's enemies will become disinclined to them and that others may hold them accountable for their patron's actions.

**Buying a Horse**

The old saying "never look a gift horse in the mouth" may be true, but if you're buying one, that's certainly the first thing any ten-year knows to do. The purchase of a horse is a long affair that involves not just haggling, but a delicate courting process with the animal. During this time the owner and the buyer get to know one another and the owner provides a detailed history of the horse, its sires, and any mishaps that occurred. This process takes at least 4 days but ensures that the horse is of good quality. Horses bought using the long route begin with one virtuous trait and no shoddy traits. Someone interested in buying a horse faster than that must go to the "hard sell" merchants, who are less than reliable and may try to deceive the buyer. Horses purchased from such unscrupulous dealers usually have many shoddy traits, though there are some diamonds hidden in the rough; for such purchases roll on the random traits table. Horse prices will vary depending upon where one buys the animal and what traits it possesses. As always, these prices are just guidelines, and the circumstances of the trade will dictate the final selling price.

**Safe Passage**

The bearer, whose name is written on the grant, is to be guaranteed safe passage through the territory of the signing ruler. Grants of safe passage are often necessary when traveling through lands occupied by raiders.

**Ship**

The construction of an ocean-worthy ship is an immense effort that requires capital only rich merchants and nobles can provide. This grant acknowledges the bearer as the principal captain and gives them official permission to dock at their home port. When traveling, one often must negotiate to dock in foreign ports. In rare cases, this grant is accompanied by a property grant, signifying that ownership of the ship is changing hands.

**Tax Audit**

This grant authorizes the bearer to audit the taxes of a local ruler, and it obliges the ruler to provide the bearer with free room and board, and all necessary assistance until the audit is completed.

**Arabian Horses**

*"My treasures do not clink together or glitter. They gleam in the sun and neigh in the night."*

- Arabian proverb

No one knows where the hot-blooded Arabian originates from. Many claim they are a gift from the heavens, fashioned from the south wind into the creature that "shall fly without wings." The name Arab means "purity", accounting for the high standards breeders of these horses have in maintaining pure blood. Arabian horses are bred for racing, breeding, and warfare, as well as delivering messages across the nation. They are known for their refinement and almost feminine grace. The legend of the five strains which make up the Arabian breed today is that Muhammad and his Companions released their herd after a long journey right next to a watering hole. Then Muhammad called them back as a test and only five mares of the entire herd returned. These five became the progenitors of the five Arabian strains. They are known for refinement and almost feminine grace.

**Appearance:** Though Arabians have delicate faces, they have bulging foreheads, called *jibbah*, thought to hold divine blessing. Thus, the larger the *jibbah*, the greater the blessing. They possess arching necks with a high crest, and a naturally high tail carriage, and average 13-15 hands high. Their coloration is bay, black, chestnut, or gray, often with white markings.



**Temperament:** Arabians are known for being high-energy. These horses thrive on regular exercise and sporting activity. In fact, if they are denied it, they suffer from bouts of melancholy and aggressive outbursts. They are never lazy. Social animals in the extreme, Arabians often will approach other horses despite their rider's will. Arabians are emotional creatures and deeply impacted by how their human keeper's treat them. At the same time, they are impulsive and brash, getting into fights with other horses without provocation.

**Names:** Naming convention among Arab breeders is to name the horses for their temperament or markings in the dialect of the South. Suitable male names are Ateef (Compassionate), Bakkir (Early), Al-Marees (The South Wind), Lamaan (Flash), Mehdi (Guided One), or Raasol (Messenger). Female names include Inshirah (Joy), Nasheeta (Energetic), Shaden (Gazelle), Talawat (Grace), and Ya-Bint-al-Hawa (Daughter of the Wind)

**Breed Traits:** Common Arabian traits are Competitive, Cribber, Fleet, Intelligent, and Willing. In addition, an Arabian gains at least one of the following unique breed traits:

**Desert Trekker:** The horse gains the Desert Hawk feat.

**Human Curiosity:** The horse is unusually friendly around people. On the up side, the horse is easier to train (all

training Difficulties are lowered by 2) and it automatically knows the trick 'Come.' On the down side, the horse is easily fooled by people trying to lure it. Anyone can make a Bluff check opposed by the horse's Wisdom to persuade it to come to them given two full rounds.

**Impulsive:** The horse is prone to rash decisions. The horse gains the Improved Initiative feat. In any high-energy encounter there is a 10% (1-2 on a d20) the horse does something totally unexpected, like attacking another horse, taking a short-cut despite its rider's direction not to, hurtling down a heavily forested slope, or starting a race too soon.

**Sensitive Soul:** The horse responds to good treatment. If double normal boarding costs are spent for the horse and its rider is gentle and soothing, the rider gains a +2 bonus on all Ride and Handle Animal checks and the horse adopts the Willing trait. However, if the horse is only adequately or poorly provided for and is beaten or berated, its rider suffers a -2 penalty on those checks and adopts the Sullen trait. The horse can swing from Willing to Sullen with a simple harsh word, but changing from Sullen to Willing requires an entire day of good treatment.

**Sprinter:** The horse can move at a galloping pace (x4 or x5 with Run feat) for 10 + quadruple its Constitution score in rounds before starting to tire.

## Random Horse Trait Table

1-2	2 shoddy traits
3-5	1 shoddy trait
6-9	2 shoddy traits and 1 virtuous trait
10-14	1 shoddy trait and 1 virtuous trait
15-17	No traits
18-19	1 virtuous trait
20	2 virtuous traits and 1 shoddy trait

## Random Virtuous Traits

1	Agile	11	Jumper
2	Bonding	12	Leader
3	Courageous	13	Loyal
4	Distinctive Appearance	14	Smooth Gait
5	Easy Keeper	15	Stayer
6	Fleet	16	Steady
7	Hardy	17	Strong
8	Homing Instinct	18	Sure-Footed
9	Horse Sense	19	Water Drawn
10	Intelligent	20	Willing

## Random Shoddy Traits

1	Balker	11	Nervous
2	Biter	12	Old Injury
3	Clumsy	13	Poor Keeper
4	Competitive	14	Rears
5	Cribber	15	Rough Gait
6	Deceptive	16	Runaway
7	Distracted	17	Sullen
8	Dullard	18	Weak
9	Hard Mouth	19	Wide-Eyed
10	Kicker	20	Wild



### Horse Traits

Traits are descriptive qualities that illustrate a horse's individual character, history, and breed. All horses automatically begin with one unique breed trait. Horses purchased through legitimate traders also possess one virtuous trait, whereas horses bought from less reputable merchants have their traits determined by rolling on the Random Horse Trait Table. Traits themselves can be picked by the Narrator or randomly rolled.

### Virtuous Traits

**Agile:** The horse can stop and change direction very quickly and takes jumps at high speed without batting an eye. All Ride checks to perform a sharp turn or leap are treated as if the horse were traveling at one speed category lower.

**Bonding:** The horse can bond with its rider. This bonding process requires at least six weeks of training with the rider and some kind of "trial by fire" where the rider proves their trustworthiness to the horse. Once bonded, the horse gets an impression of what its rider wants or needs without the rider saying or doing anything as long as the rider is within 10 feet of the horse (or is mounted). Effectively, the rider can make a single one or two-word mental command, such as "flee", "get help", "don't move", or "attack." The horse understands the command after one round, and has a choice whether it will obey or not.

**Courageous:** The horse displays great boldness and will go headlong into a dangerous situation without hesitation. When faced with a potential enemy it will rather fight than flee. The horse gains the Fearless feat.

**Distinctive Appearance:** The horse has a glossy golden sheen polish overlaying its base coat of color. Such rare horses are considered beautiful, and the horse fetches double the normal price. In addition, anyone who has trained or ridden the horse gets a +4 bonus to recognize it when the horse is being disguised or is among a group of horses.

**Easy Keeper:** The horse maintains its weight and coat with minimal feed and care. It requires half as much money to provide for the horse. However, if left to its own devices the horse has a tendency to overeat.

**Fleet:** The horse enjoys moving fast and it gains the Improved Speed feat. However, a DC 15 Handle Animal check is required to bring it out of an all-out gallop; otherwise the horse keeps galloping.

**Hardy:** Circumstances which would break another animal are a walk in the park for the horse. It gains the Great Fortitude feat.

**Homing Instinct:** If the horse's rider is knocked unconscious the horse will automatically travel back

to the place it knows as home with the rider still in the saddle. Among Arabians, such horses often have a red mark on their shoulder; see the "Story of the Bloody-Shouldered Mare" in **Chapter 13**.

**Horse Sense:** The horse can sense if a rider doesn't know what they're doing. If an untrained rider, such as a thief, attempts to mount the horse, they must make a DC 10 Reflex save or be bucked off. Even if they do mount the horse, the horse evidences a random shoddy trait out of the blue as long as the untrained rider rides the horse. However in the hands of a character with at least 6 ranks in Ride, the horse is highly responsive and the rider gains +2 on all Ride checks. Arabs prize horses that can sense a skilled rider.

**Intelligent:** An intelligent horse has a strong sense of self-preservation. If the horse detects danger, it won't willingly proceed. Handle Animal checks to push it to enter a dangerous area have a -5 penalty. While novice handlers mistake this for stubbornness, experienced handlers recognize it as good common sense. The horse can learn 3 additional tricks. If not taught tricks it will develop them on its own, like digging a hole in its stall, or flinging objects about with its teeth.

**Jumper:** The horse can jump higher and farther. It gains Skill Focus (Jump).

**Leader:** Other horses look to this horse for direction and safety. Whenever the horse is present among other horses, it makes a Charisma check to lead the other horses. If successful, the horse gets the horses to follow it.

**Loyal:** The horse obeys only one master. It will do everything in its power to return to that master is stolen or sold. The horse actively attacks anyone threatening its master. The horse will only obey those who it recognizes as important to its master and who succeed a DC 20 Handle Animal check. The horse's loyalty can be transferred to another master but it will take several weeks or even months of training.

**Smooth Gait:** The horse is more comfortable to ride than others and can be ridden indefinitely without the rider needing to nurse saddle sores. After a day of travel on this horse the rider is not Winded.

**Stayer:** The horse can go without food or water for up to 5 days before suffering the effects of starvation and dehydration.

**Steady:** The horse takes unusual sights, sounds, and smells with utter equanimity. You could lay siege to a castle over its head and it will just wonder what's for dinner. The horse takes its cues from its handler or rider, it's "herd leader." The horse gains the Iron Will feat.

**Strong:** The horse can haul a lot of weight for its size, gaining +1 Strength.



**Sure-Footed:** The horse keeps its footing in difficult circumstances like cliff sides, snow, mud, or sand. It gains Skill Focus (Balance).

**Water Drawn:** The horse can smell the presence of water within 100 feet. When the horse is suffering from dehydration this expands to 300 feet. When the horse locates water, it stomps and sniffs the ground.

**Willing:** The horse will do its very best to obey the commands given to it, even if it doesn't understand what's being asked for. The handler automatically succeeds at Handle Animal checks to get the horse to perform a trick it knows. When "pushing" the horse to perform a trick that it doesn't know, even if the Handle Animal check fails, the horse will make something up that it thinks might be close to what the handler wants.

## *Shoddy Traits*

**Balker:** The horse refuses to perform a certain task, such as entering a stall, lying down, pulling a cart, or entering a cave. It resists all attempts to make it perform the task, increasing the DC of any Handle Animal or Ride checks by +10.

**Biter:** The horse unpredictably bites people within reach for no apparent reason.

**Clumsy:** The horse seems to have four left legs. It backs into things, steps on people's feet, or trips over thin air when walking. The horse suffers -2 Dexterity.

**Competitive:** Around other horses, the horse is constantly trying to prove itself. It will attempt to join in games or races. If a stallion, it will frequently challenge other stallions for access to mares. If a mare, it views for the attention of stallions and its handlers. Such horses are so competitive, they will even compete with their riders if they think they can get away with it.

**Cribber:** The horse chews the tops of its stall and swallows air, leading to a higher risk for infection. When stabled for 3 days or more without a muzzle, the horse has a 10% chance of becoming sick with colic and bloat each week.

**Deceptive:** The horse appears to be other than what it is. A sickly beast with a shallow lung capacity may puff out its chest and extend its neck when being appraised. On the other hand, a strong-legged horse with a winsome spirit might have an unlucky coloration and fake a limp around horse merchants. It is a mystery why the horse does this, to the chagrin of its handlers.

**Distracted:** The horse is easily distracted by something, such as mares, stallions, barley, music, or fire. When around the source of its distraction, the horse attempts to get closer. All attempts to keep the horse from approaching the source suffer a -10 penalty.

**Dullard:** The horse's mind, if it has one, is slower than honey. It takes twice as long to train the horse than it does for other horses. In addition, this domesticated animal never gives its rider a clue of impending danger and cannot make Notice checks.

**Hard Mouth:** Misuse of the bit and reins have left the horse's mouth insensitive. Ride checks with the horse suffer a -2 penalty.

**Kicker:** The horse will kick anyone within range who walks behind it given half a chance. In general the horse is ill-tempered, especially with strangers.

**Nervous:** More so than most, the horse sees danger around every corner and can pick up on its rider's fear. Small distractions like unusual sounds or smells terrify it. The horse may bolt in panic or just shake fearfully. A DC 15 Handle Animal check is required to urge the horse beyond its fear. In addition, if its rider is shaken, frightened, or panicked, the horse becomes so too.

**Old Injury:** An old injury reduces the horse's speed by 10. Any effort that requires a Fortitude save or Constitution check requires an additional DC 15 check to see if the horse goes lame. A lame horse cannot be ridden or worked for one month.

**Poor Keeper:** The horse is always underweight despite good care. Caring for the horse costs twice as much as normal.

**Rears:** The horse will avoid work by rearing. A handler on the ground may be threatened by its hooves. Its rider is thrown to the ground unless they succeed a DC 20 Reflex save. If the rider is expecting the horse to rear, they get a +5 bonus on this save.

**Rough Gait:** The horse rides like you are sitting on an earthquake. The rider suffers twice the normal fatigue after a day riding on the horse (Fatigued instead of Winded).

**Runaway:** The horse occasionally bolts away from its handlers at top speed, thinking it's playing a game. Once it gets going, only a DC 20 Handle Animal check gets it to stop.

**Sullen:** This horse has a bad attitude. It must be forced to perform and then the work will be lackluster with pinned ears and clamped tail. All Handle Animal checks with the horse suffer a -2 penalty, and the horse seems to take its only pleasure in making its handler work to get it to perform simple tasks.

**Weak:** The horse suffers a -2 penalty to Strength.

**Wide-Eyed:** The horse is keenly aware of its surroundings, gaining the Skill Focus (Notice) feat. However, instead of responding to surprises with panic, the horse responds by freezing in place and staring. It requires a DC 25 Handle Animal check to snap the horse out of its trance. If left alone, it leaves the trance if attacked or after 5 rounds pass.

**Wild:** There is a feral quality to the horse. Perhaps it has never been domesticated before. Attempts to break the horse suffer a -4 penalty. However, once broken, it loses this trait.



### *Libraries & Books*

The Libraries of Alexandria, al-Fustat, Cordoba and Tripoli. The Academy of Gundishapur. Baghdad's House of Wisdom. These places are the first of the public libraries called *dar al-ilm* ("halls of science"). Besides these great storehouses, the repositories of knowledge continue to be Christian monasteries, secretive Islamic sects, private royal treasuries, and the collections of arcane societies. As all books are painstakingly handcrafted, it is rare for a library to possess more than a few hundred books.

**Specialties:** When studying in a library you may take 20 on any Knowledge skills which the library's material covers, as well as to retest a previous check. Choose on Knowledge skill per specialty. Alternately, a library can be specialized in certain topics, trading a specialty for a +2 bonus to all checks for a Knowledge it is already specialized in.

**Authoritative Corpora:** All substantial libraries bear copies of the complete works (*corpora*) of the favored scholars the library's owner. The collected works of a scholar, an authoritative corpus commands respect in Mythic Arabia, and is treasured by any scholar. Like feats, corpora have certain prerequisites in order to be understood; only those who meet these prerequisites can benefit from a corpus. If you wish to benefit from a corpus outside of a library you may choose to commit it to memory if you have the Eidetic Memory and Literacy feats (with a few exceptions). Doing so requires that you take the corpus as a feat.

**Study Time:** This time reflects how long it takes to gain the benefits of taking 20 or retesting a check in the library. You may opt to rush the research process, taking a -1 penalty to your Knowledge check for each unit of time you rush through. For example a scholar in a Colossal library would usually require 4 days time to take 20; instead he chooses to cram his studies into 1 hour as if it were a small reading room. Thus he incurs a -5 penalty on his Knowledge check.

**Cost:** While libraries are rarely bought and sold, some wealthy scholars and royalty are known to trade in libraries. The cost is merely a guideline; often scholars will require certain books in trade or certain provisions on the library's use before selling. Making a library from scratch increases the cost by +5.

### *Sample Authoritative Corpora*

#### **Al-Haafidh Ibn Rajab**

**Prerequisite:** Historiography, Trained in Knowledge (history) and Knowledge (theology and philosophy)

*An Imam devoted to knowledge, Ibn Rajab led the study circle in the Central Mosque of Banu Umayyah. He was the greatest scholar of the Hadith, both in reporting and investigating, and his withdrawing from worldly life was praised by scholars far and wide as exemplary.*

You gain a +4 bonus on all Historiography checks.

#### **Hadith**

**Prerequisite:** Honest Law, Trained in Knowledge (civics)

*The hadith is a collection of the deeds and sayings of Mohammed and his companions that provides illumination as to what actions are considered mandated, undesirable, or forbidden according to Islamic law. Caliph Uthman sought to codify the hadith, but his efforts were cut short by assassination in 656. During the Fitna, many texts were lost. When the Abbasid caliphate came to power in 758, several competing collections of hadith were recorded based on oral history. To separate the lies from the truth, scholars examine the isnad, or chain of transmission. Most copies of the hadith are living documents as new oral traditions are related and sources are rigorously debated. Indeed, scholars are very picky about which version of the hadith is used to support a case, as different sects have different ideas about what makes an author reliable.*

You gain a +4 bonus on all Honest Law checks.

#### **Hippocrates**

**Prerequisite:** Medical Science, Trained in Medicine

*A Greek physician considered to be the "Father of Medicine", Hippocrates wrote very few works, and the 60 some treatises that make up his corpus are largely Arabic translations of various Greeks quoting Hippocrates. His writings, the corpus hippocraticum, reject the superstition and magic of primitive medicine and lay down the foundations of medical science.*

You gain a +4 bonus on Medicine checks.



## The Siddhanta

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Knowledge (physical sciences)  
Translated by Mohammed Ibn Ibrahim al-Fazari, son of the famous astronomer, and Yaqub ibn Tariq, one of the greatest Persian astronomers of his time, at the order of Caliph al-Mansur in 772, the Siddhanta is a Sanskrit astronomical work. Most notably it discusses the Hindu numerals, the working of the armillary spheres, calendars, and a comprehensive set of astronomical tables..

You gain a +4 bonus on Horary Astrology, Inception, Meteorological Astrology, and Natal Astrology checks.

## Jabir Ibn Haiyan

**Prerequisite:** Alchemic Purification, Trained in Knowledge (physical sciences) and Knowledge (supernatural)

The Persian father of chemistry, Jabir pioneered new developments in making steel, dyeing cloth, water-proofing, glass-making, preventing rust, gold lettering, and creation of aqua regia for the first time; he also discovered how to use an alembic to assist in distillation. His alchemical corpus is extensive, consisting of 22 books, of which the most famous are Kitab al-Kimya and Kitab al-Sab'een written around 790 CE. Jabir was known for his rigorous scientific method, and establishment of the law of constant proportions. He also pursued the radical goal of artificially creating life through alchemy.

You gain a +4 bonus on Alchemical Purification checks.

**Special:** In orthodox circles possessing his books is considered sinful as it maintains an alchemist can learn to create new life, a process known as takwin.

## Manasseh

**Prerequisite:** Astrometry, Trained in Knowledge (earth sciences), Language (Hebrew) 4 ranks

A former Jew from Khurasan, Manasseh was appointed the task of surveying the foundation for the new city of Baghdad in 762 CE along with a Persian named al-Naubakht. He is a superb astronomer and astrologer who wrote many treatises on astrolabes and the motion of heavenly bodies. He is still alive, living part time in Baghdad.

You gain a +4 bonus on all Astrometry checks.

## The Qur'an

The Holy Book of Islam, the Qur'an was transmitted to the Prophet Mohammed by the angel Gabriel nearly 200 years ago. Mohammed could neither read nor write and

it was his companions who began recording his teachings before he died. Some accounts claim the first complete compilation of the Qur'an was made during the rule of the first caliph, Abu Bakr, by the Prophet's secretary Zayd ibn Thabit who gathered the Qur'an from parchments, pieces of bone, and the memories of men. Later, Zayd was commissioned as part of a committee by caliph Uthman ibn Affan to codify and standardize the Qur'an. This official version was spread throughout the Islamic empire between 650 and 656 CE. All copies which differed from it were destroyed. The Qur'an contains wisdom so clear, so apparent, that it is accessible to all readers and its wisdom can be applied to every field of study.

You gain a bonus to all Knowledge checks equal to your Wisdom.

**Special:** A character with the Hafiz feat gains no in-game benefit from having access to the written Qur'an.

## Rabia of Basra

**Prerequisite:** To learn the teachings of Rabia you must have the Eidetic Memory feat and study with her or one of her disciples, as her teachings haven't yet been recorded in writing.

A woman Sufi saint from Iraq, Rabia was born to poor parents who died of hunger when she was a child, resulting in homelessness and permanent separation from her siblings. She wandered on the streets of Basra begging until she was sold into slavery by a criminal. One day her master saw a light shining above her head while she prayed, and he freed her the next morning. Rabia pursued a life of solitary prayer in the desert. Her fame as a Sufi holy woman spread and people began to journey to her retreat to study with her. Her teachings consist of mystical poetry expounding the virtue of divine love. Today she is a very old woman who has retired from teaching.

You gain +1 Wisdom. If you are or become an ascetic you gain +2 Wisdom.

## Royal Stud Book

**Prerequisite:** Horse Savvy, Trained in Handle Animal

A royal stud book provides the tribal history of a certain breed of horse. Receiving one of these rare books from a sheikh is a true honor, for it represents decades, perhaps centuries, of painstaking and adventurous research. On a successful Handle Animal check while possessing the royal stud book, a character may selectively breed certain traits into or out of a line provided they have at least one horse of the breed type the book deals with. The Difficulty

Library Size	Specialties	Authoritative Corpora	Study Time	Cost
Reading Room	1	0	1 hour	15
Collection	3	1	6 hours	20
Institution	5	2	1 day	25
Archives	7	3	2 days	30
Grand	9	4	3 days	35
Colossal	11	5	4 days	40



of this check is 15, with modifiers applied by the Narrator according to the circumstances. Possessing a royal stud book greatly increases one's station among the tribe associated with the book, and may act as a seal of safe passage and sign of friendship. Of course, if it has been stolen all bets are off.

### *Zosimus*

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Knowledge (physical sciences), Knowledge (supernatural), and Knowledge (theology and philosophy)

*Zosimus of Panopolis wrote an encyclopedia of 28 books on alchemy which he dedicated to his sister at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, before Islam. He contributed a religious and mystical view of alchemy which persists to this day, incorporating Egyptian magic, Jewish mysticism, Greek philosophy, Babylonian astrology, Christian theology, and pagan mythology. He includes summaries and examples from many texts long since lost.*

Gain +3 on all Knowledge (supernatural) checks. If you have the Scholarly feat, you gain a +3 bonus on book knowledge checks pertaining to alchemy.

### *Magic Treasures*

The pages of the *Nights* are full of magic objects, but these are always treated as wondrous treasures, things which will most certainly be passed down through the family unless they fall into another's hands or prove to be the wielder's undoing.

### *City in a Bottle*

*A misty-tinted bottle with swirling fog that seems to move within the glass.*

An ancient djinni trick involves creating extra-dimensional spaces within seemingly impossible containers. A city in a bottle often stores a city which was punished, a city that housed a terrible curse, or a city may even have chosen to hide itself! If a city is within the bottle, all a character need do is gaze within the bottle for three rounds. On the first round they see the city from a bird's eye view, on the second round they begin to hear the sounds of the city, on the third round they feel the environmental conditions of the city, and after the third round they are whisked into the bottle and appear within the bottle's city. Once inside the city, one cannot be released without help from the outside or using the Plane Shift power. Anyone looking into the bottle can make a Notice check (Difficulty 25) to pick out an individual. Each additional round spent looking grants a +2 bonus to the Notice check, but if a full three rounds are spent, the rescuers are sucked into the bottle themselves! Escaping the city by riding away simply isn't possible – nothing exists beyond

its walls, and the events will transpire to keep the character within the city's walls.

*Freeing a Bottled City:* Usually a city has been bottled for good reason, and freeing it is impossible. However, if the city was meant to be freed under certain circumstances, and those conditions are met, the bottle may be opened in any suitable vast open space and the city will suddenly appear there. It is also possible to free a bottled city by using the Apport power (Difficulty 50), though this exhausts the adept. The Narrator may allow other ways to free the city.

*Empty Bottles:* If the bottle happens to be empty, then it is possible to force a city within the bottle. Trapping a city within the bottle requires knowing every name the city has ever gone by, and reciting an ancient poem unique to the bottle. An adept can also use the Apport power (Difficulty 50) to trap a city within the bottle, though this exhausts the adept. Only one city may be stored in the bottle at a time.

### *Flask of Suleiman*

*A simply brass flask emblazoned with a star of David on the stopper.*

Suleiman bin Daoud sealed countless djinni within various prisons when he secured the allegiance of the djinni tribes. This flask continues a rebellious djinni, usually a member of the Ghul, Ifreet, Marid, or Shaitan tribes. Unstopping the flask frees the djinni within, but it may be required to perform a task before it is truly free. The djinn reacts in one of the following manners:

*Incomplete Mission:* The djinni was interrupted in an important mission by its imprisonment, and seeks to get back to the mission as soon as possible. Often this involves leading the opener to a certain place, locating a person or object, or repenting of a sin. The djinni seeks to trick the opener into helping it complete its mission.

*Subservience:* The djinni is bound to perform three tasks for the opener of the bottle, serve the opener of the bottle for 1,001 days, reveal a secret to the opener, or repay a life debt to the opener. Of course, it does so grudgingly and will certainly seek to pay back any discourtesy.

*Wrath:* The djinni bursts forth yelling, "Repentance! O Prophet of God!" For several rounds the djinn attacks blindly, half the time targeting some impossible target (sun, sky, etc). The djinn believes the bottle opener to be Suleiman in the flesh, and



doesn't realize that he died long ago. Once the djinn is calmed and realizes the opener is not the responsible of the djinn's long imprisonment, it may be open to negotiating a contract of service.

## ***Magic Pomegranate Seed***

*A bright red pomegranate seed, bursting with color like a jewel.*

Some say this magic seed comes from the peri-inhabited lands of Shad-u-Kam, the Province of Delight, others that they fall from the Gao-kerena, the World Tree. When they appear in the hands of mankind, they always leave behind a fabulous legend, often altering the course of entire cities. The true magic of these seeds is that their effect depends on how they are cultivated.

*Grow a magic tree:* By planting the seed in the ground and praying earnestly, one can summon forth any kind of tree they know of (except the World Tree of course). This plant grows to maturity in one week, no matter how barren the conditions. In addition, the plant is the most fragrant of its kind, with the best tasting fruit, and coolest shade. The plant itself becomes a local legend in the community. In addition, the tree bears a magical property according to its type.

*Summoning a peri as a wife:* By breathing onto the seed with the wish for a wife, a man can plant it in the ground. The following evening, the seed will crack open and a peri (Persian nymph or dryad) will fly forth in the form of a ringdove. How the peri approaches the man varies depending on her character and the moral integrity and charm of her potential husband. A common tactic is to appear to the husband at night, but to vanish back into an alternate form during the day, such as hiding in a pumpkin, or as a ringdove.

*Heal any wound:* If the seed is eaten by a living being, it will heal any wound they possess in 24 hours, no

matter how grievous it may be. This includes all diseases, poisons, and conditions like blindness, but not magical curses and the like. The seed even cures those conditions which have been with an individual since birth. This seed can be used by an adept with the Imbue Life power to bring someone back who has been dead for a number of days equal to their adept level, instead of minutes.

## ***Al-Mikhdham***

*A radically curved scimitar inscribed with the name "Zayn al-Din al-Abidin."*

The magic scimitar of Ali, al-Mikhdham was found during a raid on a pagan shrine. The shrine at al-Khazraj held the idol Manah, under whom oaths were sworn. Manah's cult challenged the spread of Islam by detracting from the importance of Mecca, thus the Prophet dispatched Ali to destroy the idol. After demolishing the shrine, Ali took all the treasure. Among the treasure were two swords which had been presented to the idol by al-Harith ibn-abi-Shamir, the king of Ghassan. One sword was called al-Mikhdham and the other Rasub. The Prophet gave al-Mikhdham to Ali, who gave it to his son Husayn, who gave it to his son, Imam Zayn al-Abidin (658-713 AD), who was the last known family member to possess the sword.

This scimitar acts as a masterwork weapon to all save the one of True Faith. Such a wielder can use the True Faith feat at will without spending a Conviction point, and when using the scimitar against someone who has succumbed to hubris any hit made counts as a confirmed critical hit. Hubris is generally defined as the powerful committing degrading outrages against the weak from a position of alleged superiority.

## ***Flying Carpet***

*A large Persian rug, with various symbols worked into the intricate arabesque designs. Birds, trees, and flowers blend together in a beautiful mosaic of color that has the disconcerting habit of appearing as if it were floating.*

When its magic is activated with a unique command word, this carpet hovers just off the earth, a slight burst of air filling the area. The carpet will fly through the air, carrying its owner wherever they wish. It is possible to speak the command word while not on the carpet and direct it with voice commands, though these may not be any more sophisticated than one would give a dog or a horse. A flying carpet can carry up to double its capacity, but doing so reduces its speed to 30 feet. A flying carpet can always hover. A carpet's carrying capacity and maneuverability are determined by its size.

### ***Symbols Found on Magic Carpets***

Birds – Celestial messengers, longevity  
Birds of Prey – Strength and alertness  
Cut Flowers – Life is transient and ephemeral  
Dangerous Animals – Power and protection over beasts  
Ear of Corn/Shaft of Wheat - Prosperity  
Juniper Tree – An elegant or arrogant life  
Tree of life – Immortality through virtue  
Ram's Horn – Fertility, heroism, power  
Rooster – Warding off the Evil Eye  
Rose Bush – Life is beautiful but still has thorns  
String of Blue Beads Sewn Into Edge – Protection from envy  
Weeping Willow Tree – Time of sorrow



Size	Capacity	Speed
4 ft. by 6 ft.	200 lb.	40 ft. (average)
6 ft. by 9 ft.	400 lb.	40 ft. (poor)
8 ft. by 12 ft.	800 lb.	40 ft. (clumsy)

### *Slippers of Zayn al-Mawasif*

*"The slippers that carry these fair young feet,  
Cause her form to bend in its gracious bloom:  
When she paces and waves in the breeze she owns,  
She shines fullest moon in the murkiest gloom."*

These magical silk slippers, which will only fit the feet of a woman or a boy, are inscribed with a poem on their interior, and once belonged to the beloved of Masrur, the Caliph's own executioner, before they were stolen by a thief. The wearer gains the ability to use Wind Walk at her base speed, and may make an accelerated or all out move. When walking on the wind, the character shines bright like the moon, and if she is at least one hundred feet in the sky viewers on the ground will think she is a particularly bright comet so long as she is running. If she stops or slows down, her true form is visible.

### *Rewarding the Players*

Sometimes you want to reward a *player* for contributing to the game instead of their character. For example, a player might do a great job role-playing that has the entire group in peals of laughter, write up a detailed back story for a member of the *supporting cast*, or help a new player get adjusted to the game. The Narrator may give a player any of these rewards:

**Compensation:** You may reward a player with a bonus point of Conviction if you rule they can't do something because it would spoil the story, or otherwise limit

their character's abilities for the sake of the story. When refusing/forcing a character make a challenge, afflicting a character with a new Complication, or making a character's life very difficult because of an existing Complication it is appropriate to compensate the player with a Conviction point.

**Free Use of Conviction:** If a player narrates their character's use of Conviction in a particularly stunning or entertaining way, you may choose to allow them to gain the benefit without spending a Conviction point.

**Opening Lines:** The player gets to create the opening paragraph for the adventure; whatever they describe in their opening must come to pass...though not necessarily how they anticipated. The player may speak as their hero, or any other character who would have knowledge of the events after the fact.

**Story Quality:** You may reward a player (or even the entire group) by allowing them to select a *story quality* or two for an upcoming adventure. *Story qualities* are described in Chapter 7.

**Unspoken Plan:** When the player next comes up with a great idea, but the player doesn't have the creative spark in that moment to go into detail, they may instead gloss over whatever their character says or does in the vaguest of terms. At your discretion, this may include fast-forwarding over a scene and jumping right into the action. Of course, the group will find out what exactly happened later in a flashback. This is similar to when a character in the movies whispers to his friends and only later do you find out what was said.

Tree	Property
Apple	Its fruits reduce the appearance of aging by 1d2 years.
Birch	All plants in the surrounding mile flourish.
Cedar	Wicked djinni can't come within 100 feet of the tree, and anyone entering within 100 feet who is under their control is automatically freed.
Cypress	If a twig of the tree is present at any funeral, the deceased cannot be affected by the Imbue Unlife feat or turned into an undead.
Fig	Its fruits allow any barren creature eating them to conceive.
Maple	The following powers gain a +2 bonus on their power checks when used within 100 feet of the tree: Nature Reading, Scrying, and Visions. Likewise, the tree has a penchant for drawing old friends together in unlikely ways.
Oak	Provides the ruler of the land it resides upon with a +2 bonus on all Diplomacy and Intimidation checks when they are near the tree.
Orange	The seeds of its fruits can be used to make powerful love charms, guaranteeing young men and women will soon meet their perfect partner.
Pine	Its needles can be steeped into a tea which allows any diseased character to re-test their save against the disease once each day the tea is drunk.
Willow	Anyone who rests underneath the tree is freed of all mind-influencing effects. In addition, pregnant mothers have no complications at birth in the tree's presence.



## Chapter 11: The Impenitent Son

Raising our hands in prayer, my servant and I were thrown from the edge of the cliffs and into the water, white-capped and furious, below. I thought for certain I had died, for all around me was roaring, cold, and whiteness. Like a fish, I gasped for air and thought surely I would perish, when Aheyyad's voice came out, calling me, and I swam furiously. All at once I was sucked under the water, my head struck a rock, and I lost consciousness.

I returned to my senses, drenched, cold, and coughing, as I was dragged to the river's edge. Groping, I heard Aheyyad's voice near me. "God be praised, we are alive. You have saved my life!"

"Not I," said Aheyyad, "but this pilgrim." Though I could not see clearly, I clasped my rescuer's hand in gratitude. Aheyyad related that when I fell unconscious, he grabbed me, and the two of us were dragged toward a waterfall when the pilgrim, who was cleansing himself in the river, had seen us and pushed an old tree over into the middle of the river so that Aheyyad could grab on. Expressing my profoundest gratitude to the pilgrim, I found him to be a most self-effacing man.

"It is the will of God," he said. A small crowd of people had gathered, and they congratulated the pilgrim for his bravery, and then I heard a cry go out: "Hurray for Fatin ibn-Ibrahim!" Upon hearing these words, I was dumbfounded, for this was the brother of the man who had betrayed my servant and I and caused us to be captured by the assassins who had thrown us into the river.

Leaning close to me, Aheyyad whispered, "Twice God has saved us, once with his grace when we survived the fall, and now by our being rescued from the river. This pilgrim is the very flesh and blood of that conniving Ahmed ibn-Ibrahim; surely we cannot trust him. Let us not tempt God to save us a third time, and let us depart from his presence at once."

"I have seen this man in Kufa before, Aheyyad, working as a glass-dealer. He saved our lives, and thus has earned my trust. I will do what I can to return the debt and then we shall return to Kufa," I answered decisively. Though my servant was not pleased, he obeyed.

The crowd led us to a small Jewish fishing village where we were given fresh clothes and warm soup. A cry went out, and wine was poured for every person in the hostel. The pilgrim Fatin stood on a bench and got everyone's attention. "When I came here, I was an austere and somber man. Those days are no more! From henceforth, I shall be riotously merry! A great burden has been lifted from me, and to this I drink." The entire hostel raised their glasses with him and saluted his generosity.

Winding my way through the crowd, I found Fatin and bid him come over and enjoy the company of Aheyyad and I for a time. Curious at how we had ended up in the river, he consented. As he drank his wine, I told

the story of how we had been captured by assassins and how I had healed Ahmed ibn-Ibrahim's madness and how he betrayed us.

Amazed at my story, Fatin asked of his brother, "Truly God has made this earth so vast that it fits upon the head of a pin, with all its clouds and mountains. Where has Ahmed fled to?"

I reported that he went south from Daylam, though I did not share the tale that Ahmed had told us, and then I asked Fatin what had possessed him to travel to this distant land as a pilgrim and then to give up his austerities upon rescuing us.

"I left Kufa in search of Ahmed..."

### The Middle Brother's Tale

Now, I am nothing like my two brothers; while Ahmed is an ingrate and Hisam is a flatterer, I am honest. Neither am I boastful nor stingy in my praise, and I will voice criticism when it is called for. After my brother Ahmed left with his third of the inheritance, we waited to hear word of his whereabouts. A month passed and no word came. At last I decided to find my beloved brother, and I asked my father for my third of the inheritance so that I might take my men with me and set off to bring my brother back home. No sooner had he said "Take it, it is yours, my son," I set out into the woodlands where my brother had killed the stag of a bewitching princess, hoping to learn what had befallen him. Deeper we went into the wood, where scarcely a shaft of light could penetrate the tree cover. Passing through the wood, we came to a sheltered valley with a single town that sat at the edge of a sparkling lake. Dazzled by the lake, I asked a nearby laborer what magic caused the lake to glisten so.

"It is the *sha'ira* who rules these lands. She cast a spell over the lake so that the serpent within could not escape." The laborer then pointed out great stones by the edge of the lake, some twenty feet high, carved in the likeness of a terrible horned serpent. "Those stones have been here long before the *sha'ira*, and there used to be maps on them telling where the eggs of the serpent could be found and when sacrifices must be offered. Since she has taken over, her servitors have erased these markings, so that now only the oldest among us remember how to appease the serpent and keep it from breeding."

I vowed to help the townsfolk, and so I posted men to keep watch for signs of a serpent. Asking of my brother, I learned he entered the city of the *sha'ira* while under her spell. Every year the *sha'ira* stole people from the town and brought them back to her city, never to be seen again. I solemnly swore I would defend the town, but as I bowed my head in reverence, a spy of the *sha'ira* hidden in the crowd came forward and tried to kill me. God was with me, and it was I who killed him, freeing the wretched man from the *sha'ira's* spell. However, no sooner had he died than that night I was wracked by



# Chapter 11: The Impenitent Son

terrible nightmares of the horned serpent, which persisted on the next night and prevented me from sleeping. The town's wise man revealed that I had been cursed for killing the spy. To make matters worse, my men rebelled against me, fearing my curse, and returned back to my father in Kufa.

Alone at night, I shivered from the bitter cold and I feared sleeping lest I be haunted by the horrible visions of the horned serpent again. Thinking I could save myself and the poor villagers, I went out to the lake at night and, setting up a net trap, I offered a sacrificial sheep to the horned serpent. The lake water began to bubble and then, God be merciful, a great snake, some 30 feet in length, emerged from the waters, propelling itself onto land with its fins. Poisonous vapors surrounded it, and I nearly fainted. Stepping back, I drew my sword and prepared to give it the killing blow. Just then, a group of the townsfolk began hurling stones at it, thinking they might save me. I shouted at them to stop, but they would not heed my command, and the serpent pursued them, taking to the air with glistening wings. As I rushed after it, I could hear the screams of the townsfolk, and when I reached the town, the serpent had already killed six men, wrecked many homes, and made off with two heads of cattle. Blaming me for the tragedy, the townsfolk gathered, crying that I had been charmed by the *sha'ira* and that they intended to stone me. Thinking I would perish, I cried out to the townsfolk, "Remember how I have been cursed for killing a man who himself was cursed by the *sha'ira*! Seek not to bring my curse upon your own heads, and have mercy upon me!"

Not wishing to bring misfortune upon themselves, the townsfolk drove me from their town, promising to kill me if I ever returned. Thus, I became a destitute pilgrim. I had promised my father I would find what had become of my brother, but in the process I had become a murderer. During my travels I visited every shrine and holy mosque that I passed through, seeking redemption, but nowhere could my soul find peace from the nightmares that haunted me. At last I came to a mosque high in the Zagros Mountains tended by an order of Sufis. Their *murshid* (teacher) received and fed me, and welcomed me to stay. "However," he said, "you must go to bed exactly after performing your evening prayers, not a minute later, you must not question what we do here, and you must hand over your sword."

Thankful for a place to rest, I promised to obey the Sufi's rules. That night after praying as I lay in bed, tossing in turning in my nightmares, I awoke and heard a terrible howling coming from the valley below that made my blood run cold. The next

morning I noticed all the Sufis were performing penance by flagellating themselves with whips. So horrified was I by the scene that I begged the *murshid* to put a stop to this barbarism. "Remember what you have promised!" He said to me, and I fell quiet, not wishing to arouse his anger.

Thus I spent the next day visiting various healing springs, but the following night, after my prayers, I was again stricken with the nightmares. I awoke suddenly to the sound of an animal clawing at my door. Fearing for my life, I reached for my sword but then I remembered that I had surrendered it to the peace-loving Sufis. At last the horrible clawing stopped, and I rose from my bed with the first light of dawn. That day the Sufis each bore a heavy stone upon their backs when performing their duties; so terrible was the burden that in the heat of the day, several of the Sufis collapsed under the weight of their stone. Horrified at their suffering, I cried to the *murshid* to give them rest, but he only said, "Remember what you have promised!" I fell silent as before.

The next day I traveled to a holy mount and there I met a hermit who served me tea in his cave. I asked him of my nightmares and he looked up at me with a smile, "Did you not know the Sufis are expert dream interpreters? Surely they can help you with these nightmares." I thanked him for the information and then inquired about the Sufis themselves, and the strange occurrences and how I must observe similarly strange rules. "What you should do, if you wish to know the truth, is to pretend to go to sleep and then follow the orderly who comes in to check on you as stealthily as you can." Promising to do as the hermit told me, I returned to the Sufi's retreat, and asked the *murshid* about my dreams. He promised to help me in the morning, and so I performed my evening prayers and lay down to sleep, but I cracked my eyes so I could just barely see. Before midnight, one of the orderlies came in to check on me, and, thinking I was sound asleep, hastily closed the door.

Springing from my bed, I followed looked left and right down the hallway, and, seeing nobody, I quietly pursued the orderly. He hastened down the stone steps that led into the valley below, catching up to his fellow Sufis who walked in single-file each carrying a candle. Hiding myself in some bushes, I was horrified to discover a dead body buried there, but I kept from screaming, and watched as the Sufis walked out onto a great stone bridge. Once all the Sufis were gathered, the *murshid* uttered a word and the Sufis drew a great net over themselves, painstakingly securing it so that they were bound fast. Then the *murshid*, after testing the net to be sure they were all bound, said a prayer over them and



turned to walk back up the stairs. As I sat watching when the moon rose overhead, to my horror the Sufis began wailing and tearing their clothes, and shaking violently. All at once the Sufis became wolves and started gnawing and tearing at the net which bound them. Thinking they would break free, I rush after the *murshid* and I found him – though he was no longer himself, and was now a wolf – sitting upon a rock contemplating the moon. “Do not be afraid,” the wolf said, “for I have tamed the bloodlust that my students suffer from.”

“The flagellations? Carrying the stone?” I asked.

“Atonements for the injuries they inflicted on each other the night before.”

“What of the screaming in the valley?”

“Moaning their fate as the full moon fell upon them.”

“And the scratching at my door?” I asked, growing anxious.

“Ah, I was having a difficult night,” said the *murshid*-wolf. “I’m sorry if I frightened you. The wolf’s appetite is ferocious at times.”

My heart was racing. “And the dead body buried in the bushes?”

Getting up and stretching the wolf eyed me, “I see you’ve been talking with the ascetic who lives in the caves. You should know that he was once one of us, but he left in order to enjoy the evils of his new form, and he hates that I try to tame the animal nature of my students. Many years ago we were cursed by a wicked *sha’ira* who was incensed that we did not treat her any differently than our other guests. So we have suffered for many years, hoping to find a way to cure our terrible condition. Ancient texts say there is a river in Daylam which will rid a man of any curse and cleanse a soul of any crime, but each time I have sent students to this river they do not return and so I have stopped looking.”

I then revealed to the *murshid* how I sought repentance for killing a man, and that I would seek out this river. Just then the ascetic burst through the trees in wolf-form and snarled at me. The *murshid*, who had sworn a vow of pacifism did his best to slow the ascetic down as I fled into the retreat and grabbed my sword. Just then the ascetic lunged at me from behind and took a bite from my shoulder as I buried my sword in his belly. We fell to the ground, and he took his human form as he died. He whispered to me how to find the river and repented of his wrongdoing, and then his final breath left him. Lamenting that the weight of two men’s deaths hung on my head, I set out for the river, following the directions the ascetic had whispered to me. Thus I arrived here and, seeing you in the water, leapt in to rescue you. Now that I am cured, and I know where my brother is headed, I surely will seek him out and bring him back home.

Here the story shifts back to the *Physician’s Tale*, as told from Yusuf’s perspective.

I thanked Fatin for his story, and, full of admiration for the fearless man, I wished him good luck in his venture. As the hour was late, I retired to bed, but I noticed Aheyyad had a sour look on his face. At length he spoke, “Though this man be honey, do not eat him completely. Do you not remember how Ahmed said that the witch never killed a man? Yet Fatin claims that her servant tried to kill him. One or both of these men is lying,” said Aheyyad.

Laughing at my servant’s superstitions, I clapped his shoulder, “He went out of his way to save us, just as he did to save his brother, to save the town, and to save the Sufis. His brother betrayed us twice. It’s clear who is lying, Aheyyad.”

“Yes, coincidence makes even a thief into a hero,” growled my servant before going to sleep.

“God willing you will see the error in your ways,” I sighed. The evening overtook us, and while we slept I dreamt of my family and my poor mother. I dreamt that a terrible wolf had them captured and was nipping at their heels. All at once I woke up to find a great grey wolf dragging Aheyyad from the bed. Terrified, I grabbed Aheyyad’s hand as the wolf gnawed on him. My nightmare had come true!

Then a black arrow whistled through our window and struck the wolf in the shoulder. Yelping, it turned and ran off. Aheyyad’s foot was only slightly injured, but he shouted, “Did you not see the resemblance to Fatin in its face? He has been cursed as a corpse-eating *qutrub* (werewolf), I’m telling you!”

As I cleaned and bandaged Aheyyad’s foot, Ghunayya the messenger entered, her bow in hand. “It seems you can’t keep yourselves safe without me.”

Reunited with Ghunayya, we told her what had befallen us among the assassins, how Ahmed had betrayed us, and how Fatin had rescued us. Ghunayya related that she followed our pistachio shell trail, her eagle Fajera spotting the shells. Along the way she encountered several caravanserais that had suffered a rash of murders committed by a vagabond wolf and that wherever the wolf went graves were dug up and corpses disappeared. At last she tracked the *qutrub* to the very fishing village where we were brought after being rescued. “It will be simple to determine who the *qutrub* is tomorrow, for he will have a wound in his shoulder where my arrow smote him.”

When morning broke, we learned that Fatin had fled into the wilderness with three camels. Ghunayya touched the post where the camels had been tied. “Fresh blood,” she said, holding up her hand.

I sighed. “You were right, Aheyyad. I should have listened to you.”

“Of course you should have,” he said with a grin. “What will we do now?”



"Ghunayya," I said, "your family has sacrificed much for me. Your brother perished to bring my family's message to you. You have attempted to sway me from unwise action, you have followed us across the world's most difficult terrain, and you have rescued us from a wicked man. Is it too much to ask that you guide us to my home in Kufa? I shall pay any price you ask."

Looking at us over her veil, Ghunayya's eyes watered. "I only wish your help bringing my brother's killer to justice."

"My help? What can I possibly do?" I asked incredulously.

"If you've learned anything at the Academy of Gundishapur, you can tell me where a man could make this," and she produced a thin vial from her robes containing a clear fluid. "It is poison that was delivered to my brother by a dart."

"Do you know who killed him?" I asked.

"Not yet, but if you can tell me about this poison I might have a better idea. I know your family has contacts in Kufa's judiciary. Surely they can arrange for a *qadi* to try my brother's killer if I can bring him to court." Ghunayya looked at me with a firm stare; she was not a woman easily swayed.

"I promise to help you as best as I am able. I will need to set up a laboratory once we reach Kufa," I said to Ghunayya, looking to my servant.

"Was there any question?" Aheyyad smiled at Ghunayya, and she blushed. It was the first time I had seen the Bedouin woman smile, like a sunray emerging from raven tresses, and now I realized why Aheyyad was quite smitten by her.

Thus we brokered with the people of the fishing village and secured camels for Aheyyad and I, and sufficient provisions to reach the next caravanserai, and set off through the mountains. The following day we came to a small mountain stream where we stopped to rest. As I filled my water bottle, I heard Aheyyad cry out. In the bushes was a man, half-dead and parched. Rushing over, I gave the man water to drink and checked his pulse. "We must get him warm," I said to my companions. Wrapping him in all the blankets we had, we carried him inside my tent. He shook and trembled violently, and so I watched over him for the night, tending to him as best as I was able. As I lay half asleep-half awake in the twilight hours before the sun had crested the mountains, I spied a thrush dart from a branch to drink from the stream. The thrush flew back to a tree, watching keep the poor man warm. "You know," I said to the thrush in my sleep-deprived state, "a man told me a story about his friend who had been turned into a thrush, and how he rescued his friend by placing him in his mouth – he was turned into a fox you see..."

"Nonsense!" Chirped the thrush. I did a double-take of the little bird and saw that its chest was puffed with pride.

Concerned that I was losing my mind to something in the water, I called for my servant. Aheyyad rushed over, and I told him that the thrush had spoken to me. "You've been tending this man too long, sahib. Come get some rest and I will see to him." And so I went to bed, but no sooner than I had rested for five minutes, than Aheyyad called for Ghunayya and I. "It spoke! The thrush spoke!" We gathered around the little bird in utter amazement.

Clearing its throat the thrush chirped at us again. "My name is Abdul-Tawwab, and I shall have you know that my treacherous master in no way tried to save me. It was only by God's grace – helped along by my cunning – that I escaped the evil witch who cursed me thus. Once I was a man of great dignity, a soldier in the service of the mighty sheikh Ibrahim al-Nisr."

Thereupon I excitedly related the story of our misadventures to the transformed Abdul-Tawwab, but when I reached the part about Ahemd's escape and how he saved Abdul's life, the thrush shook his feathers in anger. "That lying jackal! I had been planning escape with the other soldiers, seeing that Ahmed had been charmed by the witch. He offered to help me escape, and I nearly stepped into his mouth, but then he snapped at me and nearly broke my neck in two. Ahmed intended to sell out his own men to the witch in exchange for his freedom. I escaped by feigning death and being dumped into the river. Alas, if only he was half the man his brother Hisam is!"

A branch cracked behind us, and Ghunayya spun around, her *jambiya* leveled at the throat of the man I had nursed back to health. "Peace!" He cried. "I am this very Hisam ibn-Ibrahim of whom the thrush speaks."

"Indeed it is!" Cried the thrush, and danced for joy.

Aheyyad and I exchanged looks. If this man was anything like his other two brothers, we should leave him at once, but my gentler side prevailed. "Truly this has been an extraordinary week," I said, "for you are the third son of al-Ibrahim that we have met."

"Well, the wonders will cease with me," said Hisam, "for I am my father's eldest son. If it pleases you, I shall tell you how I, the son of a sheikh, came to be a man with nothing save the rags on my back..."









## Chapter 12: Community of the Faithful

*"When a community is composed of honest, sober and virtuous people, your forming a bad opinion about anyone of its members, when nothing wicked has been seen of him, is a great injustice to him. On the contrary in a corrupt society to form a good opinion of anyone of them and trust him is to harm yourself."*  
- Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib

How should it be that I, Musa the rogue who outwitted Crafty Dalilah, should be your humble guide to the ways of the people and the faith? I happen to have a unique perspective on the melting pot that we call the caliphate, for today I am one hundred and eighty-five years old. I was just a babe when the Prophet, peace be upon him, blessed my forehead and warned my mother to keep me from games of chance. Alas, if only I had heeded those words! Light the lamp, my friend, and hear it from the horse's mouth...

**Faith & Politics**

As a thief, I am used to reading in between the lines. Yesterday I heard philosophers debating outside the House of Wisdom on whether religion should be divorced from the governance of the state. The real argument, which was dressed in dazzling rhetoric, was whether the Caliph, Commander of the Faithful, wielded God's earthly authority. If there is one debate which has dominated the politics of the caliphate, it is this question. Men and women have sacrificed their lives asking the question and seeking its answer.

**The Prophet**

Muhammad, peace be upon him, brought a message to the Bedouin tribes that challenged everything they held sacred. His message is "the submission to God." – Islam. The six fundamental beliefs shared by most Muslims are belief in one God, belief in all the prophets and messengers sent by God, belief in the Torah, the Bible and the Qur'an, belief in angels, belief in the Day of Judgment, heaven and hell, and belief in Fate. Muhammad, peace be upon him, met great resistance from his kinsmen, the Quraysh. They saw him as a threat to their traditions of ancestor worship and tribal justice, the superiority of the Arab over other races, and the lucrative profits they gained from operating the Ka'aba as the center of pilgrimage. Islam threatened all these things, advocating one God, social justice, and attacking the idol worship of the Ka'aba. Muhammad, peace be upon him, explained that he had a vision in which an angel of God spoke to him and gifted him with poetry which spoke to the hearts of all men

and women, regardless of their race. Skeptical, his kinsmen asked for a miracle. He offered as a miracle not lightning or healing, but the Noble Qur'an.

**The Noble Qur'an**

*Al-Qur'an al-Karim* is the holy book of Islam, the word of God in Arabic. The Qur'an represents the culmination of God's revelation to mankind through narrative, exhortation, and legal prescription. Each surah (chapter) save one is preceded with the words "In the Name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful." It is considered shameful and a bad omen to place the Qur'an on the ground or to stack any other books on top of it. Mistreating the Qur'an is a punishable offense. Usually, it is read on small stands and when not in use it is placed on the highest shelf in the home in sacred wrappings.

**Created vs. Uncreated Qur'an**

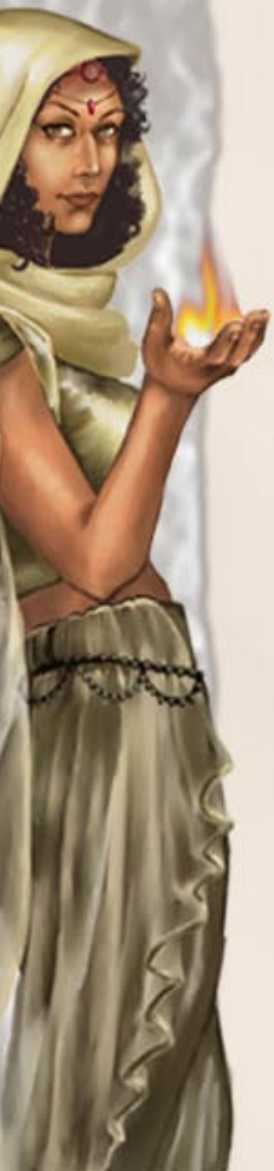
A debate exists whether the Qur'an is eternal or created. Those who say it is eternal believe that it the speech of God that has always existed alongside Him. Thus, the Qur'an's prescriptions apply no matter the historical circumstances. Those who say it is created maintain that God created these laws to meet the needs and circumstances of Muhammad's community. Thus, the Qur'an must be interpreted according to the social context.

**The Prophet's Traditions**

"Tradition" (*Sunnah*) refers to those sources that recorded the Prophet's message besides the Qur'an. These include sayings of the Prophet (the *Hadith*), stories of his Companions (*Sahhaba*), and the practice of the people of Medina, the Prophet's hometown. When the Qur'an is not sufficient to provide an answer, scholars look to the Tradition. In Shi'a Islam, the deeds and sayings of the Imam also make up the *Sunnah*.

**Shari'ah**

The code of Islamic law, the *Shari'ah* ("the straight path"), draws from the Qur'an and the Tradition; to a lesser extent it is based on scholarly consensus (*ijma*) and analogy derived from similar circumstances (*qiyas*). It covers religious rituals, day-to-day life, economics, politics, and social issues. Certain laws, such as the ban against drinking alcohol, are viewed as being divinely ordained. However, many laws are drawn from *fiqh*, which means "understanding of details", and refers to the inferences drawn by scholars. Ideally, *fiqh* is in harmony with the *Shari'ah*, but it's hard to be sure. Very few consider the *Shari'ah* as conceived by men to be infallible, as it is an attempt to interpret divine principles.



## *The Garden of Paradise*

Few of my kinsmen have seen the jungles and green pastures I have visited. It is little wonder that they, who live in the driest of deserts, believe paradise is a garden. The Qur'an describes paradise as a vast garden where rivers of water, milk, wine, and honey flow. Paradise is gushing fountains, lush greenery, abundant pomegranate trees, delicious food, and ambrosia of ever lasting life. Nobles try to emulate the Kingdom of Heaven by constructing wondrous gardens of their own; of these, the Ghuta of Damascus is truly heaven on earth.

## *The Caliphate*

The caliphate is the community of Muslims governed by a legitimate successor to Muhammad – the Caliph. Upon taking the oath of office, it was the practice of the early Caliphs to gain a personal vow of allegiance from every single Muslim. In my lifetime, the faith has grown from a desperate band of followers in the Hejaz to the most powerful empire in the known world. Not only is the practice of a personal vow of allegiance to the Caliph impractical today, but there is great opposition to the Caliph's authority. In theory, the Caliph wields absolute spiritual and temporal power, though in practice the Caliph has become increasingly disengaged from his spiritual duties. A persistent thorn in the side of the Caliph is the *Ulema*, the body of Islamic scholars. While the Caliph is allowed to do as he wills, in practice he always confers with the *Ulema* first.

## *The Ulema*

Islam is an exoteric religion – It is focused on the community of the faithful rather than limited to exceptional individuals. The rituals and guidelines are meant for everyone and salvation through individual exertion is available to all. However, the caliphate recognizes a hierarchy among the faithful and those religious leaders who are considered spiritually advanced. At the top of this hierarchy is the Caliph (or the Imam according to the Shi'a), but directly beneath him is the *Ulema*. An *Alim* is an Islamic jurist, a legal scholar responsible for writing commentary on the *Sharia*, the Islamic code of law; as a group they are called *Ulema*, and wield a great ability to influence the Caliph's policies. As professional theologians, the *Ulema* believe they represent the consensus of the community of Muslims, the *umma*. More often, these clerical scholars are out of touch with the desires and fears of all but the learned elite. They compose redactions of not only the Qur'an, but also the Traditions. In addition, the *Ulema* oversee the *mihna*, religious tribunals when a heretic is accused. These jurists are paid through an institution of religious donations called *waqf*.

## *The Waqf*

Mosques, *madrassahs* (centers of teaching), mausoleums, bathhouses, caravanserais, and hospitals are funded by the tax revenues gathered from arable land, public businesses, and donations made by the faithful. This network of permanent social contracts is known as the *waqf*. Once a *waqf* is made, it cannot be revoked. While the *waqf* can be put to pious and good uses, the actual establishment has become more elitist since the Abbasids took the throne. Traditionally, there is no concept of inheritance; when a person dies, their belonging are the ruler's property. Many of the Abbasids have set up family *waqfs* with their children as trustees, thereby securing a part of their fortune for their children. The poor gain no such luxury, and, in my estimation, suffer from this hoarding of wealth.

## *The Umma*

*Ummat al-mu'minin* (community of the believers) and *umma wahida* (one community) are words used to describe the entirety of the Islamic world, much as Christian scholars refer to "Christendom." The Constitution of Medina makes it clear that even *dhimmi* and tax-paying pagans are members of the *umma*. The most enlightened sages advocate an ideal Islamic state with the full equality of all citizens regardless of ethnicity or religion, all judged equally under the *Shari'ah*. However, such dreams are far off. Zanj and Nubian slaves labor in the salt marshes, under the whip of cruel masters. A day doesn't go by without a slave being killed or a Zanj soldier deserting the Abbasid army. Within the cities, minorities fare better, but I can only wonder how the *dhimmi* keep their dignity when forced to wear colored turbans to signify their status, and denied the rights of citizenship. Do these people not worship the same God as we do and revere the same prophets? Such persecution has become common place these days. When the Abbasids tire of persecuting Zanj and *dhimmi*, they focus their cruelty on the Bedouin, who were once their greatest allies. Bedouin are forcibly relocated in order to make sure they aren't recruited by dissident elements in the *umma*. I believe it is these practices of tyranny which have caused our beautiful faith to be split, forcing those once loyal to take a stand.

## *Orthodoxy*

The orthodox clergy adhere strictly to Tradition and literal interpretation of the Qur'an and Sunnah, refusing to admit any innovation in the *Shari'ah*. Raising the question "why" or "how" is considered blasphemous innovation; every dogma is to be believed without question. Blind faith, to the orthodox, is the only true faith, though there is a



growing movement of theologians who are willing to use reason and philosophy to argue for traditional orthodox beliefs. Orthodox theologians who rely on reason to explain the Qur'an are known as the *Mutakallimun*, and their movement is developing privately and secretly so as to avoid a backlash from the dominant orthodoxy. Al-Atharis, fuqaha, and Muhaddithin are the three main arms of the orthodoxy; they are described in **Chapter 3**.

### *The Five Pillars*

They are called the Five Pillars of Islam (*Arkan al-Islam*) by the Sunni, and the Roots and Branches of Religion by the Shi'a. They are the most sacred acts required of all Muslims.

1. **Profession of faith in God (*Shahadah*):** The Sunni must testify that there is none worthy of worship save God, and that Muhammad is God's messenger.
2. **Prayer (*Salat*):** All faithful Sunni are required to pray five times each day when the call for prayer goes out. Before prayer is the ritual ablution, a ceremonial cleansing with water, or, if not water is available, with sand. The prayer must be performed in the Arabic language and involves re-stating the *shahadah*, praising God, asking for forgiveness, and reciting at least the first chapter of the Qur'an by heart.
3. **Paying of Alms (*Zakat*):** Each Sunni is required to donate to the *waqf*. For the rich and the merchants this is 2.5% of their savings, while for farmers this is 10% of their annual produce. This money or produce is theoretically distributed among the poor, destitute, widows, orphans, and pilgrims. When one finds treasure, it is considered a good sign in God's eyes to donate 25% to the state.
4. **Fasting (*Sawm*):** Like all Muslims, Sunni are called to fast during the month of Ramadan; it involves abstinence from food, drink, smoking, intercourse, and all other forms of worldly pleasure during the daylight hours. Those exempt from fasting include children, pregnant mothers, the infirmed, laborers, and travelers.
5. **The Pilgrimage (*Hajj*):** Every able-bodied Sunni must perform a pilgrimage to Mecca during the month of Zul Hijjah at least once in their lifetime. Those who are sick or in debt are exempt. If one cannot make the *Hajj*, then it is considered acceptable to support a pilgrim with money, lodging, or spiritual counseling.

### *Branches of Religion*

The Shi'a believe in the Branches of Religion (*Furu al-Din*), practices which every Shi'a Muslim must perform. These include the Five Pillars, which the

exception that the Shi'a declaration of faith adds that Ali is the friend of God and the Prophet's rightful successor. In addition, there are unique sacred acts which distinguish the Shi'a from the Sunni:

1. **One-Fifth Tax (*Khums*):** Every Shi'ite must pay a 20% tax on their annual profit before they pay the *zakat*. Half of this money goes to support the training of Shi'a scholars and the future Imam, while half is spent like the *zakat*.
2. **Struggle (*Jihad*):** Shi'ites take the word *jihad* in its truest sense, that is a struggle against the evil within one's own soul in every aspect of life. They also believe in struggling against the evils of one's environment. While most Muslims believe in *jihad*, for the Shi'ites it is a required act.
3. **Enjoying What is Good, Preventing the Bad (*Amr e Nahy*):** Shi'ites are required to do everything possible to help themselves and others in instituting good deeds and speech, and preventing unjust behavior among Muslims. Ideally, this is done without resorting to violence.
4. **Befriending and Disassociating (*Tawalla e Tabarra*):** Being selective in one's friends is a Shi'ite ideal, though in the melting pot of the caliphate this is often limited by social realities. Shi'ites choose friends who help them to lead spiritual and virtuous lives, and avoid those who have a negative impact.

### *Taqiyya*

Many Shi'a, in order to preserve their lives in the face of persecution, adopted the practice of dissimulating (hiding) their religious beliefs; this is known as *taqiyya*. Many Sunnis consider it a sign that one fears humanity more than one fears God, while most Shi'ites believe that lying, if it will save your life, is encouraged as it allows you to go on living a good life and doing good works.

### *The Imam*

Among Sunnis, an imam is a learned person who leads congregational prayers. Politically, the ruler of Oman is known as an Imam. Among Shi'ites, The Imam is a member of the Prophet's family who is the leader of mankind in all aspects of life, a perfect example appointed by God. Some Shi'a consider the Imam to have divine status like the Prophets. The current Shi'a Imam is Ali Al-Rida, an austere man who is looked upon with disfavor by the Caliph. Many accuse the Caliph of ordering the death of Al-Rida's father while in prison. After his father's death, Al-Rida quickly secured his place as







the eighth Imam. He and Caliph Harun al-Rashid often verbally spar while visiting the tomb of saints; Al-Rida always leaves the Caliph disgraced after such meetings.

## Heretics

As I am fond of saying, “you can’t throw a rock into a crowd of Muslims without hitting someone whom all the others consider a heretic.” While most Muslims are content to live and let live, there are those who, out of good intentions, pride, or even malice, seek to restore their vision of the One True Faith at the cost of all other visions. Beyond the Shi’a, there are numerous so-called “heretics”, notably the Ismailis, the Kharijites, and the Murjites. **Chapter 3** describes the beliefs of these heretics.

## Beliefs & Customs

Customs in the caliphate vary according to the philosophical leanings of your host, which city you are visiting, which province you are passing through, which tribe you are staying with, and which empire you are raised in. While there are a plurality of traditions, every Muslim shares certain views in common: An appreciation for fate, the importance of honor, hospitality toward one’s guests, reverence for the Qur’an – these are nearly universal among people regardless of age, gender, or race.

## Fate

*Qadar* means “divine destiny” and is used to describe all that has happened and is yet to happen as written by God in the Preserved Tablet (*al-Lawhu ‘l-Mahfuz*). Fate is a mysterious force, once considered a goddess by the pagan tribes of Arabia. As the proverb goes, she is with you for

an hour and against you for ten. Fate is interpreted in many different ways, and the debate over predetermination is one of the most heated debates in the caliphate. There are three perspectives that dominate the debate: the Jabrites, Mu’tazilites, and Qadarites. **Chapter 3** describes these belief systems.

## Honor

Honor is a curious thing; a man may never know he has it until it is broken. Observing the laws of hospitality, speaking about oneself with humility, fulfilling all obligations to one’s family, doing what one promises, standing up for one’s beliefs, admitting when one has done wrong and making restitution, remaining loyal and pious in the face of suffering – these are the signs of honor. Should you find these qualities in someone, hold that one nearer than life itself, for they are your

## Taboos

- Looking royalty in the eye is forbidden for commoners
- No one may create an image of the Prophet or God upon pain of death
- One may only dine with one’s right hand
- Significant numbers (7 days and nights, 3 chances, 40 doors to open)
- The Evil Eye, blue eyes, and red hair are signs of bad luck
- The harem is forbidden to all men save the rightful husband/master
- When addressing one’s superiors use much flattery and prostration
- When saying “no” it is best to be indirect



teacher. Honor is never an individual affair; what one person does effects everyone they know, especially their family. Thus, family honor is the most closely guarded. Families may cut off an offending member themselves, often meting out punishment within the family to avoid a stain on the family's honor; sometimes this leads to "honor killings" which are common throughout the caliphate. When someone commits an unjust killing, custom demands a *diyya*, or "blood price", from the murderer's family. If no such restitution is made a blood feud may result, with each family killing one member in an escalating cycle of violence.

### *The Bond of Salt*

Hospitality is the most important virtue of the Bedouin. Many times I have relied on the kindness of stranger who would offer me the last scraps of bread in their household to make sure I did not go hungry. Like many others living under hard times, I remember avoiding my friends, lest I be unable to be a good host for them; like most Arabs, I would have rather starved than fall short in my duty as a hospitable man. Now that I am wealthy, I entertain many guests at my palazzo; they are entertained by dancers and musicians. But I will never entertain a guest who does not share salt with me. The bond of salt is a symbol of the responsibilities of the guest and the host. When a guest consumes salt at the host's table, neither may harm the other for three days; during this time the host is responsible for the guest's welfare. Men who have as many enemies as I do, know that thieves will make up all sorts of excuses to avoid sharing salt. While virtuous Muslims treat salt as a metaphor for breaking bread and sharing drink, conniving crooks take the bond of salt in the literal sense: If not salt is shared, then a crook feels he is justified in mistreating his host. I have never met a good man who refused the bond of salt, and I have never met a good host who failed to offer his guests salt.

### *Clothing*

What a person wears is a good sign of their social status, ethnic and family identity, and religion. Five fabrics are used. Cotton, being a cool fabric, is used for desert, summer, and private clothing. Camel hair and wool are woven for cold weather clothes. Some clothing is made from plant fibers called linen. Silk, only affordable for the rich, is imported from China and Persia. Dress in the caliphate is different than dress in Al-Andalus and the Maghreb.

### *In the Caliphate*

Traditional Arab dress is very similar for men and women. In the heart of the empire, men wear tunics that usually fall only to the knees, and often they

wear loose pants under their tunics. Over this the *aba*, the traditional flowing robe of the desert tribes, is worn; the *aba* is one color reflecting the man's tribal allegiance. Most are simple, though some are brocaded with gold. Men of respected positions and great learning wear a turban (called an *imamah*), a long strip of fabric wrapped around the head. How a man wraps his turban says a great deal about what group of people he belongs to. A man's turban is a source of pride and knocking it off is considered an insult. Most men wear a traditional head cloth known as a *keffiyeh*, which is secured around the head with a cord. The rich wear a *kaftan*, a cotton or silk cloak buttoned down the front with full sleeves, and reaching the ankles. The poor wear a simple long tunic called *dishdasha*, which is held in place with a sash.

Women wear similar tunics as men do, though women's tunics are more often brocaded and have intricate patterns at the neck. Like men, woman often wear loose pants. The distinct feature of woman's clothing is the veil, which is made of a large piece of cloth wrapped around the head in a convenient manner. When a woman is out in a crowd, or she wishes to appear especially modest, she pulls the veil across her face so only her eyes can be seen. In Persia, many women choose to wear the *chador*; a full length cloth lacking hand openings or closures; it is held shut with the hands or by wrapping the ends around the waist. Many Arab women wear the *jilbab*, an over garment similar to the *chador*; save that it doesn't cover the hands, feet, or face, and it more functional, having separate parts for the arms.

### *In Al-Andalus & the Maghreb*

Without the influence of the Persian or Turkish cultures, and with the strong indigenous Amazigh culture, the dress of the people in the West is distinctly different from those in the Eastern caliphate. Large outer wraps are used by both men and women, though draped in different ways; such wraps are called *kisa* in Tamazight and *izar* in Arabic. A hooded cloak distinctive to the Maghreb, called *burnus*, is often worn. Many adorn their heads with a simple winding cloth called a *kurziyya*. However, some leave the head bare; indeed some men shave their heads completely. The outfit is completed with either cork-soled sandals or pointed-toe slippers. Among the nobility in Al-Andalus, emulating the elite classes of their native Syria is popular; hence Damascene clothing is common among the Umayyad emirs. The Andalusian poor wear a simple tunic called *sayo* in their language and *shaya* in Arabic, while soldiers are identified by a scarlet cape similar to that worn in the Christian north. Among all men in Al-Andalus, *ghifara*, red or green wool caps, are as common as bare heads, though turbans are rarely used.



Like in Baghdad, women's public clothing is modest and ornate compared to her private dress, though the veil is not observed as strictly. Veils in Al-Andalus rarely cover the face; instead they are wrapped around the hair, and are held before the face when speaking to unrelated men. Caps similar to Egyptian coifs or Turkish/Hebrew *yarmulkes* (flat caps) are often worn. Indoors in private women wear a sheer linen or cotton chemise called a "body shirt." Outer clothing is solid colored wool, linen, or cotton, though the wealthy wear silk. Most women wear little jewelry; usually a pair of large-hooped earrings with gems dangling from them suffices, though a wealthy women may also wear a necklace and ankle bracelets. On her wedding day an Amazigh women is decked from head to toe in pendants, gems, elaborate necklaces, bracelets – she would wear her dowry. This native custom has become the custom of the Arabs there.

## Role of Women

As you are a foreigner, you may have heard that all women are slaves living in the harems of the king. I have had seven daughters, all far wiser than I, and I tell you nothing is farther from the truth. "Harem" refers simply to the family's part of the house where unfamiliar men are not admitted, so as to preserve the modesty and privacy of the women.

The wealthier a family is, the more its women are secluded. However, life is not as boring as the storytellers make it out to be, and not every woman of the harem is waiting to be swept off her feet by a dashing rogue (though this is how I met my late third wife, may God look kindly on her). Women regularly meet at public bath-houses, which are reserved for women at special times, at celebrations of marriage and birth, and while shopping at the *souk*. Many women are responsible for the management of their family's properties, and they are given the same economic rights as men when before a wise *qadi*. However, a woman's testimony in court carries only half the weight of a man.

Poor women have often enjoyed more equal rights than women in the cities. However, even they must be appointed a male guardian from their family according to the *Shari'ah*. This guardian is responsible for the woman's safety and for maintaining family honor should she seek improper amorous relations.

Among other peoples women hold a more dignified position. When in Anatolia I witnessed unveiled Turkish women whose husbands I mistook for their servants. While I lived with the Muslims of West African, I observed women whose mastery of the Qur'an rivaled the men; these women show no bashfulness before men and do not veil themselves, and they have a large circle of friends, men and women, outside their own family. The Qur'an says: "Whoso doeth right, whether male or female, and is a believer, all such will enter the Garden."

## Marriage

Marriage is a civil contract between a groom and a woman's guardian. If a woman's father is her guardian, he is within his rights to give his daughter in marriage without her consent if she has not yet reached puberty. If she has reached puberty, her consent is required. The marriage contract provided for a dowry (*mahr*), which was given by the groom to the bride's family. Women are expected to be obedient to her husband, but in return have a right to suitable clothes, lodging, gifts, and sexual intercourse. While a man can divorce his wife by making a statement with a witness, a wife can only divorce her husband for a good reason (impotence, madness, denial of her rights) with the order of a *qadi*, or else by mutual consent.

The *Shari'ah* allows for a man to have four wives, provided he can treat them all with justice and does not neglect his conjugal duty to any of them. In addition, a man is entitled to any number of slave concubines. However, only the nobility and the wealthy avail themselves of this law. Often a marriage contract states that the husband may take no additional wives or concubines. Men are allowed to marry women of lower station, but noble women are almost never permitted to marry someone undeserving of her high status. On the other hand, there are a few non-Muslim tribes that are a matriarchy, and their queens have *seraglios*, where they keep their male courtesans. I have even witnessed such practices within Arabia, though they are now very rare.

My second wife was a Shi'ite; and according to Shi'a marital custom there are stricter conditions on divorce, though a temporary marriage is allowed for a specific period. She sought many times to divorce me for my crooked ways. Alas! Each time the *qadi* ruled in my favor because I helped birth his favored foal. May God uplift all wise women who suffer fools like me!

## Children & Inheritance

Children are raised in the harem until they are five years of age, at which time boys go to live with the men in the *selamluk* and education begins for boys. Fortunate girls will also receive an education, though this is not yet a common practice. A child has no rights until he or she reaches the age of majority, which is 15 years of age. Among the poor, a child is their parents' insurance, and will help run the family trade and tend to the parents when they become ill. Among the rich, a child is an heir to their fortunes.

Inheritance law limits a man to bequeathing no more than one-third of his property; the remainder is used for state programs like bathhouses, hospitals, and other institutions associated with the *waqf*. However, some wealthy families set up a trust whereby their children are identified as a *waqf*, thereby justifying them keeping their entire inheritance within the family. Of the portion that a man can bequeath, his wife may receive at most



one-third. His daughters may receive only half the share of a son. In Sunni law, if a man has only daughters, they receive a portion and the rest goes to his male relatives. In Shi'a law, the daughters inherit everything.

#### *Aqiqah*

A common sacrifice known as the *aqiqah* is often performed on the seventh day after a child's birth. On this day, the child is named, his or her hair is cut, and a sheep or goat is sacrificed. The flesh of the animal is distributed to the poor, and the weight of the hair in silver or gold is distributed in alms. This ancient tradition goes back to Jewish ceremonial practice.

#### *Slavery*

Slavery is recognized under the *Shari'ah*. According to the law, a free-born Muslim may never be enslaved; only non-Muslims captured in war or the children of slave parents are allowed to be slaves. Additionally, any slave that converts to Islam must be freed by law. The caliphate also performs slave raids, especially amongst the Turks, to impress young boys into military service as mamluks. Slaves do not possess the legal rights of free men, though the law demands they be treated with justice and kindness. Freeing a slave is considered a virtuous act. Some slaves form a strong relationship with their masters, and even marry into their master's family or conduct their master's business; eventually such slaves win their freedom. This is the exception, however.

Most slaves are cruelly treated, with the justification that they are foreign unbelievers from conquered lands. Concubines are drawn largely from Frankish stock, mamluks from the Turks, and agricultural laborers from Africa. Black slaves are captured during raids on Sennaar, Kordofan, Darfur, and Nubia. Whites usually become slaves through betrayal on the part of their family or friends; often white slaves are born indentured servants by birth. Treatment of slaves during capture and transport is terrible, though those that survive are quickly integrated into their new household. Slave women are often used as concubines by male slave owners; female slave owners have no equivalent right with their male slaves. Though Islam has forbidden the practice of hiring out female slaves as prostitutes, it is occasionally practiced by rogues.

The greatest slave markets are in Morocco and Al-Andalus. Eunuchs fetch a higher price than other men, young slaves are worth more than old, and women are worth more than men. A slave with a unique set of skills is worth more than all of these put together.

#### *Saint Veneration*

The orthodoxy would like to forget about the plethora of rites, superstitions, and practices revolving around saints that are common in popular Islam. Saints' tombs are often visited to leave ex-votos, and to seek blessing and the intercession of the holy persons buried there. In rare cases, living saints (called *murshid* or *wali* in Arabian Islam and *pir* in Indian Islam) attract cultic followers. It is believed that by interacting with saints, whether living or dead, the sacred emanation (*baraka*) that the saint possessed will pass on to those who worship or interact with the saint. Many of these shrines are of great antiquity, with a few pre-dating Islam, and it is not even known who is buried there. Each saint has a festival, known as an *Urs*, which occurs on his or her birthday; every year a great festival occurs at the saint's tomb on their *Urs*. The term means "wedding", signifying the union of the saint's spirit with God. Saint veneration is only one part of a much larger cultic trend that exists alongside the orthodoxy (much to the orthodoxy's chagrin).

#### *The Magical Qur'an*

The breath of the divine made manifest through the Prophet, the Qur'an is believed to have protective and curative powers. Often, a verse from the Qur'an will be written in ink or sandalwood paste on a plate or the inside of a basin. The container will then be filled with water, which dissolves the writing. The water is poured into a glass and given to a patient to drink. Various surahs are recited to keep supernatural evil at bay and to cure illness. A common practice is known as *istikharah*, meaning "asking favors of God." This practice, when applied to the Qur'an, is known as "cutting the Qur'an." An enquirer with a pressing question seeks out a mullah to perform a ritual prayer. After offering a salutation to Muhammad and his family, the mullah opens the Qur'an to a random page, and reads the sentence where his finger falls, offering an answer based on the surah that has been revealed. Above all else, the Qur'an is never to be left open, for it is believed that Iblis will come along and read it and use its divine power for himself.

#### *Magic & Superstition*

There are many superstitions relating to protective talismans and most people, from porters to theologians, carry some sort of charm. A very common amulet in Islam is the *ta'wiz*, a piece of metal inscribed with a verse from the Qur'an which is tied to one's neck, arm, breast, or waist with a black cord; the meaning of *ta'wiz* is "to flee for refuge". It is believed to ward off evil spirits and act as a healing charm against illness and disease.







A similar talisman is the magic square or *al buduh*, inherited from India. These squares have a selection of numbers placed within them which generally add up to a value considered to be of special importance. The *buduh* is believed to invoke good and bad fortune, being used against sickness, to render one's self invisible, to open locks, and to insure the safe arrival of letters and packages. Other types of magic squares are used as love charms, to create enmity, to cause men to fall silent, to prevent dreaming, to exorcise djinni, increase milk production in a female, or to make a husband obey his wife.

The *Khamsa*, commonly known as "Fatima's Hand", is a common amulet to guard against the evil eye, though it is also used to invoke curses especially in the Maghreb. In Egypt, I was with a guide when another man held up a *Khamsa* at me; my guide warned me that the man "threw fives at us", meaning he tried to curse me. Similar to the *Khamsa* is the *nazar* or "evil eye stone" which consists of concentric circles of varying shades of blue and white.

Human hair and nail clippings are commonly believed to possess a person's essence, and may be used by an enemy to injure them with a spell. It is common that, after receiving a haircut, a man will look around and, if there is no enemy about, he will mix his cutting with those of other men. However, if he fears an enemy will collect the cuttings, he will take them secretly and bury them. Many believe that the soul occupies every

part of the body, and anyone in possession of a portion of a man's body can influence that man's soul. I have heard that even during the life of Muhammad there were men who sought to acquire his hair for the *baraka* it was believed to possess. Even today, a hair allegedly from the Prophet's head may be worn as a treasured amulet.

## Djinni

The Qur'an has numerous passages pertaining to the djinni, and the Arab tribes have long believed in these spirits. May I caution you to never, ever, cut a deal with a djinn and especially not to engage in a game of chance with one. My gambling with djinni has cost me greatly and I was cursed to see my daughters die before me. May they rest well in God! It is very rare for a person to witness one of these beings. More often, they act through powers of possession. In order to cast out a djinn from a possessed victim, various magic circles and Qur'anic verses are used; the healers breathe on flowers which are thrown at the victim. In rare cases, the victim is severely beaten to drive the djinn away. The healers attempt to get the djinn to reveal its name, which gives them power over the djinn so that they may expel it. Salt, copper or iron, and the last Surah of the Qur'an are useful to drive djinni away. According to the Qur'an, djinni are very similar to men and can believe or disbelieve God's revelations, but I have never met a djinn I've trusted farther than I could cast a stone.

## The Evil Eye

Most feared is the *Isabatul Ain*, the "Evil Eye", a penetrating glance from a djinn or magical person which is capable of inflicting terrible luck, disease, captivity, or even death. Often, people with blue or light-colored eyes are believed to possess the ability to inflict the evil eye involuntarily through their gaze; having met many blue-eyed people I can assure you this is just superstition. Arrogant boasting and excessive envy are both said to attract the Evil Eye unconsciously.

## Sihr

Any magic which deceives or harms the faithful is considered *sihr*. There are certain powers which are indisputably *sihr*; such powers often include Dominate, Drain Vitality, Harm, Illusion, Imbue Unlife, Pain, Sleep, and any other powers which are clearly the domain of evil or pagan powers (e.g. Fertility). Other powers like Curse, Heart Shaping, Light Shaping, Mind Shaping, and Suggestion may be overlooked provided they are not used on faithful Muslims and the adept is clearly a pious individual.



## Calendar & Holy Days

Throughout the Caliphate the lunar calendar is used. It contains 534 days beginning from the day of the *Hijrah*, the emigration of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina, which occurred on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July 622 of the Gregorian calendar. This was year 1 of the Hijrah. Islamic dates are written as “184 AH” (*anno hegirae* or “in the year of the Hijrah”) in Latin, or simply “184 of the Hijrah” in Arabic, which corresponds to 800 AD – roughly the present date. When references are made to a century, this refers to centuries of the Christian era.

## Days of the Week

The Islamic week derived from Jewish traditions. Weekdays begin at sunset. On “gathering day”, Muslims gather for midday worship at a Mosque.

1. *Yaum as-Sabt* (Sabbath day)
2. *Yaum al-Ahad* (First day)
3. *Yaum al-Ithnayn* (Second day)
4. *Yaum ath-Thalatha* (Third day)
5. *Yaum al-Arba’a* (Fourth day)
6. *Yaum al-Khamis* (Fifth day)
7. *Yaum al-Jum’a* (Gathering day)

## Months of the Year

According to the lunar calendar of Islam, months begin when the first crescent of the new moon is sighted. Since the lunar calendar is 11 or 12 days shorter than the solar year, months begin at different times during different seasons. The months of Rajab, Dhu al-Qi’dah, Dhu al-Hijjah, and Muharram are all sanctified, and during these months fighting is looked down upon and one is expected to be especially diligent in their prayers.

1. *Muharram ul Haram*
2. *Safar*
3. *Rabi-ul-Awwal*
4. *Rabi-ul-Akhir*
5. *Jumaada-ul-Awwal*
6. *Jumaada-ul-Akhir*
7. *Rajab*
8. *Sha’aban*
9. *Ramadan*: During this holy month all Muslims fast during the day, and focus on adhering very closely to their faith. One of the last days of Ramadan is called the Night of Destiny, and some spend the entire night in prayer.
10. *Shawwal*
11. *Dhu al-Qi’dah*
12. *Dhu al-Hijjah*: During this month the Hajj pilgrimage takes place.

## Chaining of the Devils

According to tradition, even the most wicked djinni find their powers diminished during Ramadan. Rebellious djinni aligned with Iblis suffer a -2 on all power checks during this month; this penalty increases to -4 when targeting a Muslim who faithfully observes the fast.

## Important Dates

1 Muharram. Islamic New Year.

10 Muharram. *Ashurah*, a day of mourning for Shi’a Muslims, commemorates the martyrdom of Husayn ibn Ali at the Battle of Karbala. It also commemorates the creation of the Ka’aba.

27 Rajab. *Laylat al-Mi’raj* celebrates the Night Journey of the Prophet, when it is believed he went from Mecca to the Temple Mount and was then carried bodily into Heaven to meet with the Prophets and God before returning to earth. Children are told this story in the mosques, and families come together.

15 Sha’aban. *Laylat al-Barat*, the night of repentance, is a time when the living visit the graves of their loved ones. Mosques burn candles for the dead throughout the night. Some stay awake the whole night in prayer.

19-22 Ramadan. Shi’a mourn the death of Imam Ali.

Last 10 days of Ramadan. *Laylat al-Qadr*, the Day of Power, commemorates the revelation of the Qur’an to the Prophet Muhammad. Because no one is certain which day it occurred on exactly, it is observed on several nights. During these days, those who can afford to pray and study the Qur’an night and day.

1 Shawwal. *Eid al-Fitr* is a celebration of breaking the Ramadan fast. It is also a time of reconciliation. The whole community comes together and makes merriment and people greet each other by saying “*eid mubarak*” or “happy Eid!”

8-10 Dhu al-Hijjah. The greater Hajj takes place on these three days.

10 Dhu al-Hijjah. *Eid al-Adha*, the feast of sacrifice, commemorates the Prophet Ibrahim’s willingness to sacrifice his son Isma’il for God. As Ibrahim prepared to sacrifice his son, God stopped him and



gave him a sheep to sacrifice instead. It is customary to sacrifice a sheep and distribute the meat among friends and the hungry.

## The Bedouin

The history of “the inhabitants of the desert” has not been written. They live exposed to the elements, traveling hundreds of miles to seek out lush oases or a flowing river. Several Caliphs have tried unsuccessfully to make the Bedouin a sedentary farming people by forcing populations to move into urban areas. Such unsound policies mean that urbanized Bedouin may be found in most cities. However, Bedouin prefer to live free underneath the desert sky and consider city-dwellers to be soft and shackled by the contrivances of “civilization.” In turn, many urban Arabs consider Bedouin smelly horse thieves who are always planning their next raid beneath a mask of congeniality. However, this view is far from universal. Educated men value the Bedouin for preserving the authentic traditions of the Prophet, and quintessentially Arab skills like animal husbandry and poetry.

### *Sending a Child to the Bedouin*

It was common practice before the coming of Islam to send a young boy to live with the Bedouin for two years that he might learn the arts of poetry, fighting, riding, and develop into a virtuous man. The Prophet himself was sent to the Bedouin in this way. However, nowadays this tradition is rarely practiced. The mistrust the Bedouin have of the caliphate has increased, and only those nobles and erudite men of virtue send their children to allied tribes.

## The Horse

*A drinker of wind, a dancer of fire, gift from the Almighty* – such epithets are bestowed upon the horses of the Bedouin which they ride into battle during a raid. Few city-dwellers can boast the same connection and pride Bedouin have in their horses, whose poetry places the horse on a great pedestal. Among the greatest of their stories is that of the *buraq*, a human headed Pegasus. According to this legend, man and horse were once united as the same creature, and after their separation, have become reunited by the Bedouin, who first adopted the practice of riding. Arabian pure bloods receive the best treatment from their masters, sleeping in their tents and eating their food. Indeed, I have been captured by raiders and observed their mares being fed better food than I was! Owning a horse and caring for it is a sacrament for the Bedouin. Horse breeders record their findings in royal stud books; such books are cherished by the Bedouin sheikhs who will go to great length to recover a stolen stud book.

### *Sun Horse (New Feat)*

**Prerequisite:** Charisma +2, Must be taken by the horse

A rare mare, often born during a solar eclipse, will become a *sun horse*. Like sunlight, the horse is considered an expression of divine grace; often Arab poetry compares horses to the sun. While in ancient times horses were sacrificed to glorify the sun, other horses of great beauty were harnessed to white chariots – these blessed mares were crowned and consecrated, and learned sacred solar dance patterns. Such a fortunate mare became known as a *sun horse* and was cared for like a queen. A *sun horse* gains 4 ranks in Perform (dance), and is dazzling when standing unarmored in the noon day sun; if an enemy doesn’t avert their eyes from the sun horse as per a gaze attack, the enemy must make a Fortitude save (Difficulty 12) or be dazed for one round.

### *The Bloody Shouldered Mare*

Many years ago there was a Bedouin warrior who owned a very special Arabian mare – a mare he rode into battle and to whom he entrusted his life. Either would have given their life for the other. In fact, their bond of trust was so strong that the mare often read her master’s thoughts, doing exactly what he needed at exactly the right time, allowing them to win many battles and to be the envy of all the Bedouin tribes. Years passed and one day in a fierce battle the master was severely wounded, falling across the neck and shoulder of his beloved mare. Although her master was unconscious, and she was miles from home, the mare carefully balanced him across her shoulder and headed toward home. She went for days without food or water to return her master to his family. When the courageous mare finally arrived at the encampment, she was exhausted, and her master was dead. As the family removed the master’s body, they saw that the mare’s shoulder was heavily stained with blood, leaving a distinct red mark on her shoulder. Although they had lost their leader, the Bedouin family was eternally grateful to the mare for delivering his body from battle. They knew that the long journey have been difficult for the courageous mare, and they were very concerned for her because she was heavy with foal. Finally, the time of her foaling arrived. When the long-awaited foal was born, he was vigorously healthy, and he also bore the identical “bloody shoulder” that his mother had from her master’s blood. It was then that the tribe realized God had rewarded this mare with a bloody shoulder, so that all would remember her and her master’s courage. Since that time, hundreds of years have passed, but once in a great while there is a mare of exceptional courage and beauty whose foal is graced with the bloody shoulder.



# Chapter 12: Community of the Faithful

## The Camel

The real work-horse of the Bedouin is not a horse at all! Camels are raised as beasts of burden, and are sources of milk, wool, and (in lean times) meat. The Bedouin's love for the dromedary (one-humped) camel has nothing to do with their disposition, which is mean and stubborn. Rather, Bedouin love camels because of their practicality. Camels are entirely suited to desert life, enduring hardships that would quickly kill a horse, can go without water for days, if not weeks, if given enough fodder, and they endure extremes of heat and cold, even sandstorms. Camel urine is used to clean hair and purify wounds, and camel feces are used to block the sun when forced to travel during the day. A fully-loaded camel can travel up to 25 miles in a single day, does not need to be shod, and can ford shallow rivers with ease. It stands about 7 feet tall at the shoulder. While some are specially bred for intelligence and combat, others are trained for racing. The Bactrian (two-humped) camel is suited to cooler mountainous areas.

## Poetry

The Bedouin culture has a rich oral tradition, and it is not uncommon for a Bedouin to memorize and recite books upon books worth of poetry and tribal lore. Poets, storytellers, and musicians are revered among the Bedouin tribes as lore-keepers; the best are given the title *rawun*. Themes explored in Bedouin poetry include the grace of horses, the beauty of women, the majesty of the desert, the praise of hospitality and community, the lamentation of tragedy, and the exaltation of victory. Bedouin poets are often accompanied by musicians who play the *shabbaba*, a metal flute, and the *rababa*, a one-stringed violin which they play with great versatility. To hear Bedouin women sing is to listen to the ringdove soothe the fearsome karkadann; they sit in rows facing one another and engage in a sung dialogue that commemorates special events in tribal history.

## Raids

Raiding (*ghazwa*) is a cherished tradition, a way for warriors to prove their mettle, and a profitable economic venture. Traveling over a hundred miles is quite common. Along the way, they kidnap anyone who might be able to warn their target of the impending attack. Death is never the goal of a raid. When they raid each other, killing another is rare, and should it occur, a *diyya* is always paid and the killer may be handed over for justice. Women are not bothered, unless they've taken up arms; thus, during a raid a woman will gather as many goods into her tent as she can. Likewise, harming horses is strictly forbidden. Men who have raided one another

## The Mind Palace

Bedouin storytellers and scholars pioneered the concept of a "mind palace"—a way of organizing vast amounts of information within the memory of the human mind. In this mentally constructed palace, you would imagine a familiar place and behind each door you would visual a bit of information. In order to retrieve the information, you had only to find the door and open it with a key, which could be anything from a bit of poetry to a short walk.

in the past will still honor each other as guests and trade stories as if they were friends of many years. Bedouin are poor and raid only to acquire goods, though sometimes prisoners are taken for slavery or ransom. However, the raids on cities are more violent, largely because the city-dwellers lack the perspective of the Bedouin. To the city-dwellers, a raid is an attempt to steal everything they've worked hard to achieve, and they have no recourse to get back what nomads steal from them. Thus, city-dwellers defend their cities with their lives if necessary. Learning of the death of their fellows, the Bedouin demand a *diyya*, but the cities refuse, and thus a cycle of violence is perpetrated.

## Blood Feuds

Before the coming of the Prophet, the Bedouin lived in a constant state of tribal skirmishing. When a man was murdered, his family would take it upon themselves to kill his murderer; the conflict would rapidly escalate until hostilities between both sides became so severe that a rival would be attacked on sight, and trade could only occur at the sanctified grounds of the Ka'aba. The Prophet mediated many disputes, and established a formal code of the *diyya* which is often given in restitution for a murder.

## Gender Roles

Bedouin women are subordinate to their men in many ways. Inheritance passes to a son. A man is expected to defend his tribe's honor, but more often this means insuring the women of his tribe do not have affairs with other tribesmen. A common proverb I've heard among Bedouin is "sons are the wealth of the house." Before Islam some tribes left their baby girls in the desert to die, such was the favor given to their sons. This terrible practice no longer continues today, but there are still many echoes of male favoritism. At the same time, women help out in traditional male chores and even in battle. Widows and family matriarchs can accrue great power in Bedouin tribes, while younger women usually must advance themselves through a fortuitous marriage.







## Inside a Bedouin's Tent

A Bedouin's tent is divided into two sections by a woven curtain called *ma'nad*. One section is reserved for men and for the reception of male guests – this is the *mag'ad*, or “sitting place.” The other, in which the women cook and receive female guests is called the *maharama*, or “place of women.” Once welcomed within, guests are honored, and served copious amounts of cardamom-spiced coffee. Naturally, the Bedouin host takes the first sip to assuage the guest's fears. A special meal is usually prepared, including *mensaf*, rice covered with lamb meat cooked in yogurt and topped with pine nuts. Visitors are often the cause for festivity, including music, poetry, and on special occasions even dance. While it is easy to gain the hospitality of Bedouin, there are certain things a traveler must never do. Approaching the tent from the back or under the cover of night are considered signs of hostility. At the same time, walking directly up to a tent is considered an insult; instead a traveler should wait until the man or woman of the tent comes out to extend a formal invitation. It is traditional to offer the Bedouin a gift upon departing.

## Burying the Dead

My truest friend in this world was given a Bedouin burial. Unlike the ostentatious displays of urban mausoleums, Bedouin mark their graves with exceptional simplicity, placing one ordinary stone at the head of the grave and one at its foot. Moreover, it is traditional to leave the clothes of the deceased atop the grave, to be adopted by any needy traveler who may pass by.

## Crime and the Law

I have been moments away from the executioner's sword, a flea-ridden beggar stealing from foreigners, ever wary of the hand of the law. And I have seen the other side, the great courts of the *qadis* and the libraries where the *Shari'ah* is recorded in breathtaking detail. Of all the traditions of Islam, the *Shari'ah* is the “centerpiece and backbone” of the faith. Scholars realized that the community could only be based on the directives of the Qur'an supplemented by the sayings of the Prophet and his Companions; they system they evolved was comprehensive and elastic which became the *Shari'ah* (“a path to water”).

### The Three Crimes

Islamic law has three categories of crime: *huddud*, *qisas*, and *ta'zir*.

**Huddud:** The most serious of offenses must be punished strictly and are not subject to any discretion. God demands punishment. These offenses include theft, fornication, intoxication, apostasy, and unproven allegations of a *huddud* crime. Other crimes that may be *huddud* include rebellion and mishandling public funds. Stoning, whipping, amputation, execution

**Qisas:** Those crimes which demand punishment from society and are the right of human beings are called *qisas*. These offenses include murder, rape, and bodily harm. Such crimes demand restitution or revenge. In some cases, a ruler is within his rights to punish a person for performing a discouraged act.

**Ta'zir:** Minor discretionary offenses vary according to the city and ruler. Punishments for *taz'ir* crimes include counseling, fines, censure, speaking to someone's parents, seizure of property, house arrest, imprisonment, and whipping.

### Justice

During a hearing before a *qadi*, the burden of proof is on the claimant who must produce evidence and witnesses to prove his or her case. However, if the claimant cannot produce witnesses, he can ask the defendant to take an oath. Thus, the *qadi* might ask “your evidence or his oath.” If the defendant swears he is innocent the case was dismissed, but if he refuses to take the oath the claimant wins the case. The defendant has the right to remain silent,

### Divine Law vs. Man-Made Law

Men must try to understand the *Shari'ah* which God created, though in doing so they are prone to making mistakes. While God's law is complete, non-partisan, permanent, and universal, man-made law is unfinished, partisan, changes according to the time and circumstance, and may vary according to the nation or city in which it is adopted. The goal of the upright jurist is to make decisions as close as humanly possible to God's law.



but if he remains silent when asked to make an oath, he is assumed to be guilty. Usually the defendant and claimant represent themselves, though the wealthy sometimes hire jurists. Complex cases often involve multiple *qadis*; if they cannot find an answer in the Qur'an or the Tradition, they will search for a consensus among the Muslim legal scholars to help them resolve the case. If no consensus is available, the *qadi* may form his own answer based on analogy to a precedent case. If there is no precedent, the *qadi* may make a decision based upon public interest or the customs of the area. When making a decision, the *qadi* will attempt to place an action on a spectrum ranging from forbidden to obligatory.

**Forbidden Acts (*Muharam*):** Any act that Islam prohibits has a strict punishment for the transgressors, and is known as *haram*. Performing such a crime has deep social risks, as well as psychological, bodily, and spiritual costs. Islam forbids these actions: Pre-meditated murder, usury, harming or killing civilians, disseminating harmful ideas, enslaving a Muslim, malicious theft, drinking wine, and threatening the Caliph.

**Discouraged Acts (*Makruh*):** All Muslims are enjoined to avoid these actions for the interests of self or society. However, there is no punishment for performing them. Examples include wasting resources, sleeping till after sunrise, not bathing after intercourse, making large advertisements to sell cheap products, bribery, gambling, fortune-telling, and breaking curfew.

**Permitted Acts (*Mubah*):** These are actions which a person who has reached puberty has full freedom to choose. Examples of permissible acts include bathing, eating, choosing one's profession, researching science or philosophy, governing a territory, having sex with a spouse, and trading with others.

### *Right of Retaliation*

Crimes against a person like murder, rape, and bodily harm grant the "right of retaliation" to the victim or his male next of kin. Thus, the brother of a murdered man is allowed to execute the murderer after his trial. However, only after a proper trial is conducted can retaliation be made legally. The rule of exactitude requires that the retaliator may only give up to the same amount of damage that he received, thereby discouraging excessive retaliation. Usually, blood money (*diyya*) is accepted by the injured person or his family.

**Encouraged Acts (*Mustahab*):** These are actions that a Muslim is urged to do, whereby he is viewed as a performer of the good and so deserves divine reward and God's pleasure. No punishment is set for anyone who does not perform encouraged actions. Examples are greeting others courteously, paying visits to friends and neighbors, giving alms, dressing well, performing night prayers, fasting during the holy months of Rajab and Sha'ban, and reciting the Qur'an.

**Obligatory Acts (*Wajib*):** An act that Islam makes obligatory cannot, under any circumstances, be ignored. Failing to perform an obligatory act may result in punishment, though this is rare. Praying five times a day, fasting, the poor tax, pilgrimage, struggling against evil in yourself and outside yourself, ruling justly, being kind to parents, fighting oppression and tyranny, having love and affection for the Prophet and his family, being truthful, and obeying the orders of a just state are all obligatory acts.

### *Punishment*

When a prisoner's time for punishment has come, he or she is displayed in public. By punishing the criminal in public, the authorities hope to leave a lasting impression on the hearts and minds of society so that in the future everyone will think twice about committing the crime. An extreme response minimizes the number of punishments that must be made. Many minor crimes, like bribery or gambling, leave the punishment up to the *qadi*. However, severe offenses require a standard punishment be meted out.

### *Punishing Sorcerers*

The punishment for *sihr* is stoning if the crowd feels they can overcome the sorcerer and they are confident no *qadi* will come to the sorcerer's aid. Otherwise, if the sorcerer is of low standing, a *qadi* is likely to destroy all the tainted magical charms of the sorcerer, force him to wear a collar or other garment identifying him as a sorcerer, and forbid him from practicing magic. His tongue, which has offended the Almighty, may be cut off. A second offense is always punishable by death, though some judges skip right to the chase and will order a sorcerer beheaded or even tortured first. Sorcerers who have a high status in society are approached more carefully, if they are touchable by the law at all. Often, charges of sorcery are hard to prove. A *mihna* (tribunal) is likely to be called, hoping to catch the sorcerer in a heretical statement, thereby justifying the state in taking a more aggressive stance.



**Adultery:** Death by stoning.

**Apostasy:** Death or exile.

**Enslaving a Muslim:** Enslavement.

**Highway Robbery:** Execution by crucifixion, exile, imprisonment, or right hand and left foot cut off.

**Intoxication:** 40 lashes.

**Murder, Accidental:** 100 camels.

**Murder, Premeditated:** Death, or, if the next of kin agrees, 100 camels.

**Slander:** 80 lashes.

**Theft:** Right hand cut off. On a second offense, the left foot is cut off, and on subsequent offenses the criminal is imprisoned.

**Treason:** Enslavement, exile, or death.

## Honor Among Thieves

A man is not born a thief, and, if he is lucky, he does not die one either. Before I joined Shanafra's gang, I was Musa, son of a porter, grandson of a porter. With a sparkling smile I disarmed the hardest of women, and on my back bore bags which would have crushed a donkey. Mostly, the docks of Basra were my haunting ground. I remember hearing stories of thieves burrowing under mud-dried bricks to force entry into a house, stories of thieves using fishing poles to pull things out of windows, stories of thieves posing as an apparition of Jesus, stories of thieves who paraded a crying monkey in order to collect alms for the "bewitched prince." My beginnings into thievery were not so glamorous; I was sold to Shanafra. I can only assume the price was a pittance, for my uncle was a man utterly lacking in business sense. However, when Shanafra realized I was an honest boy, he cried out, "Musa, you'd better prove to me that you're a good thief or I'm going to sell you to slavers!"

My first job was stealing a turtle. When Shanafra saw me carrying a turtle, he shouted at the top of his lungs, calling me an idiot. "A turtle cannot steal, it cannot earn bread!"

I pleaded with him to give me a chance, and eventually he consented. Affixing a candle to the turtle's shell I gathered three of Shanafra's best thieves and led them to a house I had spied in my youth, with the most beautiful of doors trimmed in gold. Lighting the candle, I sent the turtle into the house. We listened breathlessly. No one said "What in the world is a turtle with a candle on its back doing in my house?" I gave them the sign to burglarize the house. Necklaces of amber, golden oil lamps, emerald encrusted carpets – the riches we stole changed everything. Life as a thief was about to become a lot more complicated.

Ever since that day, I became known as Musa the Tortoise, and thieves as far as al-Fustat emulated that one trick which launched my career. After several years of notoriety as a thief, I was lounging beneath an apple tree when six guards sprang from the bushes and seized me, beating me upon the shoulders and head. I was taken

before a *qadi* blind-folded, and I could hear my friend Ali's voice in the courtroom. Both of us clasped each other's hands in terror as we were sentenced to exile from Basra. We were mounted on camels all the while blind-folded and led from town. After hours of riding the guard leading us stopped, and then he told us to wait where we were or he would order the archers to shoot us. I felt Ali's trembling hand on my shoulder, "Oh, Musa, as the hour of death is upon us, I must confess disloyalty on my part."

"What do you mean, Ali? You are my truest friend in the world."

"The house that you robbed with the tortoise, remember how I pointed it out to you? That was my former master's house. When I heard you intended to prove yourself to Shanafra, I knew you'd go to that house, so I made sure to that no one was there that night you burglarized it. My master grew suspicious and I was forced to flee. I have been living in hiding ever since."

I pulled off my blind-fold. We were in the middle of the desert. Ali's face was ashen as he spoke these words, but mine must have been the shade of ghost. "Did you tell them about me, Ali?"

Still blind-folded, Ali bit his lip, "I- I don't think so. They gave me a vial of something- I can't remember what I said. I'm sorry Musa. This is my doing."

Fate is not without a sense of irony. As soon as Ali had finished his confession, I heard a camel approach and hastily put my blind-fold back on. A woman's voice was at my side. "I am the wife of the Police Chief, and he will be here any minute. If you wish to stay alive you must tell me where you the treasure you stole is."

"You mean *you* brought us here?" I asked.

"Yes, I did," said the Police Chief's wife.

If we could have seen each other, Ali and I would have exchanged looks. A stunned silence was soon followed by Ali's laughter. I addressed the woman I could not see. "Alas, we have spent much of it. What is left we buried beneath the very house we stole the treasure from."

The woman rode up next to me, "How very clever. If I discover you're lying, you both will be given 80 lashes and your hands cut off."

At last, when we were certain no one was there, Ali and I removed our blind-folds. Ali sobbed, "Oh, Musa, what will you do when Shanafra learns that you did not give him all the treasure?"

"Are you really that stupid, Ali?" I laughed. "There's no treasure there! What I have not put into savings, Shanafra has squandered on wine. Many thieves have tried to burrow into that house before and every time they've been caught. With your master alerted by your escape, surely they've take precautions to guard those tunnels more closely. Can you imagine the look on the Police Chief's face when he arrests his own wife?" We both laughed. "Besides, you and I are both two camels richer." I patted the camel I had been walked out on.



# Chapter 12: Community of the Faithful

All at once the camels turned to white fire and Ali and I rolled in the sand in panic. From the fire emerged two Ifreeti, taller than any man I've seen, clad all in black trimmed in gold. "Musa the Tortoise, you truly are as slow as your namesake!" bellowed one of the Ifreet, embers burning in his mouth. His younger ally drew a sword wreathed in fire, looming over us. Terror possessed me and I blathered like an idiot. "Surely your death has been a long time coming." With that, the sword-brandishing Ifreet cut down Ali, who fell to the ground near death. Crying out, I cast myself in front of Ali. "Oh terrible Ifreeti, do no harm to Ali! He is innocent. If there is any blame in this world, it is mine!"

The older Ifreet grinned, folding his hands over his chest. "That was no policeman's wife; you spoke to none other than Crafty Dalilah! She ordered us to keep an eye on you, and so we disguised ourselves as camels. Now she will learn the lies you have fed her and she will surely strike off your head herself!"

Crafty Dalilah is a legend among thieves. She was a mistress in all manner of confidence scams and double dealing; Iblis himself might have learned deceit of her. As I would so painfully learn, she also dealt with Ifreeti. Alas, she was my first wife, and she is now with God.

Pleading with the Ifreet, I cast myself on the ground. "There is no grace save in God, the all merciful! Will you spare our lives and keep us safe from Dalilah if I can best you in a contest?"

"Best *me*?" The older Ifreet laughed, slapping his thighs.

His younger companion hovered near me. "I should strike this human dog for his insolence! Let me face him in combat, and I will put the fear of the Ifreeti into him and send them both to their graves."

"I should like to see that," mused the older Ifreet. "Very well, you may face this rogue, but it will not be a contest of arms. Rather, you must defeat him with your wit."

"A contest of riddles?" I asked, cradling Ali in my arms.

"Precisely," said the elder Ifreet.

The terms of the contest drawn, my mind raced against the minute's of life that remained in Ali. I faced the younger Ifreet who so desired my head on a platter, and posed this riddle:

*"I hang over your head, though no body have I.  
My birth is in violence and my end is in peace.  
The price for my death is an eye for an eye.  
While I live your life has but a short lease. What am I?"*

Fingering his sword hilt, the younger Ifreet glared at me with burning orbs in his eyes. "Your ill-conceived threats don't intimidate me. Soon my sword your head from your body will set free. The answer is a blood debt." Smiling to the older Ifreet, the young one stroked his moustache and presented this riddle:

*"A weed on a dunghill crept upon on a dog.  
Its wisdom diminished, and it became a man.  
What is the difference between a dog and a man?"*

I knew the answer the Ifreet sought, but to give it left a sour taste in my mouth, for here was the Ifreet slighting all mankind. "Your answer is arrogance, which makes a man presume he deserves to be treated better than a dog, when what has been allotted to him is but a brief and painful span." Beads of sweat rolled down my brow, falling into the sand. Despairing that I had never studied poetry as a boy, I then posed my second riddle:

*"I begin in sorrow, my middle is uncertain, and  
my end is lamentation."*

Laughing devilishly, the Ifreet wagged his finger at me. "That is a common riddle among the Ifreet, though our version goes: *I begin in dignity, my middle is valor, and my end is eternal glory.* The answer, of course, is war. Your attempts at gaining my sympathy fall flat, mortal cur! You cannot escape Death today." Whereupon, the Ifreet presented this riddle:

*"Every man is hostage to the same captor;  
Whose voice in the desert wind is laughter,  
For what greater irony than a thief born  
To lose his hand should be murdered  
And his blood my sword blade adorn."*

Tears welled in my eyes as Ali clutched my hand. I could not think, and I feared I would lose my mind. No answer came to me. The young Ifreet drew his sword, a cruel smile on his lips. Resigned to the punishment God had written me for my thievery, I bowed my head in prayer. "There is no escape from fate. Insha'allah."

The younger Ifreet snarled at me and lunged, but his elder caught his wrist. "Do not dishonor me! He answered your riddle – the answer is fate. Put away your sword, and defeat this fool like a true son of al-Ifreet!"



By the grace of God what I had said in earnest piety was my salvation. My heart swelled with wonder at how I had been spared, and in praise of the Almighty I came up with this riddle on the spot:

*"Men bow their heads but never see  
The First, the Last, the Everlasting,  
Until they must walk the sharp blade  
And learn all danger is just in passing."*

As the Ifreet had never read the Qur'an, he could not give me an answer. His brows knitted furiously and he opened his mouth as if to speak, but promptly shut it. No answer was forthcoming, so I demanded at once they save Ali's life. "You have struck this man unjustly. In the name of God, you must take him to a physician in the city!"

The younger Ifreet roared at me, "Do not command me in that name, you pitiful excuse for a man! My father was of noble blood while your father was a donkey!" Pushing himself free of his elder's grasp, he struck at me in a rage, knocking me to the ground with the flat of his sword. Fire swirled around me as my vision swam, and then I saw the elder Ifreet cut the younger with a swift stroke. The younger vanished into flames leaving the elder standing over me.

"O mortal, you have brought tragedy to my house today, but I will not kill you, for the law of honor prevents it. We have both suffered a great loss, but I will suffer many more than you, for I shall live for hundreds of years while you, a mortal man, will perish in the bat of an eye. This was my noble cousin who I killed today. I knew him for one thousand years." Striding close, he picked me up as if to choke me, shaking me like a rag doll while his voice burned through my being. "All those who you love will die before you! The deep suffering I carry for my

cousin's death, so too shall you know! My gift to you is your life, my curse is that it shall last till everything good and pure in your life turns to ashes and dust!" With those words, the Ifreet vanished, leaving me to sob over Ali's corpse.

Bedouin found me lamenting my friend's death two days later. They helped me bury him, and gave me provisions and a camel. However, they told me I was a cursed man, and that if I ever came into their lands again they would kill me on sight. For weeks I did not eat, and all my friends worried that I would waste away. A kind man found me on the street and took me to his house, feeding me soup and medicinal teas. At last, I came back to my senses. The man revealed he was my uncle who had sold me to Shanafra, but that he had repented of this sin, and, having earned good money as a barber, he searched for me night and day for the last year. Rejoicing, we embraced. I reformed my ways and studied with my uncle for several months to become a barber, and quickly I took over the business. One day a man came in and asked for a haircut. I sat him down in the chair and took off his keffiyeh, when I realized that he wasn't a man at all! Long tresses spilled out from underneath the keffiyeh, revealing Crafty Dalilah in disguise. She told me that I was the only man who had ever tricked her and survived, and she asked for my hand in marriage. It was an interesting moment. I had the razor in my hand, and I could have killed this woman who had condemned Ali to die. On the other hand, she was beautiful and humble, and that she came to me was a sign of trust. I consented and we were happily married, though it took me many years to reform Dalilah of her crooked ways. At last, the breaker of ties and destroyer of delights overtook her and every woman and friend I ever loved.





## Chapter 13: The Souk

*"Buying and selling is the war of believers."*

- Yemeni saying

The scent of jasmine, roasting mutton, hazelnuts, cinnamon, musk-scented kaitafs, rosewater, ambergris, and flowers fills the air. Noise assaults you from every direction: Drum players, hagglers, street preachers, camels, musicians, and children can be heard in a gentle cacophony. Bright Hebron peaches, Aleppo raisins, Iraqi sugar cane, Ba'albak figs, olives, seacoast lemons, yellow and red apples, and baby cucumbers tantalize the eyes. Merchants sit on stone blocks within their stands, hawking their wares to passersby, merchants from Basra, Bukhara, Damascus, al-Fustat, Constantinople, Cordoba, Genoa, Isfahan, Mumbai, Nishapur, Tashkent, and Baghdad.

The urban souk is the commercial quarter, a tight mass of buildings squeezed into narrow streets barely wide enough for two laden animals to pass each other. At the center of the souk is a plaza where performers put on their acts and criers announce news. Here you can find messengers, mourners, beggars, thugs, laborers, and other hired help. Among the Bedouin tribes, a souk is a weekly market in small towns where tribal conflicts have a temporary truce. In Persia it is known as a bazaar, and is often covered. I have bought from many merchants and all of them fear me; they know I will not let my mistress be cheated, and that I can drive a bargain harder than any Bedouin man. Listen close and I'll teach you how to work the stalls of merchants hungry for your coin.

### The Market of Proverbs

Many proverbs have been born from the souk, and anyone doing business in the caliphate can expect to haggle with a proverb-quoting merchant. Haggling is an art, and a merchant may be insulted if you do not haggle, possibly refusing to sell the item altogether. Of course, after a trade is closed, everyone is expected to complain about how they were had. Do not be deceived by merchant's using such guilt tactics! Driving a hard bargain is skill which no woman or man should be without.

### Coins

The first gold dinar was struck in Damascus in the 72<sup>nd</sup> year of the Hijrah (691 AD), and since then Arabian coins dominated commerce. Old Roman and Sasanian coins are rare, but still in use. However, many of the old Islamic coins depict the ruler's image. Old coins from Basra and Kufa may show the image of an imam flanked by two worshippers, and

coins from Damascus might show a standing caliph with a sword. However, over the 8<sup>th</sup> century human images ceased to be used, and three Arabian coins were minted. These are the *dinar* (gold coin), the *dirham* (silver coin), and the *fals* (copper coin). The exchange rate between these coins fluctuated with the price of their component metal, but usually 10-20 *dirham* or 50-100 *fals* equals one *dinar*. Coins, though common in the cities, are often used as a last resort in small villages. Villagers prefer to trade on a barter basis, using standards of trade which have existed for hundreds of years. For example, a boy might be called on to sell the family donkey and return with spices and salt to last for the rest of the year.

### Trade Goods by City

City	Renowned Goods
Aleppo	Clothing, cotton, figs, herbs, <i>al-maghrāh</i> (medicinal red chalk), olives, pistachios
Al-Fustat (old Cairo)	Canvas, fish, flax, jasmine, leather, linen, pottery, rice, shoes, sugar, vinegar, vitriol, water skins, wool
Baghdad	Books, carpets, fine apparel, paper, scholars, silks
Basra	Linens, silks, fish, pearls, gems, antimony, cinnabar, verdigris, litharge of silver, dates, henna, essence of violet, rose water
Ch'ang-an	paper, porcelain, silks
Cordoba	Books, citrus, leather, olives, silverwork
Damascus	Damascene steel, olive-oil, brocade, essence of violet, brassware, paper, nuts, figs, raisins
Dongola	Emeralds, gold, ivory, sorghum, tortoise shell
Jericho	Bananas, dates, grain, lamb, indigo, palm trees, sugar
Jerusalem	Apples, artichokes, bananas, carob, cheese, cotton, raisins, pine nuts, oil lamps, mirrors, sewing needles
Kairouan	Carpets, charms, leather goods, pottery
Kerala	Aloewood, pearls, perfume, spices, ships
Khour Rori	Dates, fish, frankincense, mother of pearl
Kufa	Silk turbans, , essence of violet, dates
Mosul	Grains, honey, dried meats, coal, cheese, honeydew, sumac, pomegranates, pitch, iron, knives, arrows, salted fish
Mecca	Charms, holy water, pilgrims
Medina	Dates, fruits, grains, pilgrims, vegetables
Multan	Bajra, camel-skin carpets, clothing, exotic fruits, lacquered wood, pottery, seed oils, shoes, sunflower
Sijilmassa	Gold, ivory, luxury goods, slaves
Suakin	Aromatics, gems, gold, ivory, tortoise shell
Toledo	Steel, swords
Tyre	Fish, glass beads, glass vessels, sugar



## Goods & Services

Adventuring Gear	Size	Cost
Book, simple	Small	12
Book, ornate	Medium	14
Book, holy	Medium	16
Carpet (4 x 6 ft)	Medium	3 (13 if masterwork)
Carpet (6 x 9 ft)	Large	5 (15 if masterwork)
Charm	Diminutive	2
Kohl (tin)	Diminutive	0
Lock		
Simple	Diminutive	12
Average	Diminutive	14
Good	Diminutive	16
Masterful	Diminutive	20
Musical instrument, common	Small	7
Musical instrument, masterwork	Small	17
Alchemic Preparations	Craft DC	Cost
Anesthesia	25	19
Aqua regia	30	26
Black powder	30	26
Bottled breath	25	20
Flash powder	15	8
Invisible ink	15	8
Lodestone	30	26
Naphtha	25	18
Perfume	20	15
Poison	varied	varied
Protectant	20	13
Preservative	15	8
Smelling salts	20	15
Smokestick	20	14
Syrup of ipecac	15	8
Water purifier	25	20
<b>Clothing</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Beggar's rags	Medium	0
Courtier's clothes	Medium	13
Desert aba	Medium	9
Silk shirt	Small	6
Turban	Small	1
Veil	Small	1
<b>Illegal Goods</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Forged document	Small	10
Hashish	Diminutive	1
Hookah	Small	5
Wine, palm	Small	1
Wine, grape or date	Small	10
<b>Military Equipment</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Battering ram	Large	9
Catapult		
<b>Mounts</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Camels		
Draft	Large	15
Racing	Large	19
War	Large	17
Elephants		
Labor	Huge	22
War	Huge	24



Services		Cost
Bath		0
Borrowing a book		2 per month
Gate toll		0
Haircut		1
Hireling, trained		3 per day
Hireling, untrained		1 per day
Medical care, barber		2
Medical care, hospital		0
Medical care, physician		5
Messenger		2
Mourner		1
Rickshaw		1
<b>Slaves</b>		<b>Cost</b>
Courtesan or entertainer		11
Domestic servant		9
Laborer or bearer		7
Specialist		15+
<b>Trained Animals</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Hunting cat	Medium	25
Monkey	Tiny	8
Pigeon, messenger	Diminutive	10
<b>Transportation</b>		<b>Cost</b>
Caravan travel		1 per city passed through
Litter		11
Ship's passage		3 per ocean or sea passed through

### Credit

Credit has always been closely bound to one's honor. After the secrets of paper were learned from China, merchants began formalizing the conduct of commerce on credit with "orders of payment" (*sakk* in Persian). While the government is a source of credit for the well-off and reputable, others must borrow from their families, wealthy patrons, or shady criminals. Once a sponsor is found, they act as a witness with the merchant; if the debtor should renege on their debt it is the sponsor's duty to pay the merchant. Commonly, the Radhanite Jews make excellent sources for credit, if one is so lucky to become acquainted with them.

### The Money-Changer

The most important man in the souk is the *sayrafi*, or money-changer. His job entails far more than simply making change; he also determines the precise value of a unusual or foreign coins. Usually a *sayrafi* measures a coin's bullion content by weighing the coin. Coins are not always taken at face value, but rather by their weight, to assure an honest deal. Thus, most market stalls have scales. Because weighing individual coins is a tedious affair, it is a standard practice for the government to seal coins in purses with the exact weight of the purse written on the outside. Usually a government assaying office distributes the coins, though sometimes the *sayrafi* is authorized to do so.

### The Market Inspector

The *muhtasib*, or market inspector, ensures that the weights and measures (including those of the *sayfari*) are correct. In addition, the *muhtasib* acts as a moral regulator, ensuring that prices are honest, business is orderly, that taxes are fairly issued, and that no illegal goods are sold. Whenever something hinders the free passage of goods within a city, it is the duty of the *muhtasib* to remove or repair it. Traffic jams, floods, public drunkenness, dead animals, smugglers, merchant displays flowing into the streets – the *muhtasib* deals with all these things.

### The Radhanites

It is common for the various caliphates, and the North African and Christian kingdoms of Europe to ban each others' merchants from entering their ports. Corsairs of both sides raid the shipping of their adversaries freely. The guild of Radhanite Jews act as neutral go-betweens, keeping trade alive; their propensity for business and their information network grant them privileges among the Franji, Romans, and Muslims.





## Equipment Descriptions

### Adventuring Gear

**Book:** Even the word “treasury” is often used by princes and kings to refer to their private book collections such as the value of knowledge in the caliphate. Simple books include travelogues, scientific dissertations, philosophical treatises, folk tales, and children’s books. Ornate books have arabesque illustrations, gilded letters, maps, and are superiorly bound; usually only special commissions receive this treatment. Holy books include the Qur’an, the Bible, the Torah, and the Avesta; such books are treated with the utmost reverence.

**Carpet:** Carpets are beautiful works of art to behold. In addition, they can be used to smuggle suitors into harems, hide corpses, and even to assist an adept using Wind Finesse.

**Charm:** Various Qur’anic and Bedouin charms are used in the caliphate to ward off evil spirits and accrue good fortune. Most of these have no effect, though a superstitious character might be put at ease by a charm.

**Kohl:** Kohl means “brightens the eyes.” It is a mixture of soot with various nut oils and gum resins. Kohl is used to darken the eyelids. This is considered attractive for women, and, more practically, it provides relief from the glare of the sun and prevents eye ailments. A tin has enough for 10 applications.

**Lock:** The Difficulty to open a lock with the Disable Device skill depends on the lock’s quality: simple (Difficulty 20), average (Difficulty 25), good (Difficulty 30), or amazing (Difficulty 40).

**Musical Instrument:** Instruments found in the caliphate include various drums, the nay (flute), rabab (two-stringed violin), ud (fretless mandolin), and the zither (harp). A masterwork instrument grants a +2 bonus to Perform checks involving its use.

### Alchemic Preparations

These alchemic preparations are non-magical in nature and can be made by a character trained in Craft (alchemy).

**Anesthesia:** This powder, when inhaled, makes the body numb to pain for one hour. During this time the subject suffers no penalty from wounds and is immune to the Pain power, but they also have no idea how hurt they are. However, the subject takes all action as if shaken, reflecting the deadening of sensation.

**Aqua Regia:** This universal solvent will dissolve any mundane material it comes into contact with except pattern-refined glass. One cubic foot is dissolved each minute. Common vinegar counteracts aqua regia.

**Black Powder:** You can create a 5 pound keg of this extremely volatile substance. When lit it inflicts +8 damage to everything within 10 feet, and half that damage to everything within 25 feet. A Reflex save (Difficulty 15) reduces the damage by half. You can add multiple kegs together for a bigger blast; each additional keg increases the blast radius by 1 foot, and adds +2 to the damage.

**Bottled Breath:** A bottle containing a spongy substance in which a quantity of concentrated breathable air has been dissolved. One needs only to open the bottle and fresh air begins to exhale from it. The bottle can provide air for up to 10 continuous rounds, though it need not all be used at once.

**Flash Powder:** When thrown into a fire, this powder creates a brilliant flash. All creatures within 30 feet must make a Reflex save (Difficulty 15) or be blinded for one round. The alchemist can make the flash any color they desire.

**Greek Fire:** Bituminous liquid mixture of sulfur, naphtha and quicklime, it is highly flammable. While naphtha by itself is used to light lamps, to relieve belly aches, as a solvent, and to soothe rashes, when made into Greek Fire it is a potent weapon used at sea and during warfare. Once lit, it is nearly impossible to extinguish and it will burn even in water. Anything soaked in Greek Fire automatically catches fire if it touches a fire source. If a



character lit on fire takes action to extinguish the flames (jumping in water or rolling on the ground), they may make a Reflex save (Difficulty 15) to douse the flames. Masterwork Greek Fire is clear as water, and inflicts +3 damage per round (instead of +2); it is known as “oil of the mountain.”

**Invisible Ink:** When used on paper, this ink fades within seconds, becoming invisible. It can only be revealed with a completion chemical (e.g. lemon juice), in extreme heat, or in extreme cold, as determined by the alchemist.

**Lodestone:** When this magnetic rock is used in conjunction with the Astrometry feat or the Geomancy power it grants a +2 bonus on the checks.

**Perfume:** This liquid, when sprayed lightly on the body, provides the wearer with a +1 bonus on interaction checks with the opposite sex for up to 5 hours.

**Poison:** The alchemist can prepare a variety of poisons, provided a sample of the necessary plant or animal is available. If derived from a creature, the poison has a strength equal to 10 + half the creature's level, and the Difficulty of the Craft (alchemy) check is equal to the strength of the poison +5. A masterwork poison increases the save Difficulty by +2.

**Adder Venom:** Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, and extreme thirst; they may last for up to two days. Death is rare. Syrup of ipecac is effective.

**Arsenic:** A mineral poison, arsenic causes vomiting and coldness, and may cause the victim to collapse or enter convulsions. If the victim survives for more than a week, they will probably make a full recovery. Syrup of ipecac is effective.

**Banj:** A secret preparation of various herbs and seeds, banj has varying effects on different people, but is most commonly prepared as a poison that causes unconsciousness and memory loss.

**Scorpion Venom:** A slight tingling or burning is felt in the throat, breathing may become difficult, and cramps occur in muscles. This lasts for up to two days. A tourniquet applied to the limb is the best defense, and the poison should be removed.

**Shellfish Venom:** Causes numbness and vomiting, and eventually will stop breathing causing death. Symptoms begin within a few hours. In severe cases foaming at the mouth and convulsions occur. If a victim survives, for weeks afterward they feel pain when eating. Syrup of ipecac is effective.

**Strychnine:** When distilled these poisonous leaves have a bitter taste and send the victim into tremors, causing spasms and stiffness, and eventually death. Strychnine poisoning is identified by the quick rigor mortis that sets in. Syrup of ipecac has only limited effectiveness, granting the victim a +4 bonus on their secondary save.

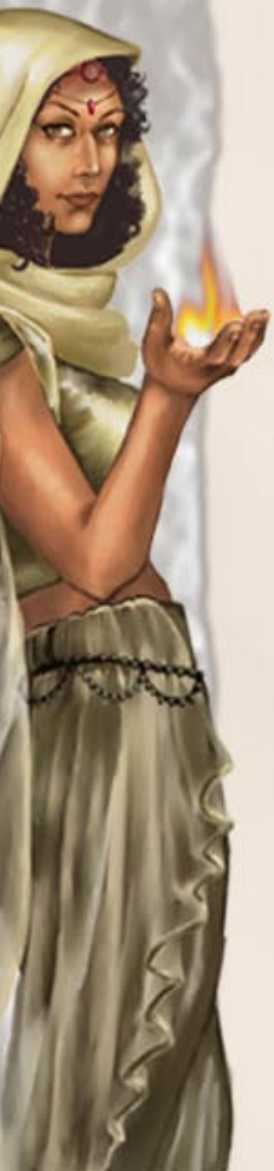
**Preservative:** These salts and herbs can be applied to rations, fruits, or meats to make the food keep for an additional month.

**Protectant:** An alchemist can make either a fire or water protectant. In either case, the material must be soaked in sappy liquid for one hour and then dried, after which it gains a +4 on Toughness saves against either fire or water. A material may only be fire or water protected, not both.

**Smelling Salts:** When the aroma these salts produce when placed in liquid will wake a sleeping person instantly. They can also be used to arouse consciousness in an unconscious person by triggering an inhalation reflex, provided the person was rendered unconscious by non-lethal damage.

**Smokestick:** When ignited, this stick creates thick, opaque smoke that fills a ten foot cube. The stick is consumed after one round and the smoke dissipates naturally.

Name	Craft DC	Save DC	Effect (Primary / Secondary)	Cost
Adder Venom	15	10	-2 Con / -2 Con and need twice as much water or become dehydrated	8
Arsenic	20	16	-2 Con / fatigued and vomiting for several days after which must make a third save or suffer -4 Con	13
Banj	30	14	Unconsciousness / memory loss of the last 24 hours	24
Scorpion Venom	15	10	-1 Con, -1 Dex / -1 Con, -1 Dex and become winded after exertion	8
Shellfish Venom	20	10	-2 Dex / -4 Con	13
Strychnine	25	16	-2 Dex, -3 Con / -2 Dex, -3 Con	18



**Syrup of Ipecac:** Made from the leaves of the semi-tropical ipecacuanha tree, syrup of ipecac is a powerful purgative. When applied to a victim shortly after being poisoned it prevents any secondary damage, but it leaves the victim fatigued.

**Water Purifier:** A small vial of this tasteless transparent liquid clears 1 gallon of water of any poisons or diseases.

## *Clothing*

**Beggar's Rags:** Anyone trying to pass themselves off as beggars who doesn't wear beggar's rags suffers a -2 penalty on all Disguise checks and on all interaction checks with beggars.

**Courtier's Clothes:** This outfit includes silk robes in splendid colors. Anyone trying to influence nobles while wearing street clothes will have a hard time of it (-2 on interaction checks with such individuals).

**Desert Aba:** Suited for desert travel, these robes are designed with a heavy face covering and offer limited protection against sandstorms (+1 on Survival and Constitution checks when in sandstorms). Usually they are white or black, but camouflage coloration is available, providing a +5 bonus on Stealth checks in the desert. However, camouflage abas are a sign of raiders and anyone wearing one may receive a hostile reception.

**Silk Shirt:** A finely woven garment commonly worn by cavalry and the devoutly faithful, as it is a sign of purity. A warrior wearing a silk shirt can remove any arrow lodged in them as a free action without causing any damage, as the silk tends to wrap around the arrowhead, making it easy to extract.

**Turban:** A turban is intended to keep off sun and rain and to regulate one temperature. Unwrapped a turban is about 10 feet long, and can be used as rope, bandages, a backpack, or for any of the purposes a woman would use a veil.

**Veil:** Besides the social necessity of wearing a veil, it offers several benefits, including regulating temperature, protection from the elements, and the ability to move about in crowds with anonymity. A veil can also double as a baby sling, picnic tablecloth, a tarp when traveling, a light blanket, or anything that a man would use a turban for.

## *Illegal Goods*

Gaining access to an illegal good requires a character get in touch with criminal elements of society. Typically a Gather Information check (Difficulty 10 + the cost) suffices, though the Narrator may prefer to play out the

transaction. Like with other Gather Information checks word may get around that character is looking for an illegal good; in such cases the authorities may take action, most likely shadowing the character to find out who they're dealing with.

**Forged Document:** Fake travel papers, weapon permits, and grants typically can only be seen through by a character trained in Craft (manuscript) or with the Honest Law feat. Masterwork forgeries are harder to detect.

**Hashish:** Derived from the cannabis plant, hashish is crumbled and mixed with tobacco in pipes. Commonly called hash, it is a psychoactive drug.

**Hookah:** Used for smoking, a hookah is a water pipe commonly found in coffee-houses. While technically illegal, they are widely available. Occasionally they are banned by the government, but such bans are always short-lived.

**Wine, palm:** Made from the sap of date palm trees, it is collected in gourds and ferments in two hours, producing a mildly intoxicating sweet wine. It does not keep and quickly sours into vinegar.

**Wine, grape:** An important part of ceremonial life in the past, wine made from grapes (or other fruits or flowers) are usually only found in the Christian and Jewish districts of Muslim cities. Grape wine keeps when bottled.

## *Mounts*

**Camel:** The "ship of the sea", a camel is principally used to transport goods in between cities. However, camels are also bred for racing and for war.

### **Camel**

**Type:** 3<sup>rd</sup>-level animal

**Size:** Large

**Speed:** 30 ft

**Abilities:** Str +3, Dex +1, Con +3, Int -4, Wis +1, Cha -3

**Skills:** Notice +4

**Feats:** Nightvision, Thick-Skinned

**Traits:** Desert Adaptation, Scent

**Combat:** Attack +3 (+1 Dex, -1 size), Damage +3 (unarmed), Initiative +1, Defense +3 (+1 Dex, -1 size)

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +4, Fortitude +6, Reflex +3, Will +2

**Desert Adaptation:** A camel gets +6 Fortitude saves to resist non-lethal heat and cold damage, and sandstorms. A camel can go without water or food for up to 5 days during summer, and up to a month during winter, before becoming dehydrated or starving.



**Racing Camel:** A racing camel is bred for speed. It gains +10 ft. speed, but -2 Strength and -1 Intelligence. A racing camel also gets a +2 bonus on Constitution checks to maintain a running pace.

**Riding Camel:** A riding camel is used for long-distance travel. It has a +2 on its Constitution checks and Fortitude saves in regard to environmental factors only.

**War Camel:** A war camel is specially trained for combat. It has +1 to its base attack bonus, Defense, and Toughness saves, along with +2 on its Fortitude saves.

**Elephant:** Massive beasts brought from Africa and India, elephants are a rarity in the caliphate and usually are only found in noble courts.

**Elephant:**

**Type:** 8<sup>th</sup>-level animal

**Size:** Huge

**Speed:** 40 ft

**Abilities:** Str +10, Dex +0, Con +5, Int -4, Wis +1, Cha -2

**Skills:** Notice 11 (+15)

**Feats:** Iron Will, Night Vision, Skill Focus (Notice), Thick-Skinned

**Traits:** Scent, Trample (damage +15, Reflex save DC 24)

**Combat:** Attack +4 (-2 size), Damage

**Saving Throw:** Toughness +9, Fortitude +11, Reflex +2, Will +9

This entry depicts a massive African elephant. An Indian elephant has only +8 strength, but is more readily trained and has Wisdom +3.

**Laboring Elephant:** An elephant used for labor gains +2 on its Constitution checks and Fortitude saves in regard to environmental factors only.

**War Elephant:** An elephant trained for war gains +1 to its base attack bonus, Defense, and Toughness saves, along with +2 on its Fortitude saves.

**Services**

**Bath:** Public bathhouses offer everyone a place to cleanse themselves for but a small fee. A bathhouse has different hours for women and men. Animals are not allowed in the bathhouse, and higher scale bathhouses may turn away those who are dressed poorly or who are clearly filthy.

**Borrowing a Book:** It is a common practice for scholars to borrow a book from a private collection or a library in order to copy from the book. Typically, the book is returned within a few months.

**Gate Toll:** Many cities charge a minor fee to enter the gates, though this fee may increase to 2 if someone bears armaments or comes from a hostile region.

**Haircut:** A haircut leaves a character looking their best; they gain a +1 bonus on interaction checks for the rest of the day. A character may only benefit from a haircut once a month.

**Hireling, Trained:** Craftspeople, dancing boys/girls, mercenaries, scribes, and skilled guides are examples of trained hirelings. The listed wages represent the minimum a hireling would accept; many hold out for higher pay.

**Hireling, Untrained:** Cooks, criers, gravediggers, laborers, and porters are examples of untrained hirelings.

**Medical Care, Barber:** Treatment by a barber is the same as a Medicine skill check of 15, thus allowing the patient to receive care, diagnosis, stabilization, be revived, or have disease or poison treated. However, for each additional task the barber must perform, increase the cost by 1.

**Medical Care, Hospital:** All characters in a hospital receive a +2 bonus on all Constitution checks to recover, reflecting the clean, safe, and quiet environment.

**Medical Care, Physician:** A physician acts as a barber and has access to various specialties of the Medical Science feat.

**Messenger:** The postal service (*barid*) is well known for hiring horse-riders to carry messages between cities, and are known for being trustworthy. A cheaper messenger might be found, though their trustworthiness may be in question.

**Mourner:** Professional mourners can be hired to perform at funerals, wailing over the corpse, offering eulogies, and generally giving the impression that the deceased was a generous and kind person whose passing is a tragedy.



**Rickshaw:** A rickshaw is a two-wheeled human, horse, or ox drawn carriage with room for one or two passengers. Though most Arab cities do not have rickshaws, many cities in Hindustan and China make regular use of them.

## Slaves

**Courtesan or Entertainer:** Artists, concubines, cupbearers, jesters, and skilled performers fetch a high price.

**Domestic Servant:** Women who perform menial chores, go shopping, take care of children, and prepare meals are purchased by many.

**Laborer or Bearer:** Cheapest of all slaves are the agricultural or construction laborers, who are often bought in groups.

**Specialist:** Rare slaves with a talent for arms, language, magic, medicine, music, or scholarship are valued the most.

## Trained Animals

Falcons, messenger pigeons, and even hunting cats are employed by nobility within cities. Many cities also have monkeys, though these are usually used by thieves and street performers.

**Hunting Cat:** Panthers, jaguars, leopards, mountain lions, and cheetahs are captured in Africa and brought to royal courts, where their cubs are domesticated and trained to hunt down prey without eating it. Some hunting cats even grow affectionate with the family's children.

**Messenger Pigeon:** Pigeons are trained to return to a particular location when they are released, thereby allowing them to deliver messages. They are also used by ship captains to locate land.

**Trained Monkey:** Monkeys are common pets among thieves and street performers, as well as among royalty. They are trained to act as pickpockets, entertainers, and con-monkeys.

### Monkey

**Type:** 1<sup>st</sup>-level animal

**Size:** Tiny

**Speed:** 30 ft, climb 30 ft

**Abilities:** Str -3, Dex +3, Con +0, Int -4, Wis +1, Cha -2

**Skills:** Acrobatics (0) +11, Climb (0) +11, Notice (2) +3, Perform (2) +0, Stealth (0) +11

**Feats:** Nightvision

**Combat:** Attack +5 (+3 Dex, +2 size), Damage -3 (unarmed or piece of fruit), Defense +5 (+3 Dex, +2 size), Initiative +3

**Saving Throws:** Toughness -2, Fortitude +2, Reflex +5, Will +1

**Skills:** Monkeys have a +8 racial bonus on Acrobatics and Climb checks, and they use their Dexterity instead of Strength for Climb checks.

### Great Jungle Cat

**Type:** 3<sup>rd</sup>-level animal

**Size:** Medium

**Speed:** 40 ft, climb 20 ft

**Abilities:** Str +3, Dex +4, Con +2, Int -4, Wis +1, Cha -2

**Skills:** Acrobatics +12, Climb +11, Jump +11, Notice +4, Stealth, +12

**Feats:** Improved Grab, Nightvision, Weapon Finesse

**Traits:** Pounce, Rake, Scent

**Combat:** Attack +7 (+4 Dex), Damage +2, Defense +6 (+4 Dex), Initiative +4

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +2, Fortitude +5, Reflex +7, Will +2

**Skills:** Great jungle cats have a +8 bonus on Jump and Stealth checks. In areas of tall grass or heavy undergrowth, the Stealth bonus increases to +8. They also have a +8 bonus to Acrobatics and Climb checks. A great jungle cat can always take 10 on a Climb check, even if rushed or threatened.

## Transportation

**Caravan:** Caravans often accept travelers who offer money. If a character has a strong sword arm or is a skilled guide they may be able to negotiate free passage with the caravan. Prices may increase if the caravan is traveling through dangerous terrain.

**Litter:** Also known as a sedan chair, a litter is typically held by 4 strong slaves, on top of which the noble reclines in luxury. Larger sedan chairs can carry two or even four passengers.

**Ship's Passage:** Most ship captains will take on passengers for a fee, though a captain is likely to increase the price if the passengers don't appear sea-worthy. A character with a keen knowledge of navigation or with the skills of a deck hand can usually negotiate free passage. Prices may increase if the ship travels through dangerous waters.



## Arms & Armor

### Weapon Descriptions

**Adarga:** A shield-weapon combination, the adarga consists of a pole with spear points at either end with a diamond-shaped shield at the center with a sword point extending from the shield. When used defensively, it provides a +1 bonus on block rolls.

**African Throwing Knife:** A strange shaped blade designed to arc over obstacles and wrap around weapons. It bypasses an opponent's defense bonus from a shield or weapon.

**Bagh Nakh:** Also known as the "tiger's claw" this hand weapon is designed to be held in the fist by placing the fingers through individual holes; three or more small spikes curve from the hand piece. The bagh nakh can be used in a grapple or in conjunction with the Improved Strike feat.

**Chain:** A weighted chain can strike targets up to 10 feet away. It can make trip attacks, and has a +2 bonus to disarm opponents.

**Chakram:** The chakram is a metal ring about one foot in diameter; the exterior is sharp while the interior is dull to allow it to be spun on the finger before being thrown.

**Chu Ko Nu:** A crossbow unique to China, it has an automatic loading mechanism which pulls quarrels from an ammunition box that can hold up to eight quarrels. Unless braced on a stable surface, the Chu Ko Nu suffers a -1 attack penalty. Because of its reloading feature, a chu ko nu can make two shots each round, allowing a trained character two attacks with it. A chu ko nu does not add the user's Strength to its damage.

**Crossbow:** A crossbow does not add the user's Strength to its damage.

**Dart:** Darts can be thrown in groups, but they do not add the thrower's Strength to damage due to their lightness.

**Double Recurve Bow:** An incredibly powerful composite bow, the double recurve is always made for Strength +2 or greater. It can be used while mounted.

### Ammunition

Arrows come in a quiver of 20 (cost 4)

Bolts come in a case of 10 (cost 4)

Sling bullets come in a pouch of 10 (cost 2)

**Elephant Blade:** A shaft weapon with a large wavy blade at the tip, it is used for hunting elephants; often it is ornately decorated. Due to its immense size, however, anyone wielding it suffer a -4 attack penalty. The elephant blade is a reach weapon and can be used against foes 10 feet away, though it can't be used against adjacent foes. In order to even lift the blade, a character must have Strength +2 or greater.

**Executioner Sword:** This massive unwieldy curved blade is usually reserved for official beheadings. Even with Exotic Weapon Training in the sword, the wielder suffers -4 to attack against foes that are not bound and immobile. In order to even lift the sword, a character must have Strength +2 or greater.

**Fan:** Used by courtiers and magistrates, fans were adapted into innocuous weapons. A fan bypasses all weapon searches.

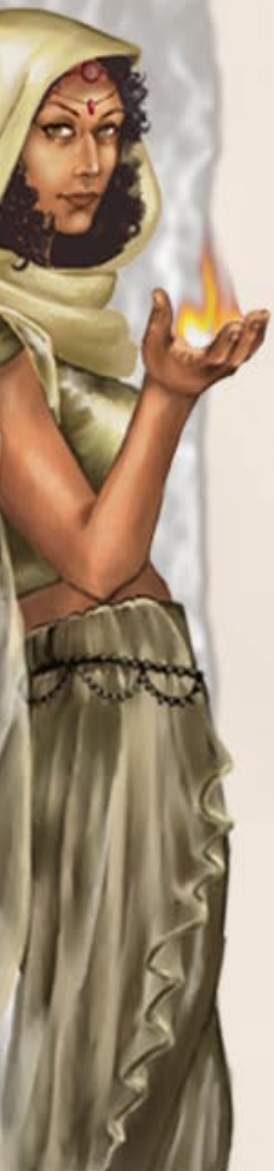
**Flail:** A heavy shaft connected to one or more bars or balls with a chain, the flail is dangerous to use untrained. Without Exotic Weapon Training in the flail the wielder suffers a -8 penalty to strike (instead of -4). Flails give a +2 bonus to disarm (including the roll to avoid being disarmed if the attack fails) attempts. While Franks make the most use of flails, they are used in Persia, India, and China as well.

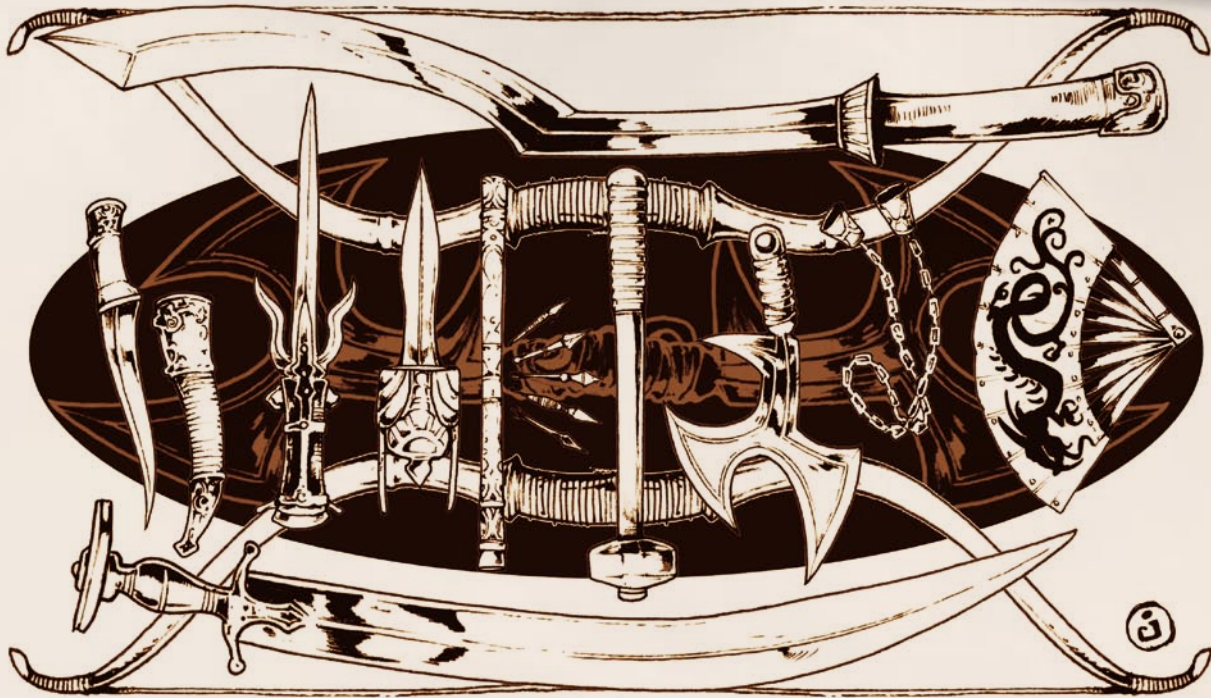
**Jambiya:** A heavy dagger, the jambiya has a slightly curved blade. It is used as all purpose tool for cutting and eating. Many jambiya are ornately decorated. While in all respects it functions as a normal knife, the jambiya bears an important distinction – if it is of masterwork quality, it is considered a ceremonial item, and while within the caliphate one will not be asked to remove their jambiya, as this would be an insult to their honor.

**Katar:** The katar is a short sword held in the fist and thrust in a punching motion.

**Kopesh:** A ceremonial religious Egyptian sword, the kopesh is often decorated with precious metals. As it is designed to deliver a crushing blow, the kopesh gains a +2 bonus on all sunder attempts.

**Lance:** A lance deals +3 additional damage when used from the back of a charging mount. It has reach, so you can strike opponents 10 feet away with it, but you can't use it against an adjacent foe.





While mounted, you can wield a lance with one hand.

**Lasso:** A rope used to pull riders from their saddles. Its maximum range is its length of 20 feet. If hit, the target is entangled. If you succeed an opposed Strength check, you can limit the target's movement. If you succeed by 5 or more, you can pull the target from their horse, inflicting falling damage. An entangled creature can escape on an Escape Artist check (Difficulty 20), or can burst the rope on a Strength check (Difficulty 25).

**Longbow:** The longbow is designed for infantry and is not useable while mounted. Most longbows are composite bows; they require a minimum Strength score to use. If your Strength score is less than the strength rating of the bow, you can't effectively use it, so you take a -2 penalty on attacks. The default longbow requires a Strength of 0 to use. A longbow can be made with a higher Strength rating; this allows you to add your Strength bonus to damage, up to the bow's strength rating. Each point of Strength rating of the bow adds +1 to its cost.

**Long spear:** You can strike opponents 10 feet away with a long spear, but you can't use it against an adjacent foe. If you use a ready action to set a long spear against a charge, you deal +3 additional damage against a charging

character.

**Majra:** Not a weapon itself, the majra is a reed sheath attached to the bow or the wielder's wrist with a cord. It is loaded with up to five darts, and when fired from a bow, it launches the darts toward a target. When using a majra, the range increment of a bow is reduced by 10 feet. However, if hit, the target must roll a Toughness save against each dart individually.

**Manople:** A gauntleted sword with two smaller curved blades extending on either side of the main one, the maniple grants a +10 bonus to resist disarm attempts. In addition, it has a +2 bonus on disarm check, including the roll to keep from being disarmed if the disarm fails.

**Maul:** A massive hammer, the maul grants a +2 bonus on sunder and trip attempts. In order to even lift the maul, a character must have Strength +2 or greater.

**Pesh-kabz:** Persian and Sindi armor-piercing dagger, it has a curved single-edge, and the back edge has a reinforcing rib. The pesh-kabz ignores one point of armor bonus in the hands of someone who knows how to use it.

### *Damascene Steel*

Steel in Damascus is made by combining layers of steel with varying hardness together with small amounts of other metal to create a stronger and more flexible weapon that would not corrode. Weapons made of Damascene steel bear wavy "water-marks" on them as water was poured over the blades during their creation. Such weapons must be made as masterwork items, and gain +1 damage instead of +1 attack. In addition, any item made of Damascene steel gains a +1 Toughness bonus. Damascene steel outside of Damascus or Toledo has an increased cost of +2. Few know that an identical material, pattern welded steel, is being made in the Rhineland and is kept secret by Charlemagne for fear of its manufacture reaching the Viking hordes; thus it may also be available to noble Franks directly in the service of Charlemagne.



# Chapter 13: The Souk

Weapon	Damage	Critical	Damage Descriptor	Range Increment	Size	Cost
<b>Simple Weapons</b>						
Club	+2	20/+3	Bludgeoning	10 ft	Medium	4
Crossbow	+3	19-20/+3	Piercing	40 ft	Medium	11
Dart	+1	20/+3	Piercing	10 ft	Tiny	3
Jambiya	+1	19-20/+3	Slashing	-	Small	4
Javelin	+2	20/+3	Piercing	30 ft	Medium	4
Long spear	+3	+4	Piercing	-		7
Mace	+3	20/+3	Bludgeoning	-	Medium	8
Sling	+1	20/+3	Bludgeoning	50 ft	Tiny	1
Spear	+3	20/+4	Piercing	20 ft	Large	6
Staff	+2	20/+3	Bludgeoning	10 ft	Large	4
<b>Martial Weapons</b>						
Axe, throwing	+2	20/+3	Slashing	10 ft	Small	8
Battleaxe	+4	20/+4	Slashing	-	Large	12
Bow, long	+3	20/+4	Piercing	50 ft	Large	12
Bow, short	+2	20/+4	Piercing	40 ft	Large	10
Lance	+3	20/+4	Piercing	-	Large	9
Long sword	+3	19-20/+3	Slashing	-	Medium	11
Scimitar	+2	18-20/+3	Slashing	-	Medium	11
Short sword	+2	19-20/+3	Piercing	-	Small	8
<b>Exotic Weapons (Aksum &amp; Nubia)</b>						
Spear thrower	-	-	-	X2	Small	3
African throwing knife	+2	20/+3	Piercing	10 ft	Small	5
<b>Exotic Weapons (Al-Andalus &amp; the Maghreb)</b>						
Adarga	+3	20/+4	Piercing or Slashing	-	Large	9
Manople	+3	19-20/+3	Slashing	-	Medium	7
<b>Exotic Weapons (Arabia)</b>						
Executioner's Sword	+4	20/+4	Slashing	-	Large	9
Majra	-	-	-	-10 ft	Small	3
<b>Exotic Weapons (China)</b>						
Chain	+2	20/+3	Bludgeoning	10 ft	Large	5
Chu ko nu	+2	19-20/+3	Piercing	40 ft	Medium	12
Fan	+1	20/+3	Slashing	5 ft	Small	3
<b>Exotic Weapons (Egypt)</b>						
Kopesh	+2	18-20/+3	Slashing	-	Medium	10
<b>Exotic Weapons (Franji Empire)</b>						
Flail	+3	20/+3	Bludgeoning	-	Large	8
Maul	+4	20/+4	Bludgeoning	-	Large	10
<b>Exotic Weapons (Hindustan)</b>						
Bagh nakh	+2	20/+3	Slashing	-	Tiny	5
Chakram	+1	20/+4	Slashing	20 ft	Small	6
Katar	+2	20/+4	Piercing	-	Medium	5
<b>Exotic Weapons (Khazaria)</b>						
Lasso	-	-	-	20 ft	Medium	1
Bow, double recurve	+3	20/+4	Piercing	40 ft	Medium	12
<b>Exotic Weapons (Persia)</b>						
Pesh-kabz	+1	19-20/+3	Piercing	-	Small	5
<b>Exotic Weapons (Roman Empire)</b>						
Scourge	+1	20/+3	Slashing	10 ft	Small	6
<b>Exotic Weapons (Sind)</b>						
Elephant blade	+3	20/+4	Slashing	10 ft	Large	10



**Scimitar:** A catch-all term for a curved sword. The name is derived from the Persian *shamsir*. Other examples of curved swords include the Turkish *kilij*, the Indian *ahir* and *talwar*, and the Abyssinian *shotel*.

**Scourge:** A three-headed whip imbedded with sharp spikes, the scourge is used to punish slaves and criminals, and is also used in religious ceremonies to self-flagellate. It can strike targets up to 10 feet away, and it can be used to make trip attacks and to disarm opponents with a +2 bonus.

**Short Bow:** The short bow can be used while mounted. Most short bows used during the time of the caliphate are composite. Each bow is designed to operate with a certain pull weight, as described under the longbow.

**Sling:** Your Strength score applies to damage when you use a sling, just as it does for thrown weapons. You can fire, but not load, a sling with one hand. You can hurl ordinary stones with a sling, but stones are not as dense or round as bullets. Thus, such an attack deals -1 damage, and you take a -1 penalty on attack rolls.

**Spear:** A spear can be thrown. If you use a ready action to set a spear against a charge, you deal +3 additional damage on a successful hit against a charging character.

**Spear Thrower:** A wooden paddle with a groove that is held on the arm, a spear thrower extends the range of a spear or javelin, doubling its range increment.

Armor in **Caliphate Nights** is slightly more complex than in **True20**. Each armor type has a maximum dodge bonus to Defense, and most have a penalty to base speed due to the limits the armor imposes on mobility. In addition, armor adds its bonus to the Difficulty of all Fortitude saves made to resist heat.

## Armor Descriptions

**Breastplate:** A solid piece of bronze, iron, or steel that covers the chest, a breastplate includes greaves and a helmet.

**Chain mail:** Made of interlocking metal rings, it is worn over a layer of soft leather; such suits always include a helmet and gauntlets.

**Chain shirt:** A shirt of chain, far lighter than a complete set of chain mail, that comes with a helmet.

**Hide:** A hardened animal hide (cow, deer, elephant, rhinoceros) that weighs as much as chain mail but offers less protection.

**Lamellar:** A lighter type of scale armor, lamellar consists of overlapping metal plates bound with leather lacing and metal links. Lamellar only imposes a -1 armor check penalty, and only a -1 penalty to Fortitude saves against heat.

**Leather:** Consisting of hard pieces of leather boiled in oil, leather armor covers the chest; it is common throughout the caliphate.

**Padded:** Also called quilted armor, it consists of multiple layers of fabric stuffed with thick batting and sewn together. It is only used by the poor and destitute.

**Scale:** Complete with gauntlets and helmet, scale mail, often called *jazeraint*, is based on the scales of fish and consists of interlinking metal plates.

**Studded Leather:** Unlike leather, studded leather is soft and supple with hundreds of metal rivets affixed so close that they form a flexible coating. Studded leather imposes no armor check penalty.

Armor				
Armor	Bonus	Dodge	Speed	Cost
Breastplate (medium)	+4	+2	-10	19
Chain mail (medium)	+3	+2	-10	18
Chain shirt (light)	+2	+4	-5	16
Hide (medium)	+2	+4	-10	9
Lamellar (medium)	+2	+5	-5	17
Leather (light)	+1	+5	-5	9
Padded (light)	+1	+4	-10	4
Scale (medium)	+3	+3	-10	17
Studded leather (light)	+1	+6	-	12



# Chapter 14: History of the Faith

## Chapter 14: History of the Faith

*"We ought not to be embarrassed about appreciating the truth and obtaining it wherever it comes from, even if it comes from races distant and nations different from us. Nothing should be dearer to the seeker of truth than the truth itself, and that there is no deterioration of the truth, nor belittling either of one who speaks it or conveys it."*

- Al-Kindi (801-873)

O worthy prince, I have humbly attended to your request this past year and compiled a history of our glorious faith for your edification and for the education of your sons and daughters. If you find in this history something objectionable or worthy of censure because you can see no aspect of truth therein, know that this is not to be attributed to me, but to those who transmitted it to me. I have merely passed this on as it was passed on to me, and thus all praise belongs to those who have made this history and to God alone.

A man who already has a language sees very little need to understand it. Consider Sibawayh, who created the phonetic description of Arabic and began the science of lexicography, the collection and study of words. Sibawayh was a Persian who acquired Arabic as a second language. He wished to understand the "language of the angels" better in order to fight the devils of corrupt bureaucracy and irresponsible statesmanship. He of all people knew the true importance of Arabic. By expressing ourselves in the words of the conquering Arab we gain a voice which ensures our history continues, that our poetry continues. For in poems the dreams of society rest, and what poets exalt or decry shows the triumphs and atrocities of their nation.

### *The Age of Ignorance*

Arabic was a language of poetry. The tribes of Arabia developed a common identity and language through their poetry, which was created from similar elements in the Arabic dialects; this poetic common tongue flowed rhythmically and rhymed easily. Most scholars term the period before Islam as the *jahiliyyah*, an age of ignorance in which few advancements were made, temptations were given in to, and paganism was rampant. They point to the practice of leaving infant girls to die in the desert, mutilating the corpses of one's enemies, and how an unfaithful woman would have relations with a man beside her husband and claim the child begotten thereof was of her husband's seed. It is true that before Islam there were cruel traditions and tribal violence was common, yet to call ignorant a society which, through a long cumulative tradition,

was able to produce the *qasida* and the *mu'allaqat* (both superb forms of poetry) does a great injustice. Even today, pagan poems hang on the walls of the Ka'aba in Mecca, and Arab poets aspire to replicate the masterful works of bygone eras. It might better be described as an age of tribal allegiance and retributive justice.

### *Iram, The City of One Thousand Pillars*

Deep in the Rub al Khali of southern Arabia lie the ruins of a pagan city that lasted for thousands of years and became fabulously wealthy from coastal trade. The Holy Qur'an, in the 89<sup>th</sup> Surah, says that the tribe of Ad, Noah's great-grandchildren, built the city Iram, but its wealth corrupted it and the people turned to decadence and studied *sihr*. King Shaddad of Iram defied the warnings of God, who smote the city with a terrible earthquake, burying it beneath the sands.

### *The Queen of Sheba & Suleiman bin Daoud*

The Prophet Suleiman, peace be upon him, was given power over all creatures, including the djinni, and the animals. One story relates how he married the Queen of Sheba:

Yemen, with its fertile soils, was the heart of a lucrative trade in frankincense and myrrh, which were exported to the Mediterranean via camels, and to Sind and Hindustan by sea. Looking out over this vast empire was Queen Bilqis, who ruled over all of Sheba (as Yemen was called in those days). Its capital city, Ma'rib, flourished then as Baghdad does today, being at the center of a trade in jewels, perfumes, and slaves. Bilqis knew how important the incense trade was for her nation; every time someone prayed to one of the pagan deities they lit a stick of frankincense or myrrh. She remembered how the Jewish king Suleiman had ordered her to stop worshipping the sun-goddess Shams and the moon-god Kamar. Bilqis was sympathetic and even impressed by Suleiman; after all, how many kings had resisted the flattery of the Queen of Sheba? She recalled the story her spies had recounted to her, how Suleiman had passed through the Valley of Ants and, hearing them speak, he felt mercy for Bilqis' people and decided to turn his army back. That night, Bilqis mounted her camel and set out to restore good relations. Upon arriving in Suleiman's throne room, she gazed in amazement upon her very own throne sitting next to his, brought by an ifreet Suleiman commanded! Suleiman asked her to identify whose throne it was, and Bilqis, overwhelmed by his wisdom and power, would eventually become his wife. Many royal houses, especially those of Yemen and Ethiopia, have claimed descent from the Queen of Sheba and Suleiman as a means to prestige.



## Golden Himyar

Sheba thrived for over 1,000 years, and the ruins of its dams, fortresses, temple complexes, and irrigation works cover the land today. Yet, the most impressive of these structures are the multi-storied buildings made from mud and straw; some of these buildings reach nine stories high! Such buildings were erected in the kingdom of Himyar, the successor to Sheba, and they still stand after all these centuries. Himyar rose to be a competitor in the incense trade with Sheba; periodic trade wars would erupt between these two nations. Though Sheba mastered the caravan routes, Himyar was a prominent sea power and its connections with foreign markets and mercenaries allowed the Himyarite *Malik* (King) Samir Yuhar to unite Yemen under the banner of Himyar. Marvelous hydraulic systems were created by the people of Himyar, such as rival those of the Romans and the Chinese. The marvels of architecture created during this time have inspired and perplexed many of our greatest architects, even those very men who designed the city of Baghdad. Long after the kingdom of Himyar was invaded by Ethiopia in the 6<sup>th</sup> Christian century, poets sung of the beauty of the palaces of Ghumdan, which were erected with the aid of the djinni.

*You have heard of Ghumdan's towers:  
From the mountaintop it lowers  
Well carpentered, with stones for stay,  
Plastered with clean, damp, slippery clay;  
Oil lamps within it show  
At evening like the lightning's glow.  
This once-new castle is ashes today  
The flames have eaten its beauty away.*

## Mecca and the Bedouin

Bedouin culture flourished before the coming of Islam, and Bedouin values, such as the virtues of manliness and poetry, became widespread. It was at this time that the Bedouin developed classical Arabic. Though once allied with the central Arabian cities, the Bedouin turned against them; their greatest victory was when the Quraysh tribe conquered Mecca and took control of the lucrative Ka'aba, the center of pilgrimage for tens of thousands. The Ka'aba itself was once a place of idol worship; statues of al-Lat, Uzza, Manat, and many other deities adorned its walls. Among the Quraysh, as with all the tribes of Arabia, spirits were attributed to inanimate objects. The animism of the Quraysh lacked a formal priesthood, but consulting with soothsayers was common, even Jewish or Christian ones. It was one such Jewish astrologer who witnessed meteors falling and divined that a prophet was born. That night the astrologer found the child Muhammad and, gazing into his eyes, knew at once that he was a prophet.

## The Message

Upon the birth of the Prophet his mother Aminah described seeing a light over the palaces of Syria. According to tradition many miraculous signs occurred at his birth – lakes dried up, the sacred fires of Persia were extinguished, and idols crumbled to dust. Wise men say: “Judge not God, but judge the prophets of God by whether they speak truth.” Is it not true that the greatest of kings led by example? Then we should devote ourselves to knowing both the words and the life of this lion among men, this seal of the prophets.

## A Prophet is Born

Orphaned before the age of six, Muhammad was raised under the protection of his uncle Abu Talib. As an orphan in a tribal society, he felt utterly displaced, and he took to contemplating the stars at night. A deeply reflective child he identified with the poor and disadvantaged who had been forgotten during the Quraysh's rapid rise to riches. Muhammad found work as a caravan driver and merchant for Khadija, a wealthy widow. They were soon married, and though this marriage greatly improved his status in Meccan society, Muhammad deeply loved Khadija. Khadija bore Muhammad four daughters. The first forty years of his life were typical of a Quraysh tribesman; he made sacrifices to Uzza, prayed at the Ka'aba, and attended to business and his family. Disenchanted with the materialism of the Quraysh, Muhammad began having visions and hearing mysterious voices. Seeking solitude in a cave on Mount Hira, he began meditating for long periods of time. One day he was visited by an angel who commanded him to recite. At first Muhammad feared he was being attacked by djinni and fled for his life, but he mastered his fear and returned to Mount Hira, where the angel instructed him to recite again.

*Recite: in the name of thy Lord who created,  
created man of a blood-clot.  
Recite: And thy Lord is most bountiful,  
who taught by the pen,  
taught man what they knew not.  
No, indeed: surely man waxes insolent,  
for he thinks himself self-sufficient.  
Surely unto thy Lord is the returning.*

Haunted by this message, Muhammad revealed it to his wife Khadija, who accepted Muhammad as a prophet. When Muhammad revealed his message to the Quraysh, declaring that he was a prophet of God, they laughed and scorned him; only his young cousin Ali ibn Abu Talib recognized Muhammad as a prophet. Gradually his closest family members came to believe, as did a small number of young members and slaves from influential families of the Quraysh who heard Muhammad preaching in public. The powerful families of the Quraysh hated Muhammad for insulting their religion and mocking their way of



# Chapter 14: History of the Faith

## Timeline

570 CE	Muhammad is born.
610 CE	Muhammad receives his first revelation at Mount Hira
615 CE	Persecution of the Muslims by the Quraysh, and the first party of Muslims leaves to Abyssinia.
616 CE	Hamza and Umar accept Islam. Second Hijrah to Abyssinia.
622 CE	Muhammad migrates to Madinah, escaping the Quraysh.
624 CE, 2 AH	Battle of Badr
625 CE, 3 AH	Battle of Uhud
627 CE, 5 AH	Battle of Trench
628 CE, 6 AH	Hudaybiyah Treaty
629 CE, 7 AH	Battle of Khaybar
630 CE, 8 AH	Conquest of Makkah. Battle of Hunain.
631 CE, 9 AH	Battle of Tabuk. Year of Delegations.
632 CE, 10 AH	Muhammad dies. Abu Bakr elected as the Caliph. Usamah leads expedition to Syria. Campaigns against Bani Tamim and Musailima the Liar.
633 CE, 11 AH	Compilation of the Qur'an begins
634 CE, 12 AH	Death of Abu Bakr. Umar elected Caliph. Conquest of Damascus.
636 CE, 14 AH	Conquest of Syria, Mesopotamia, and Palestine.
637 CE, 15 AH	Conquest of Egypt
640 CE, 19 AH	Government starts minting Islamic coins
644 CE, 23 AH	Umar is martyred and Uthman becomes Caliph.
645 CE, 24 AH	Campaigns in North Africa. Conquest of Cypress.
646 CE, 25 AH	Campaigns against the Roman Empire.
647 CE, 26 AH	Persian Empire defeated. Naval battle of the Masts against Romans.
648 CE, 27 AH	Rebellions against Uthman's rule.
649 CE, 28 AH	Uthman is martyred, and Ali becomes Caliph. Battle of the Camel.
650 CE, 29 AH	Ali moves the capital from Madina to Kufa. Battle of Siffin.
651 CE, 30 AH	Ali recaptures Hejaz and Yemen from Muawiyah who declares himself Caliph at Damascus.
652 CE, 31 AH	Ali is martyred and Muawiyah becomes Caliph, ushering in the Umayyad Caliphate.
670 CE, 50 AH	Conquest of Kabul, advance in North Africa.
677 CE, 57 AH	Siege of Constantinople. Occupation of Samarkand and Tirmiz.
680 CE, 60 AH	Muawiyah dies. Accession of Yazid. Shi'ism separates from the rest of the <i>umma</i> .
685 CE, 65 AH	Abdul-Malik declares Arabic the official language of the Caliphate and makes a common coinage.
700 CE, 80 AH	Campaigns against the Berbers of North Africa.
711 CE, 92 AH	Conquest of Iberia, Sind, and Transoxiana
716 CE, 97 AH	Invasion of Constantinople
717 CE, 98 AH	Umar bin Abdul Aziz becomes Caliph, instituting reform.
732 CE, 113 AH	Battle of Tours in modern-day France
749 CE, 131 AH	Battles of Isfahan and Nihawand. Capture of Kufa by the Abbasids; As-Saffah becomes the Abbasid Caliph.
750 CE, 132 AH	Fall of Damascus and end of Umayyad rule.
755 CE, 137 AH	Revolt of Abdullah bin Ali. Murder of Abu Muslim.
756 CE, 138 AH	Abd al-Rahman founds the Umayyad house in Andalus.
763 CE, 145 AH	Foundation of Baghdad. Abbasids are repelled from Andalus.
765 CE, 147 AH	Ismaili Shi'ism founded.
786 CE, 169 AH	Harun al-Rashid becomes Caliph.
798 CE, 181 AH	Ja'far is killed and Barkamids imprisoned.



## *Those Who Turn Away*

While most of the Meccans were idol-worshippers, there were a few who felt disgust at this idolatry and longed for the religion of Abraham. These seekers who sought the original teachings of Abraham were known as the Hunafa, or “those who turn away”. They were non-conformists who believed in one God, and they sought religion in the natural world. Muhammad was one of these Hunafa. He was greatly distressed by his vision, as he distrusted dialogue with spirits which men “avid of the Unseen” sorcerers and poets boasted in those days. His wife Khadijah tested the spirit which came to him and proved it to be good. Tradition claims this was the angel Gabriel.

life; moreover, Muhammad’s preaching threatened the revenues the Quraysh elite gained from pilgrims to the idols at the Ka’aba.

## *Flight to Abyssinia*

The converts in the early years were humble people unable to defend themselves against oppression. So cruel was the persecution they endured that Muhammad advised them to immigrate to Christian Nubia. The Quraysh posted men on all the roads to warn the tribes of the “madman” preaching in their midst. They tried to compromise with Muhammad, offering to adopt Islam if he would modify it as to make room for their gods as intercessors with God. They offered to make him their king if he stopped attacking idolatry. He refused. They offered to provide his uncle with a replacement nephew if he would let them kill Muhammad, but Abu Talib refused. Sanctions were imposed on the nascent Muslim community, and food became scarce. When Khadija and his uncle Abu Talib died in the same year, Muhammad was faced with imminent violence from his former tribesmen.

## *The Night Journey*

Muhammad was troubled that all his efforts had resulted in suffering for his community. These difficult times were forging him into a stronger man, preparing him for the greatest prophetic experience of high life. While meditating by the Ka’aba, Muhammad was roused by the angel Gabriel who took him to Jerusalem and from there he mounted the celestial Buraq, a man-headed Pegasus, and ascended into the heavens, speaking with the prophets of the past, and then he was carried into the very presence of God. When he returned, many questioned Muhammad, and he described Jerusalem in perfect detail. Incredulous, many Meccans went to his companion Abu Bakr, claiming Muhammad was crazy. Abu Bakr said to them, “If he said that, then he is truthful. I believe him concerning the news of the heavens – that an angel descends to him from the heavens. How could I not believe he went to Jerusalem and came back in a short period of time, when these are

on earth?” This was the final straw for the Meccans, and they began to plot Muhammad’s murder.

## *The Hijrah*

In the midst of this dangerous political scene, Muhammad, who had become well known as a mediator for negotiating a truce between tribes after the theft of the Black Stone from the Ka’aba, was invited by the tribes of Yathrib (or Medina, as it later came to be known) to help mediate inter-tribal conflict that was tearing the city apart. The tribes of Yathrib were so impressed with Muhammad that many adopted Islam and agreed to grant him protection. Muhammad sent his followers first. Meanwhile, the tribes of Mecca had planned to assassinate him by plunging their knives into Muhammad at the same time, thereby distributing his blood among all the tribes. Forewarned of the plot, Muhammad escaped to Yathrib with his friend Abu Bakr and his cousin Ali, assassins hot on their heels. The Hijrah (migration) of Muhammad marked the beginning of the Muslim era, and would be recorded as the first year of the Hijrah – 622 AD. Muhammad changed the name of the town to Medina, meaning “City of the Prophet”, and it would become the seat of the caliphate.

## *The Battle of Badr*

In the first year of his rule in Medina, Muhammad struggled not just against political rivals within Medina, but with the philosophies of the Meccan fugitives who accompanied him. For many years, the Meccan hunafa had declared themselves pacifists and hated the idea of fighting even in self-defense. Having been instructed by the guiding angel to fight the Quraysh until they ceased persecuting the Muslims, Muhammad began leading small expeditions to accustom them to battle. During one of these expeditions, the Muslims attacked a Meccan caravan. Outraged, the Meccans sent their entire army to surprise him. However, the Meccans were used to battles with low casualties and Muhammad’s enthusiastic charge broke their ranks. Though the Muslims had won, their moral victory would come over a debate about what to do with Meccan captives. Virtually all of the prisoners were spared by Muhammad’s decree, due to clan relations, desire for ransom, or the hope that they would convert to Islam.

## *Angels & Djinni on the Battlefield*

Muhammad reported that angels and djinni fought alongside men at the Battle of Badr, and he would address military speeches to the djinni. Those tribes which fought for Islam were the jann and the jinn; their enemies were the ghul, ifreet, and shaitan tribes. They would continue to clash unseen throughout the course of Islam, drawn to the battlefields of men.



# Chapter 14: History of the Faith

## *Battle of Uhud*

Seeking revenge for their dead kinsmen, the Meccans raised a large force and set out to attack the Muslims. Camping at the outskirts of the city, the Meccans destroyed the crops and prevented travel. Muhammad agreed to the wishes of his followers to march out and attack the Meccans. During battle, Muhammad was injured and reports were he had died, and many Muslims were routed and killed. Confident they had defeated their enemy, the Meccans returned home. The Muslim greed at raiding the Meccan tents (for which the favor of God departed them) and the superior command of the Meccan general Khalid ibn al-Walid forced inflicted severe losses on their small community.

## *Battle of the Trench*

Treachery struck the Muslims in their darkest hour. The Banu Nadir tribe, who had forged a secret alliance with the Meccans, planned Muhammad's assassination. When the attempt failed the Banu Nadir expected to be massacred as was Arabian custom; instead, Muhammad spared their lives and sent them into exile. Taking advantage of this weakness, the Meccans sent their cavalry to eradicate the Muslims, but no sooner did Medina come into the view than the Meccans found their advance stopped by a trench the Muslims had dug around Medina. This was considered a thoroughly cowardly and un-Arabian tactic, but it worked. Storms would drive the Meccans off and free the Muslims from the privations of the siege.

## *Treaty of Hdaybiya*

In the sixth year of the Hijrah, Muhammad had a dream and he informed his Companions that they would go on pilgrimage to Mecca despite the state of warfare. Heads shaved, unarmed, and in the robes of pilgrims (*ihram*), 1,500 Muslims came to Hdaybiya, just outside of Mecca, where Muhammad ordered them to stop. Muhammad sent Uthman to the Meccans to negotiate for access to the Ka'aba; the Meccans dared not deny them access and a treaty was established which allowed the Muslims not to perform Hajj that year, but the following year. The treaty also stipulated a truce for ten years. Thus, the following year the Muslims returned and the Meccans grudgingly watched as the Muslims entered the city and performed circumambulations around the Ka'aba. Muhammad sent Bilal, a freed African slave, to the minarets to make the Muslim call to prayer. At long last, it seemed, the war would end. Hearing of the great humility of Muhammad during negotiations, converts came from all across Arabia.

However, while the Muslims faithfully observed

the treaty, the Meccans broke it by attacking the Banu Bakr. In retaliation, Muhammad, at the head of an army of 10,000, lay siege to Mecca and the Meccans surrendered without a fight, expecting to be massacred. Instead, Muhammad granted amnesty to all the Meccans, though the idols of the Ka'aba received no such protection and Muhammad ordered them smashed. Henceforth, the Ka'aba would be the center of the Muslim pilgrimage.

## *Duels on the Eve of Battle*

It is a custom among the Arab tribes that prior to battle, champions are sent out to do one-on-one combat. The most famous such duel was Ali ibn Abu Talib's fight against the widely feared Amro al-Ameri at the Battle of the Trench. Ali's miraculous victory gave courage to the Muslims. Winning such a duel allows the victor to attempt to demoralize the entire opposing army by taking the *mass intimidate* challenge. Alternately, the winner may use one feat (e.g. Inspire) on all of their gathered allies, regardless of their number.

## *Seal of the Prophets*

Two years after the surrender of Mecca, Muhammad passed away quietly. This simple tribesman and merchant had gone from being an orphan to effecting a unification of Arabia that superseded all tribal allegiance. As the last true prophet of God bearing a holy text to humanity, Muhammad is the *seal of the prophets*. After his death, the leadership of the new Arabian state would be passed on to his Companions.

## *The Rightly Guided Caliphs*

### *The First Caliph, Testifier to the Truth*

"If I were to take a friend other than my Lord, I would take Abu Bakr as my friend." (Hadith)

Abu Bakr was a merchant and respected citizen of Mecca. He was also Muhammad's closest companion, having given his daughter to Muhammad in marriage and donating all his belongings to the cause of Islam. When Muhammad breathed his last, Abu Bakr hurried to the house of sorrow, and kissed the cheek of his beloved friend and spiritual master. Upon emerging from the house, Abu Bakr broke the news; disbelief and dismay gripped the community of Muslims in Medina. Muhammad had been their leader and brought them from idolatry to the way of God. How could he die? Even Umar, bravest and strongest of the Companions, lost his composure and drew his sword, threatening to kill anyone who said Muhammad was dead. Abu Bakr







reasoned with Umar and ascended the steps of the lectern in the mosque, addressing the people. "O people, verily whoever worshipped Muhammad behold! Muhammad is indeed dead. But whoever worships God, behold! God is alive and will never die." Abu Bakr quoted the Qur'an and the people were consoled. It was on the shoulders of this man that the burden of leadership fell.

Tribes rebelled and refused to pay tribute, imposters rose claiming Muhammad had passed the prophet-hood to them, and two powerful empires – the Roman and the Persian – threatened the new-born Islamic state. Abu Bakr boldly refused to make concessions to any of these enemies, and rode into battle at the forefront of Muhammad's old army, driving back the Romans, subjugating the rebellious tribes, and forcing the conversion of the false claimants of prophet-hood. These battles were known as the *Ridda* ("Apostasy"), during which many tribes rebelled from Islam in the wake of the Prophet's death. After only 27 months as Caliph, Abu Bakr chose Umar as his successor before passing away.

## ***The Second Caliph, Separator of Truth From Falsehood***

*"God has placed truth upon Umar's tongue and heart."*  
(Hadith)

A literate merchant, Umar traveled to many foreign lands. His travels gave him insight and he always spoke whatever was in his mind even if it displeased others; he was dynamic and straight forward. When he first heard Muhammad preaching, Umar was outraged as others of the Quraysh tribe were, and he even beat a slave girl who

accepted Islam until he was exhausted. The story of his embracing Islam is amazing. One day, full of anger, Umar drew his sword and set out to kill Muhammad. Along the way, Umar was stopped by a friend who revealed that Umar's own sister had also embraced Islam. Rushing to her house, Umar found her reading the Qur'an and beat her mercilessly. Bruised and bleeding she said to her brother: "Umar, you can do what you like, but you cannot turn our hearts away from Islam." Amazed at his sister's newfound strength of will, Umar asked to see what she had been reading. He was at once moved to the core by the words of the Qur'an and immediately grasped their truth. He went straight to Muhammad and swore allegiance to him. When he received the office of Caliph from Abu Bakr, Umar engaged in a campaign of vast expansion, dominating all of Arabia and expanding into Egypt, Iraq, Palestine, and Iran. Umar was always available to his people, lived simply, and kept no guards at his door; he insisted his appointed governors do the same. Often it was difficult for foreign envoys to identify which man was the Caliph, as he was the equal of his subjects in every regard. It was Umar who established departments of treasury, regular soldier's salaries, land surveys to assess equitable taxes, and provided for the poor and needy from public funds. He also established the Pact of Umar with conquered non-Muslims, which continues to govern how non-Muslims are treated. Umar was killed by a Magian with a personal grudge in 24<sup>th</sup> year of the Hijrah (644 AD). Upon learning the assassin was a Magian, Umar said, "Thank God he is not a Muslim."

## ***The Third Caliph, Uthman the Generous***

*"Every Prophet has an assistant, and my assistant will be Uthman."* (Hadith)

Before Umar died to the assassin's blow, he named a committee of Companions to decide on the next Caliph among themselves. After two days of discussion and consulting with the community in Medina, Uthman bin Affan was declared Caliph. A successful merchant of Mecca, Uthman was brought to Islam by his friend Abu Bakr, and he married Muhammad's second daughter Ruqayya. He was so tortured by his relatives because of his embrace of Islam that Uthman was forced to leave. Reestablishing his business in Medina, Uthman donated much of his wealth to charity and for equipping Muslim armies. After the death of his wife, Uthman was deeply grieved, and Muhammad was so moved that he offered the hand of his daughter Kulthum. Uthman was a *hafiz* (he had memorized the Qur'an) who came very close to saint-hood, fasting often, performing hajj every year, looking to the needs of the community, and sleeping on the floor of the mosque despite his wealth. During his reign as Caliph, Uthman continued the expansion of Islam and the practice of impartial justice for all. He compiled a complete and authoritative text of the Qur'an,



distributing copies throughout the empire. Though the first half of his rule was marked by tranquility, during the second half a rebellion formed led by the Jews and Magians. Unwilling to crush the rebellion with bloodshed, Uthman preferred to reason with them, persuading them with kindness. This strategy did not work, and the rebels gained popular support, even influencing some of the Companions. They asked Uthman to abdicate the caliphate, and he refused on the grounds that he would be breaking his solemn pledge to Muhammad. The rebels lay siege to Uthman's home and murdered him. When the first assassin struck Uthman, he was reciting a verse from the Qur'an: "Verily, God sufficeth thee; He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing." (2:137)

### *The Fitna*

Following the assassination of Uthman, citizens flocked to Ali ibn Abu Talib, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, for guidance. Ali had been passed over for leadership three times since the Prophet's death; now they urged him to take the caliphate. Ali faced three challenges to his rule. His first challenge came from within the Prophet's own family; Aisha, Muhammad's widow, demanded that Uthman's murderers be brought to justice. Ali refused on the grounds that it was too difficult to distinguish who the murderers were due to the chaotic conditions during Uthman's last days, and he refused to punish anyone whose guilt was not lawfully proven. Aisha launched her forces against Ali in the Battle of the Camel, but was defeated and repented of her rash action. His next challenge came from Uthman's kinsman Mu'awiya, the governor of Syria. To protect his rule, Ali dismissed all the old governor's upon attaining the caliphate. Mu'awiya refused, and he would openly rebel against Ali at the Battle of Siffin. The tide of battle turned against Mu'awiya, but in a flash of insight, he mounted Qur'ans on his army's lances, proclaiming that he wanted to have the decision of who should be caliph arbitrated using it. Ali and most of his troops were favorable to the idea, however a group in his army saw this as betrayal and departed – these became the Kharijites, radical fundamentalists who were sworn to oppose both camps. They preached uncompromising observance of the Qur'an in the face of corrupt authorities, claiming that Muslims should live with no ruler over them save God. These challenges were known as the *fitna*, a schism within Islam which produced the Sunni, Shi'a, and Kharijite factions.

### *The Fourth Caliph, Lion of God*

"You [Ali] are my brother in this world and the next." (Hadith)

Upon Uthman's death in 35 AH (656 CE), the office of the caliphate was unfilled for several days. The rebels pleaded with Ali bin Abu Talib, first cousin of Muhammad, to take up the office, but he refused, condemning the murder of Uthman. Only when the notable Companions urged him, however, did Ali finally agree. Ali grew up in Muhammad's household. One night he found Muhammad and his first wife Khadijah bowing and prostrating. He asked what this meant, and Muhammad told him they were praying to God and that Ali should do so too. Ali said that he would first like to ask his father. He spent a sleepless night, and in the morning he went to Muhammad and said, "When God created me, He did not consult my father, so why should I consult my father in order to serve God?" Ali was only 10 when he accepted Islam and he was at Muhammad's side constantly, at one point sleeping in Muhammad's bed to deter the Quraysh who planned to murder him. Ali was frequently consulted for his wisdom by Abu Bakr, Uman, and Uthman during their caliphates. Like these men he lived with humility. Upon attaining the caliphate, Ali dismissed all the old governors, save Mu'awiya, who refused to obey until Uthman was avenged. Kharijite assassins were deployed against both Mu'awiya and Ali. The one that targeted Mu'awiya failed, but the other stabbed Ali in the heart with a poisoned sword. Thus, in 40 AH (661 CE) died the last of the Rightly Guided Caliphs of Islam.

### *The Umayyads*

#### *Mu'awiya*

During the battle against Ali's forces, Mu'awiya's forces were near defeat when Mu'awiya ordered copies of the Qur'an affixed to their lances, as a request for religious arbitration. Ali agreed, though his decision would prove to be his downfall. Those who rebelled from the arbitration – the Kharijite – opposed both Ali and Mu'awiya. After Ali's assassination, Mu'awiya was declared the Caliph when Ali's son Hasan surrendered his claim to the caliphate; thus was established the Umayyad dynasty. Mu'awiya moved the capital to Damascus, where powerful Christian families were integrated into the government; this move created a broad base of support for Mu'awiya in Syria. Taking inspiration from the Romans, Mu'awiya instituted the chancellery and the courier service (*barid*). Under his rule Damascus became a court to rival the Romans.







**Yazid I**

Mu'awiya declared his son Yazid would inherit the caliphate; this one act changed the caliphate from an elective office to a dynasty. Anticipating dissent, Mu'awiya asked his closest ministers to swear allegiance to Yazid during Mu'awiya's lifetime, a tradition that caliphs have often fallen back on. However, this came at a time when other lineages of the Prophet competed with the Umayyads. Ibn al-Zubair, a nephew of Khadija, refused to swear allegiance to Yazid and declared himself the righteous Caliph; he gained the support of those dissatisfied with Umayyad rule and he consolidated his power in the Hejaz. Yazid launched a siege of Mecca, and in the process the Ka'aba was damaged. However, Yazid mysteriously died before the siege was completed, sending the Umayyad dynasty into turmoil. To the Sunni Yazid was not a righteous caliph, but to the Shi'a Yazid was a murderous tyrant.

## **Battle of Karbala**

Husayn ibn Ali, grandson of the Prophet, claimed the caliphate, believing the people of Kufa would support his claim. However, the Kufans did not come to his aide when Yazid's army, led by Umar ibn Sa'ad, intercepted him, forming a massive circle which closed in on Husayn's position. Knowing he would die, Husayn sent everyone save his seventy-two closest men away under cover of darkness; these seventy-two men led a fearless battle against the overwhelming forces of Umar ibn Sa'ad, though they were eventually defeated. This day is remembered as Ashurah by the Shi'ites.

## **Treachery & Civil War**

Mu'awiya II ibn-Yazid, an apolitical man troubled by the bloodshed of Karbala, abdicated the caliphate to his relative Marwan, the governor of Medina with a sordid past. Mu'awiya II died shortly thereafter, some say by poison. During Marwan's short reign he recaptured Egypt and Syria from ibn al-Zubair, and quelled the civil war among the Umayyads.

## **Abd al-Malik ibn-Marwan**

The caliphate was splintering apart, and the scholarly Abd al-Malik found the general he needed in Al-Hajjaj bin Yousef, who finally defeated the rebellious Ibn al-Zubair. Abd al-Malik's greatest achievements were not in the battlefield but in the social arena; he made Arabic the official language of the empire, established a mint and a standard currency, expanded the courier service, and repaired the damaged Ka'aba. Though his father had ordered him to appoint his brother Abd al-Aziz as caliph, Abd al-Malik instead appointed his son.

## **Al-Walid I ibn Abd al-Malik**

Al-Walid expanded the empire to Africa, the Sind, and Transoxiana with a strong navy; in these endeavors he relied on Al-Hajjaj, who became governor of Iraq. Like his father, al-Walid was a pious man who developed social institutions – hospitals, madrassahs, and a welfare system. A patron of architecture, al-Walid bought the Christian Basilica of St. John the Baptist (Yahya in Islam), and converted it to a mosque, which is today known as the Great Mosque of Damascus.

## **Suleiman ibn Abd al-Malik**

The expansion of the caliphate continued under Suleiman's rule, approaching the edges of Constantinople and Tabaristan. A pious man, Suleiman had wells dug for pilgrims to Mecca. Breaking with dynastic tradition, Suleiman appointed Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz as his successor, for Umar was widely considered the wisest man of his time.

## **Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz**

*"Rulers usually appoint people to watch over their subjects. I appoint you a watcher over me and my behavior. If you find me at fault in word or action guide me and stop me from doing it."*

- Caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz

Born to the governor of Egypt, Umar grew up in Medina and was married to Fatima, the daughter of Abd al-Malik. He developed an upstanding reputation in Medina, but was dismissed from his post by al-Walid. When Suleiman announced that he was naming Umar as his successor, Umar was shocked and only reluctantly accepted the position after trying to dissuade Suleiman. Unlike the



caliphs before him, Umar lived modestly and visitors often could not distinguish him from the servants. He was hated by the Umayyad officials for confiscating their stolen estates and redistributing them to the public, but the masses loved him. Umar enforced the Shari'ah with a passion, expanding welfare programs to orphans and the destitute. He abolished the *jizya* tax on converts, closed down bathhouses where men and women mingled freely, and repelled attacks from the Turks and rebellions by the Kharijites. True to his character right up until he was poisoned, Umar is often compared to the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs. When he learned that he had been poisoned, Umar pardoned the culprit and, collecting the punitive payments he was entitled to under the Shari'ah, placed them in the public treasury.

### *Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik*

Umar's cousin Yazid II abd al-Malik was faced with civil wars throughout the empire, which he ruthlessly put down. His brutal response caused many dissenting groups to support the Abbassids. When Yazid died of tuberculosis, his brother Hisham was named Caliph. Hisham continued the reforms begun by Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz, creating translation centers, strengthening the school system, and funding artists. Hisham ended the rebellions in the Sind and the Maghreb, reasserting Umayyad control over both areas. Furthermore, he sent his army all the way into Europe where they were finally repelled at the Battle of Tours by Charles Martel. Despite his accomplishments, Hisham's death provoked civil war between the Umayyads and Abbassids.

### *The Progeny of Yazid*

Hisham's nephew al-Walid inherited the caliphate amidst scandal. Well known for his hedonistic lifestyle, Walid was an oppressor who was soon

#### *Revolt of Zayd ibn Ali*

*"Disgraceful life and honorable death: both are bitter morsels, but if one must be chosen, my choice is honorable death."*

- Imam Zayd ibn Ali

Son of the fourth Shi'a Imam, Zayd, grandson of Husayn ibn Ali (who had led the battle in Karbala), sought redress for the wrongs done to the House of the Prophet. He fought a hopeless battle against Hisham's forces and, after he was slain, his body was exhumed from its resting place and placed on the gallows entirely naked where it remained for four years until taken down by al-Walid II.

killed in battle. He was succeeded by his cousin Yazid III who became nicknamed "The Deficient" for withholding pay from his army. When Yazid died prematurely, he was succeeded by his brother Ibrahim, who ruled only a short time before going into hiding for fear of the growing Abbasid movement.

### *Marwan II ibn-Muhammad*

When Ibrahim abdicated, his cousin Marwan took the caliphate and went into hiding. Revolts were occurring throughout the caliphate. Marwan struggled to keep the caliphate from falling apart, but his efforts were doomed to failure. At the battle of the Zab River his forces were defeated by Abu al-Abbas as-Saffah. Marwan fled to Egypt, but was caught while crossing the Nile and executed. His death signaled a massacre of the Umayyads, which would leave only one survivor – Abd al-Rahman who would go on to establish the emirate of Cordoba.

### *House of al-Abbas*

Dissent against the corrupted Umayyads had been a long time in the making. The Abbasid claim was based on their descent from Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib, a young uncle of the Prophet. In their bid for power, the Abbasids relied on non-Arab Muslims (*mawali*), especially the Persians of Khurasan and the Berbers of the Maghreb, as well as the Shi'ites. It is these former allies, whom the Abbasids have since turned their backs on, that present the gravest threat to the caliphate today.

### *As-Saffah, The Blood-Letter*

Abu al-Abbas Abdullah ibn Muhammad as-Saffah was believed by many Shi'ites to be the *mahdi*, leading a struggle of good against evil – the black flags of the Abbasids symbolizing spirituality against the white flags of the Umayyads symbolizing sorrow. Abu al-Abbas' ruthless massacre of the Umayyads earned him the title "blood-letter." Quickly consolidating his power, Abu al-Abbas established a diverse administration staffed by *dhimmi*s – Jews, Nestorean Christians, and Persian Zoroastrians. He reformed the army such that non-Arabs and non-Muslims were allowed to join. However, Abu al-Abbas seized the caliphate himself, reneging on his promise to the Shi'ites to instate their Imam as the head of the caliphate.

### *Banu Hashim*

Muhammad's great-grandfather was Hashim, for whom this Quraysh clan is named. Members are called Hashemites; they are the traditional keepers of the Ka'aba. The Shi'a believe a great leader called the *Mahdi* will be born of the Banu Hashim.



## *Al-Mansur, The Victorious*

After the death of his brother Abu al-Abbas, Abu Ja'far Abdallah ibn Muhammad al-Mansur took the throne. A political genius, al-Mansur played the varying factions at court off of one another, and assassinated the Khurasani ruler Abu-Muslim, thereby enjoying a long rule. He gained the name "the victorious" after quelling Shi'ite rebellions in Iraq and Arabia. However, he was quite tolerant of the *shu'ubiya*, a Persian cultural movement which emphasized the supremacy of Persian literature and art over that of the Arabs. He put the *barid* to work gathering intelligence reports, which he perused with his characteristic eye for detail. His greatest act was the founding of Baghdad. A ruthless task-master, al-Mansur died and was buried in one of a hundred graves dug to hide his corpse from the Umayyads.

## *Al-Mahdi, The Redeemer*

Muhammad ibn-Mansur al-Mahdi became Caliph while his father al-Mansur was on his deathbed. He became known as the "redeemer" for reestablishing relations with the Shi'ites. Al-Mahdi created new departments for the army and the chancellery, appointed *qadis*, and ended discriminatory laws against non-Arabs. Working closely with the Barmakid family, who staffed his new departments, al-Mahdi persecuted the polytheist sects within Islam. Unlike the caliphs before him, al-Mahdi assumed the responsibility of defining orthodox Islamic theology, and this decision would influence the policies of his successors. Baghdad grew during al-Mahdi's rule as the paper industry boomed, and immigrants came from across the caliphate and beyond. Mahdi's death was surrounded by mysterious circumstances. Some claimed he was cursed by a djinn, others that he was poisoned, and still others that he had a hunting accident.

## *Al-Hadi*

Following his father's mysterious death, Abu Abdullah Musa ibn Mahdi al-Hadi became Caliph. Like his father, he allowed commoners to visit him in his palace in Baghdad and speak with him. Continuing the reforms and orthodox stance his father had taken, al-Hadi also fought Kharijite uprisings. He wavered between securing succession for his son Ja'far and respecting his father's

will to keep Harun as heir apparent. Swayed by the lack of his brother's ambitions to the throne, al-Hadi moved to make the young Ja'far his heir, however he was cut short. Most agree his death was a tragic accident, but other theories suggest he was killed by those who wished to see Harun in power, namely the Barmakids or even his own mother, Khayzuran.

## *Caliph Harun al-Rashid*

*"See you not how the sun grew faint*

*And when Harun ruled, gave again his light?"*

- from a verse by Ibrahim al-Mosuli, aspiring court poet

Harun was propelled into the throne by the scheming of the Barmakids and his mother Khayzuran, who had a gift for affairs of state. He has two sons al-Ma'mun, the son of a Persian slave girl, and al-Amin, the lofty son of Lady Zubaida. The affairs of state entrusted to his ministers, Harun spent his time living a luxurious court life, sponsoring artists and scholars, and leading troops in battle against the Romans. Following the execution of his old friend Ja'far, Caliph took a more severe stance against his traditional rival, the Shi'ite Imam Musa al-Kazim, eventually arresting him for fear that Musa was preaching rebellion against the Caliph. Imam Musa was killed in Baghdad while in jail, allegedly poisoned, and his body had been put on display on the Baghdad bridge to dispel any rumors that he is still alive. Today the bones of Imam Musa and those of Ja'far are a warning to those who would act against the Caliph. Since this episode Harun has become more skeptical of his advisors and concerned about rebels betraying him. Thus began the Caliph's madness. Though he has a magnificent palace far grander than that of any Caliph before him Harun takes to traveling the city streets at night in disguise. During these outings he learns the state of his citizens. Coupled with his adopting the Persian practice of secret plainclothes police, this has caused a fair amount of fear in the people of Baghdad. At the same time, Harun is a great patron of learning and art, himself a scholar and poet, and he invites many to perform in his court. His tyranny is only rivaled by his scholarship.

## *Abu Muslim's Death*

Abu Muslim was a Persian general who was recruited by as-Saffah to foment rebellion in Khurasan and then to lead a revolt, quickly becoming the de facto Abbasid governor of Khurasan. Later he would storm Damascus, the Umayyad capital. His even-handed policies toward all faiths and his military prowess made him a hero of the Khurasanis. When al-Mansur took power, Abu Muslim was transferred as governor of Syria and Egypt, where he did not have popular support. He was called before the Caliph, and quelling his apprehensions, went to meet Al-Mansur in Iraq, where he was murdered by the Caliph's guards and thrown into the river. Epics are sung about Abu Muslim in Khurasan, and some believe he has not truly died, revering him as a saint.



*The Barmakids*

Hereditary guardians of the Nawbahar Buddhist shrine in Balkh, the Barmakid name is synonymous with wealth and status. They attained great power under the Abbasids, originally as accountants charged with paying the military. Yahya ibn-Khalid was the vizier of al-Mahdi and the tutor of Harun before being imprisoned. The sudden turn of events against the family has shocked the *ummah*, and poets lament the death of Ja'far and the imprisonment of the Barmakids. Some attribute the events to harem intrigues: Harun wanted his sister Abbasa to be able to join him and Ja'far at their drinking parties, and so he had them married purely on the matter of convenience on the condition that Ja'far not touch Abbasa; however one thing led to another and the two had drunken sex. When the Caliph learned of the child Abbasa had, he flew into a fit of rage. Another theory is that of the Alid conspiracy: An Alid rebel (of the family of Ali) named ibn Abd Allah fled to Daylam where he began to foment dissent, threatening to cut off trade through Khurasan. When ibn Abd Allah was captured he was put in the custody of Ja'far who, feeling pangs of conscience had the man released, inspiring the Caliph's wrath.

*Abd al-Rahman, The Sole Survivor*

Abd al-Rahman, founder of the Emirate in Cordoba, was prophesied to become a king. In the wake of the slaughter and the execution of his family, Abd al-Rahman fled with his younger brother Yahya to the Euphrates pursued by Abbasid soldiers. Diving into the river, Abd al-Rahman swam for all he was worth but his brother Yahya could not reach the embankment and the river pulled him back. Exhausted and defeated Abd al-Rahman watched the soldiers decapitate his brother, sending his head rolling down the muddy Euphrates. Abd al-Rahman's flight took him through Palestine and Egypt where he was shunned, threatened, and chased away. Other Umayyad refugees had come before him and none wished to risk the wrath of the Abbasids by harboring fugitives. In the Maghreb, he was warned away from Qairawan; a fortuneteller predicted that a prince from the west would create a kingdom in the east, and the ruler of Qairawan planned to murder this prince. Inspired by these prophecies, Abd al-Rahman began planning, his eyes glued to the shores of Al-Andalus. There, As-Sumail, the un-crowned king, was besieged by rebels in the northern fortress of Zaragoza. As-Sumail's puppet governor was fighting the Basques far away. Indeed, the whole country was falling apart, with no central government to hold the reins. Gathering the Umayyad refugees together, Abd al-Rahman captured Seville, then headed toward Cordoba with his small army, overcoming the exhausted forces of the governor. Abd al-Rahman would contend with the Christian forces to the north, the governor and his supporters, and the powerful Abbasid empire, but he kept his eye on his final goal: A society free of fanaticism and tribal feuds, served by a just government. To this end, he waged ruthless war for 20 years against his united enemies. His most despicable act occurred following his miraculous victory after several months being besieged in the fortress of Carmona. Abd al-Rahman collected the severed heads of the rebellion leaders, attached name tags to their ears, and sent them secretly to Qairawan, which was now part of the Abbasid territory. News reached Baghdad where Caliph al-Mansur praised God for "creating a sea between us and that demon."



## Chapter 15: Geography of the Caliphate

*That night, while I was sleeping on the roof of the cell, I dreamed that I was on the wing of a great bird which was flying with me towards Mecca, then to Yemen, then eastwards and thereafter going towards the south, then flying far eastwards and finally landing in a dark and green country, where it left me. I was astonished at this dream and said to myself "If the shaykh can interpret my dream for me, he is all that they say he is." Next morning, after all the other visitors had gone, the shaykh called me and when I had related my dream interpreted it to me saying: "You will make the pilgrimage and visit the Prophet, and you will travel through Yemen, Iraq, the country of the Turks, and India. You will stay there for a long time and meet there my brother Dilshad the Indian, who will rescue you from a danger into which you will fall." Then he gave me a traveling-provision of small cakes and money, and I bade him farewell and departed. Never since parting from him have I met on my journeys aught but good fortune, and his blessings have stood me in good stead.*

- journal of Ibn-Battuta, 14<sup>th</sup> century explorer

"When one is an explorer, the world is too large, but when one is an enemy of the state, the world is not large enough. My parents named me Sameeha bint-Ahmed al-Hamra, and I am the last of my family to carry on the tradition – are you writing this down?"

The bleary young scribe became all attention at Sameeha's prompting. "Yes, of course!"

Sighing, Sameeha stared at the scribe she had hired to record her memoirs, at the deep bags under his eyes and the ink stains on his fingertips. "How long have you been writing?"

"Not long, sayyida. Five minutes." He groggily wiped sand from his eyes. Everything was five minutes to this young man. When he came in late for work and she asked him how long it took him to reach her house his answer was "five minutes." When she asked him how long she would have to wait before the ink dried his answer was "five minutes." Sameeha wouldn't be surprised if she asked him how long it was from Samarqand to Cordoba that he would answer "five minutes."

"You know, I was your age when I left Baghdad and set forth for the Kingdom of Aksum." Sameeha looked out the window at the city streets, remembering all those people who had helped her so that she might record the truth.

Wide-eyed, the scribe looked up, realizing a story was on the horizon. "Why did you go to Aksum?"

"Because that is where my great grandfather was buried, and I sought out a student of his who could help me finish a carpet, a magic carpet the likes of which has not existed since the time of Khosroe. I traveled all over the world to find the last living magic carpet makers." Looking to the door to make sure no one was listening, Sameeha continued. "I'll make you a deal. If I tell you about the wonders I have seen will you come back tomorrow and finish being my recorder?"

"O yes, sayyida!"

"Very well. One bright Friday afternoon in Baghdad, when the white disc of the sun blazed in the third quarter of the middle heaven, there appeared a man gliding toward the highest minaret of the Caliph's Palace. This was none other than the same Kurdish soldier who had been caught holding the youngest princess' hand and reciting poetry to her; the soldier was whipped and cast into the streets and the princess imprisoned in a tower and promised in marriage to the Caliph's royal executioner. The soldier glided up to the minaret and the princess leapt onto his flying carpet; they flew over the streets as the crowd cheered and then eloped into the clouds. It was a wondrous day for Baghdad, but a terrible day for my family and our close friends the Halevis. The Caliph, it was al-Mahdi at the time, ordered all men involved in the business of flying carpets executed and all flying carpets were to be seized by the guard or burned. Fleeing the Caliph's wrath, the families went to Merv, to Ghwor, and to Bukhara. The Halevis vanished, either all dead or having gone into hiding. Only my father's stubbornness kept my family from joining the flight, and we were forced into hiding. However, the guards found us out and they seized my father and my brothers.

"My father clutched me close and whispered these words: 'The Halevis have left a carpet here with a secret code. You must find the carpet – the fate of our family depends on it!'

"He was taken to the Caliph, who, having tired of bloodshed, ordered my father and brothers imprisoned. Searching the house, I found a secret passage and within was a carpet so beautiful that I could not tear my eyes from it until my sisters dragged me away. Thus, my story begins in Baghdad, on the eve that I decided to escape the city and learn the secret of the last carpet of the Halevis."

### Measuring Distance

**Assaba:** Roughly equal to a finger or one-fourth an adult's palm.

**Palm (Cabda):** One quarter of a foot, the size of the palm of your hand.

**Foot:** One-third of a meter.

**Cubit:** About 2 feet, the distance between a person's thumb and elbow.



# Chapter 15: Geography of the Caliphate

**Pace:** 6 feet, how far an adult can move in a step or two.

**Cane (*qasab*):** 12 feet, the height of a fully grown sugar cane plant.

**Stadion (*seir*):** 600 feet, the length of an ancient foot race in Greece.

**Ghalva:** 720 feet

**League (*farasakh*):** 18,000 feet or 5.76 kilometers, the distance a person or horse can walk in one hour.

**Barid:** 4 *farasakh*, the distance a horseback courier working for the *barid*, the medieval Islamic courier service, would travel in an easy day.

**Marhala:** 8 *farasakh*, the maximum distance a postal worker would travel in one day under extreme circumstances.

## Baghdad & Iraq

*"I mention Baghdad first because it is the center of Iraq, the greatest city, which has no peer in the east or the west of the world in extent, size, prosperity, abundance of water, or health of climate, and because it is inhabited by all kinds of people, town-dwellers and country-dwellers. To it they come from all countries, far and near, and people from every side have preferred Baghdad to their own homelands...In it there is gathered that which does not exist in any other city in the world...It is as if all the good things of the world are sent there, all the treasures of the earth assembled there, and all the blessings of creation perfected there."*

- Yaqub ibn-Abdallah Yaqut, *The Book of Nations*

I was born in Baghdad, the Jewel of the World. She lies between the terminus of the caravan routes in Kufa and the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates in Basra. Through the center of the city, splitting it into two vast semi-circles, is the Tigris river; Baghdad was built on the Sarat Canal, one of the four canals connecting the Tigris and the Euphrates. On both sides of the river are miles of palaces, kiosks, and gardens; marble steps lead down to the water's edge where thousands of gondolas dance like sunbeams on the water. For a small fee, the gondolas will take one across the river, though one is a captive audience to whatever tirade the gondola driver may have in store. All households in the rich quarters have plentiful water supplied with aqueducts that intersect the city. Where the river passes through the north and south are the city gates, guarded night and day by relays of soldiers stationed in watchtowers. I have heard that Caliph al-Mansur had a vision and set off to build Baghdad; locals encouraged him to build a city on both sides of the Tigris, this way if one district's crops failed or were late, another's would be bountiful.

The pre-eminent center of learning, Baghdad draws scholars and artists from across the world who come seeking the Caliph's patronage. Indeed, the Caliph is an avid patron of all arts and sciences, and he is oft generous, though rarely merciful. Herein can be found every ethnicity, from Chinese to Moors, and every faith, from Christians to pagans. Since its founding, Baghdad's population has swelled to six times its previous size. Besides Chang'an, capital of the Tang dynasty, there is no larger city, and only Constantinople can hold a candle to the city's beauty and majestic architecture.

### The Many Names of Baghdad

Baghdad was derived from Persian for "foundation of God" though many of the Persians prefer to call the city by the Arabic word *Zawra* meaning "crooked". Depending on who you ask, Baghdad is "crooked" due to the bend of the Tigris river, the city's convoluted alleyways, or the integrity of its police (or the lack thereof). Caliph al-Mansur officially named the city *Madinat al-Salaam*, the City of Peace. Among the lower classes, Baghdad is the City of Palaces, a tongue-in-cheek reference to the vast number of palaces lining the banks of the Tigris. Poets often devise flowery epithets for Baghdad, some more honest than others.

### Districts of Baghdad

#### Athabiyya (West District)

Between the Kufa Gate and the Damascus Gate lies the Athabiyya, the Chinese district. While not officially given to the Chinese, all the trades practiced here, with the exception of the looming Damascus Gate Prison, originated in China. Silk and papermakers, who learned their arts from captured Chinese prisoners, as well as porcelain traders from China dominate business in the Athabiyya. The first hospital (*maristan*) has recently been erected by the Caliph in this district, and physicians provide free medical care for the public here. The Mosque of Baratha, where Ali ibn Abu Talib prayed 150 years ago, offers visitors healing hot springs, provided they can tolerate the heated Shi'a preaching of the monks who live there.

#### Harbiyya (North District)

Both the largest residential area and the largest slave market, the Harbiyya district meet the Tahiri Canal at its north end; it enjoys a lively river scene of pleasure boaters, fishermen, and salty dockworkers. Recently founded by the Caliph's son, prince al-Ma'mun, the House of Wisdom (*Bayt al-Hikmah*) is an institution for education, translation, and



## Navigating a City

Navigating a large medieval city, with its twisting alleys, lack of street signs, and limited lighting at night is quite challenging. Any character new to a city must make a Knowledge (streetwise) check to find their way around safely, with a Difficulty according to the area of the city they're in.

DC	Area	Baghdad Example
5	Well-planned district with helpful guards	Harbiyya, Round City, Sharqiyya
10	Industrial district with many alleyways	Athabiyya, Karkh, Rusafa, Shamasiiyya
15	Slum or ghetto with poor planning	Karkh (Fief of Dogs)
20	Labyrinthine district with secret passages	Karkh (Thieves' District)

A failure indicates that the character has become lost or has encountered a hazard typical of the area (e.g. muggers in a slum or a random guard search in a noble district).

preservation of texts. The Caliph is seeking the best and the brightest scholars, paying them to come live and work at the House of Wisdom. While the building itself is still being erected near palace and the East Khursan Gate, already the scholars of the House of Wisdom are gaining a reputation for their willingness to pay for any book. They offer its weight in gold. The Palace of Eternity (*Qasr al-Khuld*), Caliph Harun al-Rashid's residence, also lies near the East Khurasan Gate. It is named after the third Paradise visited by the Prophet. Indeed, al-Khuld is heavenly wonder upon the earth; man-made waterfalls, vast gardens, royal stables, and all manner of wondrous and magical inventions are found within.

## The Karkh (Market District)

From the wharves of Baghdad ships unload porcelain from China, spices and dyes from Hindustan, lapis lazuli and slaves from Turkestan, ivory and gold from Aksum, and pearls and weapons from Arabia. These goods eventually reach the Karkh, a sprawling series of connected souks. Smiths plying their trade from tile-paved streets and barley-mills on crushed brick roads are both found in the Karkh. The poorest section of Baghdad, known as the Fief of Dogs, lies to the southeast. At the heart of the Fief of Dogs lies the notorious Thieves' District where the Sheikh of Thieves runs an organized crime network that spans the entire city.

## The Round City

At the heart of Baghdad is the Round City, the city as it was originally built by al-Mansur before its population explosion. Guarded by great walls, some 60 to 90 feet high, the city's administrative centers, paradise gardens, and government offices are found within. Only pedestrians are allowed within the Round City and guards conduct rigorous searches at the four gates; servants must carry food and water in. Only the nobility can afford litters, traveling on the backs of their slaves. Secret tunnels connect various offices, originally designed as escape routes for nobility in times of warfare. At the center of the Round City is the Golden Gate Palace and the Great Mosque of al-Mansur. At the top of the palace's green dome sits a bronze horseman, visible for miles around in the midday sun. Whichever direction the horseman's lance points lies the gravest threat to the caliphate. Great gardens decorate the Round City, several hours in circumference, and a menagerie and an aviary provide an enclosure for wild animals reserved for nobles' sport.

## Rusafa (East District)

The Lower Bridge leads to the Rusafa district, where shoppers peruse the produce at the Tuesday Market (*Souk al-Thalatha*), returning in the evening to the palaces and marinas of the nobles along the river bank. Two sub-districts exist within the Rusafa. The Mukharrim, a center

## Regions of the Caliphate

Region	Language	Ethnicity	Dominant Religion(s)
Aksum	Ge'ez	Zanj	Christianity
Al-Andalus	Mozarabic	Moor	Islam
Arabia	Arabic	Arabian	Islam
Egypt	Coptic	Copt	Christianity, Islam
Franji Empire	Franji	Franji	Christianity
Hindustan	Hindi	Hindu	Hinduism
Khazaria	Khazar	Khazar	Judaism
Kurdistan	Kurdish	Kurd	Islam, Yezidism
Maghreb	Tamazight	Berber	Christianity, Islam, Judaism
Nubia	Nubian	Nubian	Christianity
Persia	Pahlavi	Persian	Islam, Zoroastrianism
Roman Empire	Koine	Roman	Christianity
Sind	Sindi	Sind	Hinduism, Islam
Syria	Aramaic	Syrian	Christianity, Islam, Judaism
Zhonguo	Chinese	Tangren	Buddhism



of trade, lies on the far east side; here can be found the Horse Market, the Hay Market, and the Thirst Market, where ice-cool sherbet is served under the heat of the sun. Between the Shammasiyya and the river are the Rusafa Mosque and the Palace of al-Madhi; here lies the Rusafa Maidan, a marketplace for luxury goods.

### *Shammasiyya (Christian District)*

The Shammasiyya is a Christian district known for its excellent wine; it is also known as the house of the Greek (*dar al-rumi*). At the southeast edge of the Shammasiyya lies a tangle of churches and monasteries – the Christian Quarter. Here the Nestorean Patriarch acts as the community's leader, enjoying a healthy rivalry with the Othodox Roman ambassadors who have their own palace near the East Khurasan Gate. The Nestoreans are loyal to the Caliph, but that doesn't stop other Christian sects from conspiring against the Caliph with the Romans' help.

### *Sharqiyya (Southeast District)*

Vineyards, gardens, and fruit and vegetable markets lie in the shadow of the Great Sharqiyya Mosque. Barges flow along the Tigris, depositing their cargo in well-guarded warehouses. While the odiferous businesses are based here – dyers, naphtha makers, perfumers, pitch-burners, tanners – the harbor breezes carry the odors away. The Bookseller's Market (*Souk al-Warrakin*) runs from the Basra Gate to the Harrani Gate, boasting over one hundred booksellers. Illuminated redactions of the Qur'an, beautiful texts on calligraphy, annotated maps and ship captains' logs (*diwan*), scrolls of arcane lore, and edifying histories penned by masterful hands can be purchased or rented here. Though the thief who fails to return a rented book had best beware, the booksellers are ruthless when tracking down a book that has been wrongfully taken from their collections.

### *Kufa*

Kufa is well known for the spirit of its citizens who have a long-standing tradition of deposing poor governors and electing their own. During the Shi'a – Sunni schism, the Kufans supported Ali's right to the caliphate, and eventually they rebelled. All the leaders were executed, and fear ruled the city. When the Abbasids seized Kufa they made it into their capital for over a decade until they moved the administration to Baghdad. Kufa was the first center of Qur'anic interpretation, and recording of the Hadith. The greatest Shi'a scholars came from Kufa and they developed the earliest calligraphic script of the Arabic language (*Kufic*). The Great Mosque at Kufa is a public center for Islamic jurisprudence, interpretation of the Qur'an, the Hadith, and Arabic

grammar. I have never met a people more literate or well versed in politics than the citizens of Kufa.

### *Basra*

Founded in the 16<sup>th</sup> year of the Hijrah, the same time Kufa was founded, Basra is the most important port city in the caliphate. Crisscrossed by a network of canals, the city is a maze of waterways at high tide when the water rises by the height of a man. Its Arabic name means "seeing everything", and it was given to the city because of the military role it played against the Sassanids. However, among the flying carpet weavers it is known by its Persian name *Bassorah* which means "where many ways come together." During the schism between Aisha and Ali ibn Abu Talib, the Basrans supported Aisha. The spirit of dissent and self-governance among the Basrans is only rivaled by the Kufans: Mysticism and heterodox interpretations like Mu'tazillah and Qadariyyah were born in Basra. Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali, the student of Imam Ali, established the School for Arabic Grammar which teaches logic, linguistics, and Qur'anic interpretation from a Shi'a perspective.

After consulting with my kindred in Kufa and Basra

### *Gypsy (Ethnicity)*

In Arabic gypsies are called *haddad* and *zott*, in Egypt *ghajar*, in Persia *koli*, and in Constantinople *kouloufos*. They call themselves the *Dom*, which simply means "man", and their native tongue is Domari. Most live in squatter communities in Iraq, traveling in caravans when business slows. Gypsies are talented musicians, astrologers, blacksmiths, street entertainers, tattooists, animal trainers, and veterinary surgeons. However, they are treated as heathen thieves and tramps unfit for hard work. The gypsies are regularly denied basic rights of citizenship in order to drive them away or to "civilize" them. But the gypsies will not go away... unless the wanderlust calls them.

**Naming:** Each gypsy family has a private and public name. The private name is known only by the gypsy and his or her family, whereas the public name is typical of the region the gypsy is traveling in. Because of the secrecy with which they guard their names, I was unable to record any during my travels.

I learned that there were many carpet weavers throughout the world, and that they could help me to interpret the symbols in the Halevi's final carpet. I collected what little wealth I could muster and set out for Mecca under the guise of a pilgrim. They said there was a weaver there who could help me, a woman named Fadwa who had known my great grand-father...







## Arabia

Traveling southwest from Kufa we soon passed the caravanserais at Ukhaydir and joined with other pilgrims coming from Syria. There are five parts to Arabia, of which I have traveled through all save the Rub al Khali, the Empty Quarter, which only the Bedouin can survive.

The Eastern desert is named Al-Ahsa after the great oasis there where all manner of delicious fruits are grown, in particular date palms. Many small villages exist in this oasis, and the largest town is simply called Ahsa. The al-Juwana Mosque, the second oldest in all of Islam, is a welcome sight for the traveler. However, it is not all fertile land. To the north are the Ad Dibdibah plains and to the south the Al Jafurah desert, which reaches the Rub al Khali at its southern end. We entered the As Summan Plateau, a barren land whose ancient gorges show the hand of water. How I longed to see even a glimpse of the coast, with its unstable marshes and salt flats, and ocean water that rises so close to the surface that where the land begins and the sea begins is indistinguishable.

The Northern desert, An-Nafud, is connected to the Rub al Khali by a narrow sand corridor called the ad-Dahna. An-Nafud separates the heart of the Arabian peninsula from the northern Syrian steppes known as Badiyat ash Sham. Here the sand appears red when the sun is low. Numerous *wadis*, intermittent streams, flow through this vast plateau, providing pastures for nomadic herders during winter and spring. Like thousands of caravans before us, we traveled through the Wadi as

Sirhan, a large basin 300 meters below the surrounding plateau, that was once an inland sea. The oases of Al Jawf and Sakakah were the most beautiful I have ever seen, but I was afraid of the stories of Ghuls who lured travelers into poison pools and was glad to move on.

The Nejd is a rocky plateau interspersed by small sandy deserts and isolated mountains, the best known of which is the Jabal Shammar range. Here the Shammar tribes dwell in their capital oasis of Hayil. After the steep climb through the An-Nafud, the descent through the Nejd was welcome. We passed ancient *wadis* of ar Rummah, as Surr, and ad Dawasir, and I wondered how my ancestors had traveled these very routes. As we surmounted the Jabal Tuwayq, an arc-shaped ridge, we gazed down its steep western face at oases that dotted the landscape – Al Kharij, Buraydah, Riyadh and many more. Such a sight of greenery was welcome after our long trek.

The Asir mountain range separates the verdant Hejaz from the rest of Arabia. The eastern slope rises gently, forming a plateau which drops into the Rub al Khali in the south. Numerous *harrat*, lava beds, are scars on the surface of this great plateau. The Bedouin say that in Khaybar, north of Medina, you can hear the rumbling of Ifreeti beneath the earth. I cannot describe the feeling that fills you upon reaching the birthplace of the Faith upon cresting the rugged peaks of Asir, your feet blistered, your lips parched. The Hejaz, the site of the holiest places in Islam, is majestically beautiful. Oases are scattered everywhere, agricultural plots thriving around them, and even in the terraced mountainsides. To the south the coastal Tihamah lowlands are a narrow shaft of sand bordering alluvial plains.

## Desert Storms

There are two types of storms that plague the desert: Torrential downpours and sand storms. In the desert, rainfall barely reaches half an inch per year. Most of this rainfall occurs in a downpour accompanied by terrible thunderstorms; all nomads seek shelter as lightning flies from the sky and winds whip through their tents. However, the nomads fare better than the city dwellers, who must contend with flooded streets, airborne disease, destroyed housing, and ravaged fields.

### At the Center of the World

When in Baghdad and other cosmopolitan capital cities, heroes can learn what is going on throughout the empire they are in and even in distant lands. Anyone in Baghdad may take the following challenge with the Gather Information skill.

**Pulse of the Nation:** When in a capital city, you can expand the area of your Gather Information check by increasing the Difficulty by +5 for the entire nation, and +10 for distant centers of commerce and major trade partners.



### *Faces of Baghdad*

#### *“Abu Nuwas”*

*Expert 6 (hakawati)*

A renowned poet, Abu Nuwas was born Hasan ibn-Hani. He earned the nickname “Abu Nuwas” because of his beautiful hair. The fifty-year old man is one of the most controversial poets of his day, renowned for his wine songs and his ribald poems. He is a favorite courtier of Harun al-Rashid, but the orthodox despise him for his hedonism and love of the extravagant lifestyle.

#### *Ahmad ibn-Hanbal*

*Expert 4 (mullah)*

The young Ahmad is an itinerant scholar who travels throughout Arabia, Iraq, and Syria, gathering hadiths of the Prophet. He is a man of strong belief who supports the Mu’tazilite position that the Qur’an is uncreated and eternal. Already, he is widely popular among the scholars of Baghdad for his unswerving faithfulness.

#### *Ali al-Rida*

*Expert 5 (mullah), Adept 5 (saint)*

The solemn 35-year old al-Rida became the Shi’a Imam after his father Musa al-Kazim was imprisoned by Harun al-Rashid and died in prison, allegedly of poisoning. He is one of the leading medical minds of the caliphate and advocates a balance of prophetic and scientific medicine. His followers wish him to lead an insurrection against the tyrannical Caliph, but al-Rida is beyond such aggression. He is a saint among men, blessed with the gift of prophesy and the ability to win converts to his faith. No sooner do words leave his mouth than they become proverbs.

#### *Al-Jahiz*

*Expert 4 (mullah)*

Born Abu Uthman Amr ibn-Bahr al-Kinani al-Fuaqimi, the young Zanji scholar al-Jahiz is famously ugly. His nickname “al-Jahiz” means “goggle-eyed”, a teasing term his contemporaries use. Despite his famous ugliness, al-Jahiz is a skilled author of prose, fiercely proud of his African heritage. He is a follower of the Mu’tazilite school.

#### *Al-Khwarizmi*

*Expert 2 (mullah), Adept 2 (natural philosopher)*

Though he is just a young man, Muhammad ibn-Musa al-Khwarizmi has been recruited by the nascent House of Wisdom. He is a masterful mathematician, and a Latin and Greek scholar charged with translating texts for the Caliph.

#### *Al-Sindhi ibn-Shahik*

*Warrior 6 (guard)*

The prefect of the Baghdad police force, the *shurta*, the middle-aged ibn-Shahik is a cunning man devoted to the Caliph. He has several rivalries with well-known Baghdadi thieves who continually elude him, and he is known to drink away the shame of his failures. Ibn-Shahik prides himself on his loyalty to the Caliph, but he objects to Harun’s habit of sneaking into the city in disguise.

#### *Bashir ibn al-Mutamir*

*Expert 6 (mullah)*

Bashir is the current leader of the Mu’tazilite school of philosophers which seeks to reconcile Greek thought with Islamic theology. The orthodox consider him to be a dangerous radical and he is under close watch.



**Fadl ibn al-Rabi**

*Expert 5 (merchant)*

The thirty-year old Fadl was a wealthy merchant who helped to plan Ja'far's death with Lady Zubeida. He is an insidious man who has back-stabbed his way to his current position as Chamberlain of the Round Palace, and he controls visiting dignitaries' access to the Caliph.

**Harun al-Rashid**

*Expert (aristocrat) 6, Warrior (amir) 2*

The Rightly Guided Caliph ascended the throne after the mysterious death of his elder brother. He was raised alongside the Barmakids, and was always a friend to them, until recently he turned on his dear friend Ja'far and had him murdered. Harun is a diplomat and a lover of the arts; he patronizes scholars, courtiers, and merchants and exchanges correspondence with Charlemagne. In recent years he has grown to hate the Romans and regularly goes to Anatolia to lead battles against them. The Caliph is known for his midnight outings into the city disguised as a merchant, and during his outings he is often accompanied by his eunuch executioner Masrur and his court poet Abu Nuwas.

**Jabir ibn-Hayyan**

*Adept (alchemist) 12*

Known throughout the world, Jabir is the foremost alchemist of his time. Though he has spent his whole life questing for the philosopher's stone, the elderly Persian, who looks not a hair older than 40, is also a talented scholar and physician. He is employed by the Caliph's court to compose a book on alchemy.

**Jabril ibn Bukhtishu**

*Expert (physician) 5*

A Christian Persian physician, Jabril graduated from the prestigious Academy of Gundishapur. Having once served Ja'far he now serves the Caliph. Despite being a hard-drinker and a lover of the night life, Jabril has a profound medical mind and he patronizes scholars to translate Greek medical manuscripts.

**Masrur**

*Warrior (executioner) 6*

Harun's personal eunuch slave and royal executioner, Masrur is something of a popular icon; so many stories fill the air about him that it is impossible to separate the truth from the fiction. Many allege that it was Masrur who took Ja'far's life, though only after repeated prompting by Harun.

**Rabia al-Adawiya**

*Adept (saint) 12*

An old Sufi woman saint from Basra, Rabia has spread a doctrine of mystical love through her beautiful poetry. After a life of slavery and hardship she became spontaneously realized. On being asked how she discovered the secret, she responded, "You know of the how, but I know of the how-less." She teaches her disciples in Baghdad, living the simple life of an ascetic.

**Yahya al-Barmakid**

*Expert (aristocrat) 8*

Once the vizier of Caliph Mahdi, Yahya ibn Khalid tutored Harun al-Rashid since he was a young boy. Yahya had a reputation as an ideal courtier and administrator. Despite his skill at networking, Yahya was imprisoned along with his entire family in the wake of his son Ja'far's death. Today he lives in prison, planning to recover his family's lands and get revenge on the ones who betrayed them.

**Zubaida bint-Abi Ja'far bint al-Mansur**

*Expert (aristocrat) 5*

The wife of Harun al-Rashid and mother of Muhammad al-Amin, Zubaida is the perfect picture of aristocracy. She is an immensely wealthy woman with great influence over the Caliph, and she even has her own palace in western Baghdad. A pious woman, she has performed Hajj many times, and she funds critical infrastructure projects throughout the caliphate. Along with others, Zubaida helped to orchestrate the downfall of the Barmakids.



If this were not enough to scare away travelers, the sandstorms of the deep desert can bodily drag a man across the desert by winds, bury him alive in sand, suffocate him, and cause him to be utterly lost as the features of the desert around him have changed. These sandstorms can be on top of an encampment in a matter of minutes, and cover the land in a dark cloud that lasts for hours. Prayers are sung loudly as the people hide indoors, calling on protection from the malevolent djinn that have summoned the storm. An approaching sandstorm truly is an awesome thing, and an undaunted viewer sometimes sees vague shapes in the storm front, often appearing as a herd of horses, a screaming skull, or even upside down palm trees. These storms have devoured entire armies, such is their power. A sandstorm acts as a windstorm and fog, spoils most food and water, as well as inflicting +1 non-lethal damage per hour exposed to its scouring sand. In addition, anyone in a sandstorm must make a Survival check (DC 20), consulting the table below (effects are cumulative):

**Succeed by 11+:** Able to function as if wind was only strong (not a windstorm).

**Succeed by 6-10:** Manage to find temporary protection from damaging sands.

**Succeed by 1-5:** Prevent water and goods from spoiling.

**Fail by 1-5:** Separated from main party. Lost in the desert.

**Fail by 6-10:** Temporarily blinded, deafened, or made mute. Supplies lost.

**Fail by 11+:** Buried in sand and start suffocating.

### Mirage

A mirage only appears to those characters who have been in the desert for over a week who have suffered heat exhaustion and dehydration or starvation. It appears as a verdant oasis pool, a gathering storm, or a herd of camels. Each day a character sees a mirage they must make a DC 10 Will save (+1 DC per additional day without respite, food, and water). Failure indicates they move towards or away from it as appropriate.

### Ibadi Imamate

The southeastern territory of Oman belongs to the Ibadi who have their own center of government there in the city Khour Rouri, which is called Muscat by the Romans. In Khour Rouri, frankincense ships out bound for the Mediterranean. Most of the land is desert, with mountain ranges along the north and southeast coast, which drop abruptly into the sea. The Ibadi wear long white robes and all men carry a *khanjar*; an elaborate curved dagger, on their waists (this is identical to a *jambiya*). While they are widely viewed as traitors for harboring Kharijite

assassins, the Ibadi themselves have no ill wishes toward the caliphate and only wish to be left to their own devices. The Ibadi frontiersmen are superb guides and ferocious defenders of their territory.

### The Imamates

An *imamate* is a country ruled by an imam, a ruler who claims that he has descended from the prophet Muhammad. Such leaders exercise spiritual leadership over their country and run their territory independently of the caliphate. Most imamates pay tribute to the caliphate of Baghdad, though collecting the actual tribute itself can prove quite challenging. Separate imamates exist in Cordoba, Morocco, Oman, and Tunisia; while Egypt has an autonomous governor it is not considered an *imamate*.

### Al-Medina

The City of the Prophet is surrounded by the rugged hills of the eastern Hejaz Massif. The Rahat Lava field lies to the southeast. Originally called Yathrib, after the Prophet arbitrated peace between the city's feuding Jewish it was re-named Medina al-Nabi, and it was the early capital of the *umma*. Despite the Prophet's wishes, many visit his grave at the Prophet's Mosque to commemorate him, and this is often a point of contention between the *umma* and the *Ulema*. When the Umayyads moved the capital to Damascus, governors were appointed to rule Medina as any other provincial town. Only in recent years has Medina regained its political significance.

### Jeddah

Jeddah does not resemble the fishing village it used to be. After Caliph Uthman turned it into a port for pilgrims making the *hajj*, Jeddah became the Western gateway to the caliphate. According to local folklore, the tomb of Eve herself is located in Jeddah, and police must stand watch to make sure that no one attempts to pray at the supposed tomb. The name of Jeddah means "grandmother", in honor of Eve. Of all the cities I have seen, Jeddah is the most liberal and the most diverse; Africans, Turks, and Franks live side by side here, and so do their religions. Every marketplace requires you to speak four or five languages.

It was in Jeddah that I met the weaver Fadwa, who breathed new life into me. She told me that my great grandfather had a son by a concubine in Mecca, and that this man had taught the art of dyeing wool with red clay to his children. This clay was an essential component to making a flying carpet. She also revealed that my grandfather had traveled to Aksum and he died there, never to return.



## Mecca

When we arrived at the gates of Mecca, it was discovered one of my traveling companions was not a Muslim, and he was turned back at sword point, for non-Muslims are forbidden from entering Mecca. Within I saw the *Masjid al Haram*, the holiest mosque built by Abraham, which is the object of the Hajj. I circumambulated the *Ka'aba*, the earthly representation of the house of God in heaven, seven times. While at the Hill of Arafat, I succumbed to heat prostration, and a kindly ground came and gave me water from the well of Zamzam. The guard was none other than one of my removed cousins who Fadwa had told me of!

His family explained that the original clay dyes for the flying carpets came from mountain springs untouched by the human hand. This clay, when superheated in oil at temperatures that exceed those of the seventh ring of hell, acquired magnetic properties. The Earth itself is a magnet. By soaking the wool a carpet would be woven of in clay water, a carpet could pull itself away from the Earth depending on the concentration of clay used. Though grateful for meeting them, I was unsatisfied and skeptical of the answers they gave me. Where was this ancient spring? Why didn't more people know about it? And how could I create a flying carpet that one could control? I boarded a ship bound for Aksum, hoping my answers were buried there.

### The Black Stone

The *Hajar-ul-Aswad* is a sacred stone housed within the *Ka'aba*. Many consider it just an ordinary stone, and kiss it only to honor the tradition of the Prophet. Others believe it is a meteorite which fell from Heaven and has the power to absorb the sins of the worshipper; they claim the stone was once white but it has turned black because of the all the sins it has eaten.

### The Well of Zamzam

Hagar, the wife of Abraham, discovered the Zamzam while desperately seeking water for her infant son Ishmael. The angel Gabriel appeared and touched the earth, causing the spring to appear. Hagar built a well around the spring, and it continues to flow to this day. The water is divinely blessed and is said to satisfy both hunger and thirst, and to cure all illness.

## Nubia

Strong winds and the tricky currents of the Red Sea diverted our course and forced us to land on the island of Sawakin; the sailors whispered about djinni had been imprisoned there by Suleiman bin Daoud and were afraid of setting foot on land. They called Sawakin a *mina min zaman*, a port whose beginnings lie far back in time, and they warned me that Arabs were not well received in Nubia after the long history of conflict with the kings of Dongola. Thus warned, I disembarked into the midday heat, barely able to see the palm trees that lay

just a stone's throw from me such was the air's density. After a long walk, I was welcomed into a small city and met with their sheikh who, after listening to my story, told me of a man who made flying carpets in Dongola, the capital city of Makuria, which we commonly call Christian Nubia. He offered to send me to Dongola with a guard and a translator. I graciously accepted his offer, and promised I would tell the world of the generosity of the people of Sawakin. We traveled many days through flat plains teeming with wild animals. There were several times I was afraid of raiders enslaving us, but my translator was a disarming man who was universally well received. When I asked him what his secret was he answered thus: "Baqqara, Juhayna, Jaali, Kababish – all the *naziriyah* (tribal groups) here relate like family. When there is a fight, you need someone from outside to cool things down, just as your Prophet did." He added with a broad smile, "It helped that one of the raiders was once my slave, whom I set free." Again, we traveled through fearsome desert and along the way I became sick; soon I could barely hold onto my camel and I began to lose my vision. My guides knew what to do, and they carried me to a group of woman of the Zar cult who invoked the name of the prophet Jesus and exorcised the evil from me. In gratitude I taught them how to weave in the Persian style. With my health revived, I followed my guides to the Third Cataract of the Nile, where rugged terrain and treacherous rapids form a natural gateway to the Dongola Reach, a huge bend in the Nile where the normally north-flowing river seems to reverse direction. The city of Dongola lies on the eastern bank; here caravans depart for Darfur and Kordofan to the west.

### King Cyriacus & the March on al-Fustat

In the 128<sup>th</sup> year of the Hijrah (745 AD), King Cyriacus, who united the then separate nations of Nobatia and Makuria, invaded Egypt in defense of the Patriarch of Alexandria who had been imprisoned. Upon reaching al-Fustat, Cyriacus sent the Eparch of Nobatia to negotiate with the governor of Egypt, who agreed to release the Patriarch. The name of Cyriacus is revered in Dongola as a symbol of religious unity and resistance to the Arab armies.

In Dongola I met Monnyak the weaver; he served me a local corn drink called *hilo-mur* while we showed me his work. At first the carpet appeared to be floating off the ground, but on a second look I realized it was an illusion created by the weave he used, which acted as a stereogram. As he explained his weave to me, I realized that his technique could be used to deliver secret messages. Unrolling the Halevi's last carpet, I focused my eyes behind the image, and lo! There appeared a crane escaping a tiger which leapt out at me. Monnyak wished me good luck and gave me provisions to complete my journey. As I left Dongola for the long trek to Aksum, I pondered what the Halevi's message meant.



***The Monophysite Church***

Nubia embraced Christianity during the reign of the Roman rulers Justinian and Theodora; originally they belonged to the Coptic church, but fifty years ago the Monophysites gained popularity as the Nubians were unable to reach their patriarchs in Arab-occupied Egypt due to the hostility between the Arabs and the Nubians at that time. Monophysitism maintains that Jesus had only one nature – though he was human, his thinking was replaced by the thought of God.

***Nubian (Ethnicity)***

Nubian culture is the mixing of hundreds of *naziriyah* and over one hundred languages. Generally, tribes live in small communities which often raid one another for livestock, slaves, or access to wells. In warfare, Nubians are known as deadly archers; they train in small groups since childhood and develop their skills, and their social duties, collectively. In peacetime, they are superb potters, musicians, and excel at hunting, wrestling, riding, and other sports. Every Nubian knows how to mend a camel's broken footpad and how to care for a camel if it becomes sick. They are shrewd traders, and masters of the Saharan caravans.

**Naming:** Naming practices vary according to the *naziriyah*, and are quite complex. Some groups give the child the last name of the paternal grandfather's first name, the middle name of the father's first name, and the given name chosen by the father. Most groups name their children after ancestors, though Biblical names are just as common as tribal names.

**Male Names:** Anai, Basel, Deng, Jaja, Mading, Manute

**Female Names:** Abok, Achan, Elham, Nyanath, Sittina

**Surnames:** Abboud, Garang, Kayra, Kelueljang, Nimeiri, Robienayai, Shol

***Aksum***

Aksumai, the descendant of Noah, founded the capital city of Aksum, after which the kingdom was named. The Queen of Sheba herself hailed from the Aksumite dynasty, which once controlled Yemen and vast territories of Africa. Now, the *negusa nagast* (King of Kings) exerts his power in the Horn of Africa exclusively as the kingdom no longer has the resources to manage such a vast expanse. Its grasp on the Red Sea and the Nile trade has been weakened by the caliphate, but Aksum's strong navy still maintains trade with Nubia, Yemen, Hindustan, and Byzantium. The Muslim armies

never attempted to overthrow Aksum because the Aksumites had sheltered the Prophet's daughter Ruqayya and her family from Quraysh persecution. The Aksumites are all Christian, and the people living in their capital claim that Ark of the Covenant lies in the Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion. Aksum is a cosmopolitan crossroads, a meeting place for Copts, Nubians, Arabs, and Hindis. Aksum even has Buddhist minorities. Unlike other African nations, Aksum trades mostly in bronze, silver, and gold coins which are minted in Aksum.

***Zanj (Ethnicity)***

The natives of the East African coastline, the Zanj are gifted with rhythm, courage, friendliness, and strength. They value generosity above all other virtues and are impeccable with their word. Curiously, the Zanj value slaves for their wisdom as much as they do sages. Even prior to the arrival of Islam, many Zanj lived among Arab populations, where they were valued as skilled musicians and singers. Tens of thousand of Zanj have been enslaved and work in the humid salt marshes in conditions of extreme misery; there are all the makings of a rebellion, as the Zanj slaves are aided by Zanj soldiers who have defected from the Abbasid army in large numbers. While there are a few Zanj working in the caliphate as scholars of great repute, most are subjugated outside of their homeland. Arabs unjustly accuse Zanj men of being lecherous, inciting faithful women to break their marital vows. Some refer to the Zanj by their old Greek name *Ethiopian*, which means "burnt-faced ones."

**Naming:** Zanj names reflect the everyday life activities they engaged in, though always in the most positive light. Often names from Biblical tradition are taken along those that echo local traditions. Many children have multiple first names, such as those of their ancestors; this is viewed as a well-wishing for the child.

**Male Names:** Brehanu, Kabebe, Tesafye, Yohaness, Wendimu, Zalelew

**Female Names:** Abaynesh, Chekolech, Demekesh, Mihret, Nikahywot, Zema

Upon arriving in Aksum I immediately set to work finding my great grandfather's living kin. It was my good fortune that the rulers of Aksum keep immaculate records, and I learned that, in exchange for a fabulous carpet he made for the royal family, an obelisk was erected in honor of him after his death. Traveling to the obelisk, I saw a woman saying prayers there. "Are you the great granddaughter of Tahmin the weaver?" I asked in Arabic, and then



again in Persian.

Answering in Persian, she was stunned. “Yes I am. My name is Lielit. Did you know Tahmin?” Then I revealed to her my journey and what had befallen the weavers of Baghdad, and I related to her the secret message I found in the Halevi’s carpet. We embraced as cousins and Lielit took me to her family’s home where we rejoiced at being reunited.

I spent many days enjoying their hospitality, but then Lielit revealed to me that the Halevi’s carpet was a map that could be followed using the stars. “There is a pattern here I have never seen before – constellations are used to represent different nations. If we start here, in Persia, the pattern goes to the Hejaz, across the Red Sea to Dongola, to Akum...”

“This is the very route I’ve traveled, Lielit! Where does it next lead?”

“Here...to Kerala...Hindustan. This is a map?”

Then I realized just how important this carpet was. “Yes, it is a map to carpet weavers. The Halevis were afraid of the art of flying carpet weaving being lost, so they made sure someone could find skilled artisans who would be able, between their collected knowledge, to create a flying carpet!”

Invigorated with this revelation, I bid Lielit and her family farewell, loading up my camels. I ran my fingers over the Halevi’s carpet and then set forth to the Horn of Africa to charter ship’s passage.

## Hindustan

Hindustan has remained largely untouched by the caliphate’s expansion, though I fear that soon the traditions there will be lost. There are as many languages spoken there as there are in Africa, and many royal families compete with one another for control of the territories. What struck me the most was the pomp and color of their religious practices. At first, I thought them idol-worshippers, but I quickly realized that God is near the hearts of these people every waking hour, and each statue is used much in the way we recite the 99 names of God, except that in Hindustan God has *thousands* of names.

The ship I boarded belonged to the great merchant families of Aksum; it boasted a jutting stern which is used to fasten a foresail when extra cloth is needed. We sailed past the islands of Socotra and his Brothers, and kept along the coasts of Yemen and Oman as we passed through the Indian Ocean. Many times we feared for corsairs, but our captain was an exceedingly clever man who used to be a corsair himself; it was odd that I should be so relived by this fact, but we arrived safely in Kerala. Heavy rains pounded the docks when we arrived, and we were ushered to a local inn where we were greeted by a dignitary of the Pandyas who ruled Kerala and control the finest pearl fisheries along the southern coast. Inquiring of carpet weavers, I learned there was a man who lived in the rainforests surrounding Kerala who was expecting me, and that I would be led there tomorrow. The monsoon rains delayed me another day, but at last, when the sun emerged, we traveled along a mountain stream, through forests of rosewood, bamboo, and rattan palm, over pits of king cobras and crocodiles, yet my pleasant guides made it easy; these men were *koothu* performers, which is a type of comedy, and they could mimic a baboon and make a parody of any person under God’s earth. At last I reached the weaver’s home; he was an old man named Sandeep, but his mirth was that of a child. Sandeep explained how his family inherited the art of carpet weaving from a traveler of Khurasan one hundred years ago, and he supported himself weaving carpets for the mosque in Kerala, as well as *asam* prayer rugs. Though his family had died from fever, he went on making the carpets himself, which seemed impossible to me.

“When a carpet is made, there are many hands weaving it, hands of our ancestors whose path we walk. Our tradition is to remember our ancestors, not only when we pray, but when we work. No carpet can escape this – your ancestors work through you, and the evidence is in the weave and dyes.”

Unrolling the Halevi’s carpet, this time I saw a battle of my great grand-father against Chinese men; the arabesques became his horse and wreaths became balls of fire hurtling at him. Was it possible my great grandfather had traveled all the way to China in his life time? Recalling the astrological symbols that Lielit had found, I confirmed that my next destination was the capital city Ch’ang-an. Again, I took to the seas.

## Evading Corsairs

When the characters take to the seas there is always the risk of piracy. A successful Knowledge (earth sciences) check avoids encounters with corsair vessels. The Difficulty depends on the ocean trade route they’re passing through; thus one check is made per trade route traveled. If the Narrator decides the plot demands an encounter with corsairs, the character navigating does not roll a check and instead regains a Conviction point.

Difficulty	Safety of Sea Route
10	Well-guarded routes like the Palestinian coast or the Red Sea bordering the Hejaz.
15	Minor corsair activity like the coastal route to Constantinople or the Atlantic.
20	Regularly raided trade route like the shores of al-Andalus or the route to Alexandria.
25	Heavily corsair infested route like the shores of the Maghreb or the Indian Ocean.



**Hindi (Ethnicity)**

Those who come from *Bharat*, as the natives call Hindustan, are inheritors of an ancient tradition of philosophy, poetry, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, craftsmanship, dance, and music. They make pilgrimage to their own holy shrines, are great believers in astrology, and are possessed of an optimistic fatalism called *moksha*, a doctrine of final spiritual liberation. In their country they are governed by a strict caste system of priests, warriors, merchants, and laborers; even those who leave Hindustan have trouble unlearning the habits of caste. Many Arabs believe Hindus possess magic ability which manifests through their speaking of their native language.

**Naming:** Most Hindus don't have a family name. Instead, names are given according to the child's caste. Priests are given auspicious names, warriors powerful names connoting safeguarding, merchants names implying wealth, and laborers names denoting servitude. Alternately, surnames might derive from someone's religion, hometown, or the given name of their father.

**Male Names:** Ariun, Ashok, Balamohan, Chandan, Gursharan, Jayadeep

**Female Names:** Bhairavai, Damayanti, Gopika, Harinakshi, Kalpana, Namrata

**Surnames:** Ghosh, Iyer, Malhotra, Namboodiripad, Radhakrishnan, Sharma

**Chinese (Ethnicity)**

There is a Chinese saying that goes "A nation's treasure is its scholars." No where else in the world have I seen education valued so highly. Chinese call themselves *Tangren* (people of Tang) and they call their kingdom *Zhongguo* (the middle kingdom). They are Buddhist in their philosophical and religious attitudes, and place great emphasis on virtue and responsible statesmanship. They are stereotyped alternately as aloof scholars utterly lacking of emotion, ruthless occultists, and hard-drinking gamblers seeking trouble. On the contrary, most Chinese have a clever sense of humor, enjoy word games, are masterful craftspeople, and have an excellent knowledge of medicine and physiology.

**Naming:** Chinese names consist of a two-character given name, one character represents the name of a common ancestor and the other their personal name. Chinese identify themselves by their family name first. Many also have several nicknames or sobriquets.

**Male Names:** Chen, Dishi, Lee, Liang, Shaiming, Shen

**Female Names:** Bing Qing, Chan Juan, Fang Yin, Li Mei, Lin Yao, Xin Qian

**Surnames:** Li, Qian, Sun, Wang, Wu, Zhao, Zheng, Zhou

an, lying between the floodplains, the Wei River, and the Qinling Mountains. Much to my surprise, Ch'ang-an, like Baghdad, is called the City of Peace by its inhabitants.

**China**

I disembarked at Dhaka, which lies on the Buriganga River, where people harvest jute, which is made into a coarse fabric. As my savings were getting low, I bought several jute bundles to trade as I traveled through the mountains of Lhasa, where pilgrims make prostrations in three concentric circumambulations, and the river city Chengdu, where paper is valued as gold. After months of travel I arrived in Ch'ang-an practically a beggar; I had survived on the salted fish and rice that a kindly fisherman gave me, rationing my food to last for three weeks. Such was my hunger that I began to think of selling the Halevi's carpet which had brought me here. A kindly merchant who spoke Arabic took pity on me, and invited me to stay with his family, who took me on a tour of the city. I marveled at the Wild Goose Pagodas, the Buddhist translation centers, and the Imperial Palace of the Tang Dynasty. Ch'ang-an is the center of China's politics, economy, and culture; it is here that the Silk Road begins. If trade were to stop, I was told, half the people living in the city would leave for their homelands. If there is one city which rivals Baghdad it is the massive Ch'ang-

It was in the Imperial City that I met Hui, a blind carpet weaver who made rugs from camel hair to cover the fire heated brick bed platforms. He listened to my story with the help of the merchant's son who acted as my translator. Hui escorted me to his humble home in the civilian's district, where he revealed a silk rug like none I had ever seen. The three of us unrolled the carpet, and I let go when Hui told me to do so. To my amazement the carpet did not collapse on itself, but hovered in the air a moment before falling gently to the earth without a single crease. The blind weaver explained that if I wished to magic a flying carpet, I would need to learn how to weave silk, which is the only material suited to the task. I stayed with Hui for the rest of the year, learning the Chinese methods of weaving. When the day of my departure came, Hui gifted me with two carpets to sell to support my journey and gave me his blessing. The Halevi's wool carpet seemed cumbersome to me now, but it was my compass.



## The Sind

My travels in the Sind were a painful journey into the atrocities committed in the name of the Faith. Temples had been destroyed, artists were afraid of practicing their trade, and everyone had a family member who had been killed in battle. The mass graves that run from Kashmir to Karachi were testament to the slaughter. Yet the Halevi's carpet had brought me here, and I would not be deterred from my quest. I arrived in Multan, the City of Gold, nearly two years since I left my home. However, most of the gold had been taken from the city, and frontiersman patrolled the streets. In place of the temples, there were many Sufis and holy people performing miracles. Not a day seems to go by without someone claiming to have seen a holy messenger or a saint's ghost hovering above. The city is surrounded by a flat plain irrigated with a network of canals making it ideally suited for agriculture. The souk in Multan seems to have been spared the violence; the craftsmen there make master-pieces of copper, brass, and silver in the traditional fashion, and the fish make the mouth water. The Sindhi language has 125 names for, and as many varieties of, fish. The Sindi people have a dozen names for the Sindhu river, reflecting its many moods, and the camel has a score of names to indicate its age, color, gait, and character. I began to feel like a barbarian who could only speak in two-syllable sentences.

### Sindi (Ethnicity)

Countless invasions and migrations have left their mark on the Sindhis who dwell in the lands east of the Indus River. Their culture is extremely diverse, with different customs among the Rajput, Balochi, and *Ashraf* tribes; the *Ashraf* (nobles) are the partial descendants of Muslim conquerors, and thus have a mixed ethnic heritage. They flourish at trade in silks and textiles, as well as agriculture. Sindhis are gifted poets, have prodigious memories, and are well known for their bargaining skills.

**Naming:** Most Sindis follow Arab or Hindi naming practices, though they do have unique surnames.

**Surnames:** Advani, Manshiani, Nandiram, Mohanlal, Rewachand, Kandhrani

Again, I was found. It was as if the Halevi's carpet and the stars worked in concert to guide me to those weavers who could help me. While I wandered the bazaars of Multan, asking as best I could about carpet weavers, a young girl brought me to her family's stall where I saw displayed the most gorgeous carpets with popular motifs of gulls, medallions, paisleys, tracteries, and geometric designs. Her brother Imran explained that their parents had been killed by corsairs and that he and his siblings kept food in their mouths by carrying on their parent's trade. Imran showed me the symbolism of the carpets they used, how each small things represented some story their

parents had told them, a favorite place along the river, or even a hidden joke about a merchant who had mistreated them. Imran helped me to decipher the symbolism of the Halevi's carpet. The image of the crane and the tiger indicated long life by protecting oneself from a dangerous enemy, and the tree of life at the carpet's center was a symbol for attaining immortality through virtue. I stayed with Imran and his siblings for two months, helping them to run the business, and once I paid for a tutor for all of them, I headed for my homeland of Persia. At last, I thought, my long journey would end. Little did I realize it had only begun.

## Persia

From Baghdad and Tabriz in the west to Nishapur and Merv in the east there extended the Sassanid empire, that sought to resuscitate Persian traditions which had been supplanted by Greek influences. It is a land dominated by the rugged Zagros and Alborz Mountains. Scattered plains span the coasts, but are few and far between. I first arrived in Nishapur in the province of Khurasan. Here all manner of rebels against the Caliph plot his overthrow, and the people are fiercely independent. It is not uncommon to hear talk of how the Abbasids betrayed the Khurasanis and used them to seize control of the caliphate. Nishapur lies along the Silk Road at the base of the Binalud Mountains, and is built on turquoise mines which have been in operation for a hundreds of years. From Nishapur I set forth to Isfahan, where the greatest weavers in the world live. I feared learning the state my family had come to in these past two years. Anytime I passed a guardsman or a soldier, my skin tingled, remembering that night my father had been taken away. Windswept Isfahan lies at the foothills of the Zagros Mountains. Beautiful boulevards, covered bridges, palaces, libraries, mosques, and minarets, all intricately decorated, are found in Isfahan.

## Tabaristan

The mountainous region of Persia just south of the Caspian Sea has had a long existence independent of the Umayyads. While once temporarily conquered by the Abbasids, Tabaristan could not be chained for long. Even more so than the Khurasanis, the *kuhyar* ("mountain folk") of Tabaristan are fierce revolutionaries. The Karanvand dynasty, whose latest regent is the mountain king Vadan Hormoz, rules Tabaristan. The Karanvads are isolated from most politics, though they do send delegations to Khurasan and occasionally to Baghdad.

Many of the carpet-weavers there lived in fear of another pogrom, but they welcomed me warmly enough. Several of them knew my father, and reported that he was still in prison along with the last living members of the Halevis. I learned from them that the art of flying carpet weaving came from the djinni who lived among the Khazars. The weavers of Isfahan revealed their hidden enemies, the



**Persian (Ethnicity)**

Persians consider themselves proud inheritors and guardians of an ancient and sophisticated culture. They are known throughout the caliphate as superb artists in all disciplines, whether music, poetry, architecture, calligraphy, or carpet weaving. Many of the greatest scholars of the time were born in Persia. Most Persians have adjusted well to Islamic rule, and they have strong presence in the administration of the government. Social justice and etiquette are integral to the Persian outlook. Some Arabs view the Persians as fire-worshipping heathens, though such prejudices are concealed beneath a veneer of civility and lip service.

**Naming:** Persian names often come from heroes of legend and religious personalities, though beautiful things and adjectives are also used. It is very common to name girls after the moon or flowers.

**Male Names:** Ardeshir, Bashir, Daryush, Farzad, Jamshid, Sanjar

**Female Names:** Adeleh, Behrokh, Chaman, Fakhteh, Gisi, Parisima

**Surnames:** Firdausi, Ghazali, Kermani, Sistani, Khurasani, Yazdani

“tiger” the Halevi’s carpet warned of. Flying carpets threatened the horse and camel breeding families – the Hatimis, the Zahidis, and the progeny of Abu Hanifa, who feared magic carpets would become a widely accessible method of travel and that they would lose their grip on the pulse of the caravan trade. Already having the ear of the Caliph al-Mahdi, these families used the incident of the Kurdish soldier and the princess that took place in Baghdad to justify sabotage and murder. My heart was filled with anger, but I now understood how important my quest was. If I could make a flying carpet and present it to Caliph al-Mahdi, I could reestablish the good name of the flying carpet weavers and bring this persecution to an end. After two weeks in Isfahan, the home I was staying at was raided by the Caliph’s guards, the carpet of the Halevi’s seized, and I barely escaped. At the same time I had learned of my enemies, they had learned of me. Not wishing to bring trouble upon the already difficult lives of the weavers, I packed my bags and set sail upon the Bahr e-Qazvin, bound for the land of the Khazars.

**Khazaria**

What was once a confederation of Turkish tribes along the Silk Road, grew into a kingdom in its own right after absorbing Jews escaping Roman persecution, and other non-Muslims escaping the Arab conquests. Some call Khazaria a Khaganate. The Khagan is the figurehead descended from the royal Khazarian lineage, but the actual power is

wielded by the Beg, a senior general and statesman, who was the supreme military commander and managed all diplomatic relations. What struck me the most about the Khazars was how their society integrated all people of all faiths into a beautiful social tapestry. Every year the Khazars lose ground against the Arabs, but they are a determined foe. Their capital city, known as Khamlij to the Arabs and Atil among its natives, rises along the banks of the Volga River. The city is divided into three parts by the Volga: The western part is the administrative center with a court house and a large military garrison, the eastern part is the commercial center and has many shops and baths, and between the two is an island with the palaces of the Khagan and the Beg. I was astounded to find pontoon bridges, identical to those used in Baghdad, connecting the island to the east and west banks. Here every faith in the known world is found, each with its own places of worship, even the traditional shamans who pray to the sky god Tengri. Should the nation fail against the Arabs it is considered a sign that Tengri’s favor has left the Khagan, and he is put to death. Though women have acted as the Khagan in the past, perhaps this tradition has dissuaded women from a more acting role in politics.

**Khazar (Ethnicity)**

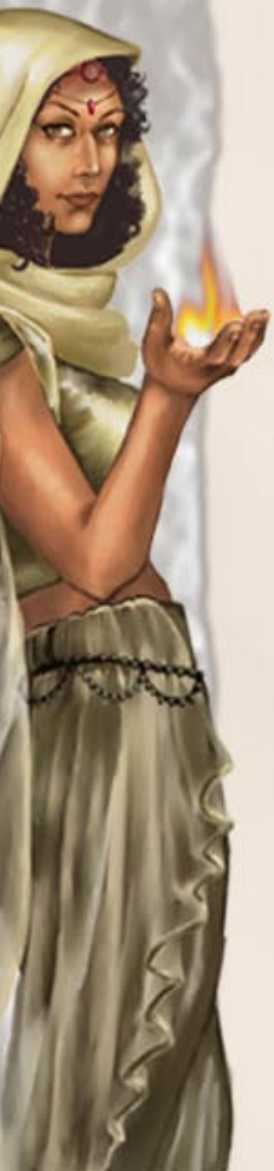
Pastoral nomads from the Central Asian steppe, the Khazars are famous horsemen and women. Khazar children are said to learn how to ride before they can walk. Many Khazars spend more time in the saddle than on their feet. From a young age boys and girls learn to hunt with bow and arrow, tend the herds, train and trade horses, as well as perform great feats of horseback acrobatics. Equaled only by the Bedouin in their love of the horse, Khazars are used to spending days and nights on horseback traversing the wind-wracked mountain passes of the steppe. Most Arabs use the term *Turk* when referring to Khazars, a shorthand term for anyone from the Central Asian steppe.

**Naming:** Khazar names come from the events surrounding the child’s birth, such as an animal that was seen, the village or place the child was born, or the age of the father or mother at the child’s birth, though just as often parents name their children after a characteristic they hope the child will possess. As children are the pride and joy of the Khazars, the naming process is of great importance.

**Male Names:** Aldivar, Bulan, Erzhan, Rayshan, Serik, Yaakov

**Female Names:** Ainyar, Chichek, Karlygash, Khatun, Serakh, Sorghaghtani

**Surnames:** Bulash, Sabriel, Shaprut, Tarkhan



I met Parsbet at the market outside of the synagogue. Like many of the Khazars she belonged to one of the smaller tribes that were consumed by the nation's armies. Her parents were weavers who had unearthed techniques of triple weft knots which had been lost for many years. She took me to her home where she taught me how to read the symmetrical stars that adorned her carpets. Not only did such stars allow an astrologer to learn when the carpet was made, but they also could locate where it was made and who made it. I sketched out for her the general pattern of the Halevi's carpet from memory, and Parsbet explained the constellations depicted there indicated it had been made partially in Persia and partially in Egypt. We talked of the conflict between our two nations and I began to realize that the carpet I would weave was a symbol of all the nations I had seen, a symbol of harmony and diversity. Parsbet asked me what I would do next, and I told her I intended to find the Kurdish soldier who had flown the carpet into Baghdad which, in so many ways, had sparked my journey. Packing my bags and thanking my hostess for her hospitality, I followed the stars south into Kurdistan.

## Kurdistan

Traveling by camel over the Araxes River and out of Khazaria, I came into Kurdistan, formally controlled by the Abbasids, but practically governed by a fractured network of tribal chiefs. The Kurds live in a rugged mountainous land whose largest city is Yerevan, which serves as a crossroads for the caravan routes between the Carolingian Empire and Hindustan. Yerevan is built on an old citadel used to guard against the barbarians attacks from the Caucas; the Abbasids occupy it in theory, but they do not have enough soldiers here to enforce this claim, and a day doesn't go by without rebellion among the Kurds. Most recently, the Abbasids have forbidden Kurdish names from being used, though thankfully they do not have the power to enforce this decree.

Finding the Kurdish soldier was as easier than I had expected. In his village he regularly took children for rides on the flying carpet. I waited for him at his house while his wife, the daughter of al-Mahdi who escaped with him, entertained me by playing on the *qernete*, a type of reed instrument with a melancholy sound. When her husband I arrived, he introduced himself as Erdewan Kalhor; immediately guessing my motives for coming, he invited me to come examine the flying carpet. It was simply if roughly made, and I could not fathom how it was propelled. Erdewan explained that he caused the carpet to move through an ancient scroll he had found imbued with the name of Suleiman bin Daoud; so long as he possessed this scroll it granted him control over the winds. Revealing the scroll to me, he permitted me to copy down the sacred name, explaining that it was the least he could do for all the suffering the weavers endured on his account. He and his wife enjoined me to keep silent of their whereabouts, and I swore an oath of secrecy. Then they told me of an ancient cave outside of Damascus which housed other treasures of Suleiman bin Daoud.

## Syria

Traveling on camelback through *Bilad ash-Sham*, as Syria is called in Arabic, I came to the city of Mosul which lies on the banks of the Tigris. An important center of commerce at the junction of trade between Hindustan, Persia, and the Mediterranean, Mosul produces muslin, a finely woven cotton fabric popular in the eastern caliphate. The Nestorians are strongest here, and they claim that the Prophet Jonah is buried in Mosul. I rode through the fertile floodplains of al-Jazira, where the Kharijites fight a constant battle against the Abbasids, and took a barge across the Euphrates, arriving in austere Aleppo.

### Kurd (Ethnicity)

Hailing from the mountains between Iraq, Syria, and Anatolia, the Kurds live a nomadic life under tribal chiefs. Tending sheep and goats, taking livestock to pastures in summer and returning to valley villages in the winter – this is the life of a Kurd. They are lovers of music, poetry, and dancing. Known as “those who waylay and raid”, many Kurds find it hard to shake the cultural stereotype of themselves as thieves. It is true that many raiders come from Kurdish lands, but raiders represent a minority of the overall population. Often, the caliphate uses this stereotype to justify illegal military action against Kurds. In addition, many Kurds are accused of worshipping Iblis; this misunderstanding stems from inaccurate knowledge about their religion Yezidism, which is based on angel worship and dance rituals.

**Naming:** Many times, Kurds have been persecuted merely on account of having a Kurdish name. Thus, Kurds who travel away from Kurdistan or who are born in hostile regions often take on Arabic or Persian names to hide their heritage.

**Male Names:** Aran, Felemez, Gudhar, Hormiz, Peshevar, Rojbin, Zorav

**Female Names:** Ashkera, Biskbitel, Gulestera, Mizgin, Navbahar, Reziyar

**Surnames:** Euz, Odemish, Soyluturk, Tumturk, Yalik



**Nestoreans**

Nestoreanism is Christian church of Syria that maintains the divine and human natures of the Prophet Jesus are separate. Nestoreans strive to understand the humanity of their Prophet. Their preachers travel throughout the caliphate and many have settled in Gundishapur and even as far as Ch'ang-an. The Orthodox, Catholic, and Monophysite churches consider the Nestorians heretics.

**Aleppo**

The people of Aleppo are possessed of a great dignity and are sober in bearing. Most of the inhabitants are Jews, and the Radhanites have a strong presence here; the souks and synagogues of Aleppo rival any in Baghdad. Trade routes from Hindustan and Damascus weave through the city, making it a great center of commerce; the merchants of Aleppo are notorious for their craftiness. A local proverb is "An Aleppi can sell even a dried donkey skin." An age-old rivalry exists between Aleppo and Damascus. The Aleppis accuse the Damascenes of being lazy and soft-spoken. Damascene merchants retort that the Aleppi accent is utterly lacking in grace or subtlety.

**Damascus**

The former capital of the Umayyads, Damascus is often called *ash-Sham* by its inhabitants, derived from *bilad ash-Sham*. It lies on the south bank of the Barada River; merchants constantly draw buckets of water from the river to cool the Damascene swords (see **Chapter 14**) that the city is famous for. Damascus boasts no less than 7 city gates, and the Grand Mosque there is the most famous in all the caliphate. Both the Christians and Muslims alike claim the head of John the Baptist is held in a shrine within the Grand Mosque. The *Via Recta* runs for over 4500 feet, and in this souk all manner of goods, especially religious artifacts, both authentic and forged, can be purchased. Surrounding the entire city

is the Ghuta, an oasis which has been preserved and cultivated by the city such that Damascus appears to lie at the center of a palatial garden.

In Damascus I met Thomas, a friend of Erdewan, who guided me to the caves where, he reported, the Ark of the Covenant rested. Rumors like this were common throughout the region. A saint's head buried here, a djinni's lamp buried there. I began to wonder if Erdewan had lied to me about the treasure. We descended into a network of tunnels so tight I could barely squeeze through, and at last we came into a damp room wherein Thomas lit a torch, revealing a pit filled with corroded coins and rusted sword hilts. Thomas shook his head, "No, that is not the treasure. This way."

He took me to a massive chamber filled with glimmering water and great spikes of stone thrusting from the ceiling. Holding his torch high, Thomas revealed that the walls of the chamber were covered in ancient Aramaic script! Herein was related the story of a great carpet the Queen of Sheba gifted to Suleiman bin Daoud to win his love, but the gift was scorned and sent back to the Queen, who, in a fit of rage, ordered it cut into nine pieces. After many trips to the cavern with Thomas, I recorded the entirety of the writing there, which described the ancient carpet's pattern with such detail that I could reproduce it. At the end of this project, I learned that the carpet of the Halevis had been captured by Roman spies and had been smuggled to Constantinople. No sooner had I learned of its whereabouts, I chartered passage on a Radhanite merchant ship.

**Men in Funny Hats**

The Greek-speaking Roman Empire of the Middle Ages is today known as the Byzantine Empire, derived from the original Greek name for Constantinople - Byzantium. However, it did not gain this name until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the time of the caliphate, it was simply called the *Imperium Romanorum* or *Romania*. The common term for Greeks at the time was *Romi*.

**Syrian (Ethnicity)**

Syrians have contributed to the fields of astronomy, philosophy, and medicine, and many of the most prominent scholars and scientists of the time are Syrians. Syrians seem to have a proverb for everything. They are descended from the people of the ancient Assyrian, Aramean, and Chaldean empires, and are the original inhabitants of Mesopotamia. Many Syrian are losing their ethnic identity as they adjust to the Arabization of the Islamic empire. Most Syrian are Christians or Jews; thus they are treated as other *dhimmi* and face severe legal restrictions.

**Naming:** Syrian naming practices vary according to region, having been influenced by the Canaanites, Elamites, Hittites, Nabataeans, and Scythians. Biblical names are especially common among Syrian children. Among Syrians, the prefix "bar" is used instead of "ibn" (son of). Often surnames refer to a place.

**Male Names:** Abel, Barnabas, Malichus, Thaddeus, Zacchaeus

**Female Names:** Anina, Mahalia, Nehara, Raziah, Shaqilat, Tabitha



## Roman Empire

The Roman Empire once occupied all of present-day Europe, but during the Arab conquests it became compacted around Anatolia and the capital city Constantinople. Heretics and ethnic minorities live in the borderlands, but the heart of the civilization is made up of Romans. Envoys from the Romans constantly visit the Caliph to negotiate terms of truce, to request exchange of prisoners, to offer tribute, or to make idle threats. The ruler of the Romans is Empress Irene, a woman of extreme cunning who has on multiple times sent only a portion of the tribute due the Abbasid Caliph. Each time the Caliph swears he'll kill her, and each time Irene assuages his rage with diplomacy and empty promises. It is common practice for the Emperor of Rome (or Empress, as the case may be) to make use of subsidies to inspire conflict among their rivals, and the spies of the Roman Empire are feared across the caliphate.

### Roman (Ethnicity)

Romans take pride in their Greek heritage and national unity. Roman songs praise frontiersmen who fight against the Arab invaders. They are a people just emerging from terrible dark ages who have learned to endure and survive. Romans are revered for their contributions to philosophy, science, and medicine, but are also rarely trusted, for there is a long-standing enmity between the Romans and the Muslims. While Romans are well-received among the educated Arabs, nobles view them as dangerous competition, and soldiers and common folk often hate them as national enemies.

**Naming:** Among commoners, descriptive patronymics and by-names ('the wise', 'the tailor', 'of Antioch') have replaced the family name. In Constantinople aristocrats move up and down the social pyramid by merit, guile, nepotism, treachery, and loyalty. Family identity, while valued privately, is rarely publicly advertised because it risks diminishing one's claim to authority. The *praenomen* (given name) is followed by the *nomen* (a clan name) which is ended with the *cognomen* (the family name).

**Male Names:** Andreas, Constantinus, Elias, Ionnes, Leontius, Menas, Petrus, Stephanus, Theodorus

**Female Names:** Anastasia, Dominica, Euphemia, Helena, Iuliana, Nicasia, Patricia, Sophia, Theocharista

**Surnames:** Iereus, Ktistes, Melissenos, Petraleiphas, Sidernia, Synadenos

## Constantinople

Located between the Sea of Marmara and the Golden Horn, Constantinople lies at the juncture between Europe and Asia. Named after the Roman Emperor Constantine, the city was designed as a rival to Rome. Under Emperor

Justinian, the Hagia Sophia, the Church of Holy Wisdom, was built at the center of the city. The city has been besieged twice by the Arabs, but each time the Romans have repelled their attackers. People of all ethnicities dwell and trade in the city, and Bulgarian, Patzinak, Khazar, and Slav voices fill the markets. The center of Constantinople is the Tetrastoon, the Palace of the Four Porticoes, which is the political heart of the Roman Empire.

### The Disputed Throne

On Christmas Day, 800 AD, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne as *Imperator Augustus*. The Romans were outraged at this upstart Frankish king, and the title is hotly contested, being claimed by both Charlemagne and Irene. Charlemagne, in an effort to soothe relations, uses a different title at court – "Emperor King of the Franks and Lombards." In fact, Irene seeks the hand of Charlemagne in marriage and if she succeeds the glory of ancient Rome would be restored, Emperor and Empress ruling side by side.

Upon arriving in Constantinople, I established myself as a carpet trader, and began importing the carpets of my friends and family. At first I barely could make enough to eat, and I suffered greatly under the stringent taxes the Romans imposed on me. Several times soldiers destroyed my carpets and spat in my face. It was so different from the *dhimmi* system of my own country, which imposed rules but condemned outward acts of violence and discourtesy. Enduring the intimidation, my business started to grow, and I learned that the Halevi's carpet had been taken to the Empress' palace, where Roman scholars attempted to decipher its message. I was able to convince them to seek my help as a native Persian weaver, and at long last I saw the Halevi's carpet rolled out before me once again. I learned that the Empress sought to uncover the secrets of the carpet in order to make a gift to Charlemagne, but another scholar hinted that her generals were watching the project closely. I tracked the path the carpet charted out for me – the Franji Empire, Al-Andalus, the Maghreb, and Egypt, and from Egypt a return to Baghdad. My course mapped out, I stole the carpet in the dead of night and fled from Constantinople on a ship bound for Portovenere, a small Franji fishing village where Arab traders were common. There it would be harder to find me.

## Franji Empire

Among the Franji one cannot have a discussion about history without hearing of the prowess of Carolus Martellus who defeated the Moors at the Battle of Tours, nor of the glories of Carolus Magnus, also known as Charlemagne. In honor of these two men, the dynasty is sometimes called the Carolingian Empire. It stretches from the Pyrenees in the southwest to the borders of the Roman Empire in the east. The Franji have faced



# Chapter 15: Geography of the Caliphate

the threat of outside invaders crossing from over the Danube River for many years. In order to defray the cost of defending the whole of his empire, the Franji King divided the nation into fiefs, each with a separate governor who pays tribute to the King. Charlemagne united the fiefs and formed a close relationship with the Popes; he wages war against the Ummayyads and maintains diplomatic relations with Caliph Harun al-Rashid.

## *Franji (Ethnicity)*

There are few men with a more stubborn sense of honor than the Franji, save perhaps the Arabs. In combat, they are fearsome foes, possessed of amazing strength and valor. The Franji have a strong sense of ownership, but no sense of public property and social justice. Few are literate save their monks and rulers, and the rest live in fear of the plague.

**Naming:** The Franji do not have bynames or surnames in the usual sense; rather, in rare cases, a person may be known also by an alternate name. Patronymic bynames may be used to identify one's father, but not necessarily.

**Male Names:** Burchard, Carloman, Grimwald, Marachar, Sigeric, Werinbert

**Female Names:** Adeltrude, Fastrada, Hildegard, Rothaide, Theodelinda

After landing in Portovenere, I set out for Vercilli where I stuck out like a river in the desert, and in the spring I started my long march over the Alps, at last arriving at the Imperial city of Aachen where the Halevi's carpet had beckoned. It was by the grace of God that I passed by the roving gangs of soldiers and managed to communicate with these unclean people whose language was completely foreign to me. I was greatly assisted by a horse trader named Basina, who was well versed in Arabic and had traveled as far as Damascus to buy horses for her master. Basina's master was a carpet collector named Sighund, who had fought as a mercenary for the Romans against the Arabs in Anatolia. Sighund related how, separated from his unit, he found work with several nobles in Syria who paid him to teach them about the Romans. During his time in Syria Sighund became an avid collector of things Persian, and he revealed a vast collection of rugs from across the world which Sighund unwittingly called "Persian." Here were fine examples of weavings by the Khazars, silk carpets from China, and vast tapestries from Baghdad. I was astounded to find one of the Halevi's carpets amidst this warrior's collection! Comparing this smaller carpet with the one I carried, I realized that the star chart on the carpet I carried was dramatically different and had been woven in a style foreign to the Halevis. I closed a deal with Sighund on one of the two carpets I had brought with me, thus

securing enough money to make my journey to the south. I traveled through Auvergnant, Languedocient, and Gascon, and I quickly gained an ear for Occitan. At last I reached the borderlands of Al-Andalus.

## *Al-Andalus*

Once Andalus was ruled by the Caliph's governors, but after the Abbasid coup, Abd al-Rahman, one of the sole survivors of the Umayyad royal family, seized Cordoba and founded his own Emirate. Al-Andalus is a tolerant and cosmopolitan land, though not quite as egalitarian as the Khazars, for in the cities of the Umayyads the Berber people are often maltreated or forced to adopt Arab customs. Here it seems that every man knows a convert to Islam, and there is a freshness to the faith throughout Al-Andalus. *Dhimmis* are well treated in Al-Andalus and are even allowed to build new places of worship. Ironically, this land so far removed from the birthplace of Islam is very conservative and resists new ideas even long after they've been adopted by Muslims in the east. The architecture here is influenced by the heavy Moorish presence, and is distinctively beautiful. The cities of Al-Andalus are truly wondrous, and it is said that in Seville one may find anything imaginable, even sparrow's milk.

## *Kingdom of Asturias*

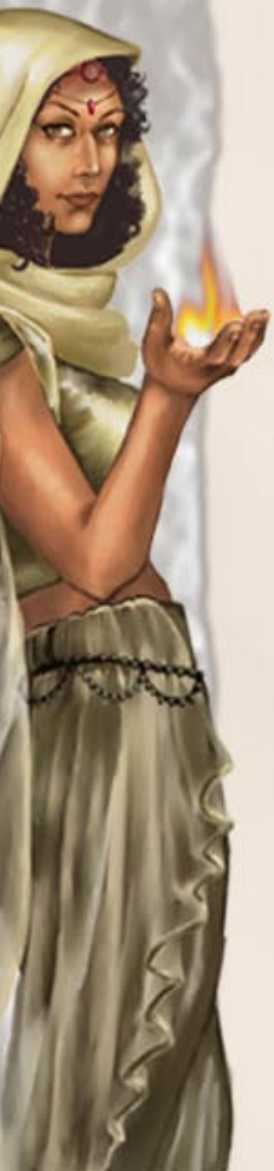
The northern Iberian peninsula is governed by King Alfonso II. His Christian kingdom, known as Asturias, is protected from the Umayyads by the formidable Cantabrian mountains and towering coastal cliffs. The boundaries in this region seem to shift weekly as skirmishes break out between the Christian forces to the north and the Muslims to the south. In these lands there is constant talk of the rebellions against the Umayyads that are beginning in Lison, Merida, and Toledo. Alfonso has close ties with the king of Pamplona, Inigo Iniguez, and they openly discuss revolt against the Umayyads.

## *Toledo*

Toledo, or *Tulaytulah* in Arabic, is the center of *la convivencia*, what the locals call the peaceful co-existence of Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Al-Andalus. It is famous for the production of steel that rivals Damascus, and especially for its swords. Located on a mountaintop, Toledo is surrounded on three sides by the Tagus River; from this high place one can look down at the surrounding countryside and irrigation works below. Ecumenical councils of the Christian church are often convened in Toledo to decide on issues of doctrine and administration.

## *Cordoba*

At the heart of the Umayyad Emirate is Cordoba, the largest and most sophisticated city in all of Europe. Of







the hundreds of mosques within the city it is the royal palace-mosque of Emir al-Hakam ibn-Hisham ibn Abd-al-Rahman, known as *La Mezquita*, that is the most splendorous. Scholars, poets, philosophers, historians, and musicians from across the world are just beginning to arrive, seeking patronage of the wealthy Banu Qasim and Umayyad families. The libraries and universities of Cordoba are numerous and have the best collection of books I have seen outside of the House of Wisdom in Baghdad. At night the streets are lit by lanterns as is the custom in Baghdad; indeed in all ways Cordoba is a rival to my beloved Baghdad.

## Moor (Nationality)

Moors, the inhabitants of Al-Andalus, have mixed blood from Berber, Arab, Zanj, Nubian, Syrian, Egyptian, and Frankish stock. The appearance of the Moors varies greatly, from black hair and dark eyes to red hair and green eyes, from ivory skin to skin the color of fertile earth. They are famed as craftsmen, horse breeders, and farmers, as well as mathematicians, naval officers, and musicians. Those Moors who are *dhimmi* – especially the Christians – are known as *musta'ribun* (*mozarabes*), or “those who imitate the Arabs.”

**Naming:** Moors follow normal Arabic naming customs, though they use bynames related to locations within Al-Andalus, such as: al-Balansi (of Valencia), al-Garnati (or Grenada), al-Isbili (of Seville), al-Jayyani (or Jaen), al-Mayurqui (of Mallorca), al-Mursi (of Murcia), al-Qurtubi (or Cordoba), al-Rundi (of Ronda), al-Tulaytuli (of Toledo).

In Cordoba I got into contact with the Khelaiwi family of flying carpet weavers who had fled the Abbasids after being betrayed by their neighbors. As I sat drinking sweet coffee and perusing the wheel and medallion designs of the pile woven carpets at their shop, the patriarch of the family, Utbah, leaned over to me, “Do you wish to see a real Halevi?” Thinking that he meant a carpet, I enthusiastically followed him down into a secret room beneath their home where I saw a young mustached man, eyes dark as coal, working on a carpet pattern. He extended me a warm greeting and introduced himself as Yaqub ibn-Wa'il ibn-Da'ud al-Halevi. Yaqub told me how he had fled to Christian Nubia and helped the Khelaiwi family come over, but they decided to travel to Al-Andalus where a distant relative lived and find their fortunes there. When assassins came for Yaqub in Nubia, he fled across the Sahara with the help of Tuareg raiders and came to Cordoba where he found the Khelaiwis who took him in. Kneeling alongside the rolled out carpet of the Halevis, Yaqub showed me how the carpet when lined up with the stars above became a ship captain's *diwan* and led to an island off the coast of Tripoli. There, said Yaqub, was the spring that produced the clay which the silk threads of the carpet must be dyed in to make it fly. There, said Yaqub, the flying carpet would be reborn.

“Come with me, Yaqub,” I said.

“No, I dare not. This area around Tripoli is infested with the worst corsairs of the Mediterranean. It is not safe to go there, especially so for a woman.”

But I had come this far, and nothing, corsairs or booby-trapped islands, would deter me. My father's life and the lives of countless weavers hung in the balance. Thus I chartered the ship of a brave captain who had once been in the navy of Cordoba, claiming that I sought to travel to Tripoli. Little did he know that I intended to travel to an unmarked island in corsair-infested waters.

## Mashriq

All Arabic-speaking lands to the east of the Nile are referred to as *mashriq* meaning “east.” It is the corresponding term for *maghreb*. Egypt itself sits on the edge of both the east and the west. To its Arab conquerors, the Maghreb is known as *jazira al-maghreb*, or “the island of the west.”

## The Maghreb

The region north of the sea of sand and west of the Nile is known as al-Maghreb, or “the west.” In many ways the Maghreb is utterly cut off from the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa by the vast Sahara; only the Tuareg cross through this wasteland, returning with strange weapons, salt, gold, ivory, and slaves. Here the Abbasids are paper tigers, dangerous to be sure, but certainly not the main power. The fierce spirit of Berber independence here seems to be contagious; the Maghreb is split into many different emirates and kingdoms.

## Bargawata



After their conversion to Islam, the Bargawata Berbers formed their own state on the western coast of the Maghreb. The founder, Salih ibn Tarif, set himself up as a prophet, promulgating a religion that mixed Shi'a and Kharijite theology with pagan traditions. His son al-Yasa, a silver-tongued diplomat, sends missionaries to the neighboring tribes; al-Yasa has even managed to establish good relations with the Emirate of Cordoba.

### *The Blue People*

The Berbers of the Sahara – the Tuareg – are called the “Blue People” because of the indigo pigment in their traditional robes and turbans. They are a matrilineal nomadic culture where the men wear the veil instead of the women, believing it wards off evil spirits and to protect from the harsh desert sands which scour the Sahara. Tuareg culture is divided into four groups: Aristocratic warriors who defend, raid, and organize the caravan trade; captive herders who tend the livestock; crafters; and clergy. The Tuareg work the trans-Saharan caravan trade, and are notorious raiders along that route.

### *Emirate of Nekor*

A Caliphal grant gave the Banu Salih control over the Rif mountains in the northwestern Maghreb. Salih converted the local Berber tribes to Islam, but always had an unsteady relationship with them. The current ruler, Salih II ibn Sa'id, recently moved the capital to the city of Nekor. However, Salih is beset on all sides by rival Berber tribes, who are always a moment away from revolting.

### *Emirate of Sijilmasa*

Southwest of Fez, Sijilmasa is a center of caravan trade that lies at the northern edge of the Sahara, on the banks of the Oued Ziz River. The Sufris, a moderate sect of Kharijites, have established their own emirate in Sijilmasa, bolstering their claim with the copious profits they have made trading with tribes to the south.

### *Idrisid Emirate*

The Idrisid emirate is a place of refugees from Khairouan and Al-Andalus, who migrate to the royal city of Fez. Preachers of the faith, the Idrisids spread Islam and the Arabic language among the Berber tribes that live in the High Atlas Mountains. The current ruler is Idris II, who is engaged in constructing a vast mosque and university. Unlike the rest of the Maghreb which is considered wild and dangerous, Fez is a religious and scientific center.

### *Ifriqiya*

The region surrounding the capital city of Kairouan is governed by the Aghlabids who nominally are governors on behalf of the Abbasids, and in reality are the absolute authorities of Ifriqiya. Kairouan is considered the “Mecca of North Africa” where Muslim forces kept the Berber tribes in check. Indeed, many Muslims consider Kairouan the fourth holiest city after Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem; non-Muslims are rarely allowed to enter Kairouan's gates. A popular way station for caravans, Kairouan is a far cry from the salt-marshes of the region; in fact the city was built in the middle of a dense forest. While most of the dangerous beasts have been dealt with, there are always rumors of some monster lurking in the marshes.

### *Berber (Ethnicity)*

The Berber belongs to one of the pastoral tribes of North Africa's coastline known collectively as *Imazighen* (singular, *Amazigh*). The term “Berber” derives from the Latin word for “barbarian” and some consider it insulting. Most *Imazighen* are settled farmers and herders who live in the mountains, though there are significant minorities of nomads (the Tuareg) and city-dwellers. They are fiercely independent people with a great love of poetry and music. Many of the inhabitants of Al-Andalus are descended from *Imazighen*, though they have only loose ties to the culture of their forefathers. *Imazighen* often face discrimination by urban Arabs who view them as crude and arrogant. Likewise, on the seas, *Imazighen* are often charged as pirates. Many believe *Imazighen* are guilty of repeated apostasy, and fear the Kharijite heresy which began among their populations.

**Naming:** Whether an *Amazigh* takes on an Arabic or a traditional Tamazight name says a lot about their attitude toward their culture, as well as the extent to which they have been persecuted. Many *Imazighen* who travel within the Caliphate choose to take on an Arabic name to avoid discrimination.

**Male Names:** Aheyyad, Cucunq, Tacfin, Tanan, Ugwistan, Yattuy, Ziri

**Female Names:** Aldjiya, Fer'udja, Lunja, Meghighda, Tafsut, Taheyyatt

The captain of the ship considered throwing me overboard when I revealed to him my true destination, but when I promised to bring back treasure from the island he quickly changed his tune. We sailed out through choppy seas to the site that the carpet suggested and found ourselves surrounded by dense fog, curling around the ship like a beckoning hand. An island loomed ahead, and soon we had entered a shallow bay. The captain's men rowed me ashore. It



was in the late afternoon when I heard the sounds of rushing water. Scrambling through the underbrush I gazed upon a spring like no other. Flocks of white birds with long blazing tails flew from tree to tree above a waterfall that cascaded over a dark glistening rock face. The water itself was purer than any I had ever seen and even seemed to glow when dragonflies skated across its surface. I crept into the cool waters with the silk thread I had brought, noticing how the red clay under my feet turned the water red. I produced to soak the thread within as Yaqub had instructed me, and as I soaked the threads I became certain that I was participating in an ancient ritual that had existed since time immemorial. For good measure I took a water skin of the red water with me and then descended to the ship at sundown. As I approached, the captain yelled for me to hurry. "Corsairs!" came the cry from the look-out. No sooner had I reached the ship than we cast off, a ship on the horizon in hot pursuit. After an hour, the captain informed us that the corsair ship was faster and that they would soon be upon us, so he instructed each man to arm himself and make ready their defense.

"Wait," I said. "Let us not resort to that." Then, drawing the symbol that the Kurdish soldier had taught me upon the sail of the ship, I doused it with water from the stream. The men stared at me like I was fully mad. Then the ship lurched and a powerful wind filled the sails nearly ripping them from the mast. Cheering, the men took to their positions. In gratitude, the captain offered to take me wherever I wished. I directed him to take me to Egypt, where the final piece of the puzzle that was the Halevi's carpet lay.

## *Patriarch of Alexandria*

The highest-ranking bishops in Eastern Orthodoxy, Oriental Orthodoxy, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Assyrian Church of the East are called patriarchs; the office and lands they oversee are known as patriarchates. There are two patriarchs of Alexandria – one for the Eastern Orthodox and another for the Copts. The Eastern Orthodox Patriarch and Pope of Alexandria and all Africa is Politanus. His Coptic rival is Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the Seat of St. Mark, Mark II.

## *Copt (Nationality)*

Natives of Egypt are Christian or Islamic; they call themselves *rometchet* ("the people") and their land *Kemet* ("the black land"). The Christians can be distinguished by their names, the crosses around their necks, or by the cross tattooed on their wrists. With the settlement of Bedouin tribes in Egypt, there are a fair number of Copts who appear similar to Arabs. It is said that every Copt knows how to dance; while this may be an exaggeration, dance is an essential part of their culture, whether a religious dance, harem dances, combat dances, street dances, or banquet dances. Perhaps even more than the Arab, the Copt is superstitious, believing in the power of ancient Egyptian spirits, the magical properties of hair and nails, and the protective properties of henna. Every peasant seems to carry a bamboo staff called a *nebbut*, both for self-defense and as a prop when performing their folk dances. Copts are gifted musicians, scientists, and farmers.

**Naming:** Coptic names are derived from many sources: native Egyptian, Arabic, Greek, Aramaic, Hebrew, Latin, and Biblical names. Naming ceremonies are of great importance among Copts and are thought to have magical significance. Names are often modified with the following suffixes: *hotep* (content), *khu* (protected), *meryt* (beloved), *nakht* (strong), *nefer* (beautiful), *sa* (son), or *sat* (daughter).

**Male Names:** Aboulam, Agathon, Ammonios, Medhu, Sennefer, Tjau

**Female Names:** Abeia, Aschajit, Chamaat, Itekujet, Neferu, Sitamun

## *Egypt*

While the war against Egypt was marked by violent siege, after the surrender the Coptic patriarch was reinstated, exiled bishops were called home, Copts were allowed to serve in public office, and churches once forcibly turned over to the Romans were returned to the Copts. However, due to the oppressive taxation regime of the Abbasids, revolts are common among both the Copts and Arabs living in Egypt. Egypt is only loosely governed by the Abbasids, and the region is practically governed by the autonomous Ahmad Ibn-Tulun who was sent as a governor for the Abbasids to quell revolts. However, upon putting down the revolts, Ahmad established his own dynasty over the Nile Valley. He is a stern ruler who tolerates no dissension. Though his relations with Baghdad are cordial, several failed assassinations have been attempted against him, causing Ibn-Tulun to deeply mistrust his former allies.

## *Alexandria*

Founded by Alexander the Great, Alexandria was the shipping point for Egyptian grain to Rome. It is a city with a violent history: Civil warfare, uprising mobs, massacres, and persecution, culminating in a long siege by Amir ibn al-As. Wondrous palaces, baths, gardens, and theaters line its streets. On Pharos island, the Great Lighthouse provides a lookout for ships and a model for all other cities' lighthouses. The ruins of the Library of Alexandria, incinerated in a fire, can be found near the city proper. Rumors abound about this library; some claim flying carpets were used to access its tall bookshelves or that it was the private collection of Aristotle. No one knows how the library was destroyed, but rumors are that, due to many collections of the library being decentralized, some portion of the collections survived the fire.

## *Al-Fustat*

Al-Fustat, the capital of Egypt, is filled with multi-story buildings that block the sun with their height, so that travelers in the daytime find it necessary to use a torch to light their way through the streets. Some of the buildings are seven to fourteen stories high; indeed, al-Fustat stands



head and shoulders above all but Baghdad's minarets. The city is a center for trade on the Nile, and is one of the most influential cities in the world, lying at the juncture between Maghreb and the Mashriq. However, organized crime is prevalent there, and a day doesn't go by without a violent crime becoming the buzz of the populace. The name al-Fustat ("the tent") came from a tale that the founder of the city, Amir ibn al-As, on returning to his tent found a dove within and, declaring the site sacred, would not take his tent down. Once the dove raised her brood and was gone, Amir built a mosque on this site which would become the city al-Fustat.

I arrived in al-Fustat at nightfall, observing the flickering torches casting shadows through its crooked streets. Disembarking, I thanked the captain for his kindness and secured lodging at a caravanserai. I traced the star map on the Halevi's carpet, and to my astonishment, found portions of the carpet began to glow. Looking up to the night sky, I found that the carpet's pattern was identical to the asterism called the leaps of the gazelle, which is known in Egypt as the plough, and to the Greeks as Ursae Majoris. I gathered as many maps as I could of the surrounding region over the following days, comparing them to the carpet and to the asterism it depicted. Bleary eyed and sleepless, I did not notice the man standing next to me until his face was next to mine.

"Abu Rawash," he said, causing me to jump in my seat. He was a pale man with piercing blue eyes, garbed in an all white robe and green turban denoting him as a Hajji. "A trade crossroads. People take stones from there to build their homes. This is where your carpet leads." He asked, feeling the edge of the carpet with a look of nostalgia.

"Who are you?" I asked.

"My name is Theset... I helped the Halevis to weave this carpet."

Knowing that my search had come to an end, I cried. My tears were joyful rain and they tasted of my loss, the loss of my family, the loss of my home. For three years I had searched the world for the truth and at last, it had found me.

## Languages of the Caliphate

### Ancient Egyptian

#### Archaic

A hieroglyphic language, Ancient Egyptian has no spoken form today, and its use is relegated to scholars and mystics. However, it is possible for a linguist to derive how to say words in Ancient Egyptian if they speak Coptic as well.

### Arabic

#### Classical

Spoken throughout the caliphate, Arabic has two forms: The Classical Arabic of the Qur'an, and the colloquial Arabic spoken in day-to-day affairs. Classical Arabic is commonly believed to be the language of divine revelation, and that translating the Qur'an is impossible as its meaning would be lost.

### Aramaic

#### Dialectal

An ancient Semitic language, Aramaic has been the language of empire and worship. It is spoken throughout the Islamic empire, especially in Palestine and among Jewish populations. While it is rapidly being swallowed by Arabic, Aramaic continues to be widely spoken.

### Defining a Language

**Archaic:** The language is no longer spoken as a native tongue, but is reserved as a language of writing. The spoken form is restricted to magical, liturgical, or scholarly uses. A character must have 5 ranks in a living related language in order to learn an archaic language. A character with 5 ranks in a living related language may also make a DC 15 Language check to understand the gist, but not the subtleties or poetry, of an archaic language.

**Borrowed Script:** The language borrows the alphabet of another loan language. Hence, speakers with 4 ranks in the loan language may pronounce what is written on a DC 15 Language check even though they will not understand it.

**Classical:** The language possesses "high" and "low" forms. The "high" form is spoken by aristocracy, clergy, scholars, and bureaucrats. The "low" form is a vernacular used in daily life among the masses. Both forms are learned as a separate language, though their writing system is the same. A character speaking the appropriate form for a given situation may make a DC 10 Language check to reduce their penalties due to station by 1 step (e.g. a sheikh speaking before a noble in High Arabic would suffer no penalties due to his lower station).

**Dialectal:** Multiple dialects are spoken within the language, according to the region you are in. When you learn the language you must write down what region you learned it in. You may attempt to understand other dialects on a DC 10 Language check, and you may attempt to communicate on DC 20. You may take this language multiple times to learn multiple dialects.

**Oral:** An oral language has no written form yet.

**Pidgin:** The language is a mix of many other languages. A character who speaks one of these loan languages may make a DC 20 Language check to understand the gist of what the pidgin speaker is saying.



## Aramaic Dialects

*Christian Palestinian* (spoken by Christians of Palestine)

*Jewish Babylonian* (language of the Talmud)

*Jewish Palestinian* (spoken by the Jews of Palestine, particularly Galilee)

*Samaritan* (spoken by the Samaritans)

*Syriac* (spoken by Syrian Christians, and in missionary communities)

## Chinese

*Classical, Dialectal*

The Chinese language used in the Tang dynasty has flourished amidst a renaissance of rhyming poetry with a rigid structure. You must choose a regional dialect when learning Chinese.

## Chinese Dialects

*Guanzhou* (spoken in south-eastern China, it is the *lingua franca* of China)

*Gan* (spoken in Jiangxi province)

*Hakka* (spoken in south China, it has been influenced by many languages)

*Min* (spoken in the south-eastern island of Fujian)

*Wu* (spoken in Zhejiang province, it is considered a soft and flowing dialect)

*Xiang* (spoken in Hunan province)

## Coptic

*Borrowed Script (Greek)*

The descendant of ancient Egyptian, Coptic is spoken almost exclusively in Egypt by peasants and clergy, though there are pockets of Coptic speakers in Nubia. Colloquial Arabic has incorporated many Coptic loan words and vice versa. The Coptic written alphabet is derived from Greek.

## Djinni

*Dialectal*

An inherently magical tongue far older than all human languages, Djinni is often learned by sha'ir, though occasionally a djinn's child by a mortal may learn it. As Arabic is considered the pure language of the Islamic faith, Djinni is viewed by all djinn as regal and pure, and frowned upon by others who speak it poorly and mutilate the poetic structure of Djinni grammar. Most mortals hearing Djinni will respond with hostility, suspecting the speaker of wicked sorcery. Choose a tribal dialect when learning Djinni: Ghuli, Ifreeti, Jannti, Jinnti, Maridi, or Shaitani.

## Djinni Dialects

*Ghuli* (a savage language that emphasizes guttural sounds)

*Ifreeti* (a seething language that sounds like crackling fire, guarded by the Ifreet)

*Jannti* (a melodious and lilting tongue spoken by djinni merchants)

*Jinnti* (a gushing language with one thousands ways to give praise)

*Maridhi* (a tempestuous and poetical language, guarded by the Marid)

*Shaitani* (an insinuating language with hundreds of ways to tell a convincing lie)

## Domari

*Oral, Pidgin*

A pidgin tongue influenced by Arabic, Hebrew, Hindi, and Vulgar Latin, Domari is spoken by the gypsies. Domari sounds like a twitter of birds when spoken, and makes use of many loan words and double-entendres. There is no written alphabet for Domari in the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

## Frankish

A West Germanic language spoken by the Franks, it is the ancestor of Dutch and had a significant impact on the development of French. While there is a Frankish written language, it is relegated to vernacular literature alongside Anglo-Saxon, Gothic, and other European regional languages.

## Ge'ez

*Borrowed Script (Arabic)*

A Semitic language that developed in the Ethiopian highlands of the Horn of Africa, it is spoken throughout the Kingdom of Aksum. Its written form is derived from Arabic.

## Hindi

*Classical, Dialectal*

Hindi is the ancient language of Hindustan, widely believed to possess magical powers. The high form is known as Sanskrit. Hindi has a wide continuum of dialects with few clear boundaries about what is Hindi and what is not.

## Hindi Dialects

*Hindustani* (the official trade language of Hindustan)

*Awadhi* (spoken in the Awadh, it is a language of literature and poetry)

*Bihari* (several similar dialects spoken in the eastern Buddhist state of Bihar)

*Brajbhasa* (spoken in the Braj, it is a language of literature devoted to Krishna)

*Dakhhini* (spoken among the Muslims of South Hindustan)

*Kanauji* (spoken in the administrative state of Kannauj)

*Rajasthani* (spoken in the Sind and northwestern Hindustan)

*Varanasi* (dialect of the holy city Varanasi)

## Koine

*Classical*

While the official language of the Roman Empire is Latin, Koine (Medieval Greek) continues to be spoken as a vernacular. Koine means "common" and it is understood by all Greeks throughout the empire. The classical form is known as *Attic*, which means "favoring the Athenians." *Atticism* is a return to the Classical methods of oration and writing. *Koine* is the language of the Christian Bible.



**Kurdish***Dialectal*

Kurdish is spoken in Kurdistan, a region including parts of Persia, Iraq, Syrian, and Anatolia. The Kurdish language has been greatly influenced by Arabic, Turkish, and Persian.

**Kurdish Dialects**

*Hewrami* (spoken in western Persia and north-eastern Iraq)

*Kurmanji* (major dialect spoken throughout Central Asia, especially in the north)

*Silemani* (spoken in Iraq, it is usually written in Arabic script unlike other dialects)

**Latin (Church)***Archaic*

Church Latin is a written medium of scholarly exchange and liturgy that is no longer a native language. Even with the Church's attempts to codify it and prevent it from changing, Church Latin is already being influenced by Vulgar Latin and other languages. It is only used amongst scholars, in government documents, at mass, in aristocratic poetry, or for arcane purposes. A character speaking Church Latin can attempt a DC 20 Language check to puzzle out the gist of what a Vulgar Latin speaker is saying.

**Latin (Vulgar)***Dialectal, Oral*

The Latin spoken among the inhabitants of the Roman Empire was brought by Roman soldiers and is considered vulgar compared to the Latin of Cicero. Vulgar Latin, also known as New Latin, is a group of dialects beginning to evolve into the Romance languages. A character speaking Vulgar Latin can make a DC 20 Intelligence check to puzzle out the gist of what a Church Latin speaker is saying.

**Vulgar Latin Dialects**

*Castilian* (spoken in the kingdom of Castile in Andalusia)

*Catalan* (spoken in northeastern Andalusia and southern Francie)

*Dalmatian* (each city along the Dalmatian coast of present-day Ukraine has its own dialect which must be learned individually, such as *Zara*, *Vegliot*, *Spalato*, *Ragusa*, or *Cattaro*)

*Occitan* (spoken in southern Francie, it is also known as *langue d'oc*)

*Francien* (spoken in northern Francie, Belgium and the Channel Islands, it is also known as *langue d'oïl*)

*Italian* (each city in Italia has its own dialect which must be learned individually, such as *Sardinian*, *Sicilian*, *Tuscan*, or *Venetian*)

*Lusitanian* (spoken in the Andalusian region of Portucale)

*Romanian* (spoken in Romania and along the Black Sea coast)

*Romansh* (spoken in present-day Switzerland).

**Mozarabic**

Spoken throughout Andalusia, Mozarabic is a mixture of various dialects of Vulgar Latin and Arabic. It uses the Arabic alphabet, but its pronunciation has more in common with Latin; thus, any speaker of Castilian, Catalan, or Lusitanian can make a DC 15 Language check to understand a Mozarabic speaker.

**Nubian***Borrowed Script (Greek)*

The language of Makuria, it is spoken by the people living on the southern banks of the Nile River, with a few communities in the southern mountains speaking a dialect. Its written alphabet is based on Greek and the ancient Meroitic script.

**Pahlavi (Persian)***Borrowed Script (Aramaic)*

The Pahlavi language is used for secular and Zoroastrian religious functions, and many great works of Persian philosophy are written in Pahlavi. It has a complicated writing system derived from Aramaic.

**Secret Code**

Many secret codes are used during the time of the caliphate to send communiqués across enemy lines, to contact agents of a secret society, and to identify a fellow member of a heresy. When you learn a secret code you must consult with the Narrator to see what secret codes are available. Typically secret codes might include a military drum language, a signal-based language used by assassins, or a royal family's code language used in times of crisis.

**Sindhi***Borrowed Script (Arabic)*

The language of the Sind has a very rich inventory of sounds. While it is usually written in the Devangari script in India, Arabic-derived letters are becoming more common. Sindhi poetry is widely revered.

**Tamazight (Berber)**

The language of the Amazigh is divided into mutually understandable regional variants, and possesses its own ancient alphabet called Tifinagh. It is spoken throughout the Maghreb and in pockets of Andalusia.

**Turkish**

Turkish is actually a group of many mutually intelligible dialects spoken by nomads and city-dwellers of the Central Asian steppe. The runic writing system is called Orkhon. Foreign educated Turks are beginning to use Arabized or Latinized Turkic writing systems.



To the Commander of the Faithful,

O venerable Caliph al-Mahdi, these last five years have been dark for the “flying carpet” families. Indeed, my father still languishes in prison, though you have released my brothers and for that may God bestow upon you good health and great fortunes. It is with the desire to see my family restored to their good standing and the slander exposed which caused this sad affair. To this end my servants have brought you this gift, a flying carpet woven according to ancient principles of sacred design. I have traveled the far reaches of this earth and reconstructed this art as it was known in classical times. It may ease your conscience to know that the cost of such a carpet outweighs all the stables of your finest mares, and thus producing them in bulk is not possible, nor is it consistent with the weaver’s values, which are always toward emulating the patterns that God has given to us with precision and loving care. With the simple utterance of “salaam” this carpet shall rise and do your majesty’s bidding, carrying you unto the very heights of the celestial dome and across the Tigris herself. I pray that this carpet, woven by all the hands that have touched my life throughout my travels, is worth at least my father’s freedom.

Your humble servant,  
Sameeha bint-Ahmed al-Hamra

## *Fantastic Locations of the Nights*

### *Iram, City of One Thousand Pillars (Arabia)*

Deep in the Rub al Khali of southern Arabia lay the ruins of a fabulously wealthy pagan city that stood for thousands of years. The Holy Qur’an, in the 89<sup>th</sup> Surah, says that the tribe of Ad, Noah’s great-grandchildren, built the city Iram, but its wealth corrupted it and the people turned to decadence and studied *sihr*. King Shaddad of Iram defied the warnings of God, who smote the city with a terrible earthquake, burying it beneath the sands. Legends say all the inhabitants were turned to stone. None can say what has become of the lost city of Iram. Many seek it to this day, drawn by the prospects of finding the fabled tomb of King Shaddad, to which legends ascribe incalculable treasures.

### *Jebel al-Nur (Arabia)*

The “Mountain of Light” houses the cave Hira at its peak, where the Prophet Muhammad received the angel Gabriel’s message; it is a sacred site often visited by pilgrims. The cave, located in the Hejaz, was the Prophet’s personal meditation space. Any character who can benefit from the baraka of holy places can pray overnight here, and is affected as if an adept had used Baraka (+10) upon them; generally the bonus applies to Concentration or Knowledge (theology and philosophy) checks, any form of meditation, or the powers of an adept with the Faith arcane philosophy. Many believe that the voice of the angel Gabriel still speaks to the worthy who meditate within.

### *Court of the Feathered Queen (Nubia)*

While Nubians are overwhelmingly Christian, some remember the old gods and spirits from the times of the Kushites – Arensnuphis, the plumed lion; Dedwen, goddess of fragrance; Mandulis, the son god. Of these pagans the Feathered Queen Nefertari is the most infamous. The finest archer of her tribe, Nefertari fought in the wars against the first Arab invasion of Nubia in 640 AD; her bowmen became the terror of the Arabs. She was rewarded with her own parcel of land. It was a mere token gesture, for the land was sandy and barren. However, through her magic and prayers to Arensnuphis, Nefertari transformed the entire region in a verdant oasis in just over a decade. The gaudy oasis court exists outside of the normal flow of time – one day here is a year in the outside world. Nefertari enjoys capturing or tricking powerful men to serve as her concubines for a month, such that when (or if) they return to the world, they find all their loved ones aged or dead. Her elite queen’s guard is filled with her former despairing lovers.

## *The Legacy of Suleiman (Aksum)*

### *The Ark of the Covenant*

Lake Tana contains islands that are home to ancient monasteries; one of these monasteries is said to house the Ark of the Covenant. According to legend, the Ark was taken from the ancient city of Jerusalem by Menelik, the son of King Suleiman and the Queen of Sheba. He is said to have brought the Ark home to Aksum for safe-keeping and stored it at the Tana Cherkos monastery for 800 years. However, while the keepers of the monastery claim the Ark is still there, other scholars are not convinced. Tana Cherkos is a holy site, and a devout pilgrim benefits from Baraka (+10) here.

### *King Suleiman’s Mines*

Slavery has long been a source of revenue for the kings and merchants of Askum. During the height of slave trade, under King Suleiman bin Daoud, numbers reached as high as 25,000 slaves a year. Most of these slaves toiled in the legendary mines of Ophir, from which gold was extracted for King Suleiman’s great temple. Popular folklore says that, if one listens carefully, the ghostly clank of the slaves’ picks can still be heard.

### *Churches of Lalibella*

The ancient town of Lalibella houses wondrous churches carved from solid blocks of rock. Such work seems to be beyond the capacity of mankind, and popular legend claims that while mortal laborers toiled during the day, King Suleiman’s djinni and angels worked together during the night.

### *Temple of One Thousand Suns (Hindustan)*

The great epics of Hindustan say: “*The beauty behind your eyes circumferences one thousand suns.*” Surely they speak of the Temple of One Thousand Suns in Varanasi, the Holy City of the Hindu faith. Since time immemorial, ascetics



have gathered at this temple to serve, protect, and seek out reincarnations of the Buddha, Krishna, and other gods and prophets. Once a reincarnated child is found, the monks first attempt to negotiate with the parents to relinquish their child into the temple's care. If this fails, they try to convince the child to travel with them in secret. If this tactic fails, the monks will abduct the "shining one" for their own good. Youth are actively trained in the temple to become prophets, healers, and saviors. However, several youths have quit their training and gone on to become political and even military leaders; though they do much good (as well as evil), these youths who returned to worldly matters are considered "lost sheep" by the monks, who try to shepherd them back into the flock.

### *Pagoda of the Celestial Kings (China)*

According to Chinese mythology, a complicated Celestial Bureaucracy maintains the world's order and prevents chaos and ignorance from darkening the lives of humankind. Chief among the world's protectors are the Celestial Kings, demonic-looking spirits who fight against vice. In ancient times a pagoda was erected to honor them on an island at the center of a crystal clear blue lake; today, the pagoda's location has been lost but the myth remains. Within the pagoda are statues of each of the Celestial Kings arranged according to the four cardinal directions they protect. Anyone of true faith meditating before one of these statues is taken into the spirit world and must defeat that king's 91 sons and 8 generals (though the challenges are rarely combat). If the faithful one prevails, they are whisked to the king's throne and they see the entire world. A devout pilgrim benefits from Baraka (+10) and a single use of the Scrying power (+20). However, the pagoda is guarded by an order of warrior-monks who make certain that only the worthy find the pagoda.

### *The Elephant's Graveyard (The Sind)*

Legends say that when an elephant dies, its family carries its body to a mass grave where the bleached bones of thousands of elephants are massed into a white mountain. The closest village makes their living hunting elephants and selling their ivory. However, the elephants fight back, rampaging homes and killing lone travelers. None have found the elephant's graveyard and lived to tell of it, but thieves dream of getting rich off the ivory. Occasionally, a wise old elephant will take a pious person to the graveyard to show them a mystery. What this mystery is nobody is certain. Some whisper the elephants reveal their pagan deity; others that they give the fortunate one a gift of ivory to satiate the village's greed, and still others say that spirits of the dead use the elephant's graveyard as a crossing over point in order to speak with the living.

### *Alamut (Persia)*

The mountain fortress of the Assassins is hidden by powerful magic in the Persian kingdom of Daylam. While the assassins consider the holdfast to be heaven on earth and a bastion of enlightenment, others see it as a den of blood, secrets, and dark magic. Alamut is a grand fortress-city, its entrance carved into a cliff face, accessed only by a steep stairway cut into the rock. The verdant and palatial interior stands in sharp contrast to the Spartan gates. Herein the families and servants of the Assassins lead decadent lives, their pleasure unlimited, and their wealth incalculable. However, the Assassins themselves live according to strict principles and must endure a rigorous training regimen that involves both re-shaping one's body and one's mind. It is said any who gaze upon the interior of Alamut are destined to die there.

### *The Seventh Son's Herd (Khazaria)*

The sons of Togarmah included Ujur, Tauris, Avar, Uauz, Bizal, Tarna, Khozar, Janur, Bulgar, and Sawir. The Khazars are descendants of the seventh son, Khozar, the heroic progenitor of the horse people. According to legend, Khozar tamed a wild yet wise mare, a queen of the Tarpan horses of the steppes, and all her wild herds kneeled on one knee before him. The mare queen gave Khozar a herd of horses of exceptional quality, gifted with the ability to form a spiritual link with humanity. It is believed that the descendants of this herd still roam the steppes of Khazaria and that the best horses are descended from their loins. Those who find the herd may be chased away, but if one of pure heart approaches she may be taken anywhere she wishes to go by a willing mare, traveling faster than the wind over rivers and mountains.

### *Peacock Warrior's Shrine (Kurdistan)*

High in the mountains of Kurdistan shines the golden Peacock Warrior's Shrine, wherein it is said any person who makes a sacrifice (material or spiritual) at the shrine will be given knowledge of their future by Malak Taus, the peacock angel. However, even if one manages to navigate the treacherous mountain passes and reach the shrine before the harsh Kurdish winter storms roll in, an armored giant known as the Peacock Warrior challenges any who seek access to the shrine. He calls himself Niveja ("Prayer" in Kurdish) and issues a challenge that tests a unique weakness of the supplicant; none know if he is mortal, djinn, or something else entirely. Anyone succeeding Niveja's challenge and making a genuine sacrifice at the shrine gains the benefits as if an adept had used Baraka (+10) on them; generally this benefit only applies to a critical future action, though it applies to all rolls at this time and not just one. In addition, the supplicant receives a vision.



## *The Ifreeti Patriarchate (Syria)*

Arrogant Malik Sayoun of the Ifreet tribe has claimed himself Patriarch of the Eastern Orthodox Church in opposition to the mortal Politianus. Indeed, the power-hungry ifreet would seize Jerusalem if he could. His patriarchate is based around the ruined oasis city of Palmyra, the “Bride of the Desert.” Sayoun, protected by a moat, drawbridge, high walls, and magic wards. Malik plots in the Fakhredin al Maany castle on top of a mountain overlooking Palmyra. There are two levels of irony to Malik’s rule: The first is that a blasphemous ifreet claims to be Pope and Patriarch. The second is that he has chosen as his “Christian” capital a city whose ancient inhabitants worshipped the pagan gods Bel and Nike. While this irony is not lost on the generals of Jerusalem, Baghdad, and Damascus, neither is the fact that Malik Sayoun’s soldiers fight with the strength of possessed men. In fact, they are. While Malik Sayoun’s followers in Jinnistan are unable to traverse into the mortal world, he provides them with a way to possess his most loyal mortal captains, granting his champions supernatural ferocity in battle.

## *Thessaloniki, City of the Pantheon (Roman Empire)*

In the halls of the Roman nobility it is whispered there are those who pay only lip service to Christianity and hide their lascivious bloody pagan ways. In the streets of Constantinople, it is common knowledge that bull sacrifices are made to the old gods to curry their favor and win their protection. These traditions are kept secret, and pagans often meet in cellars at night to perform their rites. However, there is one place in the Roman Empire where the pagans are free – Thessaloniki, also called Selanik. After a catastrophic earthquake damaged the city in 620 AD, pagan preachers divided the population in half and fortified the northern districts of the city. This was considered a tragedy to the Christians, for the city was an early center of Christianity; St. Paul had preached in the city’s synagogue and St. Demetrius looked over the city as its patron. A bloody civil war ended in a tense truce after the two sides united against attacks from the Slavs – the pagans had won the north but were forbidden from the southern Christian districts. The “City of the Pantheon”, as north Thessaloniki is called, while reviled for its paganism, has egalitarian views towards women and magic. The pagan leader is a veiled woman known only as the Sibyl, who claims to be the last of the oracles of ancient times.

## *Chateaux Maugris (Franji Empire)*

Epic Frankish poems of heroic deeds, the *chansons de geste* tell of the paladins of Charlemagne who did battle against the Umayyads as well as dragons and other magical beasts. High in the Pyrenees, the sorcerer Maugris keeps the magical relics of the deceased paladins – the unbreakable sword Durendal, the giant horse Bayard, and countless others. Maugris, the son of Beuves of Aygremont, is a chivalrous sorcerer raised by Oriande the fairy. After the death of his cousin Renaud defending the shrine of St. Peter, Maugris

grew weary of war and built his chateaux away from the eyes of Charlemagne and all mankind. While Maugris only controls a small regiment of soldiers, Charlemagne considers him a threat to Christendom, and the two are bitter rivals. Those who seek Maugris’ help must contend with his faerie guardians, his cunning magic traps, and his hardened heart. However, one who manages to touch the old sorcerer’s heart would gain a staunch ally and perhaps even access to one of the legendary relics of Charlemagne’s paladins.

## *Gypsy Street (Al-Andalus)*

Popular myth maintains that gypsies are gifted magicians who can curse with a glance and seduce with a dance. While many consider this utter superstition, the basis for this belief may be Gypsy Street, where European spirits revel in the night. Mortals always stumble across Gypsy Street by accident and can never find it if they are looking. Here, lanterns lit with fireflies bob overhead as the spirits drink wine and dance the night away. There could be no time more perilous in a pious mortal’s life! Spirits will seek the mortal’s hand for a dance, but should the mortal accept they will be whisked away into a magical dance from which the only escape is either death or going to bed with the lusty spirit. Touching the wine is equally dangerous – it can transform a mortal into a spirit, cause insanity, inflict a blessing/curse, or any other magical enchantment the gypsy spirits desire. Thankfully, Gypsy Street usually only appears during nights of urban revelry.

## *The Whispering Fog (The Maghreb)*

Sailors, corsairs, and fishermen along the shores of the Maghreb know to fear the fog that comes from the west at sunset. The so-called “whispering fog” curls around the sails of ships, creeps down alleyways, and even seeps through keyholes. Carried by the winds which blow down from the Atlas mountains, the fog is believed to drive men mad, for during this time of the year violence becomes common. Some are even able to hear the whispers of the fog, but should they listen to these voices too long, the unfortunate ones are likely to find themselves transported to the deck of a ghost ship. This ship, whose sighting always preempts the fog’s coming, is known as the Djinni’s Rose, and is captained by the fearsome “Queen of the Corsairs”, a damned woman cursed to existence as a vampire. However, she does not feed on blood but on voices, leaving her victims mute, unable to describe the horrors they have seen.

## *Library of Alexandria (Egypt)*

According to legend the Library of Alexandria was the greatest repository of magical lore in the entire world, a temple erected by Ptolemy II in honor of the Muses. More than 100,000 thousand books were held in the library’s stacks, which scholars would peruse by riding upon flying carpets. These books came from the farthest reaches of Egypt and Rome. Portions of the library were



also dedicated to the Hellenic-Egyptian god Serapis, an amalgamation of the Egyptian Osiris and Greek Apis. From the orthodox viewpoint the library was blasphemous and its destruction was commanded by God. However, many adepts believe that the library was only partially destroyed and that some secret part of it – whether a catacombs, a scattered collection of books, or a family who has memorized the core of its lore – survives today.

### *Cities of the Sea-Born*

Deep beneath the ocean waves lie the magical cities of the Sea-Born from the tale of “Jullanar of the Sea”, whose people survive by virtue of magic taught to them by Suleiman bin Daoud. The two great Sea-Born cities that exist in a tenuous truce, for just decades ago they were at war.

### *Madinat al-Badr*

The massive city of wise King Badr rests on the ocean’s floor, surrounded by a maze of coral and tall sea plants. Triton-wielding soldiers mounted on giant seahorses and psychically-bonded dolphins patrol the city’s frontier. The son of a Persian king and a Sea-Born princess, King Badr secured a truce with the city’s ancient enemy King Shamandal by marrying his devious daughter Jauhara. Nearly every citizen of King Badr’s city learns a bit of magic, which the people there religiously revere. The nobles of the city are known for their binding of powerful demons and their feuds with the marid.

### *Madinat al-Shamandal*

Perched over the edge of a volcanic trench, the city of the wicked King Shamandal has improved since the Shamandal was deposed from his throne. The people dwelling in the city have become so adapted to the water that they can no longer breathe on land, and they have grown accustomed to darkness, both physically and morally; indeed suspicion is considered a virtue and nothing is ever given for free. The city’s elite guard ride giant manta rays, crustaceans, and squids when patrolling the seas of the city; when performing raids they abandon their royal garments for simpler robes so that they are not identified. The treasure room of al-Shamandal is said to be the greatest in all the world, but feeding captured thieves to the sharks seems to be an effective deterrent against most robbers.

### *Islands of Sinbad*

Sinbad the Sailor found a many islands on his voyages, full of danger and fabulous riches. While plenty sailors claim to have seen these islands, the truth is they could be in any ocean the characters find themselves in.

### *The Living Island*

A beautiful island with tropical trees and pools of rainwater at its highest peak, the living island is actually a giant kraken which has been inert for so long sand and trees have grown on its back. If a fire is lit or its skin is pierced, the kraken awakens, creating a dangerous whirlpool as it submerges.

### *Island of the Rukhs*

This island is covered with huge banyan trees, and every creature, from the snakes to the mosquitos, is giant-sized. Merchants occasionally visit this island to go hunting for diamonds in a great valley. Here they throw chunks of meat to the valley floor which is covered in diamonds. Then the great rukhs of the mountains descend to carry the meat back to their nests. The merchants chase the birds away (in theory) and take the diamonds that had stuck to the meat.

### *Island of Dwarves and Giants*

Savage dwarves hunt the coasts for sailors who maroon on this island. However, the hairy dwarves rarely go inland where a tribe of man-eating ogres rule the island by force.

### *Island of the Cannibals*

Naked cannibals guide marooned victims to their king who offers them every fine food imaginable. However, the food is poisoned; anyone eating it become insatiably hungry and falls into a torpor. The natives then herd them like cattle to be eaten.

### *Island of the Sea Demon*

Legends tell of the Old Man of the Sea, a type of demon who appears as a decrepit elder and who bids the unwary to help him across a stream by taking him upon their shoulders. Then the Old Man proceeds to half-strangle them and force them to do his bidding. Many marooned sailors have died in the clutches of the Old Man who haunts this island.

### *The Island of Serendib*

They say this long rocky island is where Adam touched the earth upon being cast from heaven. Many sailors believe it lies just under the equinoctial lines so that days and nights are twelve hours each. It is a bad omen to arrive at this island, for when near the island, a ship begins to be tugged by a strong current such that it is washed ashore and stuck there. Shipwrecks and men’s bones litter its shores. A great mountain of precious stones rises out of the center. Only by following a river of sea water through dark caverns can one arrive at the city of Serendib, whose king is the most generous of all men.



## Chapter 16: Secret Societies

*He who knows not that he knows not is a fool – shun him.*

*He who knows not and knows that he knows not is simple – teach him.*

*He who knows, and knows not that he knows is asleep – wake him.*

*He who knows, and knows that he knows is wise – follow him.*

- Arabian proverb

Numerous secret societies exist within the caliphate, each with its own interpretation of philosophy, its set of virtues for humanity, its ideals for a perfect state, and its views of the spiritual path and religious dogma. Code-words and innuendo help initiates identify one another, and each secret society has a complex system of cryptography to encode their correspondence. Safe-houses exist for all these societies in Baghdad, and to a varying extent in urban centers throughout the caliphate. Each secret society's description is organized in the following way:

### Name (Arabic Name)

**Doctrine:** The religious-political beliefs of the secret society.

**Goal:** What the majority are trying to accomplish currently.

**History:** How the society came into being, and any notable actions it has taken.

**Politics:** The society's relationship to religious sects and other societies, as well as any internal disputes.

**Headquarters:** Where the society operates from.

**Symbol:** Many societies do not have a symbol, as the Islamic orthodoxy frowns upon representative art; not wanting to draw attention to themselves some societies rely on codes or Arabic calligraphy to identify themselves.

**Eligibility:** Initiates must have the Dedicated feat in regard to the society. In addition, there may be other feats, or certain tasks needed to become a member.

**Favored Feats:** An initiate gains two favored feats, like a background.

**Arcane Philosophy:** Many societies adhere to an *arcane philosophy* that best meshes with their view of magic. Arcane philosophies are described in **Chapter 6**

**Benefit:** Each initiate receives specialized training.

**Hindrance:** An initiate suffers some hindrance reflecting their beliefs.

### Architects of Divinity

*"What if I told you that space was inherently sacred. That feeling you get at the tomb of a saint? That is how all of creation could be, my young pupil. And we intend to build it."*

- From the *Lessons of al-Mulki* in the Library of Alexandria

**Doctrine:** Geometric relations, when given physical form, create a bond between the material and spiritual realms. A well-made mosque, a carefully arranged room, or even



an untouched mountainside are all examples of divine geometry. By following the golden ratio of stability, perfection, and harmony, it is possible to create a *haram*, a holy site, with human hands. The natural state of affairs is the *haram*, we only seek to

inspire beauty and awe as there existed in the ancient days. Environment is the strongest influence on human consciousness. By dwelling in a *haram*, a human being's dormant energies are awakened.

**Goal:** Re-awaken the ancient holy sites to elevate consciousness.

**History:** Originating in Egypt two thousand years ago, the Architects were originally priest-mages who were betrayed by the Pharaoh; most were killed and the rest scattered to the four winds. When the Arabs conquered Egypt, the Architects reformed and began building and seeking out the knowledge which their forefathers once possessed. However, this time, they kept the sacred truths of their work hidden, destroying old temples, hiding ruined tombs, and defacing hieroglyphs that explained their art.

**Politics:** The Architects are strongly aligned with Bedouin interests, as the Bedouin have sheltered and rescued them many times.

**Headquarters:** The Architects are strongest in al-Fustat, though their agents are in all major cities of the caliphate, especially Kufa and Isfahan.

**Symbol:** An ankh housed within a pyramid.

**Eligibility:** Initiates must be trained in Knowledge (physical sciences) and Knowledge (theology and philosophy), and they must undergo a test in the ancient pyramids of Egypt.

**Favored Feats:** Inception\*, Surveyor\*

**Benefit:** Architects automatically sense when they are at

Name	Main Tenet
Architects of Divinity	All space is sacred, we have only to recognize it.
Brethren of Purity	Through knowledge truth, through truth freedom.
The Exalted	Fear not the djinni – it is good they should test us.
Hand of Fatima	Magic is sacred; a few wicked men give it a bad image.
Society of Revelation	Seek to understand fate, and then be a lamp to others.
Theosophers of Inner Light	Truth is relative; intuition is the way to meaning.
The Virtuous	Through reason virtue, through virtue utopia.



or near a sacred site, and they can benefit from the *baraka* of holy sites even if they don't have the Al-Hajj feat. After benefiting from the *baraka* of three sacred sites, an initiate is automatically awakened to a higher spiritual truth and gains temporary access to a power of the Narrator's choosing for one scene. In addition, when three Architects work together, they are able to create a holy site if they make a masterwork craft, invest double the normal wealth cost, and each spend a Conviction point.

**Hindrance:** Knowing that the greater society has often abused the abilities of the Architects, or even persecuted them outright, all initiates are required to take an oath to keep their art secret. Furthermore, an initiate must work to preserve the sanctity of tombs, places of worship, and sacred sites.

### *Brethren of Purity (Ikhwan al-Safa)*

*"Know that the truth is found in every religion and is current in every tongue. What you should do, however, is to take the best and to transfer yourself to it. Never occupy yourself with imputing defects to the religions of people; rather try to see whether your religion is free from them."*

- Epistles of the Brethren of Purity (III, 501)

**Doctrine:** No single sect or religion will ever have the ultimate answer to Truth; therefore seek to cleanse yourself of the blinders of dogma and obedience and attain the perfect balance between science and faith. This knowledge is eternal and transcends all religious boundaries. The person who achieves this balance is truly wise. Armed with this great knowledge, a group of wise men may do without a king. That is our aim, to become such wise ones who rule ourselves.

**Goal:** Free the *umma* from the stranglehold of dogmatic religious ritual and provide them with access to the ancient teachings as embodied in the *Rasa'il*.

**History:** The *Ikhwan al-Safa* is a liberal yet elitist association influenced by Shi'a monotheism, Greek philosophy, and Persian and Hindu mysticism. While the Brethren's magnates declare their sole aim is to uphold the faith and attain salvation and bliss, most followers aim to overthrow the corrupt Caliphate. However, they do not seek violence, nor do they believe the *umma* is ready to rule itself. Instead, the Brethren undermine the popular intellectual system and religious beliefs. To this end they have created a spiritual community where like-minded elites can find refuge from the struggles raging between

religions, nations, and Muslim sects. In their quest to reconcile science and religion, the Brethren have accumulated a massive amount of cutting-edge learning which is called the *Rasa'il* (Epistles). Their writings emphasize the state of purity achieved by living a virtuous life. The name of the organization derives from the story of the ringdove in *Kalilah wa-Dimnah* in which it is related how a group of animals acting as faithful friends (*ikhwan al-safa*) escaped the snares of the hunter.

**Politics:** The Brethren are supporters of Ismailiyah, though some of the Brethren themselves would object to being labeled Muslims. While their writings are considered heretical, the Brethren have escaped persecution from the Caliphate as they have kept a fairly low profile, being more concerned with their own spiritual practice and healing of their communities.

**Headquarters:** Bosra (Syria) is home to the Brethren, though they have an extensive network of followers throughout all levels of society, especially in Baghdad and Kufa.

**Symbol:** "Unity" (*tawhid*) in Arabic calligraphy.

**Eligibility:** The Brethren are elitist and accept only those who are literate and possess at least one of these feats: Benefit (noble title), Benefit (sheikh), Institutional Education or Upstanding.

**Favored Feats:** Centering, Inspire (critical thinking)

**Arcane Philosophy:** Audible Life Stream

**Benefit:** Members have access to the *Rasa'il* which is in the process of being compiled; this acts as a Grand library with specialties in all Knowledge skills, but no authoritative corpora. Initiates may also take the *Rasa'il* Studies feat.

**Hindrance:** Brethren may not publicly acknowledge the authority of any human being, nor may they condone or participate in the destruction of knowledge. They tend to be unnecessarily secretive, though this is a role-playing point.

#### **Rasa'il Studies (New Feat)**

**Prerequisite:** Allegiance to the Brethren of Purity, Eidetic Memory, Literacy

The *Rasa'il* presents information so concisely and so completely, with special mnemonic devices, that dedicated scholars of the Brethren can memorize entire volumes. Pick two Knowledge specialties you are trained in. You may take 20 on Knowledge checks in those two specialties even when you don't have access to a library, though this requires having sufficient time to think about the matter.

### *The Exalted (al-Gharaniq)*

*"No more do I worship al-Uzza and her two*



*daughters. I have turned from such pagan ways. The cranes have flown away, and their sacred places are forgotten. But their wings have touched my heart, and therein their message cannot die."*

- Zayd al-Hasib, founder of the Exalted

**Doctrine:** What is unknown is feared. Those pagan deities and spirits of the past have more influence over us now than they ever did before, because the clerical hierarchy uses them to control the *umma* through fear. Only by following their rituals and fattening their pockets, the clerics say, can we keep these spirits from causing



us harm. The role goes by many names – prophet, shaman, holy man, witch doctor – but the scam is the same. Instead, the Exalted seek a culture free of fear and the systems of fear-based control. Without fear, man is a god, woman a goddess. This is the true message

of the pagan deities; their humanity and fallibility gives us hope. Thus, we seek to know these spirits, benign or wicked though they may be, for in staring at our demons face-to-face, we learn how powerful we truly are.

**Goal:** Free the *umma* from fear of the djinni and other spirits.

**History:** The Quraysh worshipped Uzza, the goddess of power, along with a host of other gods and goddesses. Within this community were those who opposed the base materialism of the Quraysh elite, who claimed there was only one god – the self. These people kept quietly to their beliefs. Many Exalted believe that the Prophet Muhammad grew up in one of these households. When the Quraysh were surrounded by the Islamic army at Mecca, a debate raged within the city's walls about whether to fight or surrender, and under what terms surrender would be made. Zayd al-Hasib was a prominent Quraysh mystic who worked for the Prophet personally, using different factions against each other in order to convince the Quraysh to submit without bloodshed. After a falling out with the Muslims, Zayd fled to Egypt. His followers became known as *al-Gharaniq*.

**Politics:** The Exalted are viewed as despicable heretics by the Islamic orthodoxy, thinly veiled theurgists and demon-summoners deserving of persecution and death. Neither do the Exalted receive a warm welcome from classical pagans (*hanifiya*), who feel threatened by their antinomian doctrine and despise their arrogant treatment of powerful and sacred spirits.

**Headquarters:** Exalted can be found wherever djinni and spirits roam, often in the depths of the windswept desert. They have a strong presence in al-Fustat and Isfahan, and are also known to operate a caravanserai in Dumat al-Jandal.

**Symbol:** In the past, the Exalted used various pagan symbols of Uzza overlaid with their own mystical symbols, however as they are currently being persecuted,

they now use more subtle symbols. A simple ring-seal depicting a winged lion reaching for a star is the most any member wears.

**Eligibility:** Initiates must refute the authority of the *Ulema*, pass a test facing down their fears, and be trained in Knowledge (supernatural), reflecting their knowledge of forbidden names.

**Favored Feats:** Apprehend the Djinni's Hand, Fearless **Arcane Philosophy:** Exalted adepts do not have their own arcane philosophy, but many tend to the *Bay'ah al-Mufariqat*.

**Benefit:** An initiate often walks a path of conflict with fearsome djinni, though some manage to find reconciliation with such beings. When an initiate defeats a djinn or other spirit in combat, a debate, or other contest, the initiate may attempt to harness the djinn. This automatically succeeds so long as the djinn is of equal or lesser level, but if the djinn is of higher level it gets a Will save against a Difficulty of 10 + the initiate's level. A harnessed djinn can never take direct action against the initiate or the initiate's interests, and the initiate can automatically cause the djinn to become frightened as long as it can hear the initiate's voice or see the initiate's face.

**Hindrance:** Exalted cannot refuse an opportunity to meet a djinn or spirit. Many Exalted are also prone to bringing ordinary mortals into contact with djinni before said mortals are ready, though this is strictly a role-playing point.

## Hand of Fatima

*"Unto God my magic has fled  
All my spells have come to naught but ash  
And in the embers of doubt a beautiful word –  
Surrendering to the glorious path."*

- From the *Repentance of Ali Sauza*, a poem of the Hand of Fatima

**Doctrine:** While the masses fear *sihr* and the ones who practice it, magic has protected them many times from the evils of djinni and tyrannical kings. However, those who practice magic in the name of God are threatened by the wrong image perpetrated by diabolic witches and arrogant pagan warlocks. Thus, we must reform the ways of these evil sorcerers, through example, word, and deed. By doing so, we can restore the old relationship of magic as the protector of humanity. The golden age, when every man, woman, and child, knows how to cast a spell in the name of God, has been prophesied. We only seek to clear the way for its fulfillment.

**Goal:** Reform adepts who threaten to give magic a bad name.

**History:** With its roots in ancient Jewish Kabalistic practice as well as Berber, Egyptian, and Carthaginian





moon worship, the Hand of Fatima formally came into being after the death of Fatima, the Prophet's daughter. According to Shi'a beliefs, Fatima lost her unborn son when Abu Bakr's supporters stormed her husband Ali's house to make him swear allegiance; later she would die of grief. However, a little known fact is that sinister allegations of witchcraft had been cast against Fatima, a woman of resounding faith, and among Abu Bakr's supporters were agents sent to intimidate her into foreswearing magic. A group of Shi'a adepts used her martyrdom to create an organization to protect practitioners of magic. Eventually, the group would expand to its present incarnation.

**Politics:** The Hand of Fatima are strong sympathizers with the Shi'a, though they are forbidden from taking part in politics, for fear that they would be tempted to use magic, and such use would backfire and turn the community against them.

**Headquarters:** Originally the Hand of Fatima worked from secret cells within Medina; while they still have the most influence in the Hejaz, their headquarters, known as *Karak al Mubarakah* (castle of the blessed) is in the mountains of Asir.

**Symbol:** The *Khamsa*, traditionally used as protection from the Evil Eye.

**Eligibility:** Anyone trained in Knowledge (supernatural) and Knowledge (theology and philosophy) may join, though often an invitation from an existing initiate is required. Many adepts, particularly pious sha'ir, as well as those who themselves have been reformed, accept the Hand of Fatima.

**Favored Feats:** Power (Second Sight)

**Arcane Philosophy:** *Ilm Shem Yah*

**Benefit:** Every member is given a charcoal mark on their forehead in a ritual of spiritual awakening. After this, the recipient can immediately recognize adepts simply by focusing on a person for a round. Each round thereafter, the initiate may make a Sense Motive check opposed by the adept's Bluff; if successful, the initiate realizes one power the adept possesses. If the initiate fails, they may learn no more powers of that adept.

**Hindrance:** Initiates in the Hand of Fatima must strive to reform wicked adepts before harming them, though if this fails, they are obligated to take action against such blasphemous sorcerers. Viewed as an uncompromising and ruthless sect by independent adepts, and fanatically moralistic by others, initiates are treated as being notorious if recognized by non-Hand of Fatima adepts.

**Society of Revelation** (*Jama'at al-Nuzul*)

*"It is our freedom to choose absolute awareness, or to settle where we are comfortable, where we are*

*confident we are right. The Web of Fate has you in its clutches; when will you stop denying and begin looking?"*

- Sayyid Dharendra, Voice of Revelation

**Doctrine:** When unconsciousness overtakes us, we act out of habit, we accept without questioning, and we grow blind to what is right in front of us. All prophets enjoin us to awaken ourselves, but there is a portal which they cannot lead us through. This is the Web of Fate. Beyond our conceptions of cause and consequence there is a rich tapestry of interconnections. Our slightest actions and thoughts are pebbles cast into a pond, our ripples eventually reaching the shores of God the All-Knowing. We endeavor to understand this web of causality in order to better understand the Divine mystery, and to assist our friends and leaders in understanding the repercussions of their actions.

**Goal:** Self and societal improvement through deep awareness.

**History:** Fate has always been important to the Arabs. The Society began among a group of Bedouin wise women who found a magical oasis where they met a dervish named as-Saffya who immersed them under water. Coming up for air the women reported having witnessed hundreds of past lives in a few seconds. Thus, the Society was born. With the coming of Islam, the Society took on an overtly political role as behind-the-scenes advisors to the Caliphs. The current leader, Dharendra, has begun using the old term for the leader of the society the "Voice of Revelation." He is widely criticized for creating a personality cult and losing sight of the Society's goals.

**Politics:** With strong ties to the Sunni, the Society of Revelation has acted to support Sunni interests covertly. However, there is a small sect within the society that supports the Shi'a instead; this group, who call themselves the People of Action (*ahl al-fi'aliya*), are loyal to a prominent Shi'a sheikh who advocates awakening leadership to the Web of Fate...against their will if need be. The *ahl al-fi'aliya* have kidnapped several governors and princes for unknown reasons.

**Headquarters:** Basra is the headquarters of the Society, where they have their own mosque, leading prayers laced with magic to create deeper awareness.

**Symbol:** A lamp on which is written the Arabic calligraphy for "Fate" or *Qadar*. The lamp, in the Society's philosophy, represents the fuel of awareness which is lit on fire in God's presence.



**Eligibility:** Initiates must refute belief in free will, accept divine destiny, and take the Destined feat, reflecting their awakening to their place in the Web of Fate. Most never seek out the Society, but are instead found by their agents and brought into the fold.

**Favored Feats:** Power (Visions)

**Arcane Philosophy:** *Nuzul al-Qadar*

**Benefit:** Trained to see the consequences that others overlook, initiates may attempt to see the consequences of theirs or another's action by spending a Conviction point. The initiate makes a Wisdom check against a Difficulty of how far into the future they wish to look: 1 day (DC 10), 1 week (DC 15), 1 month (DC 20), 1 year (DC 30). The player then declares what the consequence looks like, for example: "The amir is discharged from the service of the sultan for his insolence." The Narrator may overrule this, but the character loses no Conviction, and instead gain a Conviction point. If the consequence the player describes is particularly complex, the Narrator may require an extra effort.

**Hindrance:** All initiates have the *inner conflict* complication, which remains with them for the rest of their life; they may not achieve the turning point. This is the price initiates of the Society pay for expanded awareness, as they know all too well that the wrong move may create a domino effect of tragedy. They tend to be deeply philosophical and contemplative, though this is strictly a role-playing point.

## The Virtuous (*al-Fadila*)

*"Politicians, Caliphs, theologians – history records them as the ones who make social change. But how is there any other way to create a virtuous society than by teaching people to love virtue?"*

- Ibn Fakhry, philosopher of the Virtuous

**Doctrine:** The ultimate goal of humanity is governance in a utopia, a City of Virtue (*madinat al-fadila*). This is only attained through intellectual pursuit of virtues. All intuitive senses are subject to error and misinterpretation, mystical experiences fade; only reason can be trusted. One must apply their reason to determine the best way to pursue a virtuous life. By doing out part, we serve as an example to others of what it means to be a citizen who lives in the world but is not of the world. We walk the path of virtue so that those who come after us can find the path and finish what we have begun.

**Goal:** Inspire others to apply their reason and morals to improving society.

**History:** Plato himself is attributed as the founder of the Virtuous, though the truth is many of his followers had a greater hand in shaping the society's philosophy. A popular legend tells of al-Bastami, who inherited the teachings of the Virtuous from a dying Greek soldier, who warned al-Bastami that many had erred and attempted to use force

of arms to create their own image of utopia. Al-Bastami theorized that the *madinat al-fadila* had to evolve organically, without any overt human influence.

**Politics:** Because of their emphasis on the power of reason, the Virtuous share much common ground with the Mu'tazilites. The Virtuous often have heated debates with the Theosophers of Inner Light over the role of intuition and reason in attaining an ideal society.

**Headquarters:** Two Virtuous centers exist, one in Constantinople and the other in Basra. They also have a strong foothold in Baghdad.

**Symbol:** A palace dome and two minarets higher than it, representing the pious community gathered around the flame of virtue.

**Eligibility:** Anyone wishing to join the Virtuous must have both the Exemplary and Virtuous feats.

**Favored Feats:** Honest Law\*, Urban Heartbeat\*

**Arcane Philosophy:** The Virtuous do not have their own arcane philosophy; rather most adepts of the Virtuous believe in Science.

**Benefit:** Initiates can gain double the number of virtues normally allowed by the Virtuous feat. In addition, they may spend a Conviction point to gain an additional use of the Exemplary feat.

**Hindrance:** Initiates are forbidden from becoming involved in politics or leadership, unless they restrict themselves to leading by example only. Initiates of the Virtuous feel the pitfalls and vices of society deep in their core, and find their soul calling for a period of isolation. The need to be surrounded by a pure environment



## Urban Heartbeat (New Feat)

**Prerequisite:** Allegiance to the Virtuous

When you are in a new city, you get a feel for the general level of virtue and vice the majority of inhabitants have. You know whether it is a city of the crowd, a city of the conqueror, a city of dignity, or a city of virtue.

*City of the crowd:* The citizens have weak or no leadership, and they follow the dictates of their own desires, finding happiness in materialism.

*City of the conqueror:* The citizens attain happiness by subjugating other nations. The military is the ruling power and martial law may be in effect.

*City of dignity:* The citizens cooperate with one another and have a thriving civil society; everyone thinks of their neighbor and all have equal representation.

*City of virtue:* The citizens live according to the highest expression of the soul. There is no need for doctors or courts. Great effort goes into finding the unique talents of each person and their place in the society.



drives some Virtuous to become hermits, thereby preventing them from contributing to their vision of utopia. For every month an initiate spends in a city, they must make a DC 10 Will save (+2 DC per additional week) or require a week-long solitary retreat. Until this retreat is taken the initiate acts as if shaken.

### *Theosophers of Inner Light (Muta'allihin al-Tajalli)*

*"There is no religion higher than truth."*

- From the seal of the Theosophers of Inner Light

**Doctrine:** The Eternal Truth cannot be found through study, abstract speculation, and rational systematization. Only intuition, attained through invocation, meditation, and purification, leads one to the light of wisdom. Knowing God in this personal way requires understanding of the Universal Paradigm – the meaning that underlies every action, past, present, or future. Nothing is meaningless, there are only varying shades of interpretation. Lack of meaning and misguided meaning are both darkness. We seek to see beyond such darkness, developing our intuitive knowing – that Divine Light beyond interpretation as it was revealed to the Prophets. A society built upon appreciation of our intuitive capacity (common sense, memory, imagination) instead of condemning it will automatically unify all mankind and prepare us for the next stage of existence.

**Goal:** Shed interpretation to find true meaning.

**History:** Hajji Hadi al-Din was kidnapped by rogues who sought a ransom from his wealthy family. Hadi was placed in a cave for thirty days until his family secured his release; when he came out of the cave Hadi was a different man. He abandoned his family and joined a Sufi commune where he developed the philosophy that would become adopted by the Theosophers of Inner Light, a group of scholars who derived their philosophies from the Hindus. Their philosophy merged with the Zoroastrian principles of light and darkness when Islam swept over the

Persian empire.

**Politics:** The Theosophers are closely aligned with Sufi schools of thought. Though their doctrine bears similarities to the Brethren of Purity, the Theosophers view the knowledge-seeking Brethren with scorn for trying to capture the mysterious with words. Orthodox Muslims consider the Theosophers to at best be misguided apologists for more radical heretics, and at worst the thralls of deceiver spirits pretending to be God.

**Headquarters:** Isfahan is the center of Theosopher activity, where they run a secret school for adepts to develop their psychic abilities. Within their school is an ever-burning sacred fire, one of the original *Vrahran* fires of the Zoroastrians.

**Symbol:** None.

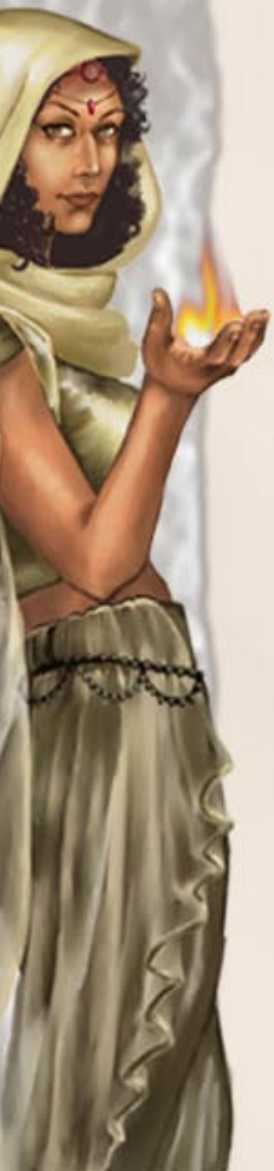
**Eligibility:** Initiates who seek to join the Theosophers must be able to prove their intuitive capabilities and embrace the intuitive capability of man to (at least in theory) know the Universal Paradigm that God created.

**Favored Feats:** Centering\*, Historiography\*

**Arcane Philosophy:** Theosophers do not have their own arcane philosophy; rather most practice Faith-based magic.

**Benefit:** When initiates are able to find meaning in an apparently senseless, chaotic, or contradictory event, they receive a flash of illumination and inspiration. They gain a free use of weaving without spending Conviction (see **Chapter 1**) or a +2 bonus on their next weaving check.

**Hindrance:** Theosophers may not give a report of any event without presenting multiple sides, knowing that their perspective is only one of many (and ultimately none of them are The Truth). They tend to be conciliatory regarding different view points, and some suffer from "analysis paralysis" though this is strictly a role-playing point.



## Chapter 17: Jinnistan

*"We Djinni sought the secrets of heaven, but we found it filled with strong guards and flaming stars."*

- Qur'an 78:8

Most puissant of mortals, know that Jinnistan is the place of my people, from the most wicked valleys of Jihannan to the glittering palaces of Jauherabad. Just as you have your directions of north, south, east, and west, Jinnistan exists in the fifth direction of the poem before it is given breath, the state between dreaming and waking, the place where the invisible new moon shines.

Before the Ibrahim was sent as the first Prophet, djinni lived amongst humanity. We were the leaders, the inventors, the muses, and the teachers of humanity, and we were also the tyrants, the monsters, and the tricksters. Ibrahim was deceived by a shaitan in the guise of God who ordered him to sacrifice his son; to save Ibrahim and his son, God sent a sheep to be sacrificed instead. Since that day, God forbade the djinni from interfering with his Prophets, and the djinn, who were already losing power to the encroaching realm of man, were cast down from their thrones. Never again would a djinni presume God's role.

With the coming of the Prophet Muhammad the djinni would be forever splintered. As the Prophet's message spread, many wicked djinni of the Ifreet and Shaitan tribes found their power over mankind diminished, and they feared having to flee the blade of Islam. Al-Shazad, a great sheikh of the Jinn, had a vision of a scythe in the shape of a crescent moon cutting a djinni in half. He summoned a meeting of the six djinni tribes at the sacred mountains of Asir, south of Mecca. Al-Shazad shared his vision, and set forth the Choice: Either side with God and submit to the Prophet, or align against them. The Jinn embraced Islam while the wicked tribes made ready their resistance. According to theologians of the Jinn this is how the djinni gained souls, and were able to decide upon salvation or damnation.

### Entering Jinnistan

While we djinni travel freely to Jinnistan, to the intrepid mortal explorer, Jinnistan does not reveal her secrets lightly. The boundary which divides Jinnistan from the earth is simply called the Veil. While djinni can penetrate the Veil at will, most mortals do not even realize it exists.

**Gateway:** There are places of the Veil that are weak which can be used as a gateway for mortal travelers to enter Jinnistan. While seeing such a gateway is second nature to the djinni, mortals may only sense them if they have the Secrets of Jinnistan feat. Otherwise, a mortal must rely on guesswork, trial-and-error, or a guide versed

in such things. Gateways appear differently according to the region of Jinnistan they lead to. A character with the Secrets of Jinnistan feat may make a Notice check to spot a likely gateway or a Knowledge (supernatural) check to remember or discover a gateway to a desired destination. As you enter the gateway, you gradually pierce the Veil. Colors begin to become brighter, smells are more intense, emotions are stronger, faint buzzing may be felt in the fingertips and ringing in the ears.

**Guide:** By far the safest way to enter Jinnistan is to find a trustworthy djinni guide, and of these, I pray you consider me suitable to the task. Every djinni can find a path into Jinnistan, though beware which djinni you trust, for once you consent to be guided, you are at the djinn's mercy as to where you are taken.

**Magic:** An adept trained in the Plane Shift power can travel to Jinnistan. Each of the main cities of Jinnistan has a different Difficulty modifier; the Shaitan are more amenable to visiting sha'ir than, say, the Ifreet.

City	Plane Shift DC	City	Plane Shift DC
Amberabad	-5	Ghulistan	+0
City of Brass	+5	Jauherabad	+5
City Beneath the Waves	+0	Jihannan	-5

If you wish to travel to a specific site within a city you may take this challenge:

*Sha'ir's Entrance:* You may increase the Difficulty of your Plane Shift check to arrive in a specific site of the city you are traveling to in Jinnistan. For example, you could appear in the court of the Ifreeti sultana.

### Suddenly Entering Jinnistan

Any character who lacks the Secrets of Jinnistan feat, or who doesn't have the Djinn-Touched background, is dazed for the first couple rounds they enter Jinnistan, due to the wondrous beauty and intense light. If the characters enter through a gateway they are adjusted to Jinnistan and are not dazed.

### Accidentally Entering Jinnistan

In rare circumstances, it is possible for a mortal to accidentally "fall" into Jinnistan, though the odds are one in a million. A pilgrim happens to be traveling along the same route jann traders use and is swept along. A raider is lost in a sandstorm and emerges at the foot of emerald mountains. The Narrator should use this plot device rarely, perhaps once in a hero's lifetime. Compensating the hero with a Conviction point is appropriate.



### *Five Laws of the Djinni*

There are several laws that must be obeyed upon arriving in Jinnistan, and customs that you should apply yourself to learn. While each city has its own customs and traditions, these things are true even in Jihannan:

#### *1. The Wish Obligation*

According to ancient djinni tradition, any mortal whosoever frees a djinn, unto that mortal the djinn or its kin are obligated to grant one wish, so long as it remains within their power. As a corollary to this law, no mortal to whom a wish is owed may leave Jinnistan until the wish is granted to them. To what degree the authorities will seek out a djinn who owes a mortal depends on the circumstances and the local attitudes among the dominant djinni tribe.

#### *2. The Unpardonable Sins*

Killing, enslaving, or dishonoring a djinn, especially while they are in the mortal world, is considered a breach of the guest-host relationship. True, a mortal may have never realized the djinn was there (perhaps killing it with a casually discarded plum pit), but such testimony is looked down upon in djinni courts. If anything, it may involve being accused of negligence as well! However, any djinn (or their next of kin) who has been wronged by a mortal has the right to forgive that mortal. If this occurs, no other djinni may seek to punish the mortal for the offense. Generally, however, the intense rivalry between the djinni grants a mortal a degree of clemency. For example, a mortal who kills an ifreet won't be punished while in a city belonging to the jinn.

#### *3. The Price of a Gift*

No gifts are free in Jinnistan, and anyone who gives a gift must, by law, be given an equal gift in exchange. In general, mortal gifts are valued less than djinni stories. Gifts may be physical objects,

but they need not be. Thus if a djinn tells a tale to a mortal, most courts rule that the mortal owes the djinn two or more stories. However, a mortal who feels they have settled a debt can appeal to the ruler of the city. Unfortunately, most djinni rulers despise being distracted from important matters of state in this regard.

#### *4. Swearing in the Name of Kashkash*

In ancient times there was a hideous ifreet who was enslaved to the King of the Jinn; his manners were impeccable, his honor unquestionable, and he was known to keep every oath he made. Kashkash was so valued for his trustworthiness and even-handedness that he was called in many times to secure oaths from rival djinni tribes. Thus, after his death, it became customary to swear oaths in the name of Kashkash; such an oath is binding to all djinn regardless of their allegiance.

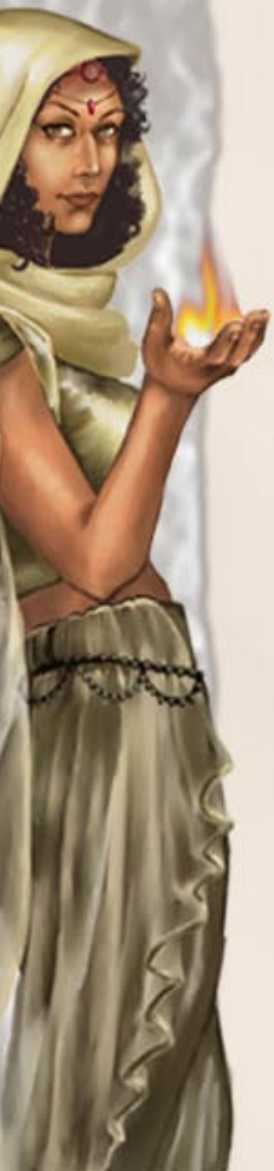
#### *5. Proper Conduct with Mortals*

The laws of Jinnistan state that a djinn who enters into a relationship with a mortal – such as that of a foster parent, lover, or oath-sworn servant – must obey the laws of the mortal's culture so long as they do not contradict one of the other djinni laws. In the case of a contradiction, other djinni laws trump the law of proper conduct. Only the grossest violations of this law are prosecuted. Generally, it is used as a guideline of right conduct. Even ghuls will avoid getting to know a mortal too well, as they fear this might obligate them to some standard of proper conduct of which they are unaware.

#### *The Six Tribes*

At the time the Choice was brought to the djinni there was an abundance of tribes, many whose names have been lost to the sands of time. Many tribes united under the banners of the six great sheikhs of the djinni. According to popular legend

Destination	Sample Gateways
Caravan Steppes	Entering a fierce sandstorm on foot Visiting the same oasis 10 times, leaving a gift there each time
Amberabad	Bearing a gift of amber to the seashore and waiting 30 days Perform a heroic deed in honor of a peri
City of Brass	Throwing a piece of obsidian into the mouth of an active volcano Lighting oneself on fire in the heat of battle
City Beneath the Waves	Riding a ship out into the eye of a storm Praising the name of the marid king and diving to 100 feet
Ghulistan	Being buried alive in a graveyard on a new moon Traveling out to a wasteland without any food or water
Jauherabad	Hold an emerald to the sunlight on a high mountaintop Fly into the clouds (via magic or on a rukh's back)
Jihannan	Telling a lie to, and successfully deceiving, a shaitan noble Witnessing a mirage in the desert...and arriving at it!



these sheikhs gave the six tribes their name: Ghul, Ifreet, Jann, Jinn, Marid, and Shaitan. The smaller tribes that were integrated into these great six account for the great diversity of appearance, personality, customs, and powers of the djinni tribes. Each of these tribes has its own leader and capital city.

## *Ghul*

The ghul are entirely female, as far as anyone knows, sired by Iblis himself. Before man was raised above the djinni, the ghuls hunted men, stealing them as husbands...and later, as food. Since the time of the Choice, their hunger has only increased. Great lovers of deserted graveyards and ruins, the ghul delight in deceiving men. Among those who believe in a racial hierarchy among the djinni, the ghul are seen as the least evolved. According to popular tradition, a djinn who is murdered and whose death is not avenged is said to return as a ghul. Their capital city is in Ghulistan. Several fiefs in the pits of Ahriman also pay tribute to the Great Ghul.

## *The Ghul*

**Abilities:** +2 Dexterity, +4 Constitution

**Suggested Feats:** Favored Opponent (humans)

**Powers:** Dominate, Drain Vitality, Self-Shaping (vulture)

**Traits:** Darkvision (60 ft.), Immunity (disease, poison), Scent

Ghul are wholly corrupted and are the original cannibals. Though they possess a shrewd intelligence, it is only used to satiate their wicked appetites and dark lusts. Consumed by their passions, Ghul stalk the places of death and wastelands, attempting to fool travelers by disguising themselves as lost pilgrims or women in distress. Thankfully, they are infinitely superstitious - a trait which the sha'ir is wise to take advantage of.

## *Ifreet*

Ifreet live in a severely patriarchal society where women are denied all rights outside of the family home. Whereas the ghuls steal men as their lovers, the ifreeti are fond of capturing mortal women for their harems. In ages past, the ifreet were tyrants who treated humanity little better than slaves. While not much has changed since then, the power base of the ifreet has been greatly diminished. Their supporters in the mortal world are limited to a handful of fanatic sha'ir and a minor conspiracy among the Magians who still worship fire. Elder ifreet are impeccably courteous and honorable to a fault; indeed, there is nothing that gives an ifreet so much delight as causing another's downfall by adhering to the letter of the law.

## *The Ifreet*

**Abilities:** +4 Strength, +4 Constitution, +2 Charisma

**Suggested Feats:** Favored Opponent (Jann or Jinn), Night Vision, Rage

**Powers:** Elemental Blast, Fire Shaping, Self-Shaping (human, dog, serpent, scorpion)

**Traits:** Damage Reduction 4/supernatural, Darkvision (60 ft.), Immunity (disease, fire, poison), Incorporeal  
Ifreet, like the fire from which they were born, are angry, moody, and prone to violence. Their palaces are burning citadels where humans serve as their slaves. Driven to seek power in the temporal sphere, Ifreet often interact with demons. It is believed that most of the djinni imprisoned by Suleiman were Ifreeti.

## *Jann*

The nomads of djinni-kind, the jann are divided into many tribes, each with its own sheikh. Keepers of the gateways between Jinnistan and the mortal world, the jann are superb trackers, reliable messengers, masterful traders, and are possessed of an eloquent, if barbed, wit. Their caravans often rescue mortals lost in the desert, whisking them away for a short time during which the mortal is treated as an honored guest. When the vision fades, the mortal is left wondering whether what he has seen was all a dream. In Jinnistan, the jann tribes are found in greatest number in Suleiman's Reach, though there are tribes scattered throughout Jinnistan; indeed jann are the most common type of djinni a traveler will meet in between the great cities.

## *The Jann*

**Abilities:** +4 Constitution, +2 Charisma

**Suggested Feats:** Fascinate, Night Vision, Track, Trailblazer

**Powers:** Earth Shaping, Elemental Blast, Self-Shaping (camel)

**Traits:** Damage Reduction 4/supernatural, Darkvision (60 ft.), Immunity (disease, earth, poison, weather), Incorporeal

Jann are mischievous spirits as comfortable in the shade of an oasis as they are in the roaring sandstorm. Marked by an individualistic streak only rivaled by the Marid, the Jann are nomads wandering the caravan routes, often serving as messengers and traders amongst the other djinni tribes. More often than not, they side with humanity, but often pranks go hand-in-hand with their aid.

## *Jinn*

Praiseworthy in every regard, the jinn have tempered their arrogant natures and are widely obedient to mankind; indeed some jinn so admire humanity they seek to emulate them. This has earned them the unflattering nick-name *abd al-ins*, meaning "slaves of the mortals." However, a jinn is too possessed of dignity and self-respect to live as a slave; indeed they are notorious for freeing themselves from the clutches of impious sha'ir. The most cherished value in jinni society is scholarship, and every jinn is taught to read and write in both their language and in



# Chapter 17: Jinnistan

Arabic. Like the human society which jinn strive to emulate, they breed horses, build mosques, and create magical works of irrigation. The architecture of the jinn is the greatest wonder of Jinnistan.

## The Jinn

**Abilities:** +4 Dexterity, +2 Wisdom, +4 Charisma

**Suggested Feats:** Dedicated, Night Vision, Rage, True Faith

**Powers:** Elemental Blast, Self-Shaping (eagle, human, lion), Wind Shaping

**Traits:** Damage Reduction 4/supernatural, Immunity (disease, poison, wind), Incorporeal

Jinn are consummate scholars and theologians who enjoy the company of mortals, and are known to invite (or kidnap) prominent human sages to their palaces where the wind never stops blowing. Masters of the desert wind, the Jinn are staunch allies of humanity, and terrible foes of the three rebellious tribes.

## Marid

Al-Marid, the progenitor of the eponymous tribe, was said to be the most powerful djinn in all of creation. Of course, with the marid tendency for exaggeration, it is not surprising that several emirs and warriors of the marid have claimed this honor for themselves. Haughty in the extreme, a marid has a strict code of honor that puts their happiness at the center of the universe. An affront to a marid's honor must be avenged in spades no matter how slight the offense. Like the seas they dwell in, the marid are fickle; what they fancy one minute they shun the next. Pleasing a marid is nearly impossible, as any suitor of a marid's favor has found out. Marid society is loosely structure around commerce,

however most marid enjoy their solitude. They have different laws governing family and marriage that are far less strict than those of mortals or other djinni. Of course, whether an individual marid obeys those laws depends on their mood and most recent allegiance.

## The Marid

**Abilities:** +2 Dexterity, +2 Wisdom, +6 Charisma

**Suggested Feats:** Fascinate, Night Vision, Suggest

**Powers:** Elemental Blast, Self-Shaping (horse, porpoise, wild elder tree), Water Shaping, Weather Shaping

**Traits:** Amphibious, Damage Reduction 4/supernatural, Darkvision (60 ft.), Immunity (disease, poison, weather), Incorporeal

Marid are a small and haughty tribe, but also the oldest, whose records go back before the dawn of man. They are alternately fascinated by mortals and want nothing to do with them. Most Marid live near the coast, as they are masters of the weather. Sailors speak of being taken to cities beneath the sea by Marid.

## Shaitan

Of all the djinni, the shaitan are the most sinister and worship Iblis himself. Their proverbs and parables emphasize the virtue of sowing lies and deceiving the upright. Shaitan are the undying foes of mankind as well as the jinn. In this endeavor they are aided by demons, corrupt sha'ir, and possessed mortals who unwittingly do the shaitan's bidding on earth. Once the shaitan were worshipped as gods, and it was a shaitan that appeared to the Prophet Ibrahim in the guise of God, telling him to sacrifice his son. Jealous of mortals who have "stolen" this "rightful" position

## Using Magic in Jinnistan

Magic may be used without fear of government persecution in Jinnistan. In fact, anyone wielding powers in Jinnistan finds their magic is enhanced according to the territory they are in. In the border regions between these territories, powers may operate normally or in slightly different ways.

Territory	Power Modifiers
Amberabad	+2 on powers used to create beauty
City of Brass	+2 on powers used to subjugate or command
City Beneath the Waves	+2 on powers used to conduct commerce or impress
Ghulistan	+2 on powers used to create fear or longing
Jauherabad	+2 on powers used in the name of God
Jihannan	+2 on powers used to subvert or in the name of Iblis
Suleiman's Reach	+2 on powers used to travel or protect

However, when djinn meet a mortal with magic ability, they tend to think they are a sha'ir and possess the ability to summon djinni. Thus, any mortal who uses magic in the presence of djinn in Jinnistan must make a Reputation check. If the check fails by more than 10, the djinn assume the adept is a sha'ir, and may react strongly against her. Most djinn know a family member or friend who has been abused or at least disrespected by a sha'ir. The adept may be hauled off to court to answer for crimes she did not commit!



from them, the shaitan are not contempt with murder, no, their capacity for revenge runs far deeper. They seek to drive mortals to idolatry, to warfare, and to depravity. May the jinn have victory over them, Insha'allah!

## The Shaitan

**Abilities:** +2 Strength, +4 Intelligence, +4 Charisma

**Suggested Feats:** Imbue Item, Night Vision

**Powers:** Heart Shaping, Illusion, Self-Shaping (camel, human, jackal)

**Traits:** Damage Reduction +4, Darkvision (60 ft.), Immunity (mind-influencing effects), Incorporeal  
Shaitan are masters of deception who delight in manipulating both mortals and other djinni to their own ends. Their arrogance, however, is their downfall. Used to having human worshippers in the past, Shaitan are furious at their current state of subservience, and plot to overthrow the Caliphate.

**Damage Reduction:** The djinni has damage reduction +4 that supernatural weapons may overcome. In addition, the damage reduction is overcome by either copper (if the djinn is allied with Suleiman and the Almighty), or iron (if the djinn is allied with Iblis and the Devil). Pagan djinn or djinn that have not made their choice yet, are harmed by some unique thing. Typically this is a seemingly harmless action, like throwing a plum pit near the djinn. A djinni's natural weapons are considered supernatural for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction.

**Incorporeal:** As a standard action, a djinn can become incorporeal. In this form it is completely invisible as well, though dogs, people with the Second Sight power or True Faith feat, and the extremely superstitious can make a Difficulty 25 Notice check to sense something is out of place when a djinn is near.

## Wish Granting

**Prerequisite:** This feat can only be taken by djinni  
The djinn knows its inextricable bond to humanity and either seeks to pursue its enlightenment through servitude or else to trick humanity for its own benefit. The djinn can use any single power when fulfilling the wishes of a mortal (the wisher must be sincere and spend a Conviction point).

## Making a Wish

Djinn, especially the malicious ifreet and shaitan, are well known for twisting the intent of a wish, fulfilling it in an unexpected way. Before making a wish, it's always wise to get someone who knows the law to run over any holes in your contract. Also, not all djinn are capable of summoning great palaces from nowhere; in fact, very few have mastered the art of granting wishes to such a high degree. Even among its practitioners, there are far more djinni who view granting wishes to mortals as a tool to

manipulate and deceive than as a lesson in wisdom and obedience.

## Step 1: Wording the Wish

When dealing with a djinn, it's important to remember that it will (in every possibly way) seek to justify freeing itself from bondage on the pretext that its freedom is needed to carry out the wish. With this one exception, few djinni capriciously twist wishes. In general, a djinn will provide an easy answer, such as giving information about where the object of the wish lies and how to get there. Alternately, a djinn might transport you to the object of your wish, or transport what you wished for to you. To what extent a djinn exerts itself depends greatly upon its willingness.

## Step 2: Determining the Djinn's Willingness

When requesting a wish of a djinni one has never met, use the modifiers below. In rare cases, the djinn automatically fulfills the spirit of the wish. Rarer still are those cases where the djinn automatically twists the letter of the wish to its advantage. The circumstances (the wisher, what is wished for, and the djinn's relationship to both) determine how a djinn responds.

## Step 3: The Fruits of the Wish

Finally, apply the modifier to the character's opposed Diplomacy check with the djinn and compare their results to the table below.

The Wisher Modifier	
Freed the djinn from bondage	+10
Commanded or disrespected the djinn	-10
Has harmed a djinn of the same house	-2
Has killed a djinn of the same house	-5
Is of the same religion or allegiance	+2
Is of an opposed religion or allegiance	-2
Addresses the djinn properly and well	+2
Has good past relations with the djinn	+5
Offers a suitable gift	+2
Draws up an effective contract	+5
Successfully intimidates the djinn	+2
Fails to intimidate the djinn	-10
Promises a large future reward	+2

The Wish Modifier	
Calls on power the djinn has	+2
Strikes the djinn as fun or amusing	+2
Is overly wordy or complicated	-2
Is for something abstract (e.g. authority, beauty, peace)	-2
Attempts to change the past	-2
Involves a short period of servitude	+2
Involves a long period of servitude	-2
Is morally repugnant to the djinn	-5
Involves danger to the djinn	-2

The Djinn Modifier	
Ifreet or shaitan	-10
A noble lord or lady	-5



**Check Result**

Succeeds Djinn adheres to the spirit of the wish

Fails by 1-5 Djinn agrees but with a caveat

Fails by 6-10 Djinn slightly twists the intention of the wish

Fails by 11+ Djinn totally distorts the wish, or the wisher has asked for the one thing which automatically grants the djinn its freedom!

***The Wondrous Sites of Jinnistan***

Jinnistan can be pictured as a firmament overlaying the world – a realm that has its own geography, weather, and customs. It is a land defined by the conflict between the wicked and the noble, and even the terrain itself reflects this. To the rebellious djinni belongs the Dark Realm, wherein lie the City of Brass, Ghulistan, and Jihannan; and to the faithful djinni belong Shad-u-Kam, the province of pleasure and delight, wherein lie Amberabad, the City Beneath the Waves, and Jauherabad. In between these two lands are wild steppes, deserts, valleys, and rivers which are known as Suleiman's Reach; the jann are the master guides of these fearsome wilds.

***Amberabad***

The City of Amber sits at the edge of the Bahr al-Shazad (known as the Bahr al-Arzenksh to the rebellious tribes). Floating palaces decorate Amberabad's busy harbor, floating columns of colored fire guided ships at night. Great patrons of the arts, the noble families of the peri live here, along with several jann families, and political exiles of the jinn who fled the battle that consumes Jauherabad. While the nobles are considered decadent they are also most friendly to mortals and many a sha'ir has been taken away to live their final days in Amberabad. The ruler of the city is the peri Queen Elaheh who is as old as the sap which the city relies on for its architecture. This sap comes not from trees; rather it is harvested at the seashore, akin to your ambergris. Amberabad is well known for its vociferous opposition parties and public debates, as well as for being something of a safe haven for criminals and refugees from all djinni tribes.

***The Peri***

The Persian peri are a mystery. Sages conjecture that they are the union of shaitan and angels, others that they are the union of humans and shaitan, others that they descend from the lost tribe of djinn, and still others that they are an entirely different creature altogether. However, sages are in agreement that before Islam the peri were wicked allies of the shaitan. A profound conversion overtook them and they all turned to the side of God, though they kept

their mischievous tendencies. The peris themselves speak little of the matter, saying only that they are denied Paradise until they atone for their ancestors' sins.

***City Beneath the Waves***

Taking a ship to the center of the Bahr al-Shazad, a traveler comes to a wondrous site – hundreds of small forested islands each with its own lighthouse. Only on closer inspection does the traveler realize that these islands are *zartani* – immense sea turtles. A ship may dock at one of these living islands with the aid of the reef giants. Then the traveler is carried by dolphins and other sea mammals down to a sparkling city housed in an opalescent shell the size of Baghdad. The marid guardians say a magic word and small passage appears in the shell, leading the traveler into the City Beneath the Waves. Herein all manner of creatures – mermaids, sea-born, marids, reef giants, and mortal sha'ir – engage in lively commerce. The ruler, the marid King Khaib Na'Fazthra, allows the markets to govern themselves, and here can be found the most staggeringly beautiful pearls, the most eloquent talking fishes, and the most suspect maps of forbidden islands and buried treasure.

***City of Brass***

The boundaries of the ifreeti's fief can be seen clearly in the southernmost waters of the Bahr al-Shazad – bright walls of fire dissuade any ship. While there are those savvy captains who know how to navigate the fire coral mazes, most rely on other means – trained rukhs, flying carpets, or magic. Of all the cities in Jinnistan it is the City of Brass which most evokes the fear of the hellfire in mortals. Great ogres guard the brass gates, walking along spiked parapets with smoke and fire-breathing hounds at their side. The ifreet live under strict military law, and their society is based on a rigid caste system with few chances for advancement. The market for mortal slaves is known as the *Suzerain*, which, I am told, is a sort of joke among the ifreeti. Slaves in the City of Brass are debased and pitiful creatures, made to satisfy the slightest whim of their ifreeti masters. However, the ifreeti are not without honor, and will submit to the authority of their Sultan rather than seek to escape justice if they are caught in a crime. The true power behind the Sultan's throne, much to the chagrin of the ifreeti nobles is his ruthless wife, Sultana Hajjiah al-Rej.

***Ghulistan***

Deep in the valleys of the emerald Qaf Mountains lay the pits of Ahriman, where savage tribes of ghuls are locked in a constant state of internecine feuds. In



the deepest of these pits the despairing traveler comes to the rusting copper towers of Ghulistan, in all her savage beauty. Surrounding Ghulistan is a jungle of poisonous snakes, deep chasms, quicksand, and tropical disease. The ruler of the ghuls, the Great Ghul Jezeera al-Misbah, is said to control a powerful djinni lamp which gives her dominion over any djinni that enter her demesnes; thus visitors to Ghulistan are exceedingly rare. The ghuls engage in raids on small towns, seizing mortal men who they take back to their lairs as lovers who ultimately are sent to the pits and eaten. It is a rare man who manages to evade the undying hunger of the ghuls.

## *Jauherabad*

The City of Jewels is located high in the emerald Qaf mountains, guarded by the elite regiment of jinni aerial troops. Magical creatures like sphinxes and hydra guard the passes that the jinni do not know of, and many of these monsters have no love of the jinn. Jauherabad is the home to the noble warrior houses of the jinn, each which strives to follow a special order given to them by Suleiman himself; the warrior houses are also the center of theological teaching and scholarship. The jinn, bolstered by peri warriors from Amberabad, wage an ongoing war against the shaitan of Jihannan. Only the most powerful sorcerer lords, who live in aerial palaces above the city, can avoid this conflict which defines life in Jauherabad. Imam Shu'ara al-Kaleej is the aging sovereign of the jinn; he has lost three sons to the conflict with the shaitan and seeks to reach a truce, a position not popular among many of the noble warrior houses.

## *Jihannan*

The Sinister City, Jihannan is ruled by a puppet government controlled by King Arzshenk, who plots the destruction of Jauherabad. Here the shaitan compose their contracts, torture their captives, practice rituals of *sihr*; swap tales of their latest successes (stories of tempting the virtuous are most popular), and spy upon the mortal world through magic mirrors. Peri captives are dangled from iron cages where monstrous demons called deevs torture them; their allies from Amberabad sneak them bits of fragrance to help them endure their torment. While slaves are not common in the city, captives are sent to work in the mines to the south of Jihannan; some claim Arzshenk is searching for a weapon to use against the jinn, one of the fabled treasures of Suleiman. A few sha'ir regularly barter with the shaitan; though always at the price of their humanity, and such sha'ir begin to think like the shaitan over time – perhaps this is the greatest victory of all for the shaitan.

## *Suleiman's Reach*

The wild lands between the Dark Realm and Shad-u-Kam are inhospitable; cobra trees spring from the ground to swallow explorers, memory fog steals the dreams of

sleepers, and grasping hands of imprisoned djinni may emerge from the bog to pull the unwary underneath the water. To add to the danger, ghul and ifreeti expeditions are always seeking a secret path through the Reach. They are opposed by the janni outriders, who are equal parts raider and guardian. A traveler who spends the night at a janni camp is sure to be treated hospitably, but the jann always manage to have the last laugh. This may be an innocent prank, such as replacing the character's horse with a transformed mortal, or it may be an unpleasant trick, such as reneging on a tempting promise at the last minute. Still, the jann are a traveler's only allies in this land, and they know all the trade routes and gateways of Suleiman's Reach.

## *The Seventh Tribe*

Many djinni scholars claim there were once seven tribes of djinni. This seventh tribe is believed to have been vanquished during the schism that followed the Choice, but not all scholars are in agreement. Several theories are extant.

1. **Aamar:** Those djinni that live among humans as humans are called *aamar*. Usually this refers to the peri, djinn-touched mortals, or those djinn that have a close relationship with a family of sha'ir. However, some scholars suggest that the seventh tribe somehow transcended (devolved) into humans.
2. **Qareen:** Each human being has a shadow, which is called the *qareen*; it is the part of a man which tempts him. According to Islam, the *qareen* is actually a separate spirit, a form of djinni. While there is a tradition among the shaitan of sending "guardian devils" to tempt likely souls, Islam implies that *every* person has their own *qareen*. There are even those wicked ones among mortals who can summon the *qareen* of a recently departed soul in a séance. Some scholars fear that the seventh tribe somehow merged with humanity and will remain hidden until the Day of Judgment.
3. **European Djinni:** There is a minority view that the seventh tribe migrated to Europe through a series of djinni bottles that were smuggled over long ago. These djinni became known as "fairies."
4. **Integrated by the Marid:** More popular is the view that the seventh tribe was consumed by one of the other djinni tribes. Certain marid history texts suggest that their tribe swelled following the Choice. Scholars infer that those djinni of the seventh tribe were not yet ready to make the Choice and so allied with the marid to gain strength in numbers. However, that the marid would agree to such a unification is unlikely.



## Chapter 18: The Redeemed Son

Thus, Hisam said to the three of us and the thrush:

*The Eldest Brother's Tale*

Once I was my father's favored son, and I looked forward to being wed to my child-hood sweetheart. However, my brother Fatin coveted her as his wife and so he conspired to separate the two of us. Now, my fiancé, realizing what was going on, warned me that my brother would try to deceive me. One day my younger brother Ahmed came to me and said, "Fatin wishes to go hunting with you and only you."

"That's nonsense," said I to my youngest brother Ahmed. "We shall go hunting the three of us as brothers."

Thus we mounted the finest steeds in our father's stables, whose hindquarter muscles were like oil upon the ocean and whose withers were deep like the eyes of my beloved. Each was a great horse of the Hamdani strain, and each marked with the red-shoulder of perseverance. Both my brothers had aspirations of becoming powerful men, but there was a terrible rivalry between the two of them when it came to sporting games. By having Ahmed with us I hoped to head off any treachery Fatin had planned. When Ahmed killed a stag like none other, we were shocked to find that moments after its death a strange woman appeared, bewitching in a way that only sorcerers are. She placed a spell on Ahmed, who became captivated by her. He talked of no one but the "woman of the woods" for days on end until he took his third of the inheritance and set out after her. With Ahmed out of the way, Fatin focused on seducing my fiancé, and he began to offer her all sorts of indecent gifts of fine silks and goblets filled with diamonds. Now, my father is a wealthy man, but such a display was beyond his means, and I began to wonder where Fatin was getting this money from. One night I followed Fatin and his riders to a small cave. Fatin went up to the cave and spoke a magic word, whereupon a chest of treasure was spat out of the cave with a growl that shook the earth. A voice said: "The treasure of Ibrahim al-Nisr lies here; all thieves had best beware!" Edging away, Fatin dragged the chest, split half the spoils with his riders and took the rest back home. I was about to report what I had seen to my father, when Fatin, with propitious timing, announced to our family that he was going to look for Ahmed. He took his third of the inheritance (though clearly he didn't need it) to finance his venture and set off. Not wanting to disparage my brother the *hero's* good name, I stilled my tongue.

Now two months had passed since Ahmed left, and a month had passed since Fatin left after him, and my family began to worry. At last I took on my fraternal responsibility and set out after my two younger brothers, taking my third of the inheritance to fund my expedition. We searched for miles in every valley and in every town and caravanserai that we came to, but there was no sign of either of them. I had just turned my horse around when I spied a woman galloping toward us on horseback, her white robe trailing in the wind. Riding us beside me, she wished me peace, and I recognized her as the woman Ahmed had been enchanted by. "I am Anbar al-Darir, queen of the City of Enlightened Animals."

Hand on the hilt of my scimitar, I gazed at her sternly. "You enchanted my brother, witch. What have you done with him and his men?"

"On the contrary," said the witch, "your brother was already enchanted by a love spell cast upon him by your fiancé. I only practice pious magic, but she dabbles in domains of magic that I am forsworn from using. Her enchantment was easily broken, however. Your brother Ahmed sought to woo my favor and brought me a great gift, so I showed him the hospitality of my city. No sooner had he spent one day in my city than he and his men made me a captive in my own palace, and interrogated my servants about my treasure room. Gathering what he could, and taking several of my animal subjects with him, he turned to leave. I surely would have let him go, but when he ordered his men to light my palace on fire, I grew incensed and all my vows of piety were forgotten. Blasting open the doors of my palace I uttered a mighty spell that turned Ahmed and his men into animals so that they might learn humility."

I traveled with the witch to her city in order to confirm her story. I beheld the burn marks on the palace walls and the new palace gates. Then the witch took me to the prison where Ahmed's men were held and uttered a magic word. They shook violently, and one by one, an ox became a general, a monkey a soldier, and a cat a standard bearer. Amazed, I inquired what had become of Ahmed and learned that she had sold Ahmed to slavers. The witch led me to a magic pool. Throwing threads of saffron into the water she breathed over a stick of incense and the smoke swirled across the water's surface. A flash of light came from the water and therein I saw my brother Ahmed being led through the desert by dangerous men. Then I bid her show me Fatin, and I saw him kill a man in cold blood. Horrified at what I had seen I yelled, "For God's sake, I can see no more!"



The waters went still and dark and the witch said to me. "Stay here with me and become my husband. I will be more faithful to you than your fiancé ever was, and I will make you my king and you will reign over all my enlightened animal subjects and I will show you magic with which you can fly through the sky and send an arrow halfway around the world."

"I am sorry, but I cannot. I must find my brothers," I answered her.

Looking crestfallen, the witch gazed out the window. "Yes, I know. That is your weakness, Hisam. You don't know when to quit while you are ahead." The witch cast one final spell, and revealed how I could find my brothers. Thanking her, I promised that once my brothers were found I would return and spend time in her city.

We rode for many days, and neared the kingdom of Daylam where I had seen Ahmed. As we set up camp, raiders leapt from their hiding places and surrounded us. Though my men gave valiant fight, we were quickly overwhelmed, and I was knocked from my saddle and fell unconscious into a ravine. When I came to my senses, I had no food nor water. Everything had been stolen by the raiders. For days I survived off of berries and pockets of stale rain water until I found this creek. I followed it, hoping to come to a town, but my legs would carry me no longer and I collapsed. Thus, you found me in this wretched state.

Here the story shifts back to the *Physician's Tale*, as told from Yusuf's perspective.

At last I recognized Hisam. "You used to work in Kufa as a baker? Fatin worked as a glass-dealer? And Ahmed as a lamp-dealer?"

"Yes, it is true," he said looking distraught.

I smelled a rat, and from the look on Aheyyad's face he did too. "It must have been very difficult having a father with a vast treasure hidden from his sons and yet gladly gave each of them a third of his inheritance," I said sardonically.

Faster than a thrush could whistle, Ghunayya was upon Hisam. "The son of Ibrahim, are you? Ibrahim al-Nisr, the thief?" She turned to me and Aheyyad, "I didn't realize it until just now. This is the son of one of the most notorious raiders in Iraq who has raided up and down the Tigris and even stolen from pilgrims. Surely he and his two brothers were up to no good in Kufa." Ghunayya hissed at fallen Hasam, "What were you doing, scouting out the city for your father's next job?"

"Please, have mercy," cried Hisam.

Exasperated, I looked to Abdul-Tawwas the thrush. "Tell me that I can learn the truth from a thrush when I cannot seem to learn it from a man."

The thrush addressed me solemnly, "Yes, this is the son of Ibrahim al-Nisr, who plotted to steal from Kufa. What he has not told you is that Ahmed and Fatin both stole money from their father's treasure trove."

"Were you sent by your father to get the money back?" I asked Hisam.

"Yes, I was," said Hisam, cringing before the furious Ghunayya. "My father didn't realize it, but I had taken his money as well. I am no better than my brothers."

Aheyyad smiled in the way that made my hearth laugh. "Well, I imagine your father is quite bankrupt now, having given his three sons the inheritance prematurely and all his savings stolen. Then again, all his wealth was stolen in the first place, so I cannot pity the man too much."

"And now the money you stole rests in the hands of raiders, the money Fatin stole has been squandered, and the money Ahmed stole is in the witch's hands," I said dispassionately to the cowering Hisam.

"Please, have mercy. What will you do with me?" said Hisam.

"I suppose," said I, pausing dramatically as I drew a knife, "that I will serve you lunch. Cheese?" Drawing a loaf of bread from my bag, I prepared a short lunch for everyone. I watched Hisam eat hungrily. "Return to Kufa with us and set things right with your father."

"I cannot return empty-handed," said Hisam.

"What father doesn't rejoice at the return of his son?" I asked. "Besides, you won't be empty handed; you'll have the light of wisdom. And if that's not sufficient for you, Aheyyad will be happy to let you carry our bags."

"Oh yes," said Aheyyad with relish, "quite happy." Thus in agreement, we wished each other good night. As we set up our tent for the night, Aheyyad asked me, "Oh sahib, wherever did you learn to separate truth from falsehood?"

I smiled. "Why, I spent two years among the Bedouin, and they taught me that when a man lies his eyes go to the right, and when he tells the truth his eyes go to the left..." Laughter carried us to sleep.

The mountains turned red with the rising sun. We had set out an hour before sunrise, and watched as the Zagros Mountains changed color before our eyes. Days became nights, and at long last we reached my hometown of Kufa. At the city gates I met an old friend who informed me of the situation with my family, how Ibrahim al-Nisr had forcibly moved in and was essentially holding them hostage while he awaited my return, hoping to threaten my life to get my father to reveal where Ibrahim's three sons had gone.



I came to my old house and saw my sisters tending the garden. Overjoyed at seeing me, they rushed out, far bigger than I remember them, and embraced me. I introduced them to Aheyyad, Ghunnayah, Hisam, and the thrush Abu-Tawwas, whom they marveled over. Going within my old home I saw my father seated across from sheikh Ibrahim al-Nisr; the sheikh was a beady-eyed man with a sharp nose and a long grey beard. He had the look of a desperate man. Upon seeing me my father stood up and embraced me, "It is not safe here, you must go –" he began.

"O sheikh al-Nisr," I said, gently easing my father away, "I have returned your son Hisam to you." Hisam entered the house, and al-Nisr became teary-eyed, and cried how he thought his son had died at the hands of thieves. Then I related our adventures and my family and al-Nisr listened without saying a word. I asked of my fiancé and the letter she sent me.

Al-Nisr said to me, "The letter you received was forged by my own hand, for I sought to lure you home so that I might threaten your life. Your mother is in perfectly fine health."

Hisam revealed that he had stolen money from his father, and my father then explained how he had helped the three sons escape al-Nisr's wrath after their thefts, believing their lies about having repented of the thieving life. There was much rejoicing at a peaceful end to what otherwise might have been a bloody affair had it not been my mixed fortune to meet Hisam and his brothers. Soon my mother and my fiancé arrived, having heard of my arrival, and we embraced.

Thereupon, my father became angry and shouted at al-Nisr to depart his house at once, "You have held my family captive so that your sons might be returned to you. Well, now you know the truth of it, you heartless thief!"

Raising his voice, al-Nisr belittled my father, "If it were not for you helping them to leave the city, none of this would have ever come to pass!"

My father cried that al-Nisr had overstayed his welcome and threatened his family, while al-Nisr cried that my father had brought calamity upon Ahmed, Fatin, and Hisam. At last I shouted out, "It is amazing that good news turns men to bickering pigs so quickly! Perhaps you need to hear something terrible before this matter can be settled!" The two men fell silent.

Hisam swore that he would help his father find Ahmed and Fatin, but first he would take Abdul-Tawwab to the witch Anbar al-Darir so that he

might be returned to his human form. Thanking me for saving his life, Hisam promised that he would give up the thieving life. I told him I would believe it when I saw it.

Now, I had a promised Ghunayya I would learn where the poison which had killed her brother had come from and to try to find the man responsible, and so I applied myself to experimenting on the poison until I learned that it came from a flowering plant in the hills of Kufa. Traveling to the hills with Aheyyad, I went to gather some of the plant, when we found a small cave from which a rumbling noise issued forth. Curious, we entered within and climbing down into the cave came to a chamber filled with treasure around which was wrapped a slumbering snake. Aheyyad grew mad with terror and begged me to leave, but I refused and nearing the edge of the treasure I found a small chest. Opening the chest I found a piece of purple felt folded in fours, and unfolding the felt I found three vials within; the vials were identical to the one Ghunayya had shown me – the poison which had killed her brother. As I turned to leave, I stumbled on the snake's tail and it awoke, fire bursting forth from its mouth. Aheyyad and I fled from the cave as fast as we could, but the serpent followed us out. The earth cracked and the trees withered as goutts of flame surrounded us, pinning us in a circle of fire. The serpent hissed at us, "Speak to me the magic word or be damned to the hellfire!"

Aheyyad and I quickly conferred with each other, our knees shaking terrible. "Is it *abracadabra*?" I asked nervously.

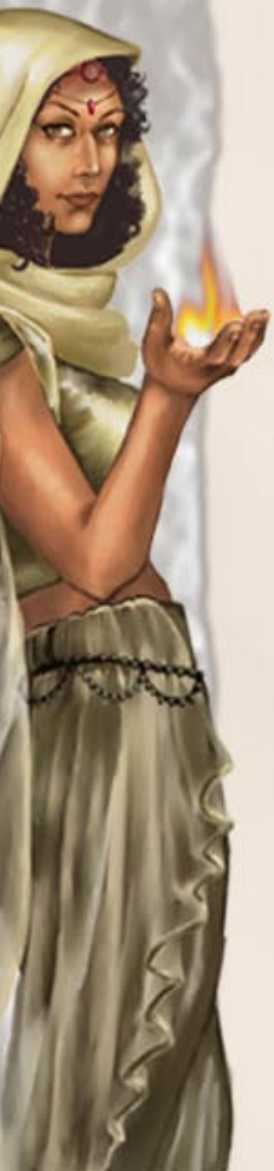
The serpent let forth a mighty roar, and then Aheyyad and I gave ourselves up for dead. "Truly, it was a good guess," said Aheyyad, attempting to comfort me in my despair.

"O Aheyyad, as we are about to die, I wish you to know that you are my truest friend in all this world. I release you from your slavery, for no man so virtuous should be the slave to another." I clutched his shoulder as the fire grew intense and I fell to my knees.

Rearing up, the serpent was about to lunge at us when Ibrahim al-Nisr appeared on horseback and uttered a magic word. Shrieking, the serpent recoiled and fled back into the cave. Ibrahim put out the fire and we thanked him profusely.

"God has been merciful to you today," said Ibrahim. "Tell me, were you stealing from my cave as all my sons have done without my knowledge?"

"Sheikh Ibrahim," I said, gathering my courage, "have you killed a Bedouin man with this





poison which you keep in your treasury?" I showed him the vials I had found.

"On my life I have not!" said Ibrahim. "In truth I did not know that this poison was even in my treasury."

"Do any of your men have access to this cave besides you?" I asked.

"No, they do not, and I was astounded to learn that my sons knew the magic word."

"It is my sorry duty to inform you that Ghunayya's brother was poisoned while delivering the false message you had sent to me," I told the sheikh, who listened mortified. "I believe one of your sons committed this crime, most likely Ahmed or Fatin."

Grief-stricken, Ibrahim revealed to me that such a thing was beyond Ahmed. "However, Fatin came back

shortly after I had forged the letter and sent it with the Bedouin courier. I know because I saw his horse for a brief second. Before I could say anything, Fatin raced off after the courier." Ibrahim paused, deeply reflecting. I imagined that the burden of past crimes weighed heavy on the man. "Perhaps Fatin was convinced that the courier realized it was forged, and he attempted to stop the courier. Fatin has always been protective of me, though also the most disobedient."

Thus, we rode back in silence to the city proper. I remembered my promise to Ghunayya who had so selflessly rescued me and Aheyyad, and I also remembered that Fatin had saved our lives.

"God is great," said Aheyyad, "and, moreover, I am a free man!"

"What shall you do with your freedom?" I asked Aheyyad, teasing.

"Well, sahib, I shall marry Ghunayya the Bedouin and I shall then aspire to educate myself as best as I am able, for I should like to become a physician one day and bring medicines to my people in Ifraqiya," said Aheyyad.

Thereupon I offered him partnership with me once I graduated from the Academy of Gundishapur. Quickly agreeing, he made his proposal to Ghunayya's family, who readily accepted. We traveled with Hisam to the witch's city, and there we had a triple wedding: Hisam to the witch Anbar al-Darir, Aheyyad to Ghunayya, and I to my beloved Hawra, and the six of us came to be closest friends.

I have kept secret, along with Aheyyad, my quest to find the *qutrub* Fatin who killed Ghunayya's brother; for if Ghunayya knew she would surely set after him and kill him herself, and if Hisam knew he would try to stop me. Fatin had saved my life, and thus I owed him a life debt. Yet, as Aheyyad always reminds me, a man must wished to be saved, or else he is trapped forever in the fortress of Alamut, guarded by the demons of disbelief and despair. In my many years as a physician I have seen men who were more monstrous than any serpent or beast I could ever imagine. I know that one day I will find Fatin, and as I restored his brother Ahmed from madness, so too will I kill Fatin the monster and save Fatin the man. Insha'allah.



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