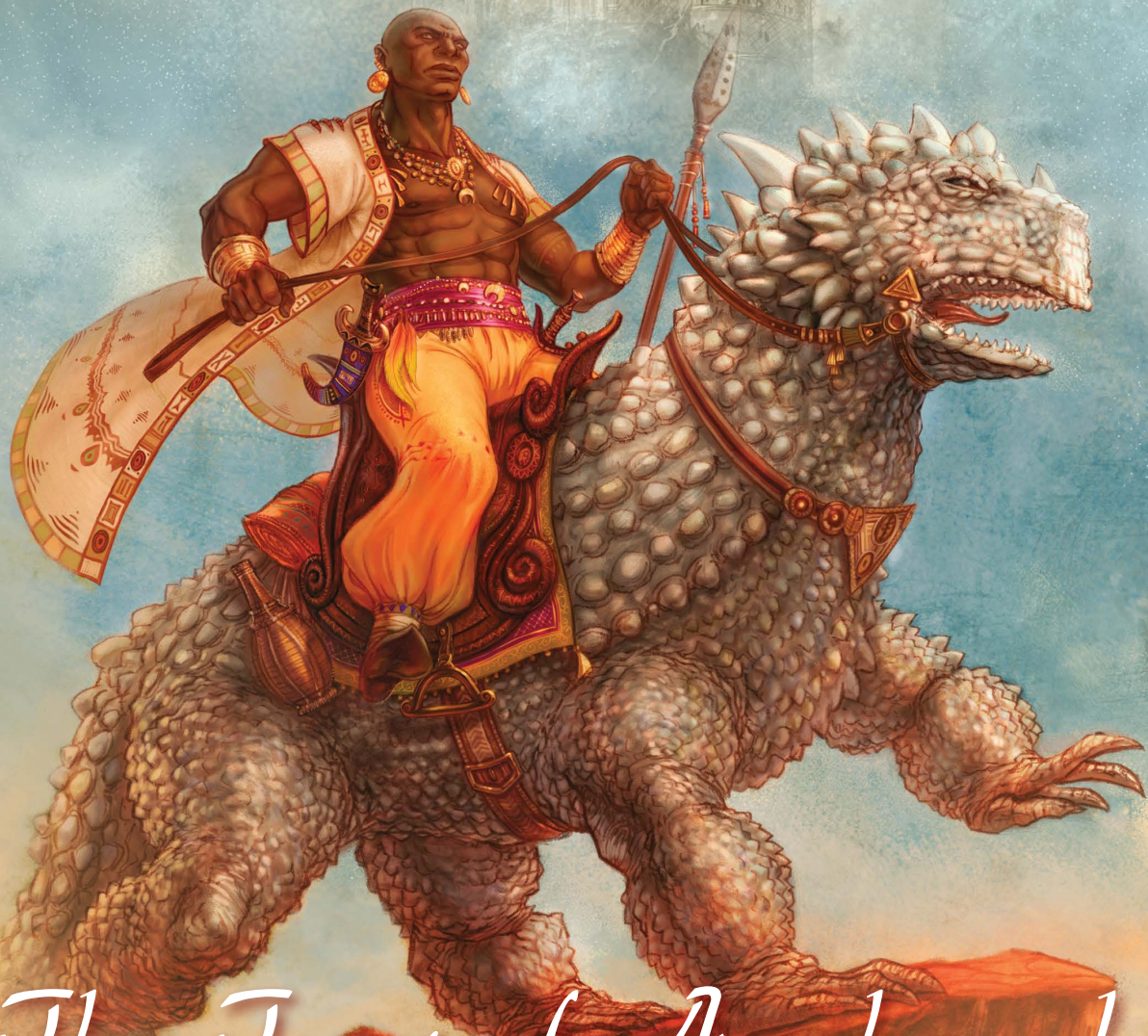


# Gapharnaûn

The Tales of the Dragon-Marked



*The Tears of Ampharool*  
QUICKSTART RULES AND INTRODUCTORY ADVENTURE

# Jazirat

*The Heart of the World*

THE INNER  
SEA





**G**APHARNAÛN  
The Tales of the Dragon-Marked

*The Tears of  
Ampharool*

QUICKSTART RULES AND  
INTRODUCTORY ADVENTURE

**MINDJAMMER  
PRESS**



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# Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <i>Into the Desert of Fire</i>           | 6         |
| <i>The World of Capharnaum</i>           | 7         |
| <b>Chapter 1: Quickstart Rules</b>       | <b>8</b>  |
| <i>Who Is Al-Rawi?</i>                   | 8         |
| <i>Action Resolution</i>                 | 8         |
| <i>Combat</i>                            | 12        |
| <i>Magic and Sorcery</i>                 | 18        |
| <i>Advancement</i>                       | 22        |
| <b>Chapter 2: The Tears of Ampharool</b> | <b>23</b> |
| <i>Once Upon a Time...</i>               | 23        |
| <i>Prologue: The Caravan of Assabi</i>   | 24        |
| <i>The Lost City of Ampharool</i>        | 26        |
| <i>The Palace of Bones</i>               | 30        |
| <i>Epilogue: The Haunted Oasis</i>       | 33        |
| <i>Example of Play</i>                   | 34        |
| <i>Pregenerated Characters</i>           | 38        |
| <i>Index</i>                             | 48        |

# INTO THE DESERT OF FIRE

**H**ow did I end up this weary of my life? Was it one greedy merchant too many criticising my services, one more bordello doxy complaining about her lot, one more child caught by the city guard for stealing food? I didn't know any more, but suddenly the walls of Fragrance looked like a prison, its inhabitants closed in on themselves, their activities empty and without meaning. I know life isn't easy, and no one's perfect except the gods and dragons, but still...

Sitting in the inn that morning with my noisy companions, a wider world called to me. As the steam rose from my mint tea, I remembered the verses the warrior-poet Issef Ibn Mussab Abd-Al-Hassan wrote for his princess:

"The sun shines brighter facing the desert  
Glory and power are not enough.  
To the honour of thy cosy bed  
I prefer the taste of adventure and freedom."

Adventure and freedom. I had been vegetating, falling back on a fake notoriety because of the mark on my back. I had reached the age where a man looks at what he's done and contemplates eternity. Being one of the Dragon-Marked without ever having deserved it was becoming intolerable. I needed to do great deeds, and I was going to find a way to do them. It was time to change my life.

The thought seized me. I sold everything I owned. I bought a camel and some scrolls to write on—I prided myself that I could pen a few verses—and then a new suit of armour and a shimsbir. Travel gear, fighting gear, food. I was ready for adventure.

After a few days negotiating, I found myself at the gates of Fragrance, facing the dancing dunes of the Aramla El-Nar. The Desert of Fire. The windblown sand brought heat, made the horizon shimmer, summoning me to follow mirages. How beautiful the desert was! I had crossed it so many times, but had I ever really seen it before?

Unable to relax, I turned to the city. In the distance, a caravan was departing. My soul burned with impatience as the Salifab calmly harnessed their beasts, my body anticipating, by way of a sudden thirst, the difficulty of the trip. To shore up my newfound resolve, I focussed on my destination.

I became aware of what was missing from my ambitions. Where would I go? Did adventure await me in the middle of the desert, or around the next corner? How was I to find it? How was I to make it happen? Suddenly my goal seemed an illusion, my life shabby and poor. I imagined the bitter verses I would write:

"Facing the immensity of the burning desert  
A fierce courage swelled my breast.  
But, turning towards the illustrious city,  
I became aimless, frozen until the sun was gone."

What fabulous verses for an adventure that was over before it ever began! How ridiculous I was! I had acted on impulse, and now found myself without home, without money. Without glory. With a sigh, I turned my dromedary towards the city of Fragrance and prepared myself to recount to my old comrades-in-arms the most laughable misadventure of my life.

As I was dismounting, a pretty young servant girl approached. "My lord, you dropped this!" she called, handing me a scroll.

"Thank you," I said, reflexively unrolling it. To my surprise, it bore writing, so was no scroll of mine. Wanting to give it back, I raised my head, but the girl was nowhere to be seen. I looked back to the scroll to decipher its contents. Yes, decipher. For it was written in an old Saabi I had only seen once or twice before, in a library of Jergath the Great. That told me it was old, despite its excellent condition.

I mouthed the passages I could make out. "Our goddess's wound." That could be the geographical fault they called the Entrails of Tiamat... A shrine there would date from ancient times, even before the creation of the blessed kingdom of Kh'saaba. The scroll indicated a place two days from the fault—a vast territory to travel through, and not devoid of danger if I encountered a djinn. But the words spoke of bravery, of that I was sure. It was an invitation to adventure—or the next best thing!

If I wanted to leave, why not be guided by this scroll? I couldn't understand it all, but the unknown is part of adventuring. And I would rather die on this quest than live in obscurity! Wasn't that the destiny of the Dragon-Marked? I climbed back into the saddle and, my heart filled with the desire to live intensely, turned towards the desert, deciding at last to join the caravan. And, when the right moment came, I would leave that, too...

# THE WORLD OF CAPHARNAUM

*Capharnaum – The Tales of the Dragon-Marked* is a fantasy roleplaying game set in an imaginary Arabia-like world. It borrows from the tales of the *One Thousand and One Nights*, as well as semitic legends and the ancient and mediaeval epics. *Capharnaum* doesn't aim to be a historical game, but a heroic one, a flamboyant refraction of historical, cultural, and mythical themes, filled with light and thrilling adventure!

## *The Names of the Dragon-Marked Resound Through the Ages*

In *Capharnaum*, you play the **Dragon-Marked**, heroic individuals with a special destiny, born with a birthmark on their backs shaped like a dragon's claw. The **Dragon-Mark** announces to the world that you're capable of astonishing feats, for good or evil. Chosen by mystical dragons in accordance with an unknown divine will, you're offered a place in the great game of the gods. As though the world itself is calling you onto the path of heroes, you'll be cast into colourful adventures, political, military, and magical intrigues, and much more.

## *Long Ago, the Agalanthians Ruled*

In an age as far back as written records go, the Republic of Agalanthia ruled the world, gathering to itself great science and knowledge. But its life was brief, and it was succeeded by the Empire. Jazirat, the land where your adventures take place, fell under the Imperial yoke, cycling through revolts and wars. Then the Empire collapsed, just like its capital, Therema, of which now only a vast field of ruins remains. Today the Agalanthians are a shadow of what they once were, but in the depths of the desert you can find traces of their greatness.

## *The Future of Jazirat is at Stake!*

This *Capharnaum Quickstart* takes place on the vast peninsula of Jazirat, which is divided into three regions.

To the south lies **Kh'saaba**, a rich kingdom rooted in ancestral traditions. Jergath the Great is its capital, the divine city raised in one night by the god Hubal. From here Saabi law reigns, extending well beyond the kingdom's borders.

At Jazirat's heart lies the **Aramla El'Nar**, the Desert of Fire. It's an arid expanse criss-crossed by never-ending caravans carrying spices, cloth, jewellery and artefacts, travelling between the peaceful oases, braving bandits and marauders and the creatures of the desert.

To the north lies **Capharnaum**, the most populous region of the peninsula. It's the centre of the world, and lies by a sunlit sea at the junction of the trade routes. Once it was the land of the Shiradim, and has suffered many wars and conquests. It's said that, since the dawn of time, the threads that weave the world's fate are tied and untied here.

## *A Land of Many Peoples*

Today Capharnaum is at peace, but only just. It's prey to the intrigues and influences of all Jazirat's neighbours: the Quarterian barons from the distant west, the Agalanthian satraps who once owned the world, the powerful Shiradi merchants and the Saabi sheiks. It's a place where all cultures meet and mix.

The **Saabi** are in the majority in Jazirat. Their ruling tribes descend from the three prophets, Hassan, Salif and Tarek, and they worship the One Thousand and One Gods. Most live to the south, in the fertile kingdom of Kh'saaba, while others are desert nomads. But some have settled in Capharnaum, for business, or to play the games of politics or taste the ripe fruits of life on offer in the cities of Sagrada, Carrassine and Fragrance. The **mujahid**, a holy warrior or poet of the sword, is the heroic symbol of this people.

The **Shiradim** are the long-oppressed cousins of the Saabi. Although physically similar, they are culturally very different. They worship Shirad, the one god with many aspects, and live mostly in Jazirat's north, in Capharnaum, the land they cleared and made fertile.

The **Quarterians** live far to the west, and worship new gods that were unknown six centuries ago: Jason, the Quartered God, and his father, Almighty Aether. Quarterian history begins with Jason, the man who made Capharnaum quake, and who won his place in the Celestial Realm by surviving the terrifying punishment of quartering, before sacrificing himself for his faithful. The Quarterians arrived in Capharnaum not long ago, on a Holy Quest to recover the martyr's remains. Many remained to make their fortune, begin new lives, and impose their new religion.

Finally, the **Agalanthians** are still here, although now only a shadow of the people that once mastered the sciences and the arts. Present everywhere because of their formidable elite troops, the Myrmidons, only a few city-states remain from their ancient empire, surviving on the commerce of men and goods.

## *Mektub! The Gods have decided! The Prophets have written!*

So come and save kings and princesses, battle with the djinn, steal forgotten treasures and sing serenades in the moonlight. And cut a dash while you do so! The *Capharnaum* game system is fast and narrative, encouraging panache and inventiveness. The **Dragon-Marked** are mighty heroes which few can resist, and the game reflects their power. Players take centre-stage, taking risks and accomplishing feats to make the very gods green with envy!

# CHAPTER 1

## QUICKSTART RULES

*Capharnaum – The Tales of the Dragon-Marked* is a bright and heroic game, with rules that aim to be as cinematic and as fun as possible. It's a simple system which encourages player description, eloquence, and invention.

Note that this *Capharnaum Quickstart* is an abridged version of the full rules of *Capharnaum – The Tales of the Dragon-Marked*, specially designed to get you playing quickly and experience the game and its world. It presents an overview of the setting and the main game systems; check out the *Capharnaum – The Tales of the Dragon-Marked* core book and its range of supplements for much more!

### WHO IS AL-RAWI?

Most roleplaying games—including *Capharnaum*—have a **game master** or **GM**, whose job it is to describe the game world and present the players with the events which constitute their adventures. In keeping with the Arabian flavour of the game, we call the game master of *Capharnaum* “Al-Rawi”, an Arabic word meaning “the Story Teller”. When you play *Capharnaum*, you're not only playing a roleplaying game, you're participating in an ancient tradition millennia old!

### ACTION RESOLUTION

Most actions the players' characters attempt in the game work automatically: speaking, eating, walking, and so on. But, when the result of an action is uncertain, Al-Rawi and the players rely on chance and the roll of six-sided dice (also called D6). The success or failure of an action is most often resolved by rolling between 2 and 15 dice. This is called a **dice roll**.

The number of dice used in a dice roll depends on several factors. Mostly, you roll a number of dice equal to your score in one of your **attributes**—Strength (STR), Constitution (CON), Dexterity (DEX), Intelligence (INT), or Charisma (CHA)—and sometimes add a number of dice equal to your score in one of your

skills—such as Fighting, Flattery, or Unctuous Bargaining. There are 32 skills in *Capharnaum*, representing the things your character knows how to do. Skills are described in detail in the *Capharnaum* core book, but you can usually work them out from their names. All the skills are listed on the character sheets on page 34.

Scores in attributes and skills are usually between 1 and 5, so you'll usually end up rolling between 1 and 10 dice. So, for example, you may make a roll of your DEX 5 attribute and your Riding 3 skill, in which you'll roll 8 dice. There are several types of dice roll, including attribute rolls, skill rolls, unskilled rolls, and opposed rolls (see page 11).

When you make a dice roll, you add up some of those dice, called your **result dice**, to make a total, called a **result**. The number of result dice is always equal to the **attribute** you're using in the roll. In the above example, you'd roll 8 dice and total 5 of them. Sometimes this is written using the notation:

#### Number of Dice Rolled / Result Dice

In the above example, the Riding skill roll could be written DEX + Riding 8/5, or just Riding 8/5.

Your result is compared to a number called a **difficulty** (see page 11), to see whether you succeed in your action or not.

Dice rolls often have the following notation:

#### Difficulty n Component 1 + Component 2 roll.

A roll of Strength and Athletics with a difficulty of 9 is written: difficulty 9 STR + Athletics. It means you roll a number of dice equal to your scores in your Strength attribute and Athletics skill,

### What Do My Skill and Attribute Scores Mean?

*A score of 1 in a skill or attribute indicates beginner-level competence. With a score of 2, you're at a professional level; and at 3, you're an expert. A score of 4 represents the best person at that skill or attribute in your whole village or even town; and at 5 you're becoming truly exceptional. Scores of 6 or beyond represent true mastery, the domain of heroes...*

and add up a number of them equal to your Strength attribute. If the result is equal to or greater than 9, you've succeeded.

## The Whims of the Dice

### The Dragon's Breath

The dragons are the servants of the gods. They watch over the Dragon-Marked as they pursue their destinies. In game terms, each player has at least one **dragon die**, which should be a different colour from the other dice, which you roll whenever you make a dice roll. For example, if you have 1 dragon die and have to roll 8 dice in a dice roll, you roll 7 normal coloured dice, and 1 die that's specially coloured to mark it out as a dragon die.

Only the Dragon-Marked have dragon dice; normal humans and monsters don't.

If you roll a 6 on a dragon die, your action is said to be "carried by the dragon's breath". You keep the 6 you rolled as part of your result, and roll the dragon die again! And, if you roll a 6 again, you keep going! As long as the dragons breathe, the dragon dice are rerolled!

Don't neglect to describe the awesomeness of the dragon's breath! It's your schtick, it's what sets your character apart from normal mortals. You're inspired by the mystic power of the dragons and the heroic destiny which awaits you, you succeed at an amazing stunt or manoeuvre, leaving everyone speechless and impressed. The greater the bonus on the dragon dice, the more superhuman your effort appears. Any additional points your dragon dice give you make you look special, but if you get more than 10, then something uncanny, even supernatural is happening; and if you get more than 20, even the gods themselves start to take note!

### Constellations

Rolling the same number on three or more dice in a dice roll is called **lighting up a constellation**. Constellations can do two things.

First, if your dice roll is a success, a constellation can activate special abilities your character has because of the **path** he follows. A path may be a school, sect, organisation, or philosophy. Each of the 5 pregenerated characters presented on page 34 and after belongs

to a path, and brief descriptions of the paths and their abilities are given there. There are many more in the *Capharnaum* core book.

*For example: Amin Ibn Malik is facing three brigands, and must fight to survive. While attempting a riposte, Amin rolls 9/5 for his attack, rolling 1, 2, 2, 2, 3, 4, 4, 5 and 5. The three 2s light up a constellation, letting him activate the Path of the Fire Scimitars (the path he chose to follow) until the end of the fight... No doubt the brigands are going to regret attacking a Dragon-Marked!*

Second, constellations are used in combat against some opponents. See the "Combat" section below (page 12) for more.

### Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice

There are two types of modifier in *Capharnaum*: numerical modifiers to the **difficulty** of a roll (or, rarely, the **result**); and an increase or decrease in the number of dice rolled. These modifiers are quite different.

In *Capharnaum*, the number of dice you roll affects how great

your success or failure will be. Changing the difficulty of a roll won't affect that; it'll be harder to succeed at the roll in the first place, but once you succeed you'll have the same chance of a great success as you would have had without the difficulty being modified. Sometimes this is exactly the effect you're looking for.

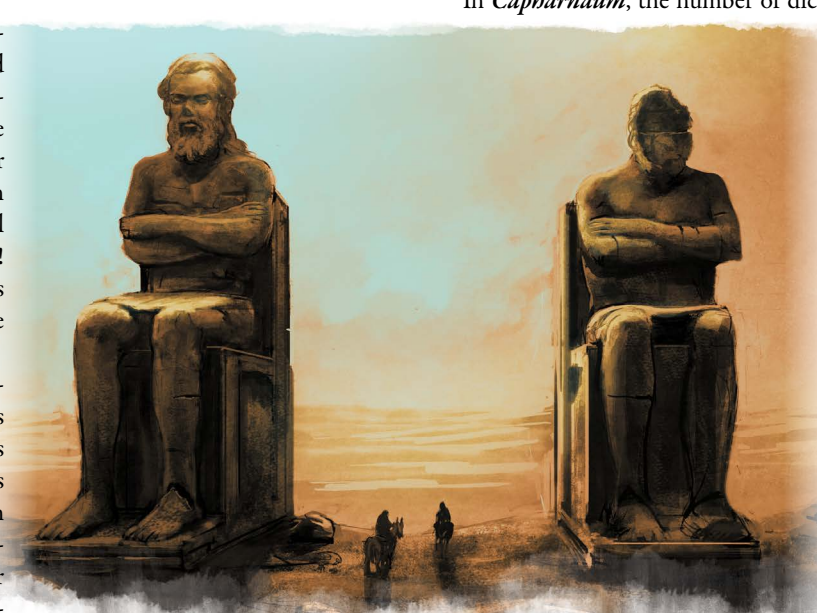
However, if you want to modify the degree of success or failure of a roll, you need to change the number of dice rolled. This is where **bonus dice** and

**penalty dice** come in.

*For example: Amin Ibn Malik is in a duel with a distant cousin who he thinks is responsible for his father's murder. Burning with the desire for vengeance, Amin hurls himself headlong into a fight to the death. Taking Amin's past history and reckless determination into account, Al-Rawi decides that he should receive a bonus die on all his offensive actions in the duel. Amin makes his first attack with a roll of 8/5 instead of his usual 7/5.*

### Heroic Virtues

Every Dragon-Marked has a "Heroic Virtues" section on his character sheet, for the three heroic virtues of Bravery, Faith, and Loyalty. Each virtue has a numerical score, and is surrounded on the character sheet by five stars. These five stars may be filled in one by one during play; when all five are filled in, the sixth point gained



takes the virtue score up by one, to the next level, and all the stars are set back to zero.

Heroic virtues are used in character creation, and it's also possible to spend stars of your heroic virtues during play, or even to lose them. For example, if you were hoping to roll a constellation to activate one of your path abilities (page 9) and didn't, you may spend one point of an appropriate heroic virtue to make up every die missing from the constellation. The heroic virtue you spend depends on the path in question, and is indicated on the pregenerated character sheets beginning on page 34. Whenever an action requires a character to spend points of a heroic virtue, it's these stars that are spent, not the raw levels themselves.

*For example: Amin faces a gang of Babouche-Druggers (page 16), and decides the Path of Malik he is following will be of great use. Unfortunately, the dice don't fall in his favour and he doesn't light up a constellation. Instead, using the Paths rules, he decides to spend two Bravery points to activate the path. His Bravery score, which was previously 4 (+5 stars), is reduced to 4 (+3 stars).*

You can also win back heroic virtue stars during play, by acting according to those virtues—by being especially brave, faithful, or loyal. You can even lose them by acting counter to those virtues. At any moment during play, Al-Rawi can decide your character gains or loses a star of one of his heroic virtues to reflect his behaviour.

Your **Heroism** score is a pool of points representing the average of all your heroic virtues. It's used for a number of purposes, but for this Quickstart its main roll is to limit the number of **swagger dice** you may roll—see page 11 for more.

## Skill Rolls

As described above, a skill roll uses a number of dice equal to the sum of an attribute and a skill score, from which you only count a number of dice equal to your attribute as your **result dice**. You must always keep the best dice in your result dice. Note, however, that this doesn't apply to your dragon dice: you have the choice to include them in your result dice or not, regardless of the numbers rolled.

The total of your result dice, called the **result**, is compared to a number called a **difficulty**. If the result is equal to or higher than the difficulty, your action is a **success**; if it's lower, it's a **failure**.

## Magnitudes

In some cases (like combat), it's useful to know and quantify the **magnitude** of a success or a failure—how well or how badly you've succeeded or failed. Magnitude is a numerical score equal to the number of dice not kept when calculating your result, also known as your **magnitude dice**. Any magnitude die roll of 1 is not counted towards your magnitude; any roll of 6 is counted twice. This gives the following calculation:

| RESULT ON MAGNITUDE DIE | ADDITION TO MAGNITUDE |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1                       | +0                    |
| 2                       | +1                    |
| 3                       | +1                    |
| 4                       | +1                    |
| 5                       | +1                    |
| 6                       | +2                    |

Your magnitude gives you an idea of how great the success (or failure!) of your dice roll is, as follows:

| MAGNITUDE | SUCCESS             | FAILURE              |
|-----------|---------------------|----------------------|
| 0         | Marginal Success    | Marginal Failure     |
| 1         | Normal Success      | Normal Failure       |
| 2         | Good Success        | Stinging Failure     |
| 3         | Very Good Success   | Painful Failure      |
| 4         | Memorable Success   | Memorable Failure    |
| 5         | Exceptional Success | Catastrophic Failure |
| 6+        | Critical Success    | Critical Failure     |

**Note:** You can end up with magnitudes which fall outside this table.

*For example: Chasing a traitor, Amin Ibn Malik tries to cross a street on his galloping dromedary. Al-Rawi sets the difficulty at 6 (the street is pretty empty), and Amin's DEX is 4 and his Riding is 3. He rolls 7 dice, getting 1, 2, 3, 3, 4, 5, 5. He keeps the 4 best (equal to his DEX), giving him a result of 17 (5+5+4+3)! The action succeeds, because 17 is (way!) higher than the difficulty of 6. The three dice which don't contribute to that total are Amin's magnitude dice: with results of 1, 2, and 3, they contribute +0, +1, and +1 to his magnitude, for a total magnitude of 2. It's a Good Success.*

## Critical Successes and Failures

You'll find that those points of magnitude you generate on a roll get used in a variety of ways in these rules. Often, though, we consider there to be a qualitative difference in your success or failure when you achieve a magnitude of 6 or more, and some special rules kick in. One of the most obvious is that if you score a Critical Success on an attack roll in combat, the damage you do ignores your opponent's **Soak** (page 18), inflicting terrible wounds.

## Dice Rolls

There are several types of dice roll:

- **Skill Rolls:** Roll as many dice as Attribute + Skill.
- **Attribute Roll:** Roll as many dice as Attribute + Heroism (page 10).
- **Unskilled Roll:** Roll as many dice as Attribute.
- **Opposed Roll:** Both you and your opponent make rolls, and the higher result wins.

Note:

- **Result:** The sum of the kept dice, called the **result dice** (which must be the best ones, except for your dragon dice—see page 9), to beat the difficulty.
- **Magnitude:** The number of dice not kept, called the **magnitude dice**. Dice which roll “1” don’t count; those which roll “6” count twice.

## Difficulties

In an action, the result is always compared to a number called the **difficulty**. The difficulty is determined by Al-Rawi, according to the descriptions given in Table 3: Difficulties. It’s up to Al-Rawi whether or not she announces the difficulty of a roll to the players: sometimes it’s more exciting to keep it secret, but sometimes it raises the tension to let the players know. If the result of the dice roll is equal to or higher than the difficulty, the action succeeds.

## Active and Passive Difficulties

Sometimes, when you attempt an action, someone may be actively opposing you or otherwise trying to stop you doing what you’re doing. For example, if you’re trying to sneak past the Palace Guard, your ability to use your Stealth skill is being pitted directly against the guard’s Notice skill.

Now, Al-Rawi may just decide on a flat difficulty for your action based on Table 3: Difficulties. However, she may also decide to make an INT + Notice roll for the guard trying to spot you. This is called an **opposed roll**. In this case, the result of the guard’s INT + Notice roll becomes the difficulty you must **equal or exceed** in order to successfully sneak past. Sometimes this is also called an **active difficulty** (see also the Active Defence action on page 14).

## Swaggering

Characters in *Capharnaum* are swashbuckling, heroic types who like nothing better than to cut a dash and look cool while accomplishing great feats, apparently effortlessly!

**Swaggering** involves taking risks when you attempt an action, in order to look cool, shine more brightly, and achieve greater magnitudes of success. But—be careful!—you also risk failing much more catastrophically on a bad roll!

When you choose to swagger, you hold back one or more dice from your result dice, and instead add them to your magnitude dice. These are often called **swagger dice**. You must specify the

TABLE 3: DIFFICULTIES

| DIFFICULTY | DESCRIPTION     | EXAMPLES   |
|------------|-----------------|--|
| 6          | Simple          | The default difficulty for most easy tasks. You may not even need to roll for this. <i>Reciting verses you know well, kicking open a rickety door, urging a Saabi horse to gallop down an empty road, picking the pockets of a distracted chatterbox.</i>                      |
| 9          | Average         | The default difficulty of a professional-level task, and hence for most dice rolls. <i>Repairing your own armour, lifting more than your own weight, writing a long letter, evaluating a precious stone at first sight, stealing from a market stall on a quiet street.</i>    |
| 12         | Difficult       | An action worthy of a specialist. <i>Forging a weapon of quality, succeeding in a feat of athletics, organising a festival for an entire city quarter.</i>   |
| 15         | Heroic          | Now we sort the wheat out from the chaff! <i>Crossing a street by jumping from one roof to another, winning a running race against a dog, juggling with sabres, riding back to front and shooting arrows from the back of your horse, dropping 30 feet onto a shop awning.</i> |
| 18         | Insanely Heroic | These actions are recklessly heroic, and have serious consequences! <i>Sleeping with the king’s wife while the king is sleeping next to you, winning a running race against a horse, dropping 60 feet onto a shop awning.</i>  |
| 21         | Fabulous        | People will be talking about you in a hundred years’ time! <i>Persuading the king who’s just woken up next to you and his wife to let you carry on, winning a running race with an abzul, diving from a cliff top into a rocky river.</i>                                      |
| 30+        | Legendary       | Actions beyond the reach of ordinary mortals! <i>Pole-vaulting over a 60-foot high rampart, juggling excitable snakes while blindfolded, stopping a bolting horse on a slippery surface using only one hand.</i>   |

number of swagger dice **before** you make your dice roll. You can never roll more swagger dice than your Heroism score (page 10).

Note that this means that, when you swagger, you actually **lower** your chance of success! But, if you do succeed, your chance of getting a greater magnitude of success is much higher. However, if you fail on your dice roll, your magnitude of failure will be that much worse!

*For example: Frank's character, Don Felix Belmonte de Valladon, is climbing down the outside of a tower in Jergath in a daring escape attempt, a difficulty 15 action for which he's rolling 7/5 (rolling 7 dice, keeping 5). He decides to swagger, increasing the stakes so that he can impress the women in the street below that are following his actions with interest. Frank says to Al-Rawi: "These three storeys are but small steps when compared to my escape from the dungeon of Lord Al-Shamin! I'll take 2 swagger dice, grinning and waving at the lard-arsed eunuchs trying to catch me and showing them what a real escape is all about!"*

*His Heroism score is 3, meaning Frank could have taken up to 3 swagger dice, but that looked too risky even for him. His 2 swagger dice means his climbing roll goes from 7/5 to 7/3! He rolls against the difficulty of 15, getting 2, 3, 3, 5, 6, 6 and 6. He keeps the highest three dice, a total of 18; his climb action is successful! The remaining 4 dice are now his magnitude dice (without the swagger, he would only have had 2), for a final magnitude of 4—a Memorable Success!*

## Helping and Hindering

Sometimes you may want to take an action which helps someone else do something, or which tries to stop them doing something. These are called **Help actions** and **Hinder actions**.

A **Help action** is an action (see "Actions and Rounds", below). If you succeed, you give a number of bonus dice to the person you're helping equal to the magnitude of your success, up to a maximum of that person's own skill score, plus one (skill +1). If you fail, however, you inflict a number of penalty dice on the person you're "helping" equal to the magnitude of your failure—and there's no limit!

### Get Creative!

*The Capharnaum system provides a flexible framework of rules with a lot of permutations in play. Try and get creative when describing your characters' actions: start by describing what your character is trying to do, and then use the rules to work out how to model it. Your characters should attempt amazing swaggers and stunts, help one another and hinder their foes, create bonuses, and improvise awesome magical effects with their spells. Throughout this Quickstart, we give you hints and tips about some of the cool things you can do with these rules.*

A **Hinder action** is an action. If you succeed, you inflict a number of penalty dice on the person you're hindering equal to the magnitude of your success. If you fail, nothing happens unless you roll a Critical Failure; in that case, you actually *give* one bonus die to the target for every point of magnitude above 5.

If you want to stop someone performing a Help or Hinder action, you can do so with an Active Defence action (page 14).

## COMBAT

*Capharnaum – The Tales of the Dragon-Marked* is a heroic game. Action scenes and combats are a frequent occurrence, and even an average Dragon-Marked fighter has their chance to shine, emulating Sinbad the Sailor, Al'ad-Din, or even the great names in the epic poems or chivalric romances (like Saladin, Lancelot, or El Cid) or Mediterranean legends (like Achilles, Gilgamesh, Hector, or Herakles). Strength, honour, cleverness and luck drive your Dragon-Marked character in his quest to defeat evil djinn and demons, steal treasures and gem-studded idols, or even a kiss when they rescue the prince or princess!

## Actions and Rounds

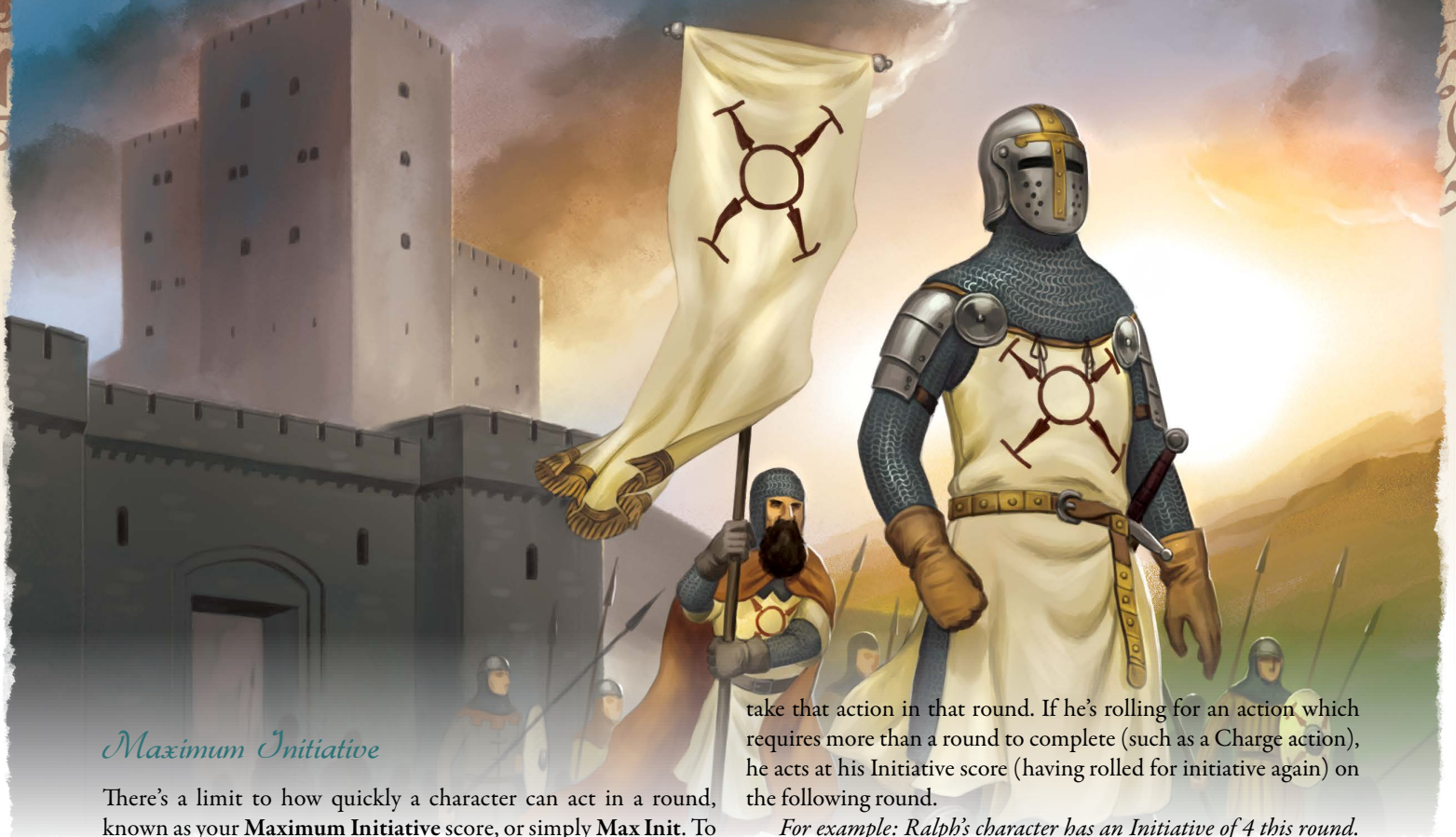
A combat is divided into **rounds** of about twelve seconds each. During one round all sorts of **actions** take place, the fighters run, attack, dodge, shout, jump, take cover, wound or are wounded. In each round, your character may do the following:

- **Take any number of the following free actions:** speak, drop an object, look at something, make a small gesture.
- **Take 2 of the following standard actions:** defend; parry; make an alert, cautious, defensive move of your DEX in paces (1 pace = 5 feet); jump; manipulate something; break a chiromancy tablet.
- **Take 1 attack action or cast 1 spell, plus any other standard action.**
- **Take a Brutal Attack action, which takes up all of the current round, and which does +6 damage if it succeeds.**
- **Take a Charge Attack action, which takes up all of the current round, and an attack action in the following round, and which does +10 damage if it succeeds.**

See "Combat Actions" below (page 13) for more.

## Initiative

When a round starts, each player rolls 1D6. The result indicates the order in which each character acts in a round, a higher result acting before a lower. This is known as **initiative**. Initiative is rolled at the beginning of every round.



## Maximum Initiative

There's a limit to how quickly a character can act in a round, known as your **Maximum Initiative** score, or simply **Max Init**. To determine your character's Max Init, average your DEX, CON, and INT and add 1 to the result. (Generally you'll calculate Max Init when you create your character: it only changes when one of the attributes involved changes.)

$$\text{Max Init} = 1 + (\text{DEX} + \text{CON} + \text{INT})/3$$

When you roll for initiative, if the die result is equal to or higher than your Max Init, then you act at an Initiative score equal to your Max Init. If the result is lower than your Max Init, then your Initiative score is equal to the number shown on the die.

*For example: Ralph's character has a Max Init of 4. At the start of the round he rolls 1D6 for initiative and gets a 5. His Initiative score for the round is 4.*

Note that if you have a Max Init greater than 6, you roll 2D6 for initiative.

## Acting in Initiative Order

Once everyone has rolled for initiative, Al-Rawi calls the highest Initiative score at the table. Any character with that Initiative score can then take his actions for that round. Once all actions for every character acting at that Initiative score are resolved, Al-Rawi calls the next lower Initiative score, and so on, continuing her countdown until 1. At Initiative score 1, any character who hasn't yet taken his actions does so, or loses their chance for that round. Al-Rawi then announces the end of the round and the beginning of the next one (assuming the protagonists want to continue to act), and everyone rolls for initiative again.

Note that if your character is performing an action that takes a number of actions to perform (such as a Brutal Attack), you roll for the action at your Initiative score as normal, but you may only

take that action in that round. If he's rolling for an action which requires more than a round to complete (such as a Charge action), he acts at his Initiative score (having rolled for initiative again) on the following round.

*For example: Ralph's character has an Initiative of 4 this round. He decides to Charge, letting him do more damage (see "Combat Actions", below). However, a Charge takes place as an attack action in the following round. Ralph takes no action in the current round (he can't even defend, as he's charging), and in the following round he rolls 3 for his Initiative. He acts at Initiative score 3 in that second round, completing his charge and making his attack.*

## Who Acts First in a Tie?

During a round, characters act in descending order of Initiative score. However, if more than one character acts at the same Initiative score, the character with the highest DEX goes first. If that also results in a tie, make an opposed roll (page 11) of DEX to see who goes first. It's often a good idea to jot down Initiative scores in descending order so you can visualise things more easily.

If it's your turn to act, you can always **delay your action** to a later point in the initiative order and let other people go first if you wish. If you don't act in a given round, your action is lost: it doesn't carry over into the next round.

## Combat Actions

A character may attempt all sorts of actions in a round. Talking is free, can be done at any point in the Initiative order, and doesn't require a dice roll. On the other hand, attacks, parries, and other feats take a certain amount of time and a certain number of actions. For example, although a simple sword strike only takes 1 action, charging an opponent by running, weapon in hand, to strike a violent blow takes 3 actions (and is called a **Charge Attack**).

When you attack in combat, you make a roll of DEX + Fighting, which must equal or exceed the target's **Passive Defence**, which is a fixed score (see Table 4: Duration of Combat Actions). Optionally, the target may immediately use one of his standard actions to make an **Active Defence**, which is a skill roll of DEX + Fighting (so the same as the normal attack roll). You may only make an Active Defence roll if you have unused actions remaining. If you roll a Critical Success on your Active Defence roll, you act before your opponent on the next round, regardless of initiative, and also gain +1 bonus die to whatever action you take. If you roll a Critical Failure on your Active Defence roll, you may not use your Soak against any damage caused by the attack. Note that any armour worn still applies.

The attacker must roll equal to or above the target's Passive or Active Defence to succeed. If an attack succeeds, it inflicts **damage** on the target. If it fails, it inflicts no damage. If an attack is a Critical Failure, your opponent automatically acts before you on the next round, regardless of initiative, and also gains +1 bonus die.

**TABLE 4: DURATION OF COMBAT ACTIONS**

| NAME                   | DURATION    | DESCRIPTION   |
|------------------------|-------------|---|
| Talk                   | 0 actions   |   |
| Combat Move            | 1 action    | DEX in 5-foot paces                                   |
| Unengaged Move         | 1 action    | DEX x 2 in 5-foot paces                               |
| Normal Attack          | 1 action*   | DEX + Fighting  |
| Brutal Attack          | 2 actions   | STR + Fighting, +6 damage                             |
| Charge Attack          | 3 actions** | STR or DEX + Fighting, +10 damage; -6 Passive Defence |
| Ranged Attack (Thrown) | 1 action    | DEX + Fighting  |
| Ranged Attack (Bow)    | 2 actions   | DEX + Fighting  |
| Aiming                 | 1 action    | +1 bonus die  |
| Active Defence         | 1 action    | DEX + Athletics or Fighting; a skill roll             |
| Passive Defence        | 0 actions   | DEX + Athletics + 6; a static value, no dice roll     |
| Disengage              | 2 actions   | DEX + Athletics or Stealth                            |
| Cast a Spell           | 1 action*   | INT + Sacred Word                                     |
| Break a Tablet         | 1 action    | No dice roll required                                 |

\*you may only take one of these actions per round.  
 \*\*attack takes place at your Initiative order in the following round.

### Ranged Attacks

On Table 9: Thrown Weapons and Table 10: Bows, you'll see that ranged weapons can be used at four possible ranges: Short, Me-

**TABLE 5: COMBAT STATS**

| NUMBER             | CALCULATION  |
|--------------------|--|
| Maximum Initiative | (DEX + CON + INT) / 3 + 1                          |
| Active Defence     | DEX + Athletics or Fighting; a skill roll.         |
| Passive Defence    | DEX + Athletics + 6; a static value, no dice roll. |

dium, Long, and Extreme. The precise distances of each of these ranges is shown on the tables. Ranged Attacks are not possible beyond these ranges.

Ranged Attacks become more difficult the greater the range. Any attack roll for a ranged weapon at greater than Short range incurs a penalty to the result: an attack at Medium range incurs a -3 result penalty; at Long range, a -6 penalty; and, at Extreme range, a -12 penalty. This is summarised on Table 6: Thrown and Ranged Attack Penalties.

**TABLE 6: THROWN AND RANGED ATTACK PENALTIES**

| RANGE   | PENALTY TO THE RESULT                   |
|---------|---|
| Short   | No change; attack at your full ability. |
| Medium  | -3 result penalty.                      |
| Long    | -6 result penalty.                      |
| Extreme | -12 result penalty.                     |

### Critical Success vs Critical Failure

In combat, magnitudes of 6 or better (Critical Success or Critical Failure) on attack and defence rolls have special effects, as shown on Table 7: Critical Success and Critical Failure Effects in Combat.

### Damage

When a character inflicts wounds on another character or monster (for example, by making a successful attack action in combat), a number of points of **damage** are done, equal to the character's STR, plus the weapon's damage bonus, plus the magnitude of the attack. Damage is **reduced** by the target's **Soak** score (page 18), representing his physical ability to soak up damage, as well as the **Armour Value** of any armour worn by the target, or any shield carried, or even of a carapace, hard hide, or other protection it possesses. **If the attack magnitude was a critical success or better, Soak is ignored. Note that armour, however, continues to protect.**

The remaining damage points are subtracted from the target's **Hit Points** (page 18).

**Damage = STR + weapon damage + attack magnitude - Soak - Armour**

| TABLE 7: CRITICAL SUCCESS AND CRITICAL FAILURE EFFECTS IN COMBAT |  |
|--|--|
| CRITICAL RESULT  | EFFECT   |
| Critical Success on Attack                                       | The damage the attacker does ignores the defender's Soak.  |
| Critical Failure on Attack                                       | The defender acts before the attacker on the next round, and gains 1 bonus die.  |
| Critical Success on Active Defence                               | The defender acts before the attacker on the next round, and gains 1 bonus die.  |
| Critical Failure on Active Defence                               | The damage the attacker does ignores the defender's Soak.  |
| Critical Success on Attack vs Critical Failure on Active Defence | The damage the attacker does ignores the defender's Soak. The defender is disarmed, knocked to the ground, and at the attacker's mercy.  |
| Critical Success on Active Defence vs Critical Failure on Attack | The defender turns the attacker's attack back on him, causing the attacker to suffer the damage he would have inflicted on the defender. The defender acts before the attacker on the next round, and gains 1 bonus die. |

| TABLE 8: MELEE WEAPONS   |         |  |
|--|---------|--|
| WEAPON   | DAMAGE  | DESCRIPTION  |
| <b>SHORT AND NON-LETHAL WEAPONS</b>  |         |  |
| Aragonian Whip   | DEX +3  | 3-pace reach; non-lethal damage.   |
| Choorā   | STR +4  | Triangular-bladed dagger; easy to conceal.                                     |
| Jambiya  | DEX +3  | Curved dagger; +1 bonus die when parrying.                                     |
| Khanjar  | STR +3  | Wavy-bladed dagger; -3 AV.   |
| Kick   | STR +2  | Non-lethal damage.   |
| Punch  | STR     | Non-lethal damage.   |
| <b>LONG WEAPONS (-3 ATTACK / ACTIVE DEFENCE IN RESTRICTED SPACES; NORMAL ATTACK AT 1 OR 2 PACES)</b> |         |  |
| Agalanthian Trident  | STR +8  | Break weapon / disarm on Critical Success Active Defence roll.                 |
| Hoplite Spear  | STR +10 | +1 bonus die vs Charge.  |
| Quarterian Lance   | STR +8  | +12 mounted charge damage bonus.   |
| Rumh   | STR +8  | Poleaxe; +1 bonus die vs Babouche-Druggers.                                    |
| <b>ONE-HANDED WEAPONS</b>  |         |  |
| Agalanthian Gladius  | STR +8  | +1 bonus die to attacks or Active Defences.                                    |
| Common Axe   | STR +8  | -3 Active Defence penalty.   |
| Crusader Sword   | STR +8  | Two-edged heavy longsword; +1 bonus die vs Babouche-Druggers.                  |
| Espada Valladana   | STR +6  | Longsword with basket guard; knockout attack.                                  |
| Falkata (Aragon), Khedama (Kh'saaba) or Yatagan (Capharnaum), Kopsis (Agalanthia)                    | STR +6  | Two-edged straight sabre; +3 damage on Brutal and Charge Attacks.              |
| Military Flail   | STR +8  | -3 Active Defence; +1 bonus die vs Babouche-Druggers.                          |
| Orkadian Axe   | STR +10 | Double-bladed war axe; -6 Active Defence.                                      |
| Sayf   | STR +4  | Short scimitar; Free Attack at -3 on failed attack with less than 2 magnitude. |
| Spatha (Agalanthia), Kaskara (Jazirat)   | STR +8  | Longsword; -3 Active Defence unless STR & CON 4+.                              |
| Suyuf (Capharnaum) or Shimshir (Kh'saaba)  | STR +8  | Long scimitar  |
| War Mace   | STR +10 | On Critical Success, break weapon or -3 penalty bruising.                      |
| Bastard Weapons  |         | +2 damage if used two-handed.  |
| Two-handed weapons   |         | +4 damage.   |

| TABLE 9: THROWN WEAPONS |        |                            |  |
|-------------------------|--------|----------------------------|--|
| WEAPON                  | DAMAGE | MINIMUM RANGE <sup>1</sup> | SHORT / MEDIUM (-3) / LONG (-6) / EXTREME (-12) RANGE (5-FOOT PACES) |
| Javelin / Throwing Axe  | STR +8 | 2                          | <12 / na / 12-24 / 24 + (Max = STR x 6)                              |
| Knife                   | STR +6 | 2                          | <12 / na / 12-24 / 24 + (Max = STR x 6)                              |
| Sling                   | STR +1 | 2                          | <12 / na / 12-24 / 24 + (Max = STR x 6)                              |

| TABLE 10: BOWS        |        |                            |                                |
|-----------------------|--------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| WEAPON                | DAMAGE | MINIMUM RANGE <sup>1</sup> | SHORT / MEDIUM / LONG RANGE    |
| Jazirati Recurved Bow | STR +7 | 7 – DEX                    | <36 / 36-72 / 72-120 / 120-150 |
| Long Bow <sup>2</sup> | STR +9 | 9 – DEX                    | <36 / 36-72 / 72-120 / 120-150 |
| Short Bow             | STR +6 | 5 – DEX                    | <36 / 36-72 / 72-120 / 120-150 |

| TABLE 11: ARMOUR          |                           |  |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| ARMOUR TYPE               | ARMOUR VALUE <sup>3</sup> | DESCRIPTION  |
| Shield, Buckler or Targe  | +1                        | +1 bonus die to Active Defence rolls.                                |
| Partial Armour            | 1 (2)                     | A helm, pieces of mail, leather doublet, epaulettes, etc.            |
| Light Armour              | 3 (4)                     | A helm, plus leather armour (may be studded), or ring or plate mail. |
| Heavy Armour <sup>4</sup> | 6 (7)                     | A helm, plus solid plate armour over mail.                           |

1: Range is in 5-foot paces. Minimum range is 2 paces.

2: +2 bonus dice when aiming.

3: AV in brackets are if a shield is also carried.

4: All rolls of Assassination, Athletics, Intrusion, Riding, Stealth, and Thievery are one step harder (+3 difficulty).

## Death Does Not Become You...

Killing is no fun, and heroes never kill gratuitously. The reason is simple: honour, bravery, and loyalty dictate that any enemy who surrenders or loses consciousness is considered “taken out” of combat and deserving of mercy. It’s common to see a defeated enemy become the best friend of the one who defeated him: Quarterian chivalric romances and Jazirati epic poetry are filled with such stories.

In game terms, when a character falls unconscious, he doesn’t automatically die (although he might if there’s no one there to treat him—see “Health and Wounds”, page 18). For a character to be killed, the attacker must, at the moment of attack, announce that he’s striking a lethal blow and intends to kill. If the target is below 0 HP (and therefore unconscious), he’s unable to defend himself, and Al-Rawi can simply decide any subsequent blow is a *coup de grace* and the victim is slain.

## Champions, Valiant Captains and Babouche-Draggers

*Capharnaum* distinguishes three categories of combatant: Champions, Valiant Captains, and Babouche-Draggers.

### Champions

Whether Dragon-Marked or not, Champions are tough, clever, and dangerous opponents. They use the combat rules as written. Dragon-Marked are always considered to be Champions, regardless of how good they actually are at fighting.

### Valiant Captains

Although tough and pugnacious, Valiant Captains are only second-rate opponents. When a Dragon-Marked obtains a Critical Success when attacking a Valiant Captain (a magnitude 6 or greater), the Valiant Captain is automatically considered to be **taken out** (dead, knocked-out, etc).

### Babouche-Draggers

These guys don’t even have Hit Points! They’re the hordes of guards or bandits that rush up, their *babouche* slippers flapping and dragging along the floor, only to fly out of windows when hit by the weakest punch. You face six of them at a time in tavern brawls, a half-dozen city guards cornering you in an alleyway, and they act as a **group**, rolling just once for initiative and making just one attack roll representing the accumulated attacks of all

## Optional Rule: The Epitaph

To reinforce the heroic and dramatic nature of Capharnaum, we recommend the Epitaph Rule.

According to this rule, when a character wants to summarily dispatch a foe that is already out of action, he must come up with an exemplary, panache-filled phrase like: “You were an admirable opponent, I have killed one thousand before finding one like you...!” or even “It is over for you, you blackguard! Now go present yourself miserably before your pitiful ancestors!” And so on.

Al-Rawi is the judge of the Epitaph’s validity. If she doesn’t find the phrase sufficiently dramatic, funny, sad or incisive, she can declare the victim wasn’t dispatched. The character is assumed not to have had the guts to finish the job.

For example: Amin has just beaten a *myrmidon* hired killer an old enemy sent after him. Dropping to -3 HP, the hired killer loses consciousness and is about to fall, when Amin’s player announces he wants to behead him before the body hits the floor. Amin cries “Run to hell and prepare a bed for the cowardly scum who sent you!”

Al-Rawi accepts the Epitaph. Amin twirls around while pronouncing these incisive words, and at the end of the twirl his scimitar detaches the head of the *myrmidon* from his body, which collapses to the sand!

six Babouche-Draggers (or however many are left in the group). When you provide stats for Babouche-Draggers (as for example on page 25), you do so as a group of 6. Instead of Hit Points, you just need to list their number.

For example: Dalila Bint Mimun, a Saabi courtesan-rogue, has been taken prisoner by a band of fearsome pirates who wish to sell her in a slave market somewhere on an island south of Kb’saaba. Having managed to untie her bonds and climb from the hold of the pirate ship, she now confronts the pirates on deck. Al-Rawi announces that all the pirates except for the captain and the second-in-command are Babouche-Draggers. There are 12 of them, in 2 groups of 6.

When a Dragon-Marked or Champion succeeds on an attack roll against a Babouche-Dragger group, he takes out a number of them equal to the magnitude of his success. If you’re confident, you can even swagger against Babouche-Draggers, taking out still more—these minions should go down like cut grain before your sword!

Dalila throws herself into the melee: “I’m currently unarmed, so I’m going to take one swagger die to get myself a weapon. I run at the first Babouche-Dragger and grab the sword he has at his belt. When I draw it, my elbow violently hits the rascal’s jaw!”

Rolling 6/3 for her attack (DEX 4 + Fighting 2, with one swagger die), she gets 2, 2, 5, 5, and 5. She keeps three dice for a result of 15. The Babouche-Dragger group’s Active Defence roll is 14, so Dalila’s attack is a success, despite her swagger. She succeeds with a magnitude of 3, so Al-Rawi declares that, first, the unsavoury individual Dalila

TABLE 12: OPPONENTS

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Champions         | Use the normal combat rules.  |
| Valiant Captains  | On a Critical Success, a Valiant Captain is dead, knocked out, taken out of the fight, etc.   |
| Babouche-Draggers | No HP. Attack in groups of 6.<br>1 bonus die for each Babouche-Dragger after the first.<br>One Babouche-Dragger is taken out for each point of magnitude on a successful attack.<br>If half or more of the group is taken out, the rest run away. |

stole the sword from is beaten and taken out of combat. Moreover, two other pirates are also out of the fight: dragged back by the momentum of the pirate that was hit, they all crash down the steps to the hold and are knocked out...

Babouche-Draggers are rarely paragons of courage. If half or more of a Babouche-Dragger group is taken out (so a minimum of three), the rest turn and flee.

Babouche-Draggers also attack the same way, with a single attack roll for each group of 6 or less; the group gets 1 bonus die for every member of the group after the first.



## Health and Wounds

### Hit Points

**Hit Points (HP)** quantify your character's health and your ability to remain on your feet and continue to adventure. A human in good health generally has 10 – 60 Hit Points. This is a reserve that drops when your character is wounded or sick; when it drops to 0 or below, your character falls unconscious.

An unconscious character cannot act, and must be treated to regain consciousness and start to heal. If you lose more than half your Hit Points in a single combat, you may suffer a **major wound**. A Dragon-Marked character may always spend a point of Heroism at that instant to avoid that major wound.

Even if he has fewer than 0 HP through illness or wounds, a character only dies in *Capharnaum* when he is dispatched (see the Epitaph Rule, page 17), or if Al-Rawi decides.

There are no other penalties connected to the character's health status or Hit Points. *Capharnaum* is a heroic game; a character fights hard until he drops.

### Soak

Each character also has a **Soak** score. Soak represents your combativeness, your resistance to damage, and also the natural toughness of your skin, hide, carapace, and so on. Soak is equal to the sum of your character's CON and Heroism scores (page 10). Since Heroism is recalculated at the beginning of each game session, Soak is, too.

When your character takes damage, the damage points are reduced by your Soak score, as well as the Armour Value of any armour you're wearing.

*For example: After falling from a horse, Marina's character takes 9 points of damage. As her Soak is 6, she only loses 3 HP.*

### No Instant Healing?

*Getting wounded is a serious business in Capharnaum! Even physicians can do little more than patch you up and then wait for nature to take its course. It's said that there are sorcerous spells of healing, using the Tarmel Haja (page 18), such as Create Health, but sorcerers are often reluctant to use their powers for such apparently trivial ends...*

## Healing

Wounded characters may be treated by a difficulty 9 INT + Survival roll or INT + Science roll, and success restores HP equal to twice the magnitude in the 12 hours following treatment. Thereafter, even if the first aid roll fails, the wounded character recovers HP equal to his Soak score every 12 hours.

## MAGIC AND SORCERY

Magic in *Capharnaum* is both flexible and profound, with many applications and permutations. Here we're presenting the core principles of the improvisational form of magic known as the **Tarmel Haja**, particularly how it's performed by the **Al-Kimyati**, the sorcerers of the Saabi (both Assabi the Trader and Princess Karima, the pregenerated characters on pages 34 and 40, are Al-Kimyati, so this applies to them).

### Tarmel Haja: The Divine Combinations

Tarmel Haja means "the divine combinations" in Saabi, and is used in *Capharnaum* to refer to magic in general, with the exception of Agalanthian magic or **Chiromancy** (see below). Indeed, the magics used by the Saabi, Shiradim, and Quarterians share a common foundation: the combination of elements, specific to each people, to obtain desired effects. When a sorcerer calls on the Tarmel Haja, he combines one of three magical actions—Create, Destroy, or Transform—with one or several **elements**, which may be physical things like sand, food, people, weapons, fire, or trees; or emotions such as fear, happiness, peace, or anger; or even more abstract concepts like health, beauty, speed, or dreams. In this way he affects his own environment, or himself, or even other people.

### Sorcery in the Game

Sorcery uses the Sacred Word skill, representing a sorcerer's ability to call on the gods to obtain a magical effect. The sorceries of the Saabi, Shiradim, and Quarterians are based on three verbs, each of which is a sub-skill of the Sacred Word skill:

- Sacred Word (Create)
- Sacred Word (Destroy)
- Sacred Word (Transform)

## The Philosophy of the Sacred Words

The definitions of the Sacred Words Create, Destroy, and Transform are not those you'd find in a dictionary. Rather, they are philosophical terms, fundamental forces of the cosmos which the Tarmel Haja allows your sorcerous character to invoke.

The Sacred Word **Create** represents the positive, creative force of the universe, that power broadly called "good". It creates wholesomeness and health, warmth and light, life, stability, law, and integrity. It can be used to oppose and counter manifestations of the Sacred Word Destroy, even those which haven't been created by sorcery. Thus, Create Health can be used to heal wounds, whether those wounds have been caused by weapons, injury, or magics such as Destroy Flesh.

The Sacred Word **Destroy** represents the negative, destructive force of the universe, that power broadly called "evil". It destroys wholesomeness and health, life and light, leaving instead sickness and wounds, darkness and chaos in its wake. Thus, if you want to "create" wounds, or fear, what you're actually doing, in philosophical, Tarmel Haja terms, is using the Sacred Word Destroy to destroy flesh, calm, peace, and so on.

That's why, when you learn certain elements, you automatically learn their opposites. If you know the element "Light", for example, you automatically know "Darkness". You can even write down "Light / Darkness" on your character sheet. In terms of the Tarmel Haja, you use Create + Light to cause light, and Destroy + Light to cause darkness.

The Sacred Word **Transform** represents the force of transformation in the world. It works to change one element into another, unrelated, and completely different element. Note that the first element must already exist, and that, instead of being destroyed (which is the province of the Sacred Word Destroy), it must actually be transformed into another element. Thus, Sacred Word Transform may transform sand into water, or a person into a camel. The sand or person must already exist, even if they have been created by Sacred Word Create. Note that Sacred Word Transform always requires two elements, even if those elements may sometimes be improvised (page 20).

## The Effects of Magic

Casting a spell is a single action: see page 14. To cast a spell, first declare the Sacred Word and elements that you're using, then describe the effect you're trying to achieve. Then make a roll of INT + Sacred Word: the difficulty is 15, unless your target is a living thing, in which case the difficulty is equal to 9, or a roll of its INT + Willpower (called a **resistance roll**), whichever is higher. If you succeed, you get to "spend" the magnitude of your roll on Table 13: Magical Effect Parameters to determine your spell's exact effect in terms of the game rules.

*For example: Nazir is trying to set fire to the robes worn by Hakim, his rival, to show off to his peers. He succeeds with a magnitude of 2. He chooses to allocate the magnitude as follows:*

- *Target: 1 (0 magnitude). It's just Hakim that Nazir is aiming at.*
- *Duration: 1 round (1 magnitude). Nazir wants to make Hakim look ridiculous, so he wants the fire to burn for at least one round.*
- *Range: 5m (1 magnitude). Hakim isn't right next to Nazir.*
- *Damage: 5 HP (0 magnitude). This is a small amount of damage, pretty much a side effect of the greater goal of making Hakim look ridiculous. If Nazir had just wanted to harm Hakim, he could have reduced the duration to 1 action (0 magnitude) and put 1 magnitude into damage, doing 10HP.*

*The robe catches fire, doing 5 HP damage to Hakim, who departs, his tail between his legs.*

## Describing a Spell Effect

When you describe a spell effect, you combine one of the three Sacred Words (you'll usually only know one or maybe two to begin with) with one or more **elements** (you'll usually know several to begin with). If you don't know a specific element, you may **improvise** it, but each element improvised increases the difficulty of the spell-casting roll by +6.

Some elements may be **broadly-defined** or **narrowly-defined**. This is often a subjective decision, and may depend on the actual

TABLE 13: MAGICAL EFFECT PARAMETERS

| MAGNITUDE | DURATION | RANGE (PACES) | TARGETS | AREA / VOLUME* | HP | ATT  | VIRTUE | SKILL | DMG / AV** |
|-----------|----------|---------------|---------|----------------|----|------|--------|-------|------------|
| 0         | 1 action | 1             | 1       | 1              | 5  | +0   | +0     | +0    | +/-1       |
| 1         | 1 rd     | 5             | 2       | 2              | 10 | +/-1 | +0     | +/-1  | +/-2       |
| 2         | 1 min    | 10            | 5       | 5              | 20 | +/-1 | +/-1   | +/-2  | +/-3       |
| 3         | 15 min   | 50            | 10      | 10             | 30 | +/-2 | +/-1   | +/-3  | +/-4       |
| 4         | 1 hr     | 100           | 20      | 20             | 40 | +/-2 | +/-1   | +/-4  | +/-5       |

\* The area unit is the square pace; the volume unit is the waterskin (2 pints), except for precious materials, where the unit is the ounce.

\*\* Applies to increases or decreases in weapon damage or armour value.

Al-Rawi may modify the difficulty of the Sacred Word roll for any effects which are not represented in the above table.

spell being cast—if in doubt, discuss it with Al-Rawi. Broadly-defined elements are more widely applicable, but increase the casting difficulty by +3. Narrowly-defined elements are more restricted in their approach and applicability, but reduce the casting difficulty by -3. Elements which are neither broad nor narrow are referred to as **normally-defined**. This means that spells using narrowly-defined elements are much easier to cast.

For example, if Assabi the Trader (page 34) tries to cast a spell to transform sand into water (very useful in the desert!), he faces a difficulty of only 12 rather than 15 because the element “Sand” is narrowly-defined.

## Targeting a Spell

Some elements, such as emotions, by definition must affect a person, so it isn't necessary to include a target as an element in a spell creating, transforming or destroying emotions. If you Create Joy, Create Dreams, etc, then a target is automatically affected; you just have to specify which.

### Magical Elements

The following elements may change from being broadly, normally, or narrowly defined based on the context of the spell. Generally, however, they fall into the categories below.

TABLE XX: MAGICAL ELEMENTS

| BROADLY-DEFINED ELEMENTS (+3 DIFF) | NORMALLY-DEFINED ELEMENTS | NARROWLY-DEFINED ELEMENTS (-3 DIFF) |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Animal                             | Feline                    | Cat                                 |
| The Elements (air, etc)            | Earth                     | Sand                                |
| Plant                              | Tree                      | Palm Tree                           |
| Food                               | Meat                      | Beef                                |
| Sense                              | Sight                     | Night Vision                        |
| Weapon                             | Bladed Weapon             | Scimitar                            |
| Living Being                       | Human Body                | Heart                               |
| Person                             | Man / Woman               | You / Me / Amir                     |
| Treasure                           | Jewel                     | Ruby                                |
| Attribute                          | Strength                  | Lifting Ability                     |
| Health / Unhealthiness             | Recovery / Injury         | Healing / Wound                     |
| Cloth                              | Clothing                  | Boots                               |

However, physical objects or substances created by magic don't automatically have targets. Create Fire simply creates a fire right in front of you. In order to set a person on fire, or to fill their lungs with water, you must include a target element in your spell which explicitly references that person. If you don't, you're improvising the target as an element, which increases the difficulty by +6.

For example, if Assabi wants to transform the water in his enemy's tears into sand (ouch!), then he needs a target element, such as Person. He doesn't have one, so must improvise, automatically increasing his difficulty by +6: the target makes a resistance roll (page 19), and adds +6 to the result. If Assabi succeeds, he allocates his magnitude on Table 13: Magical Effect Parameters, to determine what the spell does.

On average, Assabi will have a magnitude of 2. He could choose to inflict 10 points of damage (costing 1 magnitude) to 1 target (costing 0 magnitude) within 5 paces (1 magnitude); or he could inflict 5 damage (0 magnitude) on 2 targets (1 magnitude) within 5 paces (1 magnitude). Alternatively, if his target is within 1 pace (0 magnitude), he could choose to inflict a -1 penalty on the target's skill rolls (1 magnitude) for 1 combat round (1 magnitude).

The more powerful your spell is (the higher the magnitude), the more you can do!

## Supplementary Elements

Sometimes your character may know a magical element which isn't strictly necessary for the spell, but which could clearly play a supporting role. Each of these **supplementary elements** reduces the casting difficulty by -3.

## The Ancient Arts

The tribes of the Saabi have preferred ways of using their magic. Some prefer to sing their spells; some declaim epic poetry, or tragic verse; others still pluck upon the heartstrings with gladness. These ways are based on the Ancient Arts of the Agalanthians, imported into Jazirat millennia ago. A Saabi Al-Kimyati (sorcerer) doesn't have to use his tribe's preferred art when casting a spell (declaiming epic verse in the middle of combat may be inappropriate, to say the least), but if he does, he gains a **bonus die** (page 9) on his Sacred Word skill roll to cast the spell.

In the pregenerated characters on page 34, Assabi the Trader uses Astronomy and Astrology by preference, calling upon the mother goddess Al-Uzza. Princess Karima's preferred method of spellcasting is to sing her spells, praising the god Hubal.

## Handling Duration

Generally speaking, the direct effects caused by magic have a duration, which you can spend magnitude on; with enough magnitude,

## Detecting Magic

*Any character is capable of detecting magic, whether a sorcerer or not. It's a roll of INT + Willpower against a difficulty set by Al-Rawi, based on the proximity and power of the magic in question (figure a base difficulty of 15 for a non-sorcerer, maybe 9 for a sorcerer). The magnitude of the result determines how much the character perceives about the magic detected.*

a duration can be extended to be long enough as to be virtually permanent. Otherwise, once the duration of a spell ends, its direct effects end, too.

This means that if you use the Tarmel Haja to “Transform a Person to Sand”, a success against that person’s resistance roll will turn them into sand. They’re not dead, strictly speaking, but in that state there’s probably not much they can do! However, once the duration of the spell ends, then the sand will transform back into the original person.

This also means, for example, that if you “Transform Sand to Water” (handy in the desert!), then the resulting water will only remain as long as the spell duration lasts. Once it’s over, the water turns straight back to sand.

There’s one exception to this: if you use magic to cause an indirect effect, then that indirect effect remains after the magic ends. For example, if you drink the water you’ve just turned the sand into, then your thirst is quenched and remains quenched after the spell ends. Likewise, if you Create Fire in a person’s hair and use your magnitude to cause HP damage, that HP damage remains after the fire has gone out. The same goes for healing; once the healing power ends, the HP healed remain healed.

This has some interesting consequences. In theory, you can use “Transform Life to Death” to kill a person outright. However, as soon as the spell ends, the life that was transformed to death will be restored, reducing the spell’s effectiveness unless you’ve got a lot of magnitude to spend on duration (or a sharp axe and a decent amount of time to chop the currently dead body into small pieces...). However, if you use something like “Destroy Flesh” instead,

## The Costs of Magic

*It may appear that characters may make unlimited use of magic. In these Quickstart Rules, that’s pretty much the case. However, there are darker sides and perils faced by those who gives themselves up too much to its practise, and sorcerers tend to be reluctant to cast spells too frivolously. The Capharnaum core book provides much more detail on this.*



## So what can Assabi do with his spells?

*Assabi the Trader, the pregenerated character on page 34, has learned some minor magics of transformation which he uses in case of need during his caravan expeditions. He commonly transforms sand into water, bread, and even semolina rice meal.*

*He doesn't really think of his magic as offensive, but more than once he's transformed the water in a foe's eyes into sand. Ouch!*

## And how about Princess Karima?

*Princess Karima (page 40) knows magic which is all about communicating, especially emotions such as calm and friendship. She often uses Create Amity to defuse conflicts or violent situations. She can also use Create Communication on a single target to enable them to understand, say, another tongue; or on two or more targets to permit those who don't share a common language to communicate.*

and cause HP damage, then once again the damage caused will remain after the spell has ended.

This means that powerful sorcerers are truly scary; but even lowly beginning spell-casters may create some impressive effects, with some imagination and judicious spending of magnitude.

## Other Types of Sorcerers

The Agalanthians, Shiradim, and Quarterians have variations on the above magic of the Tarmel Haja, and indeed there's still more to say about how the Al-Kimyati of the Saabi work their spells. All this and more is described in the *Capharnaum* core book.

## Predefined Spells

Characters will often find themselves casting the same spells, even when using the improvised magic of the Tarmel Haja. Indeed, it's possible to create lists of predefined spells, which Al-Rawi and the players may sometimes find useful.

A common approach is to have a broadly-defined target (Person, Place, etc), and a narrowly-defined object (Sand, Love, Fear, etc). The +3 and -3 difficulty modifiers both end up balancing out, producing a spell with an overall difficulty modifier of +0.

### Agalanthians and Chiromancy

*Chiromancy is also called Fate Magic, since it alters the fates of people, animals and things by calling on the gods to intervene. It's the second main type of magic used in Capharnaum, alongside the Tarmel Haja. Chiromancy uses clay tablets, specially created and imbued with magic by sorcerers known as Chiromancers. These tablets must be broken for the magical effect they contain to be activated or released. Chiromancers alone have the knowledge needed to impregnate the clay with this request to the gods, but anyone may break a tablet.*

*Chiromancy has led to a very lucrative trade in enchanted tablets, pejoratively dubbed "Money Magic" by non-Agalanthians. These foreigners believe magic is free and instantaneous, and the fact that Chiromancy is prepared in advance and can be sold is considered a perversion. But, for the Agalanthians, Chiromancy is beneficial, since it is within anyone's reach. There's no need to study for years to learn magic: simply buy the tablet you need, and break it at the right time.*

*In the city states of Agalanthia, gifting Chiromancy tablets is common. Tablets against disease are given as birth gifts, so a mother can heal her child from the most current illnesses. Many a traveller orders tablets to guarantee his trip, to make the winds favourable, calm the waters. What other magic can do the same?*

*Chiromancy rules are found in the Capharnaum core book.*

*For example: Princess Karima often casts a spell she calls Hand of Friendship. It uses the Sacred Word Create and the narrowly-defined element Amity. She can cast it at range, but she prefers to touch the target, who may resist. She casts it at a -3 difficulty modifier, and uses the magnitude to determine the number of targets and the length of time the friendship lasts.*

Predefined spells like this may be found in ancient writings, and may have unusual effects. Players may also want to create their own. Many examples of predefined spells are provided in the *Capharnaum* core book.

## ADVANCEMENT

Characters in *Capharnaum* are not static. As you adventure, you will see your character grow and change, and forge a place for himself in the world. First of all, your heroic virtues will fluctuate during play, depending on your character's behaviour and the use you make of them. But also, when you complete a scenario, Al-Rawi will award your character **adventure points**, which you may spend to improve your skills and attributes, advance on your chosen paths, and develop new abilities.

You may earn anywhere from 10-30 adventure points from a single scenario, depending on its length and complexity. You can then spend those points to increase, say, one of your skills by +1, at a cost in AP equal to the new skill score x 10. So to increase a skill from 1 to 2 costs 20AP.

There are lots of other things you can do with adventure points; full rules for advancement are given in the *Capharnaum* core book.



## CHAPTER 2

# THE TEARS OF AMPHAROOL

**The Tears of Ampharool** is an introductory scenario for **Capharnaum – The Tales of the Dragon-Marked**, designed to be played with the simplified version of the rules provided in this book. It offers a group of up to five characters a “call to adventure”, introducing them to the *Capharnaum* setting and rules. We’ve provided 5 pregenerated character on page 34 so you can get playing right away.

For maximum game fun, if you’re a player of *Capharnaum*, we recommend you stop reading here (although you can take a look at the pregenerated characters on page 34). The events of the scenario described below should only be read by Al-Rawi, who will reveal them to you during play.

In a sense, there are two adventures here, depending upon whether the players initially accept the call to adventure or not. Each of these two adventures should be playable in one session of a few hours; we also provide guidance for linking the two parts together into a single, larger adventure of a couple of sessions of play.

If you enjoy this adventure, be sure to check out the whole range of products for **Capharnaum – The Tales of the Dragon-Marked!**

## OVERVIEW

The player characters are travelling by trade caravan from a village in the north of the Saabi Kingdom of Kh’saaba, across the Aramla El-Nar, the Desert of Fire, to the city of Carrassine in distant *Capharnaum* (see the map on the inside front cover of this book for more). During their journey, the caravan is beset by a great sandstorm, from which they are attacked by mysterious, perhaps ghostly assailants. After the storm, they see the mirage of a fabulous palace above the sands, and the promise of adventure. Depending upon whether they answer this call to adventure, the player char-

acters participate in magical events linked to an ancient betrayal, with profound consequences...

## ONCE UPON A TIME

The story of the fabulous palace of the mirage goes back two thousand years, to a period when the whole of Jazirat was under Agalanthian rule. It belonged to a Saabi king, Khawani Ibn Safi, whose dynasty had long been served by a friendly djinn named Ampharool. Ampharool loved the company of men, and Khawani neglected his harem to spend his nights debating with his magical companion.

Ampharool proved unwise, and told the king secrets about the djinn and the nature of magic. This forbidden knowledge preyed upon Khawani’s mind, who saw an opportunity to rid his lands of the Agalanthian invader. He became obsessed with the powers of sorcery, learning all he could from the djinn. Eventually, he used the secrets to bind Ampharool into an oil lamp, which he locked in a secret room, then exploited his new abilities to create the first flying carpets, intending to equip all his troops with them to expel the Agalanthian occupier and conquer Jazirat.

Khawani never completed his plans. Horrified by his father’s warrior ambitions and the consequences they might have, his daughter and heir, Princess Shahira, poisoned him. The patricide was the end of the Khawani dynasty. Bereft of the wise counsel and magical protection of Ampharool, the kingdom was plunged into chaos, cursed by internecine struggles, the death of the whole family, and the destruction of Khawani’s palace at the hands of the vengeful Agalanthian army.

But Ampharool remained, imprisoned in the lamp locked in the palace ruins, swallowed by desert sand. The lamp’s magic prevented Ampharool from leaving without outside help, unable to end even his own life.

For almost two thousand years, Ampharool has been trying to escape. He has discovered a stellar conjunction which has allowed

him to manipulate time, calling strangers into the distant past, to the moment when King Khawani was about to imprison him. For the three days this conjunction lasts every year, courageous souls can journey to this event. For those who refuse the journey, a magical mirage of the abandoned palace awaits, as it was during Ampharool's long imprisonment before it fell to ruin. The djinn hopes that the brave will prevent him from being imprisoned; or that the meek will be forced to search for his lamp and set him free.

The Dragon-Marked receive the call to adventure. Will they heed it?

## PROLOGUE: THE CARAVAN OF ASSABI IBN YUSSEF

The characters are at the gates of a village in northern Kh'saaba, one of the departure points for caravans crossing the Desert of Fire. Caravans are the village's mainstay, being the last stop before the sand begins. One is ready to leave for the north, towards Capharnaum and Carrassine.

A departing caravan is a large beast slowly awakening. Some people travel on the backs of dromedaries, but most walk. Each person knows where they should be in its long train before departure, and only starts moving when their turn comes. Travellers are situated at the centre, commodities and resources at the front and back. There are sheep and oxen to be used for food during the trip, and dromedaries carrying food and equipment.

### *The Player Characters*

We've provided 5 pregenerated characters starting on page 34 to get you playing right away. All are Dragon-Marked, just at the start of their journeys to herodom. They are:

- **Assabi Ibn Yussef Abd-Al-Salif**, the leader of the caravan, a magic-wielding master trader with a golden tongue.
- **Eloim Bar Sibias**, a Shiradi physician sworn to protect those in his charge from all harm—whether from sickness, injury, or foe...
- **Carmen de la Mancha**, an Aragonian campeador and whip-wielding duellist, an adventurer far from home.



- **Karima Bint Aziz Abd-Al-Salif**, a Saabi princess of thieves, travelling with her bodyguard.
- **Wafik Ibn Khalil-Abd-Al-Salif**, bodyguard to Princess Karima, who rides a dragon-like *abzul*.

## Some Caravan Members

There are close to 70 people travelling in the caravan with the heroes. The main ones are:

- **Thabaki**, the Saabi caravan cook.
- **Jalal**, leader of the Saabi mercenaries, a Valiant Captain in charge of 6 Babouche-Druggers (page 16).
- **Hind Safi**, the caravan guide, who makes sure the caravan takes the right path through the often trackless desert.
- **Cyra**, a rich cloth merchant and old friend of Assabi, travelling with her retinue.
- **Abarrane**, an old Shiradi traveller and wise woman.

## Travelling in the Desert

Traveling across the desert by day is hard. The sun burns, it's hot, you're always thirsty and bored, or else you need to be constantly vigilant.

At noon, some tents are pitched for a few hours, to await the sun moving from its zenith. It's a time for drinking and eating, treating sick beasts and maybe reorganising the caravan. Then it's back on the trail. At nightfall, the caravan stops and sets camp. It takes more than one hour to pitch the tents, organise the watch, make the meal, and so on. A good caravan is judged by its efficiency when setting up and striking camp.

The three first days go by quietly. The convoy is too close to the border of the desert for anything to happen.

## The Sandstorm

The fourth day dawns with a different feel, a certain tension in the air. Have the characters make difficulty 9 INT + Survival rolls to detect that a storm is coming.

By mid-afternoon a whole wall of sand, perhaps half a mile high, rushes in from the horizon in a suffocating dust storm.

If the characters detected the coming of the storm, they may be prepared. Al-Rawi, let any reasonable idea work. Perhaps they'll reinforce the camp, covering their faces against the driving sand, or even use Assabi's magic to Transform Sand to Water and create a localised rainstorm, clearing some of the air. If they don't prepare for the storm, they suffer 1 penalty die on all dice rolls as they cough and splutter, blinded and disoriented.

## The Ghostly Warriors (1 group of 6 Babouche-Druggers)

Number: 6

Max Init: 3

Passive Defence: 11

Soak: 4

Attacks/Active Defences: *Sayf*'s short scimitar 5/2 +7 damage + bonus dice.

## Voices of War

At some point, have the characters make difficulty 9 INT + Notice rolls. On a success, they hear strange voices shouting war cries in the storm. They have moments to prepare, before the caravan is attacked! On a failure, they may only use their Passive Defence on the first round.

The attackers aren't common bandits. They're strangely dressed warriors, as if this were a war. Characters making difficulty 12 INT + Fighting rolls may realise they're armed and armoured like the Agalanthians of old (a bit like ancient Greeks); characters making difficulty 9 INT + Willpower rolls will detect uncanny magics at work! (See "Detecting Magic" on page 21.)

The ancient warriors attack for at least 2 rounds—more if Al-Rawi wishes—before mysteriously vanishing into the storm. Their first attack is a Normal Attack, but after that they may make Brutal Attacks. By preference, they attack defenceless members of the caravan, and will easily kill them if not opposed. The members of the caravan cry out for the Dragon-Marked to rise to the occasion and defend them. Do the PCs jump in to fight the warriors and protect the victims? If so, award each character a star of Bravery (page 10)!

Run this first combat using the rules on page 12. The ancient ghostly warriors are treated as Babouche-Druggers, and there are 2 groups of them, each of 6 warriors. That means, Al-Rawi, that they roll for two attacks each round (not twelve!) against the heroes, with 1 bonus die for each Babouche-Dragger in the group above 1 (so a group of 6 Babouche-Druggers gets 5 bonus dice). Also, because they're Babouche-Druggers, they don't have Hit Points; one Babouche-Dragger is taken out for every point of magnitude on a successful attack (see page 16 for more).

## The Call to Adventure!

As the sandstorm clears, the shimmering image of a splendid and uncanny palace appears on the horizon—a mirage! The characters may make a difficulty 6 INT + Science or INT + History & Peoples roll to realise that a mirage is a magical place—a call to adventure!

Do the characters answer this call to adventure, and head towards the shimmering palace? Or do they try to pass it by? Al-Rawi, remind the players that their characters bear the Dragon-Mark on their backs, that they feel they're pulled towards a momentous destiny...

If they accept, go to "The Lost City of Ampharool" below. If they try to avoid the call to adventure and press on to their destination, go to "The Palace of Bones" on page 30.

## THE LOST CITY OF AMPHAROOL: ACCEPTING THE CALL TO ADVENTURE

Al-Rawi, award each one of the Dragon-Marked who accepted the call to adventure a star of Bravery (page 10). This is what it means to be a hero!

### *A Mysterious City in Turmoil*

As the heroes head towards the mirage, they find themselves walking through the streets of a city of strange buildings named Ampharool, teeming with people—a city that wasn't there a moment ago! The people around them are agitated and panicking—their king, Khawani, is trying to imprison a djinn named Ampharool, which has been a friend and ally of his dynasty for generations, to harness its power and cast off the yoke of the Agalanthians occupying the city. A difficulty 6 History & Peoples roll reveals that the fallen and decadent Agalanthians haven't been able to occupy cities in Jazirat for centuries. Astute characters may recognise the styles of the armour and weapons of the Agalanthian guards here and there in the city as the same as the ghostly warriors who attacked the caravan during the sandstorm. There's even talk of an Agalanthian army massing outside the city walls in response to the king's treachery...

### *Tea*

*The tea ceremony is a way of showing hospitality, and a pretext for talking with a passing visitor. It's not very polite to refuse tea, or not to drink the three teas. The same leaves are used to brew three servings: the first tea is as bitter as life, the second as strong as love, and the third as sweet as death.*

### *The Stars Are Wrong...*

*If the heroes are still in Ampharool at night, at any moment they may make a difficulty 6 INT + Survival roll to notice that the stars in the sky are not in the right position for the place where the caravan stopped (Assabi may make an INT + Notice roll—he's a bit of a specialist when observing the stars). With a magnitude 2 success or higher, they may notice a constellation shine that has not been visible for many centuries.*

The fabulous palace the heroes saw in the mirage stands before them in the heart of the city. It's glowing with magical energies which flash and flicker—the signs of a sorcerous duel within.

The palace looks like it could house about a hundred people. Its construction is reminiscent of the Saabi style, but is different in a few details: the dome is less spread out, the windows are narrower, the spikes on top of the fences and grills are spear-shaped and not rounded, and so on. The city of Ampharool is built in a similar style. On a difficulty 12 INT + History & Peoples roll, a character can figure out it is an extremely ancient style—perhaps the mirage has taken them back to the distant past!

### *The Dragon-Mark*

At some point, the heroes will feel pulled to intervene. Such foolishness by the king! The city is on the brink of disaster.

Al-Rawi, if the characters are not deliberately hiding their Dragon-Mark, the city folk will directly ask them for their aid. They may even be invited to the delicate pavilion, billowing with drapes, of the Princess Shahira, daughter of the king, who offers them tea, and begs for their help in stopping Khawani from imprisoning Ampharool, the ancestral protector of the city.

If the heroes agree, Princess Shahira will gift them with a crystal vial containing 3 doses of the *Draught of the Magi*, each of which gives the drinker one additional dragon die (page 9) for one scene only (this may be an entire combat). All three may be drunk at the same time for +3 dragon dice. Use them wisely!

### *Getting into the Palace*

If the PCs refuse the city people's request for help, go to "If the PCs Fail..." on page 30.

The Royal Palace is guarded at all its doors by guards loyal to King Khawani. To get into the palace and confront the king, the heroes will have to get past them.

Again, Al-Rawi, let any reasonably well thought-out plan work. It's a difficulty 12 DEX + Stealth roll to sneak past the guards, but **everyone** has to roll, and any failure immediately alerts 2 guards

## The Palace Guard (Valiant Captains)

Hit Points: 40      Max Init: 5  
 Passive Defence: 14 (15) Soak: 7  
 Attacks/Active Defences: Falkata straight sabre 8/4 +9 damage; Shield 9/4

(see below). Perhaps Eloim Bar Sibias (page 36) has some more subtle ideas?

The guards are also superstitious and very nervous: after all, there's a major magical confrontation going on just behind them! Maybe they can be distracted with some clever deception using the Acting skill (difficulty 9), or brow-beaten and even driven away with some heavy-handed Intimidation (difficulty 12)? Or perhaps Princess Karima can work her magic and befriend the guards (difficulty 9)?

Failing everything, of course, the heroes can simply run screaming at the guards, weapons drawn. They'll face 2 guards, who will resist most earnestly!

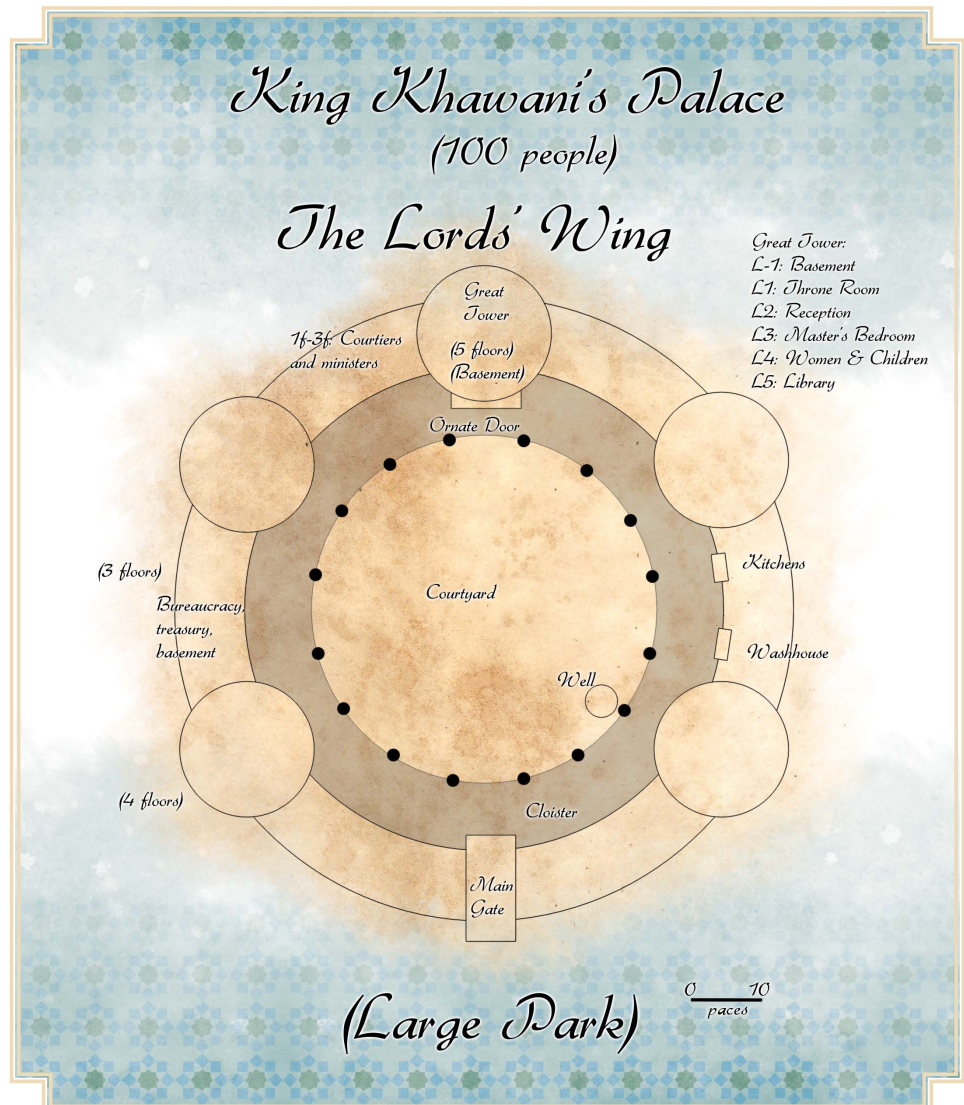
## Inside the Palace

Once past the guards, the heroes are inside the palace. It's actually deserted—everyone with any sense fled as soon as the duel began! The flashing lights and terrible thundering of the magical duel is coming from the Great Tower, directly ahead.

The palace has a ground floor, two upper floors, and five towers. Two towers stand at either side of the main gate, and another two are set symmetrically at the back of the building. These four towers have four floors. Finally, the fifth tower is located opposite the main gate and has five floors.

The palace entrance gate, probably where the PCs enter, leads to a large circular inner courtyard. To the right there is a well, a washhouse, and a door. The door leads to the servants' wing. The ground floor of the right wing makes up the kitchens. In front, a large ornate door leads to the great tower sharing the wing of the lord of the place. The upper floors of the building house the rooms for the courtiers and ministers; those of the tower house the audience room, the reception room, the master's bedroom, the floor of the women and children and, finally the library. As mentioned above, the Great Tower is riven by magical tremors.

The left wing of the palace houses the bureaucracy, the treasurer, and so on. It's the only one to have a basement, with a huge, brass-bound stone door, locked and protected by a hidden but ingenious mechanism. It's a difficulty 15 INT + Intrusion roll to detect the mechanism, and then a difficulty 12 DEX + Intrusion roll to deactivate it. Picking the lock of the door is difficulty 9 DEX + Intrusion, but is +6 difficulty harder if the character doesn't have



a proper set of lockpicks. In any case, picking the lock without disarming the mechanism causes the surround of the lock to spring open, rotate, close on the lockpicker's hands, then rotate 360°, tearing the hands off at the wrists!

This automatically costs the victim ½ his total Hit Points, and constitutes a major wound (page 18). The victim has one chance to avoid the trap, requiring a difficulty 9 DEX + Athletics roll. On a failure, the lockpicker loses a hand; on a Critical Failure, he loses both hands. A Dragon-Marked character may spend a point of Heroism to avoid the major wound; in this case, the character doesn't lose a hand, but rather has their hands badly mangled, suffering a number of penalty dice equal to the magnitude of their failure until healed. They still lose ½ their maximum Hit Points.

Opening the door leads to the king's treasury. There's enough wealth here to literally buy a kingdom. Al-Rawi, let the characters steal as much as they want, encumbering themselves almost to immobility if they want to. Neither the city folk, guards, nor Princess Shahira will take kindly to the theft, and in any case none of the treasure can be taken out of the mirage.

## The Battle Between the King and His Djinn

The battle the Dragon-Marked have come to stop is raging in the Throne Room of the Great Tower. There, ten paces from the heroes, King Khawani has used his sorcery to immobilise the djinn, Ampharool, and is reducing his Willpower to 0 to force him into the Lamp of Holding he carries in his hand. Khawani has also cast a "Protect Me" Command spell on the djinn, meaning Ampharool can't attack him, and also will attack anyone trying to harm the king—such as the Dragon-Marked!

The battle is almost over when the heroes arrive, Ampharool almost defeated. Can the characters free the djinn and save the day?

### How the PCs Can Win

Al-Rawi, make no mistake—this is a tough encounter, and the Dragon-Marked may die! However, winning isn't impossible—Khawani is distracted and acts last in the first round, and any reasonably well thought-out plan has a chance of success. Here are some ideas for how the PCs might be victorious.

### Killing Khawani

This is the most obvious and unsubtle plan, but it's a good one! If the Dragon-Marked kill the king, his magic will fail, releasing Ampharool from his immobilisation. Note that this won't work if Ampharool is already imprisoned in the Lamp of Holding, however.

## King Khawani

**STR:** 2                      **Max Init:** 5  
**CON:** 3                     **HP:** 30  
**DEX:** 4                    **Soak:** 6  
**INT:** 4                     **Passive Defence:** 10  
**CHA:** 3                    **Legend:** 3

◇ **Skills:** Combat Training 2, Command 5, Elegance 6, Endurance 3, Fighting 4, Flatter 4, Intimidate 5, Prayer 1, Sacred Word 6, Save Face 3, Science 3, Uncutious Bargaining 4, Willpower 2

◇ **Attacks/Active Defences:** *Jambiya* curved dagger 8/4 +7 damage

◇ **Armour:** Light Armour (AV: 3)

◇ **Magic:** *Sacred Words:* Create, Transform, Destroy; *Elements:* Ampharool, Armour, Dust, Fear, Flesh, Intelligence, Movement, Obedience, Person, Size, Strength, Willpower.

◇ **Special Items:** *Lamp of Holding:* Specially enchanted to hold any being with a Willpower of 0 which wills itself to enter it, or is commanded to enter it, regardless of size. Willpower may have been reduced to 0 temporarily by magic or other means. If the lid is replaced, the being is trapped, until the lid is opened again.

◇ **Notes:** Khawani has several spells he commonly casts, as follows. The casting difficulty modifiers are in brackets; note that he may cast them on Ampharool with a -3 difficulty bonus.

- **Cause Fear (+0 diff):** Using Destroy, Calm.
- **Cause Wounds (+3 diff):** Khawani jabs his dagger from a distance, using Destroy, Flesh, Person.
- **Command (+3 diff):** Using Create, Obedience, Person (or Ampharool at -3 diff).
- **Drain Strength (+3 diff):** Using Destroy, Strength, Person.
- **Drain Will (+3 diff):** Using Destroy, Willpower, Person.
- **Immobilise (+3 diff):** Using Destroy, Movement, Person. Targets may not make Movement actions.
- **Shrink (+3 diff):** Using Destroy, Size, Person.
- **Turn to Dust (+0 diff):** Using Transform, Person, Dust.

## Ampharool (Weakened)

STR: 2                      Max Init: 5  
 CON: 3                     HP: 30  
 DEX: 4                     Soak: 9  
 INT: 4                     Passive Defence: 10  
 CHA: 3                    Legend: 6

- ◇ **Skills:** Athletics 6, Endurance 6, Fighting 6, History & Peoples 3, Sacred Word 6, Storytelling 4, Survival 5, Willpower 6 (3).
- ◇ **Attacks/Active Defences:** Bastard *Suyuf* long scimitar 12/6 +16 (+19 2-handed) damage
- ◇ **Armour:** None
- ◇ **Special Abilities:** Ampharool has the following special abilities. For this Quickstart, treat them as magical spells using INT + Sacred Word.
  - 1 dragon die
  - Elemental Fury
  - Gaseous Form
  - Hallucination
  - Healing
  - Immolation
  - Lightning
  - Shapechange
  - Teleportation
- ◇ **Notes:** Ampharool has been immobilised by Khawani and currently rages in impotent fury, lamenting the terrible betrayal. He shudders and shakes in place, making incoherent shrieks and growls. He can still make attacks of Elemental Fury, Hallucination, Immolation and Lightning, but is under the effects of a “Protect Me” command by Khawani, and can’t attack him directly. Khawani is draining Ampharool’s Willpower; when it reaches 0, he will order the djinn into the Lamp of Holding.

### Dispel the Magic Affecting Ampharool

This is a more sophisticated solution, but more complex. First of all, the characters need to know precisely what magic is affecting the djinn. This is an INT + Willpower roll (see “Detecting Magic” on page 21), with a difficulty of 12 for non-sorcerers, and a difficulty of 6 for sorcerers, with the following results based on the magnitude of success:

- **Normal Success (1 magnitude):** Ampharool is clearly under the influence of a powerful spell!
- **Good or Very Good Success (2-3 magnitude):** The spell is a spell of destruction, ie uses Sacred Word (Destroy).
- **Memorable or Exceptional Success (4-5 magnitude):** The spell has destroyed Ampharool’s ability to move.
- **Critical Success (6+ magnitude):** Ampharool is not only unable to move—he’s also under the influence of a powerful command to protect Khawani. If he’s freed, he’ll probably attack the Dragon-Marked!

Once the characters understand what spell is affecting Ampharool, they can use Create to restore Ampharool’s Destroyed Movement. The attempt faces a difficulty equal to the result of the spell which Destroyed the Movement in the first place—in this case, it’s a difficulty of “merely” 18, which may just be within reach of the heroes, if they’re smart. Note however that this dispel would face a +6 improvisational penalty if the caster didn’t also know the Movement element, or something similar.

### Persuading Khawani to Stop

We’re probably in the realms of complete fantasy now (ha-ha!), but it’s possible that the enterprising Dragon-Marked may persuade the maniacal Khawani to stop his attack and free Ampharool. Any attempt like this will face some serious opposition, but, Al-Rawi, do your best to give any suitably convoluted plan, involving several rolls, probably opposed, at least a chance of success!

### What Happens if the Heroes are Outclassed?

Remember: it isn’t necessary for the PCs to win this battle. They may do, but equally they may find themselves outclassed and facing death or defeat. In that case, it’s perfectly all right for them to flee. If they’re in combat, they’ll need to disengage (page 14), but otherwise they can let Khawani complete his nefarious plan. The adventure needn’t end here—see “If the PCs Fail...” below.

## Using Legend Points

*Legend points are to monsters are what Heroism is to the Dragon-Marked. They have several uses, but for this Quickstart they’re used mostly as follows:*

- They indicate the maximum number of swagger dice a creature may take on a single roll.
- A creature adds its Legend points to its attribute score when making an attribute roll (page 11).

## *If the PCs Succeed...*

The djinn Ampharool thanks them, mentioning that the Dragon-Marked are destined for great things, and invites them to the coronation ceremony as Princess Shahira, the king's daughter, assumes the throne. The mirage dissolves, and the heroes find themselves reunited with their caravan amidst tranquil and beautiful ruins, in the early hours of the morning some hours from Carrassine. Each of the Dragon-Marked has a tear-shaped gem in their hand—see page 32—the only evidence it was not a dream.



Any other items from the palace have vanished. The other caravan members remember only having made a good and fast trip, and Hind is already boasting of his reputation as an excellent guide.

## *If the PCs Fail...*

If the PCs fail, King Khawani imprisons Ampharool in the Lamp of Holding, and tries to use its powers to cast out the Agalanthians from his city. As the mirage dissolves around the heroes, they see Khawani's army riding into battle on flying carpets...

At this point, Al-Rawi, if you like, you can end the adventure—go to “The Haunted Oasis” on page 33. If you want to carry on playing, then the PCs find themselves alone in the Palace of Bones—see below.

## THE PALACE OF BONES: REFUSING THE CALL TO ADVENTURE

As night falls, the caravan finds itself entering an abandoned yet beautiful palace that isn't on any maps. In the twilight, the palace glows with a ghostly light! It has gardens, and a surrounding wall—the PCs are already inside, and can't get out!

The gardens are filled with flowers and fruit trees, and in the centre stands a magnificent fountain covered in mosaics. At the end of the park stands a large circular palace with pink marble walls. The palace is in the purest Saabi style (see above), with towers, domes and arabesque decorations. A tall enclosing wall prevents the characters from leaving the park, together with a powerful spell: a difficulty 9 DEX + Athletics roll is required to climb the wall, but you only find yourself dropping down into the other side of the park... How can the heroes get out?

## *Magical Analysis*

The first thing the heroes might want to do is to try and understand their predicament. Analysing the magic at work here is an INT + Willpower roll, difficulty 15 or difficulty 9 for sorcerers:

- On a Normal Success (magnitude 1), the character senses that the heroes have been imprisoned by magic, but that there is also an aura of great sadness around the palace and park.
- On a Good or Very Good Success (magnitude 2-3), the character senses that something is imprisoned here, and wishes to be freed.

## Whose Palace is This?

Initially the heroes may not know whose palace they're in. As it stands, it's a difficulty 15 History & Peoples roll to associate the palace with King Khawani and his story. This difficulty is reduced by -3 for each of the following: seeing a ghostly vision; finding the flying carpet; seeing a ghostly vision of Khawani's magical duel with Ampharool in the Throne Room (page 28).

Succeeding in this roll means the characters realise they're in the palace of Khawani, who imprisoned a djinn and attempted to cast out the Agalanthians with an army on flying carpets, before being murdered by his own daughter, precipitating the fall of his dynasty and the loss forever of his once-great city.

- On a Memorable or Exceptional Success (magnitude 4-5), the character detects that the heroes and the park and palace are under the influence of a powerful Create Imprisonment spell.
- On a Critical Success (magnitude 6+), the character may immediately learn the Imprisonment magical element, for free!

## In the Palace

At some point, the PCs may want to explore the palace. It is immense, and devoid of inhabitants; see page 27 for a description. However, there are skeletons throughout, of many origins and from many eras, judging by their attire. These are people Ampharool transported during previous conjunctions, and who failed to set him free. Otherwise, the palace furnishings are intact, if faded, and the characters can find weapons, dishes, clothes, even remnants of food, dried and ancient. Everything is in place as if the inhabitants had dropped everything and left, many years ago.

## Ghostly Visions

Sometimes, at the turn of a corridor, ghosts appear miming scenes of their lives during the reign of Khawani. It's not possible to interact with them, only to watch. They tell a story of conflict, invasion, slaughter, and abandonment.

## The Flying Carpet

At the far end of the library (see the map on page 27) is a pile of carpets. Most are plain, clashing with the wealth of the palace. If the heroes try to touch them, they will turn to dust, except for one: the bottommost carpet is the first flying carpet Ampharool ever made for Khawani, and it is marvellously preserved. It's a difficulty 18 DEX + Survival roll to fly it: however, if the heroes try to fly out



## The Scorpion Man

|        |                     |
|--------|---------------------|
| STR: 5 | Max Init: 6         |
| CON: 7 | HP: 70              |
| DEX: 6 | Soak: 9             |
| INT: 3 | Passive Defence: 16 |
| CHA: 2 | Legend: 2           |

- ◇ **Skills:** Athletics 4, Endurance 5, Fighting (Sting) 1, Fighting (Other Attacks) 4, Intimidate 3, Survival 6.
- ◇ **Attacks/Active Defences:** Pincers 10/6 +15 damage; Spear\* 10/6 +14 damage (+6); Sting 7/6 +6 damage +poison\*; *Suyuf* long scimitar 10/6 +16 damage  
*\*When attacking with a spear, scorpion men always use a Brutal Attack.*

*\*\*The poison takes effect in a number of rounds equal to the victim's Soak -6 (or instantaneously, if that results in a negative number). The poison does SD6 damage, minus the victim's Soak. The victim also suffers a -3 penalty to all dice roll results for the next day.*

- ◇ **Armour:** Chitinous carapace on most of the body (Armour Value: 2)
- ◇ **Notes:** Scorpion men can use two weapons without meeting the usual prerequisites. They attack two targets with their pincers (one pincer attack per target), and a third target with their weapons, in the same action, for a total of three attacks. If they use their sting, however, they may make no other attack that round.

## Scarab Beetle Swarm

STR: n/a                      Max Init: 6  
CON: 5\*                        HP: 50\*  
DEX: 10                        Soak: 5\*  
INT: 1                         Passive Defence: 20  
CHA: 1                        Legend: 0

- ◇ Skills: None
- ◇ Attacks/Active Defences: Bite 10/10 +10 damage
- ◇ Armour: Special\*
- ◇ Notes: \* A swarm of scarab beetles is a special creature. The swarm comprises 5000 individual beetles covering an ground area of 5m<sup>2</sup>, and has 5 points of CON. Attacks targeting the swarm don't do any damage unless they are an area attack such as fire, poison, and so on. Any target in the path of a scarab beetle swarm suffers a Bite attack.

of the palace enclosure, they will always end up flying straight back in again, no matter which direction they take!

## Derja the Scorpion Man

There is one inhabitant of the Palace of Bones: Derja the Scorpion Man. This savage creature has only recently stumbled into the palace, trapped by the same stellar conjunction that has imprisoned the heroes. It has created a nest of sorts in the Throne Room of the Great Tower—the site of the ancient and epic battle between Khawani and Ampharool (see page 28, and remember the Dragon-Marked may catch a ghostly vision of this event as they enter here!), and is now searching for a way out.

Derja is aware that a djinn is imprisoned behind a hidden door behind the throne, but can't open it. He'll seize upon the heroes as a possible way to get the door open, free the djinn, and get out!

### Compelling Ampharool...

The heroes may want to compel Ampharool to render them a service before freeing him. For example, he could enchant a magic carpet for them. If they do so, Ampharool will be glad to be released, but not exactly grateful—he considers he's earned his freedom—and will probably just depart without further ado. He won't shed any Djinn's Tears for them.

Will the Dragon-Marked go along with this? Derja is more than willing to resort to violence to persuade them...

## The Chamber of the Lamp

If Derja doesn't show the heroes the location of the secret door, they'll have to find it themselves. It's a difficulty 18 INT + Notice roll; the door is a hidden panel in the wall, behind the wall-hanging at the back of the throne. The wall-hanging is old, dry, faded, but bears the legend *Thou who charmed my heart with thy gaze, who gave life to the flesh of my flesh, thy name shall be the key to my power*, written in an ancient form of Saabi which is a difficulty 12 INT + History & Peoples roll to decipher.

The heroes may also notice the door with a difficulty 15 INT + Willpower roll, to perceive the strong aura of magic behind the hidden door (see "Magical Analysis" on page 30).

Opening the door requires a difficulty 15 DEX + Intrusion roll, or perhaps an improvised spell to turn stone to sand... Failing all else, a good hour or two with clubs and hammers may break a way through.



### Djinn's Tears...

Djinn's Tears are a magical item. They're a valuable gemstone in their own right, but they have a single magical property which, if used correctly, can be extremely useful. If the gem is hurled to the ground or otherwise struck hard, it will shatter, and undo one single dice roll affecting the character or those around him. This can be any dice roll—even a missed Active Defence which has resulted in a character's death. It sets the clock back to immediately before the roll was made, allowing either the roll to be made again, or the character to choose to act differently.

Opening the door safely requires a password—the name of King Khawani’s favourite wife, Dawira, the mother of his patricidal daughter, Shahira. It’s a difficulty 15 INT + History & Peoples roll to know this name, reduced by -3 for every 3 hours spent “researching” in the palace, either in the library (where an unfinished book on the history of the family recounts the hanging of the patricidal daughter and of her mother, Khawani’s favourite), or in the administrative wing (perhaps using the registry of Khawani’s marriages and concubines), or in the bedrooms of the women’s floor, where there is a portrait of each wife, with names of each of them. See the map on page 27 for all these locations. Otherwise, if the heroes don’t say Dawira’s name out loud when opening the door, a pit trap is triggered; each character must make a difficulty 15 DEX + Athletics roll to throw himself clear, or drop 5 paces onto a bed of spikes, doing 2D6 +10 damage.

Anyone entering the room beyond will trigger a floor pressure plate, which will release a Scarab Beetle Swarm. If they’re searching diligently, the pressure plate can be found on a difficulty 18 INT + Intrusion roll, and bypassed by leaping over it on a difficulty 12 DEX + Athletics roll.

### *Freeing Ampharool*

In the chamber beyond, a tarnished lamp sits on a stone table. It emanates a powerful magical aura. Anyone touching it can sense the djinn within; if they don’t let go immediately, Ampharool will be in their thoughts, telling them his story and beseeching them to set him free by opening the lid of the lamp. If they do so, the djinn will emerge, weeping, pale and almost translucent. He sheds as many tears as there are Dragon-Marked in the Chamber of the Lamp (see below), while the palace loses its tangibility.

### *If the Heroes Succeed...*

If the Dragon-Marked free the djinn before daybreak, the mirage vanishes, and the heroes find themselves in the Haunted Oasis, each with a tear-shaped gem in their hand (see the box below), and pos-

sibly also with Ampharool’s flying carpet, the only evidence their adventure was not a dream. Any other items from the palace have vanished, and indeed only the Dragon-Marked remember there having been a palace at all. The other caravan members recall only having made a good and fast trip, and Hind Safi isn’t short in boasting of his reputation as an excellent guide. See “The Haunted Oasis”, below.

### *If the PCs Fail...*

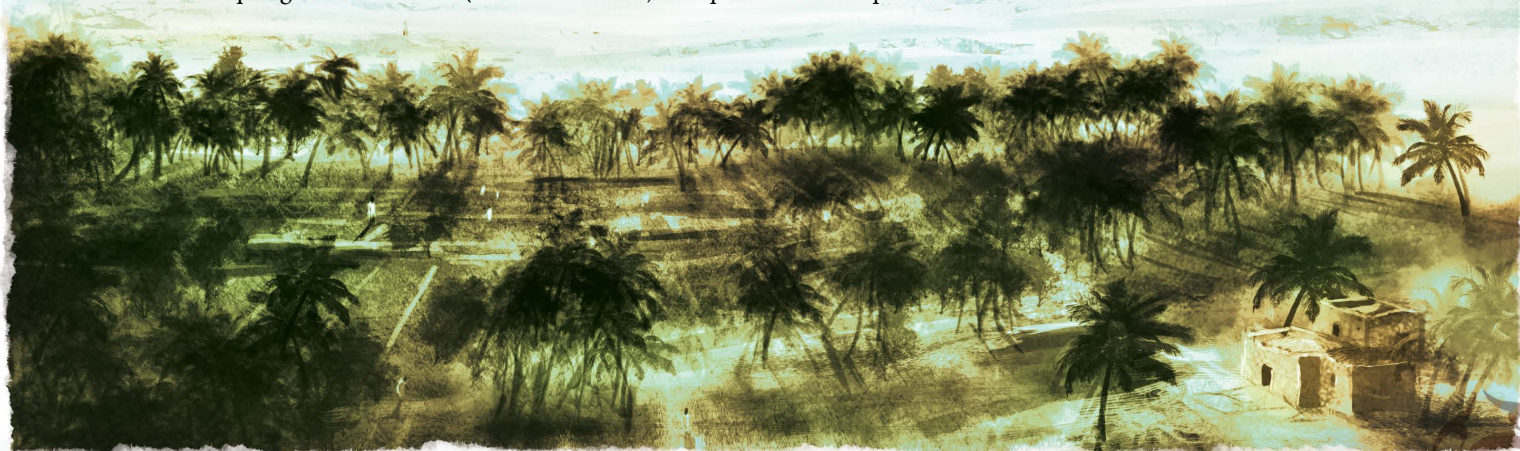
If the Dragon-Marked have not freed Ampharool by dawn, the mirage dissolves, and the heroes find themselves in the Haunted Oasis. See below.

## EPILOGUE: THE HAUNTED OASIS

If the heroes freed Ampharool, or prevented his imprisonment and the destruction of the ancient city, the Haunted Oasis is a place of peace, dotted with slumbering ruins of an ancient city and palace which enjoyed its heyday before passing gently into history. The Dragon-Marked each gain 1 point of Faith, and find their caravan camped around the oasis, which is only a few hours from their destination, the city of Carrassine.

If the heroes failed in their adventure, the Haunted Oasis is a bleak and desolate place, scoured by tortured spirits of the dead. The ruins are like bones, bleaching beneath the desert sun, and there are scorpions everywhere. The plants are a tangle of thorns, and the water is foul; there is nothing here to assuage a caravan’s thirst. Worse still, the caravan is still in the middle of the Aramla El-Nar, with many days still to go before it reaches Capharnaum. But that’s an adventure for another day!

Al-Rawi, if the PCs completed *The Tears of Ampharool* by playing only one part of the adventure, then award each of them 10 adventure points (page 22). If they played both parts, award them 20 points.



# EXAMPLE OF PLAY: THE BATTLE BETWEEN THE KING AND HIS DJINN

Here's an example of play from *The Tears of Ampharool*, to better illustrate how the *Capharnaum* rules work at your gaming table. And what better example to use than an action-packed combat!

The scene here is the big “boss fight” at the climax of “The Lost City of Ampharool”, part one of the quickstart (see page 28). It's a very tough encounter for the party of beginning Dragon-Marked adventurers provided as pregenerated characters. The party consists of **Assabi Ibn Yusef**, *Al-Kimyat* sorcerer and master trader; **Carmen de la Mancha**, Aragonian *campeador* and adventurer; **Princess Karima**, a sorcerous *Al-Kimyat* and “princess of thieves”; **Elim the Physician**, of the Sacred Heart of Shirad; and **Wafik the Protector**, one of the saurian-riding Walad Badiya, who's actually riding his saurian *abzul* into the fray!

Our Dragon-Marked heroes have successfully penetrated the magnificent royal palace in the ancient city and have just entered the throne room, where master *Al-Kimyat* sorcerer **King Khawani** is trying to force the djinn, **Ampharool**, into a Lamp of Holding he has in his hand. They know that their goal is to stop the King binding the djinn into the lamp, a terrible betrayal which will have terrible consequences!

The djinn, Ampharool, is currently immobilised, held in place by the King's magic. He's also under the influence of a powerful “Protect Me!” Command spell cast by the King, but the PCs don't know this at this point.

## Round 1

Our Dragon-Marked heroes enter the throne room. Al-Rawi declares that this is round 1 of the encounter. Each round is 12 seconds long. She explains that there's a good 10 paces distance from them and the King and Ampharool, who are themselves less than 5 paces apart. She also explains that both the King and Ampharool are distracted by their sorcerous duel at this point, so the heroes are going to act first. She asks for initiative rolls.

Each of the five players rolls 1D6 for initiative. Assabi rolls a 6, but as his Maximum Initiative is 3, has to reduce it to 3. The rolls end up as follows, in order of initiative:

- 3 – Princess Karima (DEX 4)
- 3 – Elim the Physician (DEX 2)
- 3 – Assabi the Trader (DEX 2)
- 2 – Wafik the Protector (DEX 4), on his *abzul* mount !
- 1 – Carmen de la Mancha (DEX 4)

Last – King Khawani (DEX 4) and Ampharool the Djinn (DEX 4), currently immobilised.

So here goes!

Princess Karima acts first. She has 2 actions per round, like everyone. With her first action, she tries to understand what she's seeing, and what's wrong with the djinn. She's trying to Detect Magic, which is an INT + Willpower roll against a difficulty of 6. Karima is rolling 5/3 (rolling 5D6 and totalling the highest 3 to get her result). One of those 5D6 is her dragon die, which explodes on a 6. She rolls 6, 5, 3, 2, and 3 on the dragon die. That's a result of 14, and the 3 and 2 on the remaining dice (called the **magnitude dice**) give her roll a magnitude of success of 2. That's a Good Success, and tells her that the djinn is affected by a powerful spell using the Sacred Word “Destroy”.

She doesn't get any more information than this, but from what she can see – the djinn clearly can't move from his current position – she guesses that Khawani has magically destroyed the djinn's ability to move. She decides, as her second action, to cast a spell using her Sacred Word “Create” and the element “Alacrity”, describing how this will invigorate the djinn and allow him to move again.

Now, the difficulty she faces is a massive 18, which was the result of the spell cast by Khawani in the first place. Karima is rolling INT 3 + Sacred Word 2, so 5/3. She rolls 6, 4, 2, 2, and 4 on her dragon die, for a result of 14 and 2 magnitude. That's a fail. She purses her lips, but doesn't give up yet.

Next, it's Elim's action. Elim has secrets—as well as being a physician, he's also very stealthy and knows how to use a knife. For him, his oath to protect the children of Shirad from harm also includes taking out threats to them using violence, so he tries to sneak up to the King to attack him from the shadows. He's rolling DEX 2 + Stealth 3, so 5/2. He rolls 4, 4, 3, 3, and 5 on his dragon die, for a total result of 9 and 3 magnitude. Al-Rawi says this is an opposed roll of Khawani's INT 4 + Notice 0, so that's 4/4. She rolls 6, 6, 4, 1, which is a total result of 17, which a magnitude of 0—barely successful, as are all unskilled rolls, but enough to spot Elim's attempt at stealth. Aware that he's been spotted, Elim decides to move 2 paces (equal to his DEX), which places him 8 paces from the king.

Assabi moves next. Knowing he's too far to have much success with his magic, he makes a double move of 4 paces, ending up 6 paces from the king. He's closing range, planning to use magic the next round.

Next up is Wafik, who's riding his saurian *abzul* straight into the throne room! He's still 10 paces away, so he draws his Jazirati recurved bow and shoots at the king. This takes up both his actions for the round. He's rolling DEX 4 + Fighting 4, so 8/4, against the Passive Defence of King Khawani, which is 10. Wafik rolls 6, 5, 3, 2, 2, 1, and 5 on his dragon die, which gives a result of 21 and a magnitude of 3. That's a hit! Wafik's damage of 10 points is increased by the 3 magnitude, for a total of 13. Khawani's Soak is 6, +3 for the armour value of his light armour,

meaning that 4 damage gets through. Khawani's Hit Points are reduced from 30 to 26. First blood!

Next it's Carmen's turn. She readies her Aragonian whip. That has a range of no more than 3 paces, so she needs to get closer: she spends both her actions on a double move, closing by 8 paces to end up only 2 paces from the king.

Now at last it's time for King Khawani to act. Suddenly aware that his Throne Room has been invaded by attackers, he hurls an Immobilise spell. He's rolling INT 4 + Sacred Word 6 (he's a powerful sorcerer!), so rolling 10/4. He rolls 6, 6, 5, 5, 4, 3, 3, 2, 1, 1. That gives him a result of 22, and a magnitude of 5! Looking at Table 13: Magical Effect Parameters, Al-Rawi decides to spend 2 points of magnitude on giving the Immobilise spell a range of 10 paces, another 2 points on allowing it to target 5 individuals (all the Dragon-Marked heroes!), and 1 magnitude to extend the spell's duration to a full 1 round.

All the PCs targeted by the spell have to resist, using their INT + Willpower against a huge difficulty of 22. Everyone except Assabi fails: however, Assabi rolls 6/4 and gets 23/2, a success! Of all the PCs, he's the only one who isn't rooted to the spot by Khawani's sorcery!

Finally, as the last action in round 1, Ampharool the djinn acts. Now, even though the PCs are effectively on Ampharool's side, wanting to prevent Khawani from imprisoning him in the Lamp of Holding, the djinn is under the influence of a "Protect Me!" Command spell cast by Khawani. Because of that, he's bound to attack the PCs, to protect Khawani from their attacks!

Al-Rawi decides that Ampharool is going to use his special "Lightning" ability to damage the Dragon-Marked. It's a no-nonsense sorcerous attack. Ampharool is rolling INT 4 + Sacred Word 6, so 10/4. He also gets one dragon die. He rolls 6, 6, 6, 5, 3, 2, 2, 1, and 4 on the dragon die, for a result of 23 and a magnitude of 5. A massive bolt of lightning arcs from the djinn's outstretched hands!

Al-Rawi needs to spend 2 points of magnitude to give the Lightning Bolt a range of 10 paces. She decides that she's going to try for fewer targets and more damage rather than the other way round, so spends 1 magnitude to target 2 of the PCs, and 2 magnitude on doing 20HP damage to them! She decides Ampharool will select immobilised targets, so excludes Assabi, and rolls randomly to determine that the Lightning Bolt is aimed at Carmen de la Mancha and Elim the Physician. Normally they'd roll Active Defence to get out of the way (probably rolling DEX + Athletics to dodge rather than DEX + Fighting, which implies parrying), but in this case the attack is against their Passive Defence of 14 for Carmen and 13 for Elim as they can't dodge. The Lightning Bolt strikes both of them, inflicting 20HP damage!

Carmen has a Soak of 5 and is wearing 3 points of light leather armour, so she takes 12 points of damage off her Hit Points, which drop from 20 to 8. That would be a major wound, but Carmen spends 1 point of Heroism (going from 3 to 2) to avoid that. Elim has a Soak of 5 and isn't wearing any armour; he takes a massive 15 points of damage, reducing his Hit Points from 20 to 5. Again, he spends a point of Heroism to avoid taking a major wound.

That's the end of the first round! On the positive side, the PCs now know what magic is affecting Ampharool, and also how dif-

ficult it will be to dispel; and they've also damaged Khawani, so maybe that's where they should focus their actions next round. However, Khawani and Ampharool are truly daunting opponents – this is the climactic scene of the adventure, after all – and all but one of the PCs are currently rooted to the spot by sorcery, and two PCs have suffered major damage, all in the first round!

## Round 2

At the start of the second round, Al-Rawi asks for initiative rolls again. This time she also rolls for Ampharool and Khawani, and also this time Maximum Initiative becomes a limiting factor for a lot of the PCs, who roll high but end up being restricted to their Max Init level. Initiative ends up as follows:

- 5 – Ampharool the Djinn (DEX 4)
- 4 – King Khawani (DEX 4)
- 3 – Carmen de la Mancha (DEX 4)
- 3 – Princess Karima (DEX 4)
- 3 – Elim the Physician (DEX 2)
- 3 – Assabi the Trader (DEX 2)
- 1 – Wafik the Protector (DEX 4)

That's quite a turnaround!

So, to begin with, Ampharool the Djinn is still under the influence of Khawani's Command spell, meaning he's going to attack the PCs to protect Khawani. Al-Rawi decides this time to use Ampharool's "Immolation" special ability, sending a sheet of flame coursing through the Throne Room! As before, Ampharool's rolling INT 4 + Sacred Word 6, so 10/4, including 1 dragon die. He rolls 6, 4, 4, 3, 3, 3, 2, 2, 1, and 6 on the dragon die! He re-rolls the dragon die, producing an extra 2. That means the dragon die counts as a single die with a score of 8! Ampharool's result is therefore 22 (8+6+4+4), and his magnitude is 5.

The djinn spends 2 magnitude for a range of 10 paces, and another 2 magnitude to affect 5 targets – all the PCs! He puts the final magnitude into damage, doing 10HP damage.

Now, if this was a "normal" sheet of flame (say, Greek fire, lava, or an explosion), then the PCs would have to roll DEX + Athletics to dodge, and as they're currently immobilised they wouldn't be able to. However, this is magical fire, targeted directly at the PCs, and so the rules say that each target gets an INT + Willpower roll to resist. In any case, it's largely academic: Ampharool's result was a staggering 22, and none of the PCs manage to resist (Assabi comes closest with an 18).

That means everyone can only rely on their natural resistance to damage to help them, plus any armour they're wearing. That's Soak + Armour Value. In most cases that means the PCs just sustain a couple of points of damage, except for Elim who, unarmoured, can only use his Soak of 5. He takes 5 Hit Points damage, reducing him to zero! He collapses to the ground, unconscious and out of action!

Next up is Khawani. Now, Al-Rawi knows that if the king successfully binds Ampharool into the lamp, then the scene will end as the PCs are unsuccessful in their goal. It's a defeat condition. Also,

Khawani clearly doesn't want the PCs freeing Ampharool from the Immobilise spell! So she has Khawani continue to cast Drain Will on Ampharool. This is a roll of 10/4 against Ampharool's INT 4 + Willpower 3 (reduced already from 6 by previous castings). Khawani rolls 23/5 against Ampharool's 18/1, succeeding with 5 magnitude. He spends 1 magnitude for a range of 5 paces, 2 magnitude for a duration of 1 minute (5 rounds), and 2 magnitude for a skill reduction of -2, applied to Willpower. Ampharool's Willpower drops to 1 – another attack like that, and Khawani will be able to force him into the lamp!

Finally it's the PCs' turns. First up is Carmen de la Mancha. Although she's immobilised by Khawani's sorcery, she finished her last action only 2 paces from the king, close enough to attack – so she does so, using her Aragonian whip! She's rolling 7/4 (DEX 4 + Fighting 3). Khawani is making an Active Defence, costing him his remaining action that round, with 8/4. Carmen rolls 6, 3, 3, 2, 2, 1, 1, and 5 on her dragon die, for a result of 17 with 2 magnitude, against the King's 15 Active Defence. That's a success! She does 9 damage (7 damage for the whip, +2 for the magnitude), but unfortunately all of that gets absorbed by Khawani's 6 Soak and 3 points of light armour!

Desperate, Carmen notes that she rolled three sets of doubles on her roll – none of them enough to light up a constellation and let her use her level 1 path ability from the Duellists of San Llorente de Valladon. So, she decides to spend one star of her Loyalty heroic virtue to make up one of those missing dice (she needs at least 3 dice with the same score to light up a constellation). Her Loyalty of 4 (0 stars) now drops to 3 (5 stars), and she lights up the constellation, activating her path ability!

Looking at her character sheet, we see this lets her make an immediate second attack with her second weapon, her Espada Valladena, a longsword with a basket guard. That happens right now: she rolls 7/4 for the attack, getting a result of 18 and 3 magnitude. King Khawani has used up all his actions for this round, so Carmen is attacking against his Passive Defence of 10: the attack succeeds, doing 12 damage (9 + 3 magnitude). As before Khawani absorbs 9 points, and his Hit Points drop by 3 points to 23!

Now it's Princess Karima's turn. She's concentrating on trying to free Ampharool again, reasoning that if she frees him he'll probably use his powers to disappear (she doesn't know about the "Protect Me!" Command spell, remember). She's rolling 5/3 against a huge difficulty of 18. She rolls 5, 5, 3, 2, and 6 on her dragon die! She re-rolls the dragon die – and it's another 6! She re-rolls again, this time for a 1. That's a total of 13 on the dragon die, meaning  $13 + 5 + 5 =$  a result of 23! She has 2 magnitude: she can just reach Ampharool with a range of 10 paces, costing 2 magnitude. The spell takes effect, but will only have a duration of 1 action (meaning the Immobilise spell will reassert itself afterwards until its own duration is reached). Karima is hoping it'll be enough for the djinn to escape!

Now the horrible truth dawns: the djinn advances on her menacingly, closing by 4 paces and protecting the King. Karima realises the djinn is under some kind of compulsion—probably another magical spell. She wants to try casting a Create Amity spell on Ampharool, but can only cast 1 spell (or make 1 attack) per round. Failing that,

she'd like to make a move action, but is still under the influence of the King's Immobilise spell, so can't even do that! She watches in terror as Ampharool is now only 6 paces from her...

Normally Elim would act at this point, but he's already out of combat, unconscious after suffering the effects of Ampharool's Immolation spell. So we move on to Assabi, who makes a move action, advancing 2 paces, placing him 4 paces from the King. He casts a Transform Water to Sand spell, targeting the water in Khawani's tears! It's an action of desperation – he doesn't have the "Person" element, so needs to improvise it, which increases the spell's difficulty by +6. In this case, because the spell is being targeted at the King, Khawani will have his resistance roll result increased by 6. That's hard!

Assabi is rolling INT 4 + Sacred Word 2 (6/4), against Khawani's INT 4 + Willpower 2 (6/4). Assabi rolls 6, 6, 5, 2, 2, and 6 on his dragon die! He re-rolls the dragon die, for another 5! That's a total result of 28, with a magnitude of 2! Khawani rolls 16 for his resistance, and increases that by +6 because Assabi is improvising the spell. Even then, with a 22 resistance, Assabi has succeeded – the King cries out as the water in his eyes turns to sand! Ouch!

Assabi spends 1 magnitude for a range of 5 paces (to the King), and 1 magnitude for 10HP damage. Armour doesn't protect against this, so Khawani's Soak of 6 reduces the damage to 4HP, and his Hit Points drop from 23 to 19. The spell will only last 1 action, so the King will soon be able to see again – note that Assabi could have opted to cause no damage and instead blind the King for a whole round of combat.

Finally, for the last action in the round, it's Wafik! He sees things are getting desperate, and has an idea. Chris, his player, asks Al-Rawi if he can try and throw his Rumh spear at the King. Now, the Rumh is less like a javelin and more like a halberd, so it's not immediately obvious this will work. After a bit of discussion, Chris and Al-Rawi decide this is a Swagger – Wafik is reducing his chance of success, but if it works it'll be spectacular!

So, normally Wafik would be rolling DEX 4 + Fighting 4 for his Rumh spear attack, so 8/4. With a Swagger, he moves at least 1 die from his result dice to his magnitude dice, which means he's still rolling 8D6 but only counting 3 of them towards his result. Khawani has no actions left, so he's defending with his Passive Defence of 10. Wafik could Swagger with up to 3 dice (equal to his Heroism score), but he likes the odds with just 1 Swagger Die. He rolls 6, 6, 3, 2, 1, 1, 1, and 1 on his dragon die.

Without the Swagger, that would have been a result of 17 and 0 magnitude. With the Swagger, normally that would be a result of 15 and a magnitude of 1. However, because that final 1 is on a dragon die, Wafik doesn't have to include it in his magnitude, but can choose to include it in his result. His result therefore becomes 6, 6, 1, for 13, which is more than Khawani's Passive Defence of 10, and therefore a hit. His magnitude is then figured on 3, 2, 1, 1, and 1, which is a magnitude of 2. That's good tactics!

Also – yes, with all those rolls of 1, Wafik has lit up a constellation, activating his path ability for the Walad Badiya. In combat, this means he can add his abzul's STR to the damage he does on a successful attack! This takes a bit of explanation: Chris describes how the abzul rears up, then plunges just as Wafik hurls his *rumh*

spear at the King, boosting its speed and damage. It's a jazzy-looking stunt, just what you'd expect from a Swagger which lights up a constellation, and Al-Rawi agrees.

That means Wafik does 11 damage for his *rumb* spear, +2 for his magnitude, +8 for his abzul's STR bonus – a total of 21 points of damage! Khawani's Soak and armour reduces that by 9, but that's still a massive 12 damage, reducing the King's Hit Points from 19 to 7! The King cries out, still partly blinded, as the spear strikes him a vicious slash across his front!

That's the end of the second round. The King's Immobilise spell is coming to an end, Eloim is down and out, everyone's damaged, and Ampharool is bearing down on Princess Karima, his willpower almost reduced to zero and ready to be bound into the lamp. But the King is badly hurt, and everything depends on what happens in the next round!

## Round 3

This round will probably be the decider!

Al-Rawi asks for initiative. Here's what happens:

- 4 – Ampharool the Djinn (DEX 4)
- 4 – King Khawani (DEX 4)
- 4 – Wafik the Protector (DEX 4)
- 3 – Carmen de la Mancha (DEX 4)
- 3 – Princess Karima (DEX 4)
- (3 – Elim the Doctor (DEX 2), unconscious so unable to act)
- 2 – Assabi the Trader (DEX 2)

At this point, it's worth noting just how crucial initiative is in *Capharnaum*. Wafik, King Khawani, and Ampharool the Djinn are all tied for first place, and who acts first in this round is probably going to make all the difference. As the rules on page 13 indicate, ties in initiative are resolved in descending order of DEX; ties in DEX are resolved by opposed rolls of DEX.

That means we're making three DEX rolls, for Ampharool, the King, and Wafik. These are attribute rolls, where you roll dice equal to your attribute score plus your Heroism score, and keep a number (your result dice) equal to your attribute score. For Ampharool and Khawani, we use Legend instead of Heroism—it's the "monstrous" version of Heroism. So we're rolling 7/4 for both Wafik and King Khawani, and 10/4 for Ampharool. Wafik and Ampharool each have a Dragon Die. The results are as follows:

Ampharool: 6, 4, 4, 3, 3, 3, 1, 1, 1, and 3 on the Dragon Die, for a result of 17.

Khawani: 5, 4, 4, 3, 3, 2, 1, for a result of 16.

Wafik: 4, 4, 3, 3, 3, 1, and 6 on the dragon die, exploding with a 2 (so 8), for a result of 19 (8+4+4+3).

No pressure, Wafik!

Khawani's Immobilise spell has now worn off, so Wafik and his abzul steed can move again. Unfortunately, Wafik has very few options if he wants to damage the King this round: it would take at least one action to ready his *shimsbir* long scimitar or his Jazirati

recurring bow; and at least another action to cover the distance between him and the King, even if he's reckless (see below), or two actions to notch and loose an arrow.

He does have one option: he can use his abzul to attack. If he runs headlong towards the King, being reckless and not trying to defend himself, then he can cover a distance equal to his abzul's DEX x 2. That's 8 paces, enough to get to melee distance. However, he still won't have any weapon in hand. Happily, his abzul doesn't need a weapon: it has massive teeth, and a bite attack of 8/4 and +18 damage. That's the ticket!

Khawani is going to see this coming, of course, and will try an Active Defence of 8/4. The only advantage is that Wafik has a dragon die. As the stakes are so high, he's not going to try Swaggering: if he succeeds in his attack, that should be enough!

Wafik rolls 6, 6, 4, 3, 3, 2, 2, and 6 on the dragon die! This explodes with another +5, for a total of 11. Wafik has a final result of 27 (11+6+6+4) plus 4 magnitude for his abzul's bite!

Al-Rawi knows there's no point rolling for Khawani's Active Defence: he has no dragon dice, so his best roll is going to be 24. The abzul snatches the King in its massive draconic jaws and chomps down, hard! That's 18 points of damage, +4 for the magnitude, so 22! Even with his 6 Soak and 3 armour, that's still 13 damage, far more than the 7 Hit Points he has left.

Wafik's player wants to try to use the Epitaph rule to finish off the King good and proper. "And so perish all betrayers of the sacred oaths of friendship and allegiance!" he cries. Al-Rawi allows this, and, with a scream of terror, King Khawani dies.

Now, nominally, it's Ampharool's turn to act. Even with the dead king's Immobilise and Command spells still in effect (at least for the time being...), Ampharool no longer has a king to protect. The djinn suddenly stops summoning the lightning bolt he was about to hurl at Princess Karima, and stares at the Dragon-Marked heroes in disbelief.

Al-Rawi describes Princess Shahira, the King's daughter, running into the throne room with the palace guard. "Forgive my father, mighty Ampharool!" she cries. "My family still honours our sacred bond, please protect our city!"

Assabi bends down next to the wounded Elim. "Physician," he whispers, "do you remember how to heal yourself?"

That's it! If you're reading *The Tears of Ampharool*, you'll know that this is one of the victory conditions for the adventure: the Dragon-Marked PCs have prevented Khawani from betraying his oath and binding Ampharool into the Lamp of Holding, so the Agalanthians never destroyed the city and his dynasty. As the mirage of the palace disappears around them, they find themselves with their caravan in an oasis of peaceful slumbering ruins, of a city that had its heyday then passed away gently, with many memories of riches and happiness. In their hands, each Dragon-Marked bears a magical diamond – the tears of Ampharool!

Remember – you can play through this whole adventure yourself in the adventure on page 23. How will your Dragon-Marked heroes fare against the Sorcerer King?

# CAPHARNAÛM

The Tales of the Dragon-Marked

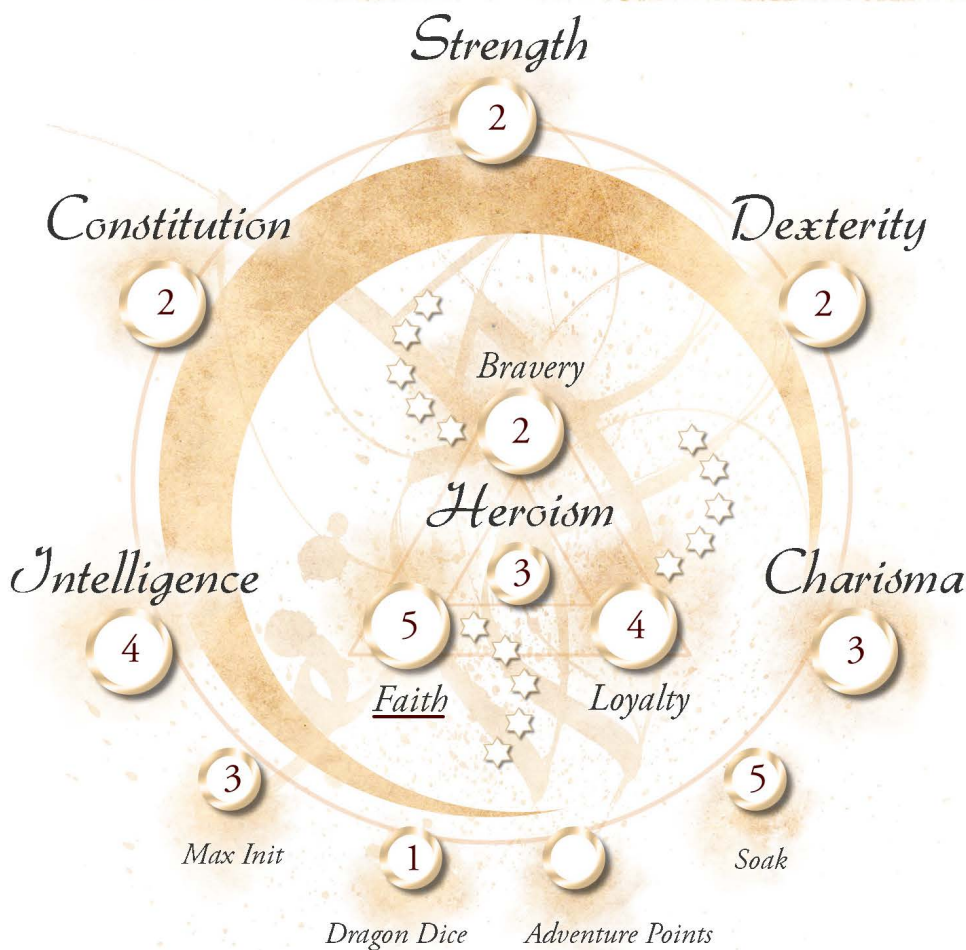
Name **Assabi the Trader**

Dath **The Saffron Dunes**

Blood **Saabi - The Clan of Yussef, Tribe of the Salifah / Ibn Yussef Abd-Al-Salif**

Status **Al-Kimyat and Master Trader**

Occupation **Caravan Chief**



## Passive Defence

10

First Weapon **Shimshir Long Scimitar 3/2 +10** Damage

Second Weapon **Jazirati Recurved Bow 3/2 +9** Damage

Third Weapon  Damage

## Armour

Light (AV3)

## Hit Points

20

### The Adventurer

Athletics **2**

Riding **2**

Storytelling\* **1**

Survival **2**

### The Poet

Acting

Music

Oratory\* **1**

Poetry

### The Rogue

Assassination **1**

Intrusion

Stealth **1**

Thievery

### The Sorcerer

Prayer **2**

Sacred Word **2**

Sacrifice **2**

Willpower\* **2**

### The Labourer

Agriculture:

Craft

Endurance\* **3**

Solidarity

### The Prince

Elegance **3**

Flattery\* **5**

Save Face **4**

Unctuous Bargaining **5**

### The Sage

History & Peoples **2**

Instruction **2**

Notice **3**

Science **2**

### The Warrior

Command **1**

Fighting **1**

Intimidate\* **1**

Training **1**

# Path Abilities

## The Saffron Dunes

### The Path of Yussef Abd-Al-Salif

Level 1

When Assabi lights up a constellation on an Unctuous Bargaining roll to sell anything (food, jewels, palaces...), he increases the price he gets by 50%, or lowers the price by 50% when buying something.

Level 1

# Magic

## Sacred Word

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|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Create                | Transform                        | Destroy               |

| Element | Type | Element  | Type |
|---------|------|----------|------|
| Bread   |      | Semolina |      |
| Sand    |      | Water    |      |

Assabi often creates food and water in the desert. In the past he's even tried to turn the tears of foes to sand.... Ouch!

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# Personal Legend

Of distant Abd-Al-Tarek origins, Assabi's parents were killed by raiders. He was raised by his uncle, an important member of the Saffron Dunes, and was a courtier in Jergath the Great, where he was the spy for a rich merchant. His Dragon Mark shines with a dim bluish aura.

### Background

Taken in by his uncle after the death of his parents, Assabi has flourished as the second-in-command of his uncle's caravan ever since he was fifteen. Since that time he has taken care of the family business and has travelled widely. Now in his forties, Assabi is not cut out for combat, although he does know how to defend himself. However, he does know how to use his good looks and his quick wit to get into his travelling companions' good graces and gain a loyalty not completely dependent on the salary he promises them upon arrival. He has also convinced a young Shiradi physician to accompany the caravan.

He always travels with his lute, which he plays in the evenings beside the fire, or when he needs to enter a trance to cast a spell.

# Character Portrait



# Equipment

Assabi owns a house in Jergath the Great and lands just outside Carrasine. He has a harem of 5 devoted lovers, and owns 11 camels and 4 slaves.

### Style

The al-kimyati of the Saffron Dunes dress richly and with many jewels, and Assabi is no exception. He wears the gold signet ring of his path, which bears the representation of a dune, and by which everyone can identify him as a member and decide whether or not to do business with him.

Wealth Level



Money

1500 ounces of cumin

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# Path Abilities

## The Sacred Heart of Shirad

### Salonim Path

Level 1

Whenever Elim lights up a constellation on a Science roll to operate on a wounded person, diagnose a disease, or heal anyone, he adds his Loyalty score to the result.

Level 1

# Magic

## Sacred Word



Create



Transform



Destroy

Element

Type

Element

Type

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# Personal Legend

Of distant Shiratim origins, Elim spent part of his childhood serving as an appointed servant of a sage of the Sacred Heart of Shirad. He once took place in a famous horse race while employed at the temple, and his fast talking once saved a village from being massacred.

A strange figure, a desert dweller dressed in black, whose veil-hidden face looks like it is made of silver, follows Elim. Elim feels somehow that the figure is linked to him.

Elim is one of the Salonim, reputed physicians who take the Oath of Salone, a sacred bond to heal the children of Shirad and protect them from all ills.

### Background

A son of a famous Shiradi physician, Elim Bar Sibias decided to make a name for himself. After practising with his father to prove himself, he joined a caravan to practice far from his father's influence and meet physicians from all over the world to increase his knowledge. Now about thirty years old, he's tall and thin, with bright, intelligent eyes and a confident manner which immediately reassures his patients.

Secretly, however, Elim has come to realise there is another side to his calling. From time to time, when necessary, he has also killed those who would threaten those in his charge. He is finding he has a gift for this, and considers it to be necessary work. He knows how to make the deaths look natural, and is able to use his Science skill in place of either Fighting or Assassination as long as his targets are unaware of his attack.

# Character Portrait



# Equipment

Elim owns three sets of city clothing, a *khanjar* (a dagger with an undulating blade), 10 books and scrolls on a variety of subjects (you can choose during play), a calligraphy kit, an astronomical orientation kit, and a medical kit. He has rooms in the university of Carrassine where he practices his craft - both aspects...

### Style

Like all the physicians of the Sacred Heart of Shirad, Elim has a tattoo on his chest, just over his heart, depicting the sun of knowledge. It's symbolic rather than religious - it doesn't mean he worships the sun, and certainly doesn't represent the god Shirad, as Shiradi dogma forbids any representation of the god.

Wealth Level



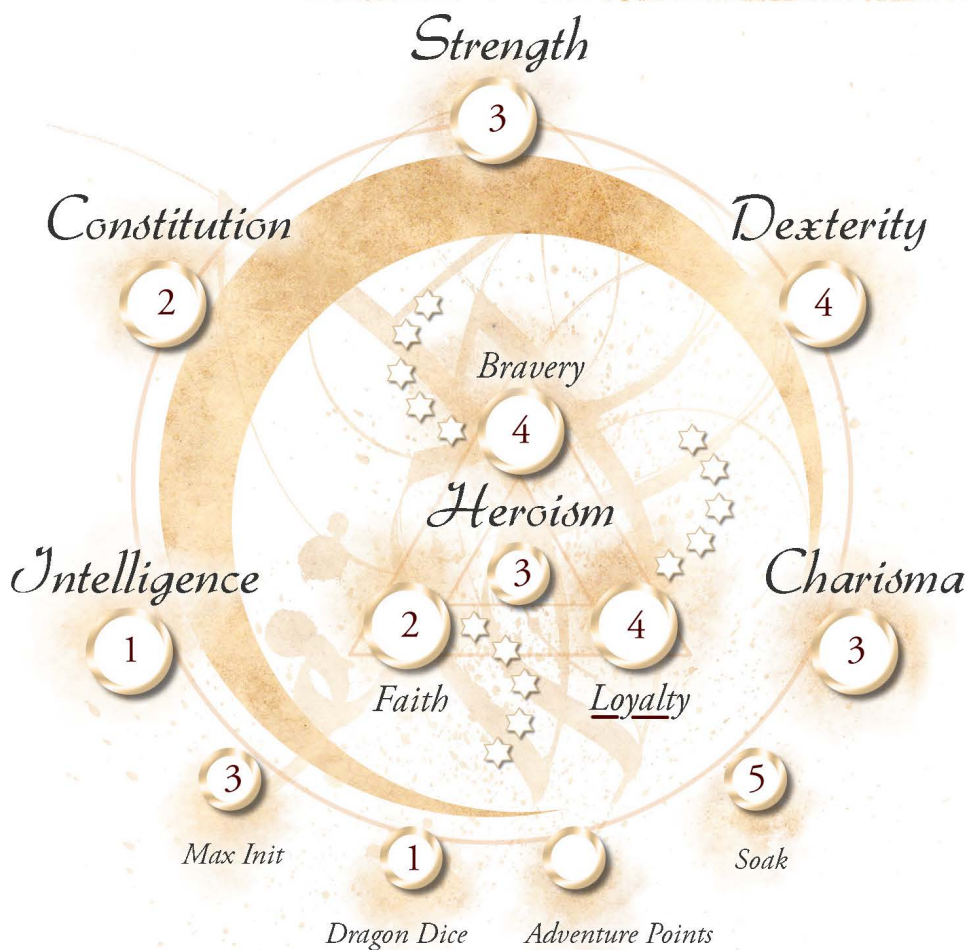
Money

100 ounces of cumin

# CAPHARNAÛM

The Tales of the Dragon-Marked

Name Carmen de la Mancha Path Duellists of San Llorente de Valladon  
 Blood Aragon  
 Status Adventurer (Campeador) Occupation Traveller



## Passive Defence

14

First Weapon Damage

Aragonian Whip 7/4 +7

Second Weapon Damage

Espada Valladena 7/4 +9

Third Weapon Damage

## Armour

Light Leather (AV3)

## Hit Points

20

### The Adventurer

Athletics 4  
 Riding 5  
 Storytelling\* 4  
 Survival 3

### The Poet

Acting 1  
 Music 1  
 Oratory\* 2  
 Poetry 1

### The Rogue

Assassination 1  
 Intrusion 1  
 Stealth 2  
 Thievery 1

### The Sorcerer

Prayer 1  
 Sacred Word 1  
 Sacrifice 1  
 Willpower\* 1

### The Labourer

Agriculture: 2  
 Craft 1  
 Endurance\* 1  
 Solidarity 1

### The Prince

Elegance 3  
 Flattery\* 2  
 Save Face 1  
 Unctuous Bargaining 2

### The Sage

History & Peoples 1  
 Instruction 1  
 Notice 2  
 Science 1

### The Warrior

Command 2  
 Fighting 3  
 Intimidate\* 2  
 Training 2

# Path Abilities

## The Duellists of San Llorente de Valladon

### Aragonian Academy

#### Level 1

If Carmen lights up a constellation when attacking with her Aragonian whip, she may make a free attack with her Espada Valladena (or any other weapon she's using), whether it's already drawn or not (ie drawing the weapon is part of the free action). The free attack is resolved in the same action as the whip attack. If she's not in range to make the second attack, the movement to close to range is included in the same action too. If the target isn't even in range of the whip attack (about 3 paces or 15 feet), then this ability can't be activated.

Level 1

# Magic

## Sacred Word



Create



Transform



Destroy

Element

Type

Element

Type

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# Personal Legend

Of distant Occidentian and Orkadian origins, Carmen belongs to a Dragon-Marked bloodline; six centuries ago, an ancestor defeated a Duke of Hell in single combat. After leaving home, Carmen crossed the desert with strangers who became friends. She escaped from a terrible prison, and took service with a Sagradan lord. Since then she has travelled a great deal, and has had numerous occupations.

Carmen is used to arid country, rocky mountains and great journeys on horseback. As pious as she is brave and proud, she's from a line of horse tamers and riders, appreciating galloping to war as much as the noisy family gatherings of Aragon, where wine flows into the night, and wives and sisters abandon themselves to the dance of the Gitanilla.

### Background

Born of the Aragonian nobility of the sword, Carmen has a provocateur's soul, far from the stereotype of the women of her land. This caused her problems in her homeland, leading her to depart for Jazirat. Well, that's where the first ship she could get on was bound for, at least...

Selling her skills according to her mood and purse, Carmen is starting to like Jazirat, its exoticism and culture of a thousand influences. She flirts with the idea of writing an epic novel where she's the hero, adventuring in hostile deserts, encountering sabretooths, winning duels with famous Saabi swordsmen. She travels through Jazirat, noting and drawing anything that might be useful for when she writes.

In her early thirties, Carmen is prim and perfumed, even after a fortnight in the desert. The tear tattooed under her left eye adds to her mystique. She joined the caravan to replenish her purse and return to Carrassine, where certain Agalanthians will pay dearly for her company.

# Character Portrait



# Equipment

Carmen wears city attire and rides on horseback.

### Style

The Duellists of San Llorente de Valladon often wear theatre masks of a crying face. Otherwise they bear a tattoo or drawing of a tear beneath their left eye - the side of the heart, symbol of sincerity.

Wealth Level



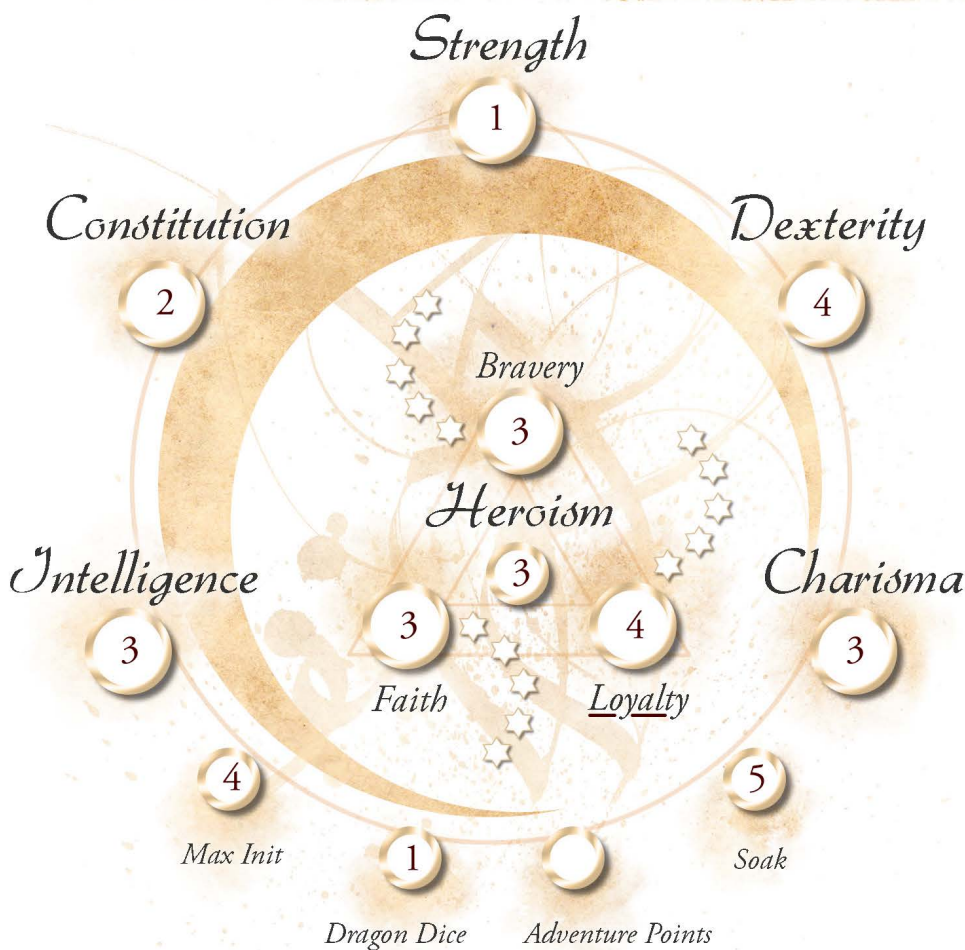
Money

100 ounces of cumin

# CAPHARNAÛM

The Tales of the Dragon-Marked

Name Princess Karima Path The Children of the Souk  
 Blood Saabi - The Clan of Aziz, Tribe of the Salifah / Bint Aziz Abd-Al-Salif  
 Status Al-Kimyat and Princess Occupation Princess



## Passive Defence

12

First Weapon Damage

Dagger of Might 7/4 +8

Second Weapon Damage

Third Weapon Damage

## Armour

Light Leather (AV3)

## Hit Points

20

### The Adventurer

Athletics 2  
 Riding 2  
 Storytelling\* 1  
 Survival 2

### The Poet

Acting 2  
 Music 3  
 Oratory\* 2  
 Poetry 2

### The Rogue

Assassination 1  
 Intrusion 1  
 Stealth 1  
 Thievery 2

### The Sorcerer

Prayer 2  
 Sacred Word 2  
 Sacrifice 1  
 Willpower\* 2

### The Labourer

Agriculture:       
 Craft       
 Endurance\* 2  
 Solidarity     

### The Prince

Elegance 4  
 Flattery\* 4  
 Save Face 3  
 Unctuous Bargaining 5

### The Sage

History & Peoples 2  
 Instruction 1  
 Notice 2  
 Science 1

### The Warrior

Command       
 Fighting 2  
 Intimidate\*       
 Training

# Path Abilities

## The Children of the Souk The Path of Aziz Abd-Al-Salif

**Level 1**  
Whenever Karima plans a robbery, ambush, or other risky and secret (but not necessarily illegal) operation in urban territory (including freeing a hostage, relieving a Prince of Thieves from his goods, etc), she may make a difficulty 9 INT + Thievery roll. If she lights up a constellation, over the next half-day she finds a number of henchmen equal to her CHA x Loyalty. These are reliable, only asking for a bit of the loot from the operation (Al-Rawi's choice).

Level

# Magic

## Sacred Word

Create

Transform

Destroy

| Element  | Type | Element       | Type |
|----------|------|---------------|------|
| Alacrity |      | Communication |      |
| Amity    |      | Peace         |      |

Karima often uses magic to calm people down. She can Create Communication to allow one person to understand or two or more people to communicate without a shared language. She can use Create Alacrity to make people zealous, enthusiastic, or just quicker on their feet.

# Personal Legend

Of distant Abd-Al-Tarek origins, Karima lived among Bedouins for many months. She used to take part in athletics competitions in Carrassine, and also assisted a historian there in composing an encyclopaedic treatise. Whenever she uses magic, she hears the muses whispering advice.

If it wasn't bound by a certain code of honour, her Clan of Aziz would bring out the worst in people. It's divided into two parts: the first took part in the founding of Carrassine and specialises in the hiring out of mercenaries; the second is its shady counterpart, Princes of Thieves behind most of the illegal activities in Jazirat, including organised crime, kidnapping, and the slave trade to the Agalanthians.

### Background

Karima is the daughter of a prince of the Salifah Ruling a fertile oasis too close to Jergath the Great to grant any real power, her father leads a rich but peaceful existence which once suited Karima perfectly, dreaming as she did of a contemplative life studying magic. She has a singing voice as clear as crystal, capable of calming people even without magic.

Unfortunately, court intrigue has reached her oasis, and Karima finds herself betrothed to a stranger - not unusual in Kh'saaba, although not the rule. Her clan was doubtless looking for some insignificant princess to marry off for political reasons...

Karima is to travel to Carrassine with the caravan of Assabi the Trader, escorted by the bodyguard sent by her future husband, the rich merchant Habibi Ibn Aziz Abd-Al-Salif. Her bodyguard rides an abzul, a great dragon-like reptilian, and is one of the fierce dark-skinned warrior for the Ibn Khalil. Her future husband is paying her a compliment by sending such an elite guard, who normally guard only Hassanid royalty...

# Character Portrait



# Equipment

Princess Karima is travelling with three sets of city clothing. She also possesses a magical Dagger of Might, forged by the expert artepharatom, which gives her a bonus die on appropriate dice rolls (already included above). The dagger is also highly resistant, and takes twice as long as normal to become blunt.

### Style

The Children of the Souk have no particular identifying style, but prefer dark clothes and a veil hiding the hair and cheeks but not the face.

Karima is a young lady just under twenty years old, petite and beautiful. She rides a dromedary and is accompanied by servants in charge of arrangements for her journey.

Wealth Level

Money

# CAPHARNAÛM

The Tales of the Dragon-Marked

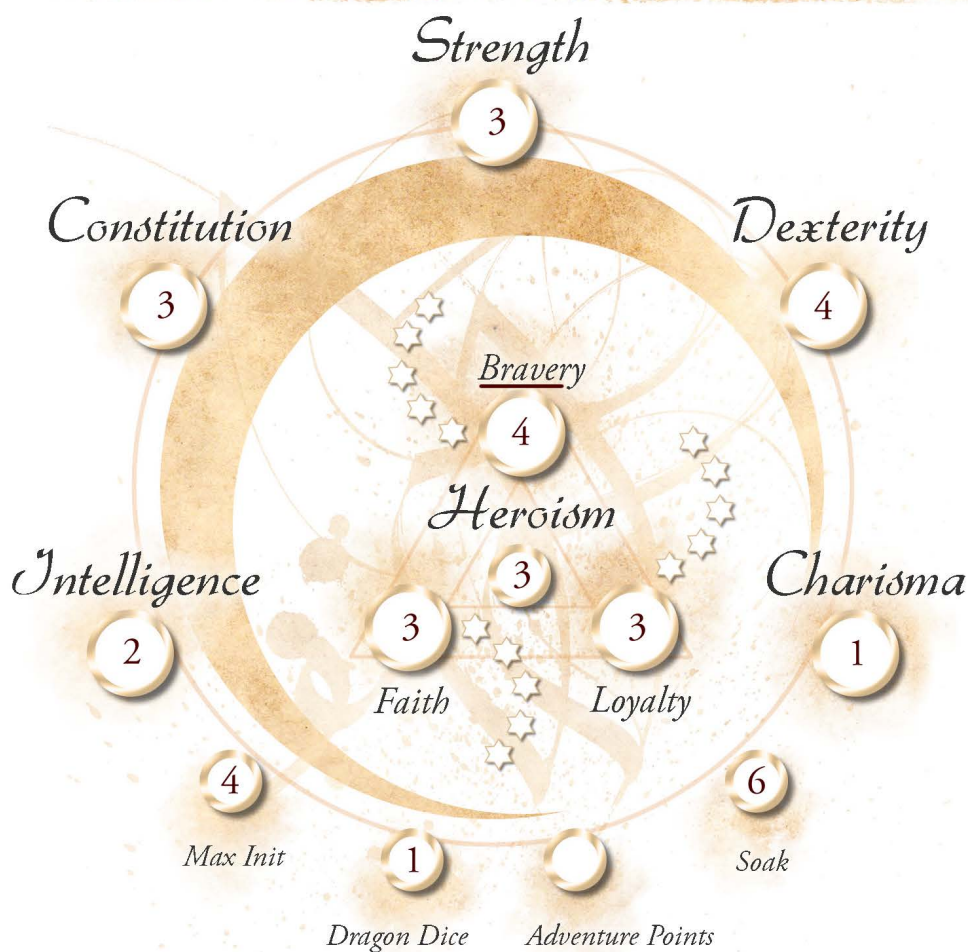
Name **Wafik the Protector**

Dath **The Walad Badiya**

Blood **Saabi - The Clan of Khalil, Tribe of the Salifah / Ibn Khalil Abd-Al-Salif**

Status **Mujahid and Explorer**

Occupation **Bodyguard**



## Passive Defence

13

First Weapon                      Damage

Rumh Spear 8/4 +11

Second Weapon                      Damage

Shimshir Long Scimitar 8/4+11

Third Weapon                      Damage

Jazirati Recurved Bow 8/4 +10

## Armour

Light Leather (AV3)

## Hit Points

30

### The Adventurer

Athletics **3**  
Riding **4**  
Storytelling\* **3**  
Survival **4**

### The Poet

Acting **1**  
Music **2**  
Oratory\* **1**  
Poetry **1**

### The Rogue

Assassination **1**  
Intrusion **1**  
Stealth **1**  
Thievery **1**

### The Sorcerer

Prayer **2**  
Sacred Word **1**  
Sacrifice **1**  
Willpower\* **3**

### The Labourer

Agriculture: **1**  
Craft **1**  
Endurance\* **3**  
Solidarity **1**

### The Prince

Elegance **1**  
Flattery\* **1**  
Save Face **2**  
Unctuous Bargaining **3**

### The Sage

History & Peoples **1**  
Instruction **1**  
Notice **2**  
Science **1**

### The Warrior

Command **3**  
Fighting **4**  
Intimidate\* **3**  
Training **3**

# Path Abilities

## The Walad Badiya, the Children of the Desert

### The Path of Khalil, Servant of Salif

#### Level 1

In combat, Wafik and his abzul (see below) are one being - the Walad Badiya. Whenever he lights up a constellation when attacking or defending, he may:

- Add his abzul's STR to his damage when attacking, or double his magnitude vs Babouche-Druggers.
- Subtract his abzul's DEX from any damage taken when performing an Active Defence.

Level 1

# Magic

## Sacred Word

|                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Create                | Transform             | Destroy               |

| Element | Type | Element | Type |
|---------|------|---------|------|
|         |      |         |      |
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|         |      |         |      |
|         |      |         |      |
|         |      |         |      |

# Personal Legend

As a child, Wafik served a *kabini* priest in the city of Jergath the Great. On a dangerous journey in a famous troupe of wandering artists, he underwent a mystical experience. Now he feels a force flowing through him - whether from gods, demons, or djinn, he doesn't know - filling him with power.

## The Clan of Khalil, of the Salifah Tribe

Unusual for the Saabi, the Ibn Khalil are mostly of Alfariqani origin, and many have black or deep-tanned skin. They are famous for their fighters, who ride abzulim, small dragons as large as two oxen, who sell their services for exorbitant prices. Found at the coast and in Al-Fariqn, it's not rare to find one elsewhere: they're famous Saabi explorers, travelling far to East and West. They know otherworldly mysteries, and often seem aloof.

## Background

Wafik is one of the dark-skinned, half-Alfariqani Saabi, a tall young man in his early twenties, with a foreign hairstyle and his body covered with ritual scars. He rides one of the *abzulim*, large lizards which many say are degenerate dragons. Few know that riders and their abzulim share an empathic bond from birth, able to communicate images and sensations. They form the Walad Badiya - the Children of the Desert.

Visiting Al-Fariq'n after coming of age, Wafik befriended a merchant-smuggler, Habibi Ibn Aziz Abd-Al-Salif, and became his bodyguard. He travelled to Jergath to escort Habibi's betrothed, Princess Karima. Karima is unaware Habibi once met her at her father's oasis, where he was captivated by her singing. Ever since he has intrigued to obtain her hand. Habibi is genuinely smitten, while Karima considers the match a political arrangement.

# Character Portrait



# Equipment

As well as his weapons and armour, Wafik wears desert gear, and has a set of city clothing, comfortable shoes or sandals, a tent, twenty metres of rope, three large leather sacks, five torches, a portable incense burner, and a camel to carry it all.

## Style

Wafik lives, sleeps, and eats on the back of his abzul. He has symbolic tattoos on his face, shoulders and arms, which he believes reinforces his link with his saurian half.

## Wafik's Abzul

**STR:** 8    **Max Init:** 7  
**CON:** 7    **HP:** 70  
**DEX:** 4    **Soak:** 10  
**INT:** 2    **Passive Defence:** 11  
**CHA:** 1    **Legend:** 3

**Skills:** Athletics 4, Endurance 5, Fighting (Bite) 5.

**Attacks / Active Defences:** Bite 9/4 +18 damage, Body Bash auto +13 damage\*; -3 Active Defence due to large size.

**Armour:** Thick Skin (AV: 2).

\*All opponents within 2 paces of the abzul must make a difficulty 9 STR + Athletics roll per round to avoid Body Bash damage.

Wealth Level

Money

15 ounces of cumin

# INDEX

|   |        |
|---|--------|
| <b>A</b>  |        |
| Action Resolution.....  | 8      |
| Actions and Rounds .....  | 12     |
| Active and Passive Difficulties .....                                       | 11     |
| Advancement .....   | 22     |
| Agalanthians .....  | 7, 22  |
| “All or Nothing” Mzagic .....   | 20     |
| Al-Rawi .....   | 8      |
| Ampharool .....   | 29, 32 |
| The Ancient Arts .....  | 20     |
| Attacking at Range .....  | 14     |
| <b>B</b>  |        |
| Babouche-Draggers.....  | 16     |
| Battle Between the King and His Djinn .....                                 | 28     |
| Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice .....   | 9      |
| Broadly-defined Elements .....  | 20     |
| <b>C</b>  |        |
| Call to Adventure, The .....  | 25     |
| Capharnaum .....  | 7      |
| Champions .....   | 16     |
| Chiromancy .....  | 22     |
| Combat .....  | 12     |
| Combat Actions.....   | 13     |
| Constellations.....   | 9      |
| Costs of Magic, The.....  | 21     |
| Critical and Legendary Successes and Failures ...                           | 10     |
| Critical Success vs Critical Failure.....                                   | 14     |
| <b>D</b>  |        |
| Damage .....  | 14     |
| Death Does Not Become You.....  | 16     |
| Describing a Spell Effect .....   | 19     |
| Desert of Fire, The.....  | 6      |
| Detecting Magic .....   | 21     |
| Dice Rolls.....   | 11     |
| Difficulties .....  | 11     |
| Dispelling Magic .....  | 28     |
| Djinn’s Tears... ..   | 32     |
| Dragon’s Breath .....   | 9      |
| Dragon Dice.....  | 9      |
| Dragon-Marked.....  | 7, 26  |
| <b>E</b>  |        |
| Effects of Magic.....   | 19     |
| Epilogue: The Haunted Oasis .....   | 33     |
| Epitaph Rule, The.....  | 17     |
| <b>F</b>  |        |
| Failure.....  | 10     |
| Flying Carpet .....   | 31     |
| <b>G</b>  |        |
| Get Creative! .....   | 12     |
| Ghostly Visions .....   | 31     |
| Ghostly Warriors .....  | 25     |
| <b>H</b>  |        |
| Healing.....  | 18     |
| Health and Wounds .....   | 18     |
| Helping and Hindering.....  | 12     |
| Heroic Virtues .....  | 9      |
| Heroism .....   | 10     |
| Hit Points .....  | 18     |
| <b>I</b>  |        |
| Initiative .....  | 12, 13 |
| <b>J</b>  |        |
| Jazirat.....  | 7      |
| <b>K</b>  |        |
| Killing Khawani .....   | 28     |
| King Khawani .....  | 28     |
| <b>L</b>  |        |
| Legend Points .....   | 29     |
| Lost City of Ampharool, The: Accepting the<br>Call to Adventure .....       | 26     |
| <b>M</b>  |        |
| Magic and Sorcery .....   | 18     |
| Magical Analysis .....  | 30     |
| Magical Elements.....   | 20     |
| Magnitude .....   | 10     |
| Maximum Initiative.....   | 13     |
| <b>N</b>  |        |
| Narrowly-defined Elements.....  | 20     |
| No Instant Healing? .....   | 18     |
| Normally-defined Elements.....  | 20     |
| <b>O</b>  |        |
| Other Types of Sorcerers .....  | 21     |
| <b>P</b>  |        |
| Palace of Bones, The: Refusing the Call to<br>Adventure .....               | 30     |
| Philosophy of the Sacred Words .....  | 19     |
| Predefined Spells.....  | 21     |
| Prologue: The Caravan of Assabi Ibn Yussef ...                              | 24     |
| <b>Q</b>  |        |
| Quickstart Rules .....  | 8      |
| <b>S</b>  |        |
| Sandstorm .....   | 25     |
| Scarab Beetle Swarm .....   | 32     |
| Scorpion Man .....  | 31     |
| Skill Rolls .....   | 10     |
| Skills and Attributes .....   | 8      |
| Soak .....  | 18     |
| Sorcery in the Game.....  | 18     |
| The Stars Are Wrong... ..   | 26     |
| Success .....   | 10     |
| Supplementary Elements .....  | 20     |
| Swaggering .....  | 11     |
| <b>T</b>  |        |
| Targeting a Spell .....   | 20     |
| Tarmel Haja: The Divine Combinations .....                                  | 18     |
| Tea .....   | 26     |
| The Tears of Ampharool.....   | 23     |
| Travelling in the Desert .....  | 25     |
| <b>V</b>  |        |
| Valiant Captains.....   | 16     |
| Voices of War .....   | 25     |
| <b>Tables</b>   |        |
| Table 1: Figuring Magnitude.....  | 10     |
| Table 2: Describing Magnitude .....   | 10     |
| Table 3: Difficulties .....   | 11     |
| Table 4: Duration of Combat Actions .....                                   | 14     |
| Table 5: Combat stats .....   | 14     |
| Table 6: Thrown and Ranged Attack<br>Penalties .....                        | 14     |
| Table 7: Summary of Critical Success and Failure<br>Results in Combat ..... | 15     |
| Table 8: Melee Weapons.....   | 15     |
| Table 9: Thrown Weapons.....  | 16     |
| Table 10: Bows.....   | 16     |
| Table 11: Armour .....  | 16     |
| Table 12: Opponents.....  | 17     |
| Table 13: Magical Effect Parameters.....                                    | 19     |

# A SHORT GLOSSARY

**Abzul:** Saurian steed of the Walad Badiya, famous for their mental bond. From Al-Fariq'n; said to be the offspring of fallen dragons.

**Agalanthians:** People who once ruled the world, as much by force as through the arts and sciences. After being a Republic and an Empire, they are now in full decline, fighting one another to assert the power of their city-states.

**Al-Kimyat (pl. Al-Kimyati):** Jazirati magicians who manipulate the alchemy of words and arts in a sorcerous art known as the *tamasheq*.

**Ancient Arts:** The nine forms of art gifted to mortals by the divine Muses. They are central to the Saabi magical practice of *tamasheq*.

**Aragon:** One of the three Quarterian Kingdoms. Proud and brave, the Aragonians are also famed for being born horsemen.

**Aramla El-Nar:** The Desert of Fire, the great desert at the heart of Jazirat.

**Babouches:** The traditional slippers worn by the Saabi.

**Blood:** Your geographic origin: the people you belong to, your tribe and clan. Example: Saabi, Quarterian, Shiradim, Agalanthian.

**Campeador:** The "country nobility" of the Aragonians, and expert horsemen. See also *hidalgo*.

**Capharnaum:** An ancient and cosmopolitan region in northern Jazirat, the heart of conspiracies, intrigues, and extraordinary and supernatural events since the dawn of time.

**Carrassine:** A city in Capharnaum specialising in trade and mercenaries. Its nine legions and star-shaped ramparts have rendered it historically impregnable. It is also the only place the dragonriders of the Walad Badiya settle down.

**Chiromancers:** Agalanthian sorcerers capable of manipulating fate by making clay tablets. Considered trivial – you can buy tablets at the market to regrow your hair or make an adulterous wife return to her husband. Nevertheless, this form of sorcery can be frightening and powerful.

**Choor:** An easily concealable dagger with a straight triangular blade, preferred by women.

**Djinn:** Powerful magical spirits of the desert, constrained by a Great Truce with the god Hubal. They live in mirages, and are capricious.

**Dragon Mark:** A birthmark in the shape of a dragon's claw, located on the left shoulder blade just behind the heart, marking an individual as a Dragon-Marked.

**Espada Valladena:** A relatively light longsword with a basket hilt, used by the *campeadors* of Aragon.

**First Path:** Simply the first special ability you acquire (usually during character creation) by virtue of belonging to a path. There are six path abilities in each path, each more powerful than the last.

**Fragrance:** A city in Capharnaum founded by the Agalanthians. A city of the arts marked by the proximity of the East.

**Hidalgo:** The courtly nobility of Aragon, more urbane and sophisticated than the *campeador*, but generally less accustomed to the rigours of the field.

**Holy Crusade, The:** Invasion of Capharnaum ten years ago by the Quarterians questing for the *Mirabilis Calva Reliquiae*, the Sacred Skull of Jason the Martyr. Although the Quarterian armies mostly departed three years ago, many Quarterians remain in Capharnaum. The city of Sagrada in particular is entirely under Quarterian control.

**Hubal:** The main Jazirati god, he has many aspects, of which Hubal-Shamin, God of Storm and the Fertilising Rains, is the most important. His temples and shrines are everywhere and his deeds and legends beyond number. In Carrassine he is called Hubal-Hadad.

**Jambiya:** A recurved dagger and survival tool of the Saabi.

**Jason Quartered:** A man who became a god when he survived death by quartering. His legend inspired an entire civilisation and gave birth to the Quarterian faith.

**Jazirat:** A huge and mostly arid peninsula located at the heart of the known world. It is divided into three regions: Kh'saaba, the Aramla El-Nar desert, and Capharnaum.

**Jergath the Great:** Located in the fertile region in southern Jazirat, this city was built in one night by the god Hubal-Jergath the Dragon. It is the capital of the holy Kingdom of Kh'saaba.

**Khanjar:** A dagger with an undulating blade, designed for penetrating between the chinks in armour.

**Kh'saaba:** An opulent kingdom in southern Jazirat, Kh'saaba is a great military, commercial and magical power. It is ruled by High King Abdallah from his court at Jergath the Great.

**League:** The major measure of distance in *Capharnaum*, the distance an average person walks in one hour. Roughly 3 miles (5 km).

**Mirabilis Calva Reliquiae:** A holy relic for the Quarterians, it is, supposedly, the skull of Jason. The Quarterian crusade to recover it is at the heart of the recent wars that shook Capharnaum.

**Mujahid (pl. mujahidin):** For the Jazirati, a mujahid is an inspired warrior, in turn Hubal's military arm, poet, and knight. The responsibilities and re-

ligious commitment demanded of the mujahidin varies from tribe to tribe.

**Myrmidons:** Agalanthian elite warriors wearing insectoid armour. It's said the order was created by the God of Hell, Cthonos himself.

**Ounces of Cumin:** Spices are a common currency in Jazirat, often more available than silver or gold. One ounce of cumin (OC) is worth the same as a coin called a silver talent (ST), and will buy a decent meal at a caravanserai.

**Pace:** The standard Capharnian unit of length, commonly used in movement and in combat. Two steps by the average person, a distance of roughly 5 feet.

**Paths:** Mystical, philosophical or martial disciplines described by the *Prophets*. The sects that follow these precepts and teach their disciplines are also called paths. Belonging to one of these paths is considered a great honour among Jazirati nobles, and conveys special abilities. Other peoples have similar institutions, variously called schools, academies, and orders.

**Quarterians:** A people in the West worshipping Jason the Quartered God and His Holy Father, Aether Almighty. Ten years ago the Quarterians invaded Capharnaum on a crusade to recover a holy relic, the skull of Jason Quartered. Although they left the region devastated, peace seems to have returned.

**Rumh:** A halberd with a long bamboo haft, used by both footsoldiers and horsemen. It's as common as the scimitar.

**Saabi:** The main Jazirati people, those living in the Kingdom of Kh'saaba and revering the Three Prophets. There are Saabi throughout Jazirat, including in the Aramla El-Nar and cities of Capharnaum.

**Sayf:** The short scimitar in common use among the city guards of Capharnaum.

**Shimshir:** The long scimitar used in Kh'saaba and the pride of the Saabi mujahid. Also called a shamsheer.

**Shirad:** The One But Many God, worshipped by the Shiradim. The Saabi claim him as an aspect of Hubal.

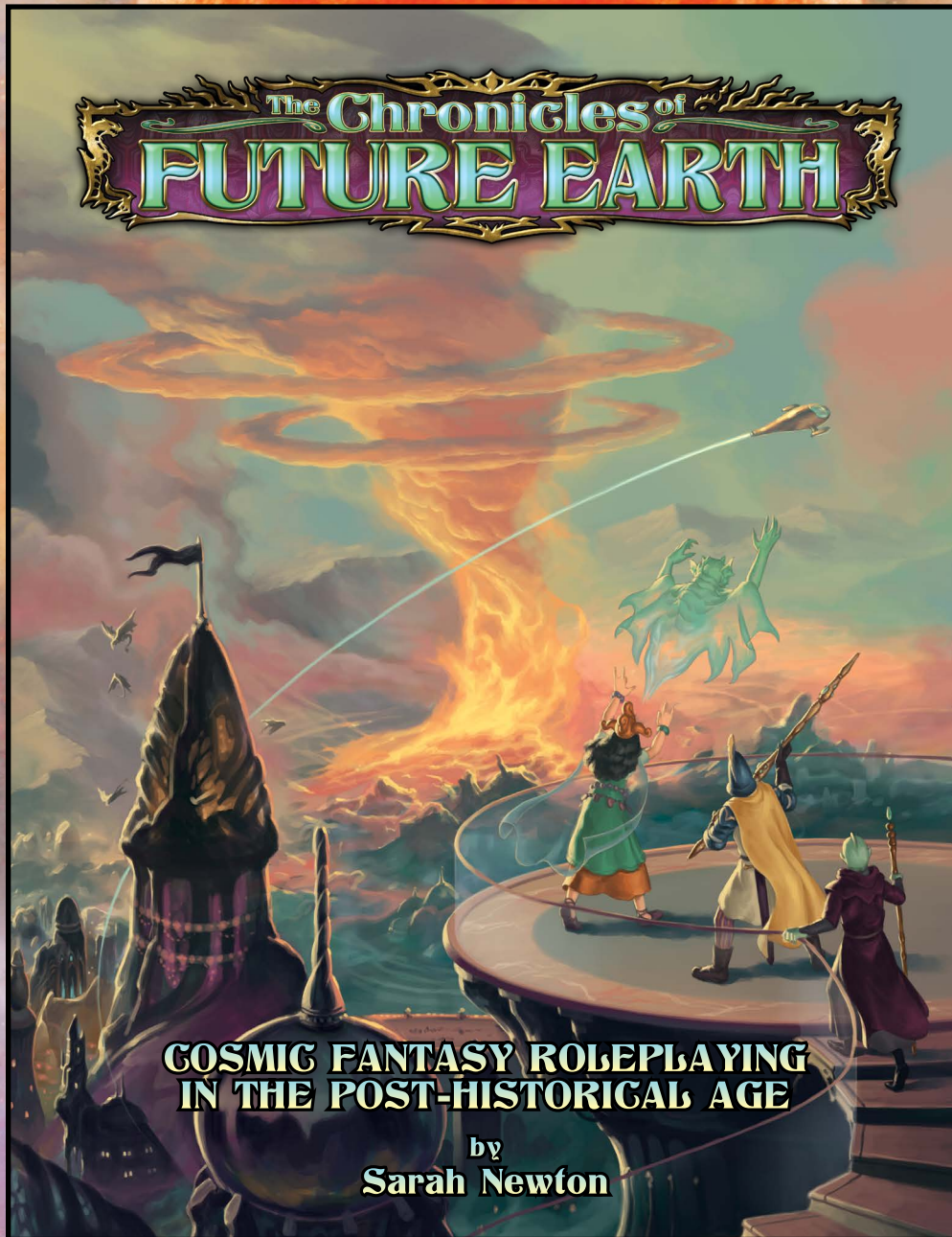
**Shiradim (sg. Shiradi):** Although native to Jazirat, this people is not considered Jazirati because of their religion. For long periods of their history they were the slaves of the Agalanthians and then the Saabi.

**Tarmel Haja:** A Jazirati term used to describe a widespread form of sorcery known as "combination magic". The term is used by almost everyone in Capharnaum to refer to magic.

**Walad Badiya:** Dragonriders belonging to Ibn Khalil of the Salifah tribe. Linked by a mystical bond to their draconic *abzulim* steeds, these enigmatic warriors are terrifying in battle.

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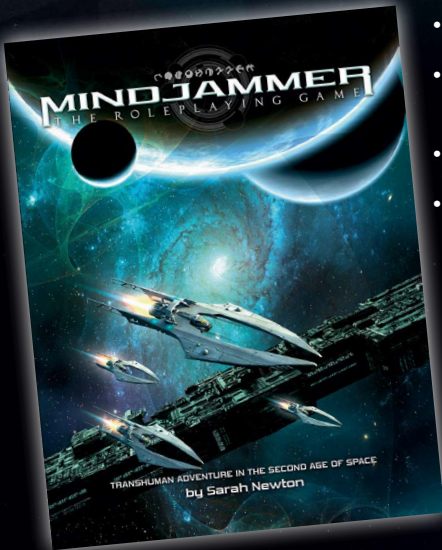


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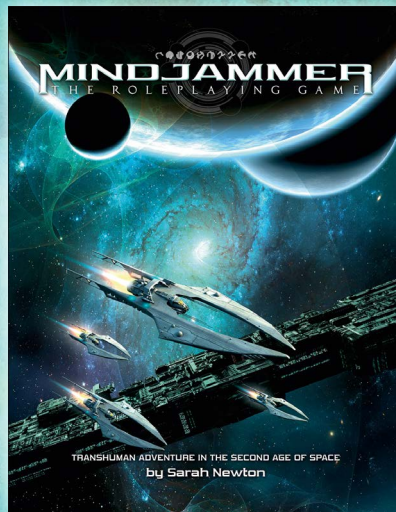
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# CAPHARNAUM

The Tales of the Dragon-Marked

*"I came seeking adventure, death, and vengeance... and I found Capharnaum. It called to me with its ancient gods and enmities, its mysterious guests, desert caravans and dusty souks.*

*I was tracking a djinn, one of the worst, a marid risen in rebellion against Marduk the Dragon. In the depths of the desert I had a vision of a thousand warriors crossing this scorching land. Here everything is in motion, wind and sand, and the night has a thousand colours. Everything is struggle - even for those who seek a peaceful life..."*

*~ From The First Odyssey to Kafer Nahum,  
by Jilali Ibn Malik Ad-d-Jassan, holy warrior of Khasaba*

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