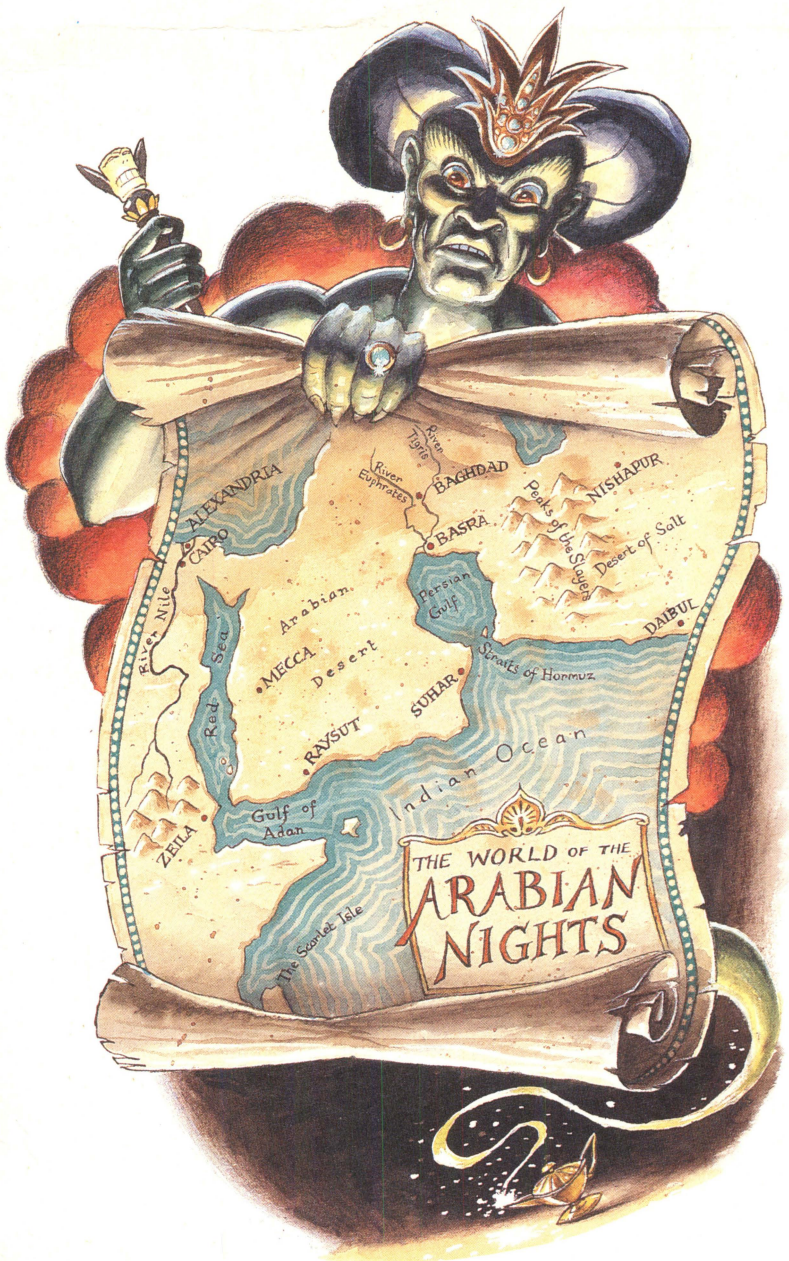


VIRTUAL REALITY ADVENTURE

TWIST OF FATE





HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Virtual Reality Adventure Books are solo adventures with a big difference. They're not random. Whether you live or die doesn't depend on a dice roll – it's up to you.

To start your adventure simply choose your character from the list on pages 7 and 8. Each character has a unique selection of four skills; these skills will decide which options are available to you.

Fill in the skills of your chosen character on the Adventure Sheet on page 6. Also note your Life Points and your possessions.

Life Points are lost each time you are wounded. If you are ever reduced to zero Life Points, you have been killed and the adventure ends. Sometimes you can recover Life Points during the adventure, but you can never have more Life Points than you started with.

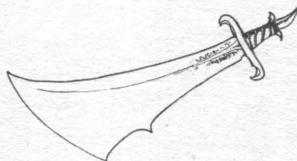
You can carry up to eight possessions at a time. If you are at this limit and find something else you want, drop one of your other possessions (by crossing it off your Adventure Sheet) to make room for the new item.

Consider your selection of skills. They establish your special strengths, and will help you to role-play your choices during the adventure. If you arrive at an entry which lists options for more than one of your skills, you can choose which skill to use in that situation.

That's all you need to know. Now choose your character.

Virtual Reality *titles to test your skills*

1. Green Blood
2. Down Among the Dead Men
3. The Coils of Hate
4. Necklace of Skulls
5. Heart of Ice
6. Twist of Fate



VIRTUAL REALITY ADVENTURE

TWIST OF FATE

Dave Morris



Illustrated by Russ Nicholson

MAMMOTH



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ADVENTURE SHEET

SKILLS (choose four)



LIFE POINTS

Initial Score _____

--

POSSESSIONS (maximum of 8)



NOTES AND CODEWORDS

--



MONEY

--



CHOOSE ONE OF THESE CHARACTERS

The Warrior

Skills: ARCHERY, FOLKLORE, SWORDPLAY and WRESTLING

Profile: You must live your life by the high ideals of the military code. You accept wounds to your body without flinching, but never a wound to your honour.

Life Points: 10

Possessions: Bow, sword

Money: 15 dinars

The Wizard

Skills: CUNNING, FOLKLORE, LUCK and MAGIC

Profile: You are a student of sorcery and mystery. The stars of your birth guarantee you a charmed life.

Life Points: 10

Possessions: Magic ring

Money: 15 dinars

The Thief

Skills: AGILITY, CUNNING, ROGUERY and STREETWISE

Profile: Born and bred in the dark crannies of Baghdad's slums, you believe your knavish skills are equal to any challenge.

Life Points: 10

Money: 25 dinars

The Ranger

Skills: ARCHERY, SEAFARING, STREETWISE and WILDERNESS LORE

Profile: You have no fear of any peril that nature can throw at you. The only true evil in this world resides in the hearts of selfish men.

Life Points: 11

Possessions: Bow

Money: 15 dinars

The Merchant

Skills: LUCK, ROGUERY, SEAFARING and SWORDPLAY

Profile: In your youth you were fascinated by the strange journeys of Sinbad. Now you have the chance to outdo them.

Life Points: 10

Possessions: Sword

Money: 30 dinars

The Nomad

Skills: AGILITY, FOLKLORE, MAGIC and WILDERNESS LORE

Profile: Your true home is among the desert dunes. You know that city dwellers are not to be trusted.

Life Points: 11

Possessions: Magic ring

Money: 15 dinars

The Beggar

Skills: CUNNING, LUCK, STREETWISE and WRESTLING

Profile: All pious men should give generously to the poor, but in your experience many disregard this. No matter – if you aren't offered charity, you'll simply take it.

Life Points: 10

Money: 10 dinars

Alternatively design your own character, taking any four skills of your choice from the list on page 9. Your character will also have any possessions needed for the skills chosen (for example, a bow if you choose ARCHERY) and will start with 15 dinars. You have an initial Life Points score of 10.

GLOSSARY OF SKILLS

ARCHERY

A long-range attack for both hunting and combat. You must possess a bow to use this skill.

AGILITY

The ability to perform acrobatic feats, run, climb, balance and leap. A character with this skill is nimble and dexterous.

CUNNING

The ability to think on your feet and devise clever ploys for getting out of trouble. Useful in countless situations.

FOLKLORE

Knowledge of myth and legend. Such knowledge is power, and you know the best way of dealing with any supernatural menace.

LUCK

The general ability to 'fall on your feet'. Your natural good fortune will help you in all sorts of situations.

MAGIC

The ability to 'summon a jinni to do your bidding. You must possess a magic ring to use this skill.

ROGUERY

The traditional repertoire of thief's tricks: picking pockets, opening locks, and skulking unseen in the shadows.

SEAFARING

Knowing all about life at sea, including the ability to handle anything from a rowboat right up to a large sailing boat.

STREETWISE

With this skill you are never at a loss in towns and cities. What others see as the squalor and menace of narrow cobbled streets is home to you.

SWORDPLAY

The best fighting skill, but to use it you must possess a sword.

WILDERNESS LORE

A talent for survival in the wild – whether forest, desert, swamp or mountain peak.

WRESTLING

You know how to handle yourself in a brawl, winning victory with armlocks, holds, leg sweeps and forearm jabs. You need no weapons – your own body is the weapon.

PROLOGUE

The Jewel of Splendour, the Bride of the World, the Pearl of the Tigris, the City of Peace...

These are some of the titles that men have given to Baghdad, greatest of all the cities of the world. You sit idly on a hilltop gazing down at the city that is your home, and you can well understand the sentiments she has inspired. There is a haze in the air which, filtering the shafts of morning sunlight, makes the gardens and marble palaces seem as though flecked with gold. Beyond the city, the River Tigris laces between the green fields and the woodland of the hunting parks like a vein of liquid fire. You lie back on the grass, content. It is a fine day and you do not have a care in the world. You close your eyes, basking in the warm sunshine.

'Bag of dates, dearie?'

You sit up, startled. How could the old woman have come right up without you hearing her? Perhaps you dozed off. You rub your eyes and stare at her.

'I said, do you want to buy a bag of dates?' she repeats with a snaggle-toothed smile.

You look at the dates, and at the dirty old fingers that are holding them. 'Er... what's the point? I couldn't eat them now anyway.'

'Save them till sunset,' she says spryly. 'Go on, only one dinar. Just to help a poor old lady.'

Charity is one of the five pillars of faith. Reluctantly, you hand her a dinar and take the bag of dates. Nodding her thanks, she totters off down the hill.

You gaze longingly at the dates. They look sweet and succulent, and your stomach is rumbling, but today is the last day of Ramadan and you cannot eat between dawn and dusk. To take your mind off hunger, you get up and stroll through the woods. On the other side of the hill, grassland gradually gives way to arid scrub. Often you have stared off towards the distant purple mountains of the east and dreamt of adventure. But today your attention is caught by the breathtaking sight of a magnificent Arab stallion, blazing white like moonlight against the warm gold of the day. It is cropping the grass only a few paces off. Muscles ripple leanly along its neck as it looks up to see you.

You take a step forward. The stallion, with the wariness of any wild animal, watches your every move. Another step and you send it bolting to stand a further twenty paces distant.

You grin and take off your jacket, folding it neatly and leaving it beside a bush. Here is a challenge that will keep your mind off hunger: taming this excellent horse!

All through the morning, you lope along beside the stallion, constantly stalking closer whenever it pauses to eat. At last it tires of running in fits and starts, gradually allowing you closer until finally you get it to accept the touch of your hand on its mane. It nuzzles you, searching for food. Here is a use for the dates you bought. The stallion munches them while you stroke its neck and croon soothing sounds into its ear.

Climbing on to the stallion's back, you ride it back to where you left your jacket. This is a stroke of luck. You could sell the stallion for hundreds of dinars – or you could keep it, and perhaps become a soldier in the Caliph's cavalry...

You dismount and tether the horse to a tree using your belt as a rope. The sun is past its zenith, and the heat and exertion of the morning have made you weary. Settling down, you close your eyes and are lulled off to sleep by the droning of bees amid the flowers.

You are woken some time later by voices on the other side of the hilltop. You get up. Your stallion is still contentedly chewing the grass. Moved by curiosity, you make your way through the bushes and look down to see a group of soldiers who have ridden out from the city in the retinue of a nobleman. The nobleman – a plump fellow in elegant robes – has a hawk which he sends swooping down the hill. Each time it falls on a fieldmouse, the nobleman's ample belly quakes with cruel laughter.

One of the soldiers comes up to the nobleman and salutes him. You are close enough to hear him say: 'Lord Jafar, shall we set up your pavilion?'

You know that name. Jafar is the Grand Vizier of Baghdad, who advises the Caliph on every detail of state policy. You decide to remain out of sight. It is not prudent to attract the attention of such an exalted lord.

You see Jafar shake his head. He waves the soldier away and beckons over a small servant clad in black.

The servant stands with a fixed grin on his face, like a worshipper waiting to hear the word of his god.

Jafar sends the hawk aloft and watches it. Then he says thoughtfully, as though to himself: 'Every night, the Caliph puts on ordinary clothes and has me lead him through the streets. In this way, he hopes to learn the true will of the people.'

'It's all too easy for a ruler to get out of touch,' puts in the little servant.

Jafar nods. 'Precisely. Lately I have been leading the Caliph to very select venues – inns and houses where I have previously planted my own agents. They talk of rebellion, and the Caliph hears their talk, and gradually he begins to believe that his subjects hate him.'

'Oh, a scheme of rare cunning, if I may say so, your excellency,' says the servant. 'But where's it leading, may I ask?'

'The Caliph, fearing rebellion, each day grows more cautious, more paranoid. He intensifies the rule of law and deals harshly with those whose loyalty is in question. And so, by fearing rebellion, each day he brings it closer.'

The servant claps his hands and gives a squeal of delight. 'You are the Prince of Guile, my lord! So the populace will come to hate the noble Caliph...'

'...And then, when the time is ripe, I'll overthrow him. How the people will cheer me! Despite my humble protests, they'll insist that I take his place. Can you see it, Natar?'

'I can, excellency!' cries the servant. 'And when

you are Caliph, what then?' He waits with an expectant smile which fades as he sees the dark look in Jafar's eyes.

'And then?' says Jafar grimly. 'Then the whole world shall tremble in fear.'

You've heard more than enough. This many secrets can get a person killed. You are scrambling back through the bushes when one of Jafar's guards comes around the hill. Outrage leaps like fire into your blood. The guard is leading your horse.

'See what I found, excellency,' he says, taking the horse over to Jafar.

'Thank you,' purrs Jafar, patting the horse's neck. 'A fine gift.'

This is too much to bear. Striding down the hill, you raise your hand and call out: 'Wait! That's my horse.'

Jafar flicks his gaze vaguely in your direction, looking through you as though you are nothing. 'I believe the horse is mine, and yet I thought I heard a voice raised in protest. How can the Grand Vizier of Baghdad be mistaken?'

You are almost choking with emotion. 'This is outright theft!'

Now Jafar squints. His eyes, like tiny crystals of ice, focus on yours. You shudder at the sudden palpable wave of evil. 'Justice is not for the likes of you,' he growls. 'I make the law. I am the law.'

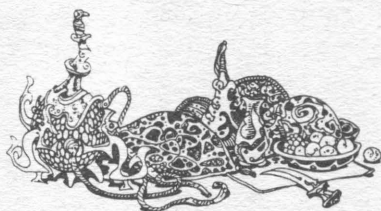
The servant, Natar, peers at you and then speaks anxiously to his master: 'This wretch may have overheard us, lord. Shall I...?' He draws his knife half

out of its sheath.

‘No,’ says Jafar, fat cheeks bulging in a revolting smile. ‘It is the last day of Ramadan, after all. In a rare demonstration of piety, I think I shall quell my usual appetite for blood. However...’ Again he meets your gaze; again you are powerless to look away. ‘Get you gone from Baghdad by dawn tomorrow. If I see you on any day thereafter, I shall make that day the last one of your life.’

Cowed into silence, you return to the crest of the hill. Jafar claps his hands and he and his men mount up. You watch them ride off with your prize. It is a cruel twist of fate that gave you your precious stallion only to allow it to be snatched away so unjustly. Dejected and filled with concern at what you overheard, you head back to the city.

Now turn to 1.



1

Nightfall finds you walking aimlessly through the narrow back streets of the city. From off in the main plaza you can hear the hubbub of street entertainers and night-time revellers. Torchlight flares from braziers set up for the festival. Here the street is hushed and dimly lit. You shrink back into the shadows, preferring to be alone with your bitter thoughts.

A beggar sits unnoticed in a doorway. He is an old dervish with a streaked grey beard. He reaches out his tin cup, startling you, and you flinch at the sight of his scabrous hands. Then you see the green turban that marks him as a hajji – one who has made the arduous pilgrimage to Mecca. ‘Alms for the love of God,’ he mutters.

Ashamed at the feeling of loathing that swept across your face at first, you fish in your pocket and give him a gold dinar. It rattles in his cup and for a moment he peers at it as though it were a wonderful vision. He gestures up at the heavens and says, ‘You have only to lift your head: there is a sight to banish misfortune. Under the wide sky, God sees all and guides the worthy to a just reward.’

The remark seems filled with portent. You gaze up past the rooftops at the stars – a thousand lights sharp as jewels on the cloth of the night. A feeling of awe at their beauty takes the breath from your body. By the time you look back, the dervish is shuffling away.

You follow him to the end of the alley, but he slips

through a crowd of people who are gathered to hear a storyteller and you lose sight of him. As the storyteller finishes his tale, the crowd begins to break up. Some move off towards a troupe of acrobats from distant Cathay whose oiled flesh gleams like amber in the flaring torchlight. Others go to buy sweetmeats from stalls around the plaza. The storyteller sits back on his mat, beaming at the mound of coins he has earned.

You are standing outside an astrologer's shop. A man emerges, brushing past you, nodding with a smile as he catches your eye. The tattoo on his chest suggests he is a sailor.

Remember to cross off the dinar you gave the dervish. If you wish to enter the astrologer's shop, turn to **69**. If you talk to the sailor, turn to **475**. If you go over to the storyteller, turn to **23**. If you go in search of the elusive dervish, turn to **92**.

2

There is a clang as your sword strikes the floor, followed by an ominous hush as Masrur steps forward smiling and pins your arms behind your back. You are taken to the dungeons, stripped of everything you own (delete all possessions and money from your Adventure Sheet), then hung in chains and tortured for several days. Lose 2 Life Points. If still alive, you are finally released and half-dragged to the docks by a captain of the Palace Guard. 'As you value your life, wretch, take ship from Baghdad on this very hour,' he snarls. 'Jafar

won't be so lenient the next time, I assure you.'

He turns on his heel and walks away, leaving you clutching a stanchion for support. He is right. You must leave Baghdad – at least until you regain your strength. Then you can come back for revenge. Turn to 160.

3

'Perhaps this tale is true, perhaps not. Only God knows all,' begins the old storyteller. 'It concerns a young prince who, while travelling in the wilderness, came to a hut of mud bricks. Drawing water from the well, he was taken unawares by two strong brothers who came upon him from behind. They carried him to their mother, an aged crone with a face as withered as a rotten gourd. Her teeth were like broken pebbles, her eyes filmy with rheum. And the prince knew from their white skin that these were not mortals, but a family of ghouls. Then he feared for his life, but even in his terror his wits did not entirely desert him. "Am I to die without a chance to save myself?" he asked as they stoked the fire.

"The ancient she-ghoul leered as she sprinkled the seasoning. "What chance would you have?" she asked. "In any contest, my sons are superior to a mortal man."

"I have no skill with weapons," replied the prince. "But in my own land I am famous as an athlete. Why not free me with a head start? Then, if your sons are fleet of foot, they can try to hunt me down. They

will return with good appetites, and no scraps at the table will go to waste.”’

The captain has come over and heard part of this tale. Butting in, he turns to you and says, ‘Why waste your time on this foolishness? This is a tale for the witless. Does this old man think us as credulous as any village peasant?’

If you agree with the captain, turn to **375**. If you want to hear the rest of the story, turn to **74**.

4

The old man takes a coal from the fire. It does not seem to hurt him – a fact that makes poor Yussuf tremble all the more. Plucking a blade of grass from the hillside, the old man ignites it with the coal and hands it to you. ‘This taper will light your way,’ he says with a sinister grin. ‘But don’t dawdle, for at moonrise it will burn out and if you haven’t returned by then you’ll be lost below ground for ever.’

With Yussuf clinging to your arm, you advance into the looming black gulf of the cave. A path leads down into the rock.

‘What’s that noise?’ asks Yussuf nervously.

You stop to turn and glare at him. ‘The chattering of your teeth!’

‘No,’ he says, shaking his head, ‘I meant that sort of scaly slithering sound accompanied by gurgling and droo . . . droo . . . droo . . .’

‘Drooling?’

Yussuf doesn’t reply. He is staring with eyes as large as eggs at something beyond your shoulder.

Slowly you turn, and in the wavering light of the taper you see the first threat the old man spoke of. Shambling up out of the tunnel come a horde of creatures with faces to daunt the heart of the bravest warrior. Turn to **200**.

5

The creatures swoop down. They are like giant moths with the faces of dead men, and their wings have the smell of grave shrouds. The first of them reaches you. You can see lice writhing in its coarse dusty fur. It lands on your shoulder and bites, tearing your flesh. Lose 3 Life Points. If you survive, you give a cry of disgust and swat it away, your punch shattering the sequin-like facets of its eye. It spirals down into the depths, but the others are not far away.

If you take advantage of the momentary respite to retreat to the top of the steps and flee into the tunnel, turn to **408**. If you extinguish the taper, turn to **449**. If you try racing for the bottom of the steps, turn to **73**.

6

Yussuf finds you wandering along the harbour front. 'I thought you must have set sail without me,' you say, grinning with relief.

'Not at all!' he declares. 'But I must confess, I am surprised to see you here in the north docks. Did you forget that we are moored over yonder, in the south docks?'

You rub your face to hide a rueful grimace. Your career as a sailor has not got off to a very promising start. Turn to **431**.

7

You give a gasp of pain as the gryphon rips out your left eye. Lose 1 Life Point. If you can survive that, read on.

Suddenly filled with renewed strength, the gryphon goes bounding across the hall and wrestles the monstrous goat to the floor. When its foe stops twitching, it looks up and seems about to speak, only to look around as a third opponent emerges from the inner recesses of the palace. This is a great snake as long as a ship, with venom running like stagnant water from its fangs. Its eyes burn red as the fires of Iblis the Despairer, lord of all evil spirits.

You look at the wounded gryphon. 'What now?' you ask with a groan.

'Now,' it says wearily, 'the only way I can hope for victory is to drink the marrow of a human thigh-bone.'

Horror of horrors! Will you agree (turn to **53**) or run for your life (turn to **30**)?

8

You step into the next room. The shutters are all closed and the only light comes from resinous torches. The haze of pungent smoke makes your eyes water. Blinking as your vision adjusts to the shadows, you see the natives crouching with heads

bowed towards the far end of this long room. Your captain stands there as though on trial – his judges, two rows of silent figures draped in rugs, which they wear like heavy robes.

‘What’s this farce?’ you thunder. ‘Release my captain or suffer the consequences, you worthless heathen dogs.’

That seems to goad them into action. They leap up with flashing eyes and bear down on you armed with spears and knives. You back into the doorway and get ready for a fight.

Turn to 54.

9

There is indeed a tingle of recuperative energy as you taste the delicious crisp fruit on your tongue. Delete the apple you have just eaten from your list of possessions and recover 1 Life Point. The merchant was as good as his word – almost as great a miracle in itself as the magic healing. You gaze longingly at his stock of apples. These are a prize worth more than gold to a daring adventurer like yourself.

‘You’d like to buy more?’ he asks.

You try not to appear too eager. ‘At five dinars each? Recovery from one serious sword-blow would require enough fruit to pauper me!’

‘Perhaps we can barter,’ he suggests.

If you have a cloak, a jewelled sword, a black jewel or a hawk, turn to 55. If not, you can still buy golden apples at 5 dinars each if you have the money left; amend your Adventure Sheet and turn to 32.

10

You have not forgotten the tale you heard from the old storyteller in the village. Delete the codeword *Conch* and turn to **469**.

11

You fall in with a merchant caravan that is heading north along the coast of the Red Sea. The owner is pleased to have a fellow traveller who can help guard his camels. 'Pirates are the main threat to trade,' he says, 'but even on the pilgrim routes close to Mecca there is still the danger of bandits. They ride out of the desert to prey on honest traders like myself.'

Despite his fears, the first couple of weeks pass without incident. You get used to the disdainful snorting of the camels as they are roused each morning, struggling resentfully to their feet and slowly filing out along the coast road. To the right lies a range of mountains of dull velvet hue, to the left is the glassy glint of the sea. If you are injured, recover 2 Life Points.

On the sixteenth day you come in sight of the walls of Mecca, the holy city, birthplace of the Prophet. Pilgrims flock from all over the civilized world as a sign of their devotion. But the merchant, Hakim, is reluctant to stop here. 'On another time I will show my respect,' he says. 'Indeed, perhaps I will visit Mecca on my return journey. But for now, look at my camels – they are heavily laden with goods which I am anxious to sell in Cairo. I cannot afford the ten days it would take to complete all the

proper rituals here.'

If you urge him to stop at Mecca, turn to **101**. If you can see his point, turn to **123**.

12

The braziers burn low while you see to your silent work. At last, with everything ready, you summon your marines ashore and together you set up a great shout which reverberates off the roof of the dome. The pirates rouse themselves to find that you have bound them all tightly with torn strips of silk.

'What devil's work is this?' demands the pirate chief. 'How did you truss us like so many geese without waking us up?'

'Too much wine made you sleep as quiet as babies,' you reply, 'and I am a skilful thief. But in all honesty, I'll admit to one mistake . . .' You tilt your head towards a single pirate who lies stretched out stiffly with a jewelled dagger in his chest. 'He had the bad luck to wake up. Now he sleeps the soundest sleep of all.' Turn to **372**.



13

You have the option to lunge at him with all your strength (turn to **148**), dive to one side as he attacks and just attempt a light slash in return (turn to **37**), or concentrate on parrying (turn to **60**).

14

Fate smiles on you. An old acquaintance from Baghdad recognizes you among the crowd of pilgrims and hastens to greet you. Hakim is astonished and not a little put out when he learns that you are a devout believer. It means that he will have to free you from bondage. Also, it means that you too can enter the holy city for the ceremonies.

Lose the codeword *Mordant* and turn to **146**.

15

Another few days brings you to Zeila, a medium-sized port on the west coast of the Gulf of Aden. The journey has been arduous, and it has been a long time since you had a drink of water. Lose 1 Life Point unless you have either WILDERNESS LORE or a full bottle. Refreshing yourself at a fountain by the city gate (where you can refill any bottles you are carrying) you hear a sublimely beautiful song wafting through the dusk. It is the call to prayer from the high minaret you can see above the rooftops. Kneeling where you are, you give thanks to heaven for seeing you safely through the desert. Turn to **149**.

16

The storm hits like a black fist, stretching the sails to bursting point. Rain lances down in a suffocating icy torrent. Waves surge up over the rail until you could almost believe it was the world's end, and you had plunged into unending watery oblivion.

By dint of every trick and ploy you've learned in your long career at sea, you weather the storm. The next morning finds you drifting on water as flat as a silver mirror. The silence of extreme fatigue hangs over the whole ship's company. The sails hang in ragged tatters and the mizzen has split, but at least no one was lost during the night.

You report to the captain that there is a chance of hitting more squalls if you continue on your present course.

'You're recommending we turn back?' he asks listlessly.

You shrug. 'That may or may not be safer. You're the captain.'

He laughs bitterly. His pride has taken a knock. 'Compared to you, I'm as green as any street urchin! You decide our course.'

Will you head on to the Indies (turn to **197**), turn west towards Egypt (turn to **176**), or strike out south in search of the Scarlet Isle (turn to **234**)?

17

You vow that you will kill them if they do not leave you in peace.

'You have the claws of a cat, youngster,' says the Sultan, his voice half-mocking, 'but the voice of a lion. Choose: will you fight my three Arab knights or face me alone?'

If you accept a duel with the Sultan himself, turn to **222**. If you square off against his knights, turn to **245**.

18

The old man studies your slippers intently. 'Such intricate embroidery,' he says. 'I don't think I have ever seen finer workmanship. Surely these slippers are no ordinary footwear?'

If you tell him about the magic slippers, turn to 87. If not, turn to 61.

19

They file out of the room without noticing you. Hurrying over to the cushions where they were sitting, you notice the chart they spoke of is still lying there. Add it to your list of possessions if you decide to take it. You realize it will not be long before they notice you are missing, so you gather your things and steal out of the citadel with all haste. Turn to 42.

20

Now that the danger is over, you find you are trembling in shock. You sit on the end of Ayisha's couch while you recover. 'Where did you learn sorcery?'

'My old nurse taught me,' she replies, smiling. 'Alas, she never told me any spell to undo these enchanted chains.'

'There must be a key.'

Ayisha nods. 'There is. It is in the nest of the giant bird known as the rokh. If you'd agree to try to get it, I could send you there with another spell that I know.' She pauses and adds hesitantly: 'It would be

dangerous, of course.'

If you agree to try, turn to **114**. If not, you must bid farewell to Ayisha and turn to **66**.

21

The Isle of Palms is a wild windswept place off the southern tip of India. Putting into a cove, you wade ashore. 'We'll wait here,' says Umar, the sailor in charge of the boat. 'If you're not back by daybreak tomorrow, then, er, well . . .'

You nod. 'I'll be back.'

The interior of the island consists of grassy slopes surrounding a high pinnacle of rock whose peak is hidden in the clouds. Seeing sheep grazing in a valley nearby, you saunter over and find a shepherd who tells you: 'Yes, the rokh's nest is atop that pinnacle. Have you come to slay it?'

You give an astonished laugh. 'Hardly! From what I've heard, that would take an army.'

The shepherd shrugs. 'Pity. It's forever stealing my sheep – swoops down, grabs one, then carries it back to its nest.'

'Maybe you should go and live elsewhere.'

'Preposterous! The grass here is the richest to be found in all the world. See how plump my sheep are, the quality of their wool . . .'

Thanking the shepherd for his help, you head towards the pinnacle. Turn to **136**.

22

The chamberlain receives you with an unctuous smile. 'You wish to see the Caliph?' he says. 'Naturally it is not quite as simple as that. There are many complicated arrangements in the running of a palace. When the Caliph gives an audience, a hundred officials are sent into a flurry of activity. I myself am only one cog in the wheel . . .'

You know what is expected: a gift of gold. If you offer 1,000 dinars or less, turn to **443**. If you offer more than 1,000 dinars, turn to **426**. If you have no money to give, you are ejected from the palace at once – and promptly arrested for breaking the curfew: turn to **405**.

23

The storyteller invites you to sit with him and take a cup of wine. Soon you find yourself blurting out the whole day's sorry tale, ending with your encounter with the dervish.

He listens with a sympathetic smile. 'Truly, there is wisdom in the words of a holy man.'

You shrug. 'If so, I lack the wisdom to discern it. What can he have meant? It seemed from his tone that he was issuing a prophecy.'

'He spoke of the rokh!' says the storyteller, raising a finger to the sky. 'It is a bird as large as a whale. The beating of the rokh's wings moves the clouds above our heads; its eyrie pierces the vault of heaven and elephants are its prey.'

'What is that to me? The mere stuff of idle yarns!'

He shakes his head. 'This is a story that has its basis in truth. It is said – though only God is all-knowing – that the egg laid by the rokh is of pure diamond! One fragment would make a man as rich as a prince. If you seek wealth, find the rokh's nest.'

The storyteller is ready to entertain another audience, so you thank him for the wine and say goodbye. The sailor you saw earlier is standing nearby, watching a street magician pull coloured ribbon from a young girl's ears. If you want to go over and introduce yourself, turn to **475**. If you go off to ponder your next move, turn to **92**.

24

You start to stoop as if you're going for the sword, then roll forward and rush past Masrur as he lunges for you. Taken by surprise, he lashes out clumsily. Unfortunately the tip of the blade bites deep into your shoulder, causing a flare of pain. Lose 3 Life Points.

Masrur thunders with rage at not having killed you with one blow. You do not wait around to give him another chance. Clutching your bleeding shoulder, you dash out on to the landing. Turn to **207**.

25

The man who stands before you is as lean and muscular as a leopard. He wears the garb of a splendid Bedouin chieftain. His burnouse is clasped by a golden scorpion sting, and his silver belt is patterned like snakeskin. The pommel of his long curved sword is an ivory vulture's head. He looks



down at you with a thunderhead gaze and says, 'Direct your prayers to me, mortal. Not that I care a whit for them!'

Despite your chattering teeth, you manage to ask his name.

'I am the Lord of the Desert! I have ruled this desolate region since the beginning of time. I am as merciful as the sun and as comforting as the rocks, as truthful as a mirage and as temperate as a sandstorm.'

While he proudly declaims all this, you are careful to avert your eyes so that you can look around the chamber. It is a grand treasure-hall, with tall jars of spices and perfumed oils, rugs and drapes of lushly coloured silk, as well as gold and silver coins that shimmer like rain droplets in the lamplight. There are only two possible exits. One is a flight of steps leading up to a locked door banded with iron. The other is a curtained alcove with a strange glyph stamped into the keystone above it. If you have FOLKLORE, turn to **287**. If not, turn to **309**.

26

The captain is grumpy at being woken. 'Why does God ordain that the sun shall set at dusk and rise again at dawn?' he says sarcastically. 'It is because He wishes the same for us. It reminds me of the parable of the holy man who was so tormented by the screech of owls outside his window at night that he gave up his vows and became a drunkard!'

'Would you rather I let you snore like a contented camel while river pirates steal upon us in the night-

time? Or perhaps while wizards cast a spell on us?' you ask, taking him by the arm. 'Come and see what I have to show you.'

When you lead him to the rail, however, there is no sign of the silent barque. 'All you saw was the reflection of moonlight on the water,' snaps the captain. 'Go back to your mattress and let us all get some sleep.'

Turn to 375.

27

In his hurry to get away, Yussuf stumbles into you and the taper falls to the floor. You try to shove him away so that you can retrieve it, but it gets trodden underfoot. Darkness descends like a raven's wing. Out of the dreadful heart-stopping silence, the only sound to be heard is the ragged rasp of Yussuf's sobbing. 'Merciful God, spare your unworthy servant,' he pleads. 'Never will I thief nor cheat at dice again. No drop of wine will touch my lips—'

'Yussuf, listen!' You reach out a hand and shake him until he gathers his wits.

'There's nothing . . .' he says in a voice of budding hope. 'What happened to the monsters?'

Stepping forward to look for the taper, you tread on something which squelches under your heel. As Yussuf picks up and relights the taper, you see that you have crushed a swarm of beetles. 'There are the monsters,' you say.

Yussuf gasps in wonder. 'Tiny insects! But the things we saw were huge.'

'Magical mirages. The terrors of our own minds were almost turned against us.' You peer into the gloom ahead. 'We must be on our guard, my friend. This is a place of dark sorcery.'

Turn to **186**.

28

You have the cool nerve of a born acrobat. The precarious descent holds no terrors for you. With sure-footed agility you continue to the bottom of the staircase.

'Come on,' you call back to Yussuf. 'It isn't far.'

'Even less so if I fall!' he whines. 'Let me make the descent at my own speed.'

Turn to **96**.

29

After a few days you have to accept that the ship has sailed without you. You consider signing on aboard another ship, but by now you are so well known around the docks for having lost your ship that people there have given you the nickname Faramush – meaning dimwit. The best job you could hope for would be swabbing the decks. You decide instead to join a camel train.

You find a merchant called Hakim who is heading across the desert to Cairo. He will pay you 3 dinars to come along and guard his wares. Another merchant, by the name of Abdullah, wishes to travel east through the Peaks of the Slayers and is prepared to pay 5 dinars. The rates of pay give you a clue

about how dangerous the respective journeys are likely to be.

If you join Hakim's expedition, turn to **400**. If you go with Abdullah, turn to **296**. (Remember to add what you're being paid to the money on your Adventure Sheet.)

30

Lose the ARCHERY skill if you had it – you could never judge your aim now that you have only one eye. You must console yourself with the thought that you are still alive. (Also, once you get an eyepatch you will at least look the part of a true sailor.) Turn to **410**.

31

Hurriedly tipping the grisly remains out into the street, you roll yourself up inside the rug. The slimy residue left on the fabric has a sepulchral stench, but you try not to think about it. As the two men pick you up, you hear one of them whisper, 'The one in here must be Remorak, Lord of the Razana. Better not drop him!'

You are carried into the next room and sat on a wooden bench. The flap of the rug falls open like a cowl, allowing you to see with one eye as the men who brought you in go scurrying over to join the other islanders cringing on the floor. The room is heady with the aromatic smoke of sputtering resin torches.

You look along the bench. Other figures, also wrapped in rugs, sit along the wall. You catch a

glimpse of a thin dirt-caked hand, a skeletal gleam of a face within the cowl beside you. It is a council of the dead.

Captain Ibrahim steps forward. 'Why have I been treated like this?' he demands as he looks along the row of silent rug-draped forms. He is pale despite his show of bravado.

Is it your imagination or does one of the forms stir slightly? You barely hear a whispering crackle of a voice: *'You came to steal the rokh's diamond egg from its nest above the Nile.'*

The captain jerks back his head in denial. 'The rokh? The giant bird of legend? Stuff and nonsense! How can I feed my family on imaginary wealth? I came here for honest trade.'

Some of the cowed figures sway together like long stalks of grass after the rain. You cannot tell if they are really moving or whether it is a trick of the shimmering smoke-hazed light. Nor do you want to know if you really can hear that soft susurrations of tomb-cold voices. The villagers are still prostrate on the floor with their faces pressed to the wooden boards. It's time you did something.

'The foreign sailor is lying,' you say in your best attempt at a corpse's voice. *'I, Remorak, will prove it with my magic. All avert your eyes! Raise your voices in prayer to your ancestors!'*

They commence a chant that drowns out any other sounds as you shrug off the musty rug and hurriedly lead your amazed captain to the door. Record the codeword *Kismet* and then turn to **145**.

32

Each of the golden apples will heal 1 lost Life Point when eaten. So that you don't forget this, write '+1 Life Point' in brackets next to the apples you have bought. You cannot eat apples to bring you back from the dead, of course – if you go below zero Life Points at any stage of the adventure then you are killed regardless of whether you may have magic apples still uneaten in your backpack.

Thanking the fruit seller, you head back to the ship. Turn to **78**.

33

Your blow splits the ghoul's head open like a gourd. Whatever spills out is not like any human brain: a quivering black mass that reminds you of a dead octopus. Retching, you cast the wooden stick aside and hastily search the hut for anything worth taking. You find 15 dinars in a jar over the hearth – money no doubt stolen from the poor souls the ghouls waylaid and ate. Add this sum to the amount recorded on your Adventure Sheet.

You also take a thick woollen cloak. You have no desire to spend the night here, and you will need something to keep warm while sheltering amid the rocks. The cloak is crawling with lice, but you hold it over the fire for a few minutes so that the smoke drives most of them out. If you decide to keep the cloak, add it to your list of possessions and turn to **80**. If you leave it behind, turn to **260**.

34

The ghoul dam looks up with bulging eyes as the door splinters under your kick. 'What have you done to my sons?' she screeches before lunging towards a meat cleaver hanging on the wall.

A worm-eaten old stick rests beside the door. You can grab it and attack her (turn to **435**), use a sword if you have one (turn to **391**), or rely on your bare hands (turn to **413**).

35

The lamp makes you invisible. The braziers burn low while you move unseen among the pirates, seeing to your midnight work. Occasionally a pirate wakes up – perhaps hearing the gurgle of a throat being slit, or the snap of a breaking neck. But each time he just looks about, sees nothing but supine figures all around, and goes back to sleep.

Finally you summon the marines out of the hold. They wake the pirate chief with a kick in the ribs. His eyes open, cloudy with wine-fog for a moment, then he leaps up with a snarl: 'The Sultan's men! Up and at 'em, my lads!'

He looks around. No one moves.

'They went to sleep dead drunk,' you say to him, 'and woke up just plain dead.'

You've used up all the magic oil in the lamp of Antar, so cross it off your list of possessions. Then turn to **372**.

36

It feels as though the wind is blasting your skin dry. You wrap your turban across your face and stumble on, barely able to see. There is no way you could hear the others even if they shouted. The tug of the other camels on the ropes is the only reassurance that you are not entirely alone in this ordeal.

Lose 1 Life Point and, if you are still alive, decide whether to head straight into the storm (turn to **105**), veer off to the left (turn to **82**), or to the right (turn to **59**).

37

His blade whips around, carving a livid streak across your breastbone. Your own blow had no effect on him. Lose 2 Life Points. If you are still alive, you can try to close in for a desperate full-strength attack (turn to **148**), lunge at him from arm's length (turn to **106**), or retreat while parrying (turn to **60**).

38

You explain to the old man that there has been a mistake: you are not a thief.

Surprisingly, his answer to this is a thin wheeze of laughter. 'Not the Shadow, eh? I thought not. I doubt they'll ever catch that one.'

'Who is the Shadow?'

'The most daring of knaves. The rogue who purloined the jinn ring of Ala al-Din and the flying rug once owned by the Emir of Cordoba, as well as the crown of the infidel ruler Shah al-Ma'in. He – or

she, for the Shadow is a figure veiled in mystery – has vowed next to steal the diamond egg of the rokh.’

If you have the codeword *Kismet*, turn to 64. If not, turn to 470.

39

You drank the poisoned water soon after coming aboard. Assuming the hawser was cut soon after, and judging the time now to be midmorning, you have been drifting for about fourteen hours. Based on the breeze and ocean current, you soon estimate how far the ship will have covered in that period.

It is hard work raising the sails on your own, but you have the advantage of long nautical experience. Bringing the ship around, you steer towards your best guess of where the other ship would have reached by dawn. You know that your friends will sail back looking for you once they find you’ve been set adrift. Not out of sentiment, of course, but nothing would stop Captain Ibrahim from retrieving a free cargo of glass and porcelain.

Unless he and the crew have already been poisoned themselves . . .

You keep on searching the horizon as the sun reaches its zenith, then sinks down the sky. Finally your persistence is rewarded by the sight of your own ship plunging through the waves towards you. As she comes alongside, you leap across to a great cheer from the crew.

Once you’ve warned the captain that he probably

has a stowaway on board, he orders the ship thoroughly searched. Soon there are shouts from the hold, and a small plump man in a long robe is dragged on deck. 'He was hiding behind one of the crates,' says the first mate.

The stowaway fixes you with a resentful stare. 'Curse you! How did you sail that ship back on your own? If not for you, I'd have poisoned the water tonight and made myself master of this vessel!'

Turn to **174**.

40

The riders are close behind. You scramble up a bank of loose earth, buying yourself a little time. Pushing through a thicket of mauve ferns, you arrive at a deep ravine whose depths are filled with haze. The ravine is spanned by a great glass column. You place a foot down to test it, finding it very slippery.

The thunder of hoofbeats warns you that the riders are searching for a way to follow. You must either risk crossing the glass column (turn to **63**) or stand and wait to confront them here, with your back to the sheer drop (turn to **86**).

41

His eyes widen as he notices the bundle of rope over your shoulder. 'I travelled far and wide in my youth,' he says. 'Now, don't tell me – let me guess. That's Indian hemp, isn't it? I saw some bizarre little conjuring tricks that used a coil of rope just like that, during my time in the east.'

If you tell him about the Indian rope trick, turn to **110**. If not, turn to **61**.

42

You travel on until you come to the sea. Walking along the shore, you approach a fishing village where men squat on the sand mending their nets. You are about to go up and greet them when you notice a slender young fellow crouching beside an overturned boat. He has only one hand, the other arm ending in a bandaged stump, and he is crying.

If you stop to talk to him, turn to **135**. If you walk past, turn to **157**.

43

Your jinni utters a last forlorn cry which echoes in the air as he fades into wisps of torn vapour. Cross the magic ring off your list of possessions, as it is useless to you now the jinni has been destroyed.

Azenomei leans back gasping against the wall. Now, while he is still stunned from the fight with the jinni, you have a chance to act. You can either attack him (turn to **423**) or run for it (turn to **445**).

44

This far down the slope, you are in no immediate danger from lava. The deadly hot gases spewing out of the volcano are another matter. They can move faster than a cheetah can run, and that dark cloud you can see would bake the flesh off your bones in seconds. Turn to **90**.

45

Using the magic lamp to turn invisible, you sneak right under the noses of the sentries, along a gallery lined with officials and slaves, past the Caliph's bodyguard, and into the throne room where Harun al-Rashid sits dining on delicate morsels of food. Nearby stands Jafar, an attentive smile masking his thoughts of treachery.

Extinguishing the lamp, you suddenly become visible. Harun leaps up with a start. 'God protect me from evil magic!' he cries.

'Wait, O Prince of the Faith,' you say, bowing to kiss the floor in front of him. 'I am no jinni, but your loyal subject. Hear my words.'

Turn to 477.

46

The demon pursues you into the covered passage. It realizes its mistake when you leap on it. Here it cannot retreat into the air every few seconds to recuperate from its wounds. 'Bad luck, you ugly devil,' you snarl as you pound it with heavy blows, 'this time you've got to fight fair.'

The demon's talons scrape you to the bone, but you give two blows for every one that it inflicts. Lose 2 Life Points – unless you have SWORDPLAY (and a sword) or WRESTLING, in which case lose only 1 Life Point. If you survive, turn to 275.

47

The guards are upon you like a pack of wolves. Their standard trick is to get in close and buffet a foe with their shields, using their swords only when there is no danger of striking one another. Knowing this, you drop low and let the first guard sweep his shield over your head, immediately straightening up and using the force of your legs to propel him off the balcony. He gives a shriek as he tumbles to the floor of the hall below. But now the next two guards have reached you – and you cannot fool them all with the same trick.

Jafar stands behind the guards with his flabby hands balled into fists. He is spitting with fury as he orders them to rush you, but they are in no hurry to throw away their lives.

You beat a retreat along the landing, fighting for your life every step of the way. You take several nasty wounds. If you have **SWORDPLAY** lose 2 Life Points; if you have **WRESTLING** lose 3 Life Points; if you have neither skill lose 5 Life Points. If you survive, you at least reach the stairway and turn to rush off into the safety of the night: turn to **383**.

48

The barque takes shape out of the darkness. You feel like one who, sunk in slumber, witnesses the vivid colours of a dream. The sails of the barque have a satin sheen as though woven of silver. Jewels sparkle around the lamps set at her prow, and her rail is decorated with inlays of polished ivory. At the stern

is a small pavilion curtained with sequinned silks. As the breeze stirs the drapes and gutters the lantern-light inside, you see a woman reclining there on a cushioned divan.

Do you wish to speak with her? If so, you must swim out to the mysterious barque: turn to **94**. If you go to fetch the captain, turn to **26**.

49

The guards burst into the room, only to find a dead body slumped on the cold marble floor. Shrugging, they sheathe their swords. Jafar pushes his way to the front and demands to know what is going on.

'The intruder committed suicide, it seems, lord,' says the captain of the guard, indicating the trickle of poison on your lips.

Jafar hisses between his teeth. 'A pity. I'd have liked to oversee the interrogation of this one!'

The captain hides a flicker of disgust at Jafar's open cruelty. Turning away sharply, he says to the guards, 'Take this corpse to the burial-ground.'

You are taken to the edge of the city and left in a small brick building beside the cemetery, there to await burial in the morning. When the guards have left, the jinni breathes the gust of life back into your lungs. Rubbing your stiff limbs, you get up and fix him with a sour frown. 'Why did you make them think I was dead?'

He smiles – at least you think it's a smile. 'They're not going to kill you twice, are they?'

'But why didn't you turn their swords to snakes?'

Or fill the room with choking fog? Or whisk me away to safety on a flying cloud?’

‘Oh, what are you moaning about?’ snaps the jinni. ‘I got you out safely, didn’t I?’ He becomes a twist of vapour that slowly flows back into your ring.

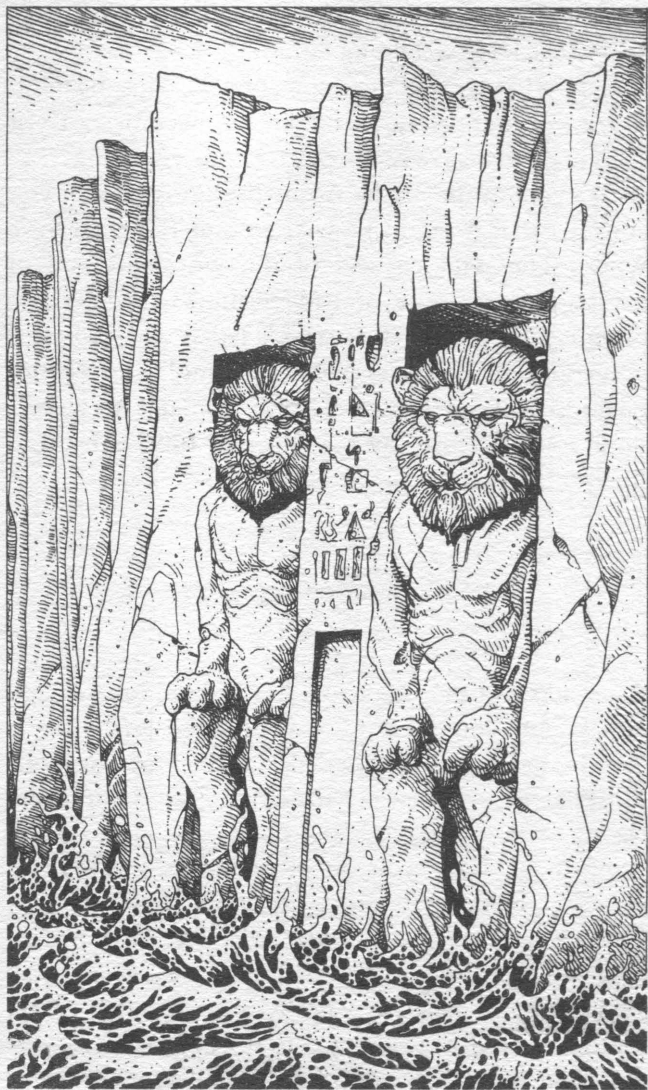
As you walk back from the graveyard, you consider that it might be wise to quit Baghdad for a while. The wild corners of the world are full of mystery and promise, and adventurers of olden times often returned from their travels laden with riches. If you could do the same, then you would be in a better position to gain justice. It only remains to decide your route – either by sea (turn to **160**) or by land (turn to **183**).



50

After all this time, the hawk has learned to trust and understand you. You raise your wrist and it soars aloft, wheeling in the sky above the ship. Seagulls flutter away in panic, but the hawk has no interest in them. Its keen eye finds the black sails of the pirate ship, and it leads you on in pursuit. At dusk you arrive at high cliffs rising at the edge of the sea. Carved into the side of the cliff are two ancient colossi with heads of lions. Between them is a vast stone slab. ‘It may be a door,’ says the first mate, ‘but I can’t see any way of getting it open.’

If you have FOLKLORE or the codeword *Sesame*,



turn to **437**. If you have **MAGIC** and a ring, turn to **440**. If you possess the Jericho horn and want to blow it, turn to **457**. Otherwise turn to **415**.

51

You have crept, clambered and crawled through places danker and darker than this. Your sharpened senses do not need light. You turn around to face the steps and continue the descent backwards, like a climber, moving sure-footedly until you feel the firm expanse of rock that marks the bottom of the staircase. Turn to **96**.

52

You press on along the tunnel. The taper gives only a smouldering glow which is barely enough to see beyond arm's length. After several minutes, you begin to feel a slight breeze. 'It might be the way out,' says Yussuf hopefully, quickening his step.

You doubt it. The air still has a stale subterranean reek. Yussuf stops abruptly with a small groan, and you hurry to join him. The tunnel has emerged at the top of a narrow stone staircase, barely two feet wide. The steps look dank and slippery. On either side is a sheer drop into darkness. You can sense an immense cavern, but the walls and ceiling and floor are too far away for the feeble light of the taper to reach. All you can see is that alarmingly narrow staircase stretching into the unseen depths below.

Yussuf finds a pebble and drops it off the side of the top step. Seven heartbeats later you hear it hit the

floor of the cavern. 'We have to go', he says.

If you turn back, turn to **408**. If you start down the staircase, turn to **430**.

53

The great beak descends, cracking open your leg. You give a great shriek of agony and sink back with a groan. Lose 3 Life Points. Even if you survive, you are barely conscious enough to witness the battle. It seems to your watery gaze as though the two monstrous adversaries are submerged in a haze of red. With thundering howls and hissing war-cries, they twine and writhe in a battle that shakes the very walls around you. At last the gryphon is victorious. It comes padding across the golden tiles to your side.

'That was the last,' it says. 'They slew my masters, who once dwelt here, but now I have avenged them.'

'At what a cost!' you wail. 'See me – half-blinded, disfigured and crippled. O merciful God, what have I done to merit such a bleak fate?'

'Come,' says the gryphon. It leads you to a vestibule where you see a table of platinum that glints with a liquid sheen. On the table rest two objects: a sapphire the size of an eye, and a whole leg of burnished gold. Pressing the sapphire to your empty socket, you discover that you can see as well through it as you could with the eye you lost. The leg also knits to your flesh. It is as strong as your former limb.

Recover 5 Life Points. Also note that you have acquired the LUCK and AGILITY skills if you did not

have them already. These are in addition to the skills you began the adventure with – that is, you may now have up to six skills instead of the usual limit of four. If you have already noted a jasmine flower on your list of possessions, turn to **98**. If not, turn to **76**.

54

The islanders launch themselves on you with shrieks of fury. 'Kill the foreign devil!' you hear the headman cry. 'It is not permitted for an outsider to gaze upon the Council of Retired Elders and live!'

Their rage works in your favour. They are all so anxious to kill you that their attacks are too fast and too wildly aimed. Weapons clash together, or lodge in the wooden pillars, more often than they find their mark in your flesh. Even so, you are injured. Lose 4 Life Points unless you have either **WRESTLING** (in which case lose only 2 Life Points) or **SWORDPLAY** and a sword (in which case lose only 1 Life Point).

If you survive, you glance up to see your captain standing dumbstruck against the wall. The haze of blue resin-scented smoke makes him look like a ghost in his white tunic. If you want to fight on and try to rescue him, turn to **122**. If you choose to flee while you still can, turn to **145**.

55

The fruit seller will give you two golden apples in exchange for each of the following items: a jewelled sword, a cloak, a hawk, or a black jewel. You can get up to eight apples if you have all these items and

are prepared to part with them. If you make the trade alter your Adventure Sheet accordingly.

You can also buy additional apples at 5 dinars each if you have any money left. Remember that you are limited to eight possessions in total and that each apple counts as one possession.

Turn to **32**.

56

You remember the tale of a man who was captured by a family of ghouls. To save his life, he challenged the two sons to a race. Securing a head start, he hid himself in a thorn bush until they ran past and then doubled back to the hut where their mother was preparing supper. He knew he had to kill her, for otherwise her sorcery would find him wherever he ran. Luckily he also knew that steel cannot kill a ghoulish witch; only a wooden weapon will do. Taking up a stick, he gave her a single good clout that dashed out her brains. And it was good for him that his first blow was decisive, because although a ghoulish witch can be hurt with one blow, a second blow will only heal its wounds.

Armed with this knowledge, turn to **469**.

57

An ominous cough breaks the silence of the night. You whirl around. Your heart sinks when you see the ghoulish witch and her sons standing right behind you. She is holding a divining rod which she points towards you, saying through gritted teeth: 'There's

your supper. Don't lose it again!

She clouts you across the face with the rod. Lose 1 Life Point. If you still live, you are gripped firmly by the arms and led back to the hut. They shove you into the pantry and the mother starts looking at the jars along the shelves. 'Let's see . . . a bit of pepper and some garlic ought to set off the flavours nicely.'

This is your last chance. If you have MAGIC and a ring, turn to **327**. Otherwise you can at least go down fighting – if you have FOLKLORE, turn to **370**; if not, turn to **305**.

58

You pick your way between the sleeping pirates, open-mouthed at the wealth carelessly scattered all around. In your amazement you fail to notice their ship's cat curled up on a pile of velvet cushions. You tread on its tail and there is a howl that rises to the high-domed roof. In seconds the pirates are on their feet, staring around in shock and fury.

Before you have a chance to call out to your marines, one of the pirates raises an earthenware jug and sloshes its oily contents all over you. On contact with the air, the oil bursts into flame. You are engulfed in Greek fire – the sticky chemical used in sea battles. If you can't put it out quickly, you'll be burned alive!

If you have SEAFARING, turn to **81**. If not, even diving into the water will not save you – you are charred to a blackened crisp in seconds, and that is the end of your adventure.

59

Weak, deafened by the shriek of the wind and blinded by the driven sand, you stumble onwards. Desperation drives you to keep going. If you lay down, you know that you would soon be buried beneath the dunes. Lose 1 Life Point. If you still have the strength to press on, will you go straight into the teeth of the storm (turn to **105**), or head right (turn to **128**) or left (turn to **82**)?

60

Your blades clash, producing a deathly knell that resounds off the marble walls. His strength is incredible. Your parry is knocked aside and you are nicked painfully on the shoulder, losing 1 Life Point. If you can fight on, decide whether to parry his next blow (turn to **129**), try for a long-reach stab at his wrist (turn to **37**), or drive in close for a desperate attack (turn to **83**).

61

The oubliette is a bell-shaped chamber lined with muck and straw. There are several other prisoners here. Seeing you pacing around, one of them sighs and points to the grille in the middle of the ceiling. 'Some of us have been here for years,' he says. 'Food is thrown down every day or so, if we're lucky. Other than that, we're forgotten here. There's no escape.'

'What about water?'

'You must lick what you can off the walls.' He

shows you his tongue – black and covered with sores.

You position yourself directly below the grille and stare up at it – a distance of almost twenty feet. The walls funnel in towards it, so there is no chance of climbing up. If you possess either magic slippers or Indian rope and wish to use them now, turn to **133**. If not, turn to **155**.

62

The discovery of a small keg of date wine in the hold saves you from the threat of dehydration, but you are still in desperate straits. You cannot sail the ship alone. Borne on by the current, you drift for days until you see a hazy stretch of land. On getting closer, it turns out to be a region of mangrove swamps: gnarled trees with their roots surrounded by swirling salt water. You peer inland. The swamps continue as far as the eye can see.

As the ship drifts sluggishly along the shoreline, a host of hairless little monkeys come gibbering through the mangrove roots. The creatures have skins that are as smooth and blotchy as old bananas. They leap and splash through the waves towards the ship. Scrambling over the side in a crash of surf, they pilfer the lockers. You rush around trying to stop them but they are too quick. Clutching their plunder, they drop overboard and swim rapidly away.

If you have **MAGIC** and a ring, turn to **220**. If not, turn to **243**.

63

If you have **AGILITY**, turn to **109**. If you resort to **CUNNING**, turn to **132**. If you have neither skill, then your foot slips on the glass surface and you plunge to your doom in the chasm far below.

64

‘The egg of the rokhl!’ you say with a far-away look in your eye. ‘I’ve heard its nest lies just below the clouds, atop a pinnacle overlooking the headwaters of the Nile.’

‘No doubt it is high above the ground,’ retorts the old man, ‘but as for being at the head of the Nile – nonsense! I myself was born in a village at the head of the Nile. If there had been any high peak nearby on which the rokhl nested, I would surely know about it. The truth is that the rokhl is to be found on the Isle of Palms, far to the east.’

Lose the codeword *Kismet* and record the codeword *Fabric* instead. Then turn to **470**.

65

Drawing a deep breath just before the smoke cloud reaches you, you stumble blindly forward to the middle of the room. The hubble-bubble pipe is still there. Pushing the tube into your mouth, you draw air into your lungs. You guessed right – the noxious smoke, in passing through the water of the pipe, is rendered harmless.

The three sorcerers are calling to each other, but they cannot see what’s happening because of the

cloud of smoke. You scoop up the chart they were looking at and tuck the hubble-bubble pipe under your arm, then grope your way to the back of the room. There you find a doorway that leads out of the citdel, and you make your escape.

Add the chart and the hubble-bubble pipe to your list of possessions if you decide to keep them, then turn to **42**.

66

Lose the codeword *Harem* if you have it.

You start back across the baking desert sands. Billows of heat rise off the ground, making the horizon tremble. Rocks and dust lie in all directions as far as the eye can see.

If you have a full water bottle, mark it as empty and lose 1 Life Point. If you did not have a full bottle, lose 2 Life Points. (Lose 1 less Life Point if you have WILDERNESS LORE.) Assuming you survive, turn to **454**.

67

Pebbles skitter under your feet as you go racing down the slope. You cannot outrun the deadly gases pouring from the volcanic cone. Within moments you are engulfed, and it feels as though a furnace has been opened right behind your back. Drawing breath to scream, you suck in a lungful of searing hot gas, and mercifully you die almost at once.

68

You come up with several plans.

First, you could just ask to see the Caliph. You know that this would involve giving the chamberlain a gift of at least 1,000 dinars to prove you're a person of high rank. Turn to **22** if you try that.

Second, you could approach someone who works at the palace and get them to take you to the Caliph in person. You know several palace employees, but you cannot be sure which of them are loyal to the Caliph himself and which are in the pay of Jafar the Vizier. If you risk it, turn to **361**.

Third, you know that the Caliph sometimes travels around the city in disguise at night. It ought to be possible for you to tail him and perhaps get close enough to tell him your story – as long as his bodyguard, Masrur, doesn't kill you first. Turn to **182** if you want to try.

69

The astrologer emerges from his shop and stands gazing out across the plaza. The festival seems not to interest him. The crowds of merry-makers might as well be the flitting shadows of puppets. His gaze is fixed firmly on the sky, where the moon shows as a thin sliver of ivory above the spires of the city.

You step up beside him. 'Barely moments ago, a dervish spoke significantly to me of the sky's portents,' you say. 'What can you see amid the stars?'

He turns to look at you. His gaze is misty with secret lore. He sweeps his arm up, taking in the

constellations spread out above, then ends the gesture by pointing at the door of his shop. 'The stars are the key to all mysteries, but yonder is the portal,' he tells you. 'One dinar will oil the lock, and then you may step in to your future.'

The sudden talk of money banishes all fancies. 'Are you a sage, old man, or the father of all merchants?' you cry. 'Have you so little heart for the beauty of the night that you must sully it with talk of money?'

He strokes his beard. 'A dinar only! Will you balk at such a paltry price, when you have the chance to learn what the future holds?'

If you pay him 1 dinar, cross it off and turn to **115**. If not, you can talk to the sailor who has just left (turn to **475**), the storyteller sitting on the plaza nearby (turn to **23**), or go on your way (turn to **92**).

70

You weave to one side, then jump back as Masrur's mighty blade comes chopping down. The blow misses you by inches, striking the floor where you were standing less than a second ago. There is a harsh ringing sound as the tip of the blade snaps off, followed by Masrur's scream of scarlet rage.

If he wasn't in a killing mood before, he is now. Dodging past, you race out on to the landing. Jafar follows, clapping his hands to summon the guards. Sure enough, a band of swordsmen come pouring through an arch at the end of the landing and rush towards you. You will have to act fast.

If you have **ARCHERY**, turn to **230**. Otherwise you

can fight (turn to **47**) or make a run for it (turn to **253**).

71

It feels as though you have no strength left in your body. You are simply stumbling on, each step a miracle in itself. Sometimes you half faint, tumbling down a dune only to pick yourself up and somehow find the will to carry on.

Lose 2 Life Points (or only 1 Life Point if you still have a full bottle). If you are still alive, you eventually see a swaying patch of greenery ahead and give a parched croak of joy when you realize it is the edge of the desert. Turn to **113**.

72

The guards burst into the room. You jump up on to the parapet and leap, landing with bent knees and rolling to absorb the shock of the fall. Even so, the wind is knocked out of your lungs and for a moment you lie motionless while taking stock of your injuries. Lose 1 Life Point if you have **AGILITY** or **LUCK**, otherwise lost 5 Life Points.

If you survive, you look up to see the guards glaring from the balcony. You realize you must drag yourself to your feet despite the pain because it will not take them long to raise the alarm. Hobbling off towards the gate, you are met by a sentry who has heard the commotion. Peering past your shoulder, he demands: 'What's going on?'

'A thief broke into the Caliph's bedchamber and

stole his fruit bowl,' you say, adopting a hangdog expression. 'Don't suppose I'll be getting any handouts now, what with all the fuss. Got any alms for a poor cripple, guv'nor?'

He gives you a contemptuous glance and shoves you aside. 'Begone, you wretch!' he cries, drawing his sword and running past you into the palace.

You smile as you watch him go. 'Thanks, I will,' you say under your breath. Turn to **383**.

73

The steps have been made slimy by dripping water. Your foot skids out from under you and the next moment you are plummeting through space.

If you have LUCK turn to **119**. If not, turn to **142**.

74

The storyteller continues, ignoring the captain's derisive scowl. 'The she-ghoul was not impressed by the prince's proposal, but her sons' pride was pricked. They insisted on proving they could outrun any mortal. "As babes we were suckled on blood, and human flesh has always been our meat," they said to the prince. "Go. You'll have five minutes' head start."

'The prince raced away, but as soon as he was out of sight of the ghouls he hid in a thorn bush. Soon – much sooner than they'd promised – the brothers came looking for him. "He's got further than I thought," he heard one say. "It's true," said the other, peering into the distance, "but we'll catch him."

‘Once they had run off, the prince doubled back to the hut. Now, in infancy his nurse had told him many old stories like this one. He knew that steel is of no use in killing a ghoul. Only strong wood will do the trick. He crept in to see the crone stirring the cooking-pot, and taking up a stick from beside the door he clouted her smartly—’ The storyteller slaps his hands together, producing such a loud noise that several small children jump back in alarm.

Then he grins and shakes his head sadly. ‘Ah, if only he’d listened more carefully to his old nurse. For you see, he forgot that one hard blow can kill a ghoul, but a second blow will only bring it back to life stronger than before. He gave the old crone two blows for good measure – and up she leapt, full of terrible vigour, and, seizing the prince, stuffed him into the cooking-pot.’

He pauses and looks around. ‘And that is the end of the story.’

‘What drivell!’ storms the captain. ‘And not even a happy ending! Come, it’s time to set sail.’

Note the codeword *Conch*, then turn to 375.

75

Venturing ashore, you find a flat grass-covered plain almost devoid of trees. Captain Ibrahim points out a white tower near the middle of the island. Facing it at a distance of three hundred paces or so is a large mound of white stones. ‘People must have lived here once,’ infers the captain.

‘Perhaps not people,’ says a voice.



Startled, you whirl around to see a strange group standing just beside you. There are seven strong warriors with grey skin, whose long snouts and serrated teeth make them look like sharks. In their midst is a dwarf with a rotund belly and small plump features. He wears a copper crown stamped with a mask-like face, and so tall is this crown that at first you did not realize he was a dwarf at all – you thought the face on the crown was his real face.

Captain Ibrahim soon recovers from his surprise. ‘You have a weird look about you,’ he blusters. ‘I warn you not to molest us. We carry swords!’

Most of the sailors are white with fear. The dwarf smiles and says, ‘Be calm. The only matter I must decide is how long you’ll stay here as my guests. You see the tower there? It may interest you to know that I built it myself in a single night. Now, if you can duplicate the feat, building a second tower from that heap of white stones, I’ll let you sail away in the morning.’

‘And if not?’ you ask.

He yawns as if the question is too obvious to merit an answer. With a magic gesture, he causes a large satin cushion to appear. ‘I’ll take a nap,’ he says, removing his crown and lying down. To the seven shark-like warriors he says: ‘Do not let them depart. Wake me in the morning.’

With that, he closes his pudgy little eyes and immediately begins to snore. If you have FOLKLORE or SEAFARING, turn to **283**. If not, turn to **311**.

76

'At first I was amazed that any mortal could reach this city,' says the gryphon, 'but I see you bear the magic bloom that allows you to walk across the clouds.'

You glance down at the flower the captain handed to you. You had forgotten you were still holding it. Note on your Adventure Sheet that you possess a jasmine flower, then turn to **98**.

77

As the echo of that ghastly whispering voice dies on the air, the cowed figures sag like puppets left to dangle on a hook. This appears to signal the end of the meeting. The islanders rise from the floor and stalk forward to bind your poor captain. He is too numb with shock to resist.

You sneak off before anyone spots you. Back at the ship, the crew listen with mounting horror as you tell your tale. 'These islanders are said to worship the corpses of their ancestors,' mutters Sayid the helmsman. 'By heaven, it seems they are ruled by them as well!'

The looks of fear are plain on all their faces, but one man at least has the courage to speak out on behalf of loyalty – Jumail the cook. 'We can't leave Captain Ibrahim to die at the hands of infidels.' He turns to you. 'If you want to try to rescue him, you can count me in.'

If you want to mount a rescue attempt, turn to **167**. If you think you should wait for the tide and then sail at once, turn to **258**.



The captain emerges from his cabin in a sour mood and announces to the assembled crew that you will not be sailing on into the Red Sea. 'I cannot risk it,' he says. 'Instead, we'll sell our cargo here and then return to Suhar.'

Several of the sailors give a groan. They had been promised a share of the voyage's profits. The rest are quite cheered by the news, since it means they will be home again sooner than they thought.

You cannot go back yet. When you set sail it was to seek adventure, and you have yet to find it. Old Madan, the ship's carpenter, sees you packing your belongings and says, 'So, you're disembarking here?'

You pull the strings of your pack tight. 'What choice is there?'

He scratches his head and says, 'Well, I have heard tales of the Scarlet Isle to the far south. It is said to be a place of fabulous riches in gold and ivory. Why not suggest that the captain tries his luck there?'

'Why should he listen to me?' you ask.

'You have hidden talents. I suspect he values your opinion.'

Well, will you suggest the captain sails for the Scarlet Isle (turn to **456**) or will you leave and make your own way from here on (turn to **11**)?

79

You are found and dragged from behind the bush, then thrown on to your face in front of the Sultan. 'I'll slay this coward, too!' snarls one of the knights, raising his spear.

'Hold,' says the Sultan simply. The knight waits as though frozen, spear poised above you.

You look up. 'Why spare me, when you slaughtered all these others?' you ask, scrabbling to your feet.

Perhaps he smiles behind his mask. 'I have not spared you, only suspended your sentence of death. You intrigue me. I see with an eye that has looked on Paradise, and I see that destiny swirls about you like smoke.'

Your mind is racing. Plainly you will not get another chance. Will you use CUNNING (turn to **379**), fight them (turn to **17**), or make a break for it (turn to **40**)?

80

You go and shelter in a cave, after first checking that it isn't already occupied. A raw wind howls outside, but you are snug inside your woollen cloak. Even so, you get very little sleep after your horrific experience. Rising with the first silver light of the predawn, you head down out of the hills to join the others. Turn to **289**.

81

Greek fire cannot be extinguished by water, only by wine. Luckily there is a half-full barrel right next to you. You dive in, smothering the licking flames. Your marines, hearing the commotion, swarm out of the hold and leap down to the jetty with drawn swords. In seconds you are embroiled in a fight for your life against the astonished pirate band.

If you have **SWORDPLAY** and a sword, lose 1 Life Point. If not but you have **WRESTLING**, lose 2 Life Points. If you have neither skill, lose 4 Life Points. Assuming you survive, turn to **372**.

82

The wind carries choking clouds of sand as fine as mill-dust. It clogs your throat and scours your eyes raw. Lose 1 Life Point. If you can survive that, then – coughing, half-blinded, deafened by the shriek of the wind – you trudge on towards your destiny.

Will you go straight ahead (turn to **151**), or to the left (turn to **36**) or right (turn to **59**)?

83

Your blow is perfectly judged, but you may as well have struck him with a stalk of grass for all the effect it has. Laughing wildly, he dives forward and slices deep into your side. Lose 4 Life Points. If you are still able to fight, you can try the same tactic again (turn to **148**), dodge while attempting a less decisive blow (turn to **37**), or just concentrate on parrying his attacks (turn to **60**).

84

The mysterious island drops astern and is lost to sight. For a day or so afterwards, the captain takes to stamping around the deck fretfully. 'I should have surveyed the isle, at least!' he admits to you. 'It might have been one of these places spoken of in the old tales.'

'Which tales are those?'

'You know the ones! I've heard tell of islands where the fruit is solid gold, where the streams give eternal life and the womenfolk are—'

'Ah, I thought you meant the other tales.' You take a sip of water from the barrel to conceal a smile. 'Stories of Sindbad's voyages – islands inhabited by murderous cannibals, insane wizards, bloated giants and the like.'

'Yes . . .' says the captain thoughtfully. 'I expect I made the right decision, after all.'

A sailor breaks in on your conversation to point out a ship drifting ahead. Her sails are furled and there is no reply to your shouts. As you come alongside, you see the reason. The deck is strewn with corpses.

Turn to 356.

85

The tangled morass of waterlogged vegetation makes for hard going. You might wade for a few minutes, then have to haul yourself up and climb between the trees. You are constantly plucking leeches off your legs, and more than once you hide in the treetops

when you see a crocodile lazily drifting past. There is nothing you can do about the blinding swarms of insects.

At low tide you collect a few shellfish off the mangrove roots and eat them raw. After a few days you manage to collect enough dry leaves and wood to make a simple raft, and on this you travel swiftly until you reach a river channel. By now you are limp with fever and so thirsty that you happily lap up the stinking river water. If you have WILDERNESS LORE, lose 2 Life Points. If not, lose 5 Life Points. (Lose 1 less Life Point if you have a bottle to drink from.)

If you still live, you rouse yourself to see a city on the river ahead. With your last reserves of strength, you paddle your little raft to the bank and crawl ashore. Turn to 442.

86

If you have MAGIC and a ring, turn to 199. Otherwise, you wait until they ride into view: turn to 17.

87

You decide to get some rest. Your opportunity to escape will come later. Pulling together a mattress of grimy straw, you doze off as the last streamers of daylight fade from the sky above the grille.

You wake up abruptly in the dead of night. A dream fades into wisps at the back of your memory. You recall being carried to the graveyard outside Baghdad. In the dream, you were alive and aware;

but unable to move. Cold sweat soaks your clothing.

You reach out a hand towards your belongings. The slippers are gone! The dim moonlight lets you see well enough to tell that the old man has gone too. Cross the magic slippers off your Adventure Sheet. You notice that the old man has left his long-tailed cat behind. You can keep it if you wish (note it on your Adventure Sheet if so) and then turn to **61**.

88

A bank of green vapour conceals you from the three sorcerers. Darting forward, you snatch up the chart they were discussing. Your eyes begin to sting, but you grope your way to one wall and climb up one of the long tapestries until you reach the balcony above. You glance down to see the sorcerers standing in the midst of the green murk. It does not have any effect on them, although you are in no doubt that it would have poisoned you within seconds.

They do not think to look up. You make your way to the end of the balcony and find a window to the outside. Climbing down, you hurry off down the hillside to safety. Note the chart on your Adventure Sheet and turn to **42**.

89

Azenomei lies motionless at your feet. Slowly he begins to dissolve into a thick black miasma. A stench like burning sulphur fills the room. When his body has completely vanished, the only thing left is his sword, which you can take if you wish. If you

have the codeword *Harem*, turn to **20**. If not, turn to **66**.

90

You dive into the stream, forcing yourself deep under the clear cool water while the cloud of lethal hot gas rolls past overhead. At last you can hold your breath no longer. Rising with a gasp, you discover that the first wave of gas has passed. The air is filled with a reek like the fires of Hell. You hurry back down the mountain before the advancing ooze of lava cuts you off.

After several more days of searching, you are certain that the legends are wrong. If the rokh really does exist, its nest is not in this part of the world. You could try travelling to the east (turn to **180**) or else abandon the search and go home to Baghdad (turn to **113**).

91

You show her the fragment of diamond. 'Sorry,' you say, abashed. 'I got this instead.'

She looks at you as though she suspects you are a blockhead. At least she doesn't accuse you of deliberate treachery. 'Well,' she says after drawing several deep breaths, 'at least tell my father where I am, will you?'

'If I see him,' you assure her. 'I don't exactly rub shoulders with the Caliph every day, you know.'

You bow and retreat from the room before she decides to turn you into a worm. Turn to **66**.

92

You walk down by the river, where the moon's reflection lies like a sunken scimitar in the black depths. Some distance off, whispering couples glide between the trees. Blinkered by love, they take no notice of the solitary brooding figure on the river bank.

You contemplate your future. The life of a beggar promises nothing but misery, hardship, sickness and an early death. You burn with outrage at the way Jafar profited by your good fortune, and the Caliph should be warned of his evil plots. But an ordinary citizen like you can hardly demand a audience with the ruler of the civilized world. It would be different if you were wealthy. 'The scales of justice are balanced by a little gold,' as the saying goes.

If you go straight to the Caliph's palace anyway, turn to **206**. If you decide instead to set out in search of adventure and riches, will you go by sea (turn to **160**) or join a merchant caravan heading overland (turn to **183**)?

93

Tiptoeing to the further doorway, you see Jafar standing talking to a slave girl. You jump back out of sight just in time to avoid being seen as he turns.

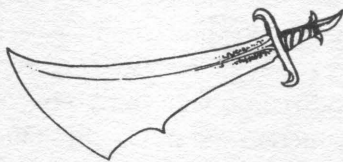
'Tonight you seem radiant with satisfaction, my lord,' purrs the slave girl, handing him a goblet of wine. 'Might it be that my company pleases you?'

Jafar sneers and lifts the cup to his lips. 'You? You're a bony milk-skinned snippet I bought off a

Christian. I'd get more pleasure from the company of the lice that inhabit a poor man's clothes!' As the slave starts to weep, Jafar grins unpleasantly and says, 'I'm pleased for two reasons. The first is because today I duped a fool out of a great prize – a stallion of unsurpassed beauty which I presented to the Caliph. Now he has given me this robe of honour and a palace of my own on the banks of the Tigris!'

'And what, O Mighty Master, is the other reason?' asks the slave, intrigued despite herself.

You have little hope of retrieving the stallion now that Jafar has given it to the Caliph. If you stay to eavesdrop on what Jafar is saying, turn to **362**. If you think it would be wiser to leave the palace now rather than press your luck, turn to **383**.



94

Sliding into the oil-black water, you swim over to the barque. As you draw level with the rail, you see a half-dozen guards crouched around a dice game on the foredeck. Inside her curtained kiosk, the woman sighs forlornly as she gazes at the moths skittering in the light of the lamps.

If you have **STREETWISE**, turn to **162**. If not, you can show yourself to the guards (turn to **117**) or approach the woman stealthily (turn to **140**).

95

The guards burst into the room in time to see you lowering yourself gingerly over the balcony. Running forward, they start to shower all manner of missiles down on your head: lamps, helmets, shields, even the splintered door-frame.

Something heavy hits your shoulder. You don't see what it is, but your grip is torn from the vine and you are falling. There is a split-second of sickening terror as the air rushes past. Then you hit the ground and a jolt of pain stabs up your body. Lose 6 Life Points. If you survive, you hear the guards' shouts from above. You cannot lie flopping in agony on the ground. You must rise and flee for your life before they catch you.

Limping painfully towards the gate you are intercepted by a sentry. Your heart sinks, but then you realize that he does not know what the commotion is all about. He stares past you at the soldiers rushing across the courtyard. 'What's going on?' he asks.

'There's an assassin in the palace,' you gasp through gritted teeth.

The sentry rushes off across the courtyard. Moving with all the speed your twisted ankle will allow, you slip out of the gate and duck into the shadows of a side street. Glancing back, you see the soldiers who were chasing you run out of the gate. They look around, confused, but none saw where you went. You have given them the slip. Turn to 383.

Sparkling light appears from no obvious source. You see crystal pillars forming an alcove in the wall ahead of you. The old man whom you met on the ledge is here, dressed now in the white robes of a king of Old Persia. A black jewel shimmers at his throat. You stand in awe of the unknown as Yussuf slowly pads down the steps to join you.

‘You have done well to come this far, and now you shall claim your reward,’ says the old man. ‘Here are four treasures.’ He reaches into a gold-banded treasure chest and brings out a copper lamp. ‘This is the enchanted lamp used by the hero Antares when he crept unseen through the harem of Sakhur the Jinni.’

‘How does it work?’ asks Yussuf.

‘Merely light it, and while you hold it in your hands no one can see you. But there is only a little of the magic oil left. Enough for a few minutes of invisibility at best.’ He puts the lamp down and produces a coil of rope. ‘This second treasure is a rope of distant India. On command it will rise straight into the air of its own accord – a marvellous treasure for a rogue!’ He puts the rope aside and draws a trumpet out of the chest. ‘And this is the horn which levelled the walls of Jericho in ancient times. Be warned that it is perilous to unleash its destructive force, however.’

He stands with folded arms while you gaze on the treasures. ‘How many can we take?’ asks Yussuf. ‘Just one?’

'One each!' declares the old man.

Yussuf leaves it to you to decide. If you choose the lamp and the rope, turn to **164**. If the rope and the trumpet, turn to **187**. If the lamp and the trumpet, turn to **210**. If you reject all those choices, turn to **233**.

97

The man leads you down a narrow alley towards a bath-house. If you have **STREETWISE**, turn to **344**. If not but you have **LUCK**, turn to **366**. If you have neither skill, turn to **387**.

98

The gryphon returns with you to where the ship is still stuck in the boughs of the violet-blossomed tree. The sailors loosen their swords and one man brings out a bow, but you call out to them that the creature is your friend.

'What harm can you do us now?' says the captain in a despairing voice. 'Has your devilish sorcery not brought us enough misfortune?'

The gryphon assures him that it intends them no harm. 'Let me take the mast of your vessel in my beak,' it suggests. 'I am strong enough to bear both ship and crew safely down to the waves.'

If you urge the captain to accept the offer of help, turn to **121**. If you think you would be better off trying a different plan, turn to **144**.

99

The heads of the cowed figures slump wearily to their chests. It is the signal that the meeting is over. The cowering islanders rise to their feet, and several dart forward along the room to seize Captain Ibrahim.

You realize it is time to get out of here, but shock at what you've witnessed makes you hesitate just a moment too long. As you tiptoe towards the door, an islander turns and spots you. A great shriek rings out, and the others are on you in an instant. Turn to 54.

100

You give orders for the merchantman's sailors to take your ship back to port, while your own crew come aboard and man their vessel. Along with a hand-picked band of your best marines, you hide inside some empty barrels in the hold. You do not have to wait long before the cry goes out from the look-out, warning of black sails on the horizon.

Grappling hooks wrench the ships together and there is the desultory clash of steel. Your sailors put up a token resistance just to prevent the pirates getting suspicious, surrendering before anyone is killed. Listening from inside the barrel, you hear the tramp of feet on the deck above. Harsh commands are given and the barrels are loaded aboard the pirate ship. The slow rolling of the heavy merchantman gives way to the swift grace of the pirates' warship.

Hours pass before you feel the ship jolt against the



side of a dock. The pirates start to unload the barrels. You get ready to spring out on them, but then someone says: 'Let's broach this keg and have a party. We can unload the rest tomorrow.'

Even better. You wait until the noise of drunken carousing settles down into rhythmic snores, then you ease the top off your barrel and climb out. You emerge from the hold to find yourself in an underground lagoon covered by a vast stone dome. There are bronze braziers all along the shore of the lagoon, and the scene they illuminate is one of opulent luxury. The shore is covered with scattered gold, gems, ivory, pearls – along with jars of oil and perfume, flasks of cool green wine and bolts of rich

red cloth. The pirates lie asleep, limbs flung out like starfish in their wine-soaked contentment. Here you see a scar-faced villain clutching a necklace of dripping sapphires. Beside him lies a snoring red-faced ruffian hugging a blanket of lustrous silk.

If you wish to rely on **ROGUERY**, turn to **12**. If you possess the lamp of Antar and want to use it, turn to **35**. If you have neither of those, turn to **58**.

101

‘What you say is full of pragmatic wisdom,’ you say to Hakim. He nods and smiles, thinking you agree, but then you go on: ‘However, it reminds me of the sad story of the man who passed Mecca every year with his camels. Each time he would pause, and bow, and say, “Next year I will make the pilgrimage.”’

‘And what happened to him?’ asks Hakim.

‘His excuses outlasted the years God had allotted to him. Whether or not he entered the gates of Paradise, I cannot say. God alone is all-knowing. But what do you think?’

Hakim turns from you to the holy city with a look of concern. ‘Even the most foolish of men knows the value of prudence,’ he mutters at last. ‘And surely I can spare ten days of my life for He who has given me everything I possess!’

He gives the orders for the caravan to halt. If you have the codeword *Mordant*, turn to **194**. If not, turn to **146**.

102

You give the signal. The ghoulish brothers go racing off without a backward glance, chortling because they think they will soon leave you far behind. So they do, but you are not worried. Instead of racing along the path, which curves around the hillside, you climb straight up and over the ridge, dropping back on to the path before they come around the bend. The two brothers give croaks of dismay when they see your heels kicking up dust in the moonlight far in front of them. They put on a burst of desperate speed, charging like a couple of enraged bull elephants, but you still just manage to beat them back to the hut.

The old she-ghoul is dumbfounded when she learns that her sons intend to keep their promise. 'Then I've been slaving away over this pot for nothing!' she grumbles. 'Why couldn't you just cheat like your old father used to?'

'But we lost fair and square, Ma,' protests the elder brother, putting his hand across your shoulder. You try not to squirm.

You spend the night with the ghoulish family – as bizarre a group of hosts as you've ever known. This is a story to enthral the passers-by in the bazaar in Baghdad. Unfortunately you are still no closer to fame and riches. Or are you? The next morning you bid farewell to the ghouls and set off out of the hills to find your friends. Turn to **289**.

103

All your plotting comes to nothing. The ship sets sail the next day – before you have time to formulate a plan, let alone put it into action. You are chained to the oars, and you have nothing to look forward to but the short harsh life of a galley slave. Your adventure is at an end.

104

The law of hospitality means that you must accept. The Bedouin would rather starve than lose face by failing to feed you. Turn to 127.



105

The outline of ruins shows as a darker blot against the charcoal-coloured sky. You have arrived at a place of basalt columns that have been uncovered by the storm. You lean against them, gasping raggedly for breath in the suffocating dry dust.

Lose 1 Life Point. If you still live, you see a feeble splinter of sunlight find a crack in the swirling sand-clouds. It lasts long enough to bathe the columns in the purple colours of dream. Then the storm eclipses it again.

The place seems draped in mystery. Will you enter the circle of columns (turn to 172) or turn away (turn to 82)?

106

His sword cuts a bloody gash across your neck. Blinded for an instant by tears of pain, you fail to strike him in return. Lose 2 Life Points. If you can still fight, decide whether to get close and attack with all your might (turn to **148**), make a well-aimed but weaker strike (turn to **37**), or back away while parrying (turn to **60**).

107

In the dead of the night, the rocking of the ship rouses you from a light doze. You have a raging thirst. As you stumble sleepily towards the freshwater barrel in the middle of the deck, you almost tread on your ship's cat. It must have been brought across by one of the others when they first explored this ship, only to get left behind in the hurry to leave. It mews piteously and rubs against your legs, so you give it a saucer of water.

You are just on the point of draining your own cup when you hear a soft thud. The ship's cat has keeled over. It wheezes a last breath and then lies still. The water must be poisoned. Flinging the cup away, you pace across the deck giving each corpse a kick in the guts. The sixth 'corpse' you do this to gives a yelp of pain and jumps up. You have found the poisoner.

Hearing your shouts, the crew come across from the other ship. Turn to **174**.

108

The seven warriors give barracuda grins and silently launch themselves into battle. You see the captain sliced instantly in two. Another of your companions turns to run, but one of the warriors grabs him by the shoulders and sinks his wide fang-rimmed mouth entirely around his head. A single bite ends the poor wretch's life.

You groan as you are chopped across the thighs, then sent flying by an arm that felt stronger than a swinging jib. Lose 6 Life Points unless you have **WRESTLING**, in which case lose only 4 Life Points. If you survive, you see that you have no chance of defeating the shark men. You cannot even save your friends. Hating yourself, but knowing you have no choice, you crawl away while the shark men are distracted by the carnage. Splashing back to the ship, you raise the anchor and let the current carry you away from the island. No one else got away; you are alone.

Turn to 266.

109

Holding your arms out to either side, you stride along the glass column at a rapid but measured pace. Shouts from behind tell you that the Sultan and his knights have reached the brink. You ignore them. The Sultan's marvellous voice booms off the walls of the chasm, but you disregard his words. After a moment a spear whistles past your ear; you do not let it distract you.

You reach the far side. The knights do not dare come after you. Taunting them by bowing, you disappear into the undergrowth. Turn to **177**.

110

You can escape at any time, so there is no need for haste. Making a mattress out of handfuls of grimy straw, you lie down to get some rest. At the top of the oubliette, beyond the grille, the last silvery gleam of daylight is fading from the sky. You yawn, dimly aware of your eyelids fluttering closed . . .

You wake up abruptly in a cold sweat. It is pitch dark. You were dreaming of being carried to the graveyard outside Baghdad. In the dream you were alive but unable to move. You could not tell anyone you were still alive.

You reach out a hand towards your belongings. The Indian rope is gone! As your eyes adjust to the gloom, you see the old man is no longer beside you. He stole your rope and used it to escape. Cross the Indian rope off your Adventure Sheet. You notice that the old man has left his long-tailed cat behind. You can keep it if you wish (note it on your Adventure Sheet if so) and then turn to **61**.

111

A rope drops from the balcony above and a figure comes sliding down to land beside you. It is Azenomei. 'Put this across your mouth!' he cries, handing you a piece of silk soaked in vinegar.

You are in no position to argue. While you wind

the silk around your face, Azenomei daringly rushes forward into the bank of green fog. One of the sorcerers tries to grab him, but only gets a hard buffet across the chin for his trouble. Snatching up the chart, Azenomei throws it to you and then leads the way back up the rope to the balcony. At the end is a window, and another rope takes you to safety outside the citadel.

‘You see,’ says Azenomei as the two of you race off down the hillside, ‘you do need me.’

Lose the codeword *Noose*. Remember to add the chart to your list of possessions. If you now agree to help Azenomei rescue his sister, turn to **270**. If you still refuse to accompany him across the desert, turn to **179**.

112

Azenomei’s golden eyes flash with eagerness for the kill. Pulling his sword from his belt, he leaps forward to match you blow for blow. Both of you suffer dreadful wounds, and red human blood soon mingles with the black ichor of jinni’s veins underfoot. You feel yourself weakening, but you are determined to make this a fight to the bitter end.

If you have **SWORDPLAY** and a sword, lose 2 Life Points. If not but you have **WRESTLING**, lose 4 Life Points. If you have neither skill, lose 6 Life Points. If you survive, turn to **89**.

113

Falling in with a group of travellers, you return at last to Baghdad. Recover 4 Life Points if you are injured. Almost a year has passed since you left, and a lot has changed in that time. Soldiers patrol the streets and a curfew forces everyone off the streets after evening prayers. The City of Peace has become a city of fear. Whenever you ask the reason, people compress their lips and warn you to keep silent, until finally a blind old woman tells you: 'The Caliph believes the city is on the brink of revolt.'

'And is it?' you ask.

She shakes her head. 'Not to start with – but the more he tightens his grip, the more likely it becomes.'

'This is Jafar's doing!'

'Perhaps.' She tilts her head at the sound of the muezzin's echoing chant. 'The curfew. I must find a place to shelter for the night.'

As she hobbles off, you consider your options. If you have the codeword *Zebra*, turn to **205**. If not but you have the lamp of Antar, turn to **45**. If you have neither of those but you have *STREETWISE*, turn to **68**. Otherwise you must present yourself at the palace and request an audience with the Caliph (turn to **22**).

114

Ayisha first casts a spell of healing. If you were injured, you can now restore your Life Points to their original score.

She follows this with another more powerful

enchantment. A dark whirlwind springs up around you. You feel yourself being flung across vast distances. For a moment you taste rain, and see the flash of lightning behind a leaden cloud. Then there is sun on your face, and you are dropping towards a verdant island set in a sparkling blue sea.

You land with a thump and the whirlwind swirls away. Picking yourself up, you look around. You are beside a sheer pinnacle of rock that rises from the centre of the island. You cannot see the top because of the clouds above. Turn to **136**.

115

The astrologer leads you up a winding staircase to a tower room at the top of his house. An archway opens on to the night, giving a crystal-clear view of the sky. While you settle yourself down on a pile of velvet cushions, he brings a wooden table on which he sets up a brass astrolabe. For several minutes you watch him take sightings of the stars, every so often giving a grunt and jotting something down on the chart at his elbow. At last he turns and says, 'I see a thief among thieves, a most daring knave, bold and lucky as an alley cat.'

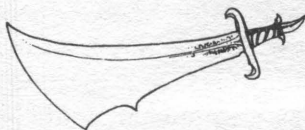
'Is it me? Or is this someone I shall meet? Where will it happen?'

He holds up a hand to stem your flood of questions. 'The future is like a page from a book seen in a dream. The words are not written in the clearest hand, nor in the sharpest of inks. All I know is that a great journey lies ahead. Beware, then, as a journey

can mean death! Treachery awaits you with a plain mark on his face. Sages and sorcerers may help or hinder you. In a place of many doors you will find your destiny . . .'

His voice trails off. In a less ominous tone he adds, 'These things I have described are but the myriad possibilities of your future. You stand at a crossroads. Choose your destiny.'

Thanking him, you leave more baffled than when you came in. Turn to **92**.



116

Masrur's sword slices the air, only to catch in the drapes just above your head. There is a ripping of velvet fabric as he yanks it free and stares around. By this time you have already dodged past and run to the doorway.

Uttering a scornful gasp, Jafar pushes the burly warrior aside and takes a step forward. 'Guards!' he yells as he claps his hands imperiously. 'Guards! A thief is at large in the palace!'

You turn your head in time to see a band of swordsmen come rushing towards you through an arch at the end of the landing. You will have to act fast.

If you have **ARCHERY**, turn to **230**. If not, you can either fight (turn to **47**) or make a run for it (turn to **253**).

117

You seize the rail and haul yourself dripping to the deck. The guards leap up with angry expressions. Lamplight flares on naked steel as they draw their swords. 'Begone!' cries the nearest guard. 'We'll slay anyone who tries to take the lady from us.'

If you meekly return to your own ship, turn to **375**. If you decide to fight, turn to **185**.

118

You turn to run, but behind you there is only a slab of unyielding rock. You join Yussuf in hammering against this, shouting for help as the monstrous horde draws closer. The creatures' noxious breath makes you choke. Turning, you look straight into the pitiless cylopean faces.

A taloned limb rises, throwing a jag-edged shadow on the cave roof.

You open your mouth to scream.

The talon falls, silencing you for ever.

119

You drop only a few feet, hitting the floor of the cavern with a painful thud. You were almost at the bottom of the staircase, only you didn't realize it! You will have a nasty bruise to show for it, but at least you are alive – for now. Turn to **96**.



120

The Caliph lavishes gifts on you: gold, jewels and splendid robes of honour. 'This is not all,' he says. 'Now I need a new Grand Vizier . . .'

'Me, lord?' You bow to keep him from seeing the look of shock on your face. 'But I am not wise or worthy enough!'

He laughs. 'What you mean to say is, you're not a fat spoiled court popinjay.'

'Prince of Princes, I would never say such—!'

'Then you are diplomatic enough for the job,' says the Caliph. 'Also, you have proved wise where it matters, which is not in academic affairs but in affairs of the human heart. Moreover, you have seen much of the world. I shall enjoy hearing your tales.'

And so, from humble origins, you suddenly find yourself the Grand Vizier to the Caliph of Baghdad. You are rich and respected. Nobles and courtiers flock to hear your advice. The Prophet Muhammed warned against intoxication, but you had always thought he referred only to wine. Now you know that destiny, too, can be a heady draught.

Turn to 482.

121

The gryphon is as good as its word. Beating its wings with hurricane force, it pulls the ship clear of the branches and swoops down, bearing you off the edge of the cloud and down towards the azure water far below.

'By the blessed Creator of All!' gasps Captain

Ibrahim, his face as white as the fluttering sails. 'This is no voyage for a sailor.'

'Cheer up,' you tell him. 'When you return to Baghdad, this will be a tale to match any that has ever been told.'

As the ship touches the waves, his look of drawn horror slowly gives way to a broad smile. 'That's true,' he admits.

The gryphon circles once and soars off into the sky. As one man, the crew fall to their knees and bow towards Mecca, thanking God for their safe deliverance. Turn to 234.

122

Grabbing the rafters, you swing yourself up and drive a hard kick into the midriff of the man right in front of you. He goes flailing back and collides with Captain Ibrahim, who gives him a hefty clout across the jaw and snatches up his sword. Ibrahim's bewildered expression gives way to a joyous lusty roar as he leaps forward to help you.

Standing back to back, the two of you fight your way to the door. Lose 4 Life Points – unless you have SWORDPLAY (and a sword) or WRESTLING, in which case lose only 1 Life Point. If you still have breath in your body, you race off with the islanders in close pursuit.

The jetty comes in sight. Encouraged by the crew's yells, you ignore the stones and spears that are whistling past your heads. Leaping aboard, the captain gives the immediate order to cast off. The

ship lurches out from the jetty and swirls on the river currents. You watch from the rail as the angry mob comes charging on to the jetty. Some career into the water in their haste, and now it is the turn of your crew to pelt them with missiles.

As he gets his breath back, Captain Ibrahim tells you that the islanders kept asking him about the nest of the rokh, the giant bird said to prey on elephants. 'I told them I wanted only to trade, but they were having none of it,' he pants. 'They accused me of being after the rokh's diamond eggs.'

'Its nest must be somewhere in these parts, then.'

'They said it was somewhere to the west,' he says with as much interest as if he were speaking about the shape of a bee's backside. 'But I think it's just so much poppycock.'

Note the codeword *Kismet* and then turn to **346**.

123

You journey on for several days. The road turns away from the coast and rises towards some hills which present an outline of dull grey-brown against the clear indigo hues of the sky. Hakim eyes the pass through the hills with a worried frown. He fears an ambush by bandits.

If you have the codeword *Mordant*, turn to **191**. If not, turn to **214**.



One of the ghoulish brothers gives the signal and they go charging off down the path like a pair of stampeding elephants. You stand watching them in the moonlight. After fifty metres or so, one of them glances back and laughs, saying, 'Haw! You forgot to start at the signal. You don't have a chance of catching us now!'

'You're right,' you reply, 'I don't.' And you shoot him through the heart.

The other ghoul skids to a halt, stares at his brother's corpse in shock, then glowers at you. He takes a step back along the trail, sees you nocking another arrow, and starts to back away.

You release the second arrow and watch it streak to find its mark. You give a sad shake of the head as you turn away. They were almost too easy. Now to deal with the vile monster that spawned them . . .

She looks up from tasting a ladle of stew as you kick in the door. Her slack blue-lipped mouth starts to frame a quizzical frown. The expression turns to a death grimace as your arrow splits her throat. Stepping over the body, you make a quick search of the hut, finding 15 dinars in a jar. Add this sum to the amount recorded on your Adventure Sheet.

You also take a warm woollen cloak. You have no desire to spend the night here, and you will need something to keep warm while sheltering amid the rocks. The cloak is crawling with lice, but you hold it over the fire for a few minutes so that the smoke drives most of them out. If you decide to keep the

cloak, add it to your list of possessions and turn to 80. If you leave it behind, turn to 260.

125

The four riders are garbed all in white with silver filigree around the borders of their robes. Three look down with fierce eyes. The emotions of the fourth remain a mystery, for he wears a mask of carved ivory. All carry bristling lances. Long swords and knives dangle at their belts.

The masked rider points to the fallen gazelle. 'This was our game, which we'd pursued since before sunrise. You've stolen it.' His voice sounds as sweet as the melody of a harp, as sweet as a fresh brook, as



sweet as poisoned syrup.

Abdullah becomes truculent. 'Who are you, to lay such accusations on us?'

The masked stranger leans forward in his saddle and says: 'I am the Sultan of Nishapur.'

If you have FOLKLORE, turn to **378**. If not, turn to **398**.

126

You have heard a tale which described just such a creature as this. In the tale, it proved an unbeatable foe because of its ability to regenerate. Every time the hero injured it, it rose into the air and hovered until its wounds had healed.

You can think of one way to prevent it doing that here. You back off into the covered passage just behind you. Turn to **46**.

127

The meagre meal is surprisingly good. You try to ignore your qualms of guilt when you see the Bedouin watching with empty stomachs while you enjoy the only food they have to spare. The children of the tribe begin to cry, so the chief starts a song to distract them from their hunger. You sit back on cushions as night rushes across the sky, unfolding a multitude of stars while the stirring strains of the desert song resound off the looming dunes around you.

Hakim makes a gift of salt to the tribe. The chief tries to hide his almost pathetic gratitude at this

kindness. 'Beware when you cross the desert,' he warns you. 'The tribes of the remote interior show no shame in stealing from others.'

Thanking the Bedouin for their hospitality, you spend the night with them and head on at first light. If you have **WILDERNESS LORE**, turn to **168**. If not, turn to **217**.

128

You stumble into a patch of quicksand. As it sucks you down, you try to twist around and pull yourself out using the halter of the camel you were leading. But the camel tugs away in fright, jerking the halter out of your hand. You see the horror-stricken looks on your companions' faces as they watch you sink inexorably into the ground. Hakim calls out something, but you cannot hear him over the howl of the storm. Then the quicksand closes over your head and you are plunged into silence and darkness.

You drift weightlessly down. Your pulse pounds in your ears and your chest is close to bursting, but you cannot bring yourself to give up your last breath. Just as it seems the cloud of oblivion is descending across your mind for ever, you fall out of the fluid sand and into an underground chamber.

You have never been so grateful for the simple taste of fresh air. Falling on your face, you give thanks to God for sparing you. But then you hear a voice that makes every muscle shake with fear.

'I am the only god here,' it says.

You look up. Turn to **25**.

129

Falling into an easy rhythm, you manage to sweep blow after blow aside, parrying as though in a trance. A mystical sense of tranquillity comes over you. You seem to be sunk in a dream. The sight of your foe's glaring gaze no longer fills you with terror. The scene is one of unearthly beauty – the shimmering colours of the silk tapestries, like streams of spring water . . . the heady odour of perfume and incense . . . the lustrous sheen of gold and jewels.

Turn to **152**.

130

Only poison could have killed these people so quickly. The obvious source would have to be the freshwater barrel in the middle of the deck. It might have become tainted by accident, but you doubt that. More likely that one of these bodies lying around the vessel is rather more lively than anyone suspected.

There is an easy way to find out. You pretend to take a drink of water and then fall back limp on the deck. Watching with squinted eyes, you see one of the 'corpses' rise to its feet and creep over to search your belongings. Giving vent to a fierce yell that would curdle the blood of a cannibal, you leap up and seize the crafty poisoner.

Jubilantly you hail your fellow sailors on the other ship, telling them to come across at once. Turn to **174**.

131

The ship is tossed helplessly far out to sea. You can hardly see the others through the deluge of black bone-chilling rain. You hear a scream, drowned out by the storm's roar, as the helmsman is pinned against the rail and crushed by the tiller.

'She's breaking apart!' you hear someone screech as the mainmast splits and falls ponderously like a great tree. It brings the ragged sails with it. You are flung back as the ship gives a lurch, plunged into water which seems strangely warm after the icy rails of rain. It feels as though you are submerged in blood. The muffled sounds of the undersea thunder in your ears. Your fingers find a plank of broken wood. You break to the surface with a gasp and look around, but there is nothing in sight except the crashing waves. The ship has gone. Turn to **280**.

132

Tapping the glass column, you discover it is hollow. Perhaps the structure is a bizarre aqueduct left by an ancient civilization? You dig madly at the earth of the bank into which it is set until you clear a space large enough to squeeze through. Inside the pipe, suspended above a dizzying drop, you crawl on hands and knees to the far end, where you dig up to the surface.

You look back to see the Sultan and his horsemen milling about on the lip of the chasm. They saw how you got across, but cannot follow for fear of being picked off as they emerged.

The Sultan's laughter rolls like a waterfall off the high rocks. 'Clever rogue, you've won your freedom. Return, and I'll reward you for amusing me.'

'Keep your reward; I prefer a long life,' you reply before turning and vanishing into the undergrowth. Turn to **177**.

133

When everyone else is asleep, you ascend to the grille. It is fastened shut by a large bronze padlock. If you have **ROGUERY** and want to pick the lock, turn to **178**. If you try using **MAGIC** and a ring, turn to **246**. If you have neither skill but you possess a hawk, turn to **201**. Otherwise, you may as well give up any thought of escaping for now (turn to **155**).

134

The cloud of poisonous fog spreads rapidly to fill the room. Check your skills. If you have **CUNNING**, turn to **65**. If **AGILITY**, turn to **88**. If you lack either skill but you possess a black jewel, turn to **156**. Otherwise the smoke envelops you and you fall senseless to the floor, never to recover.

135

You ask him the cause of his sorrow. 'Is it because you lost your hand?'

He nods, still weeping. 'What irony! What a vicious twist of fate! I am Shazir, and only a week ago I was the greatest thief in the world. Jafar of

Baghdad hired me to steal a fragment of the rokh's diamond egg for him.'

'What happened?' you ask. 'Did the rokh bite off your hand?'

He gives a bitter scowl. 'I never got that far. The first stage was to acquire a boat, so I came to this very village, which is the place where I was born. It amused me to think that here was I, the renowned Shazir, returning to the village where I had last been seen fifteen years ago. When I left I was just a scrawny young ragamuffin with a mop of unruly hair, so how could I imagine anyone would recognize me?'

'But someone did?'

'Old Muluk, from whom I once stole two fishes,' replies Shazir, nodding. 'He had me seized, they summoned the local judge, and my hand was cut off. Oh, to cut off my hand just for two fishes! I, who have stolen from the treasuries of kings!'

'Certainly the loss of your hand will curtail your illustrious career,' you say to him.

'More than that: my life is forfeit! I have already spent the money Jafar gave me. When I fail to turn up with the eggshell, he'll have his spies hunt me down.'

'Possibly not.' His story has given you an idea. 'Why not swap clothes with me? I'll sail off and get the eggshell and take it to Jafar, pretending to be you.'

Shazir shakes his head. 'Absurd. You look nothing like me.'

'In dim light I might pass. If he questions me, I'll say I'm your cousin.' Seeing Shazir hesitate, you add: 'It's better than certain death.'

Finally he agrees. He gives you his clothes and introduces you to the fishermen who were going to take him to the rokhs' island. Note the codeword *Zebra* and turn to **203**.

136

As you stand gazing up the daunting pinnacle, a great black blot comes dropping through the cloud towards you. At first you feel a stab of terror because you think it is a dislodged boulder. You step back, fearing you'll be crushed, but then the shape opens its wings and goes swooping out across the island.

You can only stand dumbstruck. It is the rokhs, but none of the tales prepared you for the true sight of it: a great soaring raptor whose shrieks rattle the rocks around you and whose claws are big enough to carry off an elephant.

The rokhs settles on a sheep, pressing the terrified animal down with a lazy sweep of its talons. One peck is enough to end the sheep's life. The bloody flesh drips from the rokhs' beak – no more than a morsel for such a giant creature.

If you have *ROGUERY* or the lamp of Antares, turn to **158**. If not, you could start to climb (turn to **181**), look through your possessions (turn to **204**), or even give up, if the sight of the rokhs has given you second thoughts (turn to **113**).

137

Consider the following points in turn. If you have either a chart or the codeword *Fabric*, turn to **203**. If not but you have FOLKLORE or SEAFARING, turn to **226**. If you do not have those skills either but you have the codeword *Kismet*, turn to **271**. If you have none of those, turn to **248**.

138

The sailor speaks rapturously of the joys of seafaring. 'The salt spray has a scent more lovely than the spices of Ceylon,' he says. 'And what jewel ever shone as bright as the setting sun, smouldering languidly like a ruby above the gold of the ocean?'

As you approach the docks, however, his mood becomes more practical. 'You'll sail from downriver to Basra,' he says. 'Thence on to the open sea of the Gulf. Once past the Straits of Hormuz, I'd counsel you to stay close to shore if you wish to avoid a hazardous adventure. Somewhere in the Indian Ocean lies the island of a malevolent dwarf. He has deep knowledge of dire sorcery. It's said that he does not welcome visitors, but nor does he hurry to see them leave again once they've found his isle. His seven sentinels have as much mercy as sharks.'

You nod, glancing away to hide your sceptical smile. 'I'm grateful for this advice. Are there other dangers of the deep I should watch out for?'

He spreads his hands as if at an embarrassment of riches. 'The giant fish called the dendan, which swallows ships. The people of the Scarlet Isle, who

are ruled by dead kings. The evil fire wizards whom the Prophet cast out from this land two centuries ago. And sundry ghosts, ifrits and cannibal pirates, of course.'

You raise your eyebrows. 'Are you sure that going to sea is a good idea?'

'Now I come to think . . .' says the sailor, pulling thoughtfully at his beard, 'it is a perilous life at best. But think of the great rewards, my friend, if you should survive to reach one of those fabulous ports where silks and spices are as plentiful as the plums of the Caliph's garden!'

If you are resolved to seek adventure at sea, turn to **160**. If you think it would be better to join a merchant expedition heading overland, turn to **183**.

139

Pulling off the hawk's hood, you thrust the bird into Masrur's face. It is just as surprised as he is, clawing the air with its wings and thrusting its talons out by instinct. You see a livid red weal appear across Masrur's heavy jowls and he flings his sword aside, clutching at the painful gash. The hawk flutters over to settle on Jafar's arm; delete it from your list of possessions.

You run back to the doorway. But the guards have heard the commotion, and even now a band of swordsmen are rushing at you from one end of the landing. Glancing back, you see Jafar stroll unhurriedly forward with a look of triumph on his podgy face. If you have **ARCHERY**, turn to **230**.

Otherwise, choose whether to stand your ground and fight (turn to 47) or run for your life (turn to 253).



140

Moving noiselessly between the softly swaying drapes, you put your finger to the woman's lips. Though startled, she nods to signal that she will not cry out for the guards. 'Who are you?' she whispers. 'Have you come to answer my prayers? To rescue me from my fate?'

'What fate is that?' you reply quietly, keeping one eye on the hunched silhouettes of the guards at the prow of the barque.

'I was the Caliph's slave, but I displeased his Grand Vizier, who arranged to have me sent as a gift to the Sultan of Basra. I would sooner die than join his harem!'

'I too have a grudge against vile Jafar,' you say.

'Then help me escape. When I do not arrive in Basra, Jafar himself will have to pay for another concubine.'

If you are female, turn to 298. If male, you can leap out and attack the guards (turn to 320), use CUNNING (turn to 342), or summon a jinni using MAGIC and a ring (turn to 364) – or just return to your ship if you prefer not to get involved (turn to 375).

141

Pushing Yussuf back, you launch yourself into the thick of the devilish horde with a defiant cry of battle-fury. Chittering madly, they rip at your flesh with their hard axe-like talons and razor-edged jaws. One reaches past you for your cringing friend, who fends it away with a feeble blow and then falls to his knees and buries his head in his hands.

You have no time to worry about Yussuf. You push one of the monsters away, but another closes its jaws on your wrist and you feel the crunch of sinew as your blood spurts across its moist leathery orb of an eye. If you have **SWORDPLAY** (and a sword) or **WRESTLING**, lost 6 Life Points and turn to **209** if you survive. Without those skills you have no hope at all, and you go down fighting under a hail of blows.

142

You claw madly at thin air, but of course there is no purchase to be had there. You are too startled to scream. The ground comes up out of the darkness and slams into you with the force of a falling drawbridge. Your life is snuffed out at once.

143

If you have a prayer-mat and wish to use it now, turn to **165**. If you have **MAGIC** (and a ring) and wish to summon your jinni, turn to **188**. Otherwise turn to **211**.

144

The captain orders the rigging stripped and spliced together, making a long rope which is lowered over the edge of the cloud.

'As the cause of all this trouble, you shall go first,' he says.

Weak with fear, you slither down the rope. When you reach the bottom there is still a drop of forty feet to the sea. You let go and fall, hitting the water with stunning force. Drenching darkness closes over your head. Lose 1 Life Point and, if you survive, turn to 280.

145

Racing through the streets back to the ship, you scramble aboard and gasp out an order for the others to cast off. As the ship pulls away from the dock, you raise yourself breathlessly and lean on the rail to watch a mob of angry islanders come chasing after you. They are too late. The front runners race to the edge of the jetty intending to jump aboard, but then they see the distance is too far. They stand suspended with flailing arms and comical alarmed stares before plunging over into the water. Your relief at escaping from such peril spills over into laughter, and the rest of the crew join in in pelting the islanders with fruit.

Suddenly a grim old man pushes through the throng. Something about the look of him chokes off your merriment. He raises a staff topped by a human skull and begins a low howling chant that reverberates off the hills. You feel a prickling in the

hair of your scalp. You are sure it is a curse.

If you have MAGIC and a ring, turn to 324. If not, turn to 346.

146

This is no carefree jaunt for the half-hearted. The rituals are rigorous and take many days. First you visit the Great Mosque, where the looming black block of the sacred Kaaba stands like the very fingerprint of God against the sky. Circling this seven times, as tradition demands, is wearying in the intense desert heat. You are soon soaked in sweat and coughing because of the dust thrown up by hundreds of feet.

After kissing the black stone, you drink and wash in the sacred well, Zamzam. Then there is an arduous run to and fro between two mountains just outside the city walls. You see an old man falter and drop to his knees, but by now you are suffused with the Prophet's teachings. You stop to help him even though you, too, are close to fainting.

Your kindness is repaid. The old man helps you with your prayers in the days that follow. On the eighth day, you listen to a sermon preached at the same spot where the Prophet last spoke to his people in this life. Then, as the sun pulls streamers of red fire out of the sky to the west, you must walk to the Pillars of Mena where you spend the next day collecting pebbles. When you wonder at the meaning of this, the old man is on hand to instruct you. It seems that when Ismail was tempted by the Devil to

disobey his father, Abraham, he drove the Devil away by throwing stones at him.

On the last day you sacrifice a sheep and distribute the meat to the poor. This symbolizes the sheep that Abraham sacrificed to God in place of his son Ismail.

The rituals are over. You are now a hajji, a pilgrim, and may wear a green turban to show this. Note the codeword *Hajji* on your Adventure Sheet. The next morning you awaken invigorated after your first good restful sleep in many days. Regain 2 Life Points if injured, then turn to 123.

147

The two ghouls race off ahead and are soon out of sight. Gasping for breath, you realize you cannot hope to keep up with them. No doubt they have benefited from their high-protein diet. You decide that it would be better to simply slink away. You are clambering down through the rocks when you hear an ominous cough just behind you. Whirling, your heart sinks to see the ghoulish witch and her sons standing right behind you. She is holding a divining rod which she points towards you, saying through gritted teeth: 'There's your supper. Don't lose it again!'

She clouts you across the face with the rod. Lose 1 Life Point. If still alive, you are gripped firmly by the arms and led back to the hut. As they shove you inside, the mother starts looking at the jars along the shelves. 'Let's see . . . a bit of pepper and some garlic ought to set off the flavours nicely.'

You must do something. If you have **MAGIC** and a ring, turn to **327**. Otherwise you can at least go down fighting – if you have **FOLKLORE**, turn to **370**; if not, turn to **305**.

148

You cut him deeply across the chest, but his skin is hard like wind-dried leather and he only smiles at your efforts. Striking back, he inflicts a wicked gash to your thigh. Lose 4 Life Points. If you are still able to fight, you can try the same tactic again (turn to **83**), weave back and go for a lighter blow (turn to **37**), or just try to parry (turn to **60**).

149

The streets of the city are tiered thoroughfares that snake up between the clustered houses to the palace at the top of the hill. As you ascend the steps of one such street, you are shouldered aside by a patrol of stern-faced soldiers. Affronted at their rudeness, you give them a glowering look as they descend towards the docks.

A passing barber notices the incident and says to you: 'The palace guards are looking for a thief who stole a ruby from the treasury. The Sultan is furious, and he has decreed that if the thief is not caught by the time the moon rises tonight the captain of the palace guard will be crucified.'

Your pride is still ruffled. 'I can understand their urgency, then. All the same, there is no excuse for manhandling an honest traveller in that way.'

He peers at you in the dusk. 'Ah, you are a stranger to the city?'

'Yes,' you say, nodding. 'What of it?'

He suddenly leaps back and cries: 'Here is the thief! Here!'

Before you can react, the soldiers turn and race back up the street. As you start to raise your hands, the barber leaps on your back, bearing you to the ground.

The soldiers grab you. 'Well done, friend,' their officer says to the barber. 'You'll be rewarded for this.'

'My reward awaits me in heaven,' he says.

'I'll give it to you myself,' you growl at him, 'once I've explained there's been a mistake.' Turn to **250**.



150

You draw back further out of sight, but in your anxiety to avoid being spotted you fail to notice a shield fixed to the wall behind you. It falls with a clang, and the three sorcerers whirl to face you. 'Stop!' cries the leader of the group. 'You have been chosen for a glorious destiny!'

You don't intend to wait and see what 'glorious destiny' entails. However, as you turn to flee, the three raise their hands and begin an eerie magical chant.

Smoke as thick and green as pond scum billows



out of their sleeves and rolls across the room towards you. Do you have the codeword *Noose*? If so, turn to **111**. If not, turn to **134**.

151

The storm passes at last. You watch it swirl off into the north, a smudge of dust against the sharp line of the horizon.

Hakim gathers everyone together. After so many hours with the wind's roar filling your ears, you have to strain to make out his words. 'We have lost two camels . . .' he is saying.

You glance around, finding one face missing. The young lad who gave the camels their fodder each evening. 'What about Hasib?'

A search is mounted, but there is no sign of Hasib. He is lost beneath the dunes that the storm left piled up in its wake. After stopping to pray, you head on until you see an oasis whose cool green shadows defy the desert's harsh golden dusk. Among the palm trees there are tents and even the turrets of an old fort. 'Do we dare approach?' says Hakim. 'They might be hostile.'

If you counsel him to enter the oasis, turn to **416**. If you think it would be wiser to pass by, turn to **438**.

152

Your next sensation is of being shaken awake. Your clothing is filled with sand and the others are leaning over you. 'You're alive!' gasps Hakim. 'It's a miracle.

You were under the quicksand for minutes on end, then you bobbed up to the surface.'

You start to tell him about your strange adventure, then think better of it. It would sound as if you were raving mad. Passing your hand in front of your face, you realize that the experience has changed you. You have conquered the dread spirit of death that dwells in the desert's fastnesses. Now you can deal confidently with any threat the desert can throw at you. Acquire WILDERNESS LORE if you did not have it before (giving you five skills in all). If you already had WILDERNESS LORE, gain 2 Life Points permanently, adding these to both your current and your original Life Points score. (So, if you began the adventure with 10 Life Points you can now have up to 12 when fully healed.)

Giving the quicksand a wide berth, you travel on until you see an oasis glittering like a green jewel in the hot golden haze of dusk. Among the trees you see people camped, and behind them is the outline of an old stone fort.

If you approach, turn to **416**. If you avoid the oasis, turn to **438**.

153

You wake up feeling sick and lethargic. The sun is beating down on the planks of the deck, and the stink of festering corpses hangs heavy in the air.

You sit up, wincing, and look around. Your heart sinks as you realize that your own ship has gone. You are alone on a ship of dead men, drifting on the

open ocean. Staggering over to inspect the hawser, you find it has been cut. Did your friends cast you adrift? It seems unbelievable – but, if not, then who did?

You tip the corpses over the side. It is hard unpleasant work that makes the thudding behind your eyes feel even worse. You are just dipping a cup into the freshwater barrel to slake your thirst when you remember that you did the same thing last night. In fact, it is the last thing you remember doing. You sniff the water, and now you can detect a faint flowery scent. It is poisoned. You are lucky to be alive.

If you have SEAFARING, turn to **39**. If not, turn to **62**.

154

You retreat slowly, pulling the foliage around you like a cloak. The eye-slits of the mask turn in your direction, pause, and then scan the rest of the glade. ‘None remain,’ declares the noble voice.

The Sultan rides off, followed by his horsemen. You emerge from hiding, taking a last sad glance at your dead friends before moving off alone. Turn to **177**.

155

A week later, the grille is hauled up and another prisoner is lowered into the oubliette. ‘Here is the real Shadow!’ calls down a guard. ‘Now you worthless wretches have got some distinguished

company for a change.'

The grille drops back into place with a clang. 'What about me?' you shout up. 'If you've got the real Shadow, you must know I'm innocent!'

The guard's face reappears at the top. He has a broad smirk as he says: 'Innocent? You can't be innocent if you're in jail, can you? So maybe you didn't steal the Sultan's ruby – who cares? No doubt there's some other crime we can mark down to you.'

'This is rank injustice!' you call back, but he has gone.

The newcomer places a hand on your shoulder. 'I, too, am the victim of injustice, for I am not the Shadow. I thought you were. In fact, I got myself caught in order to meet you. My name is Azenomei.'

You turn and look at him: a handsome, beardless young man with sparkling gaze. He has a small scar across the bridge of his nose. 'In that case, I'm sorry to disappoint you,' you say. 'And why are you smiling? Don't you know we'll probably stay here till we die?'

His grin grows all the wider as he brings out a huge bunch of keys. 'Here I have the answer to nine hundred and ninety-nine locks. All we need is a way to reach the grille.'

If you have a pair of magic slippers, turn to **336**. If you have a coil of Indian rope, turn to **292**. If you have a long-tailed cat, turn to **314**. If you do not have any of those items, you have no way of reaching the grille and you really will end your days in this miserable pit.

156

To your own amazement as much as that of the evil sorcerers, the cloud of green gas is absorbed by the black jewel you are carrying. You waste no time wondering about it, but launch yourself forward and snatch up the chart before racing from the room. The sorcerers come tottering after you, but they are old and you soon outdistance them. Retrieving your belongings (to which you should add the chart if you wish to keep it), you find the door and hurry down the hillside away from the fearful citadel as fast as you can.

Delete the black jewel, as it has now lost its power, then turn to **42**.



157

You find that one of the fishermen intends to sail to Baghdad to visit his cousin, who works as a street-porter there. When he learns that you are also a native of Baghdad, he offers to take you along. 'I would welcome some company on the voyage,' he says.

If you go with him, turn to **113**. If you want to have one last attempt at finding great treasure, turn to **137**.

158

The rokh's beady gaze scours the land all around, but it does not notice you creeping over and taking hold of its tail feathers. With a sharp caw it launches itself into the sky and you are carried up and up until finally you reach the nest on the top of the pinnacle. (If you used the lamp of Antar, cross it off your list of possessions as its magic oil is now used up.) Turn to **325**.

159

There is a sudden gust of occult wind, and you are sucked back in a dark spiral which conveys you to the Citadel of Bronze. Ayisha awaits you. She is still chained to the gold couch, but whereas before her pose was languid and resigned, now she is sitting forward eagerly. 'Did you get it?' she asks. 'Did you get the key?'

If you took the jewelled key, turn to **424**. If not, turn to **91**.

160

Seen from the docks, the towers of Baghdad are like a carving of pale wood against the sky. Ships bob up and down at the quayside, sails wrapped tight around their high slender masts. You pass groups of sailors drinking wine and playing at dice, carousing now that the rigours of Ramadan are behind them.

Several captains are hiring crew members. If you have SEAFARING they will pay you 8 dinars; if not you will only be trusted with menial tasks and your pay

is just 3 dinars. Add the appropriate sum to your Adventure Sheet.

Do you wish to sail east, to the Indies (turn to 229), westwards towards Egypt (turn to 252), or south in search of the fabled Scarlet Isle (turn to 274)?

161

Masrur's sword flashes like a lightning bolt in the lamplight. You do not even feel it cleave through your neck, and your eyes are already darkened by death when your head hits the floor at Jafar's feet. Your adventure has come to a grisly end.

162

The flag at the prow identifies the vessel as belonging to the Sultan of Basra. Those are his elite guards, each of them more than a match for any common swordsman. Even if you are a skilled fighter, you do not relish a confrontation with six such doughty warriors. Either return to your ship (turn to 375) or approach the woman quietly (turn to 140).

163

You snuff out the taper just before the monsters get within striking distance. Yussuf gives a long wail of hopeless dread as darkness closes its robe around you.

Moments trickle by. In the nerve-jangling silence, the only sound to be heard is the ragged rasp of Yussuf's desperate prayers: 'Merciful God, spare your unworthy servant. Never will I thief nor cheat

at dice again. No drop of wine will touch my lips—'

'Yussuf, listen!' You reach out a hand and shake him until he regains his wits.

'There's nothing . . . ' he says in a wanly hopeful voice. 'What happened to the monsters?'

Stepping back to find a rock to strike sparks with, you tread on something which squelches under your heel. Relighting the taper, you see that you have crushed a swarm of beetles. 'There are your monsters,' you say.

Yussuf gapes at them. 'Tiny insects! But those things we saw were huge.'

'Illusions. The shape of our own fears.' You peer into the gloom ahead. 'We must be on our guard, my friend. This is a place of dark sorcery.'

Turn to **186**.

164

Record the lamp of Antar and the Indian rope on your Adventure Sheet. As you make your choice, the old man claps his hands and the mysterious light flares up, dazzling you. As your eyes clear, you find yourselves back on the ledge overlooking the river. There is no sign of the old man, nor any trace that his charcoal fire was ever here.

'How very strange,' says Yussuf. 'I would think it all a dream, if not for the treasures we have with us. Who was the old man, I wonder?'

'A ghost or jinni. Let's hope the treasures are not cursed.'

Turn to **256**.

165

The captain glowers as you kneel on the deck and unroll the mat. 'Save your prayers for later,' he snarls. 'God is compassionate, but we cannot look to Him to guide us from this fog bank.'

The mat falls with its gold fringe towards Mecca. You scan the charts, pointing to a jagged line that the map-maker has labelled with a warning. 'See this coral reef?' you say to the captain. 'If I'm right as to our heading, it lies just a few leagues to starboard. I counsel you to steer well clear or we'll run aground.'

He stares at your prayer-mat, then tries it for himself. No matter how he unrolls it, it always falls the same way. 'It must be magical,' he grumbles suspiciously.

'It is pious magic, at least. As reliable a compass.'

Finally he agrees to steer the course you set. The current carries you clear of the dismal fog. When the crew see the sun again they raise you on their shoulders with a cheer. Turn to **234**.

166

You take a stroll through the dusty streets of red earth. Children follow you in silence. The adults have all gone with your captain to the headman's house. You see no wares to buy. When you pass the window of a house, you catch a brief glimpse of an old woman inside before the shutters are banged shut. A dog watches you without barking, then slinks off to lie in the shade beside an old well. If you

look in the well, turn to **212**. If you go to the headman's house, turn to **235**. If you return to the ship, turn to **189**.

167

With Jumail nervously following a few steps behind, you thread your way along the narrow empty streets until you reach an ox cart not far from the headman's house. Barely have you hidden yourselves behind this when you see the islanders emerging from the building, dragging your captain whom they have bound with thick ropes. Despite the danger he is in, he is wrothly red and hurling eye-popping obscenities with his usual gusto.

'Swear and call upon your god all you like,' you hear the headman say as the procession passes your hiding place. 'Tomorrow you will become a sacrifice to our gods.'

They take him and lock him inside a hut built of closely spliced hardwood logs. Two islanders are left to guard him while the others see to the grisly business of returning their dead ancestors to the cliffside tombs above the town.

Jumail is beginning to get cold feet. 'Poor old Captain Ibrahim,' he whispers. 'It doesn't look like we've much chance of rescuing him, does it? We ought to get back before they catch us, too.'

If you return to the ship, turn to **346**. If you continue with the rescue attempt and you have **ROGUERY**, turn to **190**. If you try the rescue and do not have **ROGUERY**, turn to **213**.

168

By noon of the following day your nostrils are thickly clogged with dusty sand stirred up by the wind. The sky resembles a plate of molten lead; the ground is hotter than a kiln.

One of your scouts returns and leads you and the merchant, Hakim, to a blue flag set on a long cane in the sand. 'What can it mean?' Hakim wonders aloud. 'Is it a Bedouin grave?'

Falling to your knees, you begin to dig. 'God preserve us!' cries the scout. 'Do you mean to loot the corpse?'

You only laugh. 'There is no corpse here,' you tell him. 'Quite the opposite.' Turn to **263**.

169

Drawing inspiration from the Lord of the Desert's taunts, your jinni uses his magic to transform you into a mouse. You scurry out of the alcove, but the enraged Lord pays no notice. Seeing the jinni's shadow beyond the curtain, he thinks he still has you trapped. You run across the floor and up the steps, squeezing under the frame of the giant iron door just seconds before the spell wears off and you return to your normal form.

Cross the magic ring off your list of possessions and turn to **459**.



170

You wait ten days until your owner and his camel-drivers return from Mecca. During that time, your thoughts were often of escape, but you know that running away would do you no good. You would soon be recaptured by the soldiers who patrol the pilgrim routes. The fate of a runaway slave does not bear thinking about.

As Hakim checks the straps of his camel's harness, he looks at you askance. Perhaps he has guessed what was in your mind, because he says: 'Wiser to stay with me. I treat you well enough. You're better off than most slaves, eh?'

You return his gaze without expression. 'But still I am a slave,' you say flatly. Turn to **123**.

171

They are direly offended that you should spurn their hospitality. 'We offer you our only food, and you repay us by taking our pride instead!' rages the chief. 'Begone! Perish in the wilderness, you ungrateful churls!'

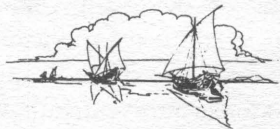
They take up stones and start to pelt you. Seizing the halters of your camels, you retreat amid the dunes. Lose 1 Life Point. If you survive, you can only nod when Hakim, the owner of the camel train, says: 'I am chastened. We are civilized men, yet we have had a lesson in honour from those who are almost too poor to afford the luxury of it.'

Turn to **217**.

172

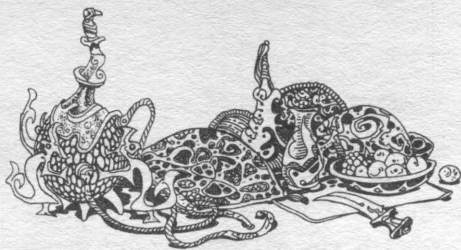
The wind wraps a cloak of sand around you and pulls you off your feet. The camel's halter slips through your fingers. You give a startled cry, but it is torn from your lips and flung into the fury of the storm. You have a single glimpse of your companions' faces in the swirling gritty gloom. They stare in dismay to see you sucked into the air by the whirlwind. Then they drop away at dizzying speed and are lost to sight.

You hurtle through the heavens, flung between the dim gulfs of the clouds by the force of the storm. A leaden knell echoes inside your skull, sounding like the surge of waves heard from the ocean floor. You draw breath, but instead of sand you get a mouthful of salt water. Your last thought is that you are drowning beneath the sea – surely the only traveller to do so while crossing the Arabian Desert! Lose 1 Life Point and, if you still live, turn to **280**.



173

You jump aside as the Lord of the Desert charges forward. He careers past, robes fluttering, slashing madly with his sword, and rebounds from the wall full of fury. Holding his sword straight out in front of him, he thrusts towards your heart. Will you try to dodge (turn to **265**), punch at him as he comes in close (turn to **468**), or kick at his legs (turn to **242**)?



The man you have caught gives his name as Jumal of Serendib. He admits to poisoning all of the crew of his own ship, but maintains that it was justified because they were unbelievers.

The captain, a perceptive man whose brother is a judge, soon sees the flaw in Jumal's argument. 'Obviously you were lying in wait till you could poison our water also!' he cries. 'You unmitigated villain!'

'You call me a villain,' says Jumal, raising his finger, 'but I counter this with the charge that you are the villains. If you had learned of my quest for the diamond egg of the giant rokh, you would happily have murdered me for the secret.'

'Sheer supposition!' retorts the captain. 'Because you yourself are a treacherous pustule with the ethics of a starving hyena, you impute the same motives to others. Where is the rokh's nest, incidentally?'

Under close interrogation, Jumal reveals that it is at the head of the Nile river. He also hands over a vial containing an all-purpose antidote, which is given to you for safekeeping. Note the antidote as a possession and also acquire the codeword *Kismet*. Then turn to **197**.

175

You take stock of your surroundings with growing astonishment. The ship is caught in the branches of a large tree whose roots lie in the clouds. Cliffs like puffs of foam loom above a sheer drop to the sea hundreds of feet below.

Slowly, like a sleepwalker, Captain Ibrahim reaches out and plucks a violet flower from the bough of the tree. He sniffs at it, then drops it into your hand. 'It is real,' he says, his gruff voice softened by awe.

'Look!' cries one of the sailors. He is pointing at gleaming towers that are visible on the other side of a hillock of cloud.



'It is a city,' says Captain Ibrahim, gradually recovering his wits. He turns to you. 'Go and investigate. The city's inhabitants may know of a way for us to reach the ground.'

You cannot argue. It was you who got everyone into this mess. You dangle your legs over the side, surprised to find the cloud surface is solid and springy. It reminds you of moss. With a last forlorn look at the others, you trudge off towards the mysterious city. You have gone only a few hundred yards when you hear the sound of a child crying. It seems to come from beyond a fleecy white bank. If you go closer, turn to **257**. If you ignore the child and continue on to the city, turn to **302**.

176

Days pass without mishap, and at last a good following wind brings you to the port of Raysut. Regain 2 Life Points if injured.

By now Captain Ibrahim is his old blustering self. Striding down the gangplank, he accosts a merchant on the seafront and asks the latest news.

'The Red Sea is unsafe for shipping, by reason of pirates,' announces the merchant. 'I myself lost a cargo of rugs that was bound for Cairo only last month.'

The captain glowers like an angry old wolf. 'Pirates? Pah! Surely the Sultan's fleets can deal with them?'

An old sailor who is passing by overhears this and stops to join in. 'These are no ordinary pirates. After

each raid, they vanish like the dew in the gardens of Baghdad with the coming of dawn. I know, for I encountered them myself.'

'And you survived?' asks Yussuf the helmsman. 'How was that?'

'Ah!' declares the old sailor, raising his finger to the heavens. 'Now I shall tell you a tale of great wonder . . .'

Will you hang around and hear his story (turn to 453) or visit the market to do some shopping (turn to 350)?

177

You wander for days in the hills until you find a trail that leads down into a region of steaming swampland. Skirting this, you travel on until you see a city of tall towers and eggshell domes straddling both sides of a great river. When you arrive at the gates, you enquire where you are.

The sentries give you an unwelcoming look. 'This is Daibul,' they say. 'Be warned – we give short shrift here to penniless vagabonds.'

'Perhaps I am no vagabond, but heir to a kingdom,' you reply, sauntering between them into the teeming city streets. Seeing their curious looks, you laugh, adding: 'Or perhaps not. God alone is all-knowing!' Turn to 442.



178

You dig at the interior of the lock using a thin metal sliver that you keep tucked in your boot. After a few seconds there is heavy click and the lock springs open. Noiselessly raising the grille, you lope across the courtyard and make your getaway. Turn to **223**.

179

Without warning, he rounds on you and utters a spell. If you possess a black jewel, turn to **202**. If not, you are helpless to stop yourself falling on all fours – or rather hoofs – and you will spend the rest of your life as a jackass.

180

It takes months, but at last, while sitting in a fisherman's shack on the fringe of the mangrove swamps outside Daibul, you hear confirmation of the legend. 'Indeed, I have seen the rokh,' claims the fisherman. 'Its wingspan is so wide as to blot out the sun, and each claw could enfold a ship. Its beak is longer and sharper than—'

You give a cough. 'The important thing is, does it really lay diamond eggs?'

He cackles wildly. 'I don't know, do I? I never visited the Isle of Palms myself, much less climbed to the rokh's eyrie.'

'The Isle of Palms?' you enquire. Suddenly, success seems within your reach.

'That's where it nests. If you want, I'll take you there tomorrow.' Turn to **21**.

181

At first the rocks are rough enough for you to climb quickly. As you get higher, though, you have to search more carefully for each handhold. Also the cliff is covered with patches of slippery moss, and twice you nearly lose your grip.

You look up. You don't seem to have got more than a third of the way, if that. You have no particular wish to look down and check. If you press on, turn to 227. If you give up and return to the ground, turn to 249.

182

Few people dare to venture outside after dark because of the curfew, so it is easy to spot the Caliph. He is wrapped in a dark cloak and accompanied by his hulking bodyguard, Masrur. You shadow them until they return to the palace, which they enter by means of a concealed tunnel. Following, you emerge from the darkness of the tunnel just as the Caliph is throwing off his disguise.

'An assassin!' roars Masrur, stepping forward and raising his sword.

'Wait!' you say to the Caliph, raising your hands to show they are empty. 'I have not come to harm you, O Prince of the Faith, but to warn you against treachery.'

The Caliph considers for a moment, then nods and leads you to the end of the corridor. 'I'll hear what you have to say.'

You follow him into the throne room, where you

come face to face with your enemy Jafar. You see hatred blaze behind his eyes, but he quickly masks it with a laugh and says: 'Why do you waste your time, O Caliph, on the prattle of a guttersnipe such as this?'

Turn to 477.

183

Arriving at the market in the early morning, you see two teams of camels loaded for long journeys. Porters rush along the line, checking the wares are securely strapped. The camels growl like consumptive old men and glower disdainfully at their handlers, rising to their feet reluctantly as the first caravan moves off.

A merchant approaches you and asks if you will hire on as a caravan guard. 'I will pay you ten dinars. Come, be quick about your answer – those are my camels you see traipsing towards the eastern gate.'

'Ten dinars to brave the blades of a thousand bandits!' scoffs another man who has overheard this. He takes your arm and points to the other caravan, now making ready to set off. 'Why weigh your lifeblood against a pouch of gold? Come with us to Egypt. It's a safer route by far than this slave-driver takes.'

The first merchant stares at him in express amazement. 'Safe, you claim? Your tongue is more wretched than a dog's tail! Is it safe to fling one's life at the mercy of the desert sun?' He turns to you. 'Let this rogue pay you in water. You will need it more

than my gold, if you take the route to Egypt.'

Decide. Will you join the first caravan, heading east through the Peaks of the Slayers, for the sum of 10 dinars (turn to **296**) or the second caravan across the desert to Egypt for the sum of 6 dinars (turn to **400**)? Remember to add your pay to the money on your Adventure Sheet.

184

You can hear murmuring and the rustling of silks as Jafar changes his robe in the next room. Since he is boasting loudly to the timid slave about his plans, it's unlikely he will hear you. Even so, you are careful to pad as quietly as a cat over to the table where the chart lies. Scanning it quickly, you see that the rokh's nest is marked close to the source of the Nile river. Note the codeword *Kismet* on your Adventure Sheet.

'These green slippers will not do!' you hear Jafar hissing at his slave. 'Have you no sense at all, you curd-faced girl? Fetch the red pair from the other room.'

You glance down. The red slippers are beside the table. You see the slave girl's swaying silhouette as she approaches the curtained archway. You must get away fast or she will raise the alarm. Hastily you retrace your steps. If you have **ROGUERY**, turn to **383**; if not, turn to **207**.

185

You draw back to the stern, where the posts supporting the kiosk roof prevent the guards from coming at you all at once. Hearing the affray, the woman peeks out from behind the silk drapes and then gives a shriek of dismay. 'Fear not, my lady!' calls one of the guards. 'We'll soon dispatch this rogue.'

They might at that. You duck as the nearest guard swings his blade towards you; the steel hisses over your head and strikes the wooden rail with a dull thunk. As your opponent swears and twists the sword to free it, you stamp on his foot and follow through with a desperate blow to his stomach. The others crowd in behind him, keen to try their mettle against you.

If you have a jewelled sword you stole from the palace, turn to **208**. If not, turn to **231**.

186

A single narrow passage slopes off from this cavern. You descend, steadying yourselves against the rock walls, until the flickering light of your taper reveals a room of worked stone just ahead. You see faded murals which show warriors in battle, fighting and dying to protect the idols of their false gods.

'These are scenes from a time before the light of truth was brought to mankind by the Prophet – may all blessings be upon him,' says Yussuf. He points to part of the mural. 'See these cloaked swordsmen with masks of iron. They are the fanatics of the god

Mithra, who gave his followers great strength and courage in battle. Or so I have heard, but God alone knows all.'

If you have FOLKLORE, turn to 232. If not, turn to 255.

187

Record the Indian rope and the Jericho horn on your list of possessions. No sooner have you made your choice than the old man claps his hands. At once the mysterious light flares up, dazzling you. When your eyes clear, you are back on the ledge overlooking the river. There is no sign of the old man, nor any trace that his charcoal fire was ever here.

'How very strange it all was,' says Yussuf. 'A dream? Surely not, for how then can we account for these two treasures?'

'Best we say nothing of this to the others. They would think us mad.'

Turn to 256.

188

A thick vapour, darker than the mist, pours from your ring and congeals into a broad figure with eyes like hissing coals. The sailors fall flat on the deck in terror. Captain Ibrahim draws his sword and takes a step forward, but you place your hand on his wrist. 'Be calm,' you say. 'This ogre is my servant.'

The jinni eyes you blackly. 'What service may I perform for you, O fount of one thousand virtues?' he grates.

‘Fill our sails with wind!’ you tell him. ‘Carry us far out of this fog bank.’

‘I exist only to do your bidding,’ he replies, but you do not like the vicious smile on his gnarled features as he says this. Your worries are confirmed a moment later when, blowing hard into the lank sails, he propels the ship directly upwards out of the water. The sailors cling on to the rail for dear life. It is a miracle that no one falls to his death. Coming to rest with a soft jolt, you think that the ordeal is over. You have landed, indeed – but not back on the waves. Beneath you is a swirling mass of white. Your ship is suspended in the clouds!

The jinni gushes back into your ring. You exert your magic, brandishing the ring and sternly crying out: ‘Jinni! I summon you to reappear!’

‘There is no jinni here,’ says a sullen voice from the ring. ‘Just a grotesque ogre.’ Turn to **175**.

189

The sun buries itself in a dry red haze over the western hills. Velvet darkness slides down to cover the landscape. From the headman’s house you see a blaze of lights, but elsewhere the town is shrouded in darkness.

The stars emerge. As a chill breeze gusts along the river, Jumail the cook pulls his jerkin around his shoulders and says, ‘I don’t like it. What’s happened to the captain? He ought to have got back by now.’

If you go ashore to look for him, turn to **235**. If you stay aboard, turn to **258**.

190

You wait until the dead of night, when both guards are deep in contented slumbers. A glance to right and left confirms the streets are deserted. Sliding through the darkness, you creep up to the door of the hut. It only takes you seconds to spring the lock. The captain looks up as the bar of moonlight strikes his face. Though startled, he has the sense to keep quiet as you lead him silently back towards the jetty. Turn to **346**.

191

Hakim selects a man to scout ahead. This is Al-Shammar, a rangy Bedouin who carries an ivory bow with which you have seen him bring down wheeling gulls above the coastal road. He must be afraid to be sent on alone, but he counts it a point of pride to laugh and say, 'I shall see if there are indeed bandits in the pass – and if there are, by my ancestors, I'll split them each with an arrow!'

Despite these brave words, you never see Al-Shammar again. By the middle of the following morning, Hakim decides to risk pressing on. The cliffs rise up on each side and you all have the feeling of walking into the gates of a cursed city. The camels seem to sense the unease of their drivers. They lower their heads and growl at the ground like beaten dogs.

You scan the hills for bandits, but there is nothing. In the timid silence, the only sound to be heard is the desolate sigh of the wind in the rocks. Turn to **289**.

192

Hakim sells you to a Frankish captain who is sailing with a hold full of lions and elephants to the court of an infidel king called Shah al-Ma'in. You adopt a surly scowl as you are led aboard his ship, but the truth is that your heart is brimming with hope. If you had run off before, your owner being a true believer, your only destiny would have been a painful death. But there is no penalty for slaves who run away from infidel owners. All you have to do, then, is come up with a plan of escape.

If you have **SEAFARING**, turn to **238**. If you have **ROGUERY**, turn to **261**. If neither, turn to **103**.

193

The Sultan decides to let you try your luck in catching the pirates. He has nothing to lose, after all. You are taken to a small port at the foot of Mount Sinai where you are entrusted with a vessel and a crew of thirty marines.

You put out to sea and sail around the coast for several days without seeing so much as a fishing boat. Your patience is finally rewarded one morning, when the lookout calls out: 'Sails on the horizon!'

The other vessels hoves into view. It turns out not to be the pirates, but a cumbrous merchant ship laden with wine barrels. Its captain obviously decided to risk passage across the Red Sea. You have a feeling his ship will make a choice target for the pirates.

If you move in and hail the ship, turn to **239**. If you keep it in sight without getting close, turn to **476**.

194

As a slave you are not granted the right to enter Mecca. Instead you are given the task of guarding the caravan goods while your owner and his camel-drivers wash and shave in preparation for the rituals.

If you have LUCK, turn to **14**. If not, turn to **170**.

195

Hakim is unsure what to do, and turns to you for advice. If you think you should press on in spite of the flag, turn to **240**. If you dig to see what it is marking, turn to **263**. If you agree with the scout that the group should head south-west, turn to **286**.

196

The jinni lays a finger along his nose and gives a sly wink, saying: 'Remember the story of Mount Safa and the Prophet? When commanded to come to him, the mountain did not move. But the Prophet knew that if it had it would have brought disaster, so he set out to go to it.'

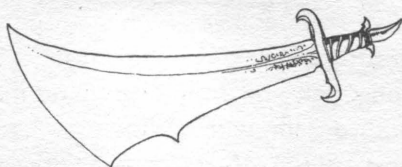
'Your parable is too oblique for me,' you say, shaking your head.

He booms out a laugh that sends blue sparks flying through the rigging. 'Then watch and learn!'

Dissolving into a cloud of pungent gas, the jinni floats down into the water. Staring down, you see a thick dark patch of bubbling miasma snaking through the depths. A faint tinge of ammonia pervades the air.

Minutes pass. Suddenly the stone door grates open

and the pirates come swimming out, gasping and coughing. A strong stench billows after them. Even at this distance it is enough to make you feel dizzy. As the pirates are taken aboard and put in irons, the jinni leaps back into your ring in the form of a black fish. Turn to **372**.



197

The remainder of the voyage is uneventful, and at last you reach the port of Daibul, which straddles a wide dun-coloured river beyond a region of mangrove swamps. The captain goes ashore, returning quite soon with a broad smile on his face. 'I have sold all the cargo to a wealthy nobleman from Nishapur!' he announced. 'Make ready. We sail on the tide!'

The crew are surprised to be returning so quickly. They had expected that the captain's business would take at least a week. As the ship hoves out of port, you feel a sense of disappointment. 'Where is the adventure I longed for?' you say with a sigh.

'Beware of wishing, so they say, lest you get what you wish for,' replies the helmsman. 'See that dark scudding cloud across our bows? We're running into a storm.' Turn to **131**.

198

The jinni labours all night, piling stone on stone until he has built a tower as tall as the first. He slides the last block in place on the dome of the roof just as the sun thrusts up a splash of gold in the east. Flitting back to you, he wipes away the sweat covering his broad brow and says, 'I've done my part of the bargain, now do yours. Give me my freedom.'

If you keep your promise to free him, you must throw the magic ring into the sea – cross it off your Adventure Sheet. If you decide to break your promise, you keep the ring and also get the codeword *Truce*.

Sunlight streaks the grass. One of the shark men steps forward and shakes his master awake. Opening his eyes, the dwarf gives a sour grunt of disappointment and says, 'So you did it.'

Turn to **441**.

199

The horses pound up the path, rearing to a halt at the brink of the glass bridge. The four riders do not see you hiding in a thicket nearby because their attention is focused on the jinni who, having taken your appearance, is standing in the middle of the bridge. 'Come and face me, dogs, if you dare!' he screams. 'I yearn to spill your blood and crack the bones of your limbs between my teeth!'

You wince. You might suggest he makes his performance a little less exuberant next time. But it seems to have done the trick – the first of the knights,

goaded by his comrades, advances out on to the bridge. He slips and falls to his doom almost at once. The second knight fares better, getting halfway to the jinni before he too tumbles off. The third must be quite nimble; he actually reaches the jinni and only slips because his sword-stroke costs him his balance.

From your hiding place, you hear the masked Sultan breathe a curse. His sword slithers from its sheath and he starts out along the bridge. Seven swift steps bring him to the jinni, who waits until the sword is in motion before dissolving into a cloud of vapour. The Sultan's lunge sweeps through empty air, and he spends an instant poised on the brink of eternity before following his knights down into the chasm.

The jinni returns to the ring beaming with satisfaction. 'I enjoyed that!'

'All very well, but how am I going to get across?' you ask.

'Just walk along the clifftop,' he says, pointing. 'There's a perfectly safe footbridge after a mile or so.'

Turn to **177**.

200

The creatures facing you each have a single eye that rolls like a blister of pus in the centre of a face covered with bristles and scales. Their arms are raised like executioners' axes, each ending in a long curved blade of chitin. As they draw nearer you catch the stench of their breath, as fetid as an open drain. Slimy



spittle runs from the writhing mandibles at the base of those repulsive insectoid heads.

If you have **LUCK**, turn to **27**. Otherwise you can try to escape (turn to **118**), fight your way through them (turn to **141**), or douse the light (turn to **163**).

201

Squeezing through the grille, the hawk soars off into the night. You watch it go with a sense of misery. You cannot blame the bird for abandoning you – it deserves its freedom – but now you feel even more trapped.

Barely a minute later, while you are still examining the lock, the hawk returns and settles on the ground. Hearing a metallic chink, you peer through the gloom. It has brought the keys from the guardhouse! Fingers trembling with anxious joy, you test each key in turn. One of them turns, and the padlock springs open. You are free. Turn to **223**.

202

The black jewel clouds and cracks as it absorbs the force of the spell. Azenomei shouts an obscene oath and draws his sword, flying at you in a fury. Strangely, it is only now that you notice his eyes. They are golden.

The battle is hard-fought and bloody. Soon you are gasping in the chill mountain air as you circle your foe looking for an opening. Blood streams from both of you; Azenomei's is black.

Lose 2 Life Points if you have **SWORDPLAY** and a

sword, or 4 Life Points if you have only **WRESTLING**. If you have neither skill, lose 6 Life Points. Assuming you survive, you finally succeed in clubbing Azenomei to the ground, where he gives a last gasp before dissolving into a thick tarry vapour.

His sword remains, and you can take it if you wish. Cross the black jewel off your Adventure Sheet as its power is used up. Then turn to **42**.

203

The rokh's nest lies in the east, on the Isle of Palms. You manage to convince the fishermen to take you there in exchange for a share of the spoils. Turn to **21**.

204

You might use a cat (turn to **316**), a pair of magic slippers (turn to **338**), or an Indian pipe (turn to **360**). Failing any of these, you must either climb up to the nest (turn to **181**) or abandon the whole quest and go home (turn to **113**).

205

You approach a richly dressed slave outside the palace gates and explain that you have come to see Jafar. 'Tell him it is Shazir.'

He peers at you in the dusk. 'Shazir? But I thought – Well, never mind. Wait here while I find Jafar.'

You catch his sleeve before he can move away. 'Jafar told me to come straight to him,' you say, adding an undercurrent of menace to your tone.

'Things might go badly for you if there's any delay.'

'Follow me,' he says after a moment's thought.

He leads you to the throne room, where you see Jafar talking to the Caliph. The slave goes over, whispers something into Jafar's ear, and brings him over to the doorway where you're waiting.

'Have you brought the diamond?' says Jafar. His voice trails off as he gets a good look at you. 'You're not Shazir!'

'No, and what I bring is something more precious than diamond. I bring the truth!' Turn to **477**.

206

You steal into the palace pretending to be a servant. The guards hardly glance at you, half drunk as they are and with one eye on the festivities in the street outside. You pass under the great arch that is emblazoned with the Caliph's insignia, past a group of slaves bearing empty platters back to the kitchens, and duck into an open doorway. You have no clear idea what you can achieve here. Perhaps you can bluff your way into the Caliph's private apartments and warn him about Jafar.

Following a corridor, you make your way up a flight of stairs. You emerge on to a landing overlooking a torchlit hall. The marble walls shine with a colour like moonlight. There are rich tapestries of black, ruby-red and the blue of dusk, and the balustrade of the balcony is inlaid with gold and limpid mother-of-pearl.

Advancing to the end of the balcony, you peer

into a chamber beyond. Swords in jewelled scabbards hang along the walls, under murals that show the Caliph's ancestors in all the glorious panoply of war. As you cross the room, you notice an alcove where a hooded hawk sits on a perch. If you wish to take the hawk, turn to **318**. If you wish to arm yourself with one of the swords, turn to **450**. Otherwise turn to **93**.

207

You are halfway along the landing when you hear a voice ring out behind you. 'What have we here? A skulking thief!'

You whirl around, but you know it is Jafar even before you set eyes on his round hateful face. There is no mistaking those vicious tones – like the squawk of a vulture as it spies a carcass. A smile creases his fat lips. 'Well, well. My benefactor from this afternoon. The Caliph really appreciated your generosity – although, of course, he thought it was *my* generosity.'

'You smirking villain!' you say as you take a step towards him.

A glimmer of alarm shows in his tiny eyes. Clapping his hands, he calls in a quavering voice for the guards. Moments later, a band of swordsmen in the Caliph's livery come bursting from an archway at the end of the landing. 'Seize this cur!' screeches Jafar, pointing at you.

The guards rush towards you. If you have ARCHERY and a bow, turn to **230**. If not, you must

either fight (turn to **47**) or beat a hasty retreat (turn to **253**).

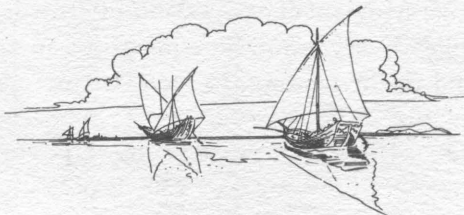
208

The first guard slumps across the rail with a groan, his belly laid open by your sword-swipe. You are about to tip him over the rail and advance to meet the next when the lamplight flashes on the gems encrusting your weapon's pommel. The remaining guards stare at you wide-eyed and their leader holds up his hand. 'Wait!' he says. 'In the night-time we mistook you for a river pirate, or some other knave with mischief in mind. Now I see you are a servant of our great lord the Caliph.'

You lower your blade guardedly. This is a happy stroke of luck. 'Yes, the Caliph,' you reply. 'May the blessing of God be upon him!'

Before you can say more, the woman rises and ventures nervously out of the curtained kiosk. 'Tell me the Caliph has sent you to bring me back!' she pleads. 'For if I am forced to enter the harem of the Sultan of Basra, I shall take my own life.'

If you tell the guards you have come to take the woman, turn to **254**. If you bid them goodnight and return to your own ship, turn to **375**.



209

At last you manage to drive the loathsome creatures away. Those you have not killed go shuffling off into the recesses of the cavern. All around you are piled the cracked carapaces of their fellows, dripping dark ichor across the rocks. You pick your way through the carnage with a shiver of revulsion. Your own wounds are merging into a single throb of pain now, and your prayer is that the other monsters do not return. You doubt if you could survive a second assault.

When you go to help Yussuf to his feet, you are astonished to find him totally unscathed. 'They left me alone once I hid my face,' he says, as surprised as you are at his lucky escape. Turn to **186**.

210

Add the lamp of Antar and the Jericho horn to the possessions listed on your Adventure Sheet. Once you have picked them up, the old man claps his hands. The mysterious light flares up to fill the cavern, dazzling you. As your eyes clear, you find yourselves back on the ledge overlooking the river. There is no sign of the old man, nor any trace that his charcoal fire was ever here.

'How sweet the night air is,' says Yussuf. 'I swear I never valued life half so much as I do now. We are lucky to be alive.'

You nod in heartfelt agreement. 'God is compassionate and merciful! Let's go back to the ship, my friend.'

Turn to **256**.

211

A dismal grey pall of fog hangs around the ship. Condensation drips from the rigging, making a soft whispering sound like fine rain on the decks. You are carried on blindly by the ocean current. There is no sign of the sun to help you steer a course, and no wind to fill the sails in any case.

Without warning, the ship lurches to one side. The stitched planks rip apart with the sound that every sailor dreads. You have time to glimpse hard jutting blocks of coral protruding through the broken hull. Then the mainmast snaps and the sail falls, enveloping you.

You hear the screams of the others as the ship goes down. Your fingers close on a spar of broken wood. Salt water fills your mouth and nose. You barely manage to struggle free of the wet sheet before it drags you under. Soaked through and buffeted by waves, you cling to the spar, drifting until at last you faint from grief and cold. Turn to **280**.

212

At the bottom of the well, a glint of afternoon sunlight catches on something smooth and metallic. You are about to climb down when a stab of superstitious fear makes you hesitate. You know the old tales that say that wells and cisterns are the homes of demons. If you descend to see what the object is, turn to **303**. If you go back to the ship, turn to **189**. If you go up to the headman's house, where the captain was taken, turn to **235**.

213

An open assault is your best chance. You have to free the captain quickly, before the other islanders return from the tombs. Jumail is not certain he agrees, but he backs you up as you emerge from the cover of the ox cart.

The two guards leap up as they see you approaching. They have sharp hunting-knives almost as long as swords. You keep to a steady confident pace, neither hurrying nor hesitating, to show them you are a foe to be feared. As you draw near, you have the chance to size them up. The one on your left is small and wiry, and looks as though he is a nimble fighter. The other is huge and lumbering.

You step up on to the porch. The two men are stationed either side of the door. The look in their eyes is a turbid mixture of surprise, amusement, uncertainty and fear. Will you deal with the smaller one first (turn to **236**), the larger (turn to **259**), or both at once (turn to **282**)?

214

Hakim asks if you will go ahead of the main group and see if there are bandits lying in wait. 'It is a dangerous job,' he admits, 'for which I will pay you two dinars.'

'Two dinars for risking my life! That's hardly fair.' He nods. 'Three, then.'

If you accept, add the 3 dinars to your money and turn to **478**. If you point out that is not in your contract to take such risks, turn to **191**.

215

The talk on the streets of Cairo is mostly of the Red Sea pirates. Small children are enthralled by the stories, but none of the adults of the city have a good word for the pirates. 'Prices have doubled in the past two months!' complains a shopkeeper. 'No one dares to travel by sea, and perishable goods cannot survive the slow journey by camel. I have not had a properly spiced meal since the end of Ramadan.'

You soon learn that the Sultan of Cairo has promised a reward for the one who puts a stop to these pirates: one thousand dinars! That would make you as rich and respected a citizen as any in Baghdad. If you go to offer your services in catching the pirates, turn to **306**. Alternatively, you can visit the bazaar (turn to **328**) or leave the city (turn to **349**).

216

The demon descends and flails at you with its thin claws. Most horrible of all is its soft hissing cry, which sounds like the dying gasps of a thousand souls. Lose 2 Life Points – unless you have either **SWORDPLAY** (and a sword) or **WRESTLING**, in which case lose only 1 Life Point.

If you survive that, the demon breaks off the fight and rises on humming wings to hover just above your head. You managed to deal it a couple of strong blows, breaking its hard exoskeleton, but now you see that it is regenerating. In front of your eyes, its wounds are disappearing. If you stand your ground, turn to **332**. If you retreat, turn to **46**.

217

By noon of the following day your nostrils and eyes are raw with the fine gritty sand stirred up by the wind. The sky is a plate of molten lead, the ground hotter than a kiln.

One of your scouts returns and leads you and the merchant, Hakim, to a blue flag set on a long cane in the sand. 'What can it mean?' Hakim wonders aloud. 'Is it a Bedouin grave?'

'More likely a warning that the region ahead is off-limits to travellers,' suggests the scout. 'We should turn south-west, master.'

If you have the codeword *Mordant*, turn to **286**. If not, turn to **195**.

218

The days crawl by. The sun, a boulder of light rolling relentlessly across the sky, plummets each evening beyond the edge of the world, draining all heat behind it so that you are left shivering in the chill of night. Even with strict rationing, you soon have barely enough water to moisten your lips, and barely food enough to make one mouthful at supper.

You have almost lost hope when, in the long shadows of dusk, you see an olive-green splash of colour against the dusty ochre landscape. You blink, rubbing your eyes to make sure, then call back to the others: 'An oasis!'

Hakim stumbles forward. Barely able to stand, he leans on your shoulder and peers into the middle distance. 'Yes, but look. See those tents? That smoke

from campfires? Do we dare risk provoking the inhabitants? If they're hostile, we're too weak to put up a fight.'

What will you advise: that you should stop at the oasis (turn to **416**), or go past and hope to find water elsewhere (turn to **438**)?

219

You jump aside as the Lord of the Desert charges forward. He careers past, robes fluttering, slashing madly with his sword, and rebounds from the wall full of fury. Holding his sword straight out in front of him, he thrusts towards your heart. Will you try to dodge (turn to **265**), punch at him as he comes in close (turn to **468**), or kick at his legs (turn to **242**)?

220

When the jinni sees what is happening, he unleashes a freezing gust of air from his lungs that turns the waves around the ship to ice. Some of the monkeys escape into the trees, but many are trapped by the frozen water. Swirling out on a column of blue grey gas, the jinni retrieves some of what they filched, returning it to you. You have lost one of your possessions, however (your choice as to which).

You must now decide whether to abandon the ship and see if you can survive in the swamp (turn to **85**) or stay aboard and let the ocean current carry you onwards (turn to **266**).

221

Collecting the turbans of everyone in the crew, you knot them together to make a long cloth. You stretch this right around the circumference of the tower. It gives you the purchase you need to slowly ascend to the top.

Surmounting the balcony, you drop to a wary crouch and survey the chamber under the dome. It is bare of any decoration or feature except for a podium in the middle, where a large grey egg rests on a velvet cushion.

You step forward. The whole tower must have been built for the single purpose of keeping this egg safe. Will you touch the egg (turn to **290**) or climb back down to the ground (turn to **267**)?



222

The Sultan leaps down from his horse. His sword leaves its scabbard with a hard ringing sound. He waits like a statue, sword-tip touching the ground. The mask remains inscrutable, but his stance conveys absolute certainty. He believes you are no threat.

You take a wary half-step forward. His left hand hovers ready lift his mask.

If you use ARCHERY and a bow, turn to **268**. If you use a mirror, turn to **291**. If you use a cloak, turn to **313**. If you have none of those, turn to **335**.

You lose no time putting a good distance between you and the city where you were imprisoned. Your journey takes you up into high crags. The sky looks dark and storm-laden. The white sheen of snow lies on the tallest peaks above you.

Days pass without any sign of habitation. You eke out your food among the rocks – mostly grubs, insects and berries. Lose 1 Life Point unless you have WILDERNESS LORE.

At last, hungry and cold, you stumble on a palace of ash-grey stone that seems to loom like a bank of cloud against the ominous sky. You climb the path towards it. Bronze gates swing open at your approach, and servants emerge to help you inside. Too weary to question them, you allow yourself to be led to a table where you are presented with dishes of honey-cake, roast fowl, mutton stew, plums and figs, spiced bread and sharp clean meltwater.

You eat so ravenously that at first you do not notice three dignified old men in scarlet robes who have quietly entered the room. As you look up, one of them raises his hand and smiles. 'Please, eat your meal,' he says. 'Later we'll have a chance to talk.'

You rise and bow. 'I must thank you for your hospitality.'

'Later. We have something to attend to first.'

They turn and glide out of the room, long robes rustling on the marble floor. If you go on with your meal, turn to 463. If you follow them to see what they are going to do, turn to 471.

224

You find Azenomei reclining on a divan in one of the citadel's many rooms. 'I thought you said we had to hurry!' you say. 'Come on - what if the jinni should return and find us here?'

He rises languidly to his feet. 'He has returned. I am the jinni whose palace this is.'

Turn to 247.

225

Pulling your arms close to your sides to avoid touching the muck and grime of the tunnel walls, you tread carefully forward through the darkness until you see a flicker of torchlight ahead. You emerge under the raised floor of a large low-raftered house. Through a crack in the floorboards, you see a strange scene. The islanders are bowing in homage to a group of rug-cloaked figures sitting on carved teak benches. Your captain stands between the two rows of seated figures as though he were on trial.

You hear him speak: 'What is this? Why have I been brought here?'

The voice that replies sounds like the rustling of dead grass. It seems to come from one of the cloaked figures. Through the smoke-filled air of the room you catch sight of a lidless gaze. A hand like old clay clutches at the folds of its rug as it says: '*You came to steal the egg of the rokh, the giant bird that has its nest in the mountains above the Nile. Do not deny it.*'

'Preposterous!' retorts Captain Ibrahim. 'I do not even believe the rokh truly exists.'



His interrogator is not deterred. *'Tonight you will be imprisoned. Tomorrow our living descendants will put you to death.'* Turn to **77**.

226

You remember hearing a tale about the rokh, which is said to swoop through the skies near to the Isle of Palms. It is so big that sometimes it seizes ships out of the water. The Isle of Palms lies in the far east, so that is where your destiny must take you. You manage to convince the fishermen to take you there in exchange for a share of the spoils. Turn to **21**.

227

By the time you are halfway, and the ground is no more distant than the wisps of cloud above, you are beginning to wonder what you've let yourself in for. You are not even sure if you could get back down now. Equally, the cliff is so smooth and sheer that your fingers and legs are aching with the strain. If you go on, you might easily drop from fatigue.

If you have **AGILITY** and a jasmine flower, turn to **272**. If you have **AGILITY** but no flower, turn to **249**. Otherwise, turn to **294**.

228

Jafar utters an evil laugh as he throws the knife. Rolling forward in a somersault, you pluck it out of the air before it can strike the Caliph, who is rooted to the spot in shock. As Jafar runs off, the Caliph recovers enough to call his guards. Turn to **339**.

229

The sails bulge as they catch the wind, reminding you of overfull waterskins. Slowly your vessel edges out of the harbour and glides gracefully downriver towards Basra. The sun rises, turning the bowl of the sky to flaring azure. Long banners of white cloud hang across the heavens, while below the river swirls with rich green darkness.

At dusk on the sixth day out of Baghdad, as the ship is moored for the night, a sailor whose name is Yussuf suggests taking a swim. 'Toiling in the rigging all day is hot work,' he says, grinning wearily as he wipes his brow. 'As the Prophet has warned us against the perils of wine, perhaps a plunge in the cool river water would refresh us just as well.'

If you want to go for a swim, turn to **474**. If not, turn to **375**.

230

Seeing you nock an arrow, the foremost guard skids to a halt on the marble floor. The others tumble into him from behind and they stand there silently for a moment, glowering at you.

'Fools! What are you waiting for?' screeches Jafar. 'The arrow can only kill one of you!'

You smoothly swing the arrow around to point at him. 'Then just tell them to charge,' you say with a sly smile.

He holds up a fat jade-ringed hand. 'Wait! Hold your ground!' he blusters at the guards. A trickle of sweat escapes the confines of his satin turban and

rolls down into the plump clefts between his narrow eyes.

‘That’s better.’ You back away carefully and start to descend the stairs. Your arrow remains trained on Jafar’s heart. ‘I’m leaving now, Jafar, but I just want you to know that I’ll be back. And I’ll bring proof of your treachery before the Caliph.’

As you reach the door, you release the arrow. It whips through the air, pinning Jafar’s turban to the door behind him. Startled for a moment, he gives a sigh of relief and then points a trembling finger at you. ‘Get that assassin!’

He deserves to die, certainly, but that must wait until another day. You desire justice as much as revenge. Turning, you run back out of the palace and lose yourself in the side streets. Turn to **383**.

231

You have rarely faced a more desperate test of your courage. Blows rain down on you, and it is all you can do to duck and weave fast enough to avoid being cut to bloody tatters. If you have **SWORDPLAY** (and a sword), lose 3 Life Points. If not but you do have **WRESTLING**, lose 5 Life Points. If you have neither skill, lose 7 Life Points. If you survive, turn to **277**.



232

You have also heard myths of the old days, when men worshipped a profusion of strange deities. Mithra was said to bestow invulnerability on his most devout followers, so that no weapon had the power to harm them. When they needed to settle among themselves, as honour would sometimes dictate, they had to resort to boxing and wrestling because these skills involved no weapons. Turn to 255.

233

'You mentioned four treasures. There are no more in the chest. Is the last that black jewel you wear?'

He takes the jewel from around his neck and hands it to you. 'This little trinket? A charm against baneful magic. Take it if you wish.'

Add the black jewel to your list of possessions. Yussuf selects the Indian rope, which he gives to you for safekeeping. Record it on your Adventure Sheet as well.

Smiling, the old man brings his hands together. There is a noise like a thunderclap and a blaze of white light, and then you are standing in the open air again. You are on the ledge above the river, with no sign now of the cavern or the old man.

'Strange magic,' whispers Yussuf. 'If we tell the others about this, they'll think us mad.'

'So we won't tell them,' you reply. Turn to 256.

234

The days stream by and you lose yourself completely in the tranquil pleasure of the sea's rhythms. You can recover up to 2 Life Points if currently below your original score. At night the stars look down upon your progress, blistering beacons placed in their courses by divine providence as a guide for seafarers. By day the sun shimmers from a sky of eggshell blue. You listen to the slow gentle creak of the rigging, the slosh of the waves and the murmur of the ship's boards. Gulls follow your course, hunting the fish that your passage stirs up to the surface.

Driven by north-east monsoon winds, you make good speed and in three weeks the peaks of the Scarlet Isle can be seen thrusting up from the horizon. Here you see the reddish tinge to the water that gives the island its name. 'Some say it is the blood of the warlike tribes who live there,' says one man in a voice hushed with fear of the unknown.

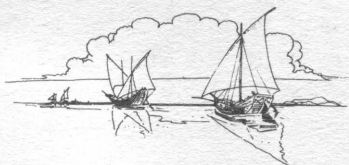
'Bah!' says the captain, hearing this. 'It is nothing more than minerals carried out to sea by the rivers.'

Finding an estuary, you cruise upstream until you see the roofs of a town. Buildings of mud-brick squat dustily amid the crags, fields laid out in front of them like rolling carpets of emerald and golden thread. As you tie up at the dock, a crowd of natives come down from the houses to meet you. The men are garbed in long robes of beige cloth, belted at the waist, and each wears a long gold-hilted knife at his side.

Captain Ibrahim leaps ashore. 'Stay with the ship,'

he tells the rest of you. 'I'm going to speak with their headman.' So saying, he strides off and is escorted by the natives back to a large building in the centre of the town.

If you disembark, turn to **166**. If you would rather stay on board, turn to **189**.



235

The other sailors are too frightened to come with you. Alone, you make your way through the empty streets to the headman's house. Now you can see that beyond it, lining the cliffs, are rows of tombs. The boulders that normally seal them have been rolled back, and emerging from them are a group of islanders bearing smoking torches. Each carries a burden across his shoulders – something long, wrapped in thick rugs like shrouds. You have the sudden conviction that they are dead bodies.

If you want to go back to the ship, turn to **258**. If you sneak into the building, turn to **281**.

236

If you are fighting with a sword, turn to **304**. If you do not possess a sword (or do not wish to use it), turn to **326**.

237

It drops on you with a voiceless shriek of glee. The talons dig deep into your neck, and you cannot stifle a scream of unendurable pain. If you have **SWORDPLAY** (and a sword) or **WRESTLING**, lose 2 Life Points; otherwise lose 3 Life Points.

If you are still alive, you feel the demon release you and retreat into the air. You must have managed to hurt it. Through red waves of pain, you see its carapace reknitting, the wounds you struggled so hard to inflict vanishing in seconds.

How can you win against such an opponent? If you run forward across the parade ground, turn to **216**. If you stand firm, turn to **332**. If you retreat, turn to **46**.

238

The ship puts out of harbour and begins the journey downriver to the Mediterranean. You soon show that you are too useful to waste at the oars, and various minor deck duties are assigned to you. Once clear of Alexandria and on to the open sea, the captain has your shackles removed. 'Ten leagues of empty ocean,' he says with a laugh, sweeping his hand astern of the ship. 'That ought to make you think twice about running away.'

That night you slip over the side. The captain thinks no one could swim all the way back to land, but you were brought up on a river boat that plied the stretch from Basra to Baghdad. A fish is no more at home in the water than you.

You reach the shore with aching limbs, shivering from the cold, but you are alive. No doubt when you're discovered missing they will assume you fell overboard and drowned. Few Frankish sailors can swim.

You find employment on a barge bound for Cairo, arriving there a few days later. The barge owner rewards you with 2 dinars for helping him to unload his cargo. Add this sum to your money and lose the codeword *Mordant*, then turn to **215**.

239

The captain of the merchant ship loudly dismisses your suggestion that he might be attacked by pirates. 'We are only one vessel!' he retorts.

'You are almost the only vessel on the Red Sea,' replies the officer in charge of your marines. 'They'll go for you as surely as wild dogs would help themselves to a fat goose.'

The captain takes umbrage at this comparison, but you see a look of unease on his sailors' faces. 'Er, Captain,' suggests his first mate, 'why don't we let those marines hide themselves in some of the barrels? That way, if the pirates do attack, they'll be in for a surprise.'

If you agree with that plan, turn to **100**. If you prefer to let the merchant ship get a little way ahead as bait for the pirates, turn to **476**.

240

The sun pours down a ceaseless stream of blistering heat. By mid afternoon you are reeling with heat exhaustion. The landscape looks like the barren plains of Hell. When you say as much to one of the camel drivers, he replies: 'Except that to enter Hell a man must die. In the case of the desert, death is the only escape.'

Lose 1 Life Point. If you still have breath in your body, you press on across the hard rocky terrain. Dust rises from your footsteps and hangs like smoke in the air. At nightfall you watch the moon rise and wonder if you will live to see another day. If you possess a hawk, turn to **458**. If not, lose another 1 Life Point and turn to **373** if you are still alive.

241

Your arrow whistles through the air and sends a spurt of blood from the chief's head. He raises his hand, face blank with shock, and finds that your shot has sliced off his ear. Waving his spear, he orders his men to break off the attack. You watch them go with relief, waiting until they are out of sight before you lower your bow.

Hakim clasps your neck and showers you with kisses. 'I owe you my life!' he sobs. 'We all do! From this day, Hakim of Baghdad is as a brother to you. Here, this pouch of gold is a poor reward, but treat it as the merest token of my esteem.'

He has given you 50 dinars. Note it on your Adventure Sheet and turn to **218**.

242

His shins are like iron. You stumble back after your kick, wincing in pain. It feels as though you have broken a toe. The only effect it had on the Lord of the Desert was to throw him off-balance so that his sword-tip barely grazed your face. Lose 1 Life Point and, if you are still on your feet, decide whether to dodge (turn to **219**) or attack (turn to **288**).

243

You check your belongings. To your dismay, the hairless monkeys made off with all your money and the first two items listed among your possessions. (Exception: if you have LUCK, you can choose which two items they stole, and they failed to find your money.)

Now you face a fateful decision. Will you abandon ship and see if you can survive in the swamp (turn to **85**) or stay aboard and let the ocean current carry you onwards (turn to **266**)?

244

The hawk flies up, spiralling around the tower to perch on the balcony. It disappears inside the dome, reappearing moments later with something clutched in its talons. It swoops down, and in the fading daylight you see that it has found a large grey egg, which it deposits on the turf at your feet.

Jumail the cook spits in annoyance. 'I thought there'd at least be a jewelled necklace or something up there!'

'Perhaps it is the diamond egg of the rokh?' suggests Selim the lookout.

You shake your head. 'Not if the legends are true. The rokh's egg would have to be bigger than an elephant! Anyway, whatever that is, it isn't diamond.'

Will you touch the egg? If so, turn to **290**. If you think it might be dangerous, turn to **267**.

245

The three attack as one, launching themselves from horseback with spears raised. Straight away you see that just one of these men would be a hard foe. Together they are almost unbeatable.

If you have **SWORDPLAY** and a sword, lose 3 Life Points. If not but you have **WRESTLING**, lose 6 Life Points. (If you have neither skill, you have no chance and are cut down at once.)

Assuming you survive, you manage to drive the knights back and they abandon the struggle. Mounting up, they ride off after their master. Turn to **177**.

246

The jinni swirls out through the grille, hanging above you in the moonlight in a dark swirling cloud from which his face peers tenebrously. 'What do you desire?'

'My freedom!' you hiss back at him.

'As do we all,' he replies with a resounding sigh.

He mutters a spell and you feel a tingling in your

muscles. It feels as if you are being squeezed and stretched. A moment later you have become a snake. Quickly you slither through the grille. If you have the codeword *Truce*, turn to **269**. If not, you wait for the jinni to turn you back to normal and then you scurry away from the prison: turn to **223**.

247

Note the codeword *Fabric*.

Azenomei looks different now. His eyes are gold-flecked, and a dark cast of evil shadows his features. He moves closer with the drowsy menace of a snake. 'So, here I have you at last,' he murmurs. 'The infamous Shadow is more gullible than I'd have thought.'

'What are you talking about?' you reply angrily. 'You know I'm not the Shadow!'

He shakes his head. 'Of course you are. That's why I allowed myself to be caught and put in the oubliette with you. I've pursued you for more than a year. Ever since you stole the gem from my citadel here.'

'Gem? What gem? You're talking nonsense! I've never been here before.'

He ignores your protests. 'The gem – a ruby almost as big as the egg of the rokh that perches in its eyrie atop the Isle of Palms – had been given to me for safekeeping by the King of the Sea. If he learns I have lost it, he will sunder me into atoms and constrain my soul within a sealed copper jar for all time! So, here is your chance to save yourself.

Tell me where you hid the ruby.'

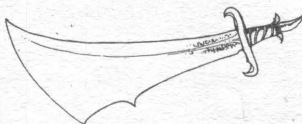
'For the last time,' you reply between gritted teeth, 'this is a case of mistaken identity. I never stole anything from you.'

'You greedy fool,' hisses Azenomei, raising his hands to weave a spell. 'Now you will die!'

If you possess a black jewel, turn to **293**. If not, turn to **315**.

248

You know that the rokh's nest lies far beyond the boundaries of the civilized world. If you journey to such remote areas, you might eventually find a clue to its whereabouts. On the other hand, you might just wander fruitlessly for years. If you decide to travel to the far east, turn to **180**. If you head west, turn to **271**. If you decide to give up the search for fame and fortune and return to Baghdad, turn to **113**.



249

You scramble back down, slipping the last few feet to land with a painful jolt. Lose 1 Life Point. If still alive, you are grateful to be back on solid ground. You rack your brains trying to think of another way to reach the nest. Turn to **204**.

Despite your protests, you are dragged in front of the palace gates. The Sultan's executioner was already preparing to execute the captain of the guard, who is relieved to see his men arriving in the nick of time.

The Sultan looks down from his palanquin. 'Is this the thief?'

The captain barely glances at you. 'Yes, O master of justice,' he says.

The Sultan orders you to be thrown into prison while he decides your eventual punishment. You are too stunned by the sudden wretched twist of fate to react. Hauled away by guards, you are stripped of your bow if you have one. They also take any money you are carrying, although they leave your other belongings.

They lower you into an oubliette. The grating drops into place with a harsh clang. You listen in shock as the heavy iron padlock is sealed. You can hear rats rustling through the dank straw carpeting the cell.

'So you're the jewel thief, then,' says a voice in the gloom. 'Doesn't look like much to us, eh, Shehrezad?'

As your eyes adjust, you make out a figure crouching beside you. He is an old man with limbs as thin and gnarled as twigs. On his lap he has a mangy cat which he is cosseting as though it were a princess. If you want to talk to him, turn to **38**. If you ignore him and sit in silence, turn to **61**.



251

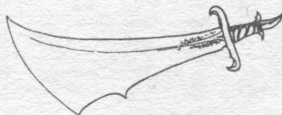
There would be no time to string and draw your bow, even if you still had it. Instead you whip an arrow out of the quiver on your back and throw it. Your aim is true. The arrow impales Jafar's wrist and with a yelp of pain he drops the knife. As the Caliph shouts for guards, Jafar runs out through an arch at the back of the room. Turn to **339**.

252

Sailors pull themselves up through the rigging like monkeys. As the sails catch the wind, your vessel heaves away from the harbour and drifts gracefully downriver towards Basra. The sun rises higher, turning the water from pale gold to the glittering olive-green of cool wine.

On the sixth day out, the ship puts in at a village to take on supplies. Strolling through the dusty streets, you soon attract a crowd of children who are eager for you to tell them stories of the splendours of Baghdad. You make up a few tales, but you are overheard by an old man who interrupts, saying, 'These stories are but fiction. It is an elegant tapestry of lore that you spin with your words, but I could tell you a tale that has the golden yarn of truth.'

If you are interested in hearing his story, turn to **3**. If you wish to return to the ship, turn to **375**.



253

The guards raise their swords and come cautiously at you three abreast. Backing away along the landing, you pass a door which must lead up to the palace roof. If you go through it, turn to **319**. Alternatively you can run back the way you came in (turn to **341**) or retreat to the door at the far end of the landing (turn to **363**).

254

The woman, whose name is Sabira, is grateful to you for rescuing her from her fate. 'To think I might have languished in the Sultan's harem for the rest of my days!' she says with a grimace as you return to your ship. 'I would sooner have died.'

You give her your hand and help her up on to the deck. 'In that case, I may very well have saved your life,' you point out.

She looks taken aback, then laughs in delight at your audacity. 'Yes, indeed. And now I shall repay you. Here are two treasures I have had since infancy. The first, given to me by my pious father, is a prayer-mat that always unfurls itself in the direction of Mecca. The second is this black jewel, which was my mother's gift. She was superstitious, and this jewel protects against the sorcery of evil wizards, ifrits and the like – or so I was told.'

Add the prayer-mat and the black jewel to your list of possessions. The captain tells Sabira he will drop her off at the next village. Turn to **375**.

255

Yussuf is so interested in the murals that he does not see the three iron-masked warriors marching along the gallery towards you. Their swords are burnished like the crescent moon, their robes richly decorated with fine embroidery. But in stark contrast to this artistry there are their faces: hideous twisted beast-masks with long metal snouts. The darkness behind their visors drinks up your feeble taper-light.

If you have a sword and wish to draw it now, turn to **278**. If you shoot them with ARCHERY (and a bow), turn to **299**. If you prefer to fight bare-handed, turn to **321**.

256

The two of you climb down to the river and swim back to the ship. Later, over supper, Yussuf tells you he is too frightened to claim his share of the treasure. 'You keep both items,' he says. 'I trust you to use their power for our mutual benefit.'

'I shall try to do so,' you assure him. Although he is not bold, you know him now to be a man of good heart. It may be that his friendship is the greatest treasure you won this evening.

Record the codeword *Gemini* and then turn to **375**.

257

It is indeed a child – a pretty little girl whose olive-black eyes are bejewelled with tears. She looks up and gives a woeful sniff when she sees you come in sight. You notice she is clutching a broken garland

of violet flowers in her hands. Then you remember that you are still holding the flower the captain plucked. If you give it to the child, turn to **323**. If not, turn to **345**.



258

Around midnight you are all woken by the lookout. He points with alarm to a group of islanders advancing towards the jetty. The moonlight splashes on their naked knives, their open feral grins. 'What have you done with our captain, you devils?' a sailor screams at them, his voice trembling in fright. He turns to you. 'We must storm the headman's house and rescue him!'

Whatever you think, the decision is out of your hands. The others have already cast off. As the ship drifts out into mid-river, the islanders reach the jetty. In their midst is a withered old man with a skull-topped staff. He begins a low howling chant that reverberates off the hills. The sound of it prickles the hair of your scalp. It sounds like a spell.

If you have **MAGIC** and a ring, turn to **324**. If not, turn to **346**.

259

If you are fighting with a sword, turn to **347**. If you do not possess a sword (or do not wish to use it), turn to **304**.

260

The night sky is like diamond, displaying the stars with dazzling clarity. A wind begins to blow in from the east and the temperature drops. Without so much as a blanket, you are forced to shelter against the bare rocks. A little bracken is all the cover you can find.

Lose 1 Life Point. (Exception: if you have WILDERNESS LORE you are used to this kind of hardship, and need lose no Life Points.) The next morning, shivering and hungry, you make your way down out of the hills to fetch the others. Turn to **289**.

261

The slave master is a short bullish man with a wide witless grin. He chains you to the oars and advises you not to try to escape. 'I'm telling you this for your own good,' he says as he walks off.

That night you pick the lock and slip out of your shackles. Rousing each of the other slaves in turn, you press your hand to their lips while you get them free.

'Are we escaping?' whispers one. 'Where shall we go?'

'You can all go where you like,' you reply. 'As long as it's in a different direction from me.'

One at a time, the slaves drop over the side and swim for the river bank. You are the last to go. Freeing the others was a sensible precaution in case the ship's captain is a vindictive man. If you had escaped alone he might have hired thugs to pursue you, but this way you cover your tracks by flooding the countryside with runaway slaves. It is a case of doing well while doing good. Lose the codeword *Mordant* and turn to **215**.

262

If you have SEAFARING, turn to **307**. If you have ARCHERY and a bow, turn to **329**. If neither, turn to **351**.

263

Scooping the sand away from the pole, you uncover a stretched piece of camel leather. When this is removed, water trickles forth from a hidden well. There is not much, but enough to clear the clogging sand from your mouth and fill your limp waterskins.

You are careful to replace the leather so that other travellers will also find water here. 'In the face of the desert's callous ways, all men are brothers,' remarks Hakim, adding a short prayer of thanks before signalling for the caravan to move on. Turn to **308**.



264

The others start to scatter, utterly routed by the Bedouin's show of fury, leaving you alone to confront the foe.

The Bedouin chief is first to reach you. Dashing his spear thrust aside, you give him a punishing blow to the side as he goes hurtling past. But although you hear him gasp aloud in pain, he refuses to retreat. He wheels his camel around, and now the other Bedouin are also upon you.

If you have **SWORDPLAY** and a sword, lose 3 Life Points. Otherwise lost 6 Life Points. If you can survive that, your bravery rallies the others, who come racing back to join the fight. At last the Bedouin lie dead on the sun-baked ground and you are able to loot their belongings.

Hakim presents you with 10 dinars as a reward. Note it on your Adventure Sheet and turn to **218**.

265

Falling into an easy rhythm, you manage to evade blow after blow. The Lord of the Desert's sword sweeps down again and again, never quite able to find its mark. A mystical sense of tranquillity comes over you, and you move as though in a trance. Everything seems unreal. The sight of the Lord of the Desert's glaring gaze no longer fills you with terror. You now see the unearthly beauty of the scene: the shimmering colours of the silk tapestries, like streams of spring water . . .

The heady odour of perfume and incense . . .

The lustrous sheen of gold and jewels . . .
Turn to **152**.

266

The ship veers away from the coast. You watch with sinking heart as all sight of land vanishes in the distance. Soon your misery turns to despair, because the clouds ahead are as thick and dark as soot and the hissing crack of lightning whips across the sky. The sea seethes, pitch-black, chopped through by crests of angry white foam.

As the clouds descend to cover you, the wind strikes with gale force, ripping at the furled sails. The ship pitches over, forcing you to cling to the mast. Waves leap like capering demons around the bows. Sea water sloshes around your feet. The rain falls as hard and heavy as a curtain of ice.

Even over the roar of the storm, you hear the great dolorous crack as the mainmast splits. It falls across the deck, sundering the spliced timbers, pulling the ship in half. You plunge into the sea, fingers scrabbling desperately to hold on to a broken plank. Water closes over your head, wrapping you in warm silent darkness. Turn to **280**.

267

You will have to try another tack: perhaps CUNNING (turn to **333**), sneaking off using the lamp of Antar if you have it (turn to **334**), or attacking the shark men (turn to **108**). If you just want to wait and see what the dwarf does when he wakes up, turn to **397**.

-268

The Sultan starts to remove his mask. In the space of one heartbeat you have drawn an arrow and nocked it to your bowstring. In another, you've raised the bow and sent the shaft shooting across the clearing. It strikes the Sultan through the eye, pinning the mask to his face.

The three knights give a gasp and reach for their swords. You ready another arrow. 'The duel was fairly fought and won,' you say to them. 'Take your master's body and go. If you're of a mind to argue, I have three more arrows I can spare you.'

Putting the Sultan's body across his horse, the knights lead it away. As you cross the clearing, you find a black jewel lying in the fallen leaves. Note it on your Adventure Sheet if you want, then turn to **177**.

269

'Shall I transform you back to human form?' asks the jinni.

You try to reply. It just comes out as a hiss.

The jinni leans closer and smiles a mocking smile. 'No? You wish to remain a snake?'

You try to bite him, but your fangs close on a thin wisp of acrid smoke. 'You must enjoy being a snake!' he says. 'You've taken to it very quickly. Well, if you don't have any more use for me, I'll be off.'

He flits up into the sky and is lost among the stars. You have only yourself to blame. The jinni returned treachery for treachery. You will spend the rest of your life in the body of a snake.

270

Azenomei leads you into the wasteland, where the hot air rasps your throat and each footstep raises a cloud of grey dust. For days you travel without seeing any sign of life. From dawn to dusk you feel as though your flesh is being dried on your bones. Night makes the rocks colder than ice.

Lose 2 Life Points unless you have WILDERNESS LORE or a bottle. If you use a bottle, note that it is now empty.

If you are still able to go on, you see a gleam of burnished metal in the thickening dusk. 'It is the jinni's citadel!' breathes Azenomei. Taking your arm, he hurries on until you stand below the walls. The battlements and turrets are all of polished bronze, flickering like fire in the red sunset.

You find the doors – a huge double portal of ebony studded with iron. Putting your shoulders against the doors, you slowly push them open. Beyond lies a great hall with many passages leading off it.

'Let's split up and look for my sister,' says Azenomei. 'We'll have to hurry, because the jinni might return at any moment.'

You gaze along the hall. 'But there may be hundreds of rooms in the citadel! How will we find her?'

'There are a thousand doors,' says Azenomei, starting off down one of the passages. 'Just be sure not to try to open any that are locked.'

Choosing a passage at random, you start to explore. Doorway after doorway leads to empty

rooms. At last you find a door that will not open. You thought there was a muffled shout from the other side, but when you press your ear to the door you can hear nothing. If you break the door down, turn to **300**. If you go looking for Azenomei, turn to **224**.

271

You travel in the far west, through the inhospitable hinterland of Egypt where, so the saying goes, 'only God and the wind dwell.'

Some legends place the nest of the rokh at the head of the River Nile. You trudge up into the mountains until you have left the last scattered settlements far behind. The landscape is one of soaring desolate crags under a sky filled with the constant threat of storms.

Water is hard to come by, and the only things to eat are snakes and insects. You climb a slope of loose dark pebbles, passing a stream where you drink deeply despite the salty taste of the water. Suddenly a boom shakes the ground. At first you think it is thunder, but then you see a corona of hissing flame against the mountain peak. A cloud of hazy black smoke is rolling down the slope towards you. You are on an erupting volcano!

If you have WILDERNESS LORE, turn to **44**. Otherwise you can run for your life (turn to **67**) or look for shelter (turn to **90**).

272

You manage to climb just a little further, until you reach a cloud streaming like a banner beside the pinnacle. Leaping on to the cloud, you wait for it to drift up, carrying you miraculously to the rokh's nest at the top. Turn to **325**.

273

As Jafar makes his throw, you sweep the cloak around, striking the deadly blade out of the air before it reaches its target. The Caliph, recovering from shock, calls for the guards. Jafar turns and flees. Turn to **339**.

274

The sailors move like monkeys through the rigging. The sails billow as they catch the wind, and your vessel moves out away from the harbour and drifts gracefully downriver towards Basra. In the dawn the water is splashed with light like liquid gold. It flows sluggishly past as the day wears on, dark and deep as a draught of cool wine.

A week passes. Moored one night in midstream, you find yourself unable to sleep. Climbing quietly over the dozing forms of your fellow sailors, you look out from the rail. The sky is filled with stars, and the moon watches its twin in the dim black depths of the river. You hear the soft splash of oars and, gazing upriver, you see the lamps of a barque approaching. If you wake the captain, turn to **26**. If you wait and watch, turn to **48**.

Casting the limp carcass of the demon to one side, you race across the parade ground in search of Jafar. He can't have got far, the fat waddling toad! Then you see him, crouching by the wall as he unrolls a long carpet embroidered with mystic sigils. He looks up, shakes his head with mocking pity, and steps on to the carpet. 'Too late,' he calls. 'But don't worry: I'll make sure our paths cross again.'

So saying, he gives an imperious gesture and the carpet starts to rise from the ground. As it rises, your heart sinks. You can't possibly get to Jafar before he is out of reach.

There is a crack like wood being hit with a



hammer. One of the stable doors flies open and bangs against the wall. You see Jafar's head shoot round in astonishment, and you follow his gaze to see your white stallion rearing fiercely in the open doorway. With a proud whinny, it gallops over and you pull yourself up on to its back.

To the end of your days, you will never quite be sure of what happens next. You could have sworn the horse's hoofs strike sparks off thin air as, with a breathtaking leap, it carries you up beside Jafar on the flying carpet.

Jafar's mouth drops open – whether to cast a spell or simply to curse you, you will never know. The stallion rears, plunges, and clubs him. He topples and falls, and the carpet slowly drifts back to the ground. Dismounting, you lift Jafar's wrist and search for a pulse. Nothing. The traitor is dead. Your honour is avenged.

If you have the codeword *Iris*, turn to **403**. If not, turn to **120**.

276

Against a true master of the sword such as Masrur, even a skilled fighter like yourself can have no chance. He calmly parries your barrage of desperate attacks. Toying with you, he allows his sword-point to prick your skin again and again – painful but not mortal wounds. Lose 1 Life Point. Finally tiring of this sadistic sport, Masrur disarms you with a deft twist of his blade. Turn to **2**.

277

Having dealt with the guards, you push aside the curtain of the kiosk. The woman presses back on her cushions, frightened by the carnage she has just witnessed, but you reach out a reassuring hand. 'Have no fear of me, my lady,' you say to her with a smile. Turn to **254**.

278

The first warrior steps forward, making no attempt to parry your attack. Your blade drives deep through the folds of his cloak, piercing his heart, but he makes no sound. Withdrawing the sword, you wait for him to topple. You are taken by surprise when, instead, he lunges at your throat. You barely deflect the blow, and now you notice that there is no trace of blood on your sword. These warriors are immune to the touch of cold steel!

His next blow is luckier – or perhaps your timing is off. The edge of his scimitar strokes the flesh of your arm, drawing a deep line of scarlet. Lose 2 Life Points. If you have a cloak and wish to use it, turn to **343**. If you decide to drop your sword and fight empty-handed, turn to **321**. Alternatively, you could try to break away and retreat through the caves: turn to **365**.



279

A man makes the sign of protection against the evil eye as you pass him on a street corner. You look at him in surprise and start to ask why he acted as he did, but he shuns you, saying, 'O unlucky one!'

Dumbfounded, you watch as he hurries off along the street. Will you follow him (turn to 322) or return to the ship (turn to 301)?

280

The surf pounds an accompaniment to your throbbing head. There is wet sand under your face. A crab is pinching your finger with its claws. You shake it off and sit up. You are on a lonely beach backed by high cliffs that shine with veins of blue and green rock. You realize you must have fainted. Getting shakily to your feet, you stagger along the beach.

Sick and dazed as you are, your first glimpse of the palace seems like a hallucination. It rises from a tumble of rocks at the end of the beach. Needle-thin spires of white marble rise around domes crusted with pastel mosaic. You stand in awe as figures emerge from the buildings and come to greet you. They are men and women with faces like angels. You swoon into their arms, and feel them carry you to the palace, where you are laid on a soft silken bed. Gratefully, you sleep.

The next time you awaken, it is to see the faces of ordinary men – honest sailors, by the look of them. They are clustered around your bed. 'What happened

to the others?' you say, sitting up.

One of the sailors steps forward. His accent tells you he is from Basra when he says: 'The wizard's beautiful servants, you mean? I saw them once. We all did, when we first arrived here.'

You swing your legs to the floor and test your strength. You feel fully recovered. Restore any Life Points lost earlier in the adventure. 'What wizard?' you ask as you get to your feet. 'Are we his prisoners?'

They all laugh at this. 'No, we're his guests!' says the man from Basra. 'He saved us all when a giant fish swallowed our ship. He even gave us a new ship for the journey home, but he told us we had to wait a week because he had seen in the future that another castaway would be swept up on the shore. That's you.'

You notice that all your belongings (if you had any) are neatly piled beside the bed, along with any money that you had. Your mysterious benefactor apparently has only the best of intentions – unlike most of the wizards you've heard of.

'Now that you're fully recovered,' says one of the other sailors, 'why delay any longer? Let's set sail!'

If you go with them to their ship right away, turn to **389**. If you ask them to wait while you go to speak with the wizard, turn to **444**.



281

You press yourself to one side of the doorway and listen. Inside, you hear two men talking. From the strained way they're speaking, you guess they must be carrying something heavy. Risking a quick peek around the door-frame, you see them manhandling a long rolled-up rug through into the room beyond.

'I think Great-grandfather's put on weight,' grumbles one of the men.

'Sssh! He'll hear you,' says the other. He leans against the wall to wipe a trickle of sweat off his forehead. 'Just one more of these to go, thank goodness. I think it's old Bamara's great uncle.'

The other glances back. You hastily duck out of sight, but he wasn't looking in your direction anyway. He takes an appraising glance at another rug lying rolled up on the floorboards. 'No,' he mutters thoughtfully. 'We took him in first, remember?'

They disappear through into the next room. This is your chance. Scuttling in, you race across to the side of the inner doorway and glance through. You get a quick impression of a crowd of people crouching in near-darkness. Looking back around the vestibule, your gaze falls on the rolled-up rug. The two men will be back for it in less than a minute. If you take a closer look at it in the meantime, turn to 411. Otherwise, you can creep quietly into the next room (turn to 433), enter boldly and announce yourself (turn to 8), or sneak back to the ship (turn to 258).

282

Both guards strike at the same time, driving towards you from either side with straight thrusts of their long knives. If you have **AGILITY**, turn to **369**. If not, you are pierced by the tips of both blades – lose 2 Life Points and turn to **390** if you are still alive.

283

You have heard the story of this island. Long ago, an old woman who could have no children found two eggs buried in the ground. One hatched, and she dressed the little manikin that emerged in baby's clothing. He grew to become a strange dwarf with magical powers, and one of his feats was to build a high tower in the space of a single night. In this tower he placed the other egg, because he had learned from a prophecy that in that egg slept his brother, whom he feared.

Turn to **311**.

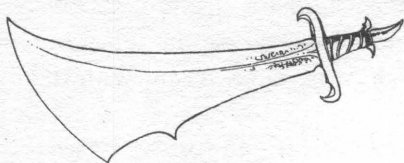
284

You say your farewells to Hakim and the others. Many speak to you with sad tremors in their voices, and several openly wipe away tears. Though you met as strangers and it is likely you'll never see any of them again, you have shared experiences that make you all as close as cousins.

Hakim himself presses a pouch into your hand. 'You've been more help than I could have imagined,' he says. 'Take this as a little bonus.'

Once out of sight around the corner, you check

the contents of the pouch: 3 dinars. Well, for Hakim that is generous. Add it to your money and then turn to **215**.



285

The pirates sail away after looting the merchant ship of its cargo. You can hear their merry shouts from afar as they broach one of the wine barrels. 'They can't be true believers,' says the captain of marines with a sorry shake of his head. 'Don't they know of the Prophet's warning against drunkenness?'

Several of his men sidle away rather guiltily when they hear this. Your reply is more forthright: 'Much worse than drunkards they are thieves and murderers. Tonight, in any case, they'll be held to account for all their crimes.'

You may have spoken too soon, however. The pirate ship is faster than your own, and soon their black sails drop out of sight across the waves. A few minutes later, the lookout calls down that he has lost them altogether.

The marine captain smacks his fist into his palm. 'Two tons of camel dung!' he swears extravagantly. 'We'll never find them now.'

If you possess a hawk, turn to **50**. If not but you have LUCK or SEAFARING, turn to **393**. Otherwise turn to **415**.

286

By evening, when it is time to halt and rest, you are close to fainting from thirst and weariness. You drop to your haunches on the ground, too weak even to eat. Others are faring worse though. One old man – a slave of Hakim's – is shivering with the first signs of fever.

Lose 1 Life Point. If you survive to see the sunrise, turn to **308**.

287

You have heard tales of the Lord of the Desert. He is one of the powerful spirits that men used to worship in the days before the coming of the Prophet. His nature is such that he uses a victim's own strength against them. In the legends, the more a person strove to defy the Lord of the Desert, the easier they made it for him to overcome them. Rather like the desert itself.

You also recognize the glyph in the keystone above the alcove. It is the seal of Suleiman, the wizard king whom all evil spirits feared. For all his power, the Lord of the Desert could never pass beyond that magic glyph. Turn to **309**.

288

Seeing an opening, you jab your elbow into the base of his throat. He snarls like a dust devil and slashes his sword across your forearm, drawing a gout of blood. You can feel yourself weakening now. Lose 2 Life Points. If you can still fight, decide whether to go for a punch (turn to **468**) or a kick (turn to **242**).

289

The caravan travels on along roads that get increasingly busy as you approach Cairo. Porters carrying great bundles of grain and cloth jostle outside the city gates in a press of heavily laden camels, donkeys and rumbling wheeled carts. In all the confusion, it amazes you that Hakim somehow manages to squeeze his way to the front of the crowd and present his papers to the sentries. The papers themselves are just a formality, since probably neither Hakim nor the sentry he speaks to can read. The important thing is the bag of gold coins that is discreetly handed over. With this transaction complete, the sentries help to push the crowd aside so that your camels can traipse through into the city.

If you have the codeword *Mordant*, turn to **192**. If not, turn to **284**.

290

The warmth of your touch is enough to crack the egg. A tiny figure jumps out, growing in seconds into the identical twin of the sleeping dwarf. Then you see on second glance that they are not identical. This dwarf has a full friendly smile in place of the other's prim little smirk.

'For a hundred years I've waited in that egg,' he says. 'I knew of my brother's evil deeds, which came to me in dreams, but I was powerless to act. Now I have been hatched into this world. It is time to set matters straight!'

With a wave of his hands, he transports you and

the others back to the ship. 'You are free to go,' he says. 'I'll deal with my wicked twin.' With that, he vanishes in a blaze of light.

If you were injured, you now find that all your wounds are healed: restore your Life Points to your score at the start of the adventure.

Captain Ibrahim loses no time in giving the order to weigh anchor. The mysterious island drops astern and is lost to sight.

The next few days pass uneventfully. You have not spotted any other vessels until a ship drifts into view one afternoon. Her sails are furled and there is no reply to your shouts. As you come alongside, you see the reason. The deck is strewn with corpses. Turn to **356**.

291

As the Sultan removes his mask, there is a moment when it obscures his gaze. Leaping forward, you press the mirror up in front of him. He stares into it. There is a gasp and he claws at his eyes, then slumps forward dead at your feet.

The three knights step closer, watching you warily. They are frightened of whatever magic you might use against them. Silently they retrieve the body, placing it across their master's horse before withdrawing in confusion. You are left alone in the woods.

There is nothing you can do for your friends, but at least you were able to avenge them. As you go to leave, you notice a black jewel lying on the moss by

your feet. Add it to your list of possessions if you want it, then turn to **177**.

292

You wait until midnight when everyone else is asleep. The rope uncoils like a serpent, stretching up into the air until it reaches the grille. Azenomei climbs up first, trying each key in turn until he finds one that fits. The padlock springs open and the two of you emerge into the sweet fresh air. Turn to **358**.

293

Cold tongues of magical flame, blasting from his fingers, lick around you. The jewel absorbs the brunt of the spell but is destroyed in the process; cross it off your Adventure Sheet.

If you have the codeword *Harem*, turn to **337**. If not, you can use MAGIC and a ring (turn to **359**), the Jericho horn if you have it (turn to **381**), or you must fight (turn to **402**).

294

No way to go on and no way back. You cling miserably to the sheer cliff and desperately try to think of a plan.

If you have them, you could use a pair of magic slippers (turn to **338**) or an Indian rope (turn to **360**). If you have neither item, you finally cannot hang on any longer, and with a bleak cry you go plunging to your doom.

295

You step forward just as Jafar throws the knife. Instead of hitting the Caliph it impales itself in your shoulder. Immediately you feel a wave of deathly weakness as the poison takes effect. Lose 5 Life Points – unless you possess an antidote, in which case you can take it to counteract the poison.

Jafar sees his last attempt has failed and, cursing, he turns to run. If you are still alive, turn to **339**.

296

For the first week you have nothing to do but walk along beside the camels and steady the swaying bundles on their backs. At Kermanshah, a town in the foothills, Abdullah exchanges the camels for donkeys. When he unwraps the bundles, you are astonished to see that they are just rags. 'Is your head on backwards?' you ask him. 'You cannot think they'll pay you much for those in the east!'

'Trade is not my true mission,' he reveals. 'Stitched inside these bundles are secret messages that the Caliph has told me to deliver to the commanders of his forts beyond the mountains.' He peers hard at you. 'Breathe no word of this to another, as you value your life.'

You do not need to be told twice. The next day you start your ascent into the mountains, guiding the donkeys up steep flinty paths until you reach a brooding forest. The slanting rays of the sun hang in the misty air, against which the shadows of the leaves remind you of naked blades.

A gazelle comes racing through the trees. You hear the pounding of hoofs and realize that it is being hunted, but before you can say anything one of the donkey-handlers has brought the gazelle down with his own spear. 'We'll eat well tonight!' he calls merrily to the others.

You look up. Against the backdrop of mist, four armed riders take ominous shape between the trees. Will you hide (turn to 312) or wait to see what they want (turn to 125)?

297

You are amazed at Masrur's strength and skill. He is one of the most dangerous swordsmen in the world, and in his youth he must have been unbeatable. As it is, your best manoeuvres and parries are only just enough to keep him at bay. You know your only hope is to stay out of his reach until he tires himself out.

You glance aside to judge the distance to the door. Taking instant advantage of your lapse of concentration, Masrur breaks through your guard and his sword lays open a long gash across your brow. You stagger back, wiping the blood from your eyes, expecting the death-blow to follow at any moment. But by this time Masrur's age and bulk are beginning to tell. Leaning on his sword to get his breath back, he gasps, 'You're better than I thought . . . you wretch . . . But I'll have you now . . .'

The door to the landing is behind you. As Masrur lumbers forward, you get ready to time your dodge

perfectly. So that he doesn't realize what you're planning, you taunt him by saying, 'You should stick to your job as executioner, Masrur. You don't seem so hot when you're fighting someone who isn't chained up!'

He snarls like a lion and lunges for your heart. Turn to 70.

298

She explains her plan: 'We'll exchange clothes. I can slip away back to your vessel, you stay here in my place.'

You give her a doubtful frown. 'I think I see a flaw. Doesn't that leave me on my way to become an inmate of the harem?'

She stifles a musical trill of laughter. 'Please excuse me for pointing this out,' she says between chuckles, 'but the guards will let you go as soon as they get a good look at you. Not that your looks are unappealing, you understand, but you just don't have the elegance that marks out a good concubine.'

Probably she's right, but do you want to risk it? If her plan backfires, you might spend the rest of your days in the Sultan's harem. If you go along with the plan, turn to 385. If not, you could use MAGIC and a ring (turn to 364), resort to CUNNING (turn to 342), or attack the guards (turn to 320). Alternatively you could just forget about helping the woman and return to your ship (turn to 375).

299

The arrow lances through the air, finding its mark in the first warrior's heart. But he gives no grunt of pain, nor does he sway and fall. Instead he plucks out the shaft and regards it for a moment as though he had never seen such a thing before. Breath rasps contemptuously behind the iron plate of his helmet as he tosses the arrow aside and lunges forward. His moon-silver sword gives your shoulder a lusty bite, and blood streams freely from the wound as he steps back with a flourish. Lose 2 Life Points. Assuming you survive this, you can draw a sword if you have one (turn to **278**), launch yourself at them and fight bare-fisted (turn to **321**), or make a run for it (turn to **365**).

300

The door frame splinters under the force of a kick, and you step through into a scented chamber curtained with diaphanous silks. A raven-haired girl reclines on a golden couch in the middle of the room. She looks up as you enter, and her expression is a mixture of fear and hope as she says: 'Have you come to free me?'

You notice that her ankle is chained to the floor, the chain being fixed by a huge padlock. 'Who are you?' you ask.

'Ayisha, the daughter of the Caliph. I was stolen from Baghdad in the middle of the night by a powerful jinni who brought me here to his citadel.'

You go closer and test the strength of the padlock.



It is easy to see that you could never hope to break it. 'Perhaps Azenomei has a key to fit it,' you tell Ayisha.

'Who is Azenomei?'

'I am.' You turn to see your friend standing in the doorway. He slowly runs his hand over the broken wood and then shakes his head regretfully. 'I did tell you not to open any locked doors.'

'Azenomei . . .' You take a pace towards him. 'Look, I've found your sister.'

His only answer is a soft mocking laugh. After a moment, Ayisha says: 'He lied to you. He isn't my brother. This is the jinni who abducted me!'

Note the codeword *Harem* and then turn to 247.

301

Are you bound for Egypt (turn to **409**), for the Indies (turn to **431**), or southwards towards the Scarlet Isle (turn to **451**)? If you cannot remember, turn to **466**.

302

The city is a sight to take your breath away. Columns of ivory and alabaster support walls of pure shimmering gold. The blocks of the pavement are gold and silver inlaid with sparkling jewels. The minarets are encrusted with lapis lazuli. Passing awe-struck through a burnished arch that gleams like flame in the sunlight, you enter a wide hall where a strange battle is taking place. A gryphon – a lion-like being with an eagle's wings and beak – is struggling with a giant scorpion. The blood of both creatures stains the metallic floor. Their screeches make you feel weak at the knees. During a respite in the fighting, the gryphon falls back panting to lie by your side. The scorpion crouches against the far wall, also recovering its strength. As it rises and flails its venom-coated sting, the gryphon turns to you and says weakly, 'Grant me a drop of your blood. It is the only thing that will sustain me in this battle.'

If you consent to give some of your blood, turn to **452**. If not, turn to **410**.

303

If you had hoped for a magic bottle or a cask of jewels, you are due for disappointment. The metallic glint turns out to be just a single dinar buried in the

muck at the bottom of the well. As you rub it clean and drop it into your pocket (add it to your money), you notice a narrow tunnel leading off from the well shaft. Looking along it, you can see nothing but dank walls with darkness stretching beyond. If you follow the tunnel to see where it leads, turn to **225**. If you climb back out of the well, you can either return to the ship (turn to **189**) or go to the headman's house (turn to **235**).

304

You jump forward with a sharp yell, but your opponent is not intimidated. He holds you off long enough for the other guard to slash a deep cut in your flank. Lose 1 Life Point and, if you are still alive, turn to **282**.

305

The two male ghouls are as large as bulls standing on their hind legs. They are a lot uglier, of course. Uttering howls to make your blood flow like ice water, they launch iron-hard kicks at your shins while shredding at your face with their long talons.

If you have **SWORDPLAY** and a sword, lose 2 Life Points. If not but you have **WRESTLING**, lose 4 Life Points. If you have neither skill, lose 6 Life Points.

If you can still stand, you step forward over the fallen bodies of the brothers. You spare no pity for the likes of them: they were mere beasts who lived by preying on blameless travellers. But your real wrath is reserved for their evil dam, the vulture-faced

crone who now stands spitting and snarling before you. You will take pleasure in ridding Creation of her loathsome life.

Seeing you to be a doughty fighter, she makes a lunge towards a cleaver hanging on the wall. You can strike at her with your bare fists (turn to **413**), with a sword if you have one (turn to **391**), or else look around for a weapon (turn to **435**).

306

You believe you can come up with a plan to catch the Red Sea pirates. The problem is, who is going to listen to an impoverished wanderer like you?

If you have **SEAFARING**, turn to **371**. If you have **STREETWISE**, turn to **392**. If you possess a harem costume, turn to **418**. Failing any of those, your only option is to try to get to speak to the Sultan while he is outside the palace: turn to **414**.

307

You steer a course between the pirates and their prey. The prow slices the waves, but the wind seems to favour the pirate ship. You see its triangular black sails looming towards your stern. A raven figurehead glares from its prow.

Your sailors rush to the rail. The pirate ship is bearing down relentlessly with the wind filling its sails. When you give the order to turn hard about, your helmsman stares at you doubtfully. 'That'll leave us dead in the water!' he says.

You nod. 'Do it.'

Your ship turns to face the oncoming pirates. You can see their faces now: eager, rapacious grins, eyes barren of pity. The wind knocks your sails flat and your ship lurches to a standstill, rocking to and fro. Your own crew's groan of dismay is echoed by a vaunting cheer from the pirates. They think you are a sitting duck. You watch calmly as they sail closer . . . closer . . .

Shuddering violently, the pirate ship comes to a dead halt. Those cruel grins vanish when the pirates see how you've lured them on to a sandbank just below the surface. Now it is they who are helpless. Calling a rapid-fire volley of instructions to the marines, you bring your own vessel around within hailing distance and tell the pirates that you are ready to take their surrender. Stuck fast on the sandbank, they have no choice. Turn to **372**.

308

Time becomes a blur. Leaving the sand dunes behind, you enter a region of barren grey rock. The howling of the wind is like a dirge, and the trembling waves of heat cause strange images to hover above the horizon.

'I have heard the voices of the celestial maidens calling me to Paradise,' avers one man. The next morning he has wandered away from the camp and cannot be found.

You press on. Everyone fears that the desert will become their grave, but no one dares to say it. Then you see a band of six white-robed Bedouin riding in

with raised spears. 'God has abandoned us!' wails Hakim, falling to his knees. 'These devils will slay us and eat our flesh.'

The Bedouin rein in at a spear-cast's distance and call out to you in arrogant tones: 'This is our desert. To pass on you must pay a toll of half your goods.'

You look at the others. Hakim is too terrified to take charge. The others look on with dull leaden faces. It is left to you to decide how to deal with this challenge. If you try to negotiate, turn to **330**. If you attack, turn to **352**. If you turn aside to avoid any trouble, turn to **373**.

309

The Lord of the Desert bids you rise. Not kindly – his voice is laden with menace. When you see his naked sword glistening in the light, you know what is to come. 'Come, mortal!' he cries. 'Your last moment is at hand. Will you stand with limbs shaking, or will you fight to save yourself? Fight boldly, and I may even be merciful.'

If you have a sword and wish to draw it now, turn to **13**. If you wish to fight him unarmed, turn to **331**. Otherwise you might try to hide – either in the curtained alcove (turn to **353**) or in one of the huge stone jars (turn to **374**).

310

You give a sudden whoop of delight that frightens the others. They think the ordeal has sent you mad. Hakim recoils in horror when you seize his sleeve

and cry: 'Sandstorm? That's no sandstorm! It's the answer to our prayers.'

'Only in God is there majesty and power,' says Rahman, the portly scribe who keeps the accounts.

You round on him. You know you must present a wild sight, with your joyful grin and feverish stare. You see his look of shock and speak to calm him, saying, 'It is not for me to guide you. God guides those He chooses to.'

You set off with a determined stride. The others murmur doubtfully, but soon see they have no hope if they do not trust you. Tugging the camels, they follow you towards the spot where you saw the dark cloud. Turn to **354**.

311

You look at the sun, now dipping low in the west. How can you possibly build a tower in the space of one night? If you think CUNNING will do the trick, turn to **333**. If you use MAGIC and a ring, turn to **355**. If you go off to explore the tower, turn to **377**. If you have the lamp of Antar and wish to use it to sneak away, turn to **334**. If you urge the other sailors to help you fight the shark men, turn to **108**. If you wait until the dwarf wakes up and try to reason with him, turn to **397**.

312

You take cover in the bushes as the riders draw near. All four are clad in white robes, with doeskin boots and glinting silver filigree across their cloaks. All

four carry spears and have swords and long curved knives at their belts. But they are not all alike in every way, for one wears a blankly serene mask fashioned from polished ivory.

The masked one speaks in a voice of honey, of music: 'I am the Sultan of Nishapur. The gazelle you took was mine, not yours.'

'All gifts are given by God,' says Abdullah defiantly. 'Besides, Nishapur is far from here and, since you wear a mask, who can say whether you speak the truth?'

'I wear a mask,' replies the other, 'because my gaze would shrivel you.' His voice remains placid but with the merest lacing of menace, like a tart taste of poison mixed with sweet date wine.

The three knights brandish their spears. Events are about to turn nasty. Will you emerge and stand with your comrades (turn to **398**) or stay in hiding (turn to **420**)?

313

Just as the Sultan removes his mask, you step forward and fling the cloak across his face. He claws at it, blinded for an instant. The three knights growl deep in their throats and go for their swords. If you possess a sword yourself, turn to **357**. If not, turn to **335**.

314

You remember the cat's weird knack of adding inches to its tail each time it hears a lie. 'Then that's how we'll escape,' says Azenomei brightly when you tell him.

You shake your head. 'The tail soon shrinks again, and the grille's at least twenty feet up.'

His eyes show a sly glint. 'I know a thousand lies, each more scandalous than the last. We'll wait till it's dark.'

At midnight he wakes you and then, bending close to the cat's ear, he starts to whisper to it. Instantly the tail shoots up, growing longer and longer, until it reaches to the grille. 'Climb!' says Azenomei, tossing you the keys.

The two of you ascend and unlock the grille. After more than a week in the noxious air of the cell, the night breeze tastes as sweet as oasis water. Azenomei takes back his bunch of keys. You notice the cat's tail is shrinking again, so you grab it and haul the animal up after you. Who knows, it might come in useful again. Turn to **358**.

315

Cold tongues of magical flame blast from his fingers. They lick around your limbs and you feel as though shards of ice are being hammered into your bones. Lose 6 Life Points unless you have **AGILITY**, in which case you dodge the worst of the spell and need lose only 3 Life Points.

If you have the codeword *Harem*, turn to **337**. If not, you can use **MAGIC** and a ring (turn to **359**), the Jericho horn if you have it (turn to **381**), or you must fight (turn to **402**).

316

You tell the cat a couple of lies. Its tail grows a few inches but then, as before, shrinks back to its original length. If you have *STREETWISE* or *FOLKLORE*, turn to **382**. If not, you realize that you will have to find something else to use: turn to **204**.

317

Jafar hurls the knife. The Caliph gives a groan, and starts to crumple across his silk cushions like a flower wilting in the sun. Jafar hardly waits to celebrate his evil deed. Seeing the look in your eyes, he flees out of the room. Note the codeword *Iris* and turn to **339**.

318

You place the hawk on your shoulder, where it sits without protest. Add it to your list of possessions. If you also wish to avail yourself of one of the magnificent jewelled swords hanging on the wall, turn to **450**. If not, turn to **93**.

319

A narrow winding staircase leads up to the roof. You can hear the guards scrambling up behind you, and Jafar's voice echoes from the bottom of the stairwell.

You run over to the parapet and look around for an escape route. Nearby is the roof of the gatehouse, just a little lower than the level of the parapet. If you could make it to the gatehouse you could descend easily to the ground and make your getaway. The snag is that it is almost ten metres away. No one

could make that jump.

Shouts from behind warn you that the guards have reached the top of the stairs. Just as you are resigning yourself to the thought of a futile death, you notice a flagpole sticking out from the wall just below the parapet. A gonfalon dangles from it, moving slowly in the gentle night breeze, casting its shadow across a moonlit balcony below. A gap of only six metres separates the tip of the flagpole from the gatehouse roof. A good athlete might make the jump.

If you have **AGILITY** and want to try to jump to the gatehouse, turn to **340**. If you prefer to rely on **CUNNING**, turn to **406**. If you try **MAGIC**, turn to **428**. Failing any of those, you are cornered and must fight: turn to **447**.

320

The guards look up amazed as you whisk the curtains aside and step out on to the deck. In an instant they have drawn their swords and are bearing down on you with murder in their eyes. The nearest swings his blade and you duck, hearing the sharp steel hiss over your head and strike the wooden post of the kiosk with a dull thunk. As your foe tugs desperately at the sword to free it, you stamp on his foot and follow through with a vicious blow to his stomach. The others crowd in behind him, keen to try their mettle against you.

If you have a jewelled sword from the palace, turn to **208**. If not, turn to **231**.

321

Your blows land solidly. The nearest warrior grunts and folds around the knee you have brought up hard into his stomach. Smashing your forearm into the side of his neck where the helmet gives no protection, you send him reeling aside. He collides with one of the others and both go sprawling.

As you whirl to face the third warrior, he brings up his sword and aims the tip at your heart. You fling yourself aside and the blade just nicks your arm. Stepping closer, you grab his forearm and drive the stiffened fingers of your other hand deep into his solar plexus. A gasp of pain issues from the iron visor as he crumples. But by now the other two have picked themselves up. You seem to be getting the better of them, but weight of numbers could still tell against you. Yussuf is no help – he just cowers at the end of the gallery bleating like a lost lamb.

If you have **WRESTLING**, lose 1 Life Point. Otherwise lose 3 Life Points. If you can survive this, turn to **386**.

322

Catching up with the man, you remonstrate with him for suggesting you bear a curse. 'This black jewel I wear is a sure defence against evil sorcery,' you point out.

'Whoever told you that was a prince of liars,' he vows. 'You have been tricked, I fear. But I know a person who can rid you of the curse.'

'At a price, I suppose?'

'Of course. But what price is too high if paying it will save your soul?'

If you go with him, turn to **97**. If you go back to the ship, turn to **301**.

323

If you have FOLKLORE, turn to **367**. If not, turn to **388**.

324

The jinni comes in answer to your summons. Surveying the chanting mage on the jetty, he turns to you and says, 'What is it you would have me do?'

'Deflect the curse!' you cry.

The jinni shrugs. 'His curse has no power. You are in the lap of fate now. I can save you from what is to come, but how do you know that matters will then turn out for the best?'

'This is meaningless prattle,' you reply. 'Steer our ship safely to a friendly port. I command you!'

Still he demurs. 'I say again, if I help you now then in the long run it may be worse for you. Will you bid me a third time? Then I must obey.'

If you dismiss the jinni and trust to fate, turn to **346**. If you insist that he does as he is told, turn to **368**.

325

The legends were true. The rokh's nest is strewn with fragments of diamond, some of them as big as a large shield. Any one of them would make your fortune – which is just as well, because you could



only carry one on the precarious descent.

There is something else in the nest: a jewelled metal key as long as your forearm. You lick your lips uncertainly. Which is it to be: the jewelled key, or a fragment of diamond? You can only choose one of them. Add your choice to your list of possessions. Then you descend the same way you came up.

If you have the codeword *Harem*, turn to **159**. If not, turn to **480**.

326

You close in quickly to a distance where he cannot get a good angle for striking. One punch lays him flat out, but he manages to gash you across the thigh as he falls. Lose 2 Life Points (unless you have *WRESTLING*, in which case lose only 1 Life Point) and turn to **434** if still alive.

327

At your command, the jinni blows a thick cloud of smoke out of the hearth. The ghouls are reduced to helpless coughing and are powerless to stop you from leaping back out of the doorway. There is the smack of a meaty fist and a yowl of pain as one of the ghouls, taking a blind swing in the smoke, hits his brother by mistake. As you hurry away down the hillside you can hear their roars of anger rattling the hilltops.

‘Am I safe now?’ you whisper to your ring.

‘Hide in a cave till sunrise,’ replies the jinni’s voice.

‘The she-ghoul will try to use her wiles to find you,

but I'll confound her with spells of my own.' Turn to **260**.

328

Cairo market has few bargains to offer because of the problem of the pirates, but you find the following goods for sale:

Water bottle	5 dinars
Bow	40 dinars
Mirror	30 dinars
Sword	30 dinars

After you have bought anything you want and noted it on your Adventure Sheet, decide whether you will offer to help catch the pirates (turn to **306**) or leave the city (turn to **349**).



329

Arrow after arrow flies from your bow, carrying flaring red fire into the enemy's black sails. The pirates are thrown into immediate confusion. While they swarm across the deck like hornets, colliding with each other in their hurry to throw water on the burning canvas, you bring your own vessel in close for boarding.

You are first to leap across the rail, your marines taking courage from your example. The pirates

muster a defiant roar as they raise their swords and rush to meet you, but they are men who prefer a helpless foe. Not used to fighting a defensive battle, they soon begin to weaken in the teeth of your onslaught.

Even though victory is certain, there is a chance you might be killed in the fighting. If you have **SWORDPLAY** and a sword, you are uninjured. If not but you have **WRESTLING**, lose 1 Life Point. If you have neither skill, lose 2 Life Points.

Assuming you survive, turn to **372**.

330

If you have **CUNNING** or **WILDERNESS LORE**, turn to **394**. If not, the Bedouin refuse to see reason and are now so indignant that they also demand your water. You must either leave (turn to **373**) or fight (turn to **352**).

331

If you have **WRESTLING** or **AGILITY**, turn to **173**. If not, decide if you will try a punch (turn to **468**), a leg sweep (turn to **242**), or wait for him to attack and then dodge aside (turn to **219**).

332

The demon swoops to renew its attack. Claws like razors rake across your flesh, but you ignore the pain and lash out with blows of your own. Each time you hit, you feel the crack of chitin and the demon utters a sibilant scream.

If you have SWORDPLAY and a sword, lose 1 Life Point. If not but you have WRESTLING, lose 2 Life Points. If you have neither skill, lose 3 Life Points.

After a short exchange of blows, the demon breaks off and rises again into the air to heal its wounds. If only you had the same advantage. Assuming you can still fight, will you stand your ground (turn to 237) or back away (turn to 46)?

333

The captain pulls off his turban and weeps into it. 'Even working all together, it would take us weeks to build that tower's twin!' he wails. 'Alas, we can only wait and see what fate the dwarf has in store.'

'Why wait?' You take hold of the cushion and turn it around so that the dwarf's head is pointing away from the sun. Ignoring the horrified looks of your comrades, you give a bold laugh and shake him awake.

He opens one eye, then the other, and yawns. 'Morning already?'

You gesture towards the tower. 'Yes. And see, we've built your tower.'

He sits up, blinks and rubs his eyes. Uttering an angry oath, he leaps to his stumpy legs and glares at you. 'But what has happened to my own tower? It lies in ruins!'

'There weren't quite enough stones, I'm afraid. We had to pull a few extra out of your tower's foundations and— well, it toppled, as you can see.'

The dwarf looks at the seven shark men, but they

are apparently too dull-witted to make any comment. Contentment shows in a tight little smile as he replaces his crown. 'Oh well,' he says to himself, 'at least I won't have to worry about the egg any more.' Turn to **441**.

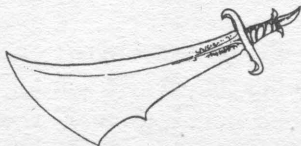
334

You can use the lamp to turn invisible and creep off to the ship, but it would mean leaving your friends behind on the island. Steering the ship on your own would be virtually impossible. Also, there is only enough oil in the lamp of Antar for a few minutes. After that it is useless.

If you decide to use the lamp anyway, cross it off your Adventure Sheet and turn to **266**. If you think there must be a better plan, turn back to **311** and choose again.

335

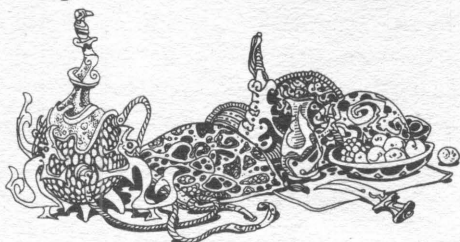
You find yourself staring into the Sultan's face. His right eye is normal, but his left one shines like a droplet of black venom. You feel a chill taking the strength from your limbs. You try to raise your arm, but it is lifeless. With a moan, you slump to the ground and darkness drops across you. It is the end.



336

In the still silence of midnight, with everyone else asleep, you crouch beside Azenomei and make your plans for escaping from this dark hole. 'One of my keys will certainly fit the lock,' he whispers. 'Give me your magic slippers so that I can get up there. Once I'm out, I'll drop them back down.'

If you trust him, turn to **380**. If you insist on being the one to go first, turn to **401**.



337

Ayisha suddenly sings a spell which sends a hail of hard pebbles flying from nowhere into Azenomei's face. He falls back, dazed, with blood streaming from a dozen wounds.

'Quickly!' shrieks Ayisha. 'Get him while he's still stunned!'

If you attack him, turn to **423**. If you run for it while you have the chance, turn to **445**.

338

The slippers make you weightless and you drift high up into the sky until finally, penetrating the clouds, you see the nest of the rokh. Success is within your grasp. Turn to **325**.



Despite the commotion behind you, there is no time to wait for the palace guards to arrive on the scene. You are determined not to let Jafar get away. You chase him down a wide staircase and on through an empty hall that echoes to the sound of his ragged breath as he struggles along in his heavy robes. Crossing a small courtyard, he glances back to see you gaining on him. You follow him the length of a covered passage, emerging on to a parade ground which abuts the royal stables. And here you skid to a halt, for Jafar has turned to wait for you.

He takes a jar from his robes and raises it, saying a few words in the tongue of the idolaters who held sway in this land before the coming of the Prophet. Then he casts the jar down, and it shatters on the cobblestones at his feet. A swirl of smoke rises, thickening into solid form. The creature Jafar has conjured has long limbs ending in extravagant talons. Its body gleams like old earthenware in the moonlight; its eyes are brighter than the stars. Strangest of all are its wings – translucent panes with a filigree of silver, like some huge insect's.

Jafar says: 'I'll leave you now to enjoy my demon's embrace.'

If you have FOLKLORE, turn to 126. If not, turn to 216.

340

Hoisting yourself over the parapet, you dangle down until your feet find purchase on the flagpole. You hold your arms out for balance and skip nimbly like a tightrope walker to the end of the pole. By this time the guards have reached the edge of the roof. 'Don't be a fool!' one of them shouts. 'You can't make that jump.'

He may be right, but you do not hesitate. You are dead anyway if they catch you. You fling yourself into empty space. Time seems to slow down as you see the gatehouse roof come looming towards you. Then your fingers catch on the cornice and you swing yourself up on to the battlements.

The guards are shouting wildly, trying to attract the attention of the sentries on watch in the gatehouse. As you descend, a portly soldier emerges from a doorway and blinks at you muzzily, a pitcher of wine in his hand. By the time he realizes you are an intruder, you have reached the street and made your getaway. Turn to **383**.

341

Just as you reach the bottom of the stairs, the door across the hall crashes open and a dozen more guards rush in, obviously alerted by the noise. Jafar clutches the rail of the balustrade above and shakes with wrath as he cries: 'I'll behead any man who lets the villain escape!'

Raising their swords, the guards charge across the hall. You push over a tall candelabra behind you to

delay them while you dart back along a passage leading deeper into the palace. Curses resound along the passage as the guards disentangle themselves from the fallen candelabra, then you hear the tramp of running feet. They are right behind you.

Turning a corner, you stop short with a groan. The passage ends in an alcove containing a tall alabaster jar. You have reached a dead end. If you have either STREETWISE or LUCK, turn to **465**. If not, you can only whirl to face your pursuers: turn to **447**.

342

'No doubt the guards check on you from time to time?'

She nods. 'One of them comes to look in through the curtain every hour or so. If you are thinking we might slip away, I advise you to forget it. As soon as they noticed I was gone they'd be sure to search every ship on this stretch of the river.'

'Then we must make sure they don't notice it. Not until tomorrow, at least.'

Gathering the cushions lining the floor of the kiosk, you start to arrange them carefully. The woman watches with furrowed brow for a moment, then sees what you are planning. Removing her shawl, she drapes it over the pile of cushions and adds a few trinkets of jewellery to complete the effect.

The two of you stand back and appraise your handiwork. Anyone looking in through the curtains

would certainly think there was a figure lying there curled up asleep. Turn to **254**.

343

You fling the cloak over the nearest warrior's head. While he is struggling blindly to get free, you kick his legs out from under him and stoop to whack his head against the ground. The iron helmet rings like an anvil under a hammer. The effect on the warrior must be rather the same as putting his head inside a bell. He squirms away, clutching his ears and writhing in pain.

The other two rush in to attack. As they step on to the cloak, you whisk it out from under them and they go sprawling. Glancing at Yussuf, you see that he will be of no use in this fight. He is cowering wide-eyed at the end of the gallery with his fist stuffed into his mouth. Still, you seem to be getting the better of the three warriors with just your bare hands.

The battle is brief. Lose 2 Life Points – unless you have **WRESTLING**, in which case lose no Life Points. If you are still alive, turn to **386**.

344

Two men stand back in the shadows of the bath-house doorway. You notice at once they are villains. One has had his ears cropped for some crime or other, the other lacks a nose. The stout sticks they hold behind their backs are a dead giveaway.

The man leading you down the alley sees you

hesitate and asks what the matter is.

'Do you think me so witless that I can be lured into a den of thieves?' you say. 'Be thankful I don't summon the city militia and have you flogged.'

Hearing this, his two cronies emerge from the bath-house and advance menacingly towards you. You beat a swift retreat to the main street. Glancing back over your shoulder, you see them watching you go with disappointed scowls. Turn to **301**.

345

She suddenly stops her sobbing and gives you a scowl of such blood-freezing hatred that you hope never to see the like again. As you step back in dismay, she leaps up and runs off between the clumps of cloud. You follow for a short distance, but you cannot find any trace of her. Seeing the spires and domes of the city not far off, you make your way towards it. Turn to **302**.

346

You sail downriver to the sea. As you go, clouds thicken like soot in the sky and the sails flutter fretfully as the first stirrings of a high wind come howling down. Lightning spits across the sky, rattling great blows against the gong of the heavens. The waters surge around your prow, sending high spurts of foam across the deck. Turn to **131**.

347

His muscular bulk is no protection against a deft sword-thrust to the heart. But in your hurry to dispose of him, you step straight into a solid punch to the jaw. You reel back, blood spurting from your nose, as the guard sinks to the ground. Lose 2 Life Points (lose only 1 Life Point if you have SWORDPLAY) and turn to **434** if you can survive that.

348

'Bit puny for ghouls, aren't you?' you say to the brothers as they start to tie you up.

The mother overhears this. 'Don't you listen to that nonsense,' she snaps. 'Those mortals are sly little wretches.'

'What do you mean, "puny"?' says one of the brothers, ignoring her.

You shrug casually. 'I've seen lots of ghouls tougher than you. Dozens.'

The other one glares at you. 'What's your game, eh? I'll have you know we're as strong as they come. A good diet of mortal flesh sees to that, eh, Ma?'

'That's right, son,' cackles the crone as she stirs the pot.

'Believe whatever you like if it makes you feel better,' you say. 'I'm going to die soon, so it doesn't matter to me. I'm just saying you're a pathetic pair of undernourished ghouls.'

They fling the ropes aside. 'Prove it!'

'All right. How about a race around the hill? If you two beat me, you'll have worked up a good

appetite. If I win, you let me go.'

'You'll never win!' they snort. Taking no notice of their mother's outraged glare, they take you outside. 'Back in a minute, Ma!' one of them calls over his shoulder.

If you have the codeword *Conch*, turn to **10**. If not, you can use FOLKLORE (turn to **56**), CUNNING (turn to **469**), AGILITY (turn to **102**), or ARCHERY if you also have a bow (turn to **124**). If you have none of those, turn to **147**.

349

Leaving Cairo on foot, you head along the banks of the Nile. Soon you have left the fertile farmland behind, and you head on into wild territory where the Sultan's rule of law does not extend. Crocodiles splash the dun-coloured water, sliding down off the sun-drenched banks as you pass. You see boats plying their trade, but they stay in midstream. A lone traveller in these parts might easily be a brigand or a mad wizard, and the few peasants you see are fearful of approaching you.

Beyond the river-bank lies a waterless wasteland. Soon the soles of your feet are hardened like leather and your tongue sticks to the roof of your mouth. In all directions the horizon is lost in a hot flat haze. Lose 1 Life Point unless you have either WILDERNESS LORE or a full bottle. (If you use a bottle, note that it is now empty.)

After days without seeing another soul, you reach an oasis. High palm trees sway against the sky. They

are a rich dark green that almost looks black against the dazzling dust-draped landscape. If you stop off at the oasis, turn to 473. If you continue past, turn to 15.

350

The pirates have stifled trade, and the marketplace is denuded of goods. What there is fetches a high price. You stroll along beside the mats of the traders. A fat man seated on a plump cushions beneath a stretched silk awning points to his dishes. 'Here is food of the far Orient,' he says.

You look at the dishes piled with golden apples. 'A journey of weeks or months, yet these apples seem quite fresh.'

'They are rich with enchantment,' he replies. 'Each has the power to banish sickness and make injuries fade like . . .'

'Like the dew of the gardens of Baghdad at dawn?' You smile.

'Like footprints on a beach as the tide rolls over them!'

'A veritable marvel. And how much do you want for these doubtless delicious fruits?'

He flutters his fingers in calculation. 'Accounting you to be a pious traveller of good heart, with a discount for your poetic turn of phrase and the proper deduction for brisk business . . . Let us say, five dinars apiece.'

Five dinars – enough for a banquet! If you wish to buy any apples, decide how many and deduct the



necessary sum from your money. Once you have done that, turn to **467** if you bought at least one apple. Turn to **78** if you bought none.

351

The pirates bear down towards your ship. As they get close, the shadow of their black sails falls across the deck, drawing a groan of fear from your marines.

The enemy's prow crashes hard into your rail, splintering the planks. Your men go pale with fear, but you are not daunted. Smashing your foot into the broken timbers, you cry out: 'This ship's scuppered. Will you wait aboard her till she sinks? Those of you who want to live, follow me!'

You leap across the rail towards the startled pirates. Your marines take courage from your example. The pirates fight furiously, but they are not used to fighting a defensive battle, and soon begin to weaken in the teeth of your onslaught.

If you have **SWORDPLAY** and a sword, lose 2 Life Points. If not but you have **WRESTLING**, lose 4 Life Points. If you have neither skill, lose 7 Life Points.

Assuming you survive to see victory, turn to **372**.

352

The Bedouin respond to your defiance by digging their heels into their camels' flanks and riding forward with a shrill battle cry. If you have **ARCHERY** and a bow, turn to **241**. If not, turn to **264**.

353

You dive through the curtain and find yourself in a cramped alcove. If you were hoping for an escape route, you're out of luck. You hear the Lord of the Desert stamping around his treasure hall. His sword makes angry swishing sounds, but for some reason he does not try to pursue you or drag you out of the alcove.

'How long can you hide in there?' he snarls. 'Come out and face me, coward!'

You could use **ROGUERY** (turn to **439**), **CUNNING** (turn to **395**), or **MAGIC** and a ring (turn to **417**). If you have none of those skills, you must emerge and fight him either with a sword (turn to **13**) or with your bare hands (turn to **331**).

You discover that the 'cloud' you saw was actually a swarm of locusts. They cover the ground, and you show the others how to catch them by throwing rugs, saddlebags and robes over them where they lie. As an added bonus, the locusts had discovered a patch of scrub which, when you dig down to the roots, reveals a trickle of water.

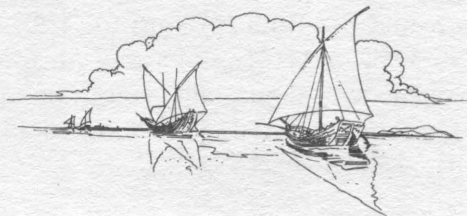
The others are squeamish about eating locusts. 'Are they not unclean creatures?' says the scribe Rahman, looking dubiously at the plate of roasted insects you hand to him. All the same, you notice he tucks in as hungrily as everyone else.

You journey on the next day with lightened spirits. 'Soon we'll reach the coast,' says Hakim. 'Then we'll take the road north-west to Cairo. No more starvation or thirst to worry about! We're past the worst of it, my friends.'

'We should stop at Mecca to make our thanks to God, master,' suggests one of the camel-drivers.

Hakim looks reluctant. 'Ah, well, perhaps we'll do that on the way back. I'll lose money if these goods are late in getting to Cairo market.'

If you also think that the caravan should stop off at Mecca, turn to **101**. If you are not worried about it, turn to **123**.



355

The jinni balks at the task you want to set him. 'To build an entire tower overnight!' he cries, raising his bristly eyebrows. 'You think too much of my ability!'

'I'm relying on you,' you reply. 'We all are. This rancid dwarf told us to build a tower. If he wakes to find we've failed, I fear an unpleasant conclusion to the matter.'

The jinni considers for a moment, nods. 'I'll grant this last wish,' he proposes, 'and then you must give me my freedom.'

If you agree, turn to **198**. If not, you must dismiss the jinni and try another tack – either CUNNING (turn to **333**), an exploration of the tower (turn to **377**), sneaking off using the lamp of Antar if you have it (turn to **334**), or attacking the shark men (turn to **108**). If you wait and see what the dwarf does when he wakes up, turn to **397**.

356

A hurried inspection of the ship reveals that everyone aboard died mysteriously and quite suddenly. 'At first I feared it was plague,' says the captain, 'but there is nothing in the log to suggest trouble. It seems they just went to sleep one night and never awoke.'

The cargo hold is found to be full of porcelain and glassware, which should fetch a tidy sum in the east. The captain, deciding that it is too late to sort through the cargo today, orders the two ships

tethered. 'Tomorrow we will give her a thorough inspection,' he says. He points to you. 'You will keep watch on board her tonight.'

It is plain from the looks of the other sailors that they would not relish spending the night on a ship full of dead men. You are not all that keen yourself, but orders are orders. Taking a lantern, you go across to the other ship. If you have LUCK, turn to **107**. If not but you have ROGUERY, turn to **130**. Otherwise, turn to **153**.



357

You drive the sword right through the Sultan so that the tip pushes through his back. His entrails spill out on to the moss. The three knights stand looking on in shock, then lift the body across their late master's horse and lead it away. You think they have forgotten you, but at the edge of the clearing one turns and casts his spear. It strikes your shoulder. Lose 1 Life Point.

If you survive, you staunch the bleeding while they ride off between the trees. There is nothing you can do for your friends, but at least you were able to avenge them. As you go to leave, you notice a black jewel lying on the moss by your feet. Add it to your list of possessions if you want it, then turn to **177**.

358

The two of you manage to slip out of the city the next morning on the back of an ox-cart. The owner is startled when the sacks of grain on the back of his cart are suddenly thrown aside to reveal two scruffy young vagabonds.

Azenomei gazes back at the city and gives a hearty laugh. 'A pox on that place! I'll never go there again, I can tell you.' He turns to you. 'And where are you bound now, my friend?'

'I left Baghdad in search of fame and fortune. But I was accused of being an infamous thief, and now I have no money.'

'You could do worse than throw in your lot with me,' declares Azenomei. 'I'm heading across the desert to rescue my sister. She was spirited away by a jinni who imprisoned her in a bronze citadel. I can promise you as much adventure as you can take!'

If someone had said that to you just a few months ago, you would have assumed they were mad. Now you have seen many marvels with your own eyes. But you have not learned to be careless of risk. 'A jinni's citadel, you say? That may be more adventurous than I'd like.'

Azenomei waits for your decision. If you go with him across the desert, turn to **270**. If you go your own way, note the codeword *Noose* and turn to **223**.



359

A swirl of vapour emerges from the ring, clotting in midair into the shape of your jinni. He looks across the chamber with a groan of dread. 'Azenomei al-Umara!' Turning to you, he mutters: 'This is one of the lords of the jinn. He is far mightier than I. If you send me forth to battle him, it may mean my death.'

'Your life's purpose is to serve me!' you shout back at him. 'Attack!'

Taking the form of a shaggy black lion, he leaps on Azenomei. The tumult of roars, shrieks and bone-crunching blows is enough to freeze your blood. It is soon clear that your jinni was right – he's no match for Azenomei. If you recall the jinni and attack Azenomei yourself, turn to **112**. If you watch to see how the fight goes, turn to **43**.

360

You give the command for the rope to rise, taking a firm hold of the top so that you are borne upwards, through the wispy clouds, to the thin clean air where the rokh has its eyrie. Turn to **325**.

361

Ishak of Mosul is one of the Caliph's favourite musicians. You know that he lives the life of a recluse in a house on the outskirts of the city. Calling on him, you are invited to dine. For almost an hour Ishak talks to you of various matters, but he is scrupulous about the laws of courtesy and does not demand to know why you have come.

At last you explain. 'I must see the Caliph. It is very important.'

Ishak looks out of the window. 'It is after dark. The curfew is in force.'

You go to stand beside him, looking him straight in the eye. 'It's very important, Ishak.'

He paces to and fro, then comes to a decision. Telling you to wait, he slips out into the night. Quite a short time later, the door bursts open and a group of soldiers dash in. Ishak stands in the doorway behind them, wringing his hands. 'It's not my fault!' he says. 'They arrested me and made me lead them back here.'

If you have **AGILITY**, turn to **446**. If not, you are seized and hauled away: turn to **405**.

362

'The other reason? It is here,' says Jafar, pulling a scroll from his sleeve. 'This chart was brought to me by my loyal henchman, who got it from an African trader. It shows where I can find the nest of the great rokh, the bird with wings longer than a city's streets. It lays eggs of diamond, and with just a few fragments of such an egg I could bribe the royal guards and make myself Caliph.'

The slave's eyes are wide with wonder. 'When will you set out to seek this treasure, lord?' she asks.

Jafar snorts. 'Me, risk my life climbing to the rokh's nest? I have no intention of doing so. I employ others for those tasks. Even now, my agents are combing the sordid dives and dens of a dozen cities

searching for the famous thief Shazir.'

'Shazir!' The slave gasps. 'I have heard of that one's daring exploits. It was Shazir who stole the emerald known as Iblis' Eye from the treasury of the Masked Sultan of Nishapur . . .'

Jafar nods impatiently. 'Yes, and it will be the same Shazir who steals a piece of the rokh's egg for me. Now, come and help me change. This robe of honour is elegant, but it is also rather uncomfortable.' He puts the chart down on a table and goes through a curtained archway into an inner room. The slave glides dutifully after him.

You look at the chart and lick your lips. Just a few quick strides and you would hold the key to great treasure in your hands. But if you are discovered here, you will be beheaded as a common thief. If you creep over for a closer look at the chart, turn to **184**. If you leave the palace now, turn to **383**.

363

You jump through into an empty chamber, slamming the door shut. You manage to wedge a candelabrum against it, but the guards are battering on the other side with the pommels of their swords. 'Break it down!' you hear Jafar snarl.

Your makeshift barricade won't hold them off for long. You look around, your heart thudding like that of a cornered animal. The only route out of here is over a vine-covered balcony – a drop of six metres or more to the hard flagstones below.

There is the sound of splintering wood. The

guards are almost through the door. You have no time left to ponder. Now you must act. If you have MAGIC (and a ring) and wish to call on your jinni, turn to 49. If you jump from the balcony, turn to 72. Or you can start climbing down using the vines for support, turn to 95.

364

The woman goes ashen as she sees the jinni swirl up in a cloud of indigo vapour from your ring. Sheer amazement is the only thing that keeps her from crying out.

The jinni listens, fingering his tusks, as you explain the predicament. 'Let me rend them into small chunks and scatter them to the fishes, supreme one!' he says eagerly as he peers out from the drapes at the six guards.

'Oh, no,' gasps the woman, finding her voice at last. 'It's not their fault. They're just doing as Jafar ordered them.'

The jinni looks to you. After a glance at the woman, you give him a nod. 'Do it without bloodshed,' you say.

Shrugging, he turns himself into a gnat and flies out to where the guards are playing dice. Without them noticing, he alters the dice roll and then buzzes into one man's ear. The man looks up and glares at the man next to him. 'What do you mean, I cheated?' he snarls.

'Cheated?' replies the other. 'I never said any such thing!'

‘It must have been your guilty conscience speaking to you, Abdul, you lowborn dog!’ chortles another of the guards.

‘Worthless excrement of a diseased camel!’ screams Abdul, leaping up and swinging a punch. Within seconds the brawl is whipped up into a frenzy by the jinni’s trickery. Soon six unconscious forms line the deck. Turn to **254**.

365

You join Yussuf in a desperate scramble up the tunnel leading to the surface. But a twist in the passage just brings you to a dead end. Yussuf throws himself against the rock slab and claws at it, crying: ‘This wasn’t here a moment ago!’

There is a deathly soft footstep right behind you. Before you can whirl to face your pursuers, something hits you in the middle of the back. Suddenly you feel dizzy. The light seems to be draining away into an inky haze.

Yussuf is screaming as he stares at your chest. You look down, and as your eyes flutter closed you see a slender sword point protruding between your ribs. It is slick with your own blood. This is the end.

366

There is no mistaking the telltale tug on your purse strings. You look down in time to see a scrawny urchin slice through the purse, snatch your gold and run pell-mell away down the alley. You are about to give chase when you see two burly ruffians lurking

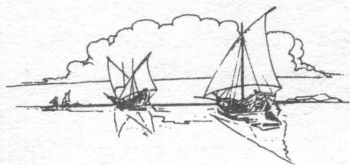
in the entrance to the bath-house. Their scarred, hard faces leave you in no doubt that they would not hesitate to use those gnarled clubs they're holding.

Realizing that the man who led you here must be in league with the thieves, you look around. But he is already running off. Sour at having been robbed, you slouch back towards the docks. Deduct all your money and turn to **301**.

367

An old story you heard from your mother suddenly springs to mind. It concerned a sailor who was cast up to the heavens on a waterspout. His comrades all fell back to their doom, but he was clutching a magic flower which enabled him to walk on the clouds. Finding a city of scintillant gold, he dwelt among the people there and even married one of them. Many years later, he was able to leave when the cloud became lodged on top of a high mountain. He brought his wife down the mountainside with him, but she could not survive in the over-rich air and soon died.

Bearing this in mind, you decide it might be safer not to give the child your flower. Note on your list of possessions that you have a jasmine flower, then turn to **345**.



368

You sail downriver to the sea. As you go, clouds thicken like soot in the sky and the sails flutter fretfully as the first stirrings of a high wind come howling down. Lightning spits across the sky, rattling great blows against the gong of the heavens. The waters surge around your prow, sending spurts of foam across the deck.

The sailors moan and start to pray for deliverance. You turn to the jinni, who exerts his magic to quell the storm. It rolls off into the east – a yellow glimmering beyond the clouds, like the fires of Iblis the Destroyer. The seas are left with a high swell, but soon that too dies down. With a satisfied smirk, the jinni becomes a coil of vapour that is sucked back into your ring. Turn to **389**.

369

You put on a sudden burst of speed that takes the two guards completely by surprise. Dodging both lunges, you whirl in time to see their expressions of slack-faced disbelief as they spring together, each piercing the other on his blade. As they slump lifeless to the ground, you step up to the door and free the captain. Turn to **412**.

370

The two sons are stocky and strong, but you can capitalize on their slow wits and clumsiness. The mother will be harder to beat, because legend has it that a she-ghoul can only be hurt by a weapon made

of wood. Furthermore, you must strike well with your first attack. There are countless stories of ghouls and witches who have been felled by one blow, only to be replenished when a second blow was struck. Now turn to **305**.



371

Falling in with a group of marines who have just returned from a patrol of the Red Sea, you impress them with your knowledge of naval tactics. These men are slaves of the Sultan, well trained and fiercely loyal. Their officer vows to follow some of your suggestions on his next patrol. A few days later you see him with his commander as they emerge from the public bath-house, and the officer calls you over to introduce you.

The commander is a man with little practical experience, but he listens keenly to your tales of distant lands. When you tell him about the explosive powders of China and the incendiary liquid used by the Byzantine navy, he claps his hands in amazement. 'You must tell these stories to the Sultan himself! He is fascinated by such things.'

'I would be delighted to do so,' you say, nodding. 'Also, I would like to explain to him about the ideas you and I have come up with for catching the Red

Sea pirates.'

'Eh? What plans are those?' Understanding dawns with a sudden grin. 'Oh yes. The plans we discussed. I hope my own input was useful.'

'Invaluable, my lord.'

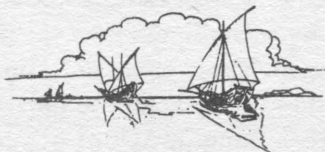
He arranges an audience with the Sultan and also pays you 50 dinars as a reward for letting the Sultan think that the plan came from both of you. Turn to **193**.

372

The pirate leader wore a black jewel on a chain around his neck. The captain of marines hands it to you. 'Perhaps you'd like to have this as a keepsake,' he suggests. 'We have to take the rest of the booty back to the Sultan, of course.'

When you return to Cairo, the Sultan is overwhelmed with gratitude. 'Those pirates had been bleeding the city dry,' he says. 'You are our saviour. This reward is hardly enough to express my thanks. On your future travels, always remember that there is a welcome here for you in Cairo.'

Add 1,000 dinars to your money. Also note the black jewel on your Adventure Sheet if you decide to keep it. Thanking the Sultan for his generosity, you take your leave. Turn to **349**.



373

At dawn the next day, a sheath of darkness suddenly covers the burnished edge of the sun. The roaring wind hits only moments later, bringing with it dense clouds of stinging sand. The storm blots out all daylight. Sheltering your eyes, you grab the halter of the nearest camel to keep from getting lost. Then you realize you have the leading camel. It is up to you to decide which route to take.

If you head straight into the wind, turn to **36**. If you bear left, turn to **82**. If you lead the camels to the right, turn to **59**.

374

You scramble across the chamber, narrowly avoiding the Lord's blade as it thrums through the air behind you, and climb quickly into the jar.

After a moment, his face appears above you. He wears a predator's smile as he says: 'You're cornered in your bolt-hole, little mouse. Let that be your final resting place, then.'

Sand pours magically from his hands, filling the jar and smothering you. There is no escape.

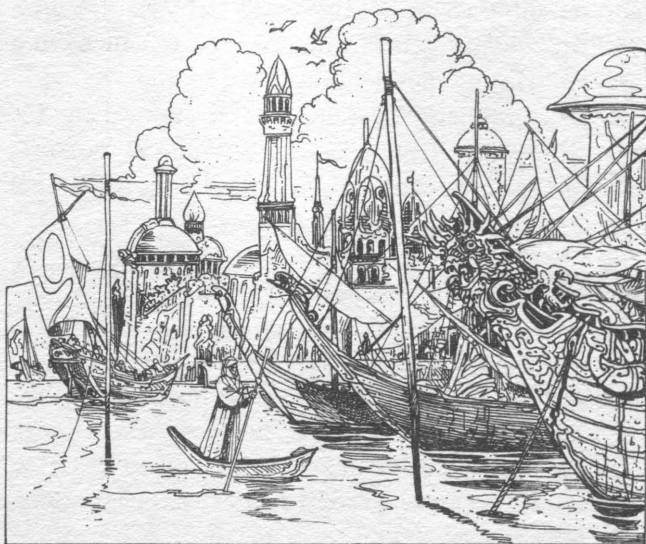
375

You sail on, to Basra and beyond, now leaving the river and entering open sea. Crossing the Persian Gulf as far as the Straits of Hormuz takes a week, in weather as serene as an idyll from the ancient epics. 'But wait till we're on the ocean,' mutters one of the sailors. 'We'll earn our pay then!'

The glittering port of Suhar lies a day's sailing down the coast from the straits. Here the ship will take on supplies for the long sea voyage. You have the opportunity to stroll through the market and examine the goods on offer. You may purchase any of the following that you have money for:

Water bottle	1 dinar
Mirror	20 dinars
Whistle	3 dinars
Pair of gloves	5 dinars
Hawk	20 dinars

Once you have made your purchases, you head back to the harbour. If you have a black jewel, turn to **279**. If not, turn to **301**.



376

You stagger on, tortured by hunger and thirst every moment you are awake. Your sleep is a fever haunted by strange fugitive visions. Lose 2 Life Points. If you survive, you fall to your knees in tearful thanks when at long last you see the walls and spires of a city in the distance.

'It is Mecca!' says Rahman, the scribe who keeps Hakim's accounts. 'God be praised for His mercy. All of you, cast off your travelling-clothes and prepare to enter the holy city. We must give thanks for our deliverance from the wilderness.'

'Not so fast,' says Hakim. 'We'll stop long enough to fill our waterskins, but if any of you want to get pious you'll have to do it on the way home. I'm in a hurry to get these goods to Cairo market, and I can't afford to dally around here for days on end.'

If you think you should go to pray in the holy city, turn to **101**. If you can see Hakim's point, turn to **123**.

377

You approach the tower and walk all around it. There is no way in. Looking up, you see a balcony surrounding the domed roof. But the smooth walls are devoid of handholds. You doubt if a lizard would find enough purchase to climb it.

If you have **AGILITY**, turn to **221**. If not but you possess a hawk, turn to **244**. Otherwise, turn back to **311** and choose again.

378

Strange stories are told about the Sultan of Nishapur. He is said to be a sorcerer who drowned his elder brother in a vat of black dye, then flayed the skin to make a covering for his sword. Learning spells that could command even the angels, he placed himself in a deep sleep during which a messenger came and cut out his eye with a silver dagger. The messenger – apparently an angel – bore the eye up to heaven, where it witnessed marvels beyond the limits of human experience. When the eye was brought back and replaced, the Sultan awoke with knowledge of secrets from before the dawn of time. The gaze of the eye had become so terrible, however, that it slew any who looked into it. Thus it was that from that day on the Sultan has always worn a mask, and the women of his harem are always blinded.

That, at least, is the story. Turn to **398**.

379

Touching your lips, you bow and say: 'Peace be upon you, O King. Your perceptive gaze has gleaned the truth: I was cursed by a powerful jinni never to know good fortune. No doubt that is why I now find myself standing in abject terror with all my friends slaughtered around me. There is only one way to end this curse . . .'

'Yes?' says the Sultan. The leather of his saddle creaks as he leans forward in curiosity.

'I must be slain. Then my curse will pass to those who kill me.' You look around the band of knights,

suddenly falling to your knees and wailing: 'I can take no more misery! Kill me, I pray!'

A nervous look passes between them. 'This pitiful wretch may speak the truth, Majesty,' they say to the Sultan.

There is silence behind the mask, then he says: 'Only God is wise in all things. Come.'

They ride off, leaving you alone in the midst of the carnage. Turn to **177**.

380

Azenomei is as good as his word. After levitating up and unlocking the grille, he throws the slippers down to you. Soon you have joined him on the edge of the pit. Gazing down into the fetid hole that has been your prison for the past week, you cannot suppress a shudder of disgust. 'I might have wasted away to a skeleton down there!' you say to him.

He claps you on the back. 'Don't think of it. We're free!'

Turn to **358**.

381

The blaring note of the horn builds in the air until the very walls of the citadel begin to shake. You sense the tremendous pressure of the sound forcing itself out from where you are standing. A moment later, the vast metal blocks of the ceiling are blown apart and the whole structure collapses around you.

Lose 4 Life Points unless you have LUCK, in which case you are miraculously unscathed. If still alive,

you dig your way out of the debris. There is no sign of Azenomei – he must have perished in the ruins of his bronze fortress. Turn to turn to **66**.

382

You know more tall tales than all the sailors of Suhar, more unlikely accounts than the storytellers of Basra, and more outright lies than every beggar in Baghdad. Within minutes the cat's tail has soared up out of sight among the clouds. You tell it a few more falsehoods for good measure, since you want the tail to stay extended long enough for you to get what you came for, then you rapidly climb up to the top of the pinnacle. Turn to **325**.

383

You make your way hurriedly away from the palace by way of the deserted back streets. Your heart is pounding at the thought of your bold escapade – but it is still a bitter heart, for you have achieved next to nothing. Jafar is still free to plague the city with his wickedness, and your own personal grievance remains unpunished.

You know now that you cannot expect to right all wrongs in a single night. First you must make your fortune. Once you are rich, you will be able to get an audience with the Caliph and tell him everything. But how will you earn fame and fortune? By joining a merchant caravan (turn to **183**) or by going to sea and sailing in search of exotic lands, as the legendary Sindbad once did (turn to **160**)?

384

Record the jewelled sword among your list of possessions. You raise it to parry Masrur's first attack. His blade strikes with an impact that makes the hilt shudder in your grip, sending a bone-wrenching jolt all down your arm. Your own sword is almost dashed aside by Masrur's great strength, and the blow cuts a narrow gash across your brow. Lose 1 Life Point. As he lunges again, you jump back, making the most of your greater speed.

'Be thankful I'm trying not to damage that precious sword,' he puffs as you circle nimbly around him. 'Otherwise I'd cut you in two where you stand.'

Out of the corner of your eye you see a silk-gowned figure emerge from the next room. It is the evil vizier, Jafar. 'You're getting old, Masrur,' he says snidely. 'Once upon a time, you could deal with a little gutter stripling like that without breaking into a sweat.'

If you try to get away, turn to **404**. If you keep on fighting, turn to **427**. If you drop the sword and surrender, turn to **2**.

385

You swap clothes. It feels odd to wear the impractical silken finery of a harem girl instead of your travelling clothes. The woman slips out of the back of the kiosk and turns at the rail. 'Since you have helped me, it's only right I should reward you,' she whispers. 'See the prayer-mat there? It has the special property that, when unrolled, it always lies in the direction of

Mecca. Take it with my blessing.'

She lowers herself into the water and swims off. After an hour or so, one of the guards comes back to check the kiosk. He peers through the curtain, but does not notice anything amiss. You doze off, only to be woken in the first grey light of dawn by cries of anguish.

'What has happened to Sabira?' one of the guards is saying. 'Who are you?'

You decide not to disclose your full involvement in the woman's escape. 'I was swimming last night,' you reply. 'I came across this barque moored in the river. You were all playing dice in the prow, but there was no woman here. I saw a pile of fine veils and silks, which I dressed myself in for fun. I suppose the swim must have exhausted me, though, because then I fell asleep.'

The guards start to wail and tear their hair, distressed at the thought of the punishment in store for them. They take no further interest in you, so you quietly slip away and swim back to your own ship. Note on your Adventure Sheet that you now possess a harem costume and a prayer-mat, then turn to 375.

386

The warriors lie motionless on the dusty floor. Letting out a long sigh of relief, you lower your bruised fists and go back to Yussuf, who is shaking in a heap. As you help him to his feet, he whispers: 'I'm sorry I wasn't any help.' He is too ashamed to

look you in the eye.

‘God did not give courage to all men and women in equal measure,’ you reply. You clasp his shoulder, trying to rally his spirits. ‘You have other fine qualities, my friend – your good humour, your loyalty and your love of life.’

He nods slowly. Then, raising his head, he peers into the gloom at the end of the gallery. ‘Are you sure they’re beaten?’

The taper gives little light. Taking it back to where you left your fallen foes, you see no sign of the bodies. You react like a startled cat, looking all around in case they are about to leap out of the darkness, when Yussuf points to the mural. ‘Look, it’s changed!’

He’s right. All of the warriors shown in the picture now lie defeated. A single hero in simple modern-day clothing is shown striding among them, breaking the ancient idols. Yussuf leans close. His voice is a mixture of puzzlement and awe as he says: ‘The face on this figure – it might almost be you . . .’

You take a close look at it. Long centuries have dimmed the ancient pigments. ‘No,’ you say at last, shaking your head. ‘It couldn’t be.’

Turn to 52.

Reaching the bath-house, the man steps back and politely motions for you to enter. You step into the entrance. Coming into cool gloom after the bright sunlight outside, you can see nothing. You sense a

movement to one side, but before you can react a heavy cosh lashes down against your skull, and you are swallowed up by a deeper darkness.

Lose 1 Life Point. If you survive, turn to **432**.

388

On the very instant that she takes the flower from your fingers, the cloud underfoot becomes no more solid than a wisp of mist. You give a scream, which the child matches with a peal of malevolent laughter as she watches you sink through the cloud. For less than a heartbeat you are surrounded in white haze, then you break through the bottom of the cloud and go plunging down to strike water with numbing force. Lose 6 Life Points and turn to **280** if you survive.

389

In time, fair winds and fate carry you to safe berth in the port of Zeila. Here you bid your shipmates farewell, for their travels will take them back to Basra, while you have yet to find your fortune.

Nearby are carts loaded with a variety of goods. They are bound for the market, and you know that you have a good chance of a bargain if you buy anything here. You find the following items for sale:

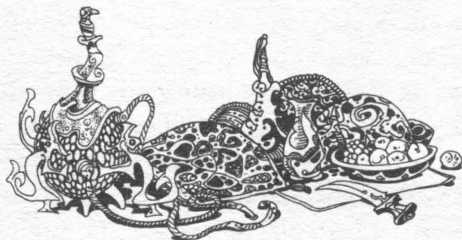
Water bottle	1 dinar
Antidote	60 dinars
Sword	15 dinars
Veil	2 dinars
Candle	3 dinars

Note anything you buy on your list of possessions, remembering to deduct the money you spend. Then turn to **149**.

390

Jumail starts burbling with fright, but at least he overcomes it enough to snatch up a shovel and start flailing it at the guards. His blows are mostly ineffectual, but they provide enough distraction to give you some hope of victory.

The fight is brief and silent. Lose 2 Life Points if you have either **SWORDPLAY** (and a sword) or **WRESTLING**; lost 4 Life Points otherwise. If you survive, you watch Jumail rush in and clobber the prone bodies of the guards for good measure before turning to free your captain. Turn to **412**.



391

Your weapon has as much effect as a blade of grass. With a shrill laugh, the she-ghoul raises her arm to strike back. The cleaver falls, embedding itself in your skull, and blood-soaked darkness falls around you. Your adventure is at an end.

One of the Sultan's advisers, a wealthy man named Nizam, has a reputation for modesty and generosity. You wait until you see him approaching the mosque for evening prayer and then take out a bowl with which you start washing the feet of the worshippers as they come up the mosque steps. Nizam pauses beside you, but instead of washing his feet you select a common labourer with toes as dirty as a camel's.

'Why do you wash this man's feet ahead of mine?' Nizam asks. 'Are you unaware that I am one of the Sultan's personal friends?'

From the corner of your eye you see that he wears a half smile, which is an encouraging sign. You decide to press ahead with your ploy. 'God sees no difference in your feet, nor cares a whit less for this man's prayers than for yours. You may indeed have the ear of the Sultan, but do not be so prideful as to suppose this elevates you above other men.'

Nizam stares open-mouthed at this, then gives a delighted chuckle. 'Never have I heard such insolence. It is most refreshing! Please do me the honour of coming to my house for supper.'

That night you strike up a friendship with Nizam over several games of chess. As you depart, you mention casually that you have a plan for dealing with the Red Sea pirates. 'Perhaps it would be better if the Sultan heard it from you, though,' you suggest. 'He'd never listen to a commoner like me.'

'Nonsense!' replies Nizam. 'How can you, of all people, think such a thing? It is your plan, and I

would not dream of presenting it as my own. Tomorrow I shall take you into the palace and introduce you to the Sultan. You can tell him your plan in person.' Turn to **193**.

393

Guided either by intuition or long experience, you stick to the course the pirates were on when last seen. 'Surely they must be trickier than that?' complains the first mate.

You shake your head. 'Not at all. Remember that no other vessel has been able to track them. They're confident of their ability to vanish into thin air, so why would they worry about pursuit?'

At dusk you arrive at high cliffs rising at the edge of the sea. Carved into the side of the cliff are two ancient colossi with heads of lions. Between them is a vast stone slab. 'It may be a door,' says the first mate, 'but I can't see any way of getting it open.'

If you have **FOLKLORE** or the codeword *Sesame*, turn to **437**. If not but you possess the Jericho horn, turn to **457**. If you have **MAGIC** and a ring, turn to **440**. Otherwise turn to **415**.

394

'Why should we pay any toll?' you reply in a challenging voice. 'No man owns the desert!'

The Bedouin leader makes a sweeping gesture with the point of his spear. 'These skies are the canopy of our tents. The sands are our rugs. The rocks, our cushions. Hence you must pay.'

'Are we your enemies?' you ask him. 'Have we caused you any harm?' When he does not find a ready answer, you go on: 'No – for, if we had, then you would have struck us down already, as honour demands.'

'And so?' he mutters darkly.

'You say the desert itself is your home. If we are not your enemies, we must be your guests. The law of hospitality forbids you to profit from us.'

There is no sound at all for several seconds. Then, to your relief, the Bedouin dismount and lead their camels over. The chief's face is like a mask of granite as he says: 'Well spoken. I am abashed. I shall kill my camel for you, and here is water from my own flask.'

The water tastes like the contents of a ditch, but you do not complain. After spending as short a time with the Bedouin as courtesy allows, you make your excuses and travel on into the west. Turn to **218**.

395

You pretend that you are so frightened that you start mumbling to yourself: 'Oh woe, that a poor slave like myself should suffer such a fate! A curse on my proud master for sending me down to keep this mighty spirit busy while he escaped!'

'What's that you say?' demands the Lord of the Desert, pressing his ear to the curtain. 'Who is your master?'

'The Defender of the Faith, Harun al-Rashid, Caliph of all the civilized world,' you reply. 'His learned sages explained how they could outwit a

senile god of ancient times by sending me, a mere slave, as lure for his quicksand trap.'

'Senile!' he roars. 'I'll turn the tables on them yet. Quickly, come forth.' When he sees you hesitate, he adds: 'Come! What do I care for the life of a slave when I can have Harun and his advisers?'

He pours gold from thin air into your hands. 'Return to the surface,' he says. 'When Harun sees this loot, tell him you found an empty treasure-house beneath the earth. Greed will bring him into my clutches!'

He opens the iron door and waves you through. Add 60 dinars to your money and turn to **459**.

396

You leap up, vault over the soldier's lance, and land directly in the Sultan's path. His guards think you are an assassin. Two of them swing their swords, but panic makes them clumsy. Ducking under their attacks, you jump forward and seize the bridle of the Sultan's horse, jerking it to a halt.

Angry soldiers surround you. The Sultan stares down, more astonished than frightened. Raising his hand to stay his guards from attacking, he says: 'I am a good enough judge of character to see you are no lunatic or zealot. Why did you risk your life to get to me?'

'Your excellency, how else can a commoner speak to a king? I know a way to catch the Red Sea pirates.'

He nods. 'I'll hear what you have to say.'

Turn to **193**.

397

You huddle together during the long chill night. Everyone is too frightened to speak. They do not even want to guess what the dwarf will do when he wakes up.

At sunrise, as a pool of gold spreads along the eastern sky, one of the shark men steps forward and touches his master's arm. Yawning floridly, the dwarf makes a great show of sitting up, stretching, and rubbing his eyes. 'I don't see any tower!' he cries in feigned surprise. 'You haven't even touched the pile of rubble. Don't tell me you all fell asleep instead of getting on with the job?'

'You stunted fiend!' roars the captain, his fear welling up into black rage. He grabs his sword. 'Let us go this instant or by God you'll soon be a head shorter!'

The dwarf purses his blobby little lips in distaste, then babbles a quick spell. A queasy feeling crawls through your flesh as you are struck by the evil magic. If you possess a black jewel, turn to **419**. If not, there is nothing you can do to stop yourself from being turned into a gasping fish, and you will end your adventures on the dwarf's dinner plate.

398

The Sultan makes a soft clicking sound with his tongue. It is almost too faint to be heard, but it is the signal for his knights to begin their butchery. Riding forward, they slash and stab at the terrified donkey-handlers. Abdullah scrambles for his sword but is cut

down in front of you.

So far you're unscathed. If you stand and fight, turn to **17**. If you run off along the woodland path, turn to **40**.

399

The captain welcomes you aboard his ship. 'We are bound for Basra,' he says. 'The journey should take less than a month. Are you from that part of the world yourself?'

'From Baghdad,' you say. 'I left to seek my fortune.'

He laughs. 'Well, I doubt you'd find it here. Overall, my last trip has barely shown a profit.'

'Not until I came aboard, presumably,' you say with a rueful look at your purse. Cross off the 50 dinars you must pay for your passage.

The voyage starts well, but only two days from the coast a sudden squall blows in from the north. 'It will be a rough ride,' predicts the captain. 'Hang on tight.'

Turn to **131**.

400

The merchant caravan leaves the city, heading out across the desert. The camels lope sedately along, refusing to be hurried. You trudge beside them on sands the colour of dried blood, gazing at dunes sculpted by the wind into patterns like snakeskin. The air is dry and stale as flint.

After several days you come in sight of a group of



tents crouching in the shade of a mountainous sand dune. The Bedouin emerge to greet you, glancing with shame at their scrawny goats. 'Alas, we have almost nothing to offer you by way of hospitality,' laments their chief. 'But take this bread and the stew of vegetable roots that I was about to share with my family.'

If you accept, it will mean that the Bedouin themselves will go hungry. If you have **WILDERNESS LORE**, turn to **104**. If not, decide whether to eat the food they have set before you (turn to **127**) or insist they keep it (turn to **171**).

401

Azenomei lends you his bunch of keys. Donning the slippers, you rise up to the grille and soon have it unlocked. Perched on the edge of the pit, you take a gulp of clean air – your first in over a week.

‘Come on!’ hisses Azenomei’s voice from the darkness of the pit. ‘Toss the slippers down.’

If you do as he asks, turn to **358**. If you decide to leave him where he is, turn to **422**.

402

Azenomei’s laughter is like the shriek of the desert wind. Taking up his sword, he leaps forward to match your blow for blow. Under your feet, red human blood soon mingles with the black ichor of the jinni’s veins. You feel yourself weakening, but you are determined to fight to the death.

If you have **SWORDPLAY** and a sword, lose 3 Life Points. If not but you have **WRESTLING**, lose 6 Life Points. Assuming you survive, turn to **89**. (If you have neither combat skill, you are spitted on Azenomei’s blade and die writhing in agony.)

403

You return to the throne room to find a scene of deep sorrow. The Sultan’s wives are weeping over his body. Even from beyond the grave, Jafar managed a last act of treachery when the poison on his knife reached the Caliph’s heart.

The royal court is in chaos. No one knows who is in charge. In circumstances like this, people often

look for a scapegoat, so you do not wait around for a reward. Slipping off in the confusion, you fetch the horse that is rightfully yours and leave Baghdad that very night. No doubt there are other adventures awaiting you in the far corners of the world.

404

As you look around, Masrur gives a roar and charges forward, raising his sword with both hands for a mighty cleaving blow. If you have **AGILITY**, turn to **70**. If you have **LUCK**, turn to **116**. If you possess a hawk and want to use it, turn to **139**. Failing any of these, turn to **161**.

405

You are thrown into prison. This time there will be no escape. A stake is already being sharpened. Tomorrow at dawn you will be impaled, and your warnings against Jafar will just be put down to the frantic last gambit of a convicted criminal.

406

You dive off the parapet. From where the guards are standing, it looks as though you have simply jumped to your doom. You hear a gasp of horror escape their throats, then the clatter of running footsteps as they come to look down.

You are in fact clinging to the gonfalon. Sliding down hastily, you swing to safety on the balcony and press back into the shadow of a leafy trellis. A moment later, a row of pale astonished faces appear

at the edge of the roof above. 'The fool jumped – must've been insane,' says one guard.

'I don't call that insanity,' says another grimly. 'Better a quick death than face the Caliph's torturers.'

The captain of the guards peers down through the darkness. 'I can't see a body,' he mutters, voice tinged with the first stirrings of doubt. 'You two, get down there and make sure of it.'

You waste no more time. When no corpse is found, they'll scour the palace looking for you. But by that time you intend to be long gone. Letting yourself in through the balcony window, you steal a brocade cloak and slip unnoticed past the guards on the gate. Add the cloak to your list of possessions and then turn to **383**.

407

It is an easy climb up the cliffs, with many jutting rocks and clumps of grass for you to hang on to. Yussuf follows with much mumbling and grumbling under his breath. He thinks you are foolhardy, but he will not abandon you to face danger alone.

Reaching a ledge, you see a small cave where a spindly old man sits huddled beside a bowl of glowing charcoal. A lurid light lies across his face as he shows you a long-toothed smile and says, 'Peace be upon you, my friends.'

Will you greet him in return (turn to **429**) or first demand to be told what he is doing here (turn to **448**)?

408

You retrace your steps, watching the taper burn steadily down. At last, when its light has dimmed to just a dying red ember and you are on the point of giving up hope, Yussuf gives a whoop of joy. 'Starlight!' he cries, clasping your arm and dragging you along. 'We've found the way out!'

You emerge on to the ledge above the river and lose no time returning to the ship. It seems as though you had been blundering through underground tunnels for hours, so you are surprised to find that no one on board had even noticed you were missing. The others listen as you tell your story over supper. The captain gives a gruff sceptical laugh and says: 'Bah, you fell asleep and dreamed this nonsense.'

But you can tell from the crew's faces that they believe you. Turn to **375**.

409

You set sail with the morning tide, steering under the magnificent crescent arch at the harbour mouth and on to the open expanse of ocean. Sunlight skitters like strings of pearls in the azure clefts of the sea.

For a week you hug the coast, watching the fishing villages glide by. Gulls shriek and circle overhead, excited at the prospect of fish stirred up by your passage. You watch as each day the dusky olive-green groves of the Hadramaut give way to the stern ochre cliffs of south-west Araby. Gain 1 Life Point if you are injured.

Arriving at the port of Raysut, you learn of pirates

who have been preying on shipping in the Red Sea. 'They swoop down without warning in black-sailed ships,' a longshoreman tells you as he helps load your cargo.

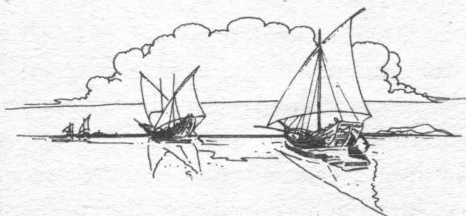
'Why doesn't the Sultan of Cairo order his fleets against them?' asks your captain.

'After their raids, they vanish like the dew in the gardens of Baghdad with the coming of dawn,' vows a sailor who claims to have seen them. 'One minute we had only empty sea ahead, then they were there. I alone escaped to tell the tale.'

'And how did you manage that?' one of the crew asks him.

'Ah, there is a tale . . . ' begins the man.

If you stay to hear his story, turn to **453**. If you want to do some shopping in the market, turn to **350**.



410

Fleeing from the city with your hands pressed to your ears to shut out the terrible din of the fight, you return to the ship and tell them what you say.

'What dreadful place have you brought us with your wizardry?' laments the captain, pulling off his turban and tearing his hair. Turn to **144**.

411

You unroll the rug. A smell rises from it like rich old loam. When you see what was wrapped up inside, you have to clap your hand to your mouth to keep from crying out. It is a dead body with cracked yellow bones protruding from flesh that crumbles like dry brown clay. From the look of it, it must have lain in the grave for many years. The eye sockets stare up from the floor – a grisly gaze that sends a shudder through your limbs.

You can hear the two men coming back. If you have CUNNING and a strong stomach, turn to **31**. Otherwise you could quickly roll up the rug before either hiding (turn to **433**), striding openly into the inner room (turn to **8**), or cravenly sneaking back to the ship (turn to **258**).

412

On the way down to the jetty, Captain Ibrahim tells you that the ancestral court kept asking about the nest of the rokh, the giant bird said to prey on elephants. 'I told them I wanted only to trade silk for ivory, but they'd have none of it. They seemed to think I was after the diamond eggs the rokh lays.'

'The chicks must have hard beaks,' you reply.

Jumail presses the captain with questions: 'Where does it nest, Captain, this great bird? How can one reach the eggs? Are they truly made of diamond?'

'Its nest is somewhere to the west,' says the captain with as much interest as if he were speaking about the shape of a bee's backside. 'As for your other

questions, I know no more than the next man.'

By now you have reached the river. Climbing aboard, the captain gives the order to cast off at once. Note the codeword *Kismet* and then turn to **346**.

413

Your fist slams into the side of her head. It is like hitting a slab of granite. As you recoil back, clutching your broken hand, she whips the cleaver round and lays open your stomach. You slump to the floor, aghast, and the witch begins to twist your entrails into sausages, even before you are quite dead.

414

By luck, that very afternoon the Sultan comes riding through the streets in a regal procession. His soldiers patrol the crowds lining the streets, making sure that everyone bows respectfully. You glance up to see the Sultan himself approaching on the back of a graceful chestnut mare whose harness glitters with jewels. For a moment you meet his gaze. He strikes you as a good man but a weary one, his thoughts no doubt constantly troubled by affairs of state.

One of the soldiers sees you looking up and jabs the butt of his lance towards you. 'You there, keep your face to the ground while the Sultan's passing!'

If you have the codeword *Hajji*, turn to **436**. If not but you have *AGILITY*, turn to **396**. Otherwise you are shoved roughly back into the gutter and the moment is lost; you will not get another chance (turn to **349**).

415

You send your men clambering up over the huge door, but they cannot find any way to open it. At last you are forced to admit defeat. You return to Cairo and report to the Sultan that the pirates' lair lies beyond an unbreachable stone portal.

He is obviously disappointed, but he puts a cheerful face on it. 'You found out more than any of my own agents were able to,' he says. 'Perhaps I can find a wizard who can force the portal to open. Take this reward for your services.'

You are given a bag containing 50 dinars. Add this sum to your money, then turn to **349**.

416

People in flowing black robes come out from the gardens of the oasis to welcome you. They bring pitchers of fresh water which you drain gratefully. Then you are led to the tents of their camp, beneath the wall of the ruined fort, and made comfortable on rugs and cushions.

After so long in the dry desert, to be surrounded by swaying palms and trickling streams is like a visit to Paradise. You rest at the oasis for several days. Regain 1 Life Point if you are wounded.

Eventually, with reluctance, you load your camels and set out on the last leg of your journey. 'We have nearly reached the Red Sea coast,' Hakim mentions as you walk beside him. 'The worst is behind us now. Although I cannot pretend the roads to Cairo are safe, at least we'll not perish of hunger or thirst.'

'Our route takes us close to Mecca,' you reply. 'Out of gratitude for our safe deliverance from the desert, we should stop and make the holy pilgrimage.'

Hakim clicks his tongue. 'Oh, another time, perhaps. On the way back. I really can't afford to waste time at Mecca. I've got all these wares to sell in Cairo, you see.'

If you try to convince him to stop at Mecca, turn to **101**. If you let the matter drop, turn to **123**.

417

The jinni comes out of your ring, but when he learns of your predicament he shakes his head sadly. 'I can help you escape, O Weaver of Enchantments,' he whispers, 'but then I would have to remain trapped here until the end of the world. The glyph above the alcove is the seal of Suleiman, and no spirit or demon can pass by it. That is why the Lord of the Desert cannot pursue you in here.'

At this, the Lord of the Desert stops pacing and stands with his ear pressed to the curtain. 'What's that?' he says. 'Talking to yourself, are you? Are you mumbling your prayers, you pious little mouse?'

You cannot speak aloud to the jinni without giving the game away. If you nod for him to proceed with whatever he has planned, turn to **169**. If you decide instead to leap out of the alcove to confront the Lord of the Desert, turn to **13** (if you possess a sword) or to **331** (if you have only your bare hands).

You ask about the women who work at the palace and find one, by the name of Fohzia, who runs errands for the Sultan's wives and also performs songs and dances in his court. You approach her while she is buying perfume in the marketplace. Pretending that you once worked in a harem yourself, you soon strike up a friendship. You help her carry her purchases back from the market. Standing outside the palace, you give a long sigh and say: 'How pleasant it would be to look on the face of the Sultan! I have heard he is a handsome man with a voice like the music of a harp.'

Fohzia laughs. 'In all honesty, people tend to say that sort of thing about kings and princesses. You mustn't take it too seriously.'

'How knowledgeable you are, friend of my heart. Working in a harem has made you wise.'

'I thought you used to work in a harem yourself?' she says with a frown.

'Er . . . yes, but it was only a little harem in a tiny town. Well, more a village than a town. Just a few tents, in fact. I'd love to see inside a proper palace.'

After a little more wheedling, Fohzia relents and smuggles you into the palace. You have to wait a few days, but at last your chance arrives. The Sultan comes to sit with his wives, and as Fohzia is about to sing for him you suddenly jump forward and kiss the floor by his feet, crying: 'Cast me out if you wish, O Dispenser of Justice, but first hear why I smuggled myself into your court.'

He peers at you, then shrugs and smiles indulgently. 'Very well, I'll listen to your story. At least it will make a change from the usual evening of songs, sherberts and sweetmeats.'

Turn to **193**.

419

Your companions are all turned into fish, but the black jewel deflects the spell so that you are not affected. The dwarf frowns and mutters a protective rune, then says: 'Incredible! No one has ever resisted my sorcery before . . .'

A bold bluff is your only chance. Taking a menacing step forward, you wave your hands in a meaningless but cryptic gesture. 'I am the High Adept of the Fire Wizards!' you say angrily. 'How dare you cast your petty little spells at me, you gnarled lump of flesh! Now I shall send you shivering down to hell in a blast of fulminous flame!'

'Wait, supreme one!' he says, quailing. 'I did not realize! Forgive your wretched servant!'

You look back at the fish thrashing around on the turf. 'Withdraw the spell. Restore my servants to their true shape and I may be lenient.'

He hastily does so. As Captain Ibrahim and the rest go aboard the ship, the dwarf sidles over and says: 'May I ask what brought you here, O Worker of Miracles?'

'We seek great treasures of ancient times. Do you know of such?'

'There is the rokh's diamond egg,' he says. 'Its

nest is at the head of the Nile, I believe. It would be a dangerous feat to steal it, though.'

'Not for one of my power!'

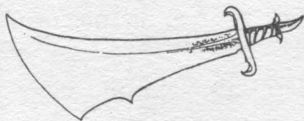
You dismiss the dwarf with a wave of your hand and stride up the gangplank. As the ship gets under sail, you stand in the stern, looking every inch the imperious wizard you pretend to be. Only when the uncharted isle has dropped below the horizon do you allow yourself to relax. Your sigh of relief is drowned out by the crew's cheers.

The black jewel is cracked and clouded now that its power is used up. Cross it off your Adventure Sheet, and record the codeword *Kismet*.

The next few days pass uneventfully. You have not spotted any other vessels until a ship drifts into view one afternoon. Her sails are furled and there is no reply to your shouts. As you come alongside, you see the reason. The deck is strewn with corpses. Turn to **356**.

420

At a signal from the masked Sultan, his knights ride forward and start to put Abdullah and the others to the sword. You quake in horror, fearing they will notice you at any moment. If you have **ROGUERY** and want to sneak off, turn to **154**. If you try your **LUCK**, turn to **461**. If you have neither of those skills, turn to **79**.



421

You loiter for a while in the marketplace, pretending to take note of the prices, but making no purchase. After a while you wander away and sit in a thoughtful posture on the edge of a fountain. It is not long before a merchant approaches you and strikes up a conversation. At first he talks of trifling matters but at last a keen look comes into his eye and he says: 'Unless I am mistaken, you have been scouting out the market prices.'

You adopt a smile that suggests grudging admiration. 'You are very perceptive. I have come here ahead of my master, who has three ships full of goods to sell. But he knows that as soon as he arrives and people see he is a wealthy man, the asking prices will go up. Hence I am here to make the deals on his behalf.'

The merchant licks his lips. 'Hmm. Well, what is your master interested in buying, if I may ask?'

You take a sidelong glance at the stall the merchant was sitting in. 'He hopes to buy amber, which is in short supply in Baghdad at the moment. Do you know anyone I could suggest he talks to?'

The merchant throws up his hands in delight. 'What a coincidence! I myself trade in amber, and my prices are very reasonable.'

'Well, as to that . . .' You rub your jaw. 'I'd have to look around the market a bit more.'

He takes out a bag of gold and presses it into your hands. 'Take my word for it. Just tell your master to come to Hisham al-Din – that's me.'

You nod sagely, assuring him that you will do as he asks, and stroll away from the marketplace. The bribe he gave you is 200 dinars. Add it to your money and turn to **399**.

422

How can you know who to trust? Leaving Azenomei to fend for himself, you hasten away across the courtyard. Add the bunch of keys to your Adventure Sheet and turn to **223**.

423

You seize a candelabrum and raise it above your head. Azenomei looks up at the last moment, his mouth opening to start a spell. He is too late. The candelabrum falls, breaking open his skull. Turn to **89**.

424

You turn the key and the lock drops from Ayisha's shackles. She springs up at once with a cry of delight. 'Excellent! Now we can return home.'

'And we must make all speed,' you say. 'I have to warn the Caliph about his evil vizier, Jafar, who has been plotting to overthrow him.'

She nods thoughtfully. 'I believe it was Jafar who summoned the jinni to abduct me. Prepare yourself . . .'

Raising her hands and chanting the words of a spell, she conjures another whirlwind that whisks the two of you halfway across the world in the blinking

of an eye. As the wind dies down, you stagger giddily out of the vortex to see that you are now in the Caliph's throne room. Jafar is also here, and his look of astonishment is soon replaced by one of outright hatred when he sets eyes on your face.

Ayisha kisses the Caliph. 'Father, I have returned.'

The Caliph is almost speechless with amazement. 'My heart is brimming with joy. But, Ayisha, who is this you've brought with you?'

Turn to 477.

425

The door is thrown open and you are dragged inside. Your first impression is the stench. It is as vile as a charnel house, and your guts bubble in turmoil. The sight of the hut's occupants is even worse, though: a morbidly pallid old she-ghoul and her two sons with faces of doltish evil. One of them holds you while the other gives you a painful poke in the ribs and says, 'A fine morsel for the supper-table.'

'It's a mortal, Ma,' says the other son.

'I can see that, you stupid boy,' replies the mother with a voice that sounds like a goat being strangled. 'What's it doing here?'

'Probably looking for the rokh's diamond eggs,' suggests the first son.

She shakes her head. 'No, wrong side of the Red Sea for that. Don't you boys listen to a word your old ma tells you? Oh well, get it trussed up. I'll stoke the fire.'

They mean to eat you! Record the codeword



Kismet, then decide what you'll do. You can fight (turn to **370** if you have FOLKLORE; turn to **305** if not), use MAGIC if you also have a ring (turn to **327**), or try to trick your way out of this somehow (turn to **348**).

426

The chamberlain returns and leads you down a long corridor to the throne room. Here the Caliph is sprawled on thick cushions, occasionally plucking a sweetmeat from the tray at his elbow. Jafar is also here, and you sense his glare of hatred out of the corner of your eye, but you ignore him. Bowing to the Caliph, you say: 'O Prince of the Faith, I have travelled far and endured many hardships in order to warn you of the danger that threatens you.' Turn to **477**.

427

If you have SWORDPLAY then you can either keep your guard up (turn to **297**) or forget about parrying and just fight furiously in an attempt to force Masrur back (turn to **276**). If you do not have SWORDPLAY, turn to **161**.

428

Your jinni emerges from the ring in a swirl of purple smoke. A single disdainful sweep of his gleaming eyes tells him what is going on. 'Shall I bring you armour and a hero's blade, that you may fight these snapping curs, esteemed one?' he suggests in a voice like breaking rocks.

'I don't have the time for such nonsense,' you reply curtly. 'Whisk me to the gatehouse roof, yonder.'

He raises his eyebrows like tufts of dried moss. 'You wish to flee? To turn tail and run from those puny wretches? Where is your bold heart?'

'In my chest, where I'd like it to remain.' The guards are just a few paces away. You scream at the jinni: 'Do it now!'

In a whoosh of air you are plucked from the rooftop, tumbled through empty air, and deposited unceremoniously on the battlements of the gatehouse. With a sour grunt of disapproval, the jinni curls back into your ring, leaving you to race down to street level before the guards can get around to the courtyard and intercept you. Turn to **383**.

429

'And may you know the mercy and blessings of God, venerable one,' you reply, touching your brow and bowing.

'Live a hundred years, if it be God's will!' says Yussuf rather more fulsomely as he scrambles on to the ledge beside you. You can tell from the wild look in his eyes that he believes the old man to be a wizard or ifrit.

The strange old man nods, the red light of the coals sketching him like a figure of blood against the shadows. 'You have spoken well,' he says, 'and now I shall speak. You see this cave? Within it are three treasures. Many have sought these treasures, and

now their bones are the sand under our feet.'

You kneel beside him. Your blood is quickened with excitement. 'You seem to know something more,' you prompt him.

'I know much! I know how the treasures may be reached. There are three obstacles. The first is a hall of one-eyed monsters; merely to look upon them means death. Next comes the gallery of warriors whom no weapon can harm; swords they spurn, clubs cause them no concern—'

'What about knives?' puts in Yussuf.

'Knives?' The old man shakes his head. 'No good. Lastly there is the causeway where the light of hope can only bring doom.'

There is a long moment of silence while you consider what the old man has told you. Yussuf, seeing the look in your eyes, grabs your arm imploringly. 'No, I beg you! It would be suicide! Forget this talk of treasure, and let's be on our way.'

If you return to the ship, turn to **375**. If you enter the cave, turn to **4**.

430

Quelling a shiver of nervousness, you begin the long descent. Yussuf watches you with a queasy look, then follows on his bottom, sliding carefully from step to step. You think he is being unnecessarily timid – until your foot slips on the dank stone and you almost fall headlong. Then you too opt for the undignified but safer means of descent.

You soon lose sight of the tunnel mouth above.

Now you feel as though you are suspended in a black void. You are uncomfortably aware of the long drop on either side, and the staircase seems narrower than ever.

You hear something that makes the hairs rise at the back of your neck. It is a soft ragged flapping. Dimly you can see shapes gliding down out of the dark recesses above. The forms are indistinct, but you can see the faceted jewel-like glint of their predatory eyes. 'They're attracted by the light!' you call back to Yussuf.

There is a moment as your words sink in. 'But – but I can't put it out,' he wails. 'Then we'd have to descend in pitch darkness.'

If you insist he snuffs out the taper, turn to **449**. If you agree that would be certain death, turn to **5**.

431

You set sail with the morning tide, passing under the magnificent crescent arch at the harbour mouth and on to the open expanse of the ocean. Sunlight skitters like strings of pearls in the azure clefts of the sea. Braced with one hand on the rail and another on the main halyard, you suck the fresh salt-laced air into your lungs and gaze keenly into the east, where your destiny awaits.

Six days out from Suhar, the lookout reports an island with white cliffs a few points off the port bow. The captain studies his charts and then looks up with a piqued expression. 'No such isle is marked here,' he says. 'I wonder if it is worth investigating?'

You can tell that the captain is torn between curiosity and the desire to get his cargo to the Indies without delay. If you encourage him to put in at the uncharted island, turn to **75**. If you urge him to keep your present course, turn to **84**.

432

You awaken to find you are in shackles. Others are also here, huddled on benches around a narrow room. Before you can question them to find out what is happening, the door is flung open and a tall bald fellow with muscles like iron bars strides into the room. Giving you a few rough strokes with the whip he carries, he takes you by the arm and hauls you outside. The hot dazzling sunlight makes you feel sick. Still dazed from the blow you took earlier, you stumble up on to a wooden platform where a slaver stands waiting. 'What am I bid for this strong young thing?' he asks the crowd.

There is a confused babble of haggling, and before you can gather your wits to speak you have been sold to a merchant with sleek good looks that mark him out as an Egyptian. 'You will do to carry my wares back to Cairo,' he says as he leads you away.

'There has been a mistake!' you protest. 'I am no slave. I am a true believer, and whoever has shackled me thus has committed a crime against the laws of man and God!'

He shows you a smile without humour. 'How often do you think I have heard that tale?' he says. 'I'll tell you: every time I buy a new slave. Now

come, wretch, and I'll assign you your chores.'

You have lost all your money and all your belongings. You have only the shackles on your wrists. You can add them to your list of possessions, but that should give you no comfort. They announce to all who see you that you are a slave, and to try to escape now would only earn you a lingering death by crucifixion. Record the codeword *Mordant* and turn to 400.

433

You stay out of sight until the last rug has been carried in to the next room. Padding softly forward, you flit through the doorway with the swiftness of a shadow. The islanders are all on their knees with their foreheads pressed to the floorboards, facing away from you towards the far end of the room. One man at the back seems to sense something and turns for a quick glance, but by this time you are already out of sight behind a stout hardwood pillar.

'Why have you brought me here, you fiends?' rings out a familiar growling voice.

It is Captain Ibrahim. You take a look out from behind the pillar. As your eyes adjust to the smoky torchlit gloom, you see your captain standing against the far wall. To either side of him are ornately carved benches where tall silent figures sit as if in judgment. Each of the figures wears a rug wrapped around him and drawn up like a cowl across his head.

Now another voice can be heard in the room. It is a dry hollow whisper, and the sound of it makes

your skin crawl. It is coming from one of the figures on the bench. *'You stand before the Council of Ancestors. What plunder did you mean to take from our people?'*

'Plunder?' demands Ibrahim, fighting to keep a nervous tremor out of his reply. 'I came not to plunder, but to trade. The Chinese silks and Indian spices in my ship's hold in return for gold and ivory.'

A soft murmuring ensues as the rug-cloaked figures lean their heads slightly together like seaweed fronds in a slow current. Other things are said, but too faintly for you to hear. Then the spokesman speaks again: *'We find you guilty. Tomorrow you shall be executed.'*

If you have ROGUERY, turn to 77. If not, turn to 99.

434

With Jumail's help you soon overpower the other guard. Stepping over their senseless bodies, you approach the door of the hut. The lock gives way to several hard kicks. Captain Ibrahim is standing inside with his hands on his hips, beard jutting at a magisterial angle. 'About time you got here, you sons of sea cooks!' he thunders. 'Now let's be off before the rest of those cursed natives arrive.'

Turn to 412.



435

You snatch up the wooden stick lying beside the door. As you throw yourself forward to strike, the she-ghoul's bony fingers are already closing around the handle of the meat cleaver. You stumble off-balance against the table. Everything seems to be in slow motion. Will you lash her across the knuckles to stop her getting the cleaver (turn to **455**) or wait until you are in position to give her a more solid blow (turn to **33**)?

436

The Sultan sees your green turban, which marks you out as one who has undergone the pilgrimage to the holy city. Raising his hand to halt the procession, he dismounts and lifts you to your feet. 'I never pass a pilgrim without asking advice,' he says with a warm smile. 'It is by God's grace that I sit on the throne of Cairo, after all.'

This is one of those situations where it is worth coming straight to the point. You're not sure how long you could play the part of a pious savant anyhow. 'It is the lot of kings to be troubled by many cares,' you say, 'and no doubt you will find it so to the end of your days. But, O Sultan, I can rid you of at least one worry. I speak of the pirates of the Red Sea.'

He gives you a keen thoughtful look. 'Speak on.'

Turn to **193**.

437

You have heard the story of this ancient place. Addressing the two lion-headed statues, you call out: 'Meow, meow, open now!'

The statues nod to show they understand. Your sailors wail in terror to see them flex their masonry muscles, but there is no danger. Now that you've spoken the magic formula, the statues are obedient to your will. They reach out and take hold of the door. There is a heavy grinding sound and slowly they slide it open, revealing a hidden cove massed with glittering treasures.

The pirates were halfway through unloading their latest plunder, and are taken by surprise. They snatch up their swords and snarl defiantly as your marines swarm among them, but the outcome of the battle is in no doubt. If you have **SWORDPLAY** and a sword, lose 1 Life Point. If not but you have **WRESTLING**, lose 2 Life Points. If you have neither skill, lose 4 Life Points.

Assuming you survive, turn to **372**.

438

Soon you regret the decision. All the waterskins are empty. Scanning the horizon, you see no sign of life – just the endless shimmering waves of heat rising off bare dusty rock. Everyone walks stiffly, hollow eyes fixed on the far distance, knowing that to falter would spell their death. Even the camels move with a wearily splayed gait, heads hung low, morose expressions on their drooping mouths.

Night falls. Lose 1 Life Point. If you are still able to continue, you see a low dark cloud descend across the bright disc of the moon. 'God have mercy!' groans Hakim through dry swollen lips. 'Not another sandstorm . . .'

If you have WILDERNESS LORE, turn to **310**. If not, decide if you will press on towards the mysterious cloud (turn to **354**) or skirt around it (turn to **376**).

439

Cupping your hands, you throw your voice to the far end of the chamber. The Lord of the Desert looks back over his shoulder as he hears muffled sounds outside the great iron-bound door.

'It must be a buried treasure vault,' one voice apparently says.

'See if you can pick the lock, then,' replies another.

With a perplexed frown, the Lord strides over to the door and flings it open. Of course there is no one there.

While his attention is distracted, you leave the alcove and hide yourself in one of the tall stone jars. Then you throw your voice back to the alcove you've just vacated: 'Hey, I'm getting peckish! Got anything to eat down here, you daft old goat?'

His head snaps around with a look of fierce white fury. Stamping back to the curtain, he raises his sword and cries: 'Put out your hand, impertinent wretch! I'll slice you five fat sausages to fill your complaining belly!'

In his anger, he forgot to lock the door. You slip

out of the jar and tiptoe over to the opening, making sure to help yourself to a handful of gold before you go. Add 50 dinars to your money and turn to **459**.

440

The jinni unfurls himself smokily from your ring, congealing like a blot of shadow in the low glancing rays of the setting sun. 'When you speak, I hear the voice of command,' he says with careful courtesy.

'This door deters us. Open it.'

The jinni looks at the portal, then turns a dubious glance from one massive statue to the other. Uncoiling his limbs in a long leap, he clings to the cliff beside one of the statues' ears and whispers something to it. When he springs back down to the deck, you glare at him and say: 'Well? You've heard my wish. Treat it as a command!'

The jinni presses his hands together and gives an embarrassed half-bow. 'It is not so easy as that, O Conjuror of Marvels. The lion-headed sentinels will take umbrage if I break their door. Still, perhaps there is another way . . .'

The first mate taps you on the shoulder. 'Do you mean to let this impertinent jinni tell you what you may wish for?' he says. 'Show him who's in charge!'

If you order the jinni to open the door, turn to **460**. If you ask him what else he can suggest, turn to **196**. If you dismiss him, you can use the Jericho horn if you have it (turn to **457**), **FOLKLORE** or the codeword *Sesame* (turn to **437**), or try to find another way to open the door (turn to **415**).

441

'You are free to leave,' declares the dwarf.

Captain Ibrahim has too much pride to let it go at that. 'In fact we never had any intention of landing at your cursed little island!' he snorts. 'I had hoped it would be one of those fabled shores where lapis lazuli streaks the beaches, or where the giant rokh lays its diamond eggs.'

The dwarf smiles at some private joke. 'There are no diamond eggs here. You should seek the source of the Nile if that's what you're after.'

The captain looks as though he would like to argue further. You drag him back to the ship and put to sea before the dwarf turns nasty. However, as the island dwindles into the distance, an ominous rumble shakes the sky. 'A storm in the offing,' warns Yussuf, who is at the helm. 'We're in for a rough ride.'

Note the codeword *Kismet*. If you have SEAFARING, turn to **16**. If not, turn to **131**.

442

You can refill your water bottle here if you have one. This city has nothing else to offer you. Passage on a ship back to Persia will cost you 50 dinars. If you have that much, turn to **399**. If not, you must resort to your skills – perhaps STREETWISE (turn to **421**) or ROGUERY (turn to **481**). If you have neither of those, turn to **462**.

443

The chamberlain considers your request. If you have the codeword *Hajji*, he is moved by your piety and leads you to the throne room where the Caliph waves aside Jafar's protests and beckons you forward: turn to 477. If you do not have the codeword *Hajji*, the chamberlain summons the guards: turn to 405.

444

You find him in the highest chamber of the palace. He is younger than you imagined, and much less sinister in bearing than the fearsome wizards of folklore. He is clad all in blue, with an azure cloak over sky-coloured robes, rings of indigo and cobalt, sapphire-hued turban clasped by an actinic jewel. His eyes also are blue, though he is not pale-complexioned like a Christian.

You bow to him. 'I have you to thank for my health – and perhaps for my life. May I know my benefactor's name?'

Instead of answering directly, he says: 'I am only an apprentice. Not the master of this palace, but its custodian.' The blue eyes crinkle in a smile. 'You interest me. It's rare I can see into the future. The weave of Fate's tapestry is intricate and richly dyed where it surrounds you.'

'As to that, I cannot say. I have had my share of interesting adventures, certainly.'

'And you have more to come. The curtain of time, opaque to other men, sometimes seems as a gauze veil to my eyes. I see you the victim of injustice. You

will have sinister friends and unwitting foes. I see you ascending to the nest of the great rokh, the bird that lays eggs with diamond shells. You'll ride on horseback through the air. Those are robes of honour that you wear. Or . . .'

'Go on.'

He shakes his head. 'I cannot tell if you will live. But I can give you a single gift that may help you.' He brings forth a pair of embroidered slippers. 'Whoever wears these becomes weightless. You can use them to ascend to the rokh's lair.'

Add the magic slippers to your Adventure Sheet. Thanking the wizard, you rejoin the others. It is only after you've set sail that you realize you never found out his name. Turn to **389**.

445

He casts another spell as you flee. If you have a black jewel, it absorbs the spell into itself, crumbling to powder as it does: delete it from your list of possessions and turn to **66**. If you don't have a black jewel, the spell takes effect and you are aged a hundred years in the space of a single heartbeat, falling to gasp your last feeble breaths on the cold metal floor.

446

You race up the stairs with the soldiers in hot pursuit. They think there is no escape, but you run out on to the terrace and vault down to the street below, leaving them to gawp like beached fishes. None of

them cares to attempt such a daring leap. By the time they get back downstairs and out into the street, you are long gone.

Sheltering in a doorway, you watch a patrol of guards go tramping past. Your only chance now is to find the Caliph while he prowls the streets in disguise. Turn to 182.

447

There is nowhere you can run. Surrounded by the palace guards, you struggle valiantly but in vain. You are cut down under a dozen scything scimitars. As you flop weakly like a landed fish, blood spurting from your wounds, Jafar looks down at you with a rejoicing smile. You will take your hatred of him to the grave.

448

The old man rocks back on his heels and gives a peal of cackling laughter. 'It is unwise to forget your manners!' he says. 'Now you'll learn a lesson.'

You take a step forward, intending to seize him, but he throws his cloak over the flickering coals and you are plunged into sudden darkness. Yussuf blunders into you. 'Careful, or we might step off the ledge.'

You hear him groping around in the dark. 'Er . . . I don't think we're on the ledge any more,' he stammers.

'Then where are we?'

'Here's a taper. Let me light it.'

There is a clatter of stone on stone as he strikes a spark, then the taper catches. It gives only a faint nimbus of light, but that is enough to tell that you are in an underground cave. Yussuf starts to say something, but panic makes his voice catch in his throat. He can only tug your sleeve and point.

You turn, and in the dim light of the taper you see a horde of beasts that must have issued from the steaming pits of Hell. Turn to **200**.

449

'Put it out!' you yell at Yussuf. 'They're almost on us!'

With a gasp of despair, he licks his fingers and pinches the taper. The light goes out with a hiss. 'Ouch,' you hear him say. 'I've burnt myself.'

You ignore him. You are more interested in how the flying creatures will react. If you were mistaken in thinking it was the light that drew them to you, then now you are surely doomed. But apparently you guessed right, because you hear the fluttering wings withdraw into the cavern depths.

'They've gone.'

'Yes,' says Yussuf. 'But how are we going to get to the bottom safely without any light?'

If you have **AGILITY**, turn to **28**. If you have **ROGUERY**, turn to **51**. If neither, turn to **73**.

450

You lift the nearest sword off its hook, but it is heavier than you thought. Slipping from your hands, it clatters to the marble floor. Instantly you hear

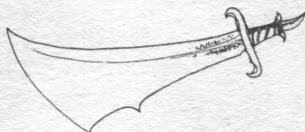


voices raised in the chamber beyond: 'Someone is there! Call the guards!'

'No need for guards!' booms a voice from the doorway you entered by. 'There'll be nothing left by the time they get here.'

You spin around. Striding towards you comes a bald giant of a man with an executioner's sword grasped in one massive hand. His eyes look like thunderheads as he rasps, 'You'd filch one of my master's fine swords, eh? Well, little one, perhaps first you should learn how to use it.'

He must be Masrur, the Caliph's fearsome bodyguard. You have heard how he once slew five men with one sweep of that butcher's blade he carries. If you snatch up the fallen sword and close with him, turn to **384**. If you try to get away, turn to **24**.



451

You set sail the next morning, riding the tide out of the docks, under the broad sweep of the triumphal arch at the harbour mouth and on to the open sea. Other ships surround you in the blazing sunshine – vessels as proud as desert hawks, with prows the shape of upcurved daggers and triangular sails as white as the wings of a hundred doves. Each is bound for a distant port. Each captain hopes to return with his hold full of pearls or ivory, spices or silks.

You ask Captain Ibrahim what cargo he will buy from the people of the Scarlet Isle. He fixes you with a sidelong look as he stands gazing out to sea with one hand on the bowsprit. 'Ivory,' he says. 'Now, be about your chores.'

Three days out from Suhar, you run into a bank of dense fog which seems to rise up in minutes off a clear calm sea. Sun, sky and horizon are all swallowed up by a pearly haze. The sails sag, limp and wet with no breeze to fill them, and the ship begins to drift.

If you have SEAFARING, turn to **479**. If not, turn to **143**.

452

The gryphon's beak slices into your breast, drawing a scarlet rivulet of blood. Lose 1 Life Point. If you survive, you fall back gasping as you see the invigorated gryphon launch itself afresh into the fray. Soon it has slain the ghastly scorpion. But before you can rise or speak a word, another monster of even greater size comes bounding into the hall. This is a great black goat with foaming spittle on its jaws.

The gryphon retreats to stand beside you. 'I must feast on a human eye,' it pants. 'That is the only sustenance that will replenish my strength.'

If you let it peck out your eye, turn to **7**. If not, turn to **410**.

'When I was younger I was a lion in battle,' begins the old sailor, 'but it is my shame to admit that in my latter years I've taken to the bottle. So it was that when the pirates attacked I lay in a dead faint below decks with a puddle of red wine beside me. I was oblivious of the carnage; I slept through the shouts and screams of the dying. When the pirates came across me they must have taken me for a corpse lying in its own blood, for they did nothing except pile me with the others. Then, steering our ship beside their own, they sailed on until dawn. Peeping with one eye, I saw a monumental door carved into the cliffs. On each side of the door were huge pagan statues of beings whose heads were as the heads of cats; their feet were in the sea.

'The pirate captain then spoke to the statues, saying: "Meow, meow, open now!" and I almost fell back into my swoon when I saw the statues rise and swing open that massive stone portal, where beyond lay a hidden cove. Fortunately I kept my wits about me enough to slip over the side while the pirates were busying themselves with steering into the cove. The door closed behind them. I then swam for an hour until, weak with my efforts and the fright of what I'd seen, I was picked up by a kindly fisherman. And that is the tale as I remember it, though God alone knows the whole truth.'

Get the codeword *Sesame* and turn to 78.

454

After several days you stumble across a well. It is a curious sculpted bowl of clear blue stone, into which the faces of fantastic animals have been carved. If you have FOLKLORE, turn to 464. Otherwise, decide whether you wish to draw water from the well. If you do, turn to 472. If not, turn to 71.

455

Blood spurts from the withered old knuckles. She gives vent to a shrill cry and drops the cleaver. Now is your chance. You bring the stick down hard against the side of her neck – only to have your surge of triumph turn to bilious despair. Instead of falling, she flexes her fingers. There are no signs now of the wounds you inflicted with your first blow. Her smile of leisurely spite would curdle milk. Ignoring your repeated blows, she stoops to recover the cleaver. Turn to 391.

456

To your surprise, Madan turns out to have been right. The captain nods sagely and says, 'I had been considering the very same thing. The Scarlet Isle is rich in wealth, you say?'

'So I have heard.'

His mind is made up. 'Very well, then. I had intended to promote you to a more responsible position in any case.'

You learn that he will pay you 5 dinars to sail on to the Scarlet Isle (10 dinars if you have SEAFARING).

Soon he is bellowing orders to the crew, and the ship steers out of the harbour and plunges southwards through the lapping waves.

Three days out from Raysut, you run into a bank of dense fog which seems to rise up in minutes off a clear calm sea. Sun, sky and horizon are all swallowed up by a pearly haze. The sails sag, limp and wet with no breeze to fill them, and the ship begins to drift. If you have SEAFARING, turn to **479**. If not, turn to **143**.

457

The horn produces a piercing note that brings splinters of rock clattering down from the top of the cliff. Your sailors press their hands across their ears, wincing with pain, as you continue to blow.

Suddenly the two lion-headed statues leap to their feet. One wades out and plucks the horn from your hands, crying: 'Enough! We hear you!' Each of its fingers is wider than a rudder, but it is dextrous enough not to hurt you.

The other statue takes hold of the stone door and hauls it open, revealing a hidden cove where the pirates are unloading their plunder. They look up in surprise and grab their swords as the first statue propels your ship in through the doorway and over to the dock.

The fight is short. The pirates are used to easy pickings, and are no match for the Sultan's marines. But you are embroiled in the thick of the fighting and your main worry is staying alive. If you have

SWORDPLAY and a sword, you take no injury. If not but you have **WRESTLING**, lose 1 Life Point. If you have neither skill, lose 2 Life Points.

Assuming you survive, cross the Jericho horn off your Adventure Sheet and turn to **372**.

458

The hawk flies off to hunt. You lapse into a doze that is more fainting than slumber. Suddenly the hawk perches on your shoulder, startling you awake. For a few moments you cannot remember where you are, and you stare around at the moon-drenched rocks and the huddled forms of your companions.

The hawk drops a fresh green leaf at your feet. You pick it up with trembling fingers and give a gasp of joy. It is damp.

Rousing some of the others, you follow the hawk to the waterhole it has found in the rocks. 'This tastes like the gutter ooze of Basra,' says one of the drivers after he tastes the water, 'and yet I vow it's sweeter to me now than the best wines of the Hadramaut.'

Turn to **373**.

459

A winding tunnel leads to a concealed opening in the side of a sand dune. The sandstorm has blown itself out, leaving the sky clear as a pool above the red sands.

Your companions are astonished when you walk back to join them. 'We thought you were dead,' says Hakim, pointing to the patch of quicksand.

'Fate dealt kindly with me for once,' you reply.

Giving the quicksand a wide berth, you travel on until you see an oasis glittering like a green jewel in the hot golden haze of dusk. Among the trees you see people camped, and behind them is the outline of an old stone fort.

If you approach, turn to **416**. If you avoid the oasis, turn to **438**.

460

The jinni plants his shoulder against the stone door and strains using all his strength. With a ponderous grinding noise, the door slowly slides up. Beyond you can see a hidden cove where the docks are piled with overflowing chests of gold and jewels.

Before the gap is quite wide enough for your ship to sail through, the two colossal statues leap up with heavy roars of outrage. Stamping their feet, they send waves swamping up over the bows. They plunge thigh-deep through the water, seize your ship and spin it around, then propel it hard through the narrow gap in the door. There is a crunch as the timbers split. The ship breaks apart. You jump out on to the jetty to find yourself surrounded by pirates. Your marines are floundering in the water. Once they swim to the jetty, you are certain they'll be able to beat the pirates. But in the meantime you are left facing a dozen of these cut-throats on your own!

If you have **SWORDPLAY** and a sword, lose 3 Life Points. If not but you have either **WRESTLING** or

AGILITY, lose 5 Life Points. If you have none of those skills, lose 7 Life Points. Assuming you survive to see victory, turn to **372**.

461

Your fingers close on something half-buried in the soil where you are kneeling. You smooth away the muck. It is a mirror. Note it among the possessions on your Adventure Sheet if you want to keep it.

The Sultan's knights have completed their grisly work. Abdullah and his servants lie scattered around the clearing. Severed limbs and gore cover the surrounding bushes. They look as though they've been slashed with a hundred scythes. If you have **ROGUERY** and want to creep off before you're spotted, turn to **154**. If not, turn to **79**.

462

You visit the market – not to buy, but to sell. You must raise at least 50 dinars to get back home. With heavy heart, you survey your belongings and see how much each will fetch. You are offered the following prices:

For an ordinary sword	20 dinars
For a jewelled sword	50 dinars
For a cloak	20 dinars
For a magic ring	50 dinars
For a bow	20 dinars
For a black jewel	50 dinars
For the lamp of Antar	90 dinars
For Indian rope	80 dinars

Those are the only items that are of interest to anyone. Once you have sold what you wish, if you now have the 50 dinars you need to buy passage on a ship, turn to **399**. If not, turn to **149**.

463

The servants bring you a cup of sherbet laced with cinnamon. Glutted by all the rich food you have eaten, you fail to notice a curious chalky aftertaste until it is too late. As you slump drowsily across the table, you are dimly aware of the three old men entering the room. 'Prepare the altar,' one of them says, his words thudding like lead weights inside your skull. 'The gods will look on us with great favour after this sacrifice.'

You black out, never to awaken.

464

You once heard a tale concerning a well like this one. Racking your brains, you finally remember the details. It was a story about a man who wandered for his whole life in the desert. He never escaped because he kept coming across the well, and 'each drop drawn from the well doubled the distance to the desert's edge'. Turn to **71**.

465

The Caliph, Harun al-Rashid, is fond of entering the city in disguise by night. In this way, by mingling on the streets in the clothes of a common trader, he gets to learn the true feelings of the populace. It is

rumoured that he uses a concealed tunnel to get in and out of the palace on these excursions. Fortunately your headlong flight has brought you to the secret entrance to that tunnel. Dipping your hand inside the stem of the jar, you find a lever. You tug it and the back of the alcove slides up, admitting you to the tunnel. It closes behind you an instant before the guards round the corner. Chuckling at the thought of how it will seem you have vanished into thin air, you lope along the tunnel until you feel fresh air in your face and see the starlight ahead. Turn to **383**.

466

You search high and low, but the harbour is large and filled with ships. Soon you realize you are lost. If you have the codeword *Gemini*, turn to **6**. If not, turn to **29**.

467

Note the golden apples you have bought on your Adventure Sheet. Each counts as one possession.

If you are currently wounded and wish to bite into one, turn to **9**. If not, turn to **32**.

468

Your knuckles crack against the hard ridge of his jaw. At the same instant, you feel the blade of his sword scraping against your ribs. Lose 3 Life Points. If you are still alive, you jump away from your opponent and prepare for another exchange of blows. You are in position for a jab to his face (turn to **288**),

a low sweeping kick (turn to **242**) – or you could just evade his attack (turn to **219**).

469

Looking along the trail, you say, 'I think you ought to give me a head start.'

'Pah!' retorts one of the brothers. 'You're all full of bluster after all.'

'It's not that. It's just that we mortals don't see so well in the dark. You want the race to be fair, don't you?'

'Fair?' The two ghouls look at each other, mouths sagging like sheep. 'What does that mean?'

'Or maybe you're afraid I'll beat you,' you put in for good measure.

With their witless pride at stake, they agree to give you a minute's head start. You race off and conceal yourself behind some rocks. Much less than a minute later, you see the two ghouls go hurtling past on strong thudding feet. Once they are out of sight, you emerge from the rocks. Will you go back to the hut and deal with the she-ghoul (turn to **34**) or try to get back to the merchant caravan (turn to **57**)?

470

You cannot help grinning at the old man as you say: 'Well, you certainly seem to have a fund of strange stories.'

'You doubt them?' He leaps to his scrawny feet, eyes flashing. 'Watch, as I prove the truth of all I've

said. You see my cat, Shehrezad? She has heard my words, yet you'll note her tail is not an inch longer than before.'

You bite your lip and take half a step backwards. The old man is undeniably mad. 'Incontrovertible proof!' you say to humour him. 'I no longer doubt you at all.'

'Don't talk to me like I'm daft, you young sprat. Now watch the cat's tail while I tell her a few lies. Shehrezad, it's my birthday today and I'm just ten years old. This morning the gaoler gave me a fine confection of dates, saffron rice, spiced mutton and wine for breakfast. I ate so much my belly ached! The Caliph is my second cousin and I myself heard the Prophet's last sermon, peace be upon him.'

You blink and rub your eyes, but there can be no doubt. With each lie, the cat's tail grows a couple of inches, then after a few seconds it returns to its normal length.

'What a miraculous animal,' is all you can say.

'She's a sure indicator of when people are telling the truth,' agrees the old man.

If you possess a coil of Indian rope, turn to **41**. If not but you possess a pair of magic slippers, turn to **18**. If you have neither, turn to **61**.

471

You shadow the three men along a gallery whose alabaster pillars provide ample cover. Reaching the end, they enter a high ceilinged hall surrounded by a balcony. Tapestries the colour of flames hang down

the walls. You press yourself into the edge of the doorway and watch what they do.

One of the three fetches a hubble-bubble pipe and sets it between some cushions. You tiptoe close, concealing yourself behind one of the drapes so you can eavesdrop on them. They sit and for a time they smoke in silence. Then one of them says: 'The traveller should be ideal for our sacrifice. Do you agree, my brothers?'

'Yes,' says one of the others. 'Then, with our spell complete, the gods will grant us the power of flight. Brother, do you have the chart?'

The third man nods and unfurls a piece of parchment. 'It is here. It shows the Peak of Hara where the rokh nests. Its diamond egg can make us immortal.'

For several minutes more they pass around the pipe, and the only sound in the room is of cool smoke bubbling through water. 'It's time to get things ready,' announces the first man at last. 'Our unwitting sacrifice should have drunk the drugged sherbet by now.'

He gets to his feet. If you have **ROGUERY**, turn to **19**. If not, turn to **150**.

472

Refreshing yourself with the cool delicious water, you journey on. With each day you grow weaker, losing a little more of your strength under the sun's enervating heat and the life-sapping chill of the night wind. At last you can go no further. You

slump to the ground, clutching a handful of sand. Soon the wind will scour your bones to add to the great white dunes that stretch all around you to infinity.

473

A nomadic tribe has made its camp here. The tents nestle like white doves in the cool shade under the trees. The tribesmen watch as you quench your thirst at the oasis, then several of them come forward and invite you to look over some goods they have for sale.

'Here is an antidote against all poisons,' says one, holding up a small glass vial. 'Here is a water bottle that is never empty. And here, a magic rope from India.'

You smile, not sure if he means it as a joke. To openly suggest that he is lying would provoke a fight. 'Great marvels indeed! I doubt if I could afford these treasures.'

'We have other things to show you,' he replies, unruffled. 'Not all are so expensive.'

You look over their wares and find the following:

Antidote	90 dinars
Everfull bottle	100 dinars
Indian rope	300 dinars
Magic ring	80 dinars
Bow	50 dinars
Mirror	40 dinars
Sword	20 dinars
Black jewel	90 dinars

Buy what you wish. If you have an ordinary bottle, you have the chance to refill it at the oasis, so note that it is now full. The Everfull bottle is exactly what he claimed it was, and will always contain water when you need it.

Bidding the nomads farewell, you continue south on foot across the desert. Turn to **15**.



474

Yussuf swims to the bottom of a cliff beside the river. You follow him and chat as night draws a veil of purple across the sky. As the heat of day gives way to a cold breeze, you both start to shiver and Yussuf suggests going back to the ship. You are about to dive into the river when, happening to glance up, you see the glimmer of firelight marking out a cave in the cliff face. Yussuf mutters a prayer when you point it out to him. 'A ghoul's lair, perhaps,' he says with a shudder of unease. 'Come, let us go back.'

If you go back to the ship turn to **375**. If you insist on investigating the cave, turn to **407**.

475

The sailor greets you in the name of God and walks beside you across the plaza. 'Ah, I am glad to be back in the City of Peace after my long travels,' he says. 'And on such a night, when merriment fills the air from dusk to dawn! But what of you, my friend? Your face seems a stranger to joy. Are sighs and long looks your stock-in-trade? If so, you'll find no taker for your wares in fair Baghdad.'

Despite your woes, you muster a smile at his whimsical way of speaking. 'Yesterday I was as light of heart as you, my friend,' you say, and before long you have blurted out your whole tale.

When you mention what the dervish said, the sailor claps you on the back and gives a whoop of jovial laughter. 'Why, these holy beggars are truly steeped in wisdom!' Seeing your blank look, he goes on: 'Surely you realize what he meant. Why, he has gifted you with the key to restoring your fortunes – and all for a mere dinar. Oh, for such a bargain to enrich my own business!'

You are getting quite tetchy by now. 'Enlighten me, O Vessel of Profundity,' you say through gritted teeth. 'How can I profit by the dervish's words?'

'He spoke of the stars, which guide those like myself who venture across the ocean in search of distant ports. You seek treasure? Then you have only to go to the docks, take ship, and sail to find your destiny!'

If you accompany the sailor to the docks, turn to 138. If you take your leave of him, turn to 92.

476

At noon your lookout reports seeing the black sails of the pirates. They are off the starboard bow, closing like a raptor on their sluggish prey.

If you order your vessel to close in and engage the pirates at once, turn to **262**. If you stand off and watch their attack on the merchant ship, turn to **285**.

477

You tell the Caliph the whole story. As he listens, his countenance darkens with rage. At first you feared he might not believe you, but so many elements add up. Now he understands the true source of rebellion was never his loyal subjects, but the detestable Vizier in whom he placed his trust.

'Jafar!' roars the Caliph. 'At last the hours of your worthless life have run out!'

Freezing in the act of sidling from the room, Jafar raises a knife. The blade drips with toxic green fluid. 'It is your own life that will end now, al-Rashid,' he replies.

Jafar is about to throw the knife. If you have **AGILITY**, turn to **228**. If you have **ARCHERY** (even without a bow), turn to **251**. If you possess a cloak and want to use it, turn to **273**. Otherwise, your only options are to leap bravely in front of the Caliph (turn to **295**) or do nothing (turn to **317**).



478

You go up into the pass. Reaching a ridge of rocks, you glance back to see the others watching you nervously. Hakim gives you a wave which is obviously meant to be reassuring. It only serves to make you all the more resentful that he has sent you on ahead as bait for bandits.

Climbing cautiously among the ridges, though, you find no sign of any bandits. You are returning to call the caravan on when you are overtaken by the dusk. While up on the higher slopes, you hadn't realized it was so close to sunset. Soon you are engulfed in darkness. It would be foolhardy to go any further now. You might trip in the dark and break your leg. But if you stay put there are other dangers – the chill of night, and the wild creatures that may even now be emerging to hunt. You do not relish the idea of spending the night unsheltered in these hills.

Then you see a light. Going closer, you discover a hut perched on a crag above the pass. If you knock at the door, turn to **425**. If you think that might be more dangerous than sleeping in the open, turn to **260**.

479

Dropping a line, you make careful note of the ocean currents. A master navigator like you can read them as clearly as the stars. Having determined your position and consulted the charts you are able to warn the captain about a coral reef that lies just a few

leagues off the starboard bow. You set the course the ship must steer, and within an hour the glint of sunbeams pierces the haze. As the ship breaks clear of the enshrouding mist, every voice on board is raised in a cheer.

‘That fog was nothing natural,’ vows Jumail the cook.

You laugh and shake your head. ‘Do not look for supernatural threats where there are none, my friend. The sea has many perils, but all of them can be handled with a calm nerve and a modicum of experience.’ Turn to **234**.



480

If you have a piece of diamond shell, you can sell it for 50,000 dinars. Even after giving the fishermen a fair share, you are still left with 25,000 dinars – enough to make you as respected as any merchant in Baghdad. Cross the diamond off your Adventure Sheet and note the money instead.

If you took the jewelled key instead of the shell, you are in for a disappointment: it is only worth 100 dinars. Sell it if you wish, noting the money in its place.

It is time you headed home. For better or worse, your quest has reached its conclusion. Now you must settle your score with the evil Jafar. Turn to **113**.

481

The next day, the talk going around the city is all about miserly Arshad the baker. He has been claiming that a thief crept into his shop by night and stole a bag of gold he had hidden under the floor.

'Is the story true?' you ask an old spice merchant who is opening up his stall as you pass.

He snorts disdainfully. 'How should I know? Arshad is a liar as well as a cheat. When my granddaughter married, we paid him for a hundred loaves and he delivered only sixty-two. His sole excuse was that this was the number of the years of the Prophet! The dog - to claim piety, while stealing from our mouths! All around the city it is well known that Arshad is more verminous than a buffalo that has not been in water for a year. If he has been robbed, I say good luck to the thief.'

You walk away. The spice merchant's words have salved your conscience. And, indeed, Arshad's gold does feel very comfortable in your pocket. Add 60 dinars to your money and turn to **399**.

482

At dusk some days later, outside the Great Mosque, you spot the dervish whose words set you on your quest. 'Ah, it's you,' he says. 'I remember you.'

'I'm Grand Vizier now,' you tell him, indicating your robe of honour.

'It's all the same to me.' He moves to go past you into the mosque.

'Wait! I didn't mean to boast. I'm just curious to

know what you meant all those months ago. Did you intend that my life was governed by the stars, or to advise me to navigate across the ocean, or did you foresee other fabulous adventures?’

‘None of those,’ says the dervish with a delighted laugh. ‘Did you think I could see the future, when God alone knows all that has happened or ever will happen?’

‘Then what . . . ?’

He points upward, and you look up at the canopy of stars emerging from the jade-green twilight. ‘I meant only that when you reside in the City of Peace, under this glorious heaven, in the comfort and majesty of the Law – why, then you dwell always in an age of miracles. That is all.’

He goes through the door and then looks back, smiling at your dumbstruck face, and adds: ‘Whatever you heard in my remarks, you put there yourself. Everyone makes their own destiny; everyone finds their own truth. When others look at you, they see a noble person dressed in fine robes of honour. But only you know whether those robes truly clothe the Grand Vizier – or merely the wildest thief of Baghdad!’

And, with a wink, he turns and hobbles off.

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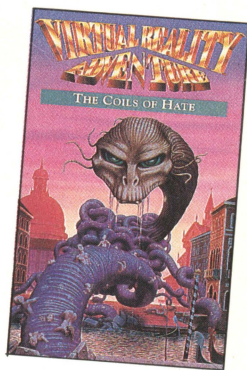
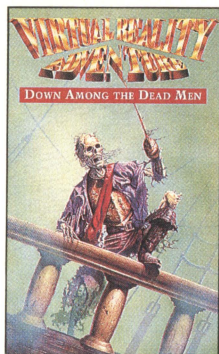
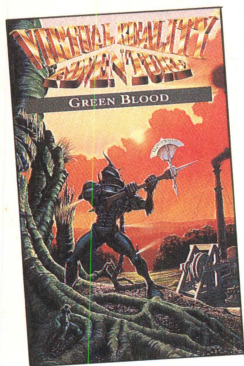
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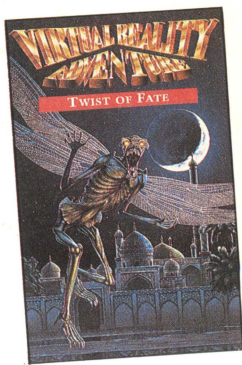
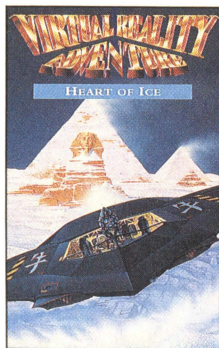
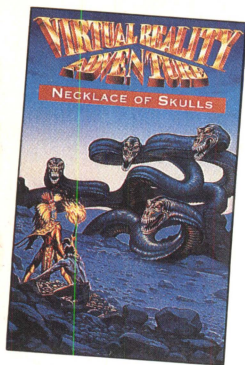
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