RULES of PLAY
Tales of the Arabian Nights

In Tales of the Arabian Nights, you are the hero or heroine in a story of adventure and wonder just like those told by Scheherazade to her spellbound sultan! You will travel the land seeking your own destiny and fortune. You will learn stories and gain wisdom to share with others. Will you be the first to fulfill your destiny? The next Tale is yours to tell!

There is, of course, a winner in Tales of the Arabian Nights, but the true joy of the game is enjoying the unfolding and telling of a great story!

WINNING THE GAME

If you are the first player to collect your own chosen goal of Story and Destiny Points and return safely to Baghdad, you win the game!

PLAY OVERVIEW

Tales of the Arabian Nights is a paragraph-based board game. What does that mean? During the game you and the other players will encounter all sorts of strange events, beings, and creatures. Each encounter will refer to a Reaction Matrix, which will offer you several choices of how to respond to the encounter. Your choice will guide you to a paragraph in the Book of Tales, which will reveal the outcome of your encounter. The skills and statuses of your character may affect your results, for good or ill!

COMPONENTS

Each copy of Tales of the Arabian Nights includes:

- One mounted game map
- Three sheets of cardboard markers
- One rules booklet (you’re holding it)
- One Book of Tales (don’t read this yet!)
- A Reaction Matrix booklet
- Six Player References
- Six Character stand-ups plus stands
- 30 Encounter cards
- 32 Treasure cards
- 112 Status cards
- 19 Quest cards
- One special Destiny Die (with +, -, and blank faces)
- Two normal dice

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19 Quest cards
112 Status cards
30 Encounter cards
Six Player References
Six Character stand-ups plus stands
32 Treasure cards
19 Quest cards
One special Destiny Die (with +, -, and blank faces)
Two normal dice
**SETTING UP THE GAME**

1. Each player takes a **Player Reference**, and chooses one of the six **Character stand-ups** and one of the six colored sets of matching **player markers**. There are six markers in each set. Place your **Player Identity** token on your **Player Board**. Also take the 3 **Quest markers** of your matching color.

2. Place your **Character** on the board in the **Baghdad** space.

3. Place your **Destiny** and **Story Points** markers on the spaces marked **Destiny** and **Story** respectively.

4. Place your **Wealth** marker on the board in the **Poor** box.

5. Keep your **Origin** and **Destination** markers for later use.

6. Shuffle the deck of **Quest cards** and deal one **Quest face-up** to each player. Place the rest of the deck face-down near the board (see sidebar about **Quest cards**).

7. Place your **Wealth** marker on the board in the **Poor** box.

8. Shuffle the **Encounter cards** and place it to one side. Place the **morning marker** next to the deck. When there are no more cards in the encounter deck, reshuffle the discards and re-use them. Also, replace the **morning marker** with the **noon marker**. If you reshuffle a second time, replace the **noon marker** with the **night marker**. (If you need to use the deck a fourth time, leave the **night marker** in place.)

9. Shuffle the **Treasure cards** and place them face-down near the board.

10. Sort the **Status cards** by type and set them face-up near the board.

**STARTING THE GAME**

Record your **Victory Formula**. You get to decide how many **Destiny Points** and how many **Story Points** you will need to win! The only restriction is that the two numbers must add up to exactly 20.

Record the formula you have chosen by taking **Victory tokens** of the appropriate number and type and concealing them under your **Player Reference**. (For example, you could decide you need 12 **Destiny Points** and 8 **Story Points**, or 7 **Destiny Points** and 13 **Story Points**, and so on.) Keep the tokens you choose secret from the other players.

Each player rolls the two normal dice. Re-roll ties. The highest roller will go first and the other players will follow in clockwise order.

Choose your **Skills**. First, sort the **Skill markers** by type to make a **Skill Bank**. Each player in turn chooses one **Skill marker**.

Repeat this step two more times, so that each player has three different skills. (If all players prefer, you can instead give random skills to each player to start. If you choose this option, then each player should end up with three different skills by exchanging any duplicates drawn.)

Each **Skill marker** is printed on both sides, with one side representing the **Talent level** and the back representing the **Master level**.

At the beginning of the game, all of your skills are at the **Talent level**, so place the markers on the table with the **Talent** side face up. During the game, your skills can increase to the **Master level**; if they do, flip the marker over to the **Master side**.

**QUEST CARDS**

The **Quest cards** give you additional reasons to travel the world. Some quests require you to visit multiple locations, which you mark with your character’s **Quest markers**. To claim a marker requires remaining in the space after you have an encounter there.

It is important to note that these quests do not have to be fulfilled linearly, nor even fulfilled at all. Once a quest is completed (or lost), draw another one and remove any of your **Quest markers** from the board. If the Quest deck is depleted do not form a new deck.
The Book of Tales

The Book of Tales is the heart of Tales of the Arabian Nights. Please do not read through it! If you do, you may limit your enjoyment of the game. The player to your left acts as the Reader during your turn. When you have an encounter, the Reader will be given a paragraph to read after your reaction is resolved and the Destiny Die thrown. The Reader will read the results of your encounter out loud so all players can enjoy the tale of your character’s adventure.

THE CONTINENTS

‘ARABIA’ consists of any space without a number printed in it.

‘EUROPA’ is any space north and west of Arabia, stretching east to Bulgars and the ‘5’ forest east of Yalta. All the spaces in the Mediterranean are part of Europa.

‘AFRICA’ includes the forest space between Damascus and Alexandria and all land spaces south and west from there.

‘INDIA’ starts at Shiraz and the ‘2’ forest space between Shiraz and Hamadan, and all the land spaces south of the word ‘India’ on the map, including Serendib and Pan-Pan.

‘ASIA’ is all the land spaces east of Europa and north of India, including Samarkand, Lhasa, and the mountain spaces west of Herat.

Places of Power

The map shows ten Places of Power. Each Place of Power has a one-way arrow leading away from it. Because these wondrous locations are hidden, you may not enter a Place of Power simply by moving your Character there with normal movement! During the course of your adventures, you may have an encounter that will reveal one of these mysterious places. Some encounters in the Book of Tales will reward you with an “opportunity to enter” a particular Place of Power. If you earn one of these opportunities, place your Destination marker on the Place of Power mentioned in the Book of Tales. While your Destination marker is on a Place of Power, you may move there with normal movement just like a normal space (following the arrow backwards). If you use this opportunity to enter a Place of Power, your movement for the turn ends immediately and the Destination marker is removed from the board. Note: you may only have one Destination marker on the board at a time! If you discover another “opportunity to enter” a different Place of Power, then you must move your marker to the new location, and your old opportunity is lost! (If you are told to move the Destination marker for any reason, any old opportunity is lost—even if the Destination marker is moved because of a status.)

Some encounters will tell you that you must move directly to a Place of Power. Move your Character to that Place of Power (regardless of the distance) and have an encounter there immediately.

As soon as you complete your encounter in a Place of Power, move your Character to the space indicated by the arrow (unless the encounter indicates that you should move somewhere else). You cannot end your turn on a Place of Power.
At the end of your movement, you must check to see what your encounter will be (even if you did not actually move your character anywhere). Draw the top card from the Encounter deck.

**Important:** If you end your move in a Place of Power, you do not draw a card; instead the Reader simply goes straight to the paragraph for that Place of Power.

An encounter may give you a free move (example: "move to any coastal space") or "magically transport" you to another space. In this case, you do not check for a second encounter unless the new space is a Place of Power. If you move to a Place of Power, then the Reader continues with the paragraph for that Place of Power.

When you have an encounter, you will face some challenge or opportunity and decide how to react. Your choice, along with your skills and statuses, will determine how you are affected by the encounter.

### The Encounter Cards

There are three kinds of cards in the encounter deck: Character Encounters, City Encounters, and Terrain Encounters. The card you draw will determine who or what you encounter. Character and Terrain Encounter cards are discarded after your encounter is resolved, but if you have a City Encounter, you may choose to keep that card to play on a future turn.

#### Character Encounter Cards and Terrain Encounter Cards

The type of Encounter card drawn determines how the encounter is resolved.

- If you draw a Character Encounter card, refer to the deck marker (morning, noon, or night). The Encounter card will direct the Reader to various paragraphs in the Book of Tales based on the matching icon shown on the card.

- If you draw a Terrain Encounter card, you must determine what kind of terrain your character is in (refer to the Terrain Key on the back cover of this rulebook). At the bottom of the card, you will find a paragraph number for each type of terrain. The Reader finds the paragraph number shown in the Book of Tales.

#### City Encounter Cards

City Encounter cards give you an opportunity to earn special rewards if you can reach a specific city during your travels.

If you draw a City Encounter, you immediately go to the paragraph printed on the bottom of the card to have an encounter. The City Encounter card also names a city and a list of results numbered from 1 to 6. You may choose to keep the City Encounter card to play later, or you may choose to discard it.

If you keep the City Encounter card, and you are in the named city at the end of a future encounter phase, then you may play the card. When you play the card, roll a die. The die roll determines the award you receive. Apply the result immediately and then discard the card.

Sometimes, the result of a City Encounter card will name another encounter. These special encounters either list a paragraph number from the Book of Tales, or a letter matching a table in the Reaction Matrix. If you play a City Encounter card and get one of these results, refer to the Book of Tales or the Reaction Matrix as indicated. You must resolve this special city encounter even if you already had a normal encounter in the same turn.

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**Example:** Sindbad occupies a sea space; his player draws the Magnetic Mountain card, so the Reader would turn to paragraph 2. If Sindbad were in a mountain space when this card was drawn, the Matrix Reader would instead go to Magnetic Mountain on Reaction Matrix N.

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**Example:** Aladdin draws Bantus. He immediately encounters something on paragraph 8. Then he chooses to keep this card.

On a later turn, Aladdin goes to Bantus and plays this card. He rolls a die for a roll of 2, he gains 2 Wealth levels.

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### Encounters in Places of Power

If you are in a Place of Power, do not draw a card! Instead, find the paragraph number printed on the Place of Power space on the board. The Reader finds the paragraph number shown in the Book of Tales.

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### Resolving Encounters

There are four steps to each encounter:

1. **Discover Who or What You Have Encountered**
2. **Choose Your Reaction**
3. **Determine Your Destiny**
4. **Resolve the Encounter**

The first paragraph the Reader turns to will usually be an Encounter Chart. Each Encounter Chart shows twelve numbered entries. You now roll one die and add:

- The value of your die roll;
- The number printed inside the gem or city icon your Character is on, if any;
- +1 to the roll if you have 3 or 4 Destiny Points, or +2 if you have 5 or more. (These additions are printed on the Destiny Track on the board as a reminder.)

Any total above 12 is resolved as a 12.

The Reader finds the result of your modified roll on the Encounter Chart and reads the description next to that number.
**Encounter Charts**

Here is a typical encounter chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Reaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lost Merchant (L)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Wicked Hag (C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mad Slave (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Friendly Merman (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mild Storm (F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Malicious Merman (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Malicious Merman (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Fearful Captain (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Beautiful Shoals (F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Treacherous Shoals (F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mad Captain (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Terrible Storm (F)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example:** Ali Baba has 9 Destiny Points. The encounter occurs in a particularly dangerous space which has a “4” printed in the gem. If he rolled a 6, the result would be a 2 (I: +4 for the gem number, +2 for his Destiny point total). The Reader, looking at paragraph 4, would tell him that a 12 means he has encountered a Terrible Storm. The Reader further notes that the Reaction Matrix will be letter “F.”

**Choose Your Reaction**

The Encounter Chart will direct the Matrix Reader to a Reaction Matrix. There are 15 matrices, each labeled with a letter from A to O. Some Encounter Charts will use a single matrix for the entire chart, in which case the matrix letter is listed by the paragraph number. Other charts will direct you to a different matrix depending on the roll, and the matrix letter will be listed next to each result on the chart (see above).

**Read the Result Paragraph**

The Reader reads the Result Paragraph aloud to the players. This is your opportunity to read dramatically, do voices, and so forth. Have fun with the reading!

Some Result Paragraphs will have lists of skills after them. We’ll explain that a little later on. For now look at the end of the paragraph. A cryptic code will appear in brackets. It will look something like this:

[D2/S1/W+1 (Max: Poor)/Storytelling/Respected]

The number printed next to the D is the number of Destiny Points gained (or lost, if it is a negative number). In the example above, the Character would gain two Destiny Points. The number after the S is the number of Story Points gained (or lost, if it is a negative number). In this example, the Character gains one Story Point. The W refers to the number of Wealth Levels gained or lost, and the maximum or minimum level this award can give. In the example, you would gain one Wealth Level, but your wealth could not be increased above Poor by the award.

**Skills** and/or **statuses** may also be named in the results (statuses will be in italics). These skills and/or statuses are gained immediately. The award example above would give you the Storytelling skill and the Respected status.

Skills are received at the Talent level unless otherwise noted. If you already have the skill, then turn the marker over to indicate that you now have the skill at Master level.

Some paragraphs instruct you to “gain a level” in a skill. If you do not have that skill, then you receive the skill at the Talent level. (During the game, if you don’t have enough Skill markers or Status cards for every player with a certain skill or status, then just note who has the skill or status and keep playing. Running out of markers or cards does not mean that you can’t get the skill or status.)

**Sometimes your award will include a Treasure** (it will be bolded within the brackets). It may mention a specific treasure (such as Ionian Gems) or a random one (Treasure). If you are awarded a specific treasure, then look through the deck to find the appropriate card and place it face-up in front of you. If someone else already has that treasure, take it from her—she is out of luck!

If you are awarded a random treasure, draw a random treasure from the deck, and place it face-up in front of you. When you earn a treasure, read the Treasure card aloud. As long as you own the treasure, you receive the benefit described on the card.

**Determine Your Destiny**

Each reaction option on the Reaction Matrix has three possible **Result Paragraphs**. Once you have chosen your reaction, the Matrix Reader notes the number and you roll the Destiny Die. If you roll:

- **– (minus):** subtract one from the paragraph number and the Reader turns to that paragraph in the *Book of Tales*.
- **Blank:** the Reader finds the paragraph with the same number shown on the matrix in the *Book of Tales*.
- **+ (plus):** add one to the paragraph number and the Reader turns to that paragraph in the *Book of Tales*.

**Example:** Looking at the chart above, Ali Baba decides that piracy is his best chance to survive, so he chooses Pray as his reaction. At this point his Matrix Reader, Aladdin, asks him to roll the Destiny Die and afterwards will give the result to Zumurrud, his reader.

* If he rolls a – symbol, then Zumurrud reads paragraph 702.
* If he rolls a blank face, then Zumurrud reads paragraph 703.
* If he rolls a + symbol, then Zumurrud reads paragraph 704.

**Treasure**

- 701 2171
- 702 2174
- 703 2183
- 713 2189
- 699 2186
The "other"

A note on the word "other" in the Book of Tales: Since many paragraphs are used for encounters with multiple people or creatures, the specific person or creature is often not mentioned. The word "other" is used instead.

Suppose you were directed to Result Paragraph 328 while encountering an 'Efreet. It reads:

On your words, the other says, "If you would truly honor me, you would grant me your aid."

NO SKILL: The task the other asks of you is beyond your abilities; you cannot help, but the story of his doomed courtship is a powerful and memorable lesson. [5]

COURTLY GRACES: The other is soon to be married to another of high station, but is lacking in knowledge of protocol. Your courtly skills help the other. In gratitude, the married couple bestow a wondrous gift upon you. [D/S/Treasure]

QUICK THINKING: With great cleverness, you weave a complex ruse to gain the other the thing he needs. Impressed and grateful, the other shares with you an arcane secret he learned many years ago. [D/S/Treasure]

Since you are encountering an 'Efreet, you would read it as:

On your words, the 'Efreet says, "If you would truly honor me, you would grant me your aid."

NO SKILL: The task the 'Efreet asks of you is beyond your abilities; you cannot help, but the story of his doomed courtship is a powerful and memorable lesson. [5]

COURTLY GRACES: The 'Efreet is soon to be married to another of high station, but is lacking in knowledge of protocol. Your courtly skills help the other. In gratitude, the married couple bestow a wondrous gift upon you. [D/S/Treasure]

QUICK THINKING: With great cleverness, you weave a complex ruse to gain the other the thing he needs. Impressed and grateful, the other shares with you an arcane secret he learned many years ago. [D/S/Treasure]

Most Result Paragraphs are divided into several sections. One of them is labeled NO SKILL, and the others are labeled with skill, status, and/or treasure names. When you are the Reader, you begin by reading only the first part of the paragraph (before the list of skills, etc.). Then, you read off the list of skills, etc. but don't read the text after the skills yet! The other player must choose which skills (if any) he is going to use before he knows what the results of his choice will be!

❖ If you don't have any of the skills, etc. listed: you must choose the NO SKILL section. The Reader reads that section aloud, and you gain the awards or penalties listed there. (Also, the Reader will read this section if you do not want to use any of your skills.)

❖ If you have one or more of the listed skills, etc.: You may choose to use any ONE of them, or choose to use no skill at all. The Reader reads the appropriate section, and you gain the awards or penalties it gives.

❖ Mandatory skills: Sometimes a heading will be noted as "mandatory". In that case, you must use that section if you have any of the skills, treasures, or statuses listed for that section, even if other choices are available.

Skills

Most Result Paragraphs are divided into several sections. One of them is labeled NO SKILL, and the others are labeled with skill, status, and/or treasure names. When you are the Reader, you begin by reading only the first part of the paragraph (before the list of skills, etc.). Then, you read off the list of skills, etc. but don't read the text after the skills yet! The other player must choose which skills (if any) he is going to use before he knows what the results of his choice will be!

❖ If you don't have any of the skills, etc. listed: you must choose the NO SKILL section. The Reader reads that section aloud, and you gain the awards or penalties listed there. (Also, the Reader will read this section if you do not want to use any of your skills.)

❖ If you have one or more of the listed skills, etc.: You may choose to use any ONE of them, or choose to use no skill at all. The Reader reads the appropriate section, and you gain the awards or penalties it gives.

❖ Mandatory skills: Sometimes a heading will be noted as "mandatory". In that case, you must use that section if you have any of the skills, treasures, or statuses listed for that section, even if other choices are available.

Master skills

If you have skills at the Master level, you can control your own fate to a greater degree. Do not immediately roll the Destiny Die to determine your Result Paragraph. Instead, the Reader checks all three possible paragraphs first, to see whether one or more of your Master skills are listed.

❖ If they are not listed, resolve the encounter in the normal way. (Roll the die, check for appropriate skills, etc.)

❖ If one of your Master skills is listed in any of the three possible paragraphs, you may choose to go directly to that paragraph (starting with the first part, then reading the section for the Master skill) without rolling the die. (You may still roll instead, if you prefer.)

NO SKILL: The Reader does not inform you if one of those skills is mandatory! Since most mandatory paragraphs are harmful to you, knowing if a selection is mandatory would encourage you to avoid it.

Example: Ali Baba has encountered a Mystic Fire, so the Reader has turned to paragraph number 728. Ali Baba has the Magic skill at the Master level.

The Reader looks over paragraphs 727, 728, and 729, and notices that paragraph 728 lists Magic as a skill. He asks Ali Baba if he would like to use his Magic skill, or if he would prefer to roll the Destiny Die. The reader does not tell a player what the paragraph numbers are unless there is more than one option for the player to choose.

Losing skills

Certain paragraphs will instruct you to lose a particular skill. If you have that skill at the Talent level, put it back in the Skill Bank. If you have the skill at Master level, turn it back to its Talent side.

Skills may also be lost due to the effects of a status. Such losses are temporary. Place all affected skill markers underneath the appropriate status card. When you lose the status, you regain the skills.

How toResolve an Encounter

Suppose you were directed to result paragraph 328:

On your words, the other says, “If you would truly honor me, you would grant me your aid.”

NO SKILL: The task the other asks of you is beyond your abilities; you cannot help, but the story of his doomed courtship is a powerful and memorable lesson. [5]

COURTLY GRACES: The other is soon to be married to one of high station, but is lacking in knowledge of protocol. Your courtly skills help the other. In gratitude, the married couple bestows a wondrous gift upon you. [D/S/Treasure]

QUICK THINKING: With great cleverness, you weave a complex ruse to gain the other the thing he needs. Impressed and grateful, the other shares with you an arcane secret he learned many years ago. [D/S/Treasure] You may lose one status of your choice.

The reader starts by reading the text before NO SKILL, then asks if you have Courtly Graces or Quick Thinking.

If you have neither Courtly Graces nor Quick Thinking, he reads the NO SKILL section, and you gain 1 Story Point.

If you have and choose to use Courtly Graces, the Reader reads the middle section and you gain 1 Destiny Point, 1 Story Point, and a random treasure.

If you have and choose to use Quick Thinking, the Reader reads the bottom section and you gain 1 Destiny Point, 1 Story Point, and a random treasure.

If you have both skills, you may choose which of the two skills you wish to use.

You can also choose not to use any skill you might have and take the NO SKILL result instead.

D1/S1/You may lose one status of your choice.
When something out of the ordinary happens to your character (such as being turned into an ape or becoming the object of someone’s affection), you receive a status.

**Effects of Statuses**

You must obey the instructions on any Status cards you have at all times, not just on the first turn that you acquired the status.

You need to keep an eye on the other players, and remind the Reader if there are any statuses in effect. If a player takes an action that ignores the effects of a status, and no one catches the error before the end of his turn, then it is too late to change and the action stands.

**Example:** Ma’aruf has gone insane (that is, he has the Insane status card). As a result, he must allow another player to choose his reactions in all encounters. But in his eagerness to pray, he forgets his insanity and chooses his own reaction. None of the other players notice this error until after the reaction is resolved and his turn is over, so the proper action stands.

**Sell Treasures**

You can sell any treasure you possess whenever you end your turn in any city after your encounters (if any). If you sell a treasure, you gain the wealth indicated on the Treasure card, noting the maximum Wealth Level you can gain written on the bottom of the card, and return the card to the deck.

**Death**

There are times in the game that your character can die—that’s just the way of things in the world of Arabian Nights. Fear not, however, as your character’s brother or sister will take over your quests for you. If your character dies, move back to Baghdad. You must also remove your Origin, Quest, and Destination markers from the board, reduce your Wealth Level to Poor, and lose all statuses and treasures. You do get to keep your skills, Story Points, and Destiny Points.

**Note:** If you have obtained your secret victory condition, you may announce that you are going to win (see Game End).

**Game End**

If you have collected at least enough Destiny and Story Points to meet your secret goal (chosen at the beginning of the game), you must return to Baghdad in order to win.

Once you reach Baghdad (and remain there after surviving an encounter), you announce that you are going to win.

All of the other players each have one last turn to try to complete their goals and reach Baghdad. At the end of this “last turn” any player in Baghdad who has filled his victory conditions can win the game.

At the end of the “last turn,” it is possible for one, several, or all players of the game to be in the running to win the game. If you are still the only eligible player at the end of that last turn, then you are victorious and all will sing your praises!

If more than one player with enough Destiny and Story Points to win ends their turn in Baghdad during that “last turn,” the tied player with the most statuses wins.

If there is still a tie, the tied player with the most skills wins. If there is still a tie, then the story is even greater as the win is shared.

**Optional Rules**

**Shorter Games**

You can lengthen or shorten the game by playing to a victory point total other than 20 points.

If you want a quicker game, you may also play with a limit of one status. In awards where more than one status is listed, you gain only the last status listed. For example, if the award listing is Wounded/Sultan, you get Sultan. If Wounded were listed second, you would receive Wounded.

If you already have a status and gain another you lose the previous one and gain the new one instead.

**Example:** You get the Blessed status last turn, and receive the Scorned and Diseased statuses in an encounter this turn. You must discard Blessed and Scorned (this was the order you received them) so you only have one status—in this case, Diseased.

**There are more ways to play!**

Go to the Z-Man Games Web site at www.zmangames.com for more optional rules such as the Storytelling Variant, the Solitaire Variant, and the Merchant Variant!
The Tales of the Arabian Nights ranks among the world’s most famous short story collections. These stories are a melding of Arabian, Persian, and Indian folk tales, with just a sprinkling of Chinese influence. In broad strokes, the tales paint a picture of a world of extraordinary treasure, earthy lusts, and uncomplicated ethics. There are fabulous creatures, from enormous roc to powerful sorcerers to ever-present ‘efreet (also known as djinn or genie); what distinguishes this from other mythologies is that even the everyday barber, beggar, or hunchback is described with a sense of wonder. It is this intimate view into an alien culture that has made these tales the most popular Arabic work in the Western world and raised them to the status of a universal classic.

Westerners who have little previous contact with Arabia or Islam may be confounded by the ethos and culture they will discover in the Book of Tales. For all its fantastic trappings, the world of the Arabian Nights is that of a very real, exotic, vital, and sophisticated culture. The societal values are just different: for instance, our heroes thought nothing of casually killing someone to gain some small convenience as long as that someone was an infidel.

The one design liberty taken was in the portrayal of women in the game. The female was definitely the lesser sex in medieval Arabia. Further, it appears that three-quarters of the “heroines” are busy seducing and betraying the nearest men; the virtuous remainder often had the distressing habit of dying to prove their essential goodness. We have represented the female characters in the game as the best, bravest, and most fortunate of these heroines. The female was definitely the lesser sex in medieval Arabia. Further, it appears that three-quarters of the “heroines” are busy seducing and betraying the nearest men; the virtuous remainder often had the distressing habit of dying to prove their essential goodness. We have represented the female characters in the game as the best, bravest, and most fortunate of these heroines.

These books were of great use in the preparation of the map. Geography is, at best, incidental to the tales; place locations in the Arabian Nights are more often than not given as so many days’ journey by horse in such-and-such a direction from Baghdad. Islands and places of power were generally reached by our heroes after a raging storm or magical beast or what-have-you had tossed them around so much that they had no idea where they were. The final rendering of the map combines appropriate cartography and period flavor.

The reader will undoubtedly agree with us that The Tales of the Arabian Nights are splendid fables. But the tales are more than just pleasing fantasies; they are a faithful reflection of the time and place in which they are conceived. With Arabia and Islam resurgent, their place in the popular literature of the Western world, but they were ruthless bowdlerizers of the stories. This version uses much flowery language and is thoroughly sanitized.

By contrast, Richard Burton’s The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night is both highly salacious and the definitive English-language compilation. Burton, the first non-Muslim to see Mecca and an adventurer par excellence, is as interesting as any Arabian Nights character. His telling is quite, quite bawdy, but the prose is so dense that modern readers will struggle through it.

As Historical Atlas of Islam (E. J. Brill, edited by William Brice), was the starting point for the map. Geography is, at best, incidental to the tales; place locations in the Arabian Nights are more often than not given as so many days’ journey by horse in such-and-such a direction from Baghdad. Islands and places of power were generally reached by our heroes after a raging storm or magical beast or what-have-you had tossed them around so much that they had no idea where they were. The final rendering of the map combines appropriate cartography and period flavor.

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These books were of great use in the preparation of the game, and are recommended to those of you who wish to read the tales:

N. J. Dawood’s Tales from the Thousand and One Nights (Penguin Classics) is a condensed version. Dawood, an Arab scholar, has written the modern translation which is at once the most faithful to the source material and the most readable. His narrative style is straightforward in everything from dialogue to earthly lusts, which makes this telling inappropriate for young children.

E. W. Lane’s The Arabian Nights’ Entertainments or The Thousand and One Nights (Livres de France and East-West Publications) is probably the best-known translation of the tales. Lane and his 19th century English contemporaries gave the Arabian Nights their place in the popular literature of the Western world, but they were ruthless bowdlerizers of the stories. This version uses much flowery language and is thoroughly sanitized.

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The reader will undoubtedly agree with us that The Tales of the Arabian Nights are splendid fables. But the tales are more than just pleasing fantasies; they are a faithful reflection of the time and place in which they are conceived. With Arabia and Islam resurgent, The Tales of the Arabian Nights can still teach while they entertain us.

Eric Goldberg
New York, 1985
A humble woodcutter in the forests of Persia, Ali Baba happened across a most wondrous secret: in a cave, hidden behind a magical door, was the treasure-trove of a band of thieves—decades of ill-gotten gain, guarded only by the password “Open, Sesame!”

Ali contented himself with only a few bags of gold, but when his brother Kassim discovered the source of Ali’s new wealth, he demanded to be given the password to the cave. But Ali, fearing for his own life when the bandits came to town searching for the magic door, warned his brother that the password was “mama.”

And so they lived in joy for many a year after.

The obstinate and lazy son of a Chinese tailor, Aladdin was singled out by an African geomancer to assist in the sorcerer’s scheme. Posing as the boy’s uncle, he brought Aladdin to a spot outside the town and gave him a seal ring that allowed him walk in safety through great peril to reach the spice islands, to the jungles of Africa, and to far Cathay.

The original swashbuckler, Sindbad was a merchant who sailed forth seven times from his home in Basra and into the oceans that gird the world. His voyages took him past India and into the dark waters of the spice islands, to the jungles of Africa, and to far Cathay.

In the wildest portion of the face of the earth he found a black giant who skewed men and roasted them like lambs; a vile man—monkey who rode Sindbad like a horse and would not leave him go; the nesting grounds of a roc, a bird so vast its wings span the entire sky; and the graveyard of the elephants, where the tusks form towers of ivory taller than the greatest of castles.

Having thus passed safely through great peril, Sindbad finally retired from the sea, as generous in his wealth as he was brave in gathering it.

Zumurrud was a slave-girl from Samarkand, who through cleverness continued to be bought by the handsome Ali Shar, a one-rich man who had wasted his fortune—she gave him her purse with the money to buy her! She sewed curtains for Ali Shar to sell in the marketplace, until one day one of his customers kidnapped her and bore her away. Through disguise and guile, Zumurrud escaped and came to a city of the Kurds, where the king had just died. By the strange custom of the land, at the first to pass through the city gates after his death, she became the new king! Using her skills as a caster of fortunes on the sand, she discovered the man who kidnapped her and had him executed for his crimes. Finally, Ali Shar, who had never ceased from searching for her, came to the city. Zumurrud playfully seduced him, again in disguise, and finally revealed herself for a glorious reunion.

Scheherazade, daughter of the vizier, volunteered herself as his wife, with a daring plan to end the King’s rampage: to pass her last night alive, she wished to tell stories to her dear sister, Dunazade.

The king agreed, and all sat together in his bed as Scheherazade began the story of the Merchant and the Djinni. When the morning came, the king was captivated by the story and agreed to let Scheherazade live to continue the story the next night.

And on the next night, again, the king was so caught up in the story that he agreed to spare her over to complete her tale. And thus they continued, night after night, Scheherazade telling her stories to Dunazade for the benefit of Shahryar, knowing that if at any night the king’s attention wandered, the next morning she would be killed and her sister would become the king’s next bride.

Night became day, became night, passed in story after story, stories piled on stories and within stories, an ocean of words and deeds, and never did Scheherazade stumble or fail. At the end of the thousand nights and a night, Scheherazade declared to the king that she had been a good and faithful wife and the mother of his two sons. By this evidence of her own virtue, she brought him the kingdom, and together they ruled in peace until they each died.
We enjoy being carried away from trivial and commonplace characters, scenes, and incidents; from the matter-of-fact surroundings of a workaday world, a life of eating and drinking, sleeping and waking, fighting and loving, into a society and a mise-en-scene which we suspect can exist and which we know can not.

— Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton, 1886