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Heroes & Villains III

Citizens of Al-Shirkuh



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HELLFROST HEROES & VILLAINS 3

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Introduction

To outsiders, the population of Al-Shirkuh appears to fall into a small range of lifestyles and occupations. Appearances can be deceiving, as every desert-dweller knows, and the inhabitants are as varied as the parched landscapes they call home.

As in the northern realm, Al-Shirkuh has its share of warriors and wise men, clerics and sorcerers, healers and harmers, peasants and nobles, commanders and cowards, and merchants and rogues. This is a land where men and women can choose to walk beside the gods or follow their own path to enlightenment, converse with mighty and capricious jinn or damn them to oblivion, live with the desert or tolerate its presence.

Most have no great destiny. They are born, grow old, and die without ever seeing the many wonders or facing the endless perils the desert has to offer. This is all they will ever know, and in that they are content. Others, though, strive for greatness. Their names may be unknown to storytellers and sages for now, but there will come a time when their deeds will be counted among those of the heroes of old.

This supplement contains 50 characters, both villainous and heroic, ready to be dropped into any *Hellfrost: Land of Fire* game or used as player characters.

STAT BLOCKS

Every NPC has an associated stat block. They have all been designed using the rules for creating Novice player characters with no advancements. These stat blocks, combined with the write-ups, are intended to show players the wealth of possibilities that *Hellfrost: Land of Fire* offers. As fully-fledged characters complete with stats and background, they can also be used in convention games and one-shots you might be running.

For GMs intending to use the characters as NPCs, we strongly suggest the stat blocks be modified as desired to suit the Rank, playing style, and strengths and weaknesses of the party they will interact with, as well as the individual GM's campaign.

For those of you who have never created an NPC in *Savage Worlds*, the best advice we can offer is “Don’t panic!” Unlike many other systems, where NPCs must be created using the same rules and restrictions as player characters, *Savage Worlds* has a much simpler approach—just give them the abilities they need to fulfill their role and you’re done! That’s right, you just pick the Traits, Hindrances, Edges, spells, and gear you want them to have. You don’t have to count advances, balance them against the heroes, or meet Edge requirements (although some rationale as to how a character with Agility d4 learned Acrobat and Improved Frenzy should be kept in mind).

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Altair the Khamsin

Race: Khamsin jinn blooded (Hadaree); **Hometown:** Qina, City of Smells (Free Emirate States); **Occupation:** Khamsin jinn mage; **Religion:** Devoted

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Investigation d6, Jinn Magic d8, Knowledge (Monsters: Jinn) d8, Notice d4, Streetwise d6, Survival d6

Charisma: -1 (-3); **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Arrogant, Delusional (Minor: thinks his dad is a greater khamsin), Distrusted, Elemental Weakness (Earth), Habit (Minor: keeps referring to his heritage)

Edges: Arcane Background (Jinn Magic: Khamsin), Jinn Blooded (Air), Still Human

Languages: Beduan, Cakalic, Jinn, Sandspeech

Arcane Powers: *Beast friend* (flying beasts only), *deflection*, *wandering senses*

Innate Powers: *Elemental manipulation (air)*

BACKGROUND

Altair's mother was the only daughter of a wealthy merchant of Qina, City of Smells. While part of a caravan bringing in new supplies of raw incense, she had a brief liaison with a Bedu porter. Nine months later, Altair came screaming into the world. She never revealed who the father was, steadfastly keeping quiet even when her father disowned her for siring a bastard and ruining the prospects of a good marriage.

Altair was born jinn blooded, and his powers manifested when he was quite young. In an effort to avoid saddling her child with the stigma of being an ordinary bastard, his mother told the young lad a small lie—his father was a greater khamsin who had seduced her in the desert. Presented with such a revelation, Altair immediately began asking questions. His mother responded

by quickly making up a name—Khazam—and saying she knew no more. She always intended to reveal the truth when Altair was older, but she died of disease before getting the chance.

Intelligent and confident, and fully believing he was a half-jinni, Altair found a khamsin jinn mage willing to take him as a pupil. While his master tried to teach him that the power of a jinn mage stemmed from learning to control lesser jinn using words of power passed down through the ages, Altair believed his growing power was his birthright—lesser khamsin knew a superior jinni when they saw one.

While he appreciated the arcane knowledge his master was imparting, he knew in his heart that his father could reveal even greater powers, ones lesser mortals could not hope to grasp. As his son, Khazam would surely instruct the boy in such lost knowledge.

When not practicing his spells, cleaning his master's home, or running errands, Altair scoured the city library and questioned scholars for any references to his father. In order to assist his studies he mastered Beduan and Cakalic, for these two cultures had many tales of the jinn. He also learned Jinn, claiming it was his native tongue and thus expected of him.

Not surprisingly, he found not a single mention of Khazam, though he learned much about the jinn in general. Far from being perturbed, he consoled himself with the knowledge that here were hundreds of greater jinn, and few names were listed in the patchy records that survived from that time.

On completing his apprenticeship Altair immediately headed off into the desert. He had exhausted local records and sages in his quest, his grandparents had no wish to know him, and he knew those who dwelt in the vast openness had many tales he had yet to hear.

Three years on and Altair is no nearer his goal. He remains determined to meet his father, considering it an epic quest not only for greater knowledge but one that might lead him to Oneness.

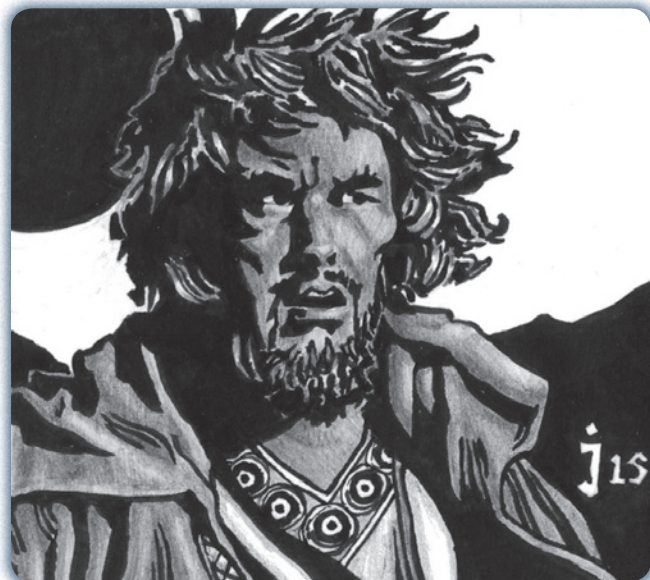
DESCRIPTION

Altair has never seen a greater khamsin, and his ideas of how they look are based on legends and pictures. He wears voluminous robes that billow in the slightest breeze. His hair is always ruffled and unkempt, giving him the appearance of just having weathered a gale.

MANNERISMS

Altair isn't an idiot. Unfortunately, he has no reason to doubt his mother's version of his conception, and thoroughly believes he is the son of a greater khamsin. Keen to remind people that he is no mere mortal, he continually talks about his unearthly heritage. It quickly becomes annoying. Worse, it has led to a potentially dangerous superiority complex.

His driving goal is to find his father, in order that he might be taught more jinn powers.



Kudret the Untouchable

Race: Sand goblin; **Hometown:** Hufrah, City of Idols (Caliphate of Al-Shirkuh); **Occupation:** Entrepreneur and self-appointed crime lord; **Religion:** Faithful (Tamarri)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Gambling d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6, Survival d6, Taunt d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Hindrances: Banned Edges, Delusional (Minor: thinks he's a crime boss), Greedy (Minor), Overconfident, Small, Untrustworthy

Edges: Beast Bond, Camel, Followers (five trained monkeys)*, Sand Walker, Sneaky

Languages: Beduan, Holy Tongue, Sandspeech

* *This breaks the rules as written, but fits the characters background. Replacements must be found or purchased in game.*

BACKGROUND

Kudret was born in the slums of Hufrah, just another of the wretched sand goblins who infest the city like rats. While he could have spent his days scavenging for food and engaging in petty larceny, Kudret was born with a natural talent for handling animals and an entrepreneurial streak larger than his sizeable hump. Naturally, neither talent was put to honest use.

His first business venture was as a rat catcher. He even went so far as to join the guild. That came to an end when it was discovered he was taking rats from the sewers, slipping them into people's houses, and then charging to remove them. Next he opened a sheltered for stray dogs, which he financed by begging for donations to his worthy cause. That ended when it was discovered the animals weren't being retrained and sold to passing merchants, but were in fact being butchered and sold to street vendors as goat meat.

Undeterred by the beatings he received from angry customers and the short stays in prison at the emir's expense, Kudret went back to the drawing board. A game of chance (duly rigged) with a drunken merchant resulted in him gaining possession of five small monkeys. After dismissing thoughts of turning them into a dancing and acting troupe, he decided to train them in the arts of picking pockets and burglary. Largely unimaginative, Kudret named his new "thieves' guild" the Five Tails.

Though they couldn't carry much, between them the monkeys delivered Kudret enough dinars a day to make his life more comfortable than he had ever known. At last he could afford to eat and drink food he hadn't dragged out of the gutter or stolen from a market stall.

His miniature crime spree happened to coincide with a spate of more audacious robberies committed by a thieves' guild. Kudret caught wind the authorities were after a major criminal gang, and promptly leapt to the



conclusion they meant him. Rather than panic at the thought of being hounded by the city watch, Kudret's heart was filled with pride—he had made it as a criminal mastermind! He laughed out loud when the emir announced the capture of the thieves responsible the robberies, for had arrested the wrong men.

Thinking it best not to tempt fate, Kudret packed up his guild operations, such as they were, and decided to move on to new pastures, where his (imagined) reputation as a major crime lord would not hamper his larcenous activities. His route has left behind hundreds of trivial acts of theft the authorities have failed to notice.

DESCRIPTION

Kudret's hump is especially large. When empty, it flaps about like a deflated bladder. When full, it gives the impression he is carrying a large sack on his bag. He's under the impression that crime lords need to display their wealth. Since he's relatively poor, he makes do with copious amounts of tacky costume jewelry. His prized possession is a gold ring that hangs from his nose.

MANNERISMS

Kudret likes money, especially money he doesn't have to work for. Fortunately, he has his monkey minions for exactly that purpose. Despite being no more than a petty thief, Kudret has come to believe himself a major crime lord. He tries to lord it over the rest of the party, who he refers to as his minions (or henchmen, if they're useful to him).

Although Kudret suffers from overconfidence, it extends to his "minions" as well—he'll offer their services to any interested party for the right price. He always asks for cash up front, but does so promising great results. That way, if his minions fail at the task he does not go out of pocket.

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JUNIOR HONORED HOST ERU “Mouse” Dar-Jamir

Race: Hadaree; **Homeland:** Hajjad, City of the Gods (Caliphate of Al-Shirkuh); **Occupation:** Priestess and camp maker; **Patron Deity:** Faithful (Eru—see *Realm Guide* #3)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d4

Skills: Faith d8, Healing d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Shooting d4, Stealth d4, Streetwise d4, Survival d4

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 4

Hindrances: Loyal, Pacifist (Minor), Young

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles)

Languages: Beduan, Holy Tongue, Sandspeech

Powers: *Feast, refuge*

BACKGROUND

Mouse was born to a trader and his wife. Although not rich, they enjoyed a comfortable lifestyle. Unbeknownst to Mouse's mother, her husband had accrued huge debts, partly from engaging in speculative business deals that went sour, and partly from his growing gambling habit. When her husband fled his responsibilities, abandoning his family to the fates, payment of the debts fell to Mouse's mother. Even after selling the family business and all her belongings she was left with a large debt. In order to pay them, the pair went into indentured servitude to the chief creditor, a young nobleman.

Their new master was a good man. He worked his servants hard, though he treated them fairly. It was he who gave the young child her nickname, for she was always scurrying to and fro, her eyes wide and bright. Mouse's mother, a priestess of Eru, quickly earned a place as her

master's cupbearer, a trusted post far above that of a common servant in station.

During what little personal time her duties allowed, Mouse's mother instructed her daughter in the faith. An intelligent child and keen to please, Mouse proved an adept pupil. By the age of seven she had a strong enough faith to allow her to invoke minor miracles, and by the age of eight she was ordained as a full junior priestess, a title she still holds, and will do until she reaches adulthood.

Mouse's mother and the lord, a bachelor, had grown close over the years. Within a few months of Mouse's ordainment he revoked the pair's servant status, declaring them freed from servitude. A mere month later, he married Mouse's mother, whose previous marriage contract had expired. At last Mouse had a proper family, but the gods can be cruel as well as kind.

Within a year Mouse's parents had died of plague, leaving her an orphan. With no legitimate heir, the estate passed to her adoptive father's uncle, a man who already had children. Bullied mercilessly because of her social status, Mouse finally took a stack of bread and a hunk of cheese, wrapped them in her blanket, and ran away.

Now an orphan, Mouse hit the open road. She worked as a kitchen maid in a caravanserai for a while, before convincing a band of adventurers to take her on as a camp girl. She stayed with the band for almost a year, remaining behind to tend the camp while her patrons explored ancient ruins. One day they never returned. Mouse stayed at the camp for three days, hoping against hope they would emerge from the dark cave entrance. Eventually realizing she was alone again, she gathered up some money and set off once more.

Attracted to the life of adventurers, and thriving on their tales of daring deeds, Mouse travels between taverns along the trade roads, constantly badgering potential heroes to hire her. No longer a slave, she demands a fair wage for her work, and she works hard.

DESCRIPTION

Ten years of age, Mouse stands a little over four feet tall. She is skinny, though not unhealthily so. Her face and hair are usually grubby, blackened by smoke from campfires or streaked with flour from wiping sweat from her eyes, and her fingernails are caked with dirt. Her large brown eyes shine with intelligence and the determination that burns in her soul. Her clothes, threadbare and patched repeatedly, show little of their former finery.

MANNERISMS

Mouse is extremely loyal to her patrons. Although technically a free citizen, she sees herself as a servant. Thus, her loyalty is one of servant and master, rather than as true friends or equals. Conscientious and eager to please, that loyalty runs deep. Although she acts mature, Mouse is still a child. Her only real possession, a tatty blanket, is never far from her hand. At night, when she thinks no one is looking, she sucks on one corner for comfort.



Dawud Effendi ibn Alhutair

Race: Hadaree; **Homeland:** Jadid, City of Trade; **Occupation:** Senior bureaucrat; **Religion:** Devoted
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Investigation d6, Notice d4, Persuasion d8, Streetwise d8, Taunt d6
Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: Cautious, Greedy (Major), Vengeful (Minor)
Edges: Contacts (see *Realm Guide #13*), Rich
Languages: Al-Waziran, Beduan, Holy Tongue, Sand-speech

** Dawud's title of effendi is an honorific, not one of noble blood. It applies only in Jadid, where it grants him +1 Charisma. It has no effect elsewhere.*

BACKGROUND

Dawud's parents were craftsmen. His father was a master mason and his mother a skilled potter. Though their lifestyle was comfortable, it did not allow them to spend ostentatiously, and in Jadid that meant they were largely unnoticed, no different from the lower classes. When it became clear their only child, Dawud, had a good head on his shoulders, they devotedly put aside every spare dinar to pay for advanced education.

After completing his education, Dawud found employment at the Ministry of Trade as a lowly scribe. Diligent and hard-working, he performed any task asked of him without hesitation or question, slowly ingratiating himself with his superiors and ignoring the snide comments of his unambitious peers. Alas for his betters, Dawud had his eyes on their titles and positions, and he was determined to claim them for himself.

He stayed behind after everyone else had left to make sure his paperwork was up to date, he volunteered to handle boring trade negotiations, and he attended committee meetings on behalf of his superiors, who, he politely suggested, had far better things to do with their precious time. Over time, this enabled him to build up an extensive network of contacts, not only within Jadid, but with those who came here to trade. When he wasn't working, he delved into his superiors' backgrounds, searching for indiscretions he could exploit.

As his masters grew to rely on him more and more, so he exploited their weaknesses and laziness. Their former contacts would now only deal with Dawud, who had made himself indispensable, and superiors at the Ministry suddenly found themselves out of favor, accused of incompetence or corruption thanks to a carefully laid trail of evidence. In many instances there was a clear irregularity in the accounts—Dawud had siphoned off the money. Of course, he was also the one who “discovered” the fraud, and who informed the authorities.

Although it has taken many years, Dawud has finally worked his way up to Second Secretary to the Minister



of Trade. His growing lavish lifestyle, funded far more by his acts of diverting money than his income, have earned him the honorific effendi.

Dawud's rise to power has not gone unnoticed. Whether someone is playing the same game and sees him as a potential rival, or whether he just hit a streak of bad luck, Dawud cannot yet say. Three months ago he was ordered to leave the comfort of Jadid and head into the desert to forge new trade deals wherever he could.

Part of him desperately wants to strike a lucrative deal, for he knows this will only boost his reputation. Part of him desperately wants to return home, for every day he is away a little more power slips through his hands and into the grasp of someone else.

DESCRIPTION

Neatly trimmed beard and hair and manicured nails mark Dawud as a citizen who cares about his appearance, but it is his extravagant clothing and prominent displays of jewelry that mark him as a wealthy.

MANNERISMS

Dawud does nothing in a hurry. His every word, his every deed, is carefully chosen to make him look good. A natural sycophant, he toadies up to those he sees as his superiors, all the while plotting their downfall. He bullies his underlings mercilessly to keep them in line.

Wealth is all that matters in Jadid, and Dawud wants to matter. Dawud doesn't care who he tramples on as he climbs the social ladder—he has no intentions of sliding back down. His greed does not extend to murder—fraud and reputation destroying are his weapons of choice, and he wields them with precision.

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Shial alim-Brukh

Race: Cakali; **Hometown:** Plain of Ash; **Occupation:** Healer, herbalist, and archer; **Religion:** Devoted

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d4

Skills: Fighting d4, Healing d8, Investigation d4, Knowledge (Alchemy) d8, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Streetwise d6, Survival d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 4

Hindrances: Anemic, Code of Honor, Death Wish, Heroic

Edges: Bite/Claws, Fearless, Hedge Magic, Nomad Ways

Languages: Beduan, Cakalic, Jinn, Sandspeech

BACKGROUND

As a youth, Shial was torn between two callings. Part of him wanted to follow his father and become a hunter and warrior, but another pulled him toward his mother's occupation as a healer. As fate would have it, he would come to learn both.

Initially he became a hunter. He quickly developed a reputation for his archery prowess. It soon became clear, though, that something was wrong. Though he appeared fit and healthy, he could not keep pace with his peers without tiring, and he began to lose weight, no matter how much food he consumed.

His mother tried a range of herbal remedies, and while they temporarily alleviated his symptoms each dose had a lesser effect than the one before. Sages were duly consulted in the hope a cure might be found. The news was not good. Shial had been stricken with an affliction known locally as "the jinn's curse." His muscles would wither, his stamina would leech away, and his bones would crumble. He would end his days trapped inside a ruined shell. Worse, there was no known cure.



Refusing to accept his fate, and no longer judged fit enough to be a hunter, Shial learned the arts of healing and herbalism at his mother's side. Driven by a fierce desire to prove the sages wrong, he learned everything she could teach. When her knowledge was drained, he traveled to neighboring tribes to consult their healers. Though he learned much and was deemed an asset to the tribe, Shial was no closer to a cure.

Shial left his tribe two years ago. His parents claimed his departure was down to a mistaken belief that their son was becoming a burden to his kith and kin. In truth, Shial had no interest in what others thought of him—his only desire was to find a cure for the malady consuming his body. Alas, no magic or miracle, no herb or mineral could alleviate his suffering for long.

Anger replaced despair, venting itself in long cries into the uncaring wind against the injustice of a mortal life. He turned his bow against whatever fell creatures he could find, slaying them as a means of satisfying the darkness gnawing at his spirit. Fate could have decreed Shial would spend his last days alone and bitter, bathed in blood for no purpose, but it did not.

The wanderer came upon a small caravan under attack by desert orcs. Without hesitation he strung his bow and unleashed arrow after arrow. When the killing was done, he used his healing knowledge to treat the injured caravan members. Their heartfelt thanks they bestowed upon him filled his heart with a warm feeling, renewing his energy and zeal for life. Asha had shown the cakali a path that could transform him from a bitter soul destined for Druj's embrace into one at Oneness. Shial stepped onto it without a second thought.

Shial still walks the desert, helping those he deems are in need of his services, and asking naught in return but the little he needs to survive and a few nights' hospitality so he can brew more herbal remedies. He still searches for a cure when the opportunity presents itself, but this is very much a secondary goal. Cured or not, he will not waiver from his chosen path until the end of his days.

DESCRIPTION

Shial's wasting disease has left him extremely gaunt. His eyes, though still bright and alert, appear sunk into his head. Often wracked with pain and unable to resist the rigors of desert life as well as before, he dresses in loose robes by day but switches to heavier ones when the sun sets and the temperature begins to fall.

MANNERISMS

Though his days are numbered, Shial has not given up. He remains of good cheer most of the time, and he has devoted whatever days remain to him helping others, be that through his healing knowledge or his bow.

He has no fear of death, but neither does he wish to rush into its cold, eternal embrace. He will succumb to the inevitable only after he has made a true difference in the world.

Kayokte

Race: Hyaenidae; **Hometown:** Kharijah, City of Claws (Kingdoms of the Sphinxes); **Occupation:** Guardian wizar mage; **Religion:** Devoted

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Shooting d4, Stealth d6, Survival d4, Taunt d6, Wizar Magic d6

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Bad Luck, Bad Reputation (see p. 22), Enemy (Minor: corrupt nobleman), Greedy (Minor), Overconfident

Edges: Arcane Background (Wizar Guardian), Bite, Laugh, Low Light Vision, Tireless

Languages: Hyaendish, Sandspeech, Sphinx

Powers: *Arcane*, *boost/lower trait* (Strength, Vigor, Fighting, Intimidation, Shooting, Stealth, and Throwing only), *deflection*

BACKGROUND

Kayokte never knew his natural family, nor does he have any intention of finding them. Short of money and not needing yet another mouth to feed, they sold him to a slaver when he was still a child. After changing hands several times, and spending a few years as an unwilling porter for a corrupt caravan owner, he eventually ended up the property of a Hadaree crime lord resident in Kharijah, City of Claws.

Something of an eccentric and prone to displays of extravagance, the criminal decided to have the youth trained in the ways of wizar magic. No one he knew ever had a hyaenidae bodyguard trained in magic, and it would both unnerve and impress his rivals. Fortunately, the crime lord knew a wizar mage willing to train anyone, no questions asked, for enough dinars. Although hyaenidae aren't naturally drawn toward wizar magic, Kayokte proved an adept pupil, and soon picked up a few basic spells (chosen for him by his criminal master). Much to Kayokte's disappointment the apprenticeship was cut short—his boss wanted to put his investment to use as soon as he had mastered the basics.

Kayokte's position and enthusiasm soon saw him rise up the ranks of the criminal organization. Within a few years he was placed in charge of several operations. Unfortunately, each and every one of them went very wrong, costing his master a fortune in lost income and confiscated goods, and the lives of several good employees. Faced with financial ruin, he shortened Kayokte's leash, keeping him by his side whenever possible.

His position as a bodyguard ended soon after. Instead of keeping to his room, Kayokte went for a walk around the gang's lair. He accidentally overheard his master in conversation with a sphinx. The pair was discussing a plan in which the criminals would attempt an assassination of the pharaoh, only for the sphinx's servants to save the day. The sphinx would earn rich rewards and increased social standing from the pharaoh, and the crime



lord would receive enough wealth to ensure any crisis of conscience about sacrificing his men's lives would not trouble his sleep.

Appalled at the betrayal being plotted, Kayokte planned on turning on his master at the first opportunity. Unfortunately, he disturbed a stack of crates, alerting the conspirators to his presence. Kayokte fled into the night, but not before he was spotted. Fully aware his life was now forfeit, and unsure if he could trust any of the authorities, Kayokte escaped the city that night.

He has wandered the sands ever since, working as a caravan guard to keep himself fed. He knows his former master still hunts him, and his reach is long.

DESCRIPTION

Kayokte positively vibrates with pent up energy and enthusiasm. As his master once commented, he's like a puppy doped up on hashish. Indeed, his eyes are bright and alert, and his tongue often lolls from his mouth. He wears a large leather armband on his right wrist to cover up the brand his master marked him with.

MANNERISMS

No one can fault Kayokte for his eagerness or willingness to volunteer for any task. He's always got a plan up his sleeve that he's ready to put into operation. His readiness to act at a moment's notice and take on any challenge comes across as overconfidence, but this isn't the case. Whereas he believes his plans are both cunning and foolproof, he always forgets to account for some major detail. Combined with his natural bad luck, this inevitably leads to the plans going disastrously, and often spectacularly, wrong.

Hellfrost: Land of Fire

Al Hakam

Race: Hadaree; **Hometown:** Marresh, City of a Thousand Gates (Caliphate of Al-Shirkuh); **Occupation:** Unfortunate Soul; **Religion:** Faithful (Shamash)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d8

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: City Dweller, Heroic, Orders (Brotherhood of Unfortunate Souls), Poverty

Edges: Connections (Brotherhood of Unfortunate Souls), First Strike, Unfortunate Soul

Languages: Holy Tongue, Orcish, Sandspeech

BACKGROUND

The man known to those he aids only as Al Hakam ("The Judge") lives among the poorest members of society, surviving day-to-day by handouts and begging. But things were not always this way.

He was born the son of a rich and powerful merchant. Sequestered away in his father's grand house, he wanted for nothing—money was abundant, and servants catered to his every whim. If he was guilty of any sin it was ignorance as to the true nature of the human soul, for despite his wealth he preferred a life of temperance and modesty.

On his way back from the temple one evening, he witnessed a gang of ruffians beating up beggars and robbing them of the few dirhams they had been given by kind-hearted citizens. Al Hakam wanted to stop the affray, but his father pulled him away, saying that the poor got what they deserved in life. Still furious at the injustice, Al Hakam informed the first city watch patrol he encountered, but they laughed him away, claiming they had better things to do than protect beggars.



That night, Al Hakam donned a servant's robe, dirtied his face, and slipped out into the streets. He hung around the area where the beggars had been assaulted, hoping the attackers might return. Luck was on his side. Though his anger demanded their deaths, Al Hakam's wisdom won through, and he left them bruised and humiliated, with a stern warning that if they robbed another beggar their fate would not be so kind.

A month of nocturnal excursions later, Al Hakam was presented with his destiny. He often encountered other beggars, and carried a small purse that he might alleviate their hunger a little. The beggar he came across that night took the coins with a thousand thanks, and then asked Al Hakam why he acted as a vigilante. At first Al Hakam thought the beggar one of the emir's spies, but the man allayed his fears and promised him no harm.

Al Hakam told the beggar that justice should be for all, as Suleiman had preached, not just the rich, and that the poor needed champions to stand up for them in the face of oppression. The beggar nodded sagely, and then introduced himself as an Unfortunate Soul.

After hearing the beggar's explanation of the brotherhood's purpose, Al Hakam offered his services on a full-time basis. It was an offer the beggar warmly accepted.

Al Hakam knew that if he was to devote his life to helping others he would need to leave his old life behind. He informed his father he wanted to move to Jadid and enroll in the University of Mercantile Studies. Knowing the reputation of the school, and believing an education there would benefit the family business, his father agreed. No sooner had he left the house than Al Hakam discarded the letters of introduction and donned his beggar's robes. Suitably disguised, and with his father believing him 1,000 miles away, Al Hakam (the name he chose for his new life) became just another beggar.

Thanks in part to Al Hakam, Marresh now has a network of Unfortunate Souls to help safeguard the weak and poor. Though reluctant to leave his home city, Al Hakam knows his services are needed elsewhere, for oppression is not confined to Marresh.

DESCRIPTION

Al Hakam rarely attracts even a first glance from passers-by, which is exactly how he prefers things. His hair and beard are long and unkempt, his skin is caked in dust and dirt, and his nails are filthy. He wears heavily worn and patched robes that need a good wash.

MANNERISMS

Al Hakam is dedicated to helping the oppressed lower classes, regardless of their race or religious persuasion. To them he is kind and generous, the main reason for his abject poverty.

To those who would oppress the weak and poor he is merciless. Common bullies might be scared away with a menacing threat, but those judged a more dangerous threat receive swift and lethal justice.

Kanika Twice-Born

Race: Bedu; **Homeland:** Great Northern Desert; **Occupation:** Khem-hekau mage; **Religion:** Devoted
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Intimidation d8, Khem-Hekau d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Knowledge (Hekata) d8, Riding d4, Survival d4

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Death Wish, God Cursed (Tammuz), Phobia (Minor: clerics and temples of Tammuz)

Edges: Arcane Background (Khem-Hekau), Spell Finesse (Arcane: *fear*)

Languages: Beduan, Black Tongue, Hekatic, Sand-speech

Powers: *Fear, obscure, voice on the wind*

BACKGROUND

When Kanika was born her parents named her Anjum. At the age of five she informed her parents she heard strange voices in her head. The adults had no fear, for it had long been known to the Bedu that those destined to master the jinn could often hear them from a young age. From there it was all downhill.

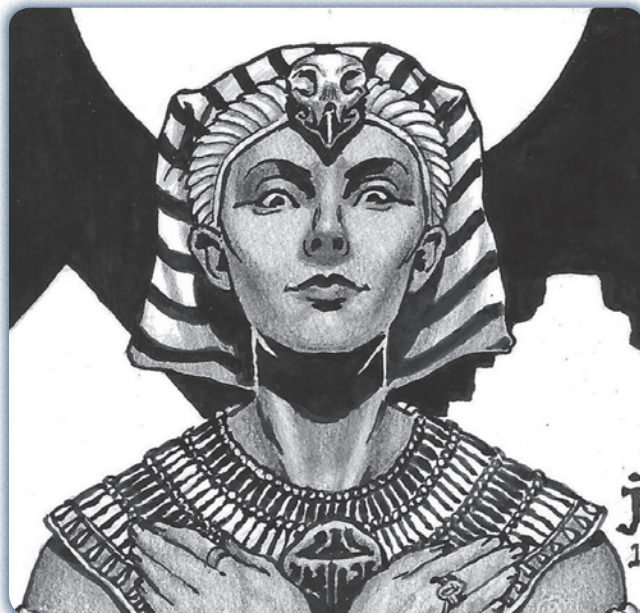
At the age of seven she began speaking of Hekata, displaying a knowledge she could not possess by any logical means, for her people avoided the accursed land. At the age nine she could speak fluent Hekatic, though no one instructed her in the dead language. At the age of 13 she began casting khem-hekau magic, again without any tutoring. It was at this point she was cast out from her tribe, being greatly feared by even the tribe's mages, who considered her cursed.

Truth be told, Anjum never really existed. In the instant before her birth (the time when souls are formed), Anjum's body was possessed by a fragment of the fell spirit of Kanika, the daughter of a minor Hekatic pharaoh born after the advent of necromancy. Though the loss of part of her spirit stripped away much of her former knowledge, she has recalled fragments of her old memories and necromantic powers.

She has no idea how her soul came to be inside a living body, and that troubles her greatly. The last she knew, rituals had tied her spirit to her mummified body for all eternity. Though not indestructible, it would at least never perish of old age or disease. Now inside a mortal shell once again, Kanika is troubled by what fate might befall her should she die a second time.

Ideally she'd simply walk into Hekata and ask the liche-wizards to perform the more standard rite she had already endured. That would leave her soul inside a mummified corpse, which she considers a much better option than dying. Sadly for her, mortals, regardless of who they claim to be, are unwelcome in Hekata, and to be caught there risks spending her days as a greatly diminished spirit inhabiting a zombie or common mummy.

In order to ensure continued immortality, Kanika



must embark on a more arduous quest. First she needs to find her original corpse, for it contains part of her spirit. Unfortunately, she can't yet remember where it was entombed, and her name is not mentioned in the few records of that age that survive outside Hekata. She then needs to locate a copy of the Book of Life Eternal.

Alas, even in the days when she walked Hekata as a mortal princess (some 700 years after the reign of Apophis ended) the volume was nothing more than a myth. According to legend, though, the spells it contained would not only rejoin her shattered soul and bestow immortality, but would actually prevent her new mortal form from decaying. Kanika would be both living and undead simultaneously.

Time is against her. More than any mortal she can feel the gathering necromantic energy over Hekata. Should Apophis awaken before she can complete the ritual, she will find herself on the wrong side when the demigod declares war on all mortals.

DESCRIPTION

Though born to Bedu parents, Kanika's appearance is more like the statues of nobles of withered Hekata. She dresses in Hekatic fashion, sporting a black and silver striped headdress and a necklace of similarly colored glass beads. These are not cheap copies purchased in a market but originals taken from tombs.

MANNERISMS

She both detests and fears the cult of Tammuz, whose clerics have ended the unives of countless Hekatics. Kanika knows that if the cult discovers the truth about her she will be hunted down. Much as it pains her to be treated like a commoner, she must play the role of a simple Bedu magician for her own safety.

Hellfrost: Land of Fire

Wasif Dar-Raja

Race: Bedu; **Hometown:** Kingdoms of the Sphinxes;
Occupation: Guide; **Religion:** Faithful (Upaut)
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d6, Knowledge (Caliphate of Al-Shirkuh) d6, Knowledge (Great Northern Desert) d4, Knowledge (Jinn Lands of Old) d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Riding d6, Stealth d4, Survival d8, Tracking d8
Charisma: -1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: Cautious, Loyal, One Eye
Edges: Woodsman, World-Wise
Languages: Beduan, Orcish, Sandspeech, Sphinx

BACKGROUND

Wanderlust burned in Wasif's soul from a young age. It came as no surprise to anyone in his tribe that he became a guide for caravans treading the ever-changing trade roads. Nor did they question his decision to leave his tribe behind and walk the trackless sands.

His first employment was guiding a small caravan. Eager to reach market and sell his wares, the caravan master demanded the route cut across the open desert to save time. Wasif objected, quoting the many possible dangers, but the final decision was not his to make.

A sandstorm rose a few days later, consuming all but four of the caravan members—Wasif, the caravan master, and two merchants. Seeking shelter from the raging storm, the survivors stumbled into the dark recesses of a crumbling ruin. Wasif advised caution, but his companions insisted on exploring the tunnels they found within the structure—the storm had cost them their caravan, but the gods had presented an opportunity for to claim recompense.



Never one to abandon those he considered under his care, Wasif reluctantly followed. The tomb, for it soon became obvious this was its purpose, was full of riches. Alas, the explorers would not claim as much as a single dirham.

Though many of the tomb's occupants were long dead, one was not. Out of the shadows shambled a living mummy, its desiccated form still pungent with the smell of funerary balms and unguents. Inexperienced in combat, and never before having faced the undead, Wasif froze in terror. Such was his fear that he was unable to aid his companions as the fiend crushed the life from them one by one. Then the mummy advanced on him.

Wasif expected to die, but he did not. Withered fingers plunged into his left eye socket. Pain beyond measure surged through his brain as the hand withdrew, clutching Wasif's eyeball. With a howl of victory on its cracked lips, the mummy lifted the moist orb to its own face and forced the living eye into its own vacant eye socket.

Pain and terror spurred Wasif into full flight before the mummy could finish its ghastly dissection of his flesh. Through tunnel and storm he ran, stopping only a day later when he collapsed from exhaustion.

Wasif's dreams are sometimes troubled by strange visions. Rather than being the focus, he is a passenger, seeing events unfold through another's eyes. He suspects the scenes he witnesses are not phantasms of the mind, but those of the mummy's lair. He is convinced that mortal and undead share an unearthly link thanks to the mummy sporting his eye.

Though he still guides parties across the desert, Wasif no longer works with caravans. These days he guides only adventurers and tomb robbers. Lacking the abilities needed to overcome the mummy alone, he hopes to find a group skilled enough to take on the fiend. He has traveled far across Al-Shirkuh in search of such heroes.

DESCRIPTION

Wasif's left eye socket is vacant, a gaping, undisguised hollow. His skin is rough and weathered from his years in the deep desert. His clothes are functional and well-worn (though still serviceable), ideally suited for the harsh conditions of the sands rather the soft comfort of city life, which he has yet to sample.

MANNERISMS

Wasif refuses to cover his empty socket—the reaction of others reminds him something else is using his eye.

The Bedu have a saying—only a man seeking death rushes into the desert. Wasif lives by that creed. He is a cautious man, prone to double-checking any expedition under his guidance not only has adequate supplies to cope with unexpected situations, but also that it has a plan of travel and escape.

Wasif does not necessarily befriend those he guides, but for as long as he is accompanying them he would die to protect them.

Mas'ouda bint Gui

Race: Half-Hadaree, half-Anari*; **Hometown:** Sirhan, City of Stars (Free Emirate States); **Occupation:** Tomb robber; **Religion:** Faithful (Qedeshet)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Investigation d4, Knowledge (Folklore) d4, Knowledge (History) d6, Knowledge (Religion) d4, Lockpicking d8, Notice d6, Streetwise d4, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Delusional (Minor; trusts that what people say is the truth), Heat Prone, Magic Forbiddance

Edges: Luck, Tomb Robber

Languages: Anari, Hekatic, Sandspeech

* *She can make Common Knowledge rolls for Folklore: Magocracy, but at a d4, regardless of her Smarts.*

BACKGROUND

Born and raised in Sirhan, City of Stars, Mas'ouda straddles two cultures. Her father was an Anari merchant from the Magocracy, who visited the city on a trade ship. On his next visit he learned the Hadaree woman whom he had briefly courted was heavily pregnant with his child. He did the honorable thing and married her. The couple settled in the city, her father opening a small mercantile business and adopting local customs.

Belonging to two vastly different cultures made Mas'ouda feel special. It also imbued in her a longing to learn more about other cultures, especially those long lost beneath the sands. Her father pandered to her interests and put her through university, where she studied history. Newly qualified, she joined an expedition investigating a ruined Anari fortress in the Dusty Mountains.

On her return she visited a coffee house to sift through the meager trinkets she had unearthed. She accidentally knocked a dagger to the floor, which a passing Anari trader retrieved. As he touched it, his eyes lit up like torches. He casually asked Mas'ouda if she knew what the item was. Mas'ouda replied it was just a dagger, old but of no intrinsic value.

Whispering conspiratorially, the man told her he was an agent of a powerful organization from the land of Rassilon. Known as the Reliquary, they believed that men should not wield magic relics, for they lacked both the temperament and understanding to use such power wisely. Mas'ouda nodded sagely, saying that Suleiman had said something similar.

The girl claimed she could sense no magic in the dagger. The stranger smiled, saying that a rare few individuals were blessed by the gods as being incorruptible by magic. Many in the Reliquary had such a gift. He offered Mas'ouda a deal—if she would return any items she unearthed to him, he would check to see if they were magic. Relics she unearthed would be transported to the Reliquary's fortress in the north, to be kept safe for eternity, and Mas'ouda would receive a fair price for her



labors. Naturally, many opposed the organization, for they were driven by a lust for power. Thus, her work and association with him would have to be kept secret.

Over the last few years Mas'ouda has recovered several relics, receiving sufficient payment to allow her to ignore finding a real job and continue with her exploration (and plundering) of tombs. Wishing to become a full member, she wrote to the Reliquary, passing the message along through her father's contacts. Months later, a stranger appeared at her father's house and introduced himself as a member of the Reliquary. He insisted the girl had been duped, for the Reliquary had no agents in the city.

Mas'ouda is determined to get to the truth, but her contact has vanished into thin air. Who was the stranger? And where have the powerful magic items she sold to him ended up? In the meantime, the Reliquary is actively considering her request to become a member.

DESCRIPTION

Mas'ouda has her mother's large brown eyes and thick, dark hair, and her father's pale skin. Her fair complexion, coupled with inheriting her father's intolerance for the heat, means she suffers sunburn from even mild exposure. She is never without her parasol. When in the wilds she dresses in the fashion of Anari peasants, finding the tighter clothing better suited to her work. When in the city, she reverts to Hadaree fashions.

MANNERISMS

Mas'ouda is clever, but she's also overly trusting. When it comes to dealing with people she takes them at face value, rarely suspecting they might have ulterior motives. Her lack of general willpower means she is easily led astray.

Hellfrost: Land of Fire

Mukhlis the Mariner

Race: Hadaree; **Homeland:** Sha'ib, City of Mazes (Al-Wazir Sultanate); **Occupation:** Brother of Sinbad (see *Realm Guide #5*); **Religion:** Devoted

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d4, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Stealth d4, Streetwise d4, Survival d8, Throwing d4

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Jinn Cursed (Major: water; see *Realm Guide #2*), Orders (Brotherhood of Sinbad), Sea Fear (Minor), Vow (Minor: return all the jinn coins)

Edges: Brotherhood of Sinbad, Connections (Brotherhood of Sinbad)

Languages: Al-Waziran, Holy Tongue, Sandspeech, Roguetongue

BACKGROUND

Mukhlis the Mariner was born seeking adventure. Little wonder that he left home and became a member of the Brotherhood of Sinbad at the age of 14. His many adventures are already legendary in certain ports, or so Mukhlis tells his audiences.

For an experienced mariner, Mukhlis displays extreme reluctance to set sail. The reason lies in the distant past, when he was part of a crew of like-minded souls seeking treasure and glory on the Southern Ocean. Spying an uncharted island, the crew chose to land and explore. Within a ruined building engraved with symbols of the marid jinn they found a sultan's ransom in gold coins of great antiquity. Without hesitation they removed them back to the ship and set sail for home.

Later that night a fell voice was heard on the wind.



Return the coins, it said, or doom will befall you. Wise heads argued the captain return to the island, but greed won out, and the ship held her course. When the ship docked in harbor the crew divided the money into equal shares. Mukhlis chose to leave the ship's company.

Though he stayed on land for many months and took part in several adventures, his heart and his need for new quests eventually lured him back to the sea. It proved a terrible mistake. Soon becalmed and lost in thick fog, the ship drifted idly off the coast of the Caliphate.

Screams of terror woke Mukhlis from his slumber. Rushing on deck, his weapon drawn, the mariner expected to see pirates storming the ship. Instead he saw the foes every mariner fears—the waterlogged, worm-ridden corpses of Dead Sea corsairs! As he watched the undead mariners hack down the mortal crew, sparing no mercy, he did the only sensible thing—he grabbed an empty barrel, jumped overboard, and swam for his life.

Mukhlis never speaks of that event, which resulted in him being washed up on a deserted island—the memory of the Dead Sea corsairs still causes him to awake in the night in a cold sweat, a stifled scream on his quivering lips. He does tell several versions of how he returned to port, though. All are wildly imaginative, but one of them may actually be true.

Once back on dry land, Mukhlis immediately set about locating his former shipmates. From those still alive (several had died at sea) he purchased any jinn coins, as he called them, they still possessed, offering double their intrinsic value. The others coins had likely been spread far and wide, passed into the hands of mariners and merchants from across Al-Shirkuh.

Still, diligence, a few lies, a lot of good fortune, and adventures the length and breadth of the continent have led to all but ten of the coins falling back into Mukhlis' hands. Ten small coins, and he may finally be free of the curse. Until they are returned to the island (as the rest have been), he must endure his fate.

DESCRIPTION

Mukhlis is a dedicated setter of fashion. No matter the occasion, he is always dressed in flamboyant clothes. No matter how perilous his adventures, he always seems to escape with his finery undamaged. Some say his clothes are magic, others insist the mariner is just lucky.

MANNERISMS

Mukhlis' sea fear is not a fear of the sea itself, but rather what dwells in the dark depths. When aboard ship he becomes agitated, staring intently at the surface of the water, his hands gripping the rail tightly, and muttering to himself. He prefers to sleep by day while at sea, for there are plenty of crew on duty to raise the alarm.

Until the last coins are returned, Mukhlis' heart will forever know the terror of the deep. Wherever he goes, he is always on the look out for gold coins marked with the jinn script and bearing the sign of a mermaid.

Lublubah bint Nabighah

Race: Hadaree; **Homeland:** Sirhan, City of Stars (Free Emirate States); **Occupation:** Astrologer mage, astronomer, and librarian; **Religion:** Devoted

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Astrology d8, Fighting d4, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d8+2, Knowledge (Folklore) d8+2, Notice d6

Charisma: -1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Bad Eyes (Major), City Dweller, Habit (Minor; no good at speaking with people)

Edges: Arcane Background (Astrology; see *Realm Guide* #10), Sage, Scholar

Languages: Classical Anari, Jinn, Sandspeech, Trader

Powers: *Analyze foe, charismatic aura, insight*

BACKGROUND

The daughter of a famous historian, Lublubah was brought up around books and scrolls. Her father was always busy or away on some expedition, and her mother had died soon after she was born, leaving Lublubah all but an orphan. She had very few friends, and so devoted herself to learning. At night, she would gaze up at the stars, forming patterns of her own imagining and inventing stories as to how they were formed.

Her father paid for her education as a matter of course, though he was irritated she had opted to learn astrology magic and astronomy rather than a “proper” subject. Lublubah specialized in the folklore of the heavens, the myths told by the various races and cultures, both of Al-Shirkuh and visitors from the cold northern lands.

On graduating, Lublubah found employment in the library at the Royal Observatory. Knowledgeable in her chosen fields, and an expert at finding obscure references concealed in the stacks, she befriended a fellow sage, Arhan ibn Mahmoud. A frequent visitor, he was forever after historical astronomical charts. He never said why he wanted them, and Lublubah never asked.

Several months ago, Lublubah learned Arhan had booked a lengthy block of time on the observatory’s main telescope. Having recently unearthed a star chart dating from the time of the Kingdom of Magor, she decided to take it to the sage, along with a pot of strong coffee. When she arrived at the observatory the sage was missing and the room had been wrecked. The only thing of interest was Arhan’s notebook, which she found buried beneath a smashed table. Thinking quickly, she studied her star charts and cast *insight*, hoping to learn something of her friend’s fate. What she saw almost stopped her heart.

Panicked, she stuffed the notebook into her robes and fled into the streets. She spent the rest of the night in the library, hastily grabbing a small collection of books and scrolls on a variety of topics she thought might be useful in the future, which she sequestered into a bag. By sunrise she had left the city behind.

Lublubah’s dreams are haunted by images of grasping



tentacles, an alien intelligence devoid of emotion, and utter darkness lacking all trace of warmth. She knows the phantasms somehow relate to the disappearance of her friend, but she cannot deduce their meaning. All she knows for sure is that things are very wrong.

Her current goal is to reach her only other friend (more an acquaintance, really), Mawiya bint Mamduh. A fellow astrologer mage and student of the heavens, the pair was in the same university class. The last Lublubah heard, Mawiya was working in the Mirrorsands.

Penniless, completely unskilled in the ways of the desert and its peoples, and fearful she is being watched by unseen eyes, Lublubah is hoping to find a group of adventurers in need of a sage. In return for her wisdom, they might escort her to the Mirrorsands. Maybe there she will find the answers she reluctantly seeks.

DESCRIPTION

Were she to wear a little male-up, sport fashionable clothes, and remove her corrective lenses, Lublubah would be an attractive woman. Instead, she wears her hair in a tight knot and wears plain robes that do nothing to flatter her figure. As a result, no one gives her a second glance—something she is quite happy with.

MANNERISMS

Though she tries her best to be helpful, Lublubah is far more at home among books than people. When she has to speak, she stutters, tumbles out facts out of order, and stutters. As a result, she tends to shy away from contact with others. She’s also very clumsy. She’s highly strung (more so than normal after recent events), and jumps at every shadow and strange noise. Her nervousness shows in her obsessive cleaning of her thick corrective lens.

Hellfrost: Land of Fire

Knight-Squire Ilias ibn Abdul-Matin

Race: Hadaree; **Homeland:** Qurqas, City of Slaves (Free Emirate States); **Occupation:** Knight Hrafn; **Religion:** Faithful (Karmelos)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d4

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Notice d6, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Survival d4

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 4 (d4); **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Hindrances: Cautious, Lame, Loyal, Orders (Knights Hrafn)

Edges: Command, Command Presence, Connections (Knights Hrafn), Knight Hrafn

Languages: Battle Tongue, Holy Tongue, Sandspeech, Trader

BACKGROUND

While his peers played at being warriors and wizards, young Ilias sat and watched, dreaming of the day he would become a mighty hero. His chances were slim, for he had suffered Upuaut's curse as a baby, leaving his right leg lame. Even after growing to adulthood and being turned down for militia service he kept dreaming.

In a bid to dispel what he considered his son's pipe dreams, Ilias' father arranged for him to be apprentices to a family friend. A merchant, he ran cargo to and from the ports of the northern barbarians. Ilias might not be good for common labor, but he had a keen mind and was sensible with money.

It was while in Rassilon the boy heard of the Knights Hrafn, a military order dedicated to the ideals of leadership. He might never be a mighty warrior, but he might still become a hero by leading men in battle. Without a second thought about his father or his job he jumped

ship in Drakeport and slowly made his way to the order's distant fortress. Through what little he had learned of the barbarians' trade tongue, he managed to get across his desire to enlist as a knight. Though the sentries were bemused at the sight of the lame foreigner, he nonetheless quickly found himself standing before the Hrafn Council, the order's governing body.

His race was never an issue, for the Knights Hrafn recruited all manner of humanoids without prejudice. What concerned them was his lameness. Employing *speaking language* spells, they questioned him on his previous combat experience. Ilias admitted he had none. Exasperated, the Lord Marshal asked Ilias what use a cripple would be on the battlefield. Ilias straightened his back, stared him straight in the eye, and replied, "Battles are not won by the arms, but by the heart and the mind." The council's vote to accept him for training was unanimous.

Though he only managed to pick up rudimentary combat abilities and failed most physical exercises spectacularly, he proved a capable tactical commander both in practical and theoretical examinations. A year of tough training later, and, with some slight reservations that might yet see him expelled, Ilias was awarded his spurs.

Despite only being a Knight-Squire, the lowest rank within the organization, Ilias has a grand dream—he wants to found a branch of the Knights Hrafn in Al-Shirkuh, with himself at its head. The Hrafn Council has agreed this in principal, but first Ilias must demonstrate to them he has in-depth knowledge of practical tactical and strategic battlefield command. Until he is awarded the title of Knight-Commander Master, no support will be provided.

His current goal is to spread word of his status as a trained unit commander in the hope of finding patrons. He also knows he must undergo practical training away from the steely gaze of his tutors. Fortunately, Al-Shirkuh boasts plenty of adventuring companies.

DESCRIPTION

As a commander, Ilias has set out to lead by example. His clothes are always clean, his beard is kept orderly, his hair is very short (in the Anari fashion), and he bathes regularly. He is what many veteran soldiers call a peacock—he looks the part of a parade ground officer, one who has the rank to lead but no practical knowledge of the hardships of life on campaign. He has a noticeable lean to the right as a result of his lame leg.

MANNERISMS

Ilias is loyal to the men under his command. His tutors considered him a little too loyal. He has yet to learn that sometimes troops must be sacrificed in order to win a battle, and that he cannot hope to bring everyone back alive. He is naturally cautious, preferring to gather as much intelligence as possible before formulating a plan. An admirable trait, but one that precludes him from reacting quickly to ever-changing events in battle.



Kulus the Red

Race: Ifrit jinn blooded (Bedu); **Homeland:** Great Northern Desert; **Occupation:** Insane orc slayer; **Religion:** Faithful (Karmelos)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d4, Shooting d8, Stealth d4, Survival d4, Tracking d4

Charisma: -8; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Distrusted, Elemental Weakness (Water), Mean, Ugly

Edges: Berserk, Jinn Blooded (Fire), Still Human

Languages: Beduan, Orcish

Powers: *Smite**

Special: Kulus may purchase the War Cry Edge, ignoring the racial requirement.

** Kulus' jinn blooded power has been changed to smite. A physical manifestation of her inner rage, she may only cast it when berserk and only on melee weapons she is holding. Any affected weapon loses the power if not in her possession or when her rage ends.*

BACKGROUND

To look at the snarling beast that is Kulus, even the greatest storyteller would be hard-pressed to imagine her as an innocent Bedu maiden without a hint of malice in her heart. And yet until recently that is exactly what she was. Kulus had no aspirations beyond a loving marriage and bearing healthy children, and she achieved both those goals before she turned 20. By the time she turned 21, her life had been transformed.

A competent marksman, Kulus was out hunting when the orcs attacked her camp. By the time she returned everyone had been butchered—friends, husband, children. The small hunting party put up a good fight, but they were no match for the orc warriors. Kulus was the only survivor. Had the gods been kinder, or wiser, they would have let her die that day.

She never speaks of the terrors she endured at the hands of the orcs. Everyone who has tried to persuade her to discuss that forbidden subject has lived, however briefly, to regret that decision. Let it be said only that they were vile enough to cause her mind to flee inward, completely shutting down her emotions. She became an automaton, an empty husk.

Her torment lasted for exactly a year. On the anniversary of her family's death, one of her captors made a fatal mistake—he reminded her of the event. It was only then that her jinn blood manifested, and it did so in style. Her mental anguish combined with the fiery passion of her bloodline, unleashing such destructive fury that even the gods flinched (or so her chroniclers say).

With her bare hands she ripped open the orc's throat. Drenched in blood steaming in the cold night air, she stood before the orcs, an ifrit filled with raw hatred no true jinn could ever hope to muster. Those who did not flee in panic lived to regret their decision. Travelers who



later stumbled across the remains of the orc camp were physically sick at the sight. Stories quickly spread that two tribes had clashed, for none could believe anything less foul had inflicted such injuries. They were wrong.

The death of the orcs did not quell her fury. Had it done so the gods would have breathed a collective sigh of relief. Instead, it fueled it to the heights of an unquenchable inferno. The metaphorical jinni had been released from the bottle, and there was no way to force it back.

So was born Kulus the Red.

DESCRIPTION

Kulus' appearance is frightful. The jagged red scar that cuts across her face detracts from her physical appearance, but it is the insane look in her eyes and constant sneer of her lips that keeps wise men and fools alike at arm's length.

Her pate is completely smooth and shaved regularly to remove any stubble. She isn't one for neatness, and the blade she uses has left a network of tiny scars on her scalp. Her nickname comes from her clothing, which is usually soaked in the blood of her latest victims.

MANNERISMS

Kulus' grip on sanity is extremely fragile. The more foes she slays, the more she needs to slay to sate the blood lust boiling in her veins. Such is the unleashed fury that friends as well as foes are in danger of becoming victims of her madness. When she bothers to speak it is either to utter a curse or snarl, or a terrifying battle scream that puts the fears of the gods into her enemies.

Her low Smarts is a result of her growing insanity, not a lack of general intelligence.

Hellfrost: Land of Fire

Fuad alim-Demirkan

Race: Cakali; **Hometown:** The Grazelands; **Occupation:** Trainee storyteller; **Religion:** Devoted

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Knowledge (Folklore) d4, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Streetwise d6, Survival d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Death Wish, Poverty, Vow (Major: recover his lover's heart)

Edges: Arcane Resistance, Bite/Claws, Fearless, Nomad Ways

Languages: Black Tongue, Cakalic, Sandspeech

BACKGROUND

Fuad never wanted much from life, and life never gave him much. A trainee storyteller, he cared little for money or material possessions, and nothing for fame and glory. But what he did have was priceless—true love. Few mortals can truly comprehend what true love entails, and to attempt to describe it is meaningless. As Fuad often says, can you describe the color of the sky to a blind man?

Let it be known for the record, for storytellers will undoubtedly bestow fame upon Fuad whether he desires it or not in the days to come, that his beloved, Aisha, reciprocated his feelings with equal intensity.

On the day the pair was to be betrothed, Fuad's tribe traveled to the camp of Aisha's kin. There they were met not by joyous scenes, but by weeping women and wailing men. Aisha had gone into the grasslands to pick wild flowers, they said, but had not returned. Hunters found her dead, her heart cut from her chest by skillful blade.

While his family raged and vowed revenge, Fuad stood as still as a statue, his body and mind completely numb. Overhead a storm gathered at supernatural pace, the thunder and lightning breaking the sky as Fuad's soul shattered into a million pieces. Without saying a word,

and unnoticed in the commotion, he began walking. He stopped only when his parched lips cried for water. As he sank to his knees he let loose a cry of utter anguish.

Annoyed by the wailing mortal, a greater khamzin who lived nearby came to investigate. He demanded to know the cause of the crying, threatening the cakali with all manner of unpleasant deaths unless he stopped. Fuad, fearless even in the face of such a creature, spoke of Aisha, of the love he felt for her, and of her death. Storytellers will one day claim that such was his passion that the jinni shed a tear, though neither party will confirm the tale. Nonetheless, the jinni was moved.

A Devoted, and wise in many things, it revealed that Aisha's soul, while pure, could not achieve Oneness while her heart was missing. However, it said it would carry her body to Jinnistan, where it might rest unblemished until her heart was restored. Fuad wept, this time with joy, and, giving the jinni a thousand thanks, vowed to find his beloved's heart. Then the jinni spoke again.

The wind carried news that Aisha's heart had been taken by a khem-hekau mage. Worse, the heart was to be placed inside a flesh golem so that it might live. Oh, the storytellers will cry, would his torment never cease! The only thing the jinn could say of the mage was a name whispered only in dark places—Azghul.

Fuad has never once questioned why Aisha decreed he and Aisha should suffer such cruel fates. His faith is strong, and he knows that his quest is his path to Oneness. Whether he succeeds or fails shall be on his shoulders. His quest is simple in goal and arduous in undertaking—he will find Aisha's heart and reclaim it, and then he will kill the khem-hekau mage.

DESCRIPTION

Fuad's appearance is nothing out of the ordinary. His only notable feature are his eyes—to gaze into them is to look into the soul of a man who has known the utter beauty of true love, and the heart-crushing despair of having had it ripped away. Even men accustomed to suffering weaken under his gaze, for they have never endured such pain (this is how his Intimidation works).

His face and hands are marked with silvery lines, magical tattoos that protect him from magic.

MANNERISMS

Despite losing his love to a monster, Fuad remains an honorable soul. Of course, the khem-hekau mage must die for his crime—that is only to be expected—but Fuad's love prevents him from becoming bitter, frustrated, or obsessed. He seeks only justice, not vengeance. When his vow is fulfilled, Fuad hopes to be rejoined with his lover in death. But until that day dawns, he fights like a lion to survive.

Fuad is heavily in debt—he owes money for his magical tattoos. Fuad sees these as honorable debts that must be paid. Whatever spare money he has (and he has frugal tastes), he sends to his creditors.



Effendi Baligh ibn Tawfiq

Race: Hadaree; **Homeland:** Balyana, City of Reflection (Al-Wazir Sultanate); **Occupation:** Noble; **Religion:** Devoted

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Gambling d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Taunt d6

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Arrogant, City Dweller, Stubborn

Edges: Command, Filthy Rich, Noble

Languages: Al-Waziran, Holy Tongue, Jinn

BACKGROUND

Baligh was born to money—lots of money. His father made his fortune through his glass quarry in the Mirror-sands and a string of glass-blowing shops. Hardworking, he built up the business from nothing over the course of his life, and was rewarded with the title of pasha. His son, however, is a waste of good flesh.

The son of a pasha, Baligh acts like his father is the Sultan. He's obnoxious, lazy, and spoiled. Sadly, by the time his father realized these unsightly traits they were thoroughly ingrained in the boy. Still, he set about trying to make something of his son. He placed the boy in charge of one of his smaller businesses, but had to step in to save it from bankruptcy. He sent Baligh to university, only to have him return with marks so low they made a sand goblin look like a genius. He cut off Baligh's allowance, only to reinstate it when his wife stepped in on behalf of her cherished son. His friends and peers joked he even contemplated hiring an Assassin to rid him of his troublesome offspring.

Faced with the prospect of leaving everything he had spent his life building to his son, he finally took matters in hand. He gave Baligh a choice—either he went out and made a name for himself, or he'd leave his businesses, fortune, and title to Baligh's cousin. Given the pair had never seen eye-to-eye, the boy simply couldn't tolerate that thought. To make matters worse, his father cut off his allowance. Baligh actually still receives his sizeable annual stipend (more than many small towns produce in a year)—his mother makes sure of that.

So it was Baligh left Balyana. Not that his passage went unnoticed—he rode through the town in his finest robes, acting like a heroic general leading his men to war. His mother secretly sent three bodyguards and two servants to wait for him outside the city with orders to watch over him. Baligh has been gone six months. In that time his bodyguards have died and his servants have deserted. If it wasn't for a party of adventurers rescuing him, he'd have died of thirst waiting for someone to bring him a cup of water.

Baligh is no hero, though he might yet become one. What makes him bearable to his comrades is his huge wealth. It's just their unfortunate fate that they have to tolerate his petulance and stupidity.



DESCRIPTION

Baligh has more money than sense, and he likes to display his wealth. His outfits would cause eyes to bulge at the Sultan's palace, and are completely ill-suited to the desert he is (temporarily) forced to call home. He wears so much jewelry he actually jangles when he walks. Even his weapons are bejeweled almost to the point of being impractical as instruments of war.

His prized possession is a magnificent "ruby," which sits in the center of his silk turban (from the Jade Empire, you know). It's actually made of glass—a former servant stole the original and substituted the fake years ago.

MANNERISMS

Baligh tries his hardest not to do anything for himself. He isn't lazy—he just doesn't see while he should dirty his hands with any form of menial task when there are peasants available to wait on his every whim. Similarly, his stubbornness is born from the belief that he, as a noble, knows what's best, and peasants, who are incapable of having any good ideas, should keep their mouths shut. In Baligh's eyes, anyone who isn't a noble is a peasant.

He is effeminate in his behavior. He once ran screaming from a battle so his manservant could clean a spot of blood off his clothes. He positively hates the desert—it's full of sand, ignorant people who don't understand a word he says, and dangerous beasts.

Having no real concept of money, he readily hands out pouches of coins to people he meets. He isn't being generous—his largesse is so people will remember his importance, and, more importantly, go and buy clothes that don't stink.

Hellfrost: Land of Fire

Marik the Barber

Race: Sand goblin; **Hometown:** Marqod's Well (Great Southern Desert); **Occupation:** Barber to heroes; **Religion:** Faithful (Marqod)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Healing d8, Notice d6, Riding d4, Stealth d6, Streetwise d8, Survival d6, Taunt d4, Throwing d6

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 4

Hindrances: Banned Edges, Big Mouth, Quirk (always offering his services), Small, Untrustworthy, Yellow

Edges: Barber (see *Realm Guide #4*), Camel, Sand Walker, Sneaky

Languages: Holy Tongue, Orcish, Sandspeech

BACKGROUND

Marik is odd. Even other sand goblins can't fathom his strange ways or what motivates him. It's not just the fact he has a job that makes him stand out from the majority of his species, but he actually enjoys his work.

Desert dwellers, his ancestors migrated to Marqod's Well in search of an easy life after the War of Bitter Waters. There were always plenty of pilgrims, and being followers of Marqod, goddess of mercy, charity was in their nature. Life wasn't quite as sweet as his kin like to make out, but things could have been a lot worse.

Marik began his career after his parents died by grooming his peers. In return for a little food or a silver dirham, he'd pick the fleas (and worse) from their hair. Later on he moved on to giving massages, learning the basics of the art by watching real barbers ply their trade. Within a few months he set up a shop catering to pil-

grims. Those with money went to human barbers, fearful the sand goblin would rob them, or slit their throats. Poorer pilgrims didn't have much choice. Of course, they didn't pay well, either, but Marik earned enough hard coin to keep himself fed to a better standard than his peers who relied on handouts.

He quickly began to enjoy the work. His customers usually had plenty to say, though in truth much of their conversation was born out of nervousness as the razor-wielding sand goblin went to work. Equally keen to converse, Marik would pass on what news he had learned.

Despite having a good life, Marik was a sand goblin, and the blood of countless generations of sand goblins thinking up quick and easy ways to make money flowed through his veins. One day he hit upon an idea.

A vital oasis for travelers from both the Caliphate and Sultanate, many adventurers came here in search of recuperation. Inevitably, they brought with them plenty of gold and silver, the material rewards of their quests. The barber figured that an adventurer's life must be quite hard, what with all the walking and fighting they did. Surely, he figured, they'd pay well to have a barber on hand ready to soothe away their sores, tend their wounds, and keep them presentable on the off-chance they encountered a sheikh at a moment's notice. Marik figured he could put up with a little hardship in return for a good wage (the pilgrims rarely tipped well).

Marik's offer was accepted, though it's one he now regrets making. The desert was much bigger and more dangerous than he ever imagined—the walking never ended. Worse, the only gold lay in dark tombs filled with undead horrors and lethal traps, or in the lair of some ravenous beast. Sure, the pay *was* better than at the oasis, but at least back there nothing was trying to rip out his stomach and eat it.

DESCRIPTION

Marik's odd ways extend to his appearance. He regularly bathes (much to the disgust of other bathhouse patrons), combs his coarse hair, and keeps it neatly trimmed. Whereas most sand goblins are quite comfortable in rags, Marik dresses in the best clothes his meager income allows.

MANNERISMS

Sand goblins may be universally mistrusted, but Marik doesn't let prejudice get in the way of him being a pleasant fellow. There's always a smile on his lips, and always a warm greeting for potential customers. If anything, he's too keen for his own good. Marik touts for business at every opportunity—even in the heat of battle.

Marik likes to keep in the middle of his traveling companions, where he feels safest. When combat rears its ugly head, he's the first to volunteer to watch the party's backs, preferably from a long distance.

Marik loves to talk. He'll talk to anyone about anything, and he just loves sharing secrets—passing on something other people don't know makes him feel important.



Faris

Race: Bedu; **Homeland:** Jinn Lands of Old; **Occupation:** Self-exiled mameluk mercenary and sand worm hunter; **Religion:** Faithful (Duamutef)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Notice d6, Riding d8, Shooting d8, Survival d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Loyal, Overconfident, Vow (Minor: recover battle standard)

Edges: Mameluk Mercenary, Steady Hands

Languages: Beduan, Orcish, Sandspeech

** When her exile ends, she will automatically gain the Connections Edge and Orders Hindrance with regard the Sand Rider Company.*

BACKGROUND

Faris is a male given name, yet it is also a title, one that simple means “Horseman.” In Al-Shirkuh, the latter is considered neutral, and applied equally to both genders. It is in this regard that Faris uses it, for until she has restored her honor she declines to use her real name.

Faris never knew her parents. All she has ever known is a life of tough training and exhausting battle drill. She has never enquired as to whether she was an orphan or an unwanted child—the past does not matter. Faris was raised by the Sand Rider company. Mameluk mercenaries of Bedu descent, trained in both lance and mounted archery, and based in the Jinn Lands, the company escorted caravans and protected Bedu tribes willing to meet their price.

Faris’ second mission took her deep into the Wastes. Orcs had been troubling caravans, and a collective of merchants had hired a quarter of the company to hunt them down. On the second day, the sand behind her erupted. (Faris had drawn the short straw that fateful day—she would be the scout, riding alone ahead of the main body.) She had seen sand worms before, though always at a great distance. The mother of monsters that rose from the desert this day surpassed them in every way. Faris could not see its entire length, for much of it remained concealed beneath the sand, but she estimated it to be over 100 feet.

Its maw, a vast cavern filled with rows of stalactites and stalagmites, engulfed a dozen riders and camels in a single gulp. Dozens more were crushed to pulp as its colossal body slammed onto the desert surface.

Faris was not the only mameluk to run—though renowned for their courage, mameluks do not confuse bravery with stupidity. The creature dived beneath the sand, only to burst forth again seconds later, consuming the warriors behind Faris. She had been spared death by a yard, saved by the fact she was at the head of the train. Its gigantic body was close enough for her to touch, but fear stayed her hand. And then it vanished once more.

There was nothing she could do for the dead save



arrange a hasty burial, and there were no wounded to tend. She searched in vain for the company’s standard, which it always carried into battle. There was no sign of it or the standard bearer. To lose warriors is lamentable, to lose the standard unforgivable.

Faris knows enough about sand worms to realize the standard will remain undigested in its gut for years, if not decades. Much as she loved her brothers-in-arms, she vowed on Duamutef’s name not to return to the company until she had retrieved the standard. A fortunate event, for Faris has no doubts that it will take her many years to reach a level of experience where she is capable of slaying such a creature. Of course, in order to kill the beast Faris must first find it.

DESCRIPTION

Faris is wiry. She keeps herself fit, eats sparingly, and trains hard. She sports two tattoos, one on each hand. The first is a phrase written in Sandspeech—“comrades until death.” The second is a stylized camel.

MANNERISMS

Faris may not currently serve with her company, but the bond of camaraderie the mameluks drilled into her cannot be brushed aside so easily. Her current companions may not be mameluks, and she may not always agree with their decisions, but Faris would sacrifice her life if it saved theirs without a moment’s thought.

She cannot hope to defeat the sand worm without more experience in battle, but she does not wish to have the quest consume the best years of her life. As a result, she has become reckless, charging into the fray with regard for the possible consequences.

Hellfrost: Land of Fire

Ibnoe ibn Tajara

Race: Hadaree; **Hometown:** Muqlad, City of Woes (Kingdoms of the Sphinxes); **Occupation:** Small-time merchant; **Religion:** Faithful (Qedeset)

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Gambling d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Riding d4, Streetwise d8, Survival d4, Taunt d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 4

Hindrances: Enemy (Minor: crime lord), Greedy (Minor), Small

Edges: Contacts, Expert Hagglers (see *Realm Guide #13* for both)

Languages: Beduan, Sandspeech, Sphinx, Trader

BACKGROUND

When Ibnoe says he comes from a very large family, he really means it. He can travel to any inhabited part of Al-Shirkuh and find a blood relative. Ibnoe is part of a continent-spanning trading dynasty. At its heart is one of Ibnoe's uncles. At least he *thinks* it's an uncle. Truth be told, Ibnoe has never met the man. Neither have any of his kinsfolk, come to that. Still, he regularly sends out consignments he wants his kin to sell, so he must exist.

It would be a blatant lie to even suggest the family is wealthy. Even with countless relatives, their activities are strictly small-scale, and tend to be on the shady side of honest. Plus "uncle" wants a 20% cut of any profits on goods he has arranged for his many relatives to sell. A quick deal, a small profit, then onto the next customer before the last one discovers what he's really purchased.

Who can forget the faulty saddles he sold to a company commander in the city guard at a bargain price, or the ensuing chaos as the cavalymen slipped off their

mounts during a parade in front of the emir, leaving their horses to run free in the streets?

Ibnoe originally plied his trade in the markets of Muqlad, City of Woes. Never one to waste money unnecessarily (such as on a trader's permit or paying any form of tax), he constantly kept one step ahead of the civil and religious authorities.

He was forced to leave in a hurry after selling a "faulty" jinn relic (actually a mundane item with a simple spell cast on it by a cleric who owed Ibnoe a favor) to a dim-witted second-hand chariot seller. Unfortunately for Ibnoe, the "relic" was intended to pay off a substantial debt owed to a major crime lord. The chariot dealer promptly disappeared when the truth was discovered (he bought land and became a farmer), but not before leaving behind evidence incriminating Ibnoe. Word spread on the street, and Ibnoe headed for the city gates.

Although he always knew caravans moved between the cities, it was only when he was forced into exile that he realized just how extensive the trade network was, and how many people lived in the wastes. In his eyes, each and every one of them was a potential customer.

He recently moved into the "antiques business." Combat is definitely not his forte, but he has teamed up with a bunch of adventurers. While they plunder gold and silver, Ibnoe follows behind, gathering broken pots (to mend and pass off as ancient Magorian vases), crumbling texts (that might have been written by Suleiman, and even pieces of brick and stone (pieces of a jinn palace). Everyone else's garbage is Ibnoe's profit.

DESCRIPTION

There's something about Ibnoe that doesn't lead his customer's to completely trust him. Maybe it's his camel hair coat and oiled hair. Perhaps it's the garishly colored clothes he wears, or the large gold medallion that dangles next to his exposed, hairy chest and the chunky gold bracelet engraved with his name.

MANNERISMS

Ibnoe will buy and sell anything if he sees a potential profit. If he hasn't got something a customer wants, he can usually lay his hands on it quickly. Failing that, he can get something *almost* identical (if he can't find perfume from Qina, he likely has some from foul-smelling substitute). Of course, such service always involves costs, which he passed onto his customers. His demands aren't always for money—he is quite fond of asking for favors. Although his business activities are sometimes less than honorable, they are rarely illegal. Ibnoe knows he's strictly small-time, but his activities are just a stepping-stone to the big score. As he frequently tells his many relatives, this time next year, I'll be rich!

Ibnoe enjoys tabac, but smokes only sparingly. At least, he smokes his own only sparingly. His typical ruse is to stick his pie in his mouth, pat down his coat, make some excuse, and then borrow a pipe full. He usually forgets to repay the favor.



Yalana

Race: Hyaenidae; **Homeland:** The Great Southern Desert; **Occupation:** Jinni-bound assassin; **Religion:** Devoted

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Survival d6, Taunt d6

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Bad Luck, Bad Reputation (see p. 22), Cautious, Greedy (Minor), One Arm*, Orders (Greater ifrit)

Edges: Acrobat, Assassin*, Bite, Laugh, Low Light Vision, Tireless

Languages: Al-Waziran, Jinn, Sandspeech

**Has the Edge only when actively on a mission from the jinni. Should she refuse the mission, she suffers from the One Arm Hindrance until she complies. These do not count toward her normal starting limits.*

BACKGROUND

Yalana lived a wretched life. Whether or not her situation has yet improved is open to debate. Her small family were nomads, constantly wandering across the sands in search of food and water. Things were so bad they even fought with vultures over the carcasses. Things were so bad the vultures often won. The family turned to petty crime, though it was born out of the desperate struggle to survive rather than pure greed.

While out hunting for scraps, Yalana's nose picked up the scent of food. Following the trail, she came upon a lone tent in the middle of nowhere. A grand feast was laid out inside, but there was no sign of the occupant. Firmly believing that no good soul would refuse her hospitality, she took it as read she could help herself. Her had luck struck again—the owner was home, and he was no good soul.

A rogue greater khamsin materialized out of thin air. Without waiting for an explanation, it spoke. "If your hand is so keen to take what others have," it roared, "then let it be put to better use." The jinni then promptly sliced off her right hand with its scimitar. Yalana howled in pain, only to stop when she realized she was clutching not a bloody stump, but a hand crafted of solid silver.

With an evil laugh, the jinni casually explained Yalana's fate. It now held her living hand, and so long as it did the hyaenidae would serve as the jinni's hand of death. Obey the jinni's commands and kill its enemies, and Yalana would be allowed to use the silver hand as if it were flesh and blood. Disobey, and the hand would not only become inanimate, but would paralyze her entire arm. When the jinni did not need her services, she would be allowed to live her life as she desired.

Yalana has served the jinni for two years. In that time she has killed many people. Yet she cannot fathom the jinni's motives for desiring their deaths. Devoted and Faithful, warriors and peasants, many have fallen to her blade, and none appear to share any connection.



Yalana remains a reluctant instrument of death. Killing to survive is one thing, but cold-blooded murder is not in her nature. For every life she takes in the name of her master, a little piece of her soul dies as well.

The jinni is, of course, far too powerful for her to contemplate killing by herself, and it is too wise to fall for simple tricks. Yalana needs help. Her fortunes have changed, for she has recently joined a party of adventurers. Still inexperienced, she hopes one day they might reach a stage where they can bring the jinni low. Then Yalana can reclaim her hand, find a cleric of reattached it, and get on with living her life the way she wants.

DESCRIPTION

Yalana's most obvious physical feature is her silver right hand. Its shiny form clashes with her yellow-red fur, making it almost impossible to hide her appendage. The jinni actually pays Yalana modestly well—a starving assassin is no use to anyone—and she has managed to transform from a scrawny bag of bone to an impressively muscled figure.

MANNERISMS

Though never overconfident, Yalana of old was forced to act rashly out of desperation. Since being bound to the jinni she has become cautious. Being caught committing an assassination would likely mean execution, and she isn't ready to die. Sure, every day she remains alive means another day of enslavement, but where there's life there's hope.

Yalana doesn't trust many people. She's had people befriend her before, but only in order to win their way into her confidence in the hope that might hack off her silver hand and sell it.

Hellfrost: Land of Fire

Abdul-Haqq ibn Raiken

Race: Hadaree; **Homeland:** Faraf, City of Voices (Kingdoms of the Sphinxes); **Occupation:** Storyteller and liar; **Religion:** Faithful (Qedeshet)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Knowledge (Folklore) d8, Knowledge (Riddles) d6, Notice d4, Persuasion d6, Streetwise d8, Taunt d6

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 8 (d10); **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Bad Reputation (Minor: liar), Enemy (Major: the nature of the foe is currently unknown), Quirk (wants to be the center of attention)

Edges: Fleet-Footed, Storyteller

Languages: Al-Waziran, Holy Tongue, Sandspeech, Sphinx

BACKGROUND

A storyteller by trade, many of Abdul-Haqq's stories vainly relate to his own fantastic adventures. He tells how he sailed beyond the Southern Ocean to a land where men had the heads of elephants. He speaks of the time he hitched a lift with a rukh to the very edge of the heavens. He recounts his outwitting a jinni at a contest of riddles. Alas, Abdul-Haqq was poorly named. His name means "Servant of the Truth," but he is as far from that as is possible. Lies trip off his tongue as readily as wisdom flowed from Suleiman's mouth.

His reputation for lying is well known in Faraf, City of Voices. Citizens still shake their heads and mutter when someone recalls the day Abdul-Haqq ran screaming through the market, claiming assassins were after him. Those citizens who courageously leapt to his defense still wince at the beating they received from the mir's guards, who were after the storyteller for non-payment of a fine. As he begins to travel into the wider world, so it will follow him.



Abdul-Haqq currently has a pressing problem—someone is trying to kill him. He suspects it relates to a map that recently fell into possession. His ownership is quite legitimate, though he went to great pains to tell anyone who would listen he stole into a mir's palace and liberated it from his bedchamber.

The map is certainly old, but the strange script has defied translation even by *speak language* spells, and the geography doesn't seem to relate to any part of Al-Shirkuh. So far he has fled from shadows in the night and armed thugs, leaving him none the wiser as to who actually wants him dead. Related to this woe is the fact that no believes him. His past "exaggerations" and "misunderstandings" have finally come back to haunt him. Well, that was until recently.

Abdul-Haqq has teamed up with a band of adventurers. He has managed to convince them the map leads to a great treasure, but that only he can understand the writing (thanks to a blessing from a greater jinni). All they have to do to earn a share of the fabulous treasure is keep him safe from rival treasure hunters. So far the ruse is working. How long he can maintain it is another matter altogether.

DESCRIPTION

Abdul-Haqq dresses to attract attention. Every item of clothing and piece of jewelry has a story attached, though none are true. The gold ring he wears was a gift from the pharaoh, his colored robes once belonged to Sinbad (who claims was an ancestor), and his dagger was used by Suleiman to slay a jinni.

MANNERISMS

Abdul-Haqq has two major, and not entirely unrelated, personality flaws—lying and vanity.

Despite his protestations, his reputation as a liar is well deserved. He couldn't tell the whole truth if his life depended on it. Naturally this isn't his fault. Oh no, he was cursed by a greater jinni jealous of his storytelling skills (another lie).

His vanity applies not to his physical appearance, but to an overwhelming desire to be the center of attention at all times.

NEW HINDRANCE

BAD REPUTATION (MINOR/MAJOR)

Whether it is deserved or not, the character has a bad reputation. No matter how far he travels, he cannot escape the tarnish to his name.

Pick the focus of the character's bad reputation. He might be a known liar, suspected of being a thief or assassin, or accused of seducing other men's wives. The Minor version gives the hero -2 Charisma, the Major version -4.

Ghazalah Dar-Azhar

Race: Bedu; **Homeland:** Great Northern Desert; **Occupation:** Dervish mage and warrior; **Religion:** Devoted

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Dervish d8, Fighting d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d6, Notice d6, Riding d4, Stealth d4, Survival d6

Charisma: -1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Habit (Minor: always moving), Illiterate, Short-Lived Magic (Major)

Edges: Arcane Background (Dervish), Two Fisted

Languages: Beduan, Jinn, Sandspeech

Powers: *Deflection, smite, wilderness step*

BACKGROUND

As a child, Ghazalah had unlimited energy. When her friends tired, she would still be running, leaping, and spinning. The wise women of the tribe said her name had been chosen well, for it meant “gazelle.” Though her tribe accepted female warriors, no one expected Ghazalah to meet the standard. Enthusiasm was not seen as a replacement for hard work, and the girl was too easily distracted to focus. When the day came for the youths’ final test, she surprised everyone. Though she lacked finesse and her moves were unorthodox, her raw energy and fluid movement confused her sparring partner. Each time he struck his blade found only empty space.

Ghazalah’s boundless energy and love of movement has not gone unnoticed. A dervish mage who frequently visited the tribe, having witnessed the duel, offered her an apprenticeship. Ghazalah refused, saying she wanted to be a warrior. At this the mage laughed. Where was it written, he asked, that a person could only master one art? Does a carpenter use only a saw to do his work? Did Suleiman not become a leader, a warrior, and a mage, and excel at all three?

The girl remained dubious, so the mage arranged for a demonstration. With the sheikh’s permission, he bade six of the tribe’s warriors to attack him. Ghazalah was horrified when the dervish drew nothing but a stout stick to defend himself against six scimitars. The man was a living whirlwind, his motions a total blur. Within moments all six warriors were flat on the sand, nursing bruises.

Although she proved a natural at dervish magic, her apprenticeship quickly brought to light a problem. For reasons she still cannot fathom, her magic had an extremely limited duration. Try as she might, she could not extend it beyond one minute. Her master consoled her through her tears and sobs. There are many mages who rely heavily on their spells to overcome all obstacles, he said. They are lazy and shall never achieve Oneness, for they follow a false path on which magic is the only solution. You seek to walk two roads, and Asha has provided you with the talents to do so. You must learn to wield both your arts with equal skill. If you cannot, then you will never achieve Oneness.



Now a mage, Ghazalah continues to walk the twin paths of magic and warrior. Her short-lived magic continues to hamper her, but Ghazalah knows this is an obstacle she must learn to live with, not try to overcome, if she is to progress toward Oneness. She strives to master both dervish magic and blade, to blend them into one combined art, and yet retain them as separate, equal abilities. Should one fail, she knows she can fall back on the other.

DESCRIPTION

Ghazalah hates any form of constraint. She wears her dark hair long and unfettered, and dresses in baggy clothes. Several long bead necklaces hang around her neck. Her face and hands are decorated with henna tattoos. The pattern is regularly changed. When she spins, whether to perform magic or wield her blades, every part of her becomes a living part of her motion.

MANNERISMS

Ghazalah is incapable of remaining static. Talking to her is frustrating, as she’s always in motion, forcing the other person to keep up with her. She rarely moves in a straight line, even when walking. Instead, she spins and whirls, sidesteps and backtracks. Combined with the permanent smile fixed on her face, it’s no wonder many believe she is a little touched in the head.

Though not cautious, Ghazalah rarely rushes into combat. With her magic limited to a short duration, she prefers to spend time working up a spell and sizing up her opponents. Once she is ready, she is a blur of spinning blades. Timed well, her last foe will fall before the spell dissipates.

Hellfrost: Land of Fire

'Urwah ibn Ramiz

Race: Hadaree; **Homeland:** Hajjad, City of the Gods (Caliphate of Al-Shirkuh); **Occupation:** Warrior; **Religion:** Faithful (Karmelos)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Taunt d6, Throwing d4

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: City Dweller, Stubborn, Yellow

Edges: Brawny, Danger Sense, Rich

Languages: Holy Tongue, Sandspeech

BACKGROUND

The son of a rich businesswoman with numerous political contacts, 'Urwah grew up a spoiled brat. He could do no wrong in her eyes, and she regularly bailed him out of any difficulties, pulling strings to make any troublesome problems with the local authorities go away.

With his mother at his back, 'Urwah became a bully. He had always dreamed of being a warrior, and his mother had paid the best swordsmen and archers in the city to train him. Unfortunately, a good physique, enthusiasm, and bravado could not make up for a total lack of aptitude. Thus, he swaggered around town, duping street kids into offending his honor so that he might prove his manhood and skill in a duel.

Word spread through the city that orcs had moved into the mountains to the north and were threatening trade along the Road of the Gods between Hajjad and Marqod's Well. Unwilling to send an army into what was neutral territory lest it provoke the Sultan, the Caliph offered the caravan extra guards—at a price. The merchants persuaded the nobleman to hire mercenaries.



Sensing his chance to finally put his skills to a real test, 'Urwah decided to volunteer his services. Chest puffed out and clad in his finery, he swaggered into the recruiting hall and demanded to join the expedition. The adventurers, veterans of many battles and skilled in steel, stealth, and spell, took one look at peacock standing before them and burst out laughing. His threats that he would have his mother force them to accept him did nothing to quell their humor. With a face as red as a beetroot, 'Urwah quietly skulked away.

Stubborn as a mule and keen to erase the perceived slight to his name, 'Urwah would not be deterred from his chosen path. As the party left the city and headed into the wilderness, 'Urwah followed them. His attempts to remain concealed while trailing the party were pitiful, though the adventurers did not let on they had seen him for several days. Instead, they let him shiver in the cold night air and shudder at every strange noise, hoping against hope his brief experience in the open desert might send him running back to his mother.

Though they eventually (and reluctantly) accepted him into their ranks, his membership did not last long. More numerous than first realized, the orcs made short work of the adventurers. 'Urwah did not witness the last of them fall—he had already wet his pants and fled screaming in terror.

Fortunately for 'Urwah, his path of retreat brought him to a small camp. Here he fell in with a band of young heroes resting after their last adventure. As yet unaware of his past experiences or his rudimentary training, he has managed to bluff them into thinking he is a skilled fighter. Whether he can maintain that illusion come the next fight remains to be seen.

DESCRIPTION

'Urwah thinks he looks the part of a mighty warrior. While he has the best armor and weapons money can buy (thanks to his mother), their decoration means he sticks out as a "play-warrior" even to untrained eyes. He bears a stern countenance, but it doesn't take a genius to spot the fear behind his eyes.

MANNERISMS

'Urwah is a typical bully. He's quick to draw his sword and prove his superiority against obviously weaker opponents, but rapidly backs down when faced with someone (or something) who knows how to handle a weapon, or who isn't afraid of his formidable mother.

Though an adult in body, he's very much a spoiled little brat at heart. When things don't go his way, or when people berate him for his failings, he automatically threatens to tell his mother about them. When that results in laughter, as it does outside of Hajjad, he is quick to scurry off and sulk.

His Danger Sense does not stem from honed abilities or years of experience. Rather, he is so scared he senses danger in every shadow. Sometimes he's actually right.

JOURNEYMAN TUGREG the WANDERER

Race: Cakali; **Homeland:** Jinn Lands of Old*; **Occupation:** Priest; **Religion:** Faithful (Upuaut)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Boating d6, Faith d8, Fighting d6, Knowledge (Jinn) d6, Notice d6, Riding d6, Survival d6, Swimming d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Heroic, Orders (cult of Upuaut), Vow (Minor: find a way to Jinnistan)

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Bite/Claws, Connections (cult of Upuaut), Fearless, Nomad Ways

Languages: Cakalic, Jinn, Sandspeech

Powers: *Speed, wilderness step*

** Though raised in the Great Southern Desert, Tugreg has spent most of his life in the Jinn Lands of Old.*



BACKGROUND

Following the destruction of their homeland, Tugreg's tribe abandoned their ancestral hunting grounds and headed west. Beyond the Lizard Tail Mountains they wandered, searching for a new home far away from places where the jinn once dwelt. Although he was raised on stories on the jinn's treachery, Tugreg never held any animosity toward them. They had sinned against his people, but Suleiman had punished them. Holding onto an old grudge would not undo the destruction.

Tugreg never felt at home in the western desert. His heart felt detached, as if it longed to be somewhere else. He journeyed to the Plain of Ash as a youth, a pilgrimage to honor his ancestors, but he felt just as lost there. It was there he had a dream that would change his life.

He dreamt of Jinnistan, the realm of the jinn, a place of air and earth, fire and water, a land unknown to gods and mortals alike. It was said even Upuaut had never walked there, for only the jinn knew the secret route, and they would not divulge it to those not of their kind. On waking, Tugreg knew what his heart desired.

Tugreg never returned to his tribe (though he has visited them on occasion). The next few years were spent in the Jinn Lands, where he learned about the cult of Upuaut from a wandering priest. On the day he took his holy vows, Tugreg swore an oath he would find a path from the mortal realm to the fabled gates of Jinnistan and he would walk it in the name of his deity.

Years later, and now an adult, Tugreg is only marginally closer to his goal. He knows the Jinn Lands well, and has uncovered much lore concerning the nature of Jinnistan, but the path still eludes him. What he has learned both excites and terrifies him—in order to progress he must venture through the most arduous mortal elemental realms; beneath sea and earth, into fire and air. Only when he has conquered these realms (metaphorically speaking) and learned their deepest secrets will he be ready to begin his most perilous undertaking.

Tugreg isn't a fool. Surviving these realms will require more than blind faith. His arsenal must include experience, powerful miracles, the cooperation (willing or otherwise) of greater jinn, and more than a touch of luck. Though his quest ultimately lies in his hands, he cannot hope to succeed alone. To that end, he has teamed up with a party of adventurers. Together they might unlock the knowledge he seeks, but when the time comes, Tugreg knows he must leave them behind and walk a dangerous road to the land of the jinn.

DESCRIPTION

Tall, dressed in his nomad robes, and with a determined countenance, Tugreg fits the stereotypical image other races have of cakali. His years of travel have left him with a few scars, most notably a chunk missing from his right ear, but these do not detract from his appearance.

He has a habit of staring into the distance. Rather than looking vacant or glazed, his eyes appear to be focused on something far beyond the horizon. If asked what he sees, his enigmatic answer is always "tomorrow."

MANNERISMS

Normally calm and composed, Tugreg gets excited about just one thing—talk of Jinnistan. Rumors of a sage or hermit a thousand miles away who might know something new are enough to get his feet moving. Tugreg knows his vow to Upuaut to unlock the secret pathway is a long-term quest. Although dedicated to his cause, he does not let it rule his every waking moment.

As his distant ancestors gave race to the primitive humans, so he feels it is his duty to follow in their footsteps. Though he might set off in a given direction on a whim, he inevitably comes across someone in need of aid. As he says, "Upuaut guides my feet to where I am needed, but what follows is my decision."

Hellfrost: Land of Fire

Many-Colored Sage

Nashida ibn Yazan

Race: Hadaree; **Homeland:** Rawdah, City of Heroes (Free Emirate States); **Occupation:** Priestess; **Religion:** Faithful (Ishkar—see *Realm Guide* #2)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d4

Skills: Faith d6, Fighting d4, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Knowledge (Folklore) d8, Notice d4, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 4

Hindrances: Magic Forbiddance, Quirk (easily distracted by matters concerning the Siphoning), Quirk (intolerant to mages who flaunt their power)

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Improved Arcane Resistance

Languages: Classical Anari, Jinn, Magorian, Sandspeech

Powers: *Detect arcana* (no conceal), *dispel*

BACKGROUND

Nashida was born the day the Siphoning began. According to her horoscope, her birth occurred at the *exact* same time as the Siphoning. Her initial plan had been to follow in her father's footsteps and become a jinn mage. However, it quickly became apparent she had absolutely no capacity for magic. Indeed, Nashida was a void when it came to manipulating the threads of magical energy, and had a great natural resistance even to miracles.

Unable to follow her heart, Nashida reluctantly settled on following her mother's path, and began training as a cleric of Qedeset. Clearly fate had decided she should be Faithful rather than Devoted.

While helping sort out the temple library, she spied a stranger in many-colored robes browsing through the

section on magic. Intrigued, for she had never seen such a strangely colored garment before, and never one to hold back from asking questions, Nashida inquired if she could be of any assistance. The woman explained she was a priestess of Ishkar, goddess of magic, and was searching for books on magic in the days before Suleiman. Little is known of the arts wielded in those distant times, and the cleric was cataloguing them all for posterity.

Nashida was a little confused, for here was a Faithful delving into a Devoted area of lore. The cleric explained that only fools and madmen let dogma stand in the way of understanding and cooperation. Even the Caliphs and Sultans of old had finally realized this.

Excited at the prospect of finally meeting someone versed in the supernatural aspects of both creeds (her parents didn't count, as they held different opinions), Nashida asked the cleric if she could explain why she could not touch the threads of magic. After all, her father was a mage. The cleric shook her head, saying that while many theories had been put forward down the ages, no one understood the cause. Beside, magic, like faith, was a matter of self-belief, not a hereditary right.

Impolitely pressing forward, Nashida then inquired as to whether the cleric knew the cause of the Siphoning. Again, all she received in reply was a disappointing no. With childlike petulance, Nashida promptly declared she would discover the root of both.

After a long talk with her parents, Nashida decided to switch training and join the cult of Ishkar. Although she had accepted her fate, she hoped that her investigations might one day help others.

She learned obscure and dead languages to help further her studies into the cause of magical forbiddance, and read every treatise she could find on the Siphoning. Her father's fellow mages provided descriptions of how the Siphoning felt, for they too longed for a solution. Nashida learned much, but in place of answers there were only more questions. So it was she left Rawdah in search of other sources of information.

DESCRIPTION

Nashida could be pretty if she bothered about her appearance. Instead, her brow is often furrowed in concentration as she ponders metaphysical issues, her hair is uncombed, and her clothes are wrinkled and covered in stains where she has forgotten to launder them.

MANNERISMS

Discussions about or investigations into the Siphoning cause Nashida to forget everything else around her. She forgets to eat, misses social engagements, and outstays her welcome when talking to people. Interruptions cause her to become cranky. She dislikes mages who flaunt their power. In her eyes, magic is a precious gift, one that should be respected and wielded only when absolutely necessary. Mages who invite the Siphoning on themselves are fools, tempting a force they do not understand.



Aws ðar-Helgasunu

Race: Half-Bedu, half-Saxa; **Hometown:** The Grazelands/Sutmark; **Occupation:** Sand mage; **Religion:** Devoted

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Riding d6, Sand Magic d8, Shooting d6, Survival d6, Tracking d6

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Dual Heritage, Heroic, Outsider

Edges: Arcane Background (Sand Magic)

Languages: Beduan, Jinn, Saxa, Sandspeech

Powers: Bolt, deflection, entangle

BACKGROUND

Aws' mother was a carpenter's daughter and a native of Dusthall in Sutmark. His father was a Bedu trader. They never married and Aws never learned his father's name or tribe, so he was forced to use his mother's name. Aws' given name is actually Aelfric, although he hasn't answered to that in many years.

As a young boy, Aws followed his mother around the nomads' trading camp, staring wide-eyed at their humped hairy horses and brightly colored tents, and listening in awe to their strange tongue. He learned Beduan as his second language. Impressed and amused by the half-breed, the traders nicknamed him "Little Nomad."

As Aws grew older and came to realize he shared the nomad's heritage, he became an avid listener to their stories. Of course, traders always paint their homeland in a good light when in foreign lands. Al-Shirkuh, they said, was a land of magnificent vistas, glittering oases, brave heroes, cunning jinn, and, most importantly, freedom. Not bound to any feudal lord, the Bedu roamed the sands at will. Too young to realize there was more behind the images their words conjured in his mind, Aws became fascinated by the idea of desert life.

At the age of twelve he disguised himself as a Bedu boy and joined a caravan heading south. By the time the ruse was discovered, the Bedu had crossed the mountains into the Grazelands. In no mood to turn back, they reluctantly agreed to look after Aws until the next spring. Somehow he never managed to find his way back across the mountains. Not that he cared.

Now in love with the desert and his new life, Aws became Devoted, casting off his ancestors' gods. Such was the intensity he felt for the desert that he apprenticed to a sand mage. And yet the Bedu never fully accepted him as one of their own. Yes, he dressed and spoke like them, for the most part, but he was not truly one of them—he had come to love the desert, but he was not born to it.

Aws desperately wanted to be accepted by the desert peoples. He couldn't help his heritage, and his heart truly lay in the sand. In order that he might achieve some degree of acceptance, Aws bade his adopted family farewell and headed out into the desert as a wanderer. Here he freely helps those in need.



DESCRIPTION

Aws has the dark hair of a Bedu nomad, but his skin is only lightly shaded. His tall frame, strong facial features, and bright blue eyes are those of his Saxa ancestors. No matter where he is, he dresses in Bedu style.

MANNERISMS

Though equally at home in the deserts of Al-Shirkuh and the cold uplands of Sutmark, Aws truly belongs to neither culture, and neither fully accepts him. To the desert people he is a northern barbarian who does not understand their ways (though he means well), while Sutmarkers see only a half-breed who has shunned his heritage in favor of foreign ways.

Though Dusthall was cosmopolitan by Sutmark standards, it was a small town. Aws dislikes the vast, crowded cities of Al-Shirkuh, and rarely tarries long.

New Hindrance

DUAL HERITAGE (MINOR)

The hero belongs to two lands. He may have been born to Hadaree parents but adopted by cakali, spent his youth between two cities, or have one parent from Al-Shirkuh and another from Rassilon. He has either divided his formative years between them or been schooled in the ways of both, though he truly belongs to neither.

The character can use Common Knowledge for rolls appropriate to both lands. However, he lacks an in-depth understanding of either. When making Common Knowledge rolls covering relevant Area, Folklore, Heraldry, Law, and Nomads, he treats his Smarts as one die lower. A d4 Smarts drops to a d4-2, as if was unskilled.

Hellfrost: Land of Fire

Hafizah bint Mu'izz

Race: Hadaree; **Hometown:** Tamarah, City of Heavenly Sin (Caliphate of Al-Shirkuh); **Occupation:** Private investigator; **Religion:** Faithful (Tamarni)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Investigation d8, Lockpicking d4, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d8, Tracking d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: City Dweller, Heroic, Vengeful (Minor)

Edges: Detailed Area Lore (Tamarah; see *Realm Guide* #13), Investigator

Languages: Holy Tongue, Orcish, Roguetongue, Sand-speech

BACKGROUND

Even as a young girl, Hafizah saw it as her duty to help others. Suleiman may have preached equal justice for all, but five centuries later the courts favor the rich, and the city guards have little interest in recovering stolen property unless the wronged party is rich or influential. Corruption is rampant, and even the Sultan seems impotent to bring back the rule of law.

When Hafizah decided to set up a private investigation business she imagined herself working out of a well-furnished office, dealing with rich clients, battling corruption at the highest level, spreading fear through the various thieves' guilds, and making a name for herself among the city's elite. Three years of hard work later and she's managed to achieve some degree of fame, though only among the lower echelons of society. Sure, she's had a few wealthy clients, but the work they offered was mostly mundane—check out a daughter's suitor, follow a servant suspected of stealing the silverware, or recover a lost pet. She was

instrumental in exposing a sect of demon-worshipping cultists led by a corrupt nobleman while searching for a rich merchant's missing daughter, but while she was well paid she was also sworn to silence by the authorities, lest the news spread panic through the city or taint the reputation of every noble. Her dream may have turned slightly sour, but Hafizah remains dedicated to her work.

Technically she's little better than the criminals she pursues, especially when she has to commit an act of breaking and entering to gather evidence or recover stolen property for a client. The city guards not in the pocket of the various criminal elements infesting the city tend to turn a blind eye. After all, not only does her work save them the bother, but they can claim the credit for reduced crime in their district.

So far she's escaped the attentions of the thieves' guilds. As far as they are concerned, any property taken from one of their members is down to a rival gang or carelessness on the part of the original thief. Hafizah is keen to keep the status quo—the guilds would order her death is they uncovered her activities against them.

Hafizah has never cared for the desert. She's never actually passed beyond the city gates, and until recently has never needed to. Last month, though, a client acting through intermediaries offered her a great deal of money to track down an old map, a family heirloom, stolen from his personal library. Hafizah doesn't believe his story, but the down payment was enough to attract her interest.

DESCRIPTION

Although her job calls for subtlety, Hafizah like to stand out from the crowd. Her hair is dyed bright red, and her forehead and right cheek are tattooed with a coiled sun dragon. By comparison her clothes are rather bland—functional rather than fashionable, and with plenty of concealed pockets.

MANNERISMS

Hafizah is a sucker for a hard-luck story, and she knows it. Although she prefers higher end clients, those with hard cash to spend on having their personal problems resolved, most of her clients are poorer citizens who cannot hope to get justice through the legal system. All she asks them in return is food and a token payment. It's usually enough to keep bread on the table and a roof over her head until something more lucrative comes along. She's convinced herself she's doing good in the world, so what's a little hardship?

Hafizah's vengeful nature covers not only wrongs done to her, but wrongs done to others. Once she accepts an investigation she pursues it like a bloodhound until the case is solved or the client calls it off.

She doesn't see herself as judge, jury, and executioner, and she hates the term vigilante (though it's applicable). Sometimes a thief may receive a beating, but most of the time she's content just to retrieve any stolen items and make a quick escape.



Badr ibn Fatih

Race: Hadaree; **Homeland:** Jizah, City of the Sphinx (Kingdoms of the Sphinxes); **Occupation:** Disgraced military officer; **Religion:** Faithful (Karmelos)
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Notice d6, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Survival d6
Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: Mean, Stubborn, Vengeful (Major)
Edges: Command, Florentine
Languages: Orcish, Sandspeech, Sphinx

BACKGROUND

Badr was a rising star in Jizah's army. A capable if somewhat stubborn commander, and not one to avoid direct confrontation with the enemy, he achieved the rank of company captain by the age of 21, and had been promoted to battalion senior captain a mere three years later. He was widely tipped by those in the know to become a senior officer before he turned 30.

As astronomers study the bright stars in the heavens, so his superiors carefully watched their underlings. Badr was good, perhaps too good. He had the support of his men and was a decorated soldier—even the pharaoh had begun to take notice. All that combined to make Badr a threat to their positions. Officers passed over for promotion in favor of Badr also had an axe to grind. While Badr was a notable student of battlefield strategy, he had yet to learn that politics could be far more deadly.

Badr was given command of two companies of infantry and ordered to head into the foothills to engage and destroy orcs spotted by local Bedu. All the intelligence indicated the orcs were few in number. Not suspecting anything untoward, Badr led his troops out of the city.

The orcs were far more numerous than his superiors had let on. Of course, they had known this all along. Just to make sure their plan worked, they sent messengers ahead to warn the orcs to the approaching soldiers. While the companies engaged what they thought was the main orc force, an equally large orc unit outflanked them and struck their exposed rear. Less than one man in ten made it back to the city alive.

Badr's superiors immediately convened a court-martial. The senior captain had led out an inferior force for the task ahead, they said, producing written orders that indicated a much stronger orc threat than Badr had been told about.

The young officer was about to accuse his superiors of lying but bit his tongue—to accuse senior officers, one of who was a sphinx, of falsifying evidence in a legitimate court of law would be tantamount to treason. Badr realized he had been played like a fool, but there was worse to come. Several survivors were coerced into testifying against their commander, swearing under oath that he had stubbornly refused to retreat, thus condemning the army to death.



Not surprisingly, he was found guilty of misconduct on operations, namely ignoring intelligence and losing his companies by refusing to retreat in the face of overwhelming odds. Badr expected the death penalty, but his enemies chose to be crueler—he was dishonorably discharged from service, publicly disgraced, and exiled from Jizah under penalty of death.

Knowing he could never find employment in the Kingdoms, Badr chose to become a wanderer. That was three years ago. Badr no longer wants to clear his name—all he wants is the death of all those who wronged him.

DESCRIPTION

He may no longer be a serving officer, but Badr hasn't let his personal standards slip. He keeps his hair and beard short. He long discarded anything that ties him to his old command, save for a single medal awarded him for bravery in the face of the enemy. His enemies may have taken his reputation, but they could not take away his memories or his deeds.

MANNERISMS

Badr's ignominious fall from grace has left him bitter and resentful. He has little time for idle chatter, and takes an interest in the affairs of others only when they might help him achieve his revenge. He still thinks of himself as a military commander, and doesn't appreciate others interfering with his plans—especially those yet to taste true battle.

His desire for revenge has warped him. Initially he sought vengeance through the courts, hoping to acquire evidence to clear his name. Now, he wants to watch those who wronged him beg for mercy before he takes their lives. His darker nature doesn't just extend to his current enemies—anyone who crosses him will receive swift and harsh punishment.

Hellfrost: Land of Fire

Adham the Headsman

Race: Hadaree; **Homeland:** Sukhnah, City of Bridges (Al-Wazir Sultanate); **Occupation:** Headsman and bounty hunter; **Religion:** Devoted

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Streetwise d6, Survival d6, Tracking d6

Charisma: 0 (-6); **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Arrogant, Bloodthirsty, Orders (Guild of Headsmen), Quirk (must *always* Intimidate a foe before he makes an attack)

Edges: Bounty hunter (see *Realm Guide #22*), Connections (Guild of Headsmen), Headsman

Languages: Al-Waziran, Holy Tongue, Sandspeech

BACKGROUND

Adham (an alias meaning “Black”) wasn’t the strongest or meanest kid in his neighborhood, but he was rarely bullied. He’d long kept the bullies away with a cold, hard stare that gave even the toughest thug pause for thought. Plenty of kids feared him, even though he’d never lifted a finger against them. With his talent for intimidation he could easily have risen to the top of the pack, but Adham believed in right and wrong, and that the strong should protect the weak. It is a belief he has never forgotten.

Adham never set out to be a Headsman—those who seek to become one have a near spiritual calling. A vacancy came up, he needed a job, and those condemned to die had been tried and found guilty by better men than him. Anyway, he thought, he’d worked as a butcher before, so he was used to killing animals.

The taking of a human life is not the same as killing a goat or lamb. Adham had imagined himself as a warrior as a boy, but his imagined foes were always armed and capable of defending themselves. When Adham looked

into his first victim’s eyes he saw a reflection of the terror gripping his heart. Though he took no pleasure in his work, things got easier after the first head rolled.

The Headsman’s mask has long been a symbol of fear. In most cases it was not the person beneath the mask victims actually feared, but what he represented—death. Adham had witnessed the fear in the eyes of the condemned many times, yet people still committed capital crimes.

Adham created a new persona for his headsman’s role. He fashioned a mask to resemble one of human skin, and he intimidated those about to die to ensure that even the hardest soul wept in terror before his life ended. It worked better than he ever imagined. Soon honest citizens and criminals throughout Sukhnah feared the name of Adham the Headsman.

Soon in demand across the length and breadth of the Sultanate, Adham decided he’d be a fool not to cash in on his reputation. There were many criminals who had escaped from jail or who had been found guilty in their absence, and someone had to deliver justice. So it was he became a bounty hunter and itinerant Headsman (plenty of communities prefer to hand over the duties of an executioner to an outsider, so as to avoid reprisals).

Adham only accepts contracts where the criminal in question has been sentenced to death by someone with the legal authority to pass that judgment. He’s not stupid, either. Unless he receives a written contract entitling him to carry out his duties he never begins a hunt. His quarry may run or hide, but he is relentless in his pursuit. They may try to plead innocence or bribe him, but he cannot be swayed. The sentence is death and punishment will be carried out. That is the law.

DESCRIPTION

Adham wears two physical masks, depending on the role he is playing. The first is a leather mask that covers his entire head. Though made of leather, it is tanned and stitched together to give viewers the impression it is made of human skin. The second is his normal Headsman’s mask, his symbol of position. What he looks like beneath them is a mystery even to his closest friends.

MANNERISMS

Adham has worked hard to cultivate his fearsome persona. It is yet another mask he wears. None of his masks are ever dropped in company. Friends, adventuring companions, patrons, victims—none have seen beneath the masks.

Over the years, his persona has taken on a perverted life of its own. It thrives on inflicting fear in his enemies. In combat, Adham never strikes a foe until he has scared them witless. Only when fear courses through their veins and Adham sees it in their eyes does he end their lives.

He never resorts to stealth when hunting criminals. The thought of an unknown assailant on their trail may induce fear, but Adham does not want them to fear faceless shadows—he wants them to fear him.



MUNAWWAR the Gray

Race: Hadaree; **Hometown:** Hufrah, City of Idols (Caliphate of Al-Shirkuh); **Occupation:** Fallen paladin; **Religion:** Faithful (Shamash)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Arcana) d6, Knowledge (Monsters: Demons) d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Streetwise d4, Survival d4

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Enemy (Minor: paladin of Shamash), God Cursed (Shamash), Mean

Edges: Arcane Resistance

Languages: Black Tongue, Hekatic, Holy Tongue

BACKGROUND

Raised on tales of demons and the wicked deceptions of Iblis by fanatically religious parents, Munawwar set her heart on becoming a cleric of Shamash from an early age. Originally she wanted to be a priest, for she never believed herself capable of becoming a paladin. The lectures and readings ignited the spark of faith into an inferno of zeal. Blessed by Shamash with additional protection against demons and those who worship them, Munawwar set out to bring light to the darkness.

Though combat against evil dominated her life, Munawwar still found time for love. Her partner was a priest of Marqod, a kind and gentle soul who tended her physical injuries and kept the unending darkness she battled from invading her heart. The couple intended to marry.

Munawwar's religious zeal and relentless pursuit of demons and their mortal servants had earned her many enemies in the Bottomless Pit. Fiends lesser and greater cursed her name. Wary of attacking her directly, they chose to strike elsewhere. A demon cloaked in human form approached Munawwar's lover while the paladin was on a quest. It whispered insidious words, accusing the paladin of being unfaithful, of mocking his lover behind her back. It took many months, but finally the words had the desired effect. Feeling totally betrayed, the priest took his own life.

When Munawwar returned and learned what had happened she was beyond consoling. Worse was in store, though, for the clerics of Tammuz told him her soul had been consigned to the Bottomless Pit. Munawwar tried to argue. Surely, she shouted, demons were responsible for taking her life, making it murder, not suicide. The clerics of Tammuz saw differently—his lover had made the final decision, wielded the blade. She was guilty of a sin against the gods who had given her existence, and the law was clear to her fate. In a fit of rage, Munawwar vowed she would travel beyond the gates of Bottomless Pit and free her lover's soul. It was heresy of the highest order, but she would not repent. She consulted every religious tome she could find, but they held no answers. Believing her cause was just, Munawwar turned away from the light. Shamash cursed her.



Where once she slaughtered demons and cultists, burned unholy texts, she now consulted them. If there was any way for a mortal to enter the Bottomless Pit, then surely they would know. Her old enemies were far from cooperative, of course. Munawwar has not given up. She has heard tales of a black gate that once opened a direct portal to the Bottomless Pit. It is her last, best hope.

Munawwar once walked in the light. Today she walks in the shadows, stumbling ever closer to the darkness she once hated. Whether her soul can be saved from the damnation awaiting it is yet to be seen.

DESCRIPTION

Although only in her late twenties, Munawwar looks closer to fifty. Her skin is saggy, especially around the jowls, her hair is turning gray, and she walks with a pronounced stoop, as if carrying the weight of the world on her shoulders. Her eyes betray an inner weariness. Any trace of the fire she once felt has been replaced by the cold ashes of enduring a seemingly endless quest that may condemn her soul.

MANNERISMS

Though thoroughly fallen from grace, Munawwar has not entirely lost her faith. She is completely torn between the calling of her soul and the calling of heart, and their goals are diametrically opposed. She knows there is little chance of Shamash ever lifting his curse of welcoming her back to the faith, but perhaps if she is successful in freeing her lover's soul from the Bottomless Pit she will at least receive some clemency when her soul is judged.

Originally she was surly because her entire being was dedicated to the endless war against darkness. Today, it is brought on by despondency and inner turmoil.

Hellfrost: Land of Fire

Executioner Azak

Race: Demi-ghûl; **Hometown:** Jinn Lands of Old; **Occupation:** Repentant ghûl and paladin; **Religion:** Faithful (Tammuz)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Monsters: Undead) d4, Notice d4, Stealth d6, Survival d4, Tracking d4

Charisma: -4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Death Wish, God Cursed (Marqod), Habit (Major: consume sentient flesh), Mean, Orders (cult of Tammuz), Ugly

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Champion, Connections (cult of Tammuz), Infravision, Keen Nose (+2 Notice and Tracking against living targets)

Languages: Black Tongue, Holy Tongue

Powers: *Smite, weaken undead*

BACKGROUND

Azak was born in the Caliphate some two centuries ago. His list of sins was long and their nature particularly vile. The acts he committed against his fellow man were so heinous that his name became synonymous with depravity and evil. Storytellers still claim he was so wicked that even the demon lords would not accept him as a worshipper, though likely this is poetic license. Little surprise that on his death Iblis hastily claimed his soul.

Iblis did not drag his soul to the Bottomless Pit to endure an eternity of torture. Instead, it was returned to his festering corpse, transforming lifeless flesh into a ravenous ghûl. For 200 years Azak skulked through the night, surviving on the flesh of corpses and innocent travelers. Though now born out of necessity, his sins were no less sickening than in his previous life.



Immortality is no gift, and even Azak tired of the torment. He had also glimpsed the Bottomless Pit, and even those scant seconds were enough to terrify him. He had no wish to die again, especially not in his current state. One night, when Shamash's milky eye was absent from the heavens, Azak cried out to Tammuz—release me from this curse and let me regain my humanity, he screamed, and I shall serve you loyally.

To his eternal surprise, Tammuz answered his pitiful plea. Tammuz had stared into the soul of the vile creature and saw the tiniest glimmer of humanity. By rights the god should have struck Azak down where he knelt, but something stayed his hand. Perhaps it was pity. Maybe it was curiosity. Knowing the tasks that lay ahead for Azak, it might even have been cruelty. Regardless, Tammuz heard, and chose to grant the creature a second chance. Angered that Tammuz would dare to interfere in the mortal realm without consulting the others, and claiming he had broken the god's own laws, Marqod cursed Azak. He would find no solace in his new life, and his worshippers would not aid him in his penance.

When Azak awoke the next night he immediately knew he had changed. Previously undead, he was now once again mortal. His claws had gone, depriving him of his ability to paralyze living tissue, but the rest of his physical form was unaltered, and his keen senses were still usable. It was not as much as he had hoped for, but it was a start.

Azak immediately set out to fulfill his part of the bargain. Passing himself off as a soldier attacked by a mummy and subjected to a lingering death, he persuaded an itinerant paladin of Tammuz to take him on as an apprentice. For a decade Azak has served his god as a paladin, slaying undead wherever he finds them with a zeal few mortals share. He has slain dozens of undead, but these barely account for one percent of the sins he must erase.

DESCRIPTION

Azak's gaunt frame is utterly hairless. His flesh is sickly gray (the color of aged meat), his nails and teeth are oddly extended, and his nose is nothing but two slits. In order to disguise his appearance and keep people at a safe distance, lest they discover his true nature, he wraps himself in grimy bandages and claims to be suffering from a slow form of mummy rot.

MANNERISMS

Azak may be undergoing penance, but that doesn't mean he's all smiles and joy. His soul is still damned, and old habits are hard to break. Few mortals are likely to understand his strange state of existence, so it's in his best interests to avoid close contact whenever possible.

Though his form is mortal and can dine as any man, Azak still hungers for the flesh of living creatures. He knows Tammuz left this part of previous life intact as a challenge Azak must overcome if he is to regain his humanity and save his soul from the Bottomless Pit.

Abdul-Ahad

Race: Hadaree; **Homeland:** Balyana, City of Reflection (Al-Wazir Sultanate); **Occupation:** Wise man; **Religion:** Devoted

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d4, Knowledge (Folklore) d8, Knowledge (Religion) d8, Notice d6, Survival d8, Taunt d8

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Pacifist (Major), Poverty, Vow (Minor: strict vegetarian)

Edges: Desert Born, Desert Hermit (*Realm Guide* #20)

Languages: Al-Waziran, Jinn, Lesarde, Sandspeech

BACKGROUND

Abdul-Ahad has a reputation for being a prophet, wise man, and eccentric in equal measure. There are many stories concerning his origin, but Abdul-Ahad does nothing to confirm or deny these—those days are over, and he has no wish to recall them. His accent indicates he is a native of the Sultanate, but beyond that there is only speculation and supposition. Even his name (which means Servant of the One) is a pseudonym.

The man who now shuns all material trappings was once a rich merchant who lived in Balyana, City of Reflection. He had money and property enough to satisfy any man, save perhaps the greediest noble, but his life was devoid of both purpose and happiness, two treasures not even the Caliph can purchase.

One fateful day, he caught his reflection in one of the many windows for which his city is famed. He did not like what he saw. Depressed, he wandered into the desert. Perhaps he thought to end his life, or maybe he was merely seeking solitude so as to collect his thoughts. Even Abdul-Ahad has forgotten the exact reason. Utterly alone, he began talking to himself, asking questions to which he expected to receive no answers—Was there more to life than acquiring wealth? Would riches bring him happiness? Could he do anything to change his life? Was Oneness within his grasp? For every question he asked aloud, an agama (a small, long-tailed, insect-eating lizard) sitting on a rock, watching the man with a look as akin to curiosity as a lizard can muster, nodded or shook its toad-like head.

Likely this was merely mundane behavior, its “replies” a quirk of fate, but Abdul-Ahad’s line of questioning began to shift in response to the lizard’s replies. By the time he had exhausted his train of thought, a process that took many days, the merchant had decided to forgo all material goods and the trappings of flesh, and dedicate himself to a life of poverty, abstinence, peace, and spiritual growth. He returned home, divided his business and wealth to his family, gave away his personal possessions, and set out once more into the trackless sands.

Those of strong faith might argue he received an epiphany in the desert, as did Suleiman. Others are more inclined to point toward heat stroke, madness brought on by prolonged isolation, or even the trickery of jinn.



Since his revelation, Abdul-Ahad and his agama have wandered the wastes, offering advice to all who ask. Sometimes the road is lonely or arduous, but no path to Oneness is ever easy.

DESCRIPTION

Abdul-Ahad has discarded the trappings of the material world to concentrate on his spiritual journey. He forgoes washing; his long, scraggly hair and beard have not been cut or washed in many years; and he shuns all clothing. His sole possession is a small, hollowed-out calabash gourd that he uses as a waterskin. Ever-present on one of his shoulders is a toad-headed agama.

MANNERISMS

Abdul-Ahad rarely speaks in clear terms. When replying to questions (no matter how mundane) or offering advice, he quotes passages from the *Hamad* or recounts parts of popular stories. Other times he spouts philosophical answers, leaving the listener to hear and understand the hidden meaning in his words. Many find it easier to speak to his agama. Whether it is mere coincidence or a true gift, the creature responds to yes and no questions regarding the hermit’s cryptic wisdom by nodding or shaking its head with surprising accuracy.

On occasion, Abdul-Ahad adopts odd behavior. He may, for instance, spend a day walking backward. When asked about his behavior, he replies with phrases like, “Sometimes one must study the path one has traveled in order to see where one is heading.”

He doesn’t try to convert anyone to his beliefs, for all journeys to Oneness are unique to the individual. He does, however, remind people about what is good for their soul in accordance with Suleiman’s teachings.

Hellfrost: Land of Fire

Safiy min Nawfal

Race: Hadaree; **Hometown:** Mazar, City of Eyes (Caliphate of Al-Shirkuh); **Occupation:** Underwater treasure hunter; **Religion:** Faithful (Upaut)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Boating d4, Fighting d8, Knowledge (Folklore) d6, Lockpicking d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Stealth d6, Swimming d8

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Curious, Enemy (Minor: kreana priest), Greedy (Minor)

Edges: Ancestral Guardian*, Mermaid Blood

Languages: Al-Waziran, Sandspeech, Seatongue

** Safiy can only use this Edge when submerged or swimming in saltwater. Because of this restriction, and because it fits his background, Safiy began with Swimming d6. Any Maintained powers automatically end when he steps out of the sea.*

BACKGROUND

The child of pearl divers, Safiy always had a close connection to the sea. Even as a youth, his natural grace and speed in the water were noticeable and frequently commented upon. His mother had always said that one of her distant ancestors, a famous explorer, was sired by a mermaid and that the sea ran in his veins, though Safiy never believed this.

One fateful day, while swimming off the coast, Safiy was caught in a rip tide. Dragged out to sea and exhausted from the futile struggle against the power of the sea, he sank beneath the waves. As his lungs burned and his muscles weakened, a ghostly figure appeared through the gloom. It told Safiy to look deep within himself and

to accept his heritage. Safiy could not say whether it was a hallucination or truly one of his ancestors, but he did as he was told. As darkness clouded his vision, Safiy inhaled, only to find that he could breathe! A quick check revealed he had grown gills!

Once back on land, he rushed to tell his parents. They greeted his news not with jubilation or fear, but with knowing smiles. Later, Safiy began dreaming of his ancestor. Through his dreams, the spirit showed him how to harness other abilities that would prove useful while beneath the waves. Safiy soon began to explore deeper water than he ever managed was possible.

He quickly realized the ocean was full of treasure. While many surface ruins had been repeatedly plundered, beneath the waves there existed a world of sunken ruins and shipwrecks just waiting to be claimed, not to mention fabulous natural treasures, like shells and pearls. Pearl diving was an honest living, and could earn him a modest income, but even with his powers giving him an advantage, there was much competition. Safiy decided there was more to be gained in diving wrecks or submerged ruins.

Unfortunately, not all the treasure that lies in the sea is unclaimed. On one expedition, he “acquired” a golden tooth from a statue of a shark. The kreana priest whose temple the surface dweller had defiled swore to hunt down the thief. Safiy and the priest have had several encounters over the years, but so far the rogue has escaped with his limbs intact (though not without a few scars).

Though he can breathe underwater through his heritage, Safiy knows that his mastery of the ability is still poor, and that one slip in concentration could be fatal. To that end, he invests heavily in *environmental protection* (water) alchemical potions.

DESCRIPTION

Safiy’s skin is weather-beaten from years of exposure to wind and sea spray. He keeps his hair close cropped, both to facilitate quick drying and to prevent it become entangled while underwater. Around his neck he wears minor trophies from his adventure—rings of coral, sharks’ teeth, small shells, and the like.

MANNERISMS

Curiosity is Safiy’s primary motivation for exploring the sea, with greed a close second. Talk of a lost temple or previously unknown shipwreck is enough to get him packing his bags and heading out to sea. He has far less interest in ruins on land, though.

Safiy likes to tell of his adventures. After all, there are few explorers with tales of fighting vicious sharks, battling giant sea monsters, and exploring submerged ruins from a bygone age. Not all of his stories are completely true, but there is enough truth to prevent him being branded a liar. His stories have reached the attention of the cult of Nu (*Realm Guide #5*), though they have yet to take any action.



Caregiver Budur

Race: Hadaree; **Homeland:** Salih, City of Fire (Free Emirate States); **Occupation:** Priestess and fund-raiser; **Religion:** Faithful (Marqod)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Faith d6, Fighting d4, Healing d8, Knowledge (Alchemy) d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Survival d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Orders (cult of Marqod), Pacifist (Minor), Poverty

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Connections (cult of Marqod), Hedge Magic

Languages: Beduan, Holy Tongue, Orcish, Sandspeech

Powers: *Boost/lower trait* (Vigor, Healing, and Persuasion only), *healing*

BACKGROUND

Budur was born in a large mining village under the protection of the Emir of Salih, City of Fire. Day and night, teams of miners toiled in the hills to extract ore, which was then shipped down the river to the emir's industrial compound. Life for the miners and their families was tough. The work was exhausting, and the men worked long shifts to earn a decent living. Many turned to hashish to prolong their productivity, but this in turn led to more accidents. Though the village had a healer, under whom Budur apprenticed, it lacked proper facilities.

Keen to help alleviate the suffering of others, and having learned all she could from her mentor, Budur left home to train as a priestess of Marqod in Salih. Her previous experience proved invaluable—she already knew how to set bones and stitch flesh, and her mentor had taught her how to brew basic herbal remedies. Even mediation proved no problem—Budur's parents often argued, and it was she who resolved their bitter disputes. Within a year, she had taken her holy vows.

Young and naive, Budur returned home. There she approached the village's ruler. She brazenly asked if he would raise a temple to Marqod. A temple would greatly benefit the miners, and those injured in their work would be able to return sooner. While the nobleman saw sense in the young priestess' words, he could spare neither the funds nor the manpower to construct a temple.

Undeterred, Budur, speaking with rash fervor, made the nobleman an offer. If she could raise the money to purchase building materials and hire workers, would he donate a parcel of land and gift the temple with 10% of its construction cost to help purchase medical supplies? With nothing to lose, and keen to have the slightly-too-keen cleric out of his hair, he agreed.

Budur's attempts to raise funds locally soon petered out—there simply wasn't enough spare money. She met with slightly more success in Salih, but was still many thousands of dinars short of her goal. Though it pained her to leave her village, Budur knew that her only hope



of earning enough money was to join an adventuring party, to whom she would offer her services as a healer in return for a share of any treasure. As an itinerant healer, she could also sell herbal brews and healing to anyone she encountered on her travels, and as an impartial outsider also help settle disputes (for a fee).

Budur has not been home in over a year, though she regularly sends money back with trustworthy merchants. By her reckoning, she still needs another 12,000 dinars to achieve her goal. Once she has the last dinar, she intends to oversee construction of the temple.

DESCRIPTION

Budur lives a frugal life, and that is reflected in her clothing. Whatever she wears, it is as simple and cheaply produced as possible. She shuns jewelry and other trappings of wealth, and even her holy symbol is made of wood. Her head is shorn, save for a long ponytail.

MANNERISMS

As well as the vows of her faith, Budur lives by a strong personal code—never take sides in a dispute, never lie, and never desert those in need. Softly-spoken, Budur endeavors to settle disputes through peaceful means. She is not stupid, and understands that violence is a necessary evil when fighting monsters and barbaric races. When the fighting stops, she is on hand to administer to the wounded, collection tin in hand.

Even when the going is tough, Budur is never without a smile on her lips and encouraging phrase on the tip of her tongue—that she suffers hardship is a small price to pay for being able to sponsor a temple to her deity.

Her poverty is not down to foolishness with money. Save for what she needs to survive, every last dirham she collects is returned to her village to help toward the new temple of Marqod.

Hellfrost: Land of Fire

Abaza Throatripper

Race: Cakali; **Hometown:** Medinat al-Jinn, City of the Jinn (Al-Wazir Sultanate); **Occupation:** Enforcer; **Religion:** Devoted

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d4, Survival d6, Tracking d6

Charisma: -3; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Mean, One Eye, Vow (Minor: track down thief)

Edges: Brawler*, Bite/Claws, Fearless, Nomad Ways

Languages: Cakali, Roguetongue, Sandspeech

* Abaza can apply this to his claw attacks.

BACKGROUND

Cast out of his tribe for excessive violence, Abaza became a prizefighter in the employ of a minor criminal. Though his talent was raw, he earned a decent enough living, the risk of serious injury was fairly small, and he got to hurt people.

While in Medinat al-Jinn, one of his illegal fights was witnessed by a powerful mage with hands in numerous nefarious pies. The wizard offered to purchase Abaza, but his boss refused—Abaza was his meal ticket, and he wasn't about to sell his most valuable asset to some spellcaster with delusions of grandeur. The following morning, Abaza's boss, or rather what was left of him, was found smoldering in his lodgings. The wizard then approached the cakali. He offered him training and a steady job as his enforcer. With no other prospects on the horizon, Abaza accepted.

Abaza learned quickly and he learned well. His anger was tempered with formal instruction, and his natural aggression channeled into formidable stares and snarls, rather than instant violence. Within a few short months of

taking up his new post, Abaza had increased his master's reputation as someone never to cross tenfold.

All was well for a year. Abaza's presence was enough to kowtow other hirelings and would be rivals, and those brave or stupid enough to cross his master rarely did so twice. The cakali never asked what aspect of the arcane arts his master was researching, nor did curiosity lead him to inquire about the various objects Abaza was ordered to collect.

One morning, Abaza awoke to find the house in uproar. A thief had dared to enter his master's house, seemingly walking through the various arcane and mundane protections, and escaped with one of his master's most precious objects—a black statuette of a tentacled deity. Abaza was immediately ordered to “question” the guards, who claimed to have seen and heard nothing. Four corpses later, Abaza was sure they were not accessories to the crime. Investigations among the city's criminal underworld quickly faltered—the thief was not local, nor did the other guilds have any knowledge of outsiders asking questions concerning his master.

Abaza's master promptly ordered him to scour Al-Shirkuh for the thief using any means he considered necessary, retrieve the statuette, and ensure the thief learned the error of his ways. Permanently. The cakali had no qualms with any of these orders, though he raised an eyebrow when his master insisted that the statuette be returned before the last full moon of the next year. It was made abundantly clear that should he fail, Abaza would suffer a most horrible death. Ignoring the threat, Abaza promptly left the city. He still has a year to go before the deadline, but so far he has had little luck in tracking down the thief.

DESCRIPTION

Abaza is a veteran of many fights, and the scars are clearly visible. His left eye socket is vacant and a jagged scar runs across it. His right eye is badly mangled, his muzzle sports several deep scars, and he is missing the little finger from his right hand.

MANNERISMS

Abaza disdains manufactured weapons—Asha gave him a perfectly serviceable set of teeth and claws, they cost nothing to maintain, and he can't be disarmed. There is also something unsettling about watching a cakali take down a foe using just his natural weapons, especially one who knows how to use them efficiently.

He has little interest in making friends. His job is to scare people into obeying his master's wishes, apply physical coercion if threats fail, and kill those who still resist. Abaza is very good at his job.

Abaza isn't carrying out his master's orders because of any loyalty, and certainly not out of fear. The cakali considers himself an employee, and he's been paid to do a job. If a better offer comes along he may well decide to take it, but only after completing his current mission—his personal code of honor demands that of him.



Boutros

Race: Bedu; **Homeland:** The Grazelands; **Occupation:** Crocodile and gatorman hunter; **Religion:** Faithful (Apsu)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Boating d4, Fighting d8, Knowledge (Area: The Salt Marsh) d4, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d4, Survival d6, Tracking d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Cautious, Code of Honor, Stubborn

Edges: First Strike

Languages: Beduan, Lesarde, Sandspeech

BACKGROUND

The Salt Marsh is home to a variety of plants and animals vital to the wellbeing of communities on its western border. Snakes and biting insects are a nuisance to those who live around and hunt in the marsh, but the biggest dangers are crocodiles (and more rarely gatormen).

As a caravan guard, Boutros witnessed the ferocity of a crocodile attack firsthand. While the merchants he was escorting were busy haggling over their wares, Boutros wandered to the edge of the marsh, where a group of children were collecting insects in nets. As he watched them play, a crocodile (a small specimen by the standards of the Salt Marsh) lunged out of the dense reeds at the water's edge with terrifying speed. Snatching a child by the arm in its teeth, it withdrew into the water.

Acting out of pure instinct, Boutros drew his dagger and leapt into the water. For long seconds the water churned as a violent life-and-death struggle ensued beneath the murky surface. By the time Boutros emerged carrying the badly wounded child, concerned villagers had already gathered. Grateful for the return of the child and for killing the crocodile, which had been troubling the settlement for several weeks, the villagers paid Boutros a handsome reward.

It was then he hit upon an idea. Being a caravan guard was a poorly paid occupation, and not without risks. Offering his services hunting crocodiles and gatormen that were troubling communities near the marsh would be far riskier to life and limb, but the rewards would be commensurately higher. Boutros would also be his own master, able to pick and choose where he traveled.

Thus it was that Boutros became a professional crocodile hunter. He travels from community to community, in and around the Salt Marsh, sometimes on foot and sometimes by flat-bottomed boat. His prices are high, though not unreasonable considering the danger, and villagers are always free to send him on his way.

Though relatively new to the profession, and still with much to learn about his favored foe, he has nevertheless earned a reputation for being relentless and trustworthy. Above all, his hunts are mostly successful.

The cult of Taweret, minor deity of crocodile hunting (see *Realm Guide* #15), which has a strong presence in



the Salt Marsh, has asked him to train as a paladin several times. Boutros has politely refused every offer. He does not hunt crocodiles and gatormen because it is a divine mission or out of the goodness of his heart—he hunts them because he gets paid.

DESCRIPTION

Although thickset and well-muscled, Boutros moves with catlike grace. His armor is torn in places, testimony to the fierce beasts he has fought and slain. While he could easily afford to replace it, he is pragmatic—until it falls apart, there is no point in buying new armor for a crocodile to chew on. When he needs a new set, he intends to have the crocodile skins he has collected made into a suit of leather armor. He carries a variety of weapons, but favors the long spear and short bow.

Boutros sports a necklace of crocodile and gatormen teeth. It is a personal rule that he takes only one trophy from each kill. To date, he has claimed ten teeth.

MANNERISMS

Boutros is not a man to be rushed, especially when it comes to hunting his chosen prey. The Salt Marsh is their territory, and he has no wish to lose a limb, or his life, by recklessly charging into the mire. Like any hunter, he sees patience as a part of his arsenal as much as any weapons.

A stubborn man by nature, he grows more so once tracking his quarry. He has learned the hard way that people who do not listen to his advice are both a liability and an easy snack for crocodiles.

Boutros considers himself to be honorable. Once he sets his price and accepts a contract, he ensures it is carried out. Should he fail, then he accepts no fee. Naturally, he expects those hiring him to keep to their side of the bargain. Those who cheat him are never helped again.

Hellfrost: Land of Fire

Scribe Lana bint Ra'uf

Race: Hadaree; **Hometown:** Faraf, City of Voices (Kingdoms of the Sphinxes); **Occupation:** Priestess, scholar, and writer; **Religion:** Faithful (Qedeset)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d4

Skills: Faith d6, Fighting d8, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Folklore) d6, Knowledge (Monsters: Giants) d4, Knowledge (Monsters: Orcs) d4, Knowledge (Monsters: Undead) d4, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Streetwise d6, Survival d4

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 4

Hindrances: Elderly, Novitiate (Minor), Orders (cult of Qedeset), Quirk (wants to study monsters before he fights them)

Edges: Ambidextrous, Connections (cult of Qedeset), Two-Fisted

Languages: Giant, Orcish, Sandspeech, Sphinx

Powers: *Boost/lower trait* (Smarts and Smarts-linked skills only), *speak language*

BACKGROUND

Lana always appreciated books and the wisdom they contained, but her youthful lust for adventure led her into a career in the pharaoh's army. For four decades she served with honor, courage, and distinction, first as a frontline warrior, later as a senior sergeant, and finally as a drill instructor.

Content she had fulfilled her obligation to the pharaoh and satisfied her need for adventure, she retired from duty. With time on her hands and a retirement fee that ensured she would not need to search for employment anytime soon, she returned to her true passion—learning.

A decade after retiring, she felt the call of Qedeset.



The clerics were somewhat surprised a woman of her age and previous experience desired to become a scholar, but they welcomed her into the temple as a novice. Had Lana hearkened to her inner voice earlier in life, she might have become a paladin, but with age against her, she opted to follow the path of a holy scribe.

Lana had only just qualified as a junior priestess when her superiors summoned her before them. The pharaoh, in his infinite wisdom, had requested the temple produce the most complete bestiary ever written. The tome was to cover all known beasts from all the lands of Al-Shirkuh, supernatural creatures such as demons, jinn, and undead, and even golems. Given her combat experience and love of lore, Lana had been personally selected by the pharaoh as one of the researchers. She would leave the temple and walk the desert, gathering firsthand information and collecting folklore.

Lana objected. While grateful that she should be considered for such an important task, her youthful adventurous streak had long since faded and her body was no longer up to the rigors of long-distance travel. Alas, her words fell on deaf ears—the pharaoh had spoken, and his word was that of Qedeset.

So it was that Lana, inexperienced in the ways of her faith yet skilled in the ways of the warrior, set out into the vastness. She has been working on the project for three years. During that time she has gained knowledge into the anatomy, social structure, culture, and military prowess of giants, orcs, and undead (the latter following a prolonged spell on the edges of Hekata).

Despite sending back reams of parchment, Lana knows her quest is likely to last many more years, and that she will come face to face with truly terrifying monsters.

DESCRIPTION

Old age has been kind to Lana. Her features are still youthful, though crows' feet around her eyes and her steel gray hair, which she ties in a ponytail, betray her years. Her brown eyes glimmer with enthusiasm, though quickly turn hard when combat occurs. Her fingertips are permanently stained with ink.

Although she moves with a grace, and has a body, more befitting someone much younger, her muscles are not as strong as they once were, and cold mornings cause her bones to ache. Despite her ailing strength, she still wears twin short swords tucked into her belt.

MANNERISMS

Lana would rather be back in the temple, surrounded by books and scrolls, but orders are orders. Although not arrogant, she has come to believe she was the best choice for the mission—paladins would kill first and study later, and few priests would know when to stop writing and start fighting, or running.

Keen to produce the best work possible, Lana is not prepared to take stupid risks. She knows she may have to kill many monsters before she is able to properly study one.

Waqgas ibn Siddiq

Race: Hadaree; **Homeland:** Hajjad, City of the Gods (Caliphate of Al-Shirkuh); **Occupation:** Delusional cavalryman; **Religion:** Faithful (Karmelos)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Battle) d4, Notice d4, Riding d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d4

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Clueless, Delusion (Minor; thinks his brother is a cat), Inept (Minor)

Edges: Mounted Combatant, Steady Hands

Languages: Holy Tongue, Sandspeech

BACKGROUND

Raised on a farm, Waqqas spent much of his youth helping his father rather than attending school. Even when he did go to school, his mind drifted off, for Waqqas knew where his future lay—he was going to enlist in the cavalry and serve the Caliph. By the time he was old enough to join, his father and older brother were glad to see the back of him—Waqgas was strong and well-suited to menial labor, but he wasted too much time and energy pretending to be a warrior riding down imaginary foes.

Although not possessed of the sharpest mind, Waqqas was strong, quick, and knew how to ride. Coupled with his willingness to obey orders without question, he was considered an ideal recruit. Three months later, Waqqas was assigned to a cavalry company.

For five years he served with distinction. While never going to climb the ranks, his bravery and loyalty were frequently commented on by his superiors. His only return home was to bury his father. That his brother inherited the farm outright didn't trouble Waqqas—he was enjoying his life in the cavalry, and the Caliph provided everything he needed.

During an engagement against orcs, Waqqas was seriously injured. His wounds were not enough to end his career, but he did require lengthy convalescence even after magical healing. He returned to the farm, where he could rest at his leisure until he was ready to help out with physical chores to rebuild his strength.

Waqgas found the farm deserted. Even the livestock had gone. The only living creature was a black cat. After three days alone in the house, the soldier finally recalled that his brother never owned a cat. Faced with endless options as to what could have occurred, Waqqas' imagination went into overdrive. His dull brain analyzed the evidence and leapt to the most "logical" (others might say fanciful) conclusion—a jinni or wizard had transformed his brother into a cat for some perceived slight! Though loyal to the Caliph, Waqqas knew he could not leave his brother in this state.

After securing an extended leave of absence, Waqqas set off to track down the culprit and convince him to reverse the spell. Though clerics to whom he told his tale detected nothing magical about the feline, Waqqas



could not be convinced to abandon his quest or look for a simpler solution.

Waqgas's brother has not been transformed into a cat. Following a bad harvest, the farmer borrowed money from a loan shark. A second bad harvest meant he could not repay the debt. Accepting the loan shark's threats at face value, he abandoned the farm, while his creditor took the livestock to help pay off the debt. His brother is alive and well, and starting a new life in a village near Hulwan, City of Gardens.

DESCRIPTION

Waqgas has a muscular frame toned by years of combat and training. His eyes are large and dull, reflecting the warrior's dim intellect. Most viewers are drawn to his hawkish nose, which juts from his face like a pyramid rising from the desert sands. No peacock pretending at being a soldier, his armor and weapons are battered but well maintained.

MANNERISMS

Outside of military matters, Waqqas has a poor knowledge of the world. He hasn't traveled much, he was too distracted by daydreams of soldiering to acquire much formal education, and his limited mind has focused entirely on his chosen career. This doesn't stop him voicing an opinion on all manner of topics, though. He doesn't pretend to know more than he does—there is a childlike innocence to his repeating facts he has picked up, no more illogical or foolish they might seem.

He spends a great deal of time talking to his "brother," toward whom he is highly protective. The cat seems to enjoy the attention and security.

Hellfrost: Land of Fire

Kaltor Twice-Sure

Race: Cakali; **Hometown:** Plains of Ash; **Occupation:** Mathemagician; **Religion:** Devoted

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Gambling d6, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Mathemagic d8, Notice d4, Shooting d6, Survival d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Cautious, Code of Honor, God Cursed (Shamash), Vow (Minor: find formula)

Edges: Arcane Background (Mathemagic; see *Realm Guide #21*), Bite/Claws, Fearless, Nomad Ways

Languages: Cakalic, Hekatic, Magorian, Sandspeech

Powers: *Deflection, detect/conceal, speed*

BACKGROUND

It was the cakali who taught humans mathematics. Through the principals they imparted, men were able to keep accurate censuses, record quantities of livestock and stores, allocate land, and later construct pyramids and domes. Mathematics, it has been argued by some scholars, was the knowledge that allowed the first human civilizations to form. Under the yolk of the jinn, much advanced lore was lost, with mathematics practiced only by trusted accountants and scholars.

Kaltor always had a head for numbers. While his peers were struggling to master division and multiplication, he was already engaged in solving more complex sums. Offered the chance to become a mathemagician, he jumped at the opportunity to further his knowledge.

His training quickly brought an understanding that the universe followed mathematical principles. This was the order imposed by Asha, and through mathemagic one could manipulate reality. As he delved further into

the arcane study, it dawned on him there must exist an equation that would allow one to attain Oneness through complete and instant understanding of Asha.

Kaltor has made it his life's work to piece together this formula and solve the equation. Such an endeavor would be exceedingly lengthy and the research amazingly complex, for the equation would, by its very nature, have to take into account every mathematical principle currently known, and likely the creations of many new ones—or perhaps the discovery of ideas currently thought lost.

Having exhausted his personal knowledge, Kaltor has reluctantly been forced to leave his tribe in search of forgotten lore and other mathematicians. He would dearly love to search for the fabled Lost Library of his ancestors, but is torn between achieving his goal and honoring the dead. Not even the cakali are immune to prosecution for disturbing the ruins, and Kaltor numbers among a rare few cakali who are not immune to fear.

Kaltor's quest is a worthy one, but he has lost sight of one very important fact—Oneness is achieved by the journey, not the end result. While he searches for a formula that might not even exist, he is already working toward his desired aim.

Even if he succeeds in piecing together the formula, he has not given the slightest thought to another, more terrifying, possibility—an equation that weaves together *everything* about the universe would, in effect, give one power over Asha and Druj, and possibly the gods. In the wrong hands, such power could be used to perform acts of unimaginable evil and destruction on a cosmic scale.

Kaltor may be Devoted, but the gods have taken notice of him—Shamash has already cursed the mathemagician for daring to search for such a formula. While Qedeshet may favor uncovering and spreading knowledge, Shamash sees the misguided mortal as a potential threat to the ordered nature of the universe. Should he uncover too much of the equation, the cult may be forced to take terminal action to end his quest.

DESCRIPTION

Kaltor dresses in plain scholarly robes. This isn't to display his profession, but a vain hope that enemies will consider him harmless and leave him in peace. His brow is furrowed, for it is rare that he isn't lost in thought.

MANNERISMS

Kaltor is not a cakali to be rushed. Life, like mathematics, can go horribly wrong if one forgets something important or begins making assumptions. Better to be sure than to be sorry, as he says.

His mind is constantly working toward solving the ultimate equation. As a result, Kaltor often forgets things he considers “a drain on his time,” like washing or eating. When it comes to combat, he is content to sit back, use a missile weapon or magic, and calculate the odds of the party's success. Should the odds look bad, he isn't afraid to run.



DANYAL IBN QALLARTAN

Race: Hadaree; **Hometown:** Tamarah, City of Heavenly Sin (Caliphate of Al-Shirkuh); **Occupation:** Scout; **Religion:** Faithful (Upuaut)
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d8, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Survival d8, Tracking d8
Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 4 (d4); **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: Lame, Phobia (Major: flies), Ugly
Edges: Pathfinder, Woodsman
Languages: Beduan, Cakalic, Holy Tongue

BACKGROUND

A former cavalry scout and pathfinder in the Caliph's army, Danyal quit the regimented military life in search of adventure, fame, and riches. It was a decision he would soon regret, as he tells anyone prepared to listen to his sorry and fanciful tale.

He claims that while searching for a ruin in the Great Southern Desert he was attacked and captured by a race of giant flymen—creatures that had the general appearance of men in form and garb, but with the heads of flies. Beaten unconscious, Danyal awoke many hours later in what appeared to be a cave. Here he was put to work as a miner alongside other captives.

During his captivity he was astounded to learn the flymen had a fully evolved culture, though one that ran on a strict caste system. At the bottom were drones, near mindless but immensely strong creatures. Above them were castes of artisans and warriors, and finally the nobles (known as "Masters"), though he never encountered any of the ruling class. No priests were ever mentioned, though he thought it quite likely they honored Baalzebul, the minor god of pestilence whose holy symbol is a bloated fly.

Over the course of several months Danyal planned his escape while playing the part of a dutiful and subdued slave. Storing away what meager rations and water he could afford, he surreptitiously made for the exit while the flymen were distracted by one of their religious rituals, though his flight did not go unnoticed—he was hounded all the way by flymen warriors.

It seemed the flymen lived inside a mountain, for when he reached the entrance he found himself at a dizzying height. Though weak, he clambered down the precipice toward the desert sands.

As he neared the bottom his vision suddenly blurred and he fell, breaking his leg. Regaining his senses, he was shocked to discover that he was lying not at the base of a mountain, but of a rocky pillar some 100 feet high. Staggering away into the blistering desert, all the while swatting at a swarm of buzzing flies that tore at his exposed flesh, he deduced the flymen had shrunk him to their natural size, keeping him in miniature form through some potion added to his rations. Flinging away the pouch of food, he dragged himself on, escaping the



cloud of tiny pursuers only by dint of a fearsome wind, against which they could not progress.

Danyal survived only by good fortune, for his half-dead, badly blistered body was found by a passing Bedu caravan. After regaining sufficient strength, Danyal told his rescuers of his story. Their raised eyebrows and sideways glances told him his tale was considered fanciful, a hallucination brought about by too much sun and too little water. Since that day, Danyal has been branded insane, a liar, or both in equal measure by all those who have heard his story of intelligent flymen.

DESCRIPTION

Danyal's face, arms, and torso are heavily scarred, injuries he insists occurred during his escape from his flymen captors. His left leg is twisted below the knee, a result of a bad fracture that was not set properly before healing began. Around his neck hangs a bird-shaped silver amulet, a symbol of Upuaut's avian aspect. He dresses in long, flowing robes.

MANNERISMS

Although many years have passed since his alleged imprisonment, Danyal still suffers from acute pteronarcophobia (fear of flies), a serious drawback in a land where flies are almost as common as grains of sand.

While not obsessive about it, Danyal keeps himself clean, washing his skin as soon as he is dirty and brushing away any traces of food after meals so as to reduce the chance of attracting flies. He carries a long-handled flyswat, which he swishes around his head and body almost subconsciously.

Hellfrost: Land of Fire

Firelord Majd ibn Amkram

Race: Hadaree; **Hometown:** Jadid, City of Trade; **Occupation:** Paladin and scavenger hunter; **Religion:** Faithful (Geb-Agni)*

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d4, Faith d8, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Survival d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Heroic, Loyal, Orders (cult of Geb-Agni), Wanted (Minor: hunted by mechanical assassins from the City of Iron)

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Brawny, Connections (cult of Geb-Agni)

Languages: Beduan, Holy Tongue, Sandspeech

Powers: Armor, deflection, smite

** Majd has special dispensation from the cult to wear and wield non-metal armor and weapons. As balance, his Faith rolls suffer a -2 penalty when his miracles are used against opponents other than Scavengers.*

BACKGROUND

The son of a renowned blacksmith, Majd had no dreams other than to learn his father's trade and earn a comfortable living. That simple dream was abruptly shattered in his 12th year.

Such was Majd's father's fame that he had been invited to attend a powerful noble in Musayid, City of Winds, who had need of his services. Majd had pleaded to accompany him, but he was needed at home to keep the business going. A month after the caravan departed news filtered back to Jadid—the caravan had been attacked and utterly destroyed by Scavengers.

Three nights later, the distraught youth had a dream.



In it he was approached by the shade of his father, who begged his son to avenge his death and help others avoid the same fate. When Majd asked how he could achieve this, his father pointed him toward the cult of Geb-Agni.

The cult had no qualms about accepting Majd as a novice—his father was a worshipper and a close friend to the local clerics, and Majd already possessed talents as a metalworker. A scrawny youth yet to grow into manhood, Majd subjected himself to a punishing physical exercise routine to build up his muscles and fitness. Although he at first rebelled against having to learn how to survive beneath the ground, his mentors, who he had told of his reason for joining the cult, persuaded him that the skills he learned would be invaluable should he have to enter the Mountains of Death on the trail of Scavengers.

On his 16th birthday, Majd completed his training and took his final vows. Knowing that carrying metal weapons would be as much as a hindrance as a help against the metal-hunting Scavengers, his mentors gifted him a maul, its business end crafted from granite blessed by priests of the order and carved with the holy symbol of Geb-Agni—Majd might honor his god's fiery aspect first and foremost, but he would require the help of his earth aspect as well if he was to be successful.

Majd has killed dozens of Scavengers, and his actions have not gone unnoticed. To the inhabitants of Last Water Oasis and the merchants who walk the Wind Road he is a hero. To the lord of the Iron City he is a problem that needs eliminating. Majd has already had to kill three mechanical assassins, and he knows more will come.

DESCRIPTION

Clad only in a leather vest and trousers held together by strips of the same material, Majd's impressive physique is visible for all to see. His bulging arms are covered in bright red tattoos, giving the impression of flames flowing down his arms toward his hands. He dyes his hair and beard with red ochre in honor of his patron deity.

Although he wears jewelry around his neck and wrists, none of it is made of metal. Instead, it comprises polished stones threaded onto thick leather strips.

MANNERISMS

Scavengers are dangerous opponents, but Majd always has time to share his booming laugh. As he says, a mortal's life is too short to be taken seriously. When it comes to fighting Scavengers he becomes a focused warrior, hell-bent on destroying his enemies through the combined power of his natural strength and miracles.

He disdains using or wearing metal objects whenever he is in the wilds—he sees no point in making himself a prime target for Scavengers, and his god provides him with adequate protection.

Although he has set himself a goal, Majd is always ready to lend a hand to those in need. He is not a soft touch, though—those who abuse his willingness to help soon learn he has a fiery temper.

Royal Watcher Mina bint Khulus

Race: Hadaree; **Homeland:** Rawdah, City of Heroes (Free Emirate States); **Occupation:** Paladin; **Religion:** Faithful (Inpu—see *Realm Guide #1*)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Faith d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Religion) d6, Notice d8+2, Streetwise d8, Survival d4

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: City Dweller (Minor), Vengeful (Minor), Vow (Major: Recover stolen artifacts)

Edges: Alertness, Arcane Background (Miracles)

Languages: Beduan, Hekatic, Holy Tongue, Sandspeech

Powers: *Barrier, sentry*

BACKGROUND

Mina grew up on tales of the dead. Huddled in her bed, she would listen wide-eyed as her mother told her how the dead suffered in the Afterlife if their grave goods were stolen from their tombs, and how robbers unleashed fearsome undead on the world through their ignorance and greed.

She initially joined the cult of Tammuz, but during her training it became readily apparent she had both keen eyes and an intense dislike of tomb robbers—the latter left her with little appreciation for the justice system, and she frequently made it clear that all tomb robbers should be subjected to summary execution. Sensing she had little future in the main cult, her mentors suggested she might better serve Tammuz as a paladin of Inpu, an idea Mina took to heart.

As a fully-fledged paladin her star rose to prominence with great speed in the cult—her devotion, no-nonsense approach to her duties, and excellent eyesight brought many tomb robbers to justice (though few ever came to trial), and she was lauded by her peers and superiors.

There are many tomb robbers and few clerics of Inpu. One fateful night, one of the five noblemen's tombs Mina was assigned to guard was plundered by thieves. Her sin was trivial, enough only to earn her a minor rebuke from her superiors and a temporary weakening of her faith from Inpu. Another cleric might have accepted both punishments with good grace, but Mina saw things differently.

She saw her punishments as a dark stain on her honor. In her eyes the glances her peers cast her way were disparaging, their whispers jokes at her expense. This quickly led to heated arguments and several fights. Fearing they might lose a notable paladin, her superiors informed her that all the thieves stole were nine golden statuettes, precious to the living but unlikely to give the spirit of their dead owner much discomfort.

Their plan to convince her to forget the past and move on backfired. Mina at once took a solemn holy vow to retrieve the statuettes and punish the perpetrators,



an act that would redeem her honor in the eyes of her peers and cleanse any lasting taint from her soul. Unable to talk her out of her plan, Mina's superiors reluctantly agreed to give her extended leave of absence from her other duties.

Five months into her quest and Mina has recovered four statuettes and delivered three thieves to their gods. Having scoured Rawdah, she now knows the remaining statuettes were sold to a merchant. Undeterred by the news, though with no experience in surviving the harsh open desert, Mina has left her home in search of the remaining five statuettes. She has no intention of paying for their return when she tracks them down—they are stolen property and rightfully belong back in the tomb of their long-dead owner.

DESCRIPTION

Mina has little time for personal beautification, seeing them as a distraction from her duties. She disdains make-up and keeps her hair close-cropped. Her thin lips are fixed in a stern visage, and her eyes narrowed.

MANNERISMS

Always a serious person, and fiercely devoted to her god's holy cause, Mina has become driven to complete her quest and redeem what she sees as her tainted honor. She has no time for humor and frivolities, nor has she the patience for lengthy investigations and slow questioning. When she does not get the answers she wants to hear she resorts to threats of violence to loosen tongues, and when that fails she is not afraid to use her weapons.

She is ever alert for danger, her eyes darting to and fro, taking in every detail of her surroundings, no matter how trivial they might seem.

Hellfrost: Land of Fire

Kemet the Healer

Race: Ushabti (Hadaree); **Homeland:** None; **Occupation:** Healer; **Religion:** Devoted

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Healing d10, Knowledge (Alchemy) d8, Survival d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances*: Clueless, Inept (Major), Yellow

Edges: Construct, Hedge Magic

Languages: Al-Waziran, Cakalic, Hekatic, Sandspeech

** Kemet has three Major Hindrances. Normally this would warrant no special consideration, but we have chosen to allow him to cast gravespeak using his Spirit as his arcane skill die in compensation. As he was "born" through magic, he is subject to the Siphoning.*

BACKGROUND

While Kemet appears to be human, he was never born. For all his appearances, Kemet is actually an ushabti. Ushabtis are small figurines common as grave goods among the Faithful, though their use dates back to the earliest worship of the goods. In the world of mortals they are inanimate objects. In the world of the gods, though, they are given a semblance of life so that they can serve those they were buried with, transforming from base materials to creatures of flesh and blood, albeit ones with limited sentience and a dedicated function.

Kemet was placed in the tomb of a Hekatic nobleman in the era before the rise of khem-hekau magic. His trappings, and the spell engraved upon his wooden form, gave him life in the heavens as a healer. Kemet served his master faithfully for millennia, for the mummified nobleman's mortal remains were still intact and thus his spirit endured in the realm beyond death.



Two years ago, a cakali ushabti mage came across Kemet's figurine in a market, it having been stolen from his master's tomb centuries beforehand. Some weeks later, the mage used the ushabti as a focus for a *bodyguard* spell, but something went very wrong. Instead of merely enlarging and animating the ushabti figure, Kemet's spirit form was torn from the heavens and rudely deposited in the mortal world inside his full-size replica. Worse, Kemet's spirit was not returned to the Afterlife when the shocked mage promptly lost control of his spell—he was stuck in the world of mortals.

Fortunately the mage proved curious, and the pair, with Kemet suddenly able to learn new things and fully express himself in the manner of any mortal, entered into a dialogue that lasted many months. Many things came as a shock to the newly "born" healer, none more so than learning of Hekata's corruption and eventual fall into darkness and death.

Eager to explore the mortal world, Kemet and the mage eventually parted company. After a tour of the ruins of Hekata, Kemet began his travels around Al-Shirkuh, a trip that continues to this day.

As he walked across the sands a troubling thought entered his mind. Although he had a spirit form in the Afterlife and now had a mortal body of sorts, Kemet was unsure as to whether or not he had a soul—Hekatic mages created golems, and they were regarded as soulless automatons. After conversing with clerics and imams he met of his travels, though never revealing his reason for asking, he adopted the Devoted faith last year. That creed at least claimed that everything, regardless of form or substance, was part of the universe and therefore could achieve the state of Oneness. He knows he might not ever see his old master again if and when he dies, having forsaken the gods, but after 2,700 years of service he has no wish to going back to be a slave.

Kemet is not truly alive. He appears human, but is a construct—he does not bleed (though all forms of healing work on him), breathe, or require sustenance. He still retains a tenuous link to the Afterlife, which enables him to talk with the spirits of the dead.

DESCRIPTION

Kemet wears the traditional garb of a Hekatic ushabti figurine—a striped headdress that hangs over his shoulders and a fake beard. He favors a simple linen kilt, the traditional clothing of Hekatic peasants.

MANNERISMS

Beyond a rudimentary grasp of several modern languages, Kemet has little understanding of the mortal realm. Things mortals take for granted are still new and frightening in equal measure. In many ways he is a child, curious, keen to learn, and lacking understanding of social mores. Kemet knows he is far from Oneness. Until he achieves that state, he is unsure what will happen to him should his mortal form perish. To that end, he is afraid of confrontation and avoids taking unnecessary risks.

Barika the Blade

Race: Hadaree; **Hometown:** Jizah, City of the Sphinx (Kingdoms of the Sphinxes); **Occupation:** Adventurer-for-hire; **Religion:** Devoted

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d4, Survival d6, Throwing d8

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Cursed (Special Major: Fighting drops to d4 if he uses any weapons other than daggers or throwing knives), Greedy (Minor), Vow (Minor)

Edges: Master of Knives (see *Realm Guide* #22), Quick Draw

Languages: Al-Waziran, Sandspeech, Sphinx

BACKGROUND

An orphan, Barika grew up on the streets of Jizah, City of the Sphinx. Elsewhere she might have survived on alms, but Jizah was wracked by poverty. Despite knowing the harsh penalty that would be imposed if she was caught, Barika turned to petty theft to fill her constantly rumbling stomach. One day she was caught with her hands in a stranger's purse.

Glowing menacingly over the terrified child, the stranger demanded to know what the waif thought she was doing. Barika span a tried and tested sob story, producing tears on demand. Unimpressed, the stranger gave her a choice—she could come with him and learn how to be a warrior, a noble enough profession, or be handed to the authorities and tried as a thief. Barika didn't take long to make her choice.

Her master proved harsh but fair, and good to his word. He made Barika exercise hard to build up her muscles and stamina; he drilled her for hour after hour in every weapon known in Al-Shirkuh until she knew every fighting style. What he failed to hammer out of her was a growing arrogant streak.

Barika's master would often go away for weeks at a time. He never took her with him, and he never explained what he was doing. The day dawned when he never returned. Unsure what to do next, but now a capable warrior, Barika became an adventurer-for-hire, offering her blade in return for hard coin.

Her arrogance was almost her downfall. While camped in the wilds, a lone Bedu approached her. After offering to share her campfire, Barika asked the nomad his business. The man explained that he was in need of a strong arm and skilled warrior, and had plentiful coin to pay for such services. Puffing out her chest, Barika said he had found his warrior. Words are cheap, and the nomad asked Barika to demonstrate her prowess. She performed drill after drill, boasting of the many weapons with which she was proficient. Through her mastery of weapons, she added, she hoped to achieve Oneness.

No sooner had the words left her lips than the nomad transformed into his true guise, a greater majin. Calling



her a fool of a mortal and insulting the name of Suleiman, the jinni laid a terrible curse upon her—should she try to wield any of the weapons she had named her prowess would instantly fail her.

Barika was heartbroken, but fate had not been entirely cruel—daggers are common tools, and Barika had not listed it among the many weapons she knew. Although her path to Oneness had been sent back, she quickly devoted herself to a new quest—she would gain perfect mastery with daggers and throwing knives. After that she intends to hunt down the jinni and make him regret the day he met Barika the Blade.

DESCRIPTION

Barika has suffered her fair share of injuries during her career. Her nose is bent, having been broken several times; her face is flecked with small scars; she is missing two teeth; and one of her ears has a nick out of the lobe. Her appearance is distinctive rather than ugly. She wears her hair short in the manner of a warrior, so as not to give her foes something to grab hold of in combat.

MANNERISMS

Having grown up in abject poverty, Barika craves money and the luxuries it can buy. Although a good person at heart, she has no interest in being charitable—no one helped her when she was in desperate need. As such, any help she offers comes at a price.

A dagger is rarely out of her hands. She is constantly spinning, flipping, twirling, and balancing a blade. When she needs both hands for a task, the dagger disappears into a sheath as quick as a flash, only to reappear when the task is completed.

Hellfrost: Land of Fire

Fadeen Hamzah

Race: Bedu; **Homeland:** The Great Southern Desert; **Occupation:** Fadeen; **Religion:** Faithful (Duamutef)
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Streetwise d4, Survival d4, Tracking d4
Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: Inept (Minor), Loyal, Orders (cult of Duamutef), Overconfident
Edges: Attractive, Connections (cult of Duamutef), Fadeen (Duamutef; (see *Realm Guide #20*), Respected Tribe
Languages: Beduan, Sandspeech
Powers: *Boost/lower trait* (Vigor, Persuasion, Riding, Shooting, Survival, and Tracking only)

BACKGROUND

Hamzah wanted to be a cleric of Duamutef more than anything else in the world. As a youth he would watch the paladins at their martial practice, listen wide-mouthed to the stories of the priests, and attend rituals faithfully.

As soon as he turned 14 he applied to join the cult. Although he washed out within a few months, he applied four more times. Each time he was rejected. Hamzah's problem was not a lack of faith, for he had that enough for two men, but, as the Bedu say, that he was a few grains short of a sand dune. In short, Hamzah was born with a dull intellect.

While he proved capable enough at the martial side of the cult, he lacked the brains to master anything above the basic of the more important aspects—the laws of the Bedu, the nuances of hospitality, identifying tracks, and

surviving in the harsh desert. With these skills vital even for paladins, the clerics had no choice but to fail him.

After his fifth rejection he was taken to one side by the senior priest of his tribe. The priest explained to Hamzah that he would never become a cleric, but that did not mean he could not serve Duamutef as a holy warrior. If Hamzah was willing, the cult would train him as a fadeen, a lay paladin in service to the cult. Although it took much longer to train him than normal, Hamzah was eventually appointed as a fadeen. It was the happiest day of the young man's life, as he tells anyone prepared to listen.

Hamzah has since left his tribe. He remains on very good terms with his kin and returns to their camp whenever he can, but he felt his calling lay in the open desert. Here he could best serve Duamutef by aiding others and protecting the desert from despoilers.

In the three years he has been an itinerant fadeen, Hamzah has earned a good reputation. He may be simple, but he is extremely personable (and his tribe is well respected across Al-Shirkuh) and has proven his loyalty to the cult and his fellow nomads countless times. While he is rarely invited to settle disputes or advise nobles, he frequently dines in the tents of sheikhs or stands at their side when a show of strength is required.

Hamzah doesn't understand the subtlety of romantic courtship, though he has plenty of female admirers—his good looks turn heads wherever he goes. The young man has rebuffed all romantic advances, a move that displeases his parents, who think their son should be married by now. Hamzah is devoted to Duamutef first and foremost, and has no time to settle down and raise a family right now.

DESCRIPTION

Hamzah is an attractive man, with a wide, even smile, neatly cropped hair and beard, smooth complexion, and good (although not muscular) physique. His eyes shine with a childlike innocence, betraying the weakness of his mind. As a mark of devotion to his deity, he sports a tattoo of Duamutef's holy symbol on his forehead and the backs of his hands.

MANNERISMS

Fadeen is an occupation, not a title. Hamzah, though, insists on being addressed as "Fadeen Hamzah," in the same way clerics are usually addressed by their title before their given name. Strangers find it rather odd ("Hamzah the Fadeen" would be the conventional usage), but those who know the popular simpleton endeavor to keep him happy. It is second nature to his true friends.

Hamzah's overconfidence stems not from a belief that he can do anything, but from an eagerness to please others and the inability to calculate the see when a task is doomed to failure. Essentially he is too stupid to know when to hold back. He is fiercely loyal to those he calls friend, and is prepared to weigh in against any odds to rescue a friend in trouble.



Artak

Race: Sand Goblin; **Hometown:** Kebir Khayma Medina (Great Southern Desert; see *Realm Guide #4*); **Occupation:** Spelunker; **Religion:** Devoted
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Healing d6, Knowledge (Area: The Underearth) d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Swimming d4, Throwing d6

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Hindrances: Bad Luck, Banned Edges, Cautious, Delusional (Minor: Believes there is a cave of diamonds), Small, Untrustworthy

Edges: Camel, Dungeon Crawler, Sand Walker, Sneaky

Languages: Earthtongue, Orcish, Sandspeech

BACKGROUND

Artak never had much luck. All his get-rich-quick schemes failed abysmally, often leaving him poorer than when he began, and more often than not he lost money gambling on simple tosses of a coin. Lacking the inclination to become a thief—he believed it was too much work and risk for too little reward—he devoted himself to scavenging for a living, a respectable enough occupation for his ilk.

One fateful day his luck changed. There he was, minding his business and enjoying a cup of coffee, when a visiting storyteller began reciting a tale. Artak didn't pay the storyteller much attention, at least not until he heard him mention a cave of diamonds located somewhere in the depths of the earth. Although he had never seen a diamond firsthand, he knew their general form and, more importantly, knew they were extremely valuable. An entire cave of them would make him richer than even the Caliph and Sultan combined!

Artak listened intently to the rest of the tale, memorizing the description of the glittering cave until he could see it in his mind's eye as clearly as he could his own hands. There and then he vowed to find the cave and exploit its vast treasure.

When the storyteller had finished Artak bought him a cup of coffee and questioned him further. The storyteller did not the exact location of the cave mouth that would lead to the diamonds, but he listed several important subterranean landmarks that would point the way, as well as numerous trials and pitfalls that must first be conquered.

The sand goblin's initial forays into the Underearth all failed. Armed only with some scraps of rope and a lantern, Artak explored several nearby caves in the Desert Wall Mountains, but was continually thwarted by sheer cliffs, narrow gaps, and deep sumps. A normal sand goblin would have quit at this point, but Artak had become fixated on his quest. Over time he purchased, stole, or borrowed more equipment, learned how to swim, and squeezed himself through tighter and tighter gaps.

He has explored hundreds of caves and wandered through many miles of subterranean passageways, yet



has found no sign of the fabled cave. Reluctantly, Artak has been forced to seek help in accomplishing his quest. Fortunately for him there are always adventurers looking to make money.

Artak's great plan for wealth is doomed to fail—not because he lacks the resources to find the cave, but simply because the cave of diamonds does not actually exist. Had he bothered to listen to the story in full he would (probably) have realized that it was an allegorical tale, not a factual one. As for the storyteller who revealed the nature of the landmarks and hazards, he was merely spinning his one-goblin audience a yarn in the false belief the goblin was looking to hear a good story.

DESCRIPTION

Artak's appearance and natural odor are made worse by the thick layer of lamp oil and animal fat that coats his permanently matted hair. He sees such greasy substances as an important tool in his chosen quest, but others find it repulsive.

MANNERISMS

Artak has spent much of life underground, living by lantern light. Although his eyes work perfectly well in daylight he has developed the habit of squinting.

Sand goblins are rarely rash creatures, but Artak takes their natural cautiousness to a higher level. Part of his cautiousness stems from the bad luck that follows him round like a second shadow. He never gambles and he prefers not to take any unnecessary risks.

Artak is a stickler for detail, especially when it comes to planning and checking he has the right equipment for expeditions. He weighs up every situation before making a decision. After all, a dead Artak cannot enjoy the wealth to be found in the cave of diamonds.

Hellfrost: Land of Fire

Hanife Snaketalker

Race: Cakali; **Hometown:** Maqneh, City of Peace (Free Emirate States); **Occupation:** Paladin; **Religion:** Faithful (Qedeshet)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d4

Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d6, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Area: Snakelands) d6, Knowledge (Folklore) d6, Knowledge (History) d6, Notice d6, Survival d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Hindrances: Big Mouth, Curious, Code of Honor, Orders (cult of Qedeshet), Pacifist (Minor)

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Bite/Claws, Connections (cult of Qedeshet), Fearless, Nomad Ways, Snake Charmer (see *Realm Guide* #17)

Languages: Cakalic, Sandspeech, Sslaniss

Powers (Miracles): *Insight, speak language*

Powers (Other): *Beast friend* (living snakes only)

BACKGROUND

Snakes have always been part of Hanife's life. Born to a storyteller and caravan guardsman in the Great Northern Desert, Hanife grew up listening to tales about the ophidae and their accursed realm. While her peers avoided snakes (cakali may not fear death, but that doesn't make them oblivious to danger), Hanife was never troubled by their presence—like all the females in her family she had been taught secret songs of charming and friendship that could turn the most vicious snake into a temporary ally.

Hanife's family moved to Maqneh, City of Peace, in search of better prospects when she was still young. Although she quickly became urbanized, the call of the desert never truly left. A capable if less than brilliant student, Hanife, her mind filled with her mother's stories of

crumbling cities, desolate tombs, and forgotten temples, chose to join the cult of Qedeshet as a paladin. This would give her the best of both worlds—the opportunity to study firsthand the things in her mother's stories and a chance to return to the desert. Her tutors found her an able pupil, though one prone to daydreaming and easily distracted by unrelated matters.

On reaching the stage in her academic training where she could specialize, Hanife opted for folklore and history, with particular focus on the ophidae, a race few sages had studied in any detail. She mastered their language as well as any non-ophidae could manage (a task made harder by her race having a muzzle), studied musty maps of their homeland, and absorbed all the myths concerning the ancient race.

For her final exam Hanife was dispatched to the Snake-lands as part of a small expedition. What she discovered there exceeded her wildest dreams. The ophidae were not a barbaric race, as she had been led to believe, but possessors of a rich culture steeped in magic and science far beyond the understanding of any modern scholar. She also learned a terrible truth—the ophidae had returned to Al-Shirkuh. During the trip she made friends with Many-Colored Sage Ikhlas bint-Masrur, leader of the Many-Colored Tent community, with whom she stays whenever she is in the Snakelands.

Hanife suspects the ophidae will soon begin reclaiming their other cities. With time against her, she endeavors to spend as much time as possible in the Snakelands, gleaned all she can about the snakemen before access to their cities becomes impossible.

DESCRIPTION

Hanife spends much of her time in the field, not the library, and her appearance reflects this. Her red-brown fur is rarely combed, her claws are cracked and frequently encased in dirt, and her clothes are in need of darning. She is rarely without her brightly colored headscarf, which is emblazoned with Qedeshet's holy symbol in gold stitching.

MANNERISMS

Hanife couldn't keep a secret if her life depended on it. As a cleric of Qedeshet she does not see this as a hindrance or character flaw—her deity dislikes secrets of any kind, as does Hanife. Those who know quickly learn not to include her in all their plans or pass on gossip (unless they want other people to know, of course).

Another trait her companions find problematic at times is her curiosity—she simply cannot abide a mystery. Even as something as a closed door has her twitching to know what is on the other side. She defends her insistence on poking her nose into everything by repeating an old cult adage—"One who does not seek does not learn."

Although she is a paladin, Hanife does not consider herself a warrior. She considers herself a field historian, someone who scours ruins for lost knowledge. She'll fight in self-defense, but she never initiates combat.



Waqar Dar-Mukarram

Race: Bedu; **Homeland:** Jinn Lands of Old; **Occupation:** Sha'ir mage; **Religion:** Devoted

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Knowledge (Arcana) d4, Knowledge (Folklore) d8, Knowledge (Monsters: Jinn) d6, Knowledge (Riddles) d6, Notice d4, Persuasion d4, Streetwise d6, Survival d4

Charisma: -1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Bad Reputation (see p. 22), Delusional (Major: Jinn are friendly), Enemy (Minor: Jinn Slayer)

Edges: Arcane Background (Sha'ir; see *Realm Guide* #19), Storyteller

Languages: Beduan, Cakalic, Jinn, Sandspeech

Powers: *Boost/lower trait, elemental manipulation, voice on the wind*



BACKGROUND

A child of the Jinn Lands of Old, Waqar grew up in sight of several jinn ruins. His parents feared the tumbled stones, and told him stories of how the jinn enslaved the races and forced them to work for their benefit under the lash. Waqar never truly believed the tales, though.

Several years later Waqar's peers dared him to spend a night in one of the ruins. It was a frequent request in his tribe, the adolescents seeing it as a test of courage. Unafraid, Waqar wrapped himself in his blanket and settled down for the night in a dark corner. As the moon rose high in the sky, Waqar heard an unearthly voice echo through the silent stones.

It spoke to him by name, telling him that the jinn had been misrepresented by history, that they had come to the realm of mortals as saviors (did they not put an end to war in the lands they conquered?), and that Waqar had been chosen to spread this message among the races.

The voice was a trick created by his peers using *voice on the wind*. Their intention was that Waqar would repeat the story in the morning and be sternly rebuked by his parents. Waqar was duly chastised, but he refused to listen when his peers admitted their involvement. The jinn had spoken to him and he would obey their commands. Numerous beatings from his parents and countless lectures from his tribe's imam could not dissuade Waqar from his misguided belief. The seeds of his bad reputation were well and truly sown.

Waqar left his tribe at the age of 14 to become apprentice to an itinerant sha'ir, a storyteller who worked magic. His mentor might well have set him straight on the true nature of the jinn, but that was not to be, for he was a Penitent. Instead of correcting Waqar's erroneous views, he only reinforced them (though the two did not agree on every point of the Penitent's creed).

Since master and apprentice parted ways Waqar was wandered far and wide. Everywhere he goes, he attempts to correct history's mistake in labeling the jinn as wicked. So far his words have fallen on largely deaf ears.

DESCRIPTION

Waqar is adorned with tokens dating from the Jinn Empire—he wears small coins and pieces of pottery looped on a long leather thong around his neck, on his right middle finger is a ring once worn by a lesser jinni, and copies of jinn texts are sewn into his traditional garments.

MANNERISMS

Waqar isn't insane, but he definitely delusional when it comes to the jinn. Normally mild-mannered, he both becomes defensive and argumentative when discussing the unearthly race and their past activities. That others do not wish to hear his words concerning the jinn is down to centuries of false history becoming ingrained in their collective psyche. As he tells his audiences, "When one has repeatedly been fed lies it is hard to stomach the taste of truth."

Although not a member of the Penitents, he shares their view of the jinn as a savior race (though not the belief that they are heralds of the true gods). His stories of the jinn invariably paint them in a good light, which rarely goes does well with audiences.

Waqar rarely mentions the name of Suleiman. In his eyes, Suleiman was a usurper who tried to conquer the Jinn Empire, but who, in his lust for glory, brought only death and destruction. He accepts the Devoted creed, but believes it is based on ancient jinn philosophy.

He sees his magic as a gift from the jinn, a means of communicating with them on a higher level. In his eyes he does not charm lesser jinn. Rather, he makes polite requests, leaving the jinn to decide whether or not they respond. If a spell fails, it is because the jinn did not find his task worthy of their attention. If he suffers the Siphoning, it is punishment for angering them with his request for assistance.

Hellfrost: Land of Fire

Golem

Race: Majin jinn blooded (Hadaree); **Hometown:** Akhmim, City of the Devoted (Al-Wazir Sultanate); **Occupation:** Guardian wizir mage; **Religion:** Devoted
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d6, Survival d4, Wizir Magic d8

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: City Dweller, Distrusted, Elemental Weakness (Air), Heat Prone, Loyal

Edges: Arcane Background (Wizir Magic: Guardian), Jinn Blooded (Earth), Still Human

Languages: Al-Waziran, Earthtongue, Jinn

Powers: *Armor**, *boost/lower trait* (Strength, Vigor, Fighting, Intimidation, Shooting, Stealth, and Throwing only), *smite*

Innate Powers: *Elemental manipulation (earth)*

* *Golem's armor transforms his skin into stone, and gives the illusion items he is wearing or carrying are also stone. By making a Stealth roll when standing perfectly still he can adopt the guise of a statue, potentially getting the Drop on his opponents.*

BACKGROUND

The man known only as Golem grew up listening to racial abuse. Once his peers knew he was jinn blooded he was variously taunted with names like Stone-head, Rock-brains, and Pebble. The words themselves didn't hurt him. What hurt was the vehemence and ignorance behind them. Golem never let the bullies rile him with their taunts—that path would lead to a life of victimization, and Golem was proud of his heritage, not ashamed. Those that tried physical violence against the youth soon regretted their actions, pummeled by his fists or sent

running by a spray of stones answering his jinn blood commands. Once word got around that he could stand up for himself, he earned a few dirhams a week acting as “bodyguard” for other kids subjected to harassment. Golem didn't care what gender, race, or faith his charges were, a viewpoint he has maintained in adult life. In the end the bullies gave up.

It was only during his training as a guardian wizir mage, shortly after he first cast *armor* in fact, that he was called Golem. At first he saw this nickname as just another joke at his expense, an attempt to brand him as dim-witted. He soon realized it was a compliment—golems are loyal, strong, fearless, and remorseless in their duties. He liked the name so much that it is now the only one he uses.

Like most guardian wizir mages, Golem is a freelance agent. He picks and chooses his commissions on his own criteria, rather than his need to make a living.

Although he dislikes the heat and has little understanding of the harshness of the open sands, he recently decided to give up city life and explore the trackless desert. He is currently searching for an adventurer of suitable social class who needs a bodyguard. Golem doesn't know how long his wanderlust will last, but he intends to enjoy himself until the yearning to explore fades.

DESCRIPTION

In his natural form Golem is rather unimpressive. He isn't overly muscled, he is of average height, and his face is best described as nondescript—all ideal for a guardian wizir mage who prefers not to attract attention to his presence. Similarly, he rarely wears clothes that broadcast his position as a bodyguard, even going so far as to disdain armor heavier than leather when working in an urban environment.

When he casts *armor*, though, he takes on the appearance of a living statue to the extent that even his clothes and weapons seem to be made of stone. More than one would-be assassin hunting one of his masters has lost his life when he failed to notice the eyes of a seemingly mundane statue following him across the room.

MANNERISMS

Unlike many of his kin, Golem isn't slow to make decisions—that trait does not fit well with his chosen life path. Nor is he stubborn—fixed routines only benefit potential assassins. Golem accepts contracts for his services only for a year and a day. After that, he typically finds a new master so he can experience new surroundings.

Once Golem declares someone a friend he is fiercely loyal, prepared to do anything to keep them from harm, no matter the risk to himself. The same mentality applies to his chosen master. Only a deep betrayal of his trust can cause him to retract his friendship or services.

Golem detests the oppressive heat of the open desert, and is much more comfortable in cities, where there is always shade. Once the temperature starts to rise he begins to grumble constantly.



Nafisah bint Razin

Race: Marid jinn blooded (Hadaree); **Homeland:** Tamarah, City of Heavenly Sin (Caliphate of Al-Shirkuh); **Occupation:** Courtesan and thief; **Religion:** Faithful (Tamarni)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Knowledge (Law) d4, Knowledge (Religion) d4, Lockpicking d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Distrusted, Elemental Weakness (Fire), Enemy (Major: agent of robbed client), Greedy (Minor), Overconfident

Edges: Attractive, Houri, Jinn Blooded (Water), Still Human

Languages: Al-Waziran, Holy Tongue, Sandspeech

Innate Powers: *Elemental manipulation (water)*



BACKGROUND

Nafisah is what the citizens of Tamarah, City of Heavenly Sin, call an alley cat. Uneducated and abandoned by her parents, who had plenty of other mouths to feed, she survived into her early teens mostly by begging and stealing. Eventually she caught the eye of a tabac seller, who gave her work selling single smoke pouches of tabac on the streets. It was here she met Zalada, proprietress of the University of Courtesans.

Drawn to the child's natural beauty, fluid movement, and casual confidence, she offered to enroll Nafisah as a student. The training would be long and hard, and she would have to repay her tuition costs from future earnings, but a girl with her abilities could make good money doing nothing more than hanging on the arm of a rich client at social functions.

Nafisah had to work harder than most of the other girls in her class. While she had many desirable natural talents, she was illiterate and uneducated, traits most unbecoming in a courtesan, who is expected to be capable of engaging in small talk on a variety of topics, lacked any knowledge of social etiquette, and spoke with a distinctly lower-class accent.

Once qualified, Nafisah began her career as a courtesan. Her looks and grace soon made her popular with the rich citizens of Tamarah. As Zalada had promised, she did indeed earn good money, but she also had to hand over 50% of her fee to Zalada until her tuition fees (which amounted to 4,000 dinars) were paid off.

Nafisah had sampled the lifestyle of the rich, a lifestyle she now wanted for herself (without the baggage that comes with marriage). Her clients were invariably wealthy, and most had valuable objects lying around their home. In order to afford the many luxuries she now craved, and repay Zalada sooner (Nafisah now owes just 800 dinars), she began stealing from her clients.

Many of the clients she steals from do not miss a few coins or piece of jewelry, but her latest mark was

particular attached to the rune-engraved amulet she lifted from his bedroom. Having survived one attempt on her life, Nafisah has wisely decided it is prudent to leave Tamarah, at least in the short-term. Unfortunately, the nobleman is not so easily dissuaded, and has sent an assassin after her.

DESCRIPTION

Nafisah is an attractive woman. Her large, moist brown eyes are highlighted with *kobl*; her full lips are stained with brightly colored mineral pigments to make them more alluring, and her luxurious hair is worn braided and draped over one shoulder. When in urban areas she dons light clothing, just enough to tantalize the senses, but without revealing too much flesh.

MANNERISMS

Nafisah is sure about just three things. First, she is an attractive woman. Second, men are weak when it comes to attractive women. She has no compulsion at using her feminine wiles to get what she wants—which is mainly money. That's the third thing she knows for sure—money cannot buy happiness, but it can certainly help make life more enjoyable.

She is not a prostitute, nor would she ever consider stooping to selling her body for sex. Like all courtesans she is an educated social companion, there to be seen and admired, but not touched. Much of her income comes not from the fees she charges (though they are a good earner), but from robbing her clients blind.

Nafisah moves with a natural fluidity, a boon from her jinn heritage. Whereas khamsin jinn blooded often seem to glide, she flows, seeming to wrap herself around objects and people as she passes by.

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Will your character's deeds be COUNTED AMONG those of the heroes of old?

To outsiders, the population of Al-Shirkuh appears to fall into a small range of lifestyles and occupations. Appearances can be deceiving, as every desert-dweller knows, and the inhabitants are as varied as the parched landscapes they call home.

Al-Shirkuh has its share of warriors and wise men, clerics and sorcerers, healers and harmers, peasants and nobles, commanders and cowards, and merchants and rogues. This is a land where men and women can choose to walk beside the gods or follow their own path to enlightenment, converse with mighty and capricious jinn or damn them to oblivion, live with the desert or tolerate its presence.

This supplement contains 50 characters, both villainous and heroic, ready to be dropped into any *Hellfrost: Land of Fire* game or used as player characters.



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