



# SHADOWS OF UMBERTO

DW  
DUNGEON WORLD

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With love to Diablo's city of Caldeum, Disney's Aladdin, ancient Zoroastrianism, and every other desert trope in the book.

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SHADOWS OF UMBERTO

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An old man in chains kneels before the throne. The throne's occupant is his lord, the caliph. The caliph is thirteen, and doesn't understand this man. Is he an enemy? He doesn't look like one. His magi council warned him against showing weakness in front of his enemies. But they are absent now; clearly, the fate of this old man didn't concern them. The caliph straightens his oversized crown, and prepares to speak.

We zoom out, to the world beyond: the royal palace, perched precariously atop a spire of thin rock. A single narrow path winds its way from the palace gates back to the city below, though from the sky all you would see is a press of bodies. Each of these souls seek a royal audience. One of them is the old man's daughter. She intends to argue her father's innocence. Has their family not dutifully served the crown for generations? How can her dear father possibly be part of some rebellion? Every sunrise for the past month she has joined the winding queue. She has yet to even reach the palace gates. Her back aches, and her stomach grumbles, but she waits still; it is all she can do.

Another scene, a quarter of a mile below. We see the mother's son conducting a ritual in blood and fire. The whispers in his dreams promised an end to his families' hardship - if he would help the rebellion. Naively, he believed them. His flesh twists perversely, skin scorched by crimson balefire. His final thought before his sanity is stripped away is his grandfather's smiling face.

Elsewhere, our characters gather. Perhaps they come from distant lands or have spent their lives in the warren-like alleyways of the city. Either way, it is their actions that will shape the way of things to come for the elderly man, his family, and all who live within the fortunate city: Umberto.



SHADOWS OF UMBERTO

# INTRODUCTION

*"...And it was given to him to see all the city spread out below him, like a tapestry. He saw carpets fluttering in the skies, and the markets filled with sweetstuffs, and rare spices, and cunningly crafted jewelled birds that sang more sweetly than any bird hatched from an egg...*

*...He saw the craftsmen and the porters and the merchants; he saw the warriors and the city guards, and strangers from all nations who had come to Baghdad, the jewel of cities.*

*Incomparable.*

*All this he saw, but his heart was troubled within him."*

– Neil Gaiman, "Ramadan" (1993)

Shadows of Umberto is an adventure toolkit for Dungeon World, designed around a desert city of markets and mysticism. The first version was written after my first Dungeon World campaign, in the summer of 2013. We played maybe half a dozen games in and around this desert city. Notable monsters were overcome, memorable treasures were looted, and we learned lots of new and important things about the world we'd created together. So much in fact, I thought I'd write a book about it.



While I was happy with the original, it wasn't perfect. Most glaringly, it wasn't ready for print. Additionally, what constitutes a "Dungeon World Adventure" has changed over the years, and this new edition is designed to reflect that. Although the core concept remains the same much of the backstory has been re-written to bring the adventure as a whole together. Adventures, treasures and compendium classes have now been grouped together for easier reference during play.



## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The book is designed for new Dungeon World GMs to supplement their adventures. There's an introduction, and a few extra dungeons - you can use all of them, or none. There's compendium classes and treasures - throw them in if they sound appropriate for your game, ignore them if not. No-one feeling the Arabian Nights right now? Stick this book back in the shelf and come back to it another day.

### ICONS

 This icon represents knowledge most party members wouldn't be aware of unless they spout lore, or have shown evidence of researching the topic before.  This icon represents something interesting a character may spot if they discern realities.

### USING IT PIECEMEAL

The tables and custom moves in this book could be useful in any kind of bustling city setting. There's plenty of flavour written for Arabian Nights-style settings out there; I'd hope my humble efforts can be something you can throw into the mix, give a good stir and see what comes out.

### WRITING INSPIRATION

You may be reading all this because, hey, you're going to write your own amazing adventures one day! For the sake of a few bucks, it pays to keep an eye on the competition, right? If so, put the book down and start writing. As in right now.

It's never been easier to become a published game designer, and there's never been more ways to find help, support and encouragement (not to mention a paying audience) for your work. Come find me online and I'll happily help critique your work. But first, you've got to write something!

# PRINCIPLES OF PLAY

Improvisation is a key aspect of any RPG, but *Dungeon World* thrives on it. The GM's agenda, principles, and moves are a framework for play. Together, they guide actions and encourage improvisation for both the GM and the players. They aren't vague ideas to browse over; they're an explicit part of playing the game.

The principles I've added and amended below come from my own experience in running games. They are guides to keep you focused on your agenda, which is the same as any DW game. These are: *Portray a fantastic world*, *Fill the characters' lives with adventure*, and *Play to find out what happens*.

## NEW PRINCIPLES

**Keep the cast diverse.** Don't default to a white, western, all-male cast. Attempt an accent or two, even if only for a few sentences. More diversity makes NPCs memorable and your world more grounded.

**Add one fantastic twist when you describe something.** When you talk about new locations, creatures, or people, try breaking the player's expectations with one specific thing. What they're interacting with may be *like* Jafar from *Aladdin*, or a horned demon, or a mummies' tomb; but how does it differ, radically? *Maybe the caliph's evil vizier has a loving family. Maybe the pyramid isn't so old and dusty, but the current fashion for Umbertoan nobles.* (There's a few lists of interesting physical traits later in this book.)

**Sometimes, a goblin is just a goblin.** Time is always against you when you're GM. Just add *one* fantastic twist, if something comes to mind, and if it doesn't, go with what's obvious instead. It's more important to keep the action going than be clever.

**Keep taking notes.** Use anything and everything the players say to you. When a player suggests something, try taking that to mean they want to see more of that thing in play. For example, maybe a PC says they have a fear of minotaurs, after they killed his brother. That's a cue to you to work out how to fit minotaurs (and the "dead" brother!) into the game, as soon as possible! Bonds, alignments, and even the moves players take when they level up can all be used for this as well.

**Sometimes, avoid telling your players "no."** If a player says they have the powers of a god, that would break the game, so you're obliged to say "no you don't." However, always offer some kind of alternative, or compromise. (This is sometimes called "say yes, and..." or "yes, but...") Ask the players more questions; work out what they're really after then *tell them the consequences and ask.*

**Link your treasures to your monsters, and make both memorable.** Two big things in any game are to loot memorable treasures and overcome notable enemies. By linking the two, you're killing two birds with one stone.

**Encourage players to describe their ideas clearly. If they conflict with yours or others, work together to reach a compromise.** Let's say I'm the GM and you're the PC, and you want to play an evil paladin. For some reason, I don't want evil paladins in my campaign. First, I need to know your intent from the start, so we can discuss it. Second, if I just shut down your idea, you'd probably feel pretty annoyed. Third, if I don't feel I can at least reach some middle ground with you, I'm likely to feel annoyed. (Fourth, if anyone's annoyed, that's not a good basis for a fun game.) So, clear communication and compromise is always best. While this may sound obvious, I've seen new Dungeon World GMs misinterpret the principles to mean they can *only* react to player input, or not even bring their ideas to the table.

**Make this game your own.** While this is a pre-written adventure, it's my intent this book will be a starting point for many interesting and unique adventures to come. Make it weird, make it cool, make it funny. Most of all, make it your own. Have fun!



# SHADOWS OF UMBERTO

Imagine a mountain, taller and wider than the Empire State Building. Gleaming citadels cap its peak. A thousand twisting alleys and claustrophobic bazaars are carved into the living rock. The earth beats with ancient magic from the dawn of time. This mountain is Umberto: cradle of civilisation and modern sorcery alike.

They call it "The Fortunate City": where beggars become princes, and sinners become saints. Any soul can earn their fortune here. Thousands try every day. Each dreams of a place among the wealthy nobility, who in turn seek the favour of the caliph, who rules only by the grace of his council of magi. Below them all, dim alleys hide darker pacts, and the whispers of revolution.

What will come of this ancient city? Will it die, in black blood and balefire? Or will the council's greed fester for generations to come?

Enter the party...

# ADVENTURE FRONT

Eons ago, the caliph of Umberto and his loyal magi council banished the evil djinn and their vile king **Baphomet** from the mortal plane. The spell was forged in royal blood; while a caliph lives to rule Umberto, the djinn were trapped in the nightmare realms. In the years since, the council's loyalty gave way to greed and self-interest, and the cautionary tales of the evil djinn were forgotten. Last year, three treacherous magi killed the old caliph. They were goaded into doing so by none other than Baphomet, who has learned how to invade the dreams of the weak-willed. While the three avoided suspicion, they also failed to kill the caliph's son, and thus the djinn remained banished.

The son now rules Umberto. He is well-meaning, but leaves too much of ruling the city to the magi, whose uncompromising laws have become unpopular of late. Goaded in their dreams by the whispers of the djinn, the people have risen up in revolution. District after district has declared their support for the rebels, the so-called 'Hasza-shin'. Their goal: to overthrow the palace rule, at any cost.

## THE FATE OF UMBERTO

The city stands on the brink of war. The Hasza-shin threaten the palace from below, while the treacherous trio destabilise it from within. No matter which does the most damage, Baphomet and his demonic djinn stand to profit.

## CAST

- × **Baphomet**, demonic king of the *djinn*
- × **Caliph Ertan al-Ertan**, second of his name, ruler of Umberto
- × **Octavia**, **Ciezus**, and **Lapidot**, a trio of treacherous magi
- × The other members of the **Magi Council**
- × **The Hasza-shin**, faceless members of the revolution

## STAKES

- × If Baphomet returns, what will happen to the city?
- × Will any of the magi council remain loyal?
- × Can the caliph survive, to become a better ruler?
- × Whose side, if any, are the PCs on?

### **DANGER: THE TREACHEROUS TRIO**

Impulse: to take by subterfuge

- ☐ The Hasza-shin receive aid, in secret
- ☐ A PC or loyal member of the court is framed
- ☐ The trio receive new powers from their demonic patron
- ☐ The caliph is assassinated
- ☐ The trio steal the power of the council

### **DANGER: THE HASZA-SHIN**

Impulse: to overthrow the status quo

- ☐ Several prominent districts declare their support
- ☐ Conflict erupts between the loyalists and the rebels
- ☐ A prominent member of the court is kidnapped/killed
- ☐ The fighting reaches the gates of the palace
- ☐ The palace is breached

### **DANGER: BAPHOMET RETURNS**

Impulse: to return to the lands of the living

- ☐ The djinn are discovered fighting with the rebels
- ☐ An attempt to banish the djinn fails spectacularly
- ☐ The palace is overrun, from within or without
- ☐ The caliph is killed, ending the Djinn's banishment

# DUNGEON: KHORZUQ MARKET

Khorzuq is a market-district on the eighty-fourth level of the mountain. In the centre, below a gold-and-marble fountain, lies a large gem. The raw power of this lodestone, embedded in the mana-soaked rock, permeates the region. As markets go, it's one of the nicest; but it also attracts a lot of unwanted attention.

The lodestone would be worth a fortune to the Hasza-shin, the Magi Council, or others.

## LOCATIONS

In Khorzuq, every place has someone looking to sell something.

**When they come to a new place**, use the tables at the end of the book to see who's there and what they're selling. Also, roll 2d6; on a 6- they support the rebels, on a 7+ they support the magi. (Most Khorzuq merchants support the palace, especially the rich ones.)

**Druuze the humble noodle-seller (❶)** has a particularly lavish restaurant, *Oodles of Druuzles*. She is the secret head of Hasza-shin activity in the area. **Asha the jewelfrafter** runs a workshop just across the road from Druuze (❷). Asha supports the caliph, and has been spying on Druuze in secret. Other rebels or loyalists may lead the party to Druuze or Asha, as appropriate.

Druuze is planning to steal the lodestone, leaving Khorzuq dark and barren. This would be an example to other districts of the rebel's might. For her part, Druuze intends to sell the lodestone for a significant profit. If the party earn Druuze's trust (by killing Asha, say) she'll offer a place in the heist and a share of the spoils.

Asha knows something of Druuze's intent, but not all. She's looking for strangers to infiltrate the rebels and take Druuze alive. Doing so would earn her respect, and likely, the favour of the palace.

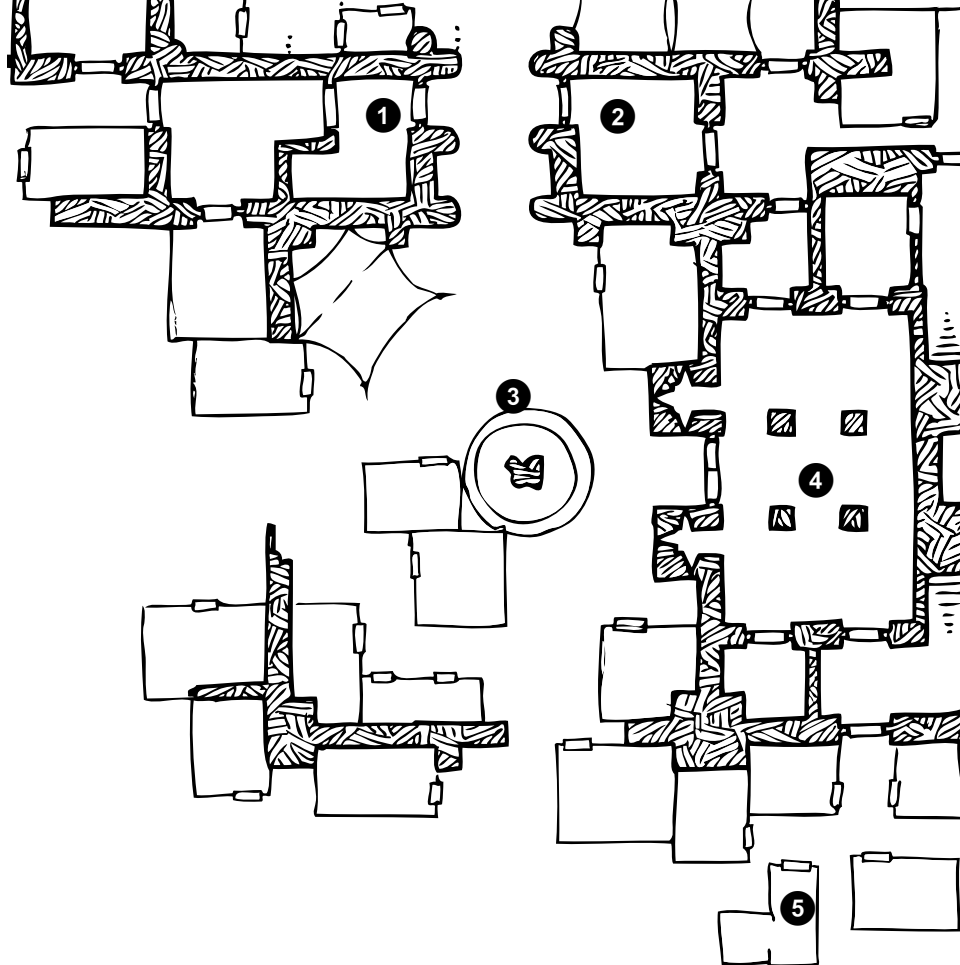
There are two markets in Khorzuq: one by **the fountain (3)** and one in the **'Little Palace' (4)**. No merchant would offer something at market value; dungeon rations might be 6-9 coin at first. 📖 It is common practice to haggle in Umberto, though no seller will tell you this. Dozens of paper lanterns illuminate the fountain area, each marked with a light cantrip. The lodestone's magic keeps them lit, and the water in the fountain (3) fresh and flowing. Drinking the water cures a debility if they have one, or heals 1d6hp otherwise. Drinking from the fountain carries a 1d8-coin fine if caught. If they can't pay, it's a night in the cells. 👁 Guards will shake down or take away beggars or tourists that attempt to drink from the fountain.

The Amirate commissioned the **Little Palace (4)** but only finished the exterior. The walls of the interior are empty and unadorned. Packing the warehouse-sized space are dozens more stalls, shisha-bars and coffee shops. There are also a handful of permanent structures within, including the jail.

The house of the district merchant, Amira Shahriya bint-Khorzuq is also here. She spends most of her time negotiating thousand-coin deals for fabrics and rare reagents. There are two routes to the Lodestone here - one from the Amira's house, the other beneath the jail. There are no guards for either, but only a few know they exist at all.

Finally, **a disused smithy in the south (7)** is the secret hideout for three adventurers. Safia is local to the region, a street rat and half-witch. Ollis is a small-time Amir, fallen on hard times. Malkelm is a druid, and used to be (or maybe still is) part of the caliph's wazirs. The trio intend to take the Lodestone for themselves and deliver it to an unknown buyer in Mirkasa.





### ADDITIONAL PRINCIPLES

**Every market is a dungeon, too.** Just because this is an urban environment doesn't mean it's any less dangerous than a dungeon. Your dungeon moves, principles, and intent towards the party is no different here than it would be in any other dungeon.

### ADDITIONAL DUNGEON MOVES

- ☐ The guards take notice of your actions.
- ☐ Someone makes an offer they can't refuse.
- ☐ A merchant won't stop pestering them.

## CHARACTERS

**Amira Shahriya** is a young modern Umbertoan. She wears a blue tailored pinstripe suit (cut to show off her waist and arms) stylishly paired with a traditional red sari. The gold jewellery on her throat and hands hides a Mirkasan elektrickery device (*hand*, 1d10 damage, ignores armour.) She is genial and sociable, but incredibly shrewd.

**Druuze** is an older woman. Her face is adorned with heavy silver jewellery and a triangle-like tattoo stretches from over her eyes to the tip of her slender chin. Her robes are always spattered with salt and noodle-water, and her sleeves are usually rolled up. There is a small bell tied to her ankle, hidden below more robes, that tinkles as she walks. The bell contains *Ra-Hoor the Sunflesh*, a bound djinn.

**Asha** looks like a humanoid statue carved from ivory. While it looks like at one time she had a pair of ivory antlers, there's only one now. ■ Her sculpture doesn't match any sculptures you've seen, suggesting she is very old - possibly predating modern civilisation. Despite her great size, she is usually gentle-natured and moves with a surprising grace. Intricate carvings cover her body, that glow when she is angered. She is sustained by the lodestone's power, so has no need to eat or drink. Before the Green Scar was a jungle, her people built a great city there; only overgrown ruins exist there now. She is a wazir of the caliphs, but generally keeps this a secret.

**Ollis** speaks with a strong Chalcedon accent (think posh english). His fine clothes have been torn and he has a black eye. He uses a chalcedoni long-rifle. **Safia** has a heavy Umbertoan accent, dresses plainly, speaks rarely, and favours stealth. The only sign of her presence is an occasional scent of sulphur. There's a brace of ornate daggers at her hips. **Malkelm** wears nothing but a loincloth, and a collar carved from an auroch's horn. You can't place his accent, but he speaks common well. He doesn't seem to have any obvious weapons, a fact that somehow only makes you more nervous.



SHADOWS OF UMBERTO

# DUNGEON: THE ROYAL PALACE

The iron deserts of Salhadid - and the mystical energy that flows through them - once belonged only to the djinn. The first magi banished them, using a mortal's blood to bind their ritual. The mortal became the first caliph, and the bindings have held for thousands of years.

But the strength of Magi has waned, and the last caliph is in mortal danger. Baphomet - king of the djinn, and greatest among them - tears the palace apart. If he finds the caliph first, all is lost for the city.

This adventure is for when you've checked off most of your grim portents and are ready to end the campaign. (Swap Baphomet for a manticore or something if you wanted to run this adventure earlier.) While most of the guards deal with the monster, the party can explore the palace at their leisure. **If the party manage to kill the monster or find the caliph first**, there'll be a significant reward. Or if they prefer, they can stuff their bags with royal gold and sneak out when no-one's looking...

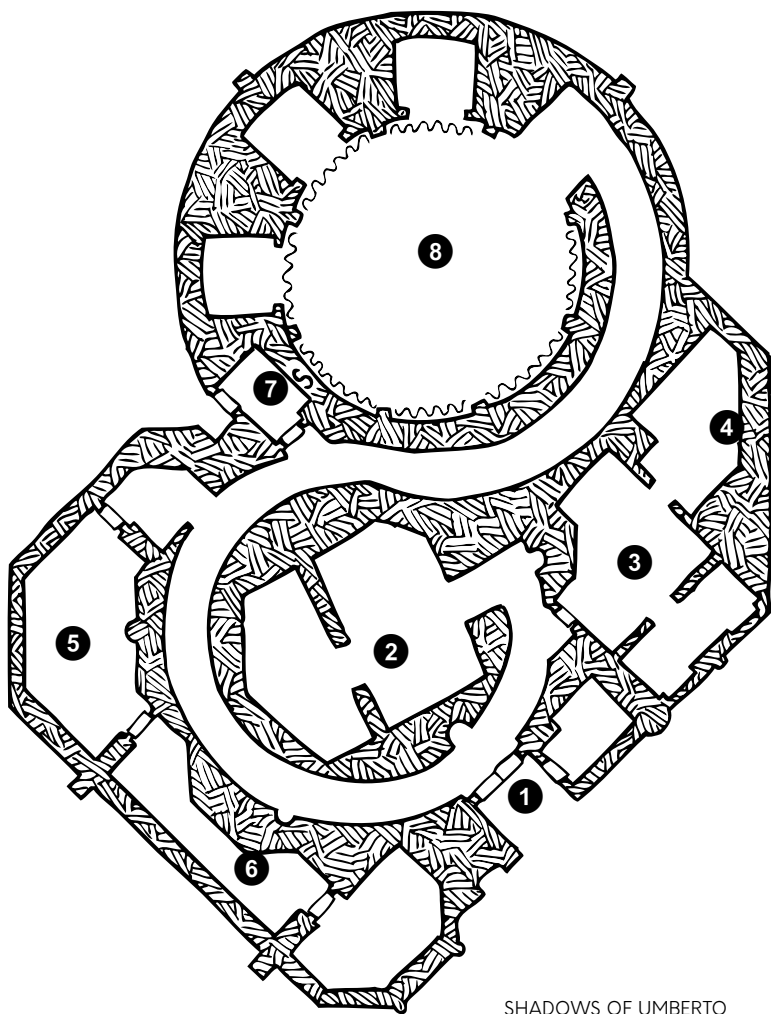
The palace is the oldest structure in the city. It stands on top of the mountain, but a magical aura keeps the desert air cool and fresh.

## LOCATIONS

The guards drove the monster from the **palace gates (1)** once already. Each door is tall as a giant, solid bronze, a foot thick, and torn to shreds. There's 2d6 palace guards still alive (3hp, 1 armour, 1d6 damage reach). Hiding in the gatehouse are 1d6x10

frightened and injured commoners. Before the attack, they were queuing to each beg a favour from the royal court. There's a 50% chance any commoner encountered is a rebel who intends to kill the caliph.

Most visitors are first led to the **courts (2)** to state their purpose in front of the council. 3d6 magi are here right now, either aiding in the defence or making a hasty plan of



action. Half want to escape while they still can; the other half want to find the caliph. **If there's an odd number**, the three treacherous magi (Octavia, Ciezus, and Lapidot - see Adventure Front) will be among them.

The **royal pharmacy** (③) and **library** (④) are lavishly decorated. A fine glass ceiling covers both of them, keeping the air warm. A airlock-style pair of doors keeps the humidity from the pharmacy out of the library. A dozen academics are attempting to save what they can. A small treeman helps tends the pharmacy and a gnomish electro-golem organises the library. Both are construct, d10 damage close, 12hp, 3 armour.

**When you sell a random book, clipping, or pouch of seeds you've swiped**, roll+INT. On a 10+, multiply the result by 100; on a 7-9, multiply it by 10; on a miss, multiply it by 5.

There's plenty of riches in the **visitors apartments** (⑤) - use the treasure tables as a guide. One of the visitors may be Amira Shahriya bint-Khorzuq, merchant lady of Khorzuq market. She's accompanied by three well-trained guards wearing *Journeyman's Silks*. Other visitors are sages or diplomats from distant lands, or other merchant lords and ladies.

A non-denominational **chapel** (⑥) is kept for outsiders to practice as they will. A sole magi is here, praying to the spirits of previous magi to deliver them from evil. There's a 50% chance they 'summon' half a dozen djinni instead.

The **servant's quarters** (⑦) lead underground. Kitchens, boutiques and apartments eventually give way to the the city proper. Most rooms have chimneys leading back up; something small or amorphous could sneak through one. There's a 🕸 hidden entrance to the throne room from here.

The **throne room** (⑨) is the oldest part of the palace. The caliph often sees his visitors here instead of the courts. The throne is huge - it could seat an ogre - and hewn from a single piece of malachite. Ancient stone hieroglyphs from the oldest pyramids line the walls. ■ The hieroglyphs tell of the first magi, who used the first caliph's blood to take the city for mankind.

## THE CALIPH

The caliph is hiding in a random location in the palace (roll 1d8). If you roll a 1 he isn't in the entrance hall at first, but will appear there later. A God-shard of the Green Scar accompanies him, a member of his wazirs. The God-shard has fallen in love with the caliph, and intends to propose, should they both get out alive. (This marriage would unite two of the most significant powers in the world. I leave the long-term consequences of this to the GM.)

## THE MONSTER

Whether the king of the djinn or something else, the monster is huge, terrifying and planar. That means it's as big as a house, has no less than 20hp and deals at least 1d10+3 damage (close, reach, messy). **When the party move to a new location**, roll 1d8 for the monster's location too. When the monster is in a location for the first time, it's wrecked; the second time, it's destroyed.

## OTHER THREATS

Palace guards (1d8 damage, 6hp, 1 armour) will attempt to (in order of priority) save a member of the court, attack the monster, or kill anyone carrying stolen loot.

# REGION: SALHADID DESERT

This section was originally printed as part of *Perilous Deep*s by Jason Lutes, under the title "The Iron Wastes". If you're looking for more exploration-based gameplay, I can highly recommend both this book and *Freebooters on the Frontier*, available on DriveThruRPG.

## IT CAN BE FOUND...

SURROUNDING the Umberto mountain for hundreds of miles  
SOUTH-EAST of the Mirkasa Hinterlands

NORTH of the Malachite Mines, source of Umberto's wealth

WEST of the main Silk Road, from Umberto to Xi

## IMPRESSIONS

- ☐ By day: sun, sand, dots on the horizon (friend or foe?)
- ☐ By night: pale moons; witchlights, demon-whispers in the air
- ☐ Circling carrion birds
- ☐ The occasional mesa, and the shelter it may offer
- ☐ Eroded pyramids, looted of any wealth
- ☐ Untouched pyramids, undiscovered in centuries

## DISCOVERIES & DANGERS

**A lush oasis, safe but coveted by all travellers.** How long do you dare stay here? What claim from another party has already been embedded in the soft earth?

**A circle of gluttonous carrion-birds:** *Horde, 1d6 damage, flying, organised.*



**A quiet (for now) section of the Silk Road.** Who else might use this? Where will this allow faster, safer travel to?

**An outpost of foreigners**, perhaps a Chalcedoni legion or grove of Green-scar Godsworn. What might the foreigners want in exchange for shelter or safe passage?

By default, the outpost is *Poor, Shrinking, Guard, Need (Supplies), Oath* (it's parent nation). Also, choose or roll one:

#### DETAIL

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 1   | The foreigners are hated by the locals, and raided at every opportunity: + <i>Blight (nomads)</i>   |
| 2   | Built on the site of an ancient curse: + <i>Blight (cursed earth)</i> , + <i>Need (exorcists)</i> , - <i>Population</i>   |
| 3   | Formerly a town, captured and fortified by the foreigners, its former residents enslaved: + <i>Population</i> , + <i>Safe</i> , + <i>Defences</i> , + <i>Blight (would-be rescuers)</i> |
| 4   | The outpost was a prison for exiled criminals: + <i>Lawless</i>   |
| 5-6 | The outpost's occupants are odder than usual: (choose) + <i>Elves</i> , + <i>Dwarves</i> , + <i>Antfolk</i> (etc.)  |

**A soft place, where the sand is deadly and the dunes seemingly endless.** What lies beneath the sand layer for those that fall through it? What time-spanned souls have been lost here, helpless, for centuries? How might the party escape?

**A mile-wide crop of cactus**, each plant several feet tall. **When you navigate through the field**, roll+DEX. On a 10+ your clothing is torn, but nothing of value is lost. On a 7-9, something important is hooked - leave it behind or spend the necessary time to get it free. **When you travel around the field instead**, you risk wasting time and drawing unwanted attention.

**A desert ironwood**, maybe a thousand years old. What might a druid ask it? What marks of ancient conflict scar it's bark? What is said to happen when the ironwood blooms? Is it blooming now?

## PERILOUS TRAVEL

Travel across the desert is almost always perilous. Above and beyond dungeon supplies, you need transport, reliable guards, and food and water to survive the harsh environment.

**When you travel through the desert**, roll. If you...

- ☐ ... spend 100 or more coin in supplies, +1.
- ☐ ... take it slow (arrive 2 days later than intended), +1.
- ☐ But if you...
- ☐ ... have drawn unwanted attention in town, -1.
- ☐ ... will be travelling for more than 3 days, -1.
- ☐ ... spend less than 30 coin on guides and gear, -1.

On a 10+, you get there, no problem. On a 9 or less, you're not there yet - the GM will describe what's blocking your path and ask what you do. On a 6-, your lack of preparation has also left each of you with a debility of the GM's choice.



# CREATURES OF INTEREST

## THE CALIPH

*Solitary, Divine*

Caliph Ertan al-Ertan is a troubled youth of thirteen years, and the last living member of his bloodline. His mother died in childbirth and his father was distant; he was effectively raised by the court. While most of the magi were stern or uncaring, he took great joy in meeting outsiders (such as his *wazirs*) and learning about foreign lands. He has never left the palace.

Every day since his father's death he has spent three hours taking audience with his people. He has commanded his magi to deal with many of their pleas, which typically get ignored or forgotten. This has left most outside the court believing, though he may be a sweet boy - he is not fit to rule.

The caliph is typically dressed in expensive, voluminous robes, wearing an oversized crown of marble and jade. The thing that strikes visitors the most are his eyes, which are always so (pick one:) *Distant, Innocent, Weary, Academic, Passionate, Naive, Touched*.

## WAZIRS

Wazirs are strangers that have pleased the caliph in some way and joined his personal honour guard. They are essentially rival adventurers; use the *one-shot character creation* to make them more unique. They can communicate with other wazirs and the caliph at all times, via a magical *shell of Albrect*. (see *Artifacts*.)

## THE COUNCIL MAGI

*Solitary, Intelligent, Organised, 1d10+3  
damage (near, far) 16hp*

Your typical magus will often show one or two tokens of their power and prestige:

- ☐ Intricate tattoos that glow in the presence of magic
- ☐ Rich, ornate robes and jewellery
- ☐ Several *unseen servants* carrying their wares
- ☐ Simple glowing lights following them
- ☐ A magic staff made from jade, malachite, or polished silver.
- ☐ The cloying scent of expensive incense
- ☐ A retinue of dutiful scribes and retainers
- ☐ An obscure foreign tool related to the study of magic, like a chalcedoni ethero-lens or mirkasan witch-shackle
- ☐ Barely-contained distaste at the lower classes

### EXAMPLE MAGI

**Octavia** is one of the oldest members of the court. They currently take the form of an elderly man, but have taken other forms in centuries past. Their left hand constantly twitches, as though pulling the strings of some puppet. When angered, these tiny strings can sometimes be seen in the air, like the webs of a spider.

**Ciezus** is egocentric, using ice magic to create polished mirrors wherever he goes. He is also an engineering genius - no-one knows more about the magical barriers keeping out the hot desert wind than he.

**Lapidot** is a ghost, a memory of a long-dead magus kept alive by the will of Ciezus and Octavia. Only the three of them are aware of this fact. Although a master of illusory magic, she can actually affect nothing physical in the world.



SHADOWS OF UMBERTO

## DJINNI

*Solitary, Large, Magical, 1d10+1 damage  
(reach, 3-piercing) 14hp 4 armour*

An unbound djinn is like Jafar at the end of *Aladdin*, right before he gets captured in the lamp. After their moment of phenomenal cosmic power, a djinn will try to possess a mortal so they don't find themselves trapped again.

■ **A wizard or particularly academic character can try and bind a djinn.** They'll need to recall the magic words, and have a mundane 1-weight (or less) object within reach. **When you try and bind a djinn to a mundane object**, you're defying danger with INT. On a miss, the djinn will try and possess you, or another PC nearby. (To avoid immediate possession, defy danger with WIS.)

A djinn takes whatever form its whims and the environment demands. Typically, this is humanoid, with two or three of the following:

- ☐ Horns (rough and odd, or smooth and laquered)
- ☐ A glowing sigil, floating an inch above the forehead
- ☐ Red, blue-gray, purple or alabaster-white skin
- ☐ Piercing eyes, shrouded eyes, or a single eye, unblinking
- ☐ Two voices, speaking not quite in unison
- ☐ A smell of sulphur, sand, or a long-distant memory
- ☐ Ethereal extra limbs or tentacles

■ **If possessed by a djinn**, you'll gain one of these traits every few days.



## THE HASZA-SHIN REBELS

*Horde, Organised, Arcane, 1d6 damage (close) 3hp 1 armour*

By default, a rebel cell consists of a half-dozen or so bloody-minded revolutionaries with sacrificial knives or improvised weaponry. Many bear the tell-tale mark of demon possession upon them.

On a conflict-by conflict basis, choose two or three:

- ☐ The cell has obtained better arms and armour: 1d8 damage, +near, or +1 armour
- ☐ This is an isolated cell; if caught, none will know anything about where other other rebels may be found
- ☐ The cell's leader carries a powerful magic item, describe it
- ☐ The cell has won the people to their side, who flock around and hem you in: passing through the crowds unscathed requires you defy danger first
- ☐ The rebels are former gladiators: +reach, +messy

Then additionally, choose one:

- ☐ The cell's leader is known in the community
- ☐ Possession has left these rebels mindless and savage (-organised)
- ☐ These rebels have refused any deals with demons (-arcane)
- ☐ The locals consider the rebels terrorists
- ☐ There is a significant reward for these particular rebels



## HIRELINGS

**When the party go looking for help**, roll or pick someone appropriate from the table opposite.

Hirelings start with a *loyalty* score from 1-3, a cost, and at least one *skill*. The GM sets a hireling's starting loyalty depending on how they meet the PCs. **If a cost isn't met frequently**, the hireling's loyalty is reduced by 1. **If a hireling's loyalty reaches -1**, they leave the party on the worst terms.

**When a hireling does something that isn't covered by their skills**, they do it imperfectly (it attracts harm or unwanted attention) and spend 1 loyalty.

**When a hireling does something covered by their skills**, roll+LOY. On a 7+, they do it. On a 7-9, it costs harm or unwanted attention. On a miss, it also costs loyalty.

### ADDITIONAL HIRELING NAMES

Liebling, Marron, Ward, Paride, Walton, Flores, Chang, Reed, Stringer, Sambles, Wotton, Acritarche, Giles, Densham, McGraw, Matt, Castillo, McClellan, Schirduan, Brandt, Osborne, Strappa, Fournier, Cooper, Pempie, Stock, Loren, Musallam, Spengler, Merhoff, Barnsley, Caetano, Willhelmsson, Rosenberg, Casali, Krapilsky, Greenfelder, George, Arden, Gunton, Almendralla, Dempsey, Raichelson, Strandberg, Parducci, Schubacca, Rocha, Felix, Klein, Curd, Prescott, Ralston-Bryce, Roland, Jensen, Rees, Cedrylle, Tim, Spenser





## NAME COST SKILL

1	<b>Egan</b> , the guardian	<i>Justice met</i>	Gain the caliph's ear, deal harm
2	<b>Hakiki</b> , the crone	<i>Time among the people</i>	Inspire the people, get a generous discount
3	<b>Zariz</b> , the shrewd	<i>An equal cut</i>	Cut purses, cut throats, move undetected
4	<b>Nanga</b> , the magus	<i>Political power</i>	Enter the palace unbarred, use sorcery
5	<b>Logan</b> , the templar	<i>Heroic deeds</i>	Survive an attack unscathed, destroy demons
6	<b>Haroun</b> , the deified	<i>The natural order defended</i>	Transform into a monster, heal the land
7	<b>Mortressa</b> , the sick	<i>A cure for her magical sickness</i>	Barf forth raw magic, make a distraction
8	<b>Arcus</b> , the rogue	<i>An interesting heist</i>	Scout for traps, claim something valuable
9	<b>Vizesh</b> , the djinni	<i>A physical form</i>	Wound his kind, invade the minds of mortals
10	<b>Sandler</b> , the water-boy	<i>New business</i>	Scrounge supplies, discover rareities
11	<b>Faye</b> , the arbalist	<i>Renown</i>	Snipe a target, offer covering fire
12	<b>Wüf</b> , the dog	<i>Your love</i>	Dig for treasure, track a target, love you forever

# ARTIFACTS OF RENOWN

## THE BLADE OF MISPLACED ROT

A scimitar of unknown design, inlaid with bronze runes along the blade and a copper-red leather handle. The corpse of a foe killed by this weapon will, over the course of about 24 hours, turn into an exact duplicate of the sword's wielder in every respect.

This effect will only work on foes roughly the same size as the wielder. Corpses larger or smaller than the wielder will melt into a pile of mush after around 24 hours. **If the wielder kills themselves with the blade**, their mortal remains will morph into a perfect copy of the blade instead.

## THE BOOK OF CAIN

A dusty old tome filled with pages of esoteric, wordy script. On careful study, you could learn many secrets of the world from it.

**If you have an intelligence of 13 or higher**, the Book of Cain counts as a Bag of Books with unlimited uses. Each time you use the book, hold 1. When you make camp, spend hold, one-for-one, on the options below.

- ☐ You spend too long reading and prepare no spells.
- ☐ You take no rest and heal no hit points or debilities.
- ☐ An unseen enemy takes advantage of your distraction.
- ☐ A spirit trapped in the book offers a dangerous bargain.

## DEATH MASK OF THE CALIPH

An incredibly lifelike golden mask modeled on the features of the (now former) Caliph of Umberto. Wearing this mask will earn the hatred of Umbertoan royalists (like the palace guard or court magi) and the respect of his detractors.

## THE CRIMSON GEM OF PZITORAC

An old red ruby. Strands of copper have been carefully threaded through the gem itself, which glows with a ruddy light. The ruby holds the soul of Pzitorac, a djinn who defied Umberto in defiance of his kin; his soul was trapped in the ruby as punishment.

Unlike other bound djinn, the owner of the crimson ruby of Pzitorac will find themselves invested with a fraction of the demon's power. **When the owner of the gem defends a mortal**, hold 1. Spend one or more hold when you make camp to gain one of the following:

- ☐ Your attacks gain the *forceful* tag.
- ☐ Your attacks gain the *messy* tag.
- ☐ **When you defend**, roll 3d6(+CON) and drop the lowest die.
- ☐ You learn an interesting fact about Pzitorac.
- ☐ You learn an interesting fact about the djinni realms.

For each option taken, you also take on an aspect of Pzitorac's appearance: small horns, fangs, glowing eyes, etc. Once you have taken every option, Pzitorac will attempt to break free.

## CITY GAZETTEER

This leather-bound tome isn't the newest guide to the city, but it's one of the clearest. **When you discern realities in the city and have sufficient time and light to check the map**, add the following to your options:

- ☐ What was/is (pick one, GM's choice) this market's specialty?
- ☐ What's the fastest/safest (pick one, player's choice) route to the palace?

## THE SHELLS OF ALBRECHT

A pair of matching seashells, set into a piece of jewellery of the player's choice (earrings are common.) **When you wear a shell**, you can telepathically communicate with anyone else also wearing a shell.

## JOURNEYMAN'S SILK

An expensive-looking full-length robe, in the fashion of the Silk Merchants' caravan guards. A system of hidden gears under the robes allow the wearer to wind and unwind the silk in seconds. The Silk Merchants train to use their robes to enhance their considerable acrobatic skills.

The robes are 0 armour and 2 weight. No other armour can be worn, including a shield. **When you forgo making camp to train with your robes instead**, hold 1. Spend 1 hold to do one of the following:

- ☐ Travel to a flat surface within *far* distance or closer
- ☐ Volley with a thrown weapon tethered to your wrist by a length of silk. (You can safely recover the weapon provided another enemy doesn't slash the silk first.)
- ☐ Distract a crowd of onlookers for a moment with a dramatic flourish
- ☐ Jump several feet high, then float safely to the ground a moment later

Keep track of how many times you have trained. **When the total is equal or higher to your current level**, you may train and make camp in a single period from now on.

## FOCAULT'S PENDULUM

A ball of lead suspended on intricate copper wire. The pendulum will sway gently and dispense a trickle of salt for about ten minutes if held aloft. **When you consult the pattern formed by Focault's Pendulum**, roll+INT. On a 10+, the GM will answer all three questions below. On a 7-9, pick one.

- ☐ What plane of existence or physical realm am I in?
- ☐ Which direction will lead me home?
- ☐ Where is the nearest ocean?

## "...AND MIGHT I INTEREST YOU IN ONE OF THESE?"

- 1 A bundle of aromatic spices. 🐉 A sprig of *goldenroot* (Dungeon World, p.139) is hidden within.
- 2 A rare Mung vase in mint condition. **When you sell the vase on**, roll+CHA. On a 10+, you earn 50 coin. On a 7-9 you earn 20 coin. On a miss, you earn 10 coin. A few days later, you hear the merchant has left town at short notice.
- 3 Three large eggs, wrapped in silk. The sellers claims they are dragon eggs. Two are chicken eggs, and one is a manticores.
- 4 A furry animal with large ears, in a gilded cage. It hates sunlight. Don't get it wet. Don't feed it after midnight.
- 5 A fine wine from your hometown.
- 6 A handful of arrows (1 ammo) fletched with basilisk feathers.
- 7 A Chalcedoni lightbulb. It glows in the presence of magic.
- 8 A golden lamp, said to hold 776 djinni. (👁️ it doesn't.)
- 9 An oil painting of a funeral. Several of the figures in the crowd look similar to the party, but one is conspicuously missing. 🗖️ Going by the age and the clothes of the figures, you'd estimate the painting at about 200 years old.
- 10 A gnomish electro-pistol (*near, arcane.*)
- 11 A bronze skeleton key. The merchant claims it unlocks the path to the forbidden city of Dis. The key works as a skeleton key, but each use brings this world closer to being absorbed by Dis, the hungry city from *Dark Heart of the Dreamer*.
- 12 A deed to a golden horse, offered at a high price. The horse's location is only revealed if they buy the deed (so it doesn't get stolen.) Other than its bright gold skin, the horse is perfectly normal, healthy and faster than most.

# CHARACTERS & COMPENDIUMS

The GM may bring the homelands moves into play as an alternative to race or background. Each character may take one of the homelands moves below in place of their race, drive, background, or similar. Homelands moves represent a childhood brought up in a specific culture, and may not be taken after character creation. (If a player wants to play someone from multiple cultures, or who travelled a lot as a child, offer the barbarian race move Outsider instead.)

## UMBERTO

**Master Haggler:** Growing up amongst the endless bazaars of Umberto city taught you no price is final until it's final. **When you spend time (minutes or hours, GM's call) haggling the price down**, roll+CHA. On a 10+, it's half price. On a 7-9, it's half price, but word gets around locally you're a pain in the ass to trade with. On a miss, if you want the discount, you'll be in the trader's debt.

## CHALCEDON

*Formerly green hills and gentle farmland - the last century has seen it turned to wasteland from rampant magical industry. The nobility live above the smog in fancy airships; everyone else toils their lives away in the muck. Not even the elite are free of minor magical corruption.*

**Survived the Fallout:** Industry turned your lands into a polluted ruin. While you survived, you were not left unchanged. **When you or an ally use the Wizard move ritual**, you may count yourself as a place of power. The GM will describe any physical or mental consequences before the ritual begins.

## THE GREEN SCAR

**Our Gods Died by Your Hands:** When the people of Chalcedon burned your jungles, your gods burned with them. When you left, you took what scraps of your gods remained with you.

You start with *faith* equal to your wisdom score (usually 8 or more.) **When you spend 1 faith**, you may change the result of a single die that was just rolled by +1/-1. **When your faith reaches 0**, your gods die. This may not kill you, but one way or another, it's going to hurt. It will also have a clear and significant impact on the world as a whole. **If there is a way to restore your faith**, you aren't yet aware of it.

## THE TYRHENNIAN SEAS

*The ocean separating the Chalcedon continent from Umberto and Mirkasa. No two Tyrhennians are alike, save their shared love of danger and derring-do.*

**Nemesis:** You have a lifelong enemy, name and describe them. **When you write a bond**, you may choose to write it about your nemesis instead of another player. **When you roll a miss**, the GM may add "your nemesis appears!" to their list of GM moves.

## MIRKASA

*A cold, bleak tundra. The Templars of Mirka are an ancient and well-regarded order of witch hunters. The gnomes of the Mirkasa mountains have recently harnessed the power of 'elecktrickery', bringing the once-backward nation into the modern age.*

**Devotee of Saint Mirka:** The templars leave blessed weapons in roadside shrines; a light for the righteous in their hour of need. You carry a blessed blade with you (close, 1 wt.) **If you've taken a debility and/or lost at least half your hp**, the blessed weapon deals +1d4 damage. **If you permanently give your blessed blade away to one who needs it**, mark XP.

## COMPENDIUM CLASS: BOUNDSMAN

**When you bind a djinn to your service**, the next time you level up you may take this move:

### BOUND SERVICE

The djinn can grant up to three wishes for whomever holds its object of binding. There are a few provisos, a few quid-pro-quos: you cannot wish for more wishes; a djinn cannot kill, force any creature to fall in love, or bring any creature back from the dead. These notwithstanding, anything can be wished for.

**When the djinn undertakes your first wish**, the GM picks one from the list below. For second, they pick two. For the third and final command, all three and the djinn permanently leaves your service immediately afterwards.

- ☐ The djinn deliberately misinterprets your command
- ☐ An enemy learns of your object of binding.
- ☐ The djinn's arcane power leaves a permanent and obvious mark.

While you have a djinn bound to your service and still own its object of binding, the following move may become available in play:

### FRIEND LIKE ME

**When you earn the djinn's trust and make it clear you are an ally**, they become an hireling with loyalty equal to your remaining wishes and a cost of *their freedom, sooner rather than later*. **When you ask nicely - rather than wish - for them to accomplish a simple task**, roll+loyalty. On a 10+ they do it as intended. On a 7-9, they do it, but subtract 1 loyalty. On a 6- they interpret your request as a wish instead - pick 1-3 options from the *Bound Service* list above.



## COMPENDIUM CLASS: WAZIR

When a caliph once asked “why does my foolish cousin control the courts of Zarrakech?” the cousin was found dead two days later, face-down in a bowl of poisoned wine. Another time, a caliph (well in their cups) asked “why am I not entertained?” The revels were long and arduous, and no wazirs survived.

The wazirs are the caliph's personal guard and investigators. When the caliph has a question his magi cannot answer, he asks the wazirs to find out for him. There's no formal method of recruitment, other than pleasing the caliph in some way. No-one may challenge a wazir on a quest for his caliph without due cause - not even a magus, or another wazir.

*When you join the service of the caliph and swear fealty, you get this move until yours or the current caliph's death:*

### HONOURBOUND

**When you answer a question or complete a task put to you by the caliph**, mark XP. If you fail to answer a question in reasonable time, expect a rival to have answered it first.

*When you have taken **honourbound**, the following count as class moves for you:*

### ASK THE TAVERN

You are granted a *Shell of Albrecht* (see Artifacts), allowing for instant communication with the caliph and any other wazir you know that owns one too.

### PRAISE THE SUN

**When you face Umberto at dawn and pray to the mountain**, you gain 1 preparation as per the move *bolster*.

### JOLLY COOPERATION

**When you defend a fellow wazir**, take +1 forward.

# FACTIONS OF THE WORLD

**The Etheromantic Accord:** Ghostlike scholars from Chalcedon known for their work storing magical energy.

**Obadiah Cheapfields:** A suit of clockwork armour inhabited by the ghost of one of Chalcedon's leading nobles.

**The Vectis Guilders:** homeless engineers from the city of Vectis, destroyed in the steamflux calamity of 1794.

**The Aurochs:** A druidic order from before Chalcedon became an irradiated ruin. Barbaric and notoriously short-tempered.

**The Church of Moreth:** A death-cult popular out west. Its priest-doctors are known to wear heavy capes and beak-like helmets.

**The Templars of Mirka:** Warrior-priests and inquisitors for the state religion of Mirkasa. Single-minded and capable with many weapons.

**The Aberrenti:** The gnomish refugees who fled northern Mirkasa, following an unknown calamity in their mountain homes.

**Hedon's Call:** An organisation offering asylum to Mirkasan atheists.

**Amirate Journeymen:** Guards of the Silk Road from Umberto to Xi; also protectors of Umberto's merchant lords and ladies.

**El-Rayhim Dra El-Naga:** An anthropomorphic shard of a dead god from the Green Scar, now mortal.

**Wyrmfyrds:** A conglomerate of insect-people from the Wyrksteeth mountains, most commonly ants and spiders.



SHADOWS OF UMBERTO

# BESTIARY

NAME	TAGS	DMG	HP	MOVES
Abomination	Solitary, Large, Construct, Terrifying	d10+3, reach, forceful	20hp 1 armour	<input type="radio"/> Tear flesh apart <input type="radio"/> Spill putrid guts
Amir (Merchant)	Solitary, Intelligent	-	12hp	<input type="radio"/> Tempt with great wealth <input type="radio"/> Offer oddities from distant lands <input type="radio"/> Flee battle
Djinn	Solitary, Large, Magical	d10+1, reach, 3 piercing	14hp 4 armour	<input type="radio"/> Grant power at a price <input type="radio"/> Take control <input type="radio"/> Break free of a prison
Fire Beetle	Horde, Small	d6, hand, 3 piercing	3hp 3 armour	<input type="radio"/> Burst from the earth <input type="radio"/> Spray fire everywhere
Guard	Group, organised	d6+1, reach	3hp 1 armour	<input type="radio"/> Uphold the law <input type="radio"/> Make a profit

NAME	TAGS	DMG	HP	MOVES
Imp	Horde, Planar, Organised	d6, reach, 3 piercing	7hp 1 armour	<input type="radio"/> Start fires <input type="radio"/> Disrupt spells <input type="radio"/> Cause mischief
Magus	Solitary, Intelligent	d10+3, near	16hp	<input type="radio"/> Set down the law <input type="radio"/> Reveal ancient secrets <input type="radio"/> Issue demands
Minotaur	Solitary, Large	d10+1, reach	16hp 1 armour	<input type="radio"/> Confuse them <input type="radio"/> Make them lost
Mummy	Solitary, Divine, Hoarder	d10+2, close	16hp 1 armour	<input type="radio"/> Curse them <input type="radio"/> Wrap them up <input type="radio"/> Rise again
Rebel	Horde, Organised	d6, close	3hp 1 armour	<input type="radio"/> Die for a cause <input type="radio"/> Inspire others
(Rival) Wazir	Group, Intelligent	d8, reach	6hp 1 armour	<input type="radio"/> Show them up in front of the caliph <input type="radio"/> Return from almost-certain doom <input type="radio"/> Steal what they covet

# GLOSSARY

**Umberto:** (Salhadid; *al-M'btā*, "holiest.") A tall mountain in the middle of the Salhadid desert that contains the capital city of the region. Also used in reference to the city and/or the greater Salhadid region (informal.)

**Caliph Ertan al-Ertan:** The thirteen-year old ruler of Umberto.

**Amir/Amira:** Merchant prince/princess. Each market-district of Umberto is ruled by a member of the Amirate. As a group, the Amirate are also responsible for maintaining the Silk Road, running hundreds of miles east to the distant lands of Xi.

**Wazir:** (Salhadid; "one who watches.") One inducted into the caliph's personal retinue from outside the Magi Council. Wazirs most often serve as couriers, bodyguards, or private investigators.

**Hazsa-shin:** (Salhadid; "strikers of the dream.") Gutter-rat revolutionaries who oppose the Magi Council's rule.

■ Many have made pacts with Djinni to gain sorcerous power.

**Djinn:** (Salhadid; "a darkness banished.") A catch-all term for demon or dangerous spirit. The Magi are responsible for keeping Djinni banished.

# NAMES & HONORIFICS

## NAMES

- ☐ Balsora
- ☐ Behman
- ☐ Cassim
- ☐ Danash
- ☐ Hasad
- ☐ Hasib
- ☐ Ismalia
- ☐ Melia
- ☐ Rashid
- ☐ Serendib
- ☐ Zara

## TITLES

- ☐ The **Baseless**
- ☐ The **Breaker**
- ☐ The **Demonbound**
- ☐ The **Despised**
- ☐ The **Eater**
- ☐ The **High**
- ☐ The **Iconoclast**
- ☐ The **Revered**
- ☐ The **Sublime**
- ☐ The **Supreme**
- ☐ The **Venerated**

## SELLING...

1. Beasts of burden
2. Clocks & clockworking
3. Gambling & the illicit
4. Glass & fake jewellery
5. Justice and combat
6. Keys & deeds
7. Pen & ink; also proofing
8. Silk & coin
9. The post; also couriers
10. Truths, forbidden or lost

## OCCUPATIONS

- ☐ Alchemist
- ☐ Barber
- ☐ Beekeeper
- ☐ Blood-letter
- ☐ Bookmaker
- ☐ Carpet-seller
- ☐ Dovekeeper
- ☐ Hedge Wizard
- ☐ Preacher
- ☐ Snake Charmer
- ☐ Storyteller
- ☐ Street Musician