

Scheherazade: The Sultan's Palace

Ah, do come in, my friends! The night is as cold as the gaze of an uncaring woman, and as black as the heart of a man who has turned his back on the teachings of Muhammad, may all prayers and blessings be showered upon the name of the Prophet! Here you will find warmth, and comfort, and we can while away the hours with tales. I'm sure that you have not come all the way across the desert this night without a tale or two on your lips? Certainly you must have seen many strange and wonderous things on your long journey? But what a poor host I am! May Allah curse all my sons with weak zabbbs for my foolishness! You are thirsty and must rest! My small caravan is not much, but all that I have is yours, for I know that Allah is kind to the generous man. Indeed, that reminds me of a tale...have you heard the story of the one-eyed man and his beautiful slave girl? First, though, pull up a cushion and rest yourselves here on my carpet. I will send for wine and cool sherberts for you to drink, perfumed with rose water. When your throats are cool and refreshed, perhaps then we shall have time for stories.

I have always said, that there can be no finer way to spend an evening than to share tales of wonder with your fellow travelers, do you agree. Of course, a good tale is more than just entertainment. Certainly there are clever men, whose words are so much more beautiful and perfectly formed than my own that old men will weep to hear them and young maidens will throw themselves at their feet in ecstasy. Such poets can make a fine living with their honeyed words. But in the right circumstance, a story can be even more valuable than gold. A well-told tale at the right time can save your life. You doubt the truth of this? May Allah turn every morsel of food to ash before it reaches my mouth if my words are lies! I see then that you do not know the famous tale of Scheherazade, the greatest storyteller of all time! It begins like this:

It is related, O auspicious friends, that there once lived – but Allah alone knows all – in the antiquity of time and the passage of the age and of the moment, a king of a far off land who was called Shahryar. The king was bitter and angry towards all womankind, for he had one day caught his queen in the arms of a great black slave. After he had put both woman and slave to death, he vowed that no woman would again be permitted to betray him. And so it was that every day Shahryar would wed a young virgin maid and the very next morning, after he had lain with her, he would have her beheaded in the palace square. This went on day after day, year after year, until Shahryar had wedded and executed over a thousand maidens. Soon, it became impossible to find a suitable bride, as every maiden in the kingdom had already died or fled.

And so it was that Scheherazade, the daughter of the king's wazir, stepped forward. Scheherazade was very clever, and very beautiful, and although her father begged her not to, she insisted on marrying the king, for she had conceived a plan. On the wedding night, after the king had taken

Scheherazade to his bed and pierced her young virginity and was lying spend upon the carpet, Scheherazade kindly asked the king if she might tell him a tale, to better pass the night and give him pleasant dreams. The king agreed, and so Scheherazade began to spin the king a magnificent tale...

You see, Scheherazade was not only a beautiful maiden of wit and charm, she had also read many books and heard many tales. She knew of kings that had come before, and had learned from the examples of men that had come before. He was versed in the histories of long-lost races and ancient peoples and studied the words of philosophers, artists, poets, scientists, astrologers and mystics. In her head swam a thousand thousand wondrous tales, as many as there are fish in all the oceans of the world!

And so when sun began to rise over the horizon, Scheherazade had still not finisher her story. She told the king, that if she would only be allowed to live one more day, that she promised to finish her tale the next night. And so it was, that Shahryar allowed his queen to live another day. But the next night Scheherazade once again had not finished telling her story by the time the sun rose in the east. In this way, Scheherezade lived on for a thousand and one nights, telling her stories, until she had born the king a son, and he finally was moved to spare her life!

What the Game is about

Scheherazade: The Sultan`s Palace is a storytelling game and a roleplaying game, where players tell stories set in the magical fairytale world of ancient Arabia. Specifically, this game is designed for you to tell tales that take place in and around the sultan`s royal palace and its many rooms. The tales you will tell are inspired by The Book of a Thousand and One Nights, also known as the 1001 Arabian Nights, a collection of tales that have been passed down in many different forms and in many different languages. The tales originate from around the ninth century AD, a time when the Arabic world was at the height of science and culture, even as western culture had plunged into the dark ages.

The tales of the Thousand and One Nights tell of adventure, intrigue, magic, sex, heroism and betrayal. Many of the tales are familiar to us, at least in part. The tales of Aladdin and his magic lamp are in the Book, as are the seven voyages of Sinbad the sailor and the legend of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. As are many, many other stories that are less well known. Unsurprisingly, the Books are highly recommended reading to prepare for playing this game.

The tales of the Thousand and One Nights are set in a framing story, that of Scheherazade and her king. The book is divided up into 1001 nights, as each night Scheherazade stops in the middle of a tale as the sun rises, leaving Shahryrar eager to hear the next chapter. Occasionally, within these stories, the characters of the

tales will find themselves in a situation where they must explain a point or prove a moral to someone else, and so they begin a tale of their own. This is the idea of *nested storytelling*.

Scheherazade: The Sultan`s Palace mimics this structure. One player will begin each session as the *primary storyteller*, acting in the role of Scheherazade and beginning the night`s *primary story*. Everyone else will be a player in this tale. Each of the other players will take on the role of one of a *player character (PC)* in that tale, dictating that character`s actions and speaking out that character`s dialogue. The primary storyteller will narrate the scenery and the environment of the palace, where the story is set, and play out the characters of any other characters (*non-player characters*, or *NPC`s*) that the player characters happen to meet there. In this way, **Scheherazade: The Sultan`s Palace** is much like many other roleplaying games you may be familiar with.

Scheherazade: The Sultan`s Palace is unique in its support of nested storytelling. During play, there may be times that one of the PCs wishes to tell a tale of their own, perhaps to prove a point to an NPC, or to convince them to spare their life, or simply to buy time. When the PC begins to tell a tale, that player`s character now becomes a *secondary storyteller* for a new *secondary story*. All the other players, including the player who had been the primary storyteller, now assume the roles of player characters in the new tale.

The secondary tale may run its course, and the primary story will then pick up again where it left off. Alternately, one of the players in the secondary story may decide to tell a tale of their own, beginning an entirely new, *tertiary story*, with a new *tertiary storyteller*.

In this way, the role of storyteller will pass around the group. Depending on the number of players and how much time you devote to the session, each player may get a turn to be the storyteller in one evening of storytelling.

What you will need to play

Before you begin a session of **Scheherazade: The Sultan`s Palace**, you will need the following items at hand:

- A group of friends, ideally between three and six in number (yourself included), armed with imagination and a few hours to spend telling stories.
- A large number of coins, to act as *golden dinars*. A large jar of pennies is perfect for this. If you`re feeling extravagant, have some money changed into gold dollar coins at the bank. The exact number doesn`t matter, but you should have enough coins to give each player more than they can hold in their two hands at once.

- A large mat, cloth or blanket to spread on your playing surface. Spread either over a table or on the floor; gathering around a brightly colored fabric is a great way to get in the mood of the setting. It's also very useful in keeping your coins from bouncing around and getting lost.
- The stack of the character cards included with this game, shuffled into a pile, face down.
- A map of the sultan's palace, laid out on the playing surface (see the section on the Palace)
- Optionally, you may wish to have a timer on hand, if you want to limit the lengths of your tales.

How to begin a session

Once you have gathered your players and materials around your playing surface, and everyone has been made appropriately comfortable with soft cushions and sweet drinks, you are ready to play *Scheherazade: The Sultan's Palace*.

Each player should draw a hand of five character cards from the deck. Then, divide up all of the coins you'll be using between the players. Each player, including the primary storyteller should have a number of coins in a pile in front of them -- their personal *treasury*. Again, the exact amount doesn't matter, as long as every player has a large enough pile that they can each start off feeling as wealthy as a sultan.

One of the players will need to take the place of the primary storyteller for the session. Often this is whichever player is hosting the event, or who has called the players together. Or your group may decide to switch the position around each session that you meet. The primary storyteller's role requires no more preparation than any other, but they will have the added responsibility of keeping the session going, and closing it when it's over. If this the first time your group has played *Scheherazade: The Sultan's Palace*, you will probably want to select the person who has the most familiarity with the game, or with the tales of the *Thousand and One Nights*.

Once the primary storyteller is selected, they should begin the session by telling the tale of *Scheherazade and King Shahryar*, either from memory or simply by reading the passage above. It's an important ritual, to set the mood, and put the game in the proper context of the nested tale. It's also good practice for getting comfortable with the kind of language that makes the tales so much fun to tell.

At the end of the story, you should continue with the words:

On one particular night, this is the tale that Scheherazade told...

How to begin a tale

In Scheherazade: The Sultan`s Palace, each tale begins the same way, whether it is the primary story thread for the session, or one of the levels of sub-story.

The first step is to set the moral for the story. In the time of the Thousand and One Nights, it was important that every story was also a moral lesson of some kind, an example to educate and instruct the listener in some way. Otherwise, the stories could be seen as foolish fantasy, or even a dangerous blasphemy. Similarly, In Scheherazade: The Sultan`s Palace, every tale has a lesson to teach. As players, this gives us a useful guide to steer the story. Although nobody will know exactly how the tale will relate to the moral, every player, not just the storyteller, can work together to bring out that theme in the story you tell together.

The primary storyteller may begin the first tale like so:

O Great King Shahryar, tonight I will tell you a tale that will demonstrate to you, why it is so very important to listen closely to the advice of your elders

Or,

O my King, although you have in nights before heard me tell of all the many just reasons that the sinful and the wicked should be punished, let me now tell you a tale that teaches the importance of mercy and forgiveness, and why even a great ruler should sometimes hold back his anger.

Or,

Tonight, my King, if you will permit me, I will tell you a tale that shows that women are sometimes more clever than their husbands

Or.

You look troubled, my King. Tonight, I shall tell you a tale of wonder and merriment, that will lift your fallen spirits to the heavens with laughter, and show to you that life is full of more joy than pain.

Or you can certainly make up your own on the spot. Even as the primary storyteller, you don`t necessarily need to have any idea ahead of time of how this moral is supposed to be revealed in the course of play. Think of it instead as a way of guiding you in the story.

The next step is to pick your setting. In Scheherazade: The Sultan`s Palace, all the tales take place in the great royal palace of the Sultan. All the storyteller needs to do is pick a room in which to begin.

Now, it is related, O King, that many years ago, in the antiquity of time and the passage of the age and of the moment, that one night, under a full moon, in the lush and beautiful gardens of the Sultan`s Palace there were...

Now it is time for the players to choose their characters in the first story. Looking at their hand of character cards and keeping the setting and the moral of the story in mind, each player should select one card and place it face up in front of them. They then immediately replace the card by drawing from the pile. Moving around the table, the storyteller will introduce each character by name.

... A loyal eunuch called Raihan, a poor tailor by the name of Abu al-Hasan, and the royal princess, Budur.

Now that we have our characters, a setting and a moral tone for the tale, our story can begin in earnest. Along with choosing a room in the palace, the storyteller will have gained a list of possible *story hooks*. It`s up to the storyteller to pick one and employ it in the tale they`ve begun, or to make one up off the top of their head. The important thing is to give the player characters something to start off the session with, a problem that they need to face. Don`t worry too much about building a complicated plot line just yet, start instead with a simple situation. The story will grow organically as you add characters and elements to it.

This is also a useful time to think about the character cards in your hand. As a storyteller, you don`t play a single character, like the other players, but your cards can still be useful as non-player characters. If you`d like to introduce a character into your story from your hand, simply place it in the middle of the play area, and draw a new card to replace it. You don`t need to stick with the characters in your hand – use them as inspiration when and if you need it.

For example, having chosen the garden as a starting location, the storyteller might glance down at the map of the Palace and see that one story hook option associated with that room is

“A furtive meeting between forbidden lovers”

Looking at their hand of cards, their eyes fall upon Coral-Pearl, the forlorn slave girl. Placing that card on the table, the storyteller continues with the words:

As each of them walked through the magnificent garden, the air rich with the smell of violets and jasmine, each was hidden from the other by the lush foliage, the flowered terraces and the splashing fountains. Nevertheless, each one, from

their vantage point, caught sight of a beautiful young harim girl, as she ran out into the garden, her face covered by a thin silk, her pale skin draped in a simple peach-colored chemise. And each of them heard her sweet words as she spoke to Abu al-Hasan:

“Oh, my love! You’ve come for me at last! How I have waited since I first saw you from the palace window. I knew at once, when I set eyes upon you, that I could never love another face again, as long as I might live, and that if I could not be near you, I would soon waste away and die. I see now that my prayers have been answered, and you have received my note! Although we’ve never spoken, and I do not even know your name, I hope against hope that you here to answer my greatest wish, and rescue me from this place, so that we can be together.”

Now it’s up to the players to take the story and run with it. Will they help Abu al-Hasan to escape the palace with Coral-Pearl? Will the other players turn him in to the Sultan’s justice? As you tell the tale together, you all discover where the tale will lead.

How to begin another tale

Through the course of play, there may be an opportunity for one of the player characters to tell a tale of their own. Let us say, for example, that somehow or another, Abu al-Hasan has found himself brought before the sultan’s wazir, who has threatened to have the poor tailor beheaded for daring to seduce a girl from the sultan’s harim. Despairing for his life, the player playing Abu al-Hasan exclaims,

Please, great wazir, know that although I am a loyal servant of my lord the sultan, and I would never try to steal his property, you must know that I was compelled by love, a force that is greater even than loyalty, greater than my fear for my own life. If you will permit me just a moment, I will tell you a story that proves that there is nothing in this world, save the will of Allah himself, that can stand in the way of true love. My tale begins in the deepest dungeons of the palace, where three prisoners were being held...

The player has thus begun a new secondary story within the primary story. As before, this tale begins by explaining the moral, and then setting the scene within a room of the palace. Each of the other players now selects a new character card from his or her hand, playing it directly on top of the card already there (except for the primary storyteller, who will be playing their first character card as a player) and redraws from the pile to replace it. Play now begins again in exactly the same way, with the player who began the tale taking on the role of storyteller.

There is no limit to how many levels of nested stories you may begin, although your group may wish to decide ahead of time what seems like a reasonable number. It’s unlikely that more than five levels of sub-stories are a good idea.

The Rules (or, How to Spend Your Gold)

During the course of a story, in most situations, the storyteller can simply cooperate with the other players to tell the tale, without the need for any other rules. As the player character speak with each other, move about, perform simple actions in the palace and interact with other characters, the storyteller will simply narrate in the background, keeping the story moving as needed. However, there may be times that a player character will attempt something where success is uncertain, and they will be opposed by other forces, beyond their control. At times like this, the storyteller may initiate a contest.

Contests

As Raihan rounds the corner, he comes face to face with two of the wazir's loyal guards, each as tall as a tree and as wide as a great elephant, wielding a shining scimitar as long a from end to end as a man's height. They glare at him with menace in their eyes and a look of evil intent.

At this point, loyal Raihan may decide to fight the armed guards, although the odds may seem stacked against him. If he does so, the storyteller, taking the role of the merciless guards, will take up a number of coins from the pile in his treasury, and present them to the player taking the role of Raihan. If the storyteller considers this a minor challenge for the player character, he will hold up only a meager sum of coins. If he considers it a nearly insurmountable obstacle, he can hold up a brimming handful of coins to represent this.

The guards are indeed the wazir's best men, and Raihan well knows that their deadly swords have separated more than one man from his head. It will certainly not be a simple task to overcome them...

The player responds by taking as many of his or her own coins as they wish to use to meet that challenge and holds them out before them.

Raihan is no fool, and carries the scars of more than one battle on his back. More importantly, he knows that his cause is just and that Allah will not allow him to fail now.

Both players take their coins and cup them between their closed hands, shake vigorously, and slap them to the table all at once. Each separates the coins that have come up heads from those that have come up tails, and both players then compare to see who has come up with the most heads.

If the storyteller has flipped more heads in the contest, the character has failed their task, and the storyteller may narrate what happens.

Raihan leaps forward bravely, but foolishly. The guards easily overpower him, and he finds himself hurled against the stone wall to embrace darkness, certain that he will soon be meeting his maker by way of a sharp blade...

If the player has more heads in the contest, then the character has succeeded, and they may describe the feat as they see fit.

Raihan disarms the first guard with a quick strike, and grabs his sword even before it falls to the floor. Moving like a whirling dervish, he spins the shining steel and a moment later two heads are rolling on the floor of the hallway.

If the two sides have tied, then the contest has come to a momentary standstill, as both forces stand evenly matched. It is up to the storyteller to either give up and concede to the player, or to increase the stakes of the contest and begin another round, by holding out even more coins from their treasury. The storyteller then narrates the ongoing conflict.

Raihan has disarmed and quickly dispatched one of the guards, and stands over his body while facing off against the second guard. Steel grinds against steel as both men force their swords against the other. Just then, Raihan hears the sound of running footsteps behind him. Reinforcements have arrived, and he is trapped!

The player may then either give in, or hold out more coins to continue the contest for a second round. This will continue until one party has either had a deciding victory, or has conceded, either by choice or because they have run out of coins in their treasury.

Whichever side has lost the contest now gathers up all of the coins that have been used by both sides and adds them to their own treasury. They may have failed this time, but they will be all the better prepared for the next challenge.

There may be times that two player characters may be facing off against each other, instead of against the storyteller. Treat these instance in exactly the same way, with one exception: each player chooses the number of coins they wish to use in the contest secretly, holding them closed in their hand and then revealing them each other simultaneously.

Talents and Powers

Every character card includes a line of text describing the character. Within that text, certain words or phrases are printed in bold. These are special *talents* that the character possesses, skills and abilities in which they excel.

Anytime that a character is involved in a contest which involves one of their talents, and they fail to come up with more heads on their flip than their opponent, they may flip those same coins a second time and try again. If they have failed to beat their opponent a second time, then their character has failed indeed, despite their talent. The storyteller of the current story is the arbiter of whether the talent is truly involved in the current contest.

Other words or phrases on the character card may be *italicized*. These words describe *powers* the character possesses, above and beyond the scope of mere mortals. The different powers that characters might possess are described below.

- *Enchanter*: The character is possessed of the magical ability to turn men and women into beasts, and back again. A transformed character retains their own mind, but no longer has the power of speech. The effect happens in an instant, and is permanent until it is reversed.
- *Shapeshifter*: The character can transform at will into another form, either an animal or an elemental shape of fire, wind or air. They have all the benefits that that form would provide, although they can only assume one form at a time.
- *Illusionist*: The character has the ability to transform one inanimate object into another of approximately the same size, for a limited amount of time. The spell wears off after a day, and the object will return to its previous shape.
- *Authority*: The character is a figure of respect and leadership, with a title and command over many of the faithful. Loyal men and women will heed their commands and obey their wishes.

Begging and Bribing

The world of legendary Arabia is a place of wonder and fantasy, a world where sometimes the amazing can happen at just the right moment. A rescue in the nick of time, a chance recognition in a crowd, a helpful distraction at a crucial moment. If the characters goal is just, then Allah may take a hand in their destiny. When one of the players wants just such an event to occur, something that the player characters could never cause on their own, they may *bribe* the storyteller to include it in the tale.

To return to the tale of Raihan and the guards, if the player knows that he cannot hope to face the guards himself, he may ask instead for a kind of divine intervention. To do this, the player steps back for a moment, and interrupts the tale

in the voice of one of the characters hearing it. In other words, if this is the primary story, the player would speak out as King Shahryrar, interrupting Scheherazade in her tale:

But surely, Scheherazade, the young Coral-Pearl knew that Raihan was on his way to rescue her! As you have described her, I know that she is not some lazy good-for-nothing harim girl, looking only to lie about and eat hashish while her rescuer comes for her. No, she would be there even now, to help Raihan in his combat, by ambushing those guards from behind!

If this was a secondary or tertiary story, the player could instead interrupt in the voice of a character hearing the current tale, likely whichever character card was one from the top of the pile in front of them.

As the player says this, they hold out a number of coins from their treasury in their hand, offering it towards the storyteller, as many as they think the intervention in the story is worth. The storyteller, taking their creativity and their generosity into account, may accept their offer...

Indeed, just as you say, O my King, just at that moment, Raihan heard a loud crash, as the young but wily slave girl, Coral-Pearl, leapt up from behind and dashed a large pot over the head of one of the guards, knocking him unconscious on the spot! As the other turns his back, to face his unexpected attacker, it is a simple matter to dispatch him as well.

Or they may reject it...

Ah, sadly no, my King. For though she was with him in spirit, even at that very moment, Coral-Pearl was being held under guard, tied to a chair in her own chambers, her eyes like moonlit ponds, swelling with tears, and her abundant bosom quivering with fear. Raihan would have no help from her...

If the offer is accepted, of course, the storyteller adds the coins to their own treasury. If it is rejected, the player may have at least the consolation of keeping their riches, but they may not make a second offer. On the other hand, other players are free to make counter offers or counter bids, trying to buy the storytellers favor with gold. It is ultimately up to the storyteller what they accept and what they do not.

Alternately, if a player has few coins left in their treasury, they have the option of *begging*, instead of *bribing*. The player may interrupt in the same way, but instead suggesting something awful that may happen to their character, or to the player characters in general.

Ah, Scheherazade, I can see what has happened now. Certainly the alarm has already been sounded throughout the palace and Raihan is completely surrounded by the palace guards. There can be no future for him apart from the sultan's oubliette, and beyond that, the executioner's block. I know that were it my palace, he would meet no other fate.

And saying this, the player would hold out his empty hands in supplication. The storyteller may choose to reject their suggestion, and continue the story as it was, or they can take pity on the humble player and accept their suggestion, placing a few coins in their hands for their trouble. Allah rewards those who are generous, and a good storyteller knows that a temporary setback for the characters usually leads to a more interesting and involved story.

Indeed, O my King, it is exactly as you say, Raihan had no hope of escape, and was summarily grabbed and thrown into a bottomless oubliette. However, even in that place where not even light could penetrate, Raihan heard the sounds of other voices beside him, and he knew that hope was not yet lost...

Ending a tale

It is easy to let a story get carried away, but each tale must come to an end sometime. Indeed, if the primary story is to continue, each nested tale must conclude sooner rather than later. If your group finds that the sub-stories tend to drag on longer than they like, you may find it useful to set a time limit on them from the beginning.

Each storyteller is responsible for bringing their tale to a conclusion, when they feel that the events that have taken place match (at least in some way) the moral that the tale set out to tell. Players should work with the storyteller, keeping this in mind as well.

And so, the sultan saw that the love Abu al-Husan had for Coral-Pearl was true, and realized that could not be angry with him for following his heart. The sultan gave Coral-Pearl's hand to him, and the kadi wed them on the spot, in the sultan's own throne room. Then the sultan gave each of them ten thousand golden dinars as a wedding gift, and a train of camels to carry their riches. And so you see, it is always better to be merciful, rather than vengeful.

All the character cards that have been used in that story are gathered up and added to a discard pile, next to the draw pile, and play continues, returning to the previous level of the nested tale, and returning the role of storyteller to its previous holder.

Ending the Session

The primary storyteller may end the evening's session in one of two ways. They may decide that it is getting late and so say,

But at that moment, Scheherezade saw the sun creeping over the horizon, and discreetly grew silent. But, O King, she promised, if you will but allow me to keep my head for but one more day, I will continue my tale tomorrow night.

Alternately, if the tale has come to a natural conclusion and the moral of the primary story has been played out to the storyteller's satisfaction, they may bring that tale to a close. However, before the sun rises, they must start a new tale, giving a new moral, and setting out a new setting and a new set of characters. The players will then have time from the end of this session until the beginning of the next to consider what that next tale will be about...

The Palace

There are many wondrous rooms in the sultan's palace. It may help you as you tell your stories to draw out a rough map of the palace and its layout while you play. Each room should have a list of story hooks listed on it, for all the players to use. Here are four sample rooms, feel free to add your own:

The Garden:

- “A furtive meeting between forbidden lovers”
- “A secret plot for murder is hatched”
- “An illicit sale is made”
- “Someone seeks companionship and ease of sorrow”
- “Slaves plot against their masters”

The Throne Room:

- “The Sultan sentences criminals to death”
- “The Sultan weighs two sides of an issue”
- “Supplicants vie for the Sultan's favor”
- “The Sultan seeks entertainment”
- “A wedding is interrupted”

The Oubliette:

- “Prisoners plan their escape”
- “An unlikely visitor”
- “An unexpected magical intervention”
- “A prisoner is not whom they seem”
- “A guard betrays their post”

The Hammam (Baths):

“An unwise seduction”

“The experienced tries to teach the young”

“An unwanted seduction from an unexpected place”

“A case of mistaken identity”

“A prank taken too far”

The Characters

Here is a sample list of 10 characters to copy onto index cards and begin to build your deck of character cards:

Raihan, the Loyal Eunuch

A strong Negro slave with an endless courage, Raihan is a fine warrior and a good man to have at your side.

Coral-Pearl, the Forlorn Slave Girl

The beautiful Coral-Pearl is as clever as a desert fox and as quiet as a mouse.

Ibrisia, the Waylaid Warrior Princess

A Christian warrior from far-off lands, Ibrisia is as beautiful as she is fierce.

Shams-al-Din, the Old Wazir

A man of great learning and great cleverness, wisely granted an equally great *authority* by the Sultan.

Abu al-Husan, the Poor Young Tailor

Although without education, his words are those of a poet and his beautiful young face has a pure look of sincerity.

Budur, the Wily Princess

Although clever and with all the learning which befits her station, Budur` s greatest talents are as a lover.

Smoke, the Fire Efrin

A cunning *shapeshifter* and a wicked deceiver.

Zubaidah, the Enchantress

A learned *enchanter* and a deceiver of men.

Mahmoud, the Carpet Salesman

A legendary haggler (and a poet when he` s drunk), Mahmoud loves to regale others with his skills as a lover.

Abdallah, the Mystic

Among his many scholarly pursuits, Abdallah is an *illusionist* and an insightful advisor.