

Caravans

Campaign Guide

Sample file



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Introduction

Returning from the bazaar, Husar saw his favorite niece sitting on a low stone fence, idly tossing pebbles into the dirt. Her face was drawn, the corners of her mouth turned down. She looked as if she had swallowed a pitcher of sour milk.

"What is the matter, my child?" asked the elder.

Jamilia threw another stone and watched the dirt settle around it. "Nothing."

"Very well," replied Husar. He straightened the cowl around his slim shoulders. "Be sure to leave some stones for the other sullen children." He turned to leave.

"Wait," said Jamilia. She tossed her black, silken hair behind her shoulders.

Husar paused. He looked down his strong, aquiline nose at her. "Yes?"

"I failed my history examination today," she said, running tapered fingers over the stones cemented in the fence. "My instructor said I must take it again."

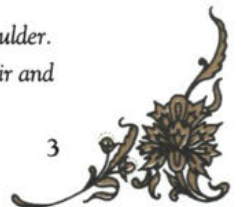
"Then you have nothing to feel bad about," said Husar. "Apply yourself diligently, and you are certain to pass the examination in your second attempt."

"But I do not want to study history. It is a waste of time. I have no use for so many facts."

Husar settled down beside his petite niece. "Hear this story, my child. It is about two twin boys, Umar and Karim. In appearance, they could not have been more similar, boasting chiseled features and strong bodies worthy of a sultan.

"But in outlook, they could not have been more different. Umar loved books and learning. By age two, he could identify birds by the sound of their songs. By age six, he could speak three languages. Karim, however, had no use for such things. He reacted so violently to his parents' efforts to teach him reading and writing that they eventually gave up. Karim took pride in his ignorance, declaring that experience was a far better teacher than books, and that his brother was a fool for wasting his life stuffing his head with useless information.

"By the time the twins reached adolescence, their dispositions had manifested themselves physically. Umar's head had doubled in size, becoming as large as a boulder. It was a marvelous thing; at will, Umar could command his head to inflate with air and





carry him into the sky. So tough was his skull that it could batter down stone walls; in fact, when Umar breached the enemy's castle by pummeling it with his head, he won the Siege of Essafah al-Ibabs.

"Karim, sadly, suffered a much different fate. His head withered and shrank, taking on the appearance of a rotten apple. His skull became as soft as mud. He died in a storm when a strong wind snapped his head from his neck and carried it away."

Jamilia looked at her uncle incredulously. She cupped her hand over her mouth to stifle a giggle. "I have listened to many of your fantastic tales," she said, "but none so fantastic as this. Is it really true?"

"No," admitted Husar. "But it might as well be."

Welcome to *Caravans*, an epic adventure of treachery, intrigue, and romance set in Zakhara, the Land of Fate.

The adventure is designed for three to five player characters (PCs) of levels five to nine, with a total of 20 to 30 levels for the entire party.

You, the Dungeon Master (DM), should familiarize yourself with all of the materials in this set before beginning play.

What You Need

Caravans assumes you have access to the *Player's Handbook*, the *DUNGEON MASTER*[®] *Guide*, the *MONSTROUS MANUAL*[™] accessory (or the first two volumes of the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM*[®]), and the *AL-QADIM*[®] *Arabian Adventures* sourcebook. The *AL-QADIM MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM* Appendix and the *Land of Fate* boxed set are helpful but not mandatory.

The Adventure Book

The 64-page *Adventure Book* consists of six episodes. Most likely, the PCs will move through the episodes in sequence, but because their actions are unpredictable, they may decide to pursue the episodes in a different order. The "What Next?" section at the end of each episode discusses the party's options and directs you, the

DM, to the appropriate sections of the *Adventure Book*.

The adventure breaks down as follows:

Episode One. Solving the mystery of a talking tent brings the PCs to the attention of Fahad al-Zakir, one of Tajar's wealthiest and most revered dignitaries. Fahad hires the PCs for an expedition that will take them across the High Desert to the Pit of the Ghuls. Their mission: to locate and retrieve Fahad's missing fiancée, Sita, whom Fahad has not seen in more than half a century and whom he still dearly loves.

Episode Two. This episode details the party's trek across the High Desert, fraught with scheming genies, suspicious strangers, and ferocious monsters.

Episode Three. The party meets an eccentric mystic who gives them access to a powerful magical item, but only if they help him deal with a bizarre entity from another world.

Episode Four. At a military camp deep in the High Desert, the party becomes embroiled in an ancient feud between two warring tribes and meets a sorcerer with a deadly secret.

Episode Five. An investigation of Vahtov, the village where Sita was last seen, leads to an ancient crypt and an alliance with a mysterious shapeshifter.

Episode Six. A deadly confrontation in a fiery palace beneath the Pit of the Ghuls determines the fate of Fahad's lost love.

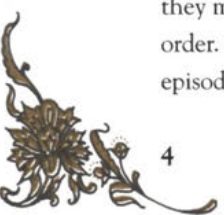
The Campaign Guide

The 32-page *Campaign Guide*, which you're reading now, contains source material to supplement the information in the *Adventure Book*:

Chapter 1. This chapter describes Ala'i the Hungry, a magical item that the PCs acquire in Episode One of the *Adventure Book*.

Chapter 2. Here you'll find descriptions of key locations in the High Desert, with commentary by one of Zakhara's most esteemed traders.

Chapter 3. This chapter provides information relevant to desert travel, including caravan organization, water sources, and camel behavior.





Chapter 4. Included here are profiles of two major nonplayer characters and a section summarizing the statistics of most of the monsters featured in the adventure.

DM's Maps and Players' Aids

Other components in this box :

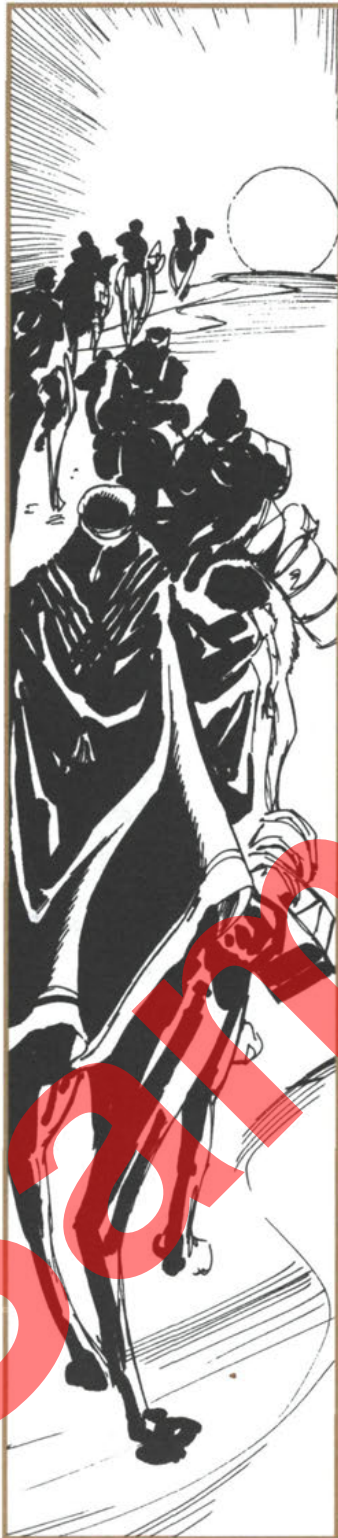
- A poster-sized reproduction of a magical silken carpet called Ala'i the Hungry. The PCs acquire this powerful item during their quest. Chapter 1 of this book explains how to use it.
- An eight-page handout booklet, including two *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM* pages. Carefully remove the staples from this booklet to separate the sheets.

The *Adventure Book* explains when and how to use each of the player handouts (PH's).

- Six card sheets, color on one side, black and white on the other. Four of the colored sides are Ala'i's Responses, representing Ala'i the Hungry in various states of activation. Chapter 1 of this book explains their use. The other two colored sides are DM maps (Tajar and Environs and the High Desert). The six black-and-white sides contain tactical maps and diagrams for encounters described in the *Adventure Book*.

That's it. You're ready to begin. May Fate grant you a clear mind, a keen eye, and a strong heart!





Chapter 1

Ala'i the Hungry

Jamilia found her uncle asleep in the shade of a towering palm. "Wake up, Uncle," she said excitedly. "See what I bought! Is it not exquisite?"

Husar rose and wiped the sleep from his eyes. Before him, his niece proudly displayed a violet tapestry embroidered with an intricate pattern of stars and sunflowers.

"It is for Mother's birthday," she said. "I spent the money I earned grooming camels for Ahmad the herdsman. It cost only two silver pieces."

Husar ran his hand along the edge of the tapestry, a few of the fibers working loose in his hand. It was worth no more than two silver pieces, if that. But the thought would mean more to Jamilia's mother than the craftsmanship. "It is a fine piece," he said.

"You struck a good bargain."

Jamilia rolled her treasure into a bundle, then sat beside her uncle in the cool shade. "The merchant said the tapestry would not be out of place hanging beside Ala'i the Hungry," said Jamilia. "What a strange idea, a tapestry hanging next to a person."

Husar laughed. "No, my child. Ala'i is not a person. It is the name of a carpet. A most famous and most magical carpet. Listen!

"Ages ago, there lived a sha'ir named Ala'i ibn Dissafah, a man with eyes as brown as almonds and a thick mane of ebony hair. A man blessed by the gods, Ala'i had distinguished himself in not one but three fields of endeavor. First, he excelled as a seer, a prophet so skilled that he could predict the number of drops that would fall in a rainstorm. Second, he was a weaver of consummate artistry, producing caftans so splendid that maidens swooned at the sight. And third, he was a brilliant scholar, proficient in poetry, philosophy, and literature.

"But though Ala'i was an exceptional man, he was a man nonetheless. And like all men, his days on this world were limited. Ala'i mourned his old age, not because he feared death, but because of all he wanted to do. 'I regret having not spent more time in study,' he lamented to a genie. 'Would that I had spent less time spinning cloth and telling fortunes, and more in the company of great poets and writers.'

"I cannot give you back your youth,' said the genie. 'But I can offer you a second life of sorts, one drawn from your three great skills. If, that is, you are willing to abandon this life for one quite different.'

