

Al-Qadim House Rules

For 4e D&D

Adapted by Caoimhe Ora Snow
<caoimhe.snow@gmail.com>

These are based on the “Armor in Fiery Zakhara,” “Calling on Fate,” “The Evil Eye,” and “Wizard Spells by Province” sections of the original AD&D 2nd Edition *Arabian Adventures* handbook.

Armor in Fiery Zakhara

Some foreigners — especially pale-faced characters from the distant North — have dubbed Zakhara “the Burning World.” Whether the setting is city, sea, desert, or jungle, the Land of Fate is uniformly hot by day, especially during the summer months. Only the high mountains of northern Zakhara offer relief from the searing midday sun, but in turn they offer new difficulties, such as unsteady footing and sheer slopes.

The omnipresent daytime heat shapes every aspect of life in the Land of Fate. Resting (or at least slowing the pattern of business) is common during the midday hours. Bazaars are busy during the early morn and late afternoon. But in between they may be empty, save for a few dozing businessmen and half-crazed barbers flashing their blades in the sun.

The most obvious concession to climate is dress. Loose robes are preferred to tight-fitting leggings. More importantly from a gaming standpoint, the heat also affects a Zakharan’s choice in armor. The heavy plate mail found in the distant North is a rarity here, used for occasional pomp and ceremony if at all. Full metal plate armor, encasing the body from head to toe, is unknown to the common Zakharan; those few suits which exist are collectors’ items, procured for their magic or as curiosities.

The reason for this is simple: heavy armor makes movement difficult and even dangerous in a hot climate. Foreigners who insist on wearing such armor often stagger and pass out with exertion. Even with “exhaustive” training, a man in full plate will be less effective in the Land of Fate than a man who chooses his armor more prudently.

When wearing armor in Zakhara, you take a climate penalty on attack rolls, Endurance checks, and initiative rolls equal to the sum of the armor check penalty and the speed penalty, as shown on the table below:

Armor Type	Climate Penalty	Healing Surge Spent
Cloth armor	–	–
Leather armor	–	–
Hide armor	-1	–
Chainmail	-2	-1
Scale armor	-1	–
Plate armor	-3	-1
Light shield	-1	–
Heavy shield	-2	-1

If you are a Zakharan native, you can reduce the climate penalty by spending a healing surge; instead of regaining hit points, the climate penalty is divided in half until you take your next extended rest.

In addition, Zakharan natives are used to fighting in lighter armor while still making the most of the protection afforded by that armor.

- ◆ If you are proficient in leather armor (or heavier) and you choose to wear cloth armor, you get a +1 bonus to your AC and Reflex.
- ◆ If you are proficient in hide armor (or heavier) and you choose to wear leather armor, you get a +1 bonus to your AC and Reflex.
- ◆ If you are proficient in chainmail (or heavier) and you choose to wear hide armor, you get a +1 bonus to your AC and Reflex.
- ◆ If you are proficient in plate armor and you choose to wear scale armor, you get a +1 bonus to your AC and Reflex.
- ◆ If you are proficient in heavy shields and you choose to use a light shield, you get a +1 bonus to your Reflex.

These bonuses are not cumulative; if you are proficient in plate and choose to wear cloth armor, you get a +1 bonus to AC and Reflex.

The Evil Eye

Pride and success can be dangerous in the Al-Qadim campaign, especially for a character who boasts aloud. When Zakharans receive a compliment, they often protest and belittle their skills, lest a jealous genie overhear and bedevil them with the evil eye. The evil eye is the ability to bring misfortune upon another — from an annoyance to a tragedy — with no more than a glance. Nearly all genies are thought to have this power. They need not stand before a character to use it, but can spy upon him or her from afar.

In game terms, the evil eye is not magical per se, though magic can sometimes invoke or prevent it. Rather the evil eye is a common, ordinary part of life in a world where genies run rampant and elemental spirits continually seek to cause trouble.

The following rule is designed to reflect the danger of being less than humble in an Arabian setting. If player characters are praised and fail to respond with humility and modesty, they must make a saving throw. A character who fails has made a genie jealous, and becomes afflicted with the evil eye.

Neither Fate nor Fortune can be said to smile upon characters afflicted with the evil eye. They become hapless and unlucky. All saving throws suffer a -2 penalty, as do all ability checks and skill checks. Strangers can sense that something is wrong with the “sufferers,” but rather than sympathy, they feel distrust. Local governments view anyone afflicted with the evil eye as shifty; a sufferer’s business may be audited for fraud. Local clergymen view sufferers as potentially dangerous, and may search their belongings or even refuse to offer hospitality.

A character afflicted with the evil eye only can be cured by the rawun power *influence evil eye*, or by the remove affliction ritual. The saher’s *avert evil eye* spell can protect a character from this plight (even a pompous braggart), but the spell is of no help after the fact.

Calling Upon Fate

In Zakhara, Fate is the force which guides and shapes the lives of everyone, and all Zakharans know her power. Is she a god? The god of gods? Powerful ruler of the genies? Or simply a pervasive force beyond true comprehension? The answers are for the sha'irs and priests to debate. For others, it matters not who Fate is, but what she does. She is the weaver of Time, supplying threads of the future and mixing them with threads of the past. She graciously provides the basis for all victories, and she is the justification for all defeats. She does not excuse characters who do not do their best, however; their future is in their own hands as well as in the hand of Fate. Win or lose, she is always there, the supreme mediator and guardian of the future.

Dehydration, blinding storms, sandslides that bury characters alive—these are but a few of the perils faced by characters in Fate's burning land. She is not without mercy, however. Characters who find themselves in dire and deadly straits can call upon Fate for aid. She may smile upon those who call her, but she also may turn her hand against them. Most Zakharans try to avoid placing themselves in need of such divine intervention.

How to Call Upon Fate

To call upon Fate, a character must be in a position where survival is doubtful at best. For example, a character without a weapon, surrounded by a pride of hungry panthers, would be in a sufficiently desperate situation. So would someone trapped in a back alley by an angry contingent of the sultan's guard. So, too, would a character trapped in a well, into which a flame wizard is about to cast a fireball; or a character falling from a flying carpet half a mile above the ground. Life-and-death situations are preferred.

Calling upon Fate is a 1d20 roll. On a roll of 20 or higher, Fate intervenes on the character's behalf. On a natural 1, the hand of Fate turns against the asker.

An individual can call upon Fate rarely, at most once per week.

Fate's Response

If Fate intervenes on a character's behalf, the DM is responsible for coming up with some good fortune that gives the individual at least a fighting chance. For example, in the case of the panthers, the moonlight might suddenly glint upon the blade of an old weapon, fortuitously buried in the nearby sand. In the case of the city guard, a higher-up might suddenly shout, "You fools! Take the prisoner alive!" For the character about to be incinerated in a well, a scattering of rocks might break loose, revealing a small passage in the side of the well. And for the plummeting character, a large eagle might fly nearby, allowing the character to grab hold and slow his or her fall. Alternately, a passing djinni might take an interest in the plummeting mortal, and begin negotiating terms of a rescue. Should the mortal hesitate, the djinni might even save the character just as the ground loomed up from below.

At the very least, a character upon whom Fate smiles should be granted a +5 power bonus to one immediate saving throw—even a saving throw where none would otherwise be available. Alternately, the character could receive a +5 power bonus to his or her next attack roll (handy for a character surrounded by killers).

Whatever happens, the DM should not provide the character with an automatic rescue—only with the raw material with which he or she can survive. For example, if the panthers were to suddenly fall to the ground, dead, that would be going too far. The hand of Fate works a bit like the old serial plots from the 1920s and beyond; the hero seems doomed and hopeless, but when a new reel begins, some means of escape miraculously appears, allowing his saga of perils to continue.

If Fate turns her hand against the asker, the individual suffers a -4 penalty to all saving throws, attack rolls, and skill checks until the end of the encounter. Of course, in a truly desperate situation, the character may die before the end of the encounter. Such are the risks of tempting Fate.

Arcane Powers and Provinces

An arcane power is in zero or more elemental provinces. (Divine, martial, psionic, primal, and shadow powers are not in elemental provinces, even if they are elemental in nature.)

- ◆ If it has the keyword **fire** or the keyword **radiant**, it is in the Flame Province.
- ◆ If it has the keyword **cold** or the keyword **acid**, it is in the Wave Province.
- ◆ If it has the keyword **lightning** or the keyword **thunder**, it is in the Wind Province.
- ◆ If it has a province keyword (such as **Flame**, **Sand**, **Wave**, or **Wind**), it is in that province.
- ◆ If an arcane power doesn't fit any of the previous rules, then it is not in any elemental province.
- ◆ A power can be in more than one province; for example, wall of fog is in both the Wave Province and the Wind Province.
- ◆ An elemental mage can use a spell from his or her chosen province even if it is in another province as well.

Additional Keywords

The following arcane powers gain additional keywords in an Al-Qadim setting:

Power	Class and Level	Keyword(s)
Bag of the Four Winds	Artificer 22	Wind
Breath of the Desert Dragon	Sorcerer 16	Wind
Breath of Winter	Sorcerer 17	Wind
Calm the Flames	Swordmage 27	Flame
Cinder Storm	Wizard 25	Wind
Cloak of Winter Storm	Sorcerer 25	Wind
Cloudkill	Wizard 19	Wind
Cyclone Pull	Sorcerer 13	Wind
Dance of Biting Wind	Bard 15	Wind
Dark Rain of Mutuz-Vot	Warlock 15	Wave
Dominant Winds	Sorcerer 16	Wind
Earth Brute	Wizard 13	Sand
Earthquake Strike	Bard 13	Sand
Entombing Earth	Wizard 19	Sand
Extinguishing Rain	Sorcerer 6	Wave
Feather Fall	Wizard 2	Wind
Fire Sigil	Wizard 22	Flame
Float	Wizard 2	Wind
Fog Form	Sorcerer 10	Wind
Furnace of Sand	Wizard 17	Sand, Wind
Gale-Force Infusion	Swordmage 7	Wind
Glitterdust	Wizard 5	Sand
Grounding Rebuke	Sorcerer 1	Sand
Jaws of the Earth	Sorcerer 13	Sand
Kalak's Burning Sands	Warlock 9	Sand
King's Step	Warlock 10	Sand
Mystical Debris	Wizard 2	Sand
Phoenix Step	Warlock 10	Flame
Pinioning Vortex	Wizard 3	Wind
Poisonous Evasion	Sorcerer 17	Wind
Rimestorm	Sorcerer 7	Wind
Roaring Storm of Cania	Warlock 5	Wind
Sand Shape	Warlock 6	Sand
Sea Tyrant's Fury	Warlock 17	Wave

Power	Class and Level	Keyword(s)
Searing Sands	Sorcerer 3	Sand
Shard of the Endless Avalanche	Wizard 17	Sand
Sorcerous Sirocco	Sorcerer 2	Wind
Stoneskin	Wizard 16	Sand
Stonewrack	Wizard 15	Sand
Storm Countess's Kiss	Warlock 9	Wind
Summon Angel Wretch	Wizard 19	Wind
Summon Arrowhawk	Wizard 9	Wind
Summon Diamond Falcon	Wizard 16	Sand, Wind
Summon Dust Devil	Wizard 1	Wind
Summon Earthwind Ravager	Wizard 25	Sand, Wind
Summon Hammerfist Crusher	Wizard 10	Sand
Summon Living Mountain	Wizard 29	Sand
Summon Rockfire Dreadnaught	Wizard 19	Sand
Summon Stormstone Fury	Wizard 15	Sand
Tune of Ice and Wind	Bard 5	Wind
Vestige of Land's Soul	Warlock 25	Sand
Vortex of Fire	Warlock 15	Wind
Wall of Fog	Wizard 6	Wave, Wind
Whirlwind	Sorcerer 1	Wind
Wind of Swirling Flames	Artificer 13	Wind
Wind Shape	Sorcerer 22	Wind
Winds of Change	Sorcerer 9	Wind
Wrath of the Arctic Wind	Swordmage 27	Wind
Wrathful Vapors	Sorcerer 25	Wind
Zephyr of the Barren Sands	Swordmage 6	Sand, Wind