

Inspiration and sources for each card

Magic: The Naming--Arabian Nights

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When the **Magic** game's first expansion was released back in 1993, designer Richard Garfield was particularly inspired by a comic book called *The Sandman* by Neil Gaiman. In fact, so inspirational did Garfield find issue #50 with its story "Ramadan," that one card in *The Arabian Nights* expansion ended up being named after a moment at the end of that tale. "This book," Garfield said back in 1993, "reminded me what an intriguing, dynamic environment [*The Arabian Nights*] tales offer. The literature is rich with people, monsters, magical devices, and places."

Garfield's approach was all-inclusive. After researching roughly one dozen books on *The Arabian Nights*--including translations of, histories of, critiques of, translations of, and interpretations of--he set out to name the nearly 100 cards by keeping a list of names, places, characters, treasure, monsters, and "anything else that caught my fancy," he explained.

If you aren't familiar with *The Arabian Nights*, it's the tale of a king named Shahryar who, obsessed with the faithfulness and virginity of his wife, takes a new one every night, then has her killed the next morning to ensure she was loyal only to him. Eventually, Shahryar roars through most of the virginal women in the kingdom, and that's when he comes to Shahrazad. Shahrazad figures out that she can stay alive by weaving an ongoing series of stories, each with an ending that dovetails into the next. These keep the king suspended each dawn, awaiting the next cliffhanger. In this manner, Shahrazad keeps herself alive for 1001 nights, ultimately convincing the king that he's misjudged her, and the two live happily ever after.

More background elements of the tales (that is, if they could appear in any story at all) became common cards in the set: camels, deserts, wolves, apes, and so forth. "The more specific folk," Garfield said, "I tended to make rare--technically uncommon, as there was no rare." The exceptions to this rule were djinns and efreeti, which could easily appear in any story but which were almost always main players when they appeared. "I wanted a lot of them, but I didn't want them to be common. Hence, I made four of each, spread out in every color but white. They didn't seem to belong in white--while not always evil, they were *never* good."

To fully comprehend the vast array of translations available--and to make it more understandable when Garfield said that most Arabic words he found in translation guides within his references don't show up in online translations--you may remember the brief history of *The Arabian Nights* that editor Beverly Marshall Saling outlined in *Duelist #2*:

"E. W. Lane first introduced parts of *The Arabian Nights* to English-speaking audiences from 1839 to 1841, but his version was incomplete. A full English version wasn't available until John Payne's 1882 - 1884 edition. Payne's translation, written in the Gothic style popular at the time, appealed strongly to the Romantic longing for exotic fantasy, popularizing *The Arabian Nights* and becoming the standard English version of the tales. The rather florid 1885 - 1888 translation by explorer Sir Richard Burton eventually became more widely distributed than Payne's, but Burton relied so heavily on Payne's version that many scholars consider his footnotes on Arabic customs his only real contribution to his own book. Many modern translations of the tales still owe some of their phrasing to Payne: one exception to this is the 1990 translation by Husain Haddawy, who based his version on a fourteenth-century Arabic manuscript."

With that in mind, you'll understand that some of the original source material for Garfield's naming designs may be lost in the sands of time

Abu Ja'far

Garfield asked, "Was this a leper?" Well, according to "The Tale of the Three Apples," Ja'far was, in fact, a wazir to the caliph Harun al-Rashid. Leper by reputation only, perhaps.

Aladdin

If you don't know where any other name comes from, you ought to know this one. And forget what you learned from the Disney animated film--Aladdin (or Alaeddin, in some translations) started out as quite a punk, who made his father so sad that the old man died of grief. His tale is also one of the longest in all of *The Arabian Nights*. "Note," Garfield said, "that he is supposed to be Chinese, and Julie Baroh drew him as such."

Aladdin's Lamp

If you're interested, Aladdin's mom (who's alive in the tale--see why you shouldn't trust Disney's version?) rubs the lamp first, but Aladdin knows about the powers of jinn and takes it away from her. The first thing he demands of the jinn who emerges? Food.

Aladdin's Ring

Not as central a focus as the lamp, Aladdin's ring contained an efreethat he used to get out of the underground cave where the lamp had been buried and where he was trapped after trying to recover said lamp. Makes you wonder just how many wishes this kid needed.

Ali Baba

With forty more cards in the set, *Arabian Nights* could have had one for each thief Ali Baba had to best in order to retain the wealth he discovered hidden in the thieves' cave. This tale is, of course, the origin of the "Open, Sesame" expression (and as Ali Baba's greedy brother finds out, "Open, Barley" won't do the trick).

Ali from Cairo

A childhood friend of Ma'aruf (same guy, different spelling, as the one who owns the Ring of Ma'rûf), Ali was always one step ahead of failure--hence, his card power of keeping his controller alive.

Army of Allah

Allah is the Arabic word for "God."

Bazaar of Baghdad

Baghdad is, of course, the central setting for many of the tales of *The Arabian Nights*. Founded in 762 A.D. by Abu Jafar al-Mansur, the city of Baghdad was originally built on the west bank of the Tigris River and was called Madinat as-Salam (City of Peace).

Bird Maiden

Very minor characters mentioned offhandedly in a few stories.

Bottle of Suleiman

Richard Garfield said, "King Solomon caught djinns in a bottle--that's how I remember it, at least. This bottle would contain a djinn, and it would either help you or hurt you." My guess is that Christina Aguilera was never intended to be *that* genie.

Brass Man

In "The Third Kalandar's Tale," the narrator, Ajib, briefly encounters a boatman made "of brass with a tablet of lead on his breast inscribed with talismans and characts." Before the boat ride finishes, the skiff tips over, and the brass man sinks into the depths.

Camel

Trust me--they're in the book.

City in a Bottle

The card that started the flavor--the card inspired by *Sandman* #50. "It is an amazing comic," Garfield said. "The gist of it is that a sultan realizes his realm is at its height with fabulous treasure and magic and creatures and beauty and power. He can't stand the idea of it decaying, so he asks the dream lord to take it into his realm. Eventually, the dream lord does take it, putting it in a bottle and carrying it away so it can live forever in dreams and stories. As he is leaving the city, you can see the magic is gone--there are cracks in the walls. There is dirt. Then it's revealed that this story is being told to a child in the modern Middle East in the ghettos. The story-within-a-story aspect of the comic is true

to *The Arabian Nights*, and the use of it in my expansion is entirely appropriate, I think. And since I wanted an *Arabian Nights* hoser in any case, it's highly appropriate that it's the only modern reference."

City of Brass

Emir Musa sought long and hard to find the fabled City of Brass, a city marked by two towers "of Andalusian brass, which appear to the beholder in the distance as they were twin fires." When Musa comes to the city, however, he finds it without entrances and completely devoid of life. And everyone who climbs to the top of a ladder to mount the walls casts themselves to their death on the other side.

Cuombajj Witches

Witches appear in numerous stories in *The Arabian Nights*, and "cuombajj" is an adaptation of an Arabic term meaning "corrupt."

Cyclone

Some cards are suitably generic to fit the feel of the setting. This is one of those.

Dancing Scimitar

The scimitar, a great curved blade, was the weapon of choice in ancient Persia and Arabia.

Dandân

Garfield recalled, "The dandân was a fantastic fish that, if memory serves--and it certainly doesn't; it rules--was as big as a man but could be killed by a clap of your hands. Hence, Dandân is a 4/1 creature."

Desert, Desert Nomads, Desert Twister

Given how much of *The Arabian Nights* takes place in the desert, it's amazing there aren't more cards in this set that use this name.

Diamond Valley

In "The Second Voyage of Sindbad," the sailor comes upon a valley in the mountains where merchants who "traffic in diamonds" kill sheep, skin them, and cast pieces of the corpses down into the valley so the gems will stick to them and they can draw the wealth out from amidst the "perils and terrors" below.

Drop of Honey

This reference comes from one of the more obscure stories in *The Arabian Nights*. Garfield describes it as "a short tale whose flavor is 'for want of a nail, the kingdom fell.' Someone bringing back some honey spills a drop . . . a fly lands on it . . . a rat jumps on the fly . . . a cat on the rat . . . and so on until the kingdom is at war."

Ebony Horse

This was a gift from a Persian sage to the King of the Persians, Sabur, that would, when ridden, both fly and "cover the space of a year in a single day." The King's son eventually uses it to woo away a bride in a distant city. An entire tale in *The Arabian Nights* centers on this particular treasure.

El-Hajjâj

Alternatively spelled Al-Hajjâj, El-Hajjâj was a tyrannical governor of numerous stories (beginning about 500 nights into Shahrazad's tales) who was alleged to have slain 120,000 men in his efforts to quell uprisings and who died in 714 A.D.

Elephant Graveyard

More an African myth than a Middle Eastern/Indian one, geologists say that such a place has never existed. Another Disney cross-reference--*The Lion King*, this time--bites the dust.

Erg Raiders

"Erg" is an adaptation of an Arabic term meaning "desert."

Erhnam Djinn

A few cards in the *Arabian Nights* set bear names that are personally significant to Richard Garfield. In this case, "Erhnam" is an anagram of "Herman," Garfield's brother-in-law.

Eye for an Eye

This is a biblical saying, supported in *The Arabian Nights* by the numerous references to one-eyed people and the evil eye cast upon enemies.

Fishliver Oil

"Occasionally this was used to allow characters to travel underwater," Garfield explained.

Flying Carpet

Quoting a note from Sir Richard Burton's translation of *Thousand Nights and a Night*: "The great prototype of the Flying Carpet is that of Sulayman bin Daud [i.e. King Solomon], a fable which the

Koran (chap. xxi. 81) borrowed from the Talmud, not from 'Indian fictions.' It was of green sandal embroidered with gold and silver and studded with precious stones, and its length and breadth were such that all the Wise King's host could stand upon it, the men to the left and the jinns to the right of the throne; and when all were ordered, the Wind at royal command, raised it and wafted it whither the Prophet would, while an army of birds flying overhead canopied the host from the sun."

Flying Men

A flavorful name, evocative of the setting.

Ghazbán Ogre

"Ghazbán" is an adaptation of an Arabic term meaning "treacherous."

Giant Tortoise

"The Third Voyage of Sindbad" describes "tortoises twenty cubits wide." That's about thirty-five feet wide, to you and me.

Guardian Beast

"Several stories feature guardian beasts in one form or another," Garfield pointed out. "Since they were usually more than background elements, I made it a rare."

Hasran Ogress

"Hasran" is an adaptation of an Arabic term meaning "hideous."

Hurr Jackal

"Hurr" is an adaptation of an Arabic term meaning "gulch."

Ifh-Bíff Efreet

Another of designer Richard Garfield's inside references, and the only one that editor Beverly Marshall Saling recalls actually questioning as to its "Arabian" feel. "Ifh-Bíff" was a childhood nickname for Garfield's sister, Elizabeth.

Island Fish Jasconius

The island fish (minus the "Jasconius") appears in "The First Voyage of Sindbad" when it's revealed that Sindbad's sailors have lit a fire on the back of a giant fish that, being burned, is about to awaken and plunge them all into the sea to drown. Given that there's a second voyage of Sindbad, you can correctly surmise that Sindbad himself survived. "Jasconius" refers to a tale from the sixth century in

which Saint Brendan and his monks camped on the back of a whale named Jasconius. The whale eventually threw them off, taking their cooking pot down into the depths with it.

Island of Wak-Wak

This island actually exists in pre - *Arabian Nights* folklore. According to legend, the name is derived from the so-called "tree of wonders" growing on a collection of islands. This tree bears rounded fruit resembling the heads of women suspended by their long hair (so Arab sailors imagined). When these fruit are ripe, they fall to the ground, making a sound like "wak-wak." Geographers are divided as to the location of these islands. In "The Seventh Voyage of Sindbad," the sailor encounters an island of people where, on the first of each month, the men all turn into birds and fly away.

Jandor's Ring

Jandor actually shows up more often as "Judar," an Aladdinesque character. His briefly mentioned seal-ring (a gift from Abd al-Samad) contained a jinn, as told in the tale "Judar and His Brethren."

Jandor's Saddlebags

In the tale "Judar and His Brethren," Judar/Jandor and a Moor shared saddlebags that filled themselves with whatever manner of food was desired, "a thousand dishes an hour, if we called for them."

Jeweled Bird

In "The Tale of Nur Al-Din Ali and His Son Badr Al-Din Hasan," a wazir's daughter wears a dress decorated with birds "whose eyes and beaks were of gems and claws of red rubies and green beryl."

Jihad

According to the *Encyclopedia of Politics and Religion* (ed. Robert Wuthnow), "the Islamic idea of *jihad*, which is derived from the Arabic root meaning 'to strive' or 'to make an effort,' connotes a wide range of meanings, from an inward spiritual struggle to attain perfect faith to an outward material struggle to promote justice and the Islamic social system." The most common interpretation--and the one that works best with this card--is "holy war."

Junún Efreet

"Junún" is an adaptation of an Arabic term meaning "nasty."

Juzám Djinn

"Juzám" is an adaptation of an Arabic term meaning "evil."

Khabál Ghoul

"Khabál" is an adaptation of an Arabic term meaning "night."

King Suleiman

The Arabian Nights contains numerous references to King Solomon capturing all manner of djinns and efreets. Thus, the power of the King Suleiman card.

Kird Ape

"Kird" is an adaptation of an Arabic term meaning "jungle."

Library of Alexandria

Alexandria, Egypt, was one of the many fabled cities mentioned in *The Arabian Nights*, and the library there was famed to be the center of all learning and knowledge.

Magnetic Mountain

In "The Third Kalandar's Tale," Ajib, son of Khazib, mentions a "mountain of black stone" called the "Magnet Mountain," which causes the ship's sides to open as "every nail in plank will fly out and cleave fast to the mountain; for that Almighty Allah hath gifted to loadstone with a mysterious virtue and a love of iron, by reason whereof all which is iron travelleth toward it."

Merchant Ship

Another "trust me--it's in there" name.

Metamorphosis

Richard Garfield said, "Finding sorcery-type effects was tough. But things *did* get changed into other things."

Mijae Djinn

Another insider name, "Mijae" is an anagram of "Jamie." "I was the best man at his wedding, summer 1993," Garfield explained.

Moorish Cavalry

The Moors were a nomadic people of the northern shores of Africa, originally the inhabitants of Mauretania. In the eighth century, they converted to Islam and became fanatical Muslims.

Shakespeare's Othello is probably history's most famous Moor, but scores more Moors (say *that* three times fast!) appear in many *Arabian Nights* tales.

Nafs Asp

"Nafs" is an adaptation of an Arabic term meaning "hidden." And asps are *the* snake of choice in places like Egypt.

Oasis

Turns out this is, in fact, named for a small body of water in the desert and *not* the hotel/casino in Las Vegas.

Old Man of the Sea

In "The Fifth Voyage of Sindbad," Sindbad encounters an old man who begs Sindbad to carry him on his shoulders and carry him across a channel. Sindbad obliges, thinking the old man must be lame in some way, but when he does, the old man locks his legs around Sindbad's neck (he has legs like "a buffalo's hide for blackness and roughness") and won't get off. He forces Sindbad to carry him all over the place for days. Eventually, Sindbad tricks the old man into drinking an excessive amount of wine, and when the old man gets drunk and falls off Sindbad's shoulders, Sindbad bashes him in the head with a rock and kills him. No moral to this story, unless it's "Friends don't let friends ride drunk." Garfield notes that some sources had the old man as an orangutan.

Oubliette

This is a dungeon with an entrance only from above. Garfield said, "I first heard the word in the movie *Labyrinth*, I think, when David Bowie as the Goblin King said, 'It is French for forget--because you put people there and forget about them.' When I ran across an oubliette in one of the *Arabian Nights* tales, I couldn't resist putting it in."

Piety

Religious devotion and reverence to God are fundamental parts of nearly all of the tales in *The Arabian Nights*.

Pyramids

A fixture more of Egypt than of Arabia or Persia, the pyramids still pop up in at least one story--the "Tale of Nur Al-Din and His Son Badr Al-Din Hasan," which is set in Egypt.

Repentant Blacksmith

The blacksmith in question had repented his previously evil ways--"I think he was a rapist," said Garfield--and somehow along the way acquired the power to be immune to fire. At one point, in fact, he "hammered a red-hot sword with his fist," Garfield noted.

Ring of Ma'rûf

Ma'rûf, or Ma'arûf, as he crops up in some translations, was a cobbler who found a ring that (like most rings in *The Arabian Nights*) contained a jinn, this one named Abu al-Sa'adat. The tale of Ma'rûf is, in fact, one of the last ones that Shahrazad tells her untrusting husband, King Shahryar.

Rukh Egg

D&D players know this giant terror better by the name "roc," but it's a bird of the same feather--an eagle-like bird big enough to carry an elephant. Sindbad escapes the nest of a rukh by riding the mother bird out. "The Fifth Voyage of Sindbad" actually begins with the discovery of a rukh egg on the beach, and though Sindbad advises his men not to break it, they do anyway. Then come the "he-ruk" and the "she-ruk," who bomb Sindbad's ship with giant boulders. The ship sinks, Sindbad washes up on shore, and promptly encounters the Old Man of the Sea. Small world, huh?

Sandals of Abdallah

A tough one to research, and Richard Garfield's honesty about the origins of the name of this one is pretty sincere: "Abdallah is a fellow who gets magic sandals. I think they allow him to walk on water? Breathe water? Fly? Hell, I don't remember."

Sandstorm

Interestingly, most of the storms in *The Arabian Nights* take place over water.

Serendib Djinn, Serendib Efreet

Serendib was the old-world name for Ceylon. The story goes that when Adam and Eve were cast down from paradise, Adam fell on the isle of Serendib and Eve near Joddah, in Arabia. After 200 years, Eve joins Adam, and they live in Ceylon. In "The Sixth Voyage of Sindbad," Sindbad said, "we passed several islands, amongst others the island of Bells, distant about ten days' sail from that of Serendib."

Shahrazad

Alternatively spelled "Scherezade," Shahrazad is the young woman who tells tales-within-tales (within tales!) in order to keep her husband the king from killing her. Night after night, for a 1001 nights, she leaves the king wanting to hear the rest of the story (which Shahrazad knows better than to end), and thus does she ultimately convince him that she merits sparing. "I honored her with a game-within-a-game card," Garfield said.

Sindbad

For seven voyages, Sindbad (spelled "Sinbad" if you're into claymation Hollywood fantasy films) the sailor had many adventures. He comes in a close third for popularity behind Aladdin and Ali Baba (the tales, not necessarily the cards).

Singing Tree

From "The Story of the Sisters Who Envied Their Younger Sister," this was a tree whose leaves were so musical that every leaf sang in concert.

Sorceress Queen

"There were plenty of these," Garfield said of this character-type in *The Arabian Nights*. One mentioned by name, Lab, is the Queen of the City of the Magicians, "a she-Satan, a sorceress and a mighty enchantress, passing crafty and perfidious exceedingly" in the story "Julnar the Sea-Born."

Stone-Throwing Devils

"An interesting story," said Garfield of the origins of this card name. "One island was occupied by stone-throwing devils in one of the stories. But some people were upset with me for its use, because apparently 'stone-throwing devil' is a derogatory term for someone. I suspect that 'stone-throwing devil' has been an expression for a long time, and its meanings have changed or been applied to different people."

Unstable Mutation

"Another effect I saw," Garfield explained; "a transformation that ended in tears."

War Elephant

Elephants, like camels, abound in *The Arabian Nights*.

Wyluli Wolf

Another inside reference, "Wyluli" is an anagram of the name "Lily Wu," the maiden name of Garfield's wife.

Ydwen Efreet

Remember Mijae Djinn? Well, Richard Garfield was best man when "Mijae" married "Ydwen"--that is, his friend "Jamie" married "Wendy." The use of anagrams of insider names in *Arabian Nights* established a precedent for such naming conventions that used to be prevalent in **Magic**.

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Send questions and comments to editor@wizards.com.