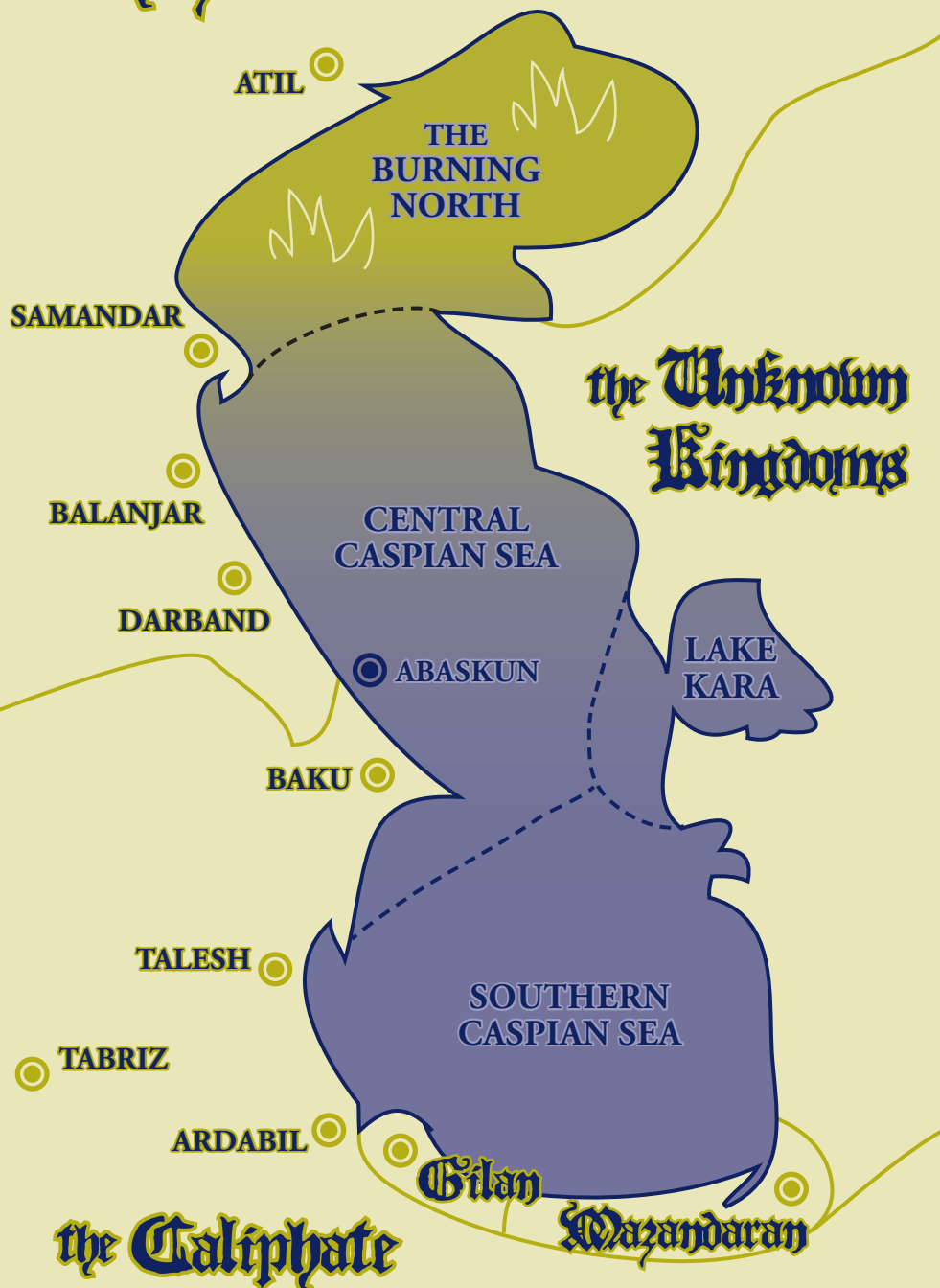


Khazaria



The Author & Friends PRESENT Ware Caspium

WE TAKE THESE AS OUR INSPIRATION

This game exists thanks to the *Arabian Nights*, *Candide*, *Prince Caspian*, *The Horse & His Boy*, *Invisible Cities*, *The Pirates of Dark Water*, *Gentlemen of the Road*, and the the Caucasus from 700-1000 AD.

OUR STORY BEGINS IN THIS WAY...

During the golden age of Baghdad and Byzantium, pagan spirits still vexed humanity despite the best efforts of temple, church, and mosque.

The wind-horse Tulpar was a scion of the sky god Tengri, given to the Turkic kings of the plains that they might ride into battle with gale-force swiftness. But when Queen Serakh enticed King Bulan and the Khazar aristocracy to convert to Judaism, Tulpar became an unwelcome reminder of their pagan past.

King Bulan quickly arranged for his youngest daughter, Tzitzak, to marry the king of Byzantium, offering Tulpar as her dowry. However, the day before the wedding, a spectacular "accident" set the northern Caspian Sea ablaze with Greek Fire. And so there was war instead.

Soon after, Bulan's eldest daughter, Ateh, long married to King Mardaviz of Mazandaran, died under suspicious circumstances. Amidst the ensuing chaos, Ateh's Khazar guards slew Mardaviz, blaming the king for her death. Eager to prevent war with Mazandaran, Bulan offered Tzitzak in marriage to its new king, Mardaviz's brother Voshmgeer.

However, the wicked Voshmgeer had secretly locked away Mazandaran's true heir, Prince Qadir, who was nearly the same age as his aunt Tzitzak.

And, thus, complications ensued.

THE FOUR PLAYER ROLES

This game is for 1-4 players portraying:

- *the wind-horse Tulpar*, held captive in the Royal Mazandarani Stables;
- *Princess Tzitzak of Khazaria*, locked in the tower until her wedding;
- *Prince Qadir of Mazandaran*, kept hidden in the palace gardens; and
- *Grandeur & Misery (GM)*, the many complications the world presents.

These roles can be divided up however the players see fit. During playtesting, I played Tulpar and Tzitzak, my friend played Qadir, and we shared the GM role between us. In a single-player game, a solo player plays all four roles.

The player of *the wind-horse Tulpar* should determine the following:

- three powers bestowed by Tengri;
- a pagan spirit owing Tulpar a favor;
- a lesson the horse has yet to learn;
- why Tulpar remains loyal to Tzitzak.

The player of *Princess Tzitzak* should likewise determine:

- three traits inherited from Bulan;
- three traits inherited from Serakh;
- a possession bearing minor magic;
- a lesson the princess has yet to learn;
- her involvement in the "accident."

The player of *Prince Qadir* should likewise determine:

- three traits inherited from Mardaviz;
- three traits inherited from Ateh;
- a possession bearing minor magic;
- a lesson the prince has yet to learn;
- the circumstances of Ateh's death.

The player of *Grandeur & Misery* should read over the initial complications the protagonists face in Chapter One.

CHAPTER ONE – ESCAPE FROM MAZANDARAN		POWER	MARKS
1	King Voshmgeer seeks imprisonment for those he suspects and death for those who oppose him	∞	
2			
3			
4	The common people despise and frequently oppose Voshmgeer	●●●	
5			
6			
	A possible avenue of escape!	●	

EXAMPLE – AMIDST THE TALESHI UNDERWORLD		POWER	MARKS
1	Kidnappers in search of victims with rich relatives	●●	
2			
3			
4	The White Banner Society and its crimelord, Greyback	∞	
5			
6			
	The Circus Grotesque, a local freakshow	●	

PLAYING THE FIRST CHAPTER

In this game, protagonists, not players, have turns. During a protagonist's turn, a scene focusing on that character is collaboratively created, beginning with the GM framing the current situation. *Qadir has been locked in the palace garden for weeks and has been forced to subsist off his mother Ateh's beloved date trees.*

Next, that protagonist's player should describe the character's actions, with the GM portraying the world and any non-protagonist characters. *One night, having grown weary of dates, Qadir weaves a rope out of vines and sneaks out of the garden and into the royal stables, looking for food.* At this point, Tulpar's player would play the wind-horse, even though it not yet Tulpar's turn.

Eventually, play proceeds to one of two points, either:

- the players collectively decide that this turn is over and move on to the next protagonist's turn; or
- the story reaches a point where complications should ensue.

Tulpar startles Qadir by speaking to him, but they are soon thick as thieves, conspiring to ruin Voshmgeer's upcoming marriage to Tzitzak. At this point, the players decide to add a complication.

When adding a complication, the protagonist's player rolls a d6 for:

- that protagonist;
- each applicable trait they are using;
- each additional protagonist helping;

Traits that are called upon for dice cannot normally supply dice ever again, though the powers given to Tulpar by Tengri can each be used once a chapter.

Additional dice are not necessary or even always desirable, since they merely allow protagonists a greater degree of choice as to which complication they face. However, that choice may assist players in ending a chapter more quickly, as will shortly become apparent.

The player rolls Qadir's die, with Tulpar providing one more die, getting the results of 2 and 4. The rolling player determines which die result to follow, with the GM matching the result with this chapter's complications and narrating.

Qadir's player chooses the result of 4. Consulting the complications, the GM narrates a young stablehand overhearing the conversation between the horse and the prince. The stablehand unlocks Tulpar's shackles, watches the two to speed off into the night, wishes them luck, and waits a few minutes before raising the alarm about the horse being "stolen." Notice that a complication is not a success or failure but a twist that creates a new situation.

Each die roll should be recorded in the GM's list of complications, since roll results determine both when a chapter wraps up (pacing) and how the current location grows and changes between chapters (development). *Since Qadir's player achieved a die result in the 4-5 range, the GM marks an X in the Marks column, across from the three dots showing the Power of the common people's loathing.*

Only one roll can happen in a single turn. If the players decide that another complication is needed, the current turn ends immediately and can resume later. *Qadir's player describes the prince and the wind-horse flying up to the tower where Tzitzak is imprisoned. The players decide that additional complications are needed, so Qadir's turn is now over.*

Turn order adjusts to players' needs. *The GM suggests that Tzitzak go next, since Tulpar appeared in Qadir's turn.*

When the players have accumulated Marks that exceed the Power of a single complication, the complication is *exhausted*. The rolling player narrates the end of the chapter and each player with a protagonist active in the chapter chooses whether the protagonist:

- remains in the current location; or
- moves to an adjacent location.

Four turns later, Tzitzak's player rolls a 5, marking XXXX beside a complication with Power ●●●. That player narrates the palace gardeners sneaking the princess out the front gate under a cart of dead flowers from her botched wedding. Once safe, she secures passage on a pirate vessel, moving to the Southern Caspian. Tulpar, learning of Tzitzak's departure, sets out after her. Qadir stays put, hoping to raise an army. Complications with infinite Power can't be exhausted, only endured.

The protagonist that ultimately closes the chapter also gains an additional trait, favor, object, or other boon that can be drawn on in a future roll. *Tzitzak stole her wedding ring from Voshmgeer.*

PLAYING LATER CHAPTERS

Each future chapter will take place in a single location. If the protagonists split up, some chapters will feature only one or two of them. Dice or tokens can be placed on the map to show the current location of each protagonist.

Each dot on the map or region of the Caspian Sea is a distinct location. Protagonists can only move to sea locations, including the sunken city of Abaskun, if they are traveling by ship, Tulpar, or another method. The Burning North is likewise impassable without special circumstances. Players may add new locations to the map during play.

The GM should freely create a new set of complications for each subsequent chapter, with the following suggestions:

- each chapter should have three to five complications, none spanning more than three sides of a die;
- a complication with infinite Power acts as the major support beam, something to count on; therefore have only one (or zero) per chapter;
- complications with a Power greater than three should be very rare.

When visiting an old location:

- replace old, exhausted complications with new complications;
- old complications with Xs should grow in Power (or become infinite);
- an old, infinite complication with Xs should drop to Power 3.

The game ends when each protagonist has learned their lesson. THE END.