

Sha'iri: Sorcery of the Elements

Knacks: Rain, Sand, Spirit, Star, Wind

Apprentice Degree: Song of the Elements

Adept Degree: Shield of the Elements

Master Degree: Fury of the Elements

The Yilan'bazlik, Ruzgar'hala, Jadur'rihad, and Aldiz'ahali tribes collectively practice an archaic sorcery which draws upon their perception of the four elements: sand (earth), wind (air), rain (water), and stars (fire)—along with a fifth element, spirit, which transcends the other four. The sorcery has its origins in the earliest days of the Empire, a gift from the elemental spirits known as genies.

At one time, the genie races (the honorable Jann, vicious Ifrit, alluring Ba'jehn, and deceitful Yemman) fulfilled a role in the Crescent Empire equivalent to the role of the Sidhe in Avalon. Rather than being utterly without emotion, however, genies were hyper-emotional, experiencing all the desires, foibles, and rivalries of humans in overwhelming proportion. To secure favors of one sort or another, genies would provide gifts to ordinary humans (leading to the legend of the genie and the wish); particularly crafty humans wished for a shred of the genies' power. Over time, these humans rose to power of their own and intermarried, mingling their bloodlines and producing the sorcery known as Sha'iri.

Rather than being identified by a specific physical trait, a practitioner of Sha'iri (called a Sha'ir) can be identified by a lack of certain characteristics. Neither his hair nor his clothing will ever be rustled by the wind, no matter how strong. He is never inconvenienced by falling rain; it rolls right off him without even dampening his hair or robes. No matter how long he spends under the blazing sun, his skin never changes from its natural coloration. Finally, a Sha'ir never leaves footprints while walking on sand—even wet sand, though any mount he happens to be riding will.

Apprentice Degree

The first powers manifested by a Sha'ir are those of perception. While less dramatic than the more potent powers they develop later, these perceptive powers are generally considered the most useful, and ensure that even half-blooded Sorcerers can easily find work as guides or navigators.

Once an Apprentice has been to an oasis in the desert and drunk from its waters, he becomes attuned to it. At any time, he may make a **Brawn + Rain** roll against a TN of 20 to get an idea of the direction and distance to the nearest oasis to which he has become attuned. Direction is determined along one of sixteen compass points (north, north by northeast, northeast, etc.), and distance is measured as Near (within ten minutes' walk), Not Far (within two hours' walk), Far (within a day's walk), Very Far (within a week's walk), or Extremely Far (more than a week's walk away).

In addition, he can always sense the current positions of stars, moons, planets, and other heavenly bodies, even when they are not visible due to daylight, weather, having his eyes closed or covered, being indoors, and so on. He is also innately sensitive to the geometric relationships between them; he is always aware of the exact time and his exact latitude and longitude, and he receives a number of Free Raises equal to his Rank in the Star Knack on any Navigation rolls he attempts.

Finally, by making a **Wits + Wind** roll against a TN of 15, the Apprentice may send a message on the wind to any other person within the Crescent Empire and underneath the open sky. The message may only be one word long, plus one additional word for every Raise made on the roll. This may only be attempted once per Scene; if the roll fails, the wind is simply too weak to carry the Sha'ir's words.

Adept Degree

As a Sha'ir grows in power, he begins to develop resistance to the more common threats the ele-

ments may throw at him in the Empire. He cannot be harmed directly by sand; he may fall any distance onto sand without damage, and any amount of sand may be dumped onto him without effect, so long as the sand contacts him or his possessions directly. (Thus, a forty pound bag of sand dropped onto an Adept from a height will inflict damage as usual, because the bag prevents the sand from contacting him directly.) Similarly, no amount of sand (even if the Adept is completely buried) obstructs his breathing, and airborne sand (e.g., during a sandstorm) never obstructs his vision.

Furthermore, the Adept never suffers damage from falling onto water (even frozen water, should he encounter it) or from having water dropped directly onto him. He is capable of breathing underwater, and never needs to fear drowning. Similarly, he is protected at all times from sunburn and the damaging effects of strong wind. An Adept never suffers damage from warm weather (e.g., the two right-most columns on the Weather Table in the *Game Master's Guide*), and rough weather only increases damage if the Adept encounters it in cold climates.

Master Degree

A Sha'iri Master can draw upon the most raw forces of the elements to summon storms: the precious life-giving clouds of a rainstorm or the angry savagery of the sands. The Sha'ir must spend a Drama Die and make a Brawn + Rain roll against a TN of 30. If successful, he summons a light rain storm that will drop one quarter of an inch of water over the course of 24 hours, plus another quarter inch for every Raise made on the roll. This ability may not cause existing storms to worsen, nor does it cause a shift on the Weather Table.

If he prefers, a Sha'ir can summon a sandstorm. To do so, he must spend a Drama Die and make a Resolve + Sand roll against a TN of 20. If successful, the current weather shifts one category toward the top of the Weather Chart in the *Game Master's Guide*, plus one additional category for every Raise made on the roll. Beginning with the Round it is summoned, the sandstorm inflicts the damage specified on the Weather Table to everyone in the area at the beginning of Phase 10, until the storm ends or until they find some form of cover. While the storm rages, he may also spend an Action to have the storm target one specific target. The Sha'ir rolls Resolve + Sand to make this attack, which cannot be parried (either as an Active Defense, or as a Knack to determine Passive Defense). If successful, the Sha'ir rolls a number of dice equal to his Rank in Sand, keeping a number of dice equal to his Mastery Level in Sha'iri. The storm lasts a number of Rounds equal to his Rank in the Sand Knack, or unless the Sha'ir chooses to end it early by simply spending an Action.

A Master-level Sha'ir can also call upon his connection with the storm to create one of the true wonders of the Crescent Empire: the flying carpet. Once (and only once) in his life, the Master may infuse a finely-made carpet with the essence of the wind. A Wits + Wind roll against a TN of 30 is sufficient to create a flying carpet sized for one person (typically the Sha'ir himself), and under the empathic control of the owner of the carpet. Carpets of larger size require one Raise for each extra passenger, or for the ability to carry an extra fifty pounds of non-living equipment (or valuables). For example, a carpet enchanted to carry the Sha'ir, one additional passenger, and 200 pounds of gear would require a roll against a TN of 55. The carpet must be of the finest cloth and craftsmanship, at a total cost of 100 altyini times the TN to create the carpet (in the example above, the carpet intended to harness the wind must be worth at least 5,500 altyini).

If this roll fails, the wind becomes incensed at the Sha'ir's attempt to restrain it within an inferior vessel. The carpet is destroyed, the Sha'ir cannot attempt to create another for at least one year, and the price of the carpet to be enchanted at that time is doubled. If the Sha'ir succeeds at his roll, he has successfully created a carpet capable of carrying him on the wind. The carpet is incapable of movement unless the Sha'ir who created it (or its proper owner) is standing or sitting upon it; at all other times, it appears to be a normal (though finely-made) carpet. Only individuals with the ability to detect Sorcery will be able to determine it is something more.

For purposes of overland travel, the carpet ignores any sort of terrain hazard, moving at the speed of a quality horse across even (paved) ground (to a maximum of sixty miles in a single day); attempts to move faster than that will result in the Sha'ir and any passengers being swept off the carpet (which will then flutter harmlessly to the ground). The carpet can be ridden in battle, with no effect on speed; however, the Sha'ir and anyone on the carpet can move freely from one Level of elevation to another, and may be able to hover out of the melee reach of enemies. Anyone riding a carpet in battle must use Balance (or Parry) as his defense Knack; if a passenger attempting a Balance Active Defense fails, the Game Master may spend a Drama Die to have the passenger topple off the carpet, taking falling damage accordingly (the Sha'ir himself is never in danger of falling off the carpet in this manner).

Sorcerous Knacks

Rain: In addition to its uses for his Mastery Level abilities, a Sha'ir can use his Rain Knack in an attempt to dowse for water. To do this, he spends a Drama Die and rolls Brawn + Rain against a TN of 5. Success on this roll allows the Sha'ir to find a water source where, with about ten minutes of digging, he can find one pint of fresh water, plus an additional pint for every Raise taken on the roll. Once exposed to the dry Crescent air, the water will evaporate shortly if not gathered or consumed.

Sand: The Sand Knack is primarily used by Master level Sha'irs to summon sandstorms and direct their attacks. Once he has summoned a sandstorm, or when he encounters one which is naturally occurring, the Sha'ir may spend a Drama Die (in addition to the one spent to create the storm, if appropriate) to give it a specific shape, such as a giant serpent or a pack of wolves, and cause it to act appropriately. If he is in control of the storm, he may add twice his Rank in the Sand Knack to any rolls to direct the attacks of the shaped storm. Regardless, the damage inflicted by the storm (on each individual attack, or on Phase 10 of every Round) is increased by his Rank in this Knack, as the storm is able to act with semi-sentience and strike with improved focus.

Spirit: The Sha'ir's Spirit Knack relies on the use of tonal chanting to combat and drive away supernatural creatures, including the Sidhe and some Synchronic creatures. The final list of which creatures may be affected by this power is up to the Game Master, but it certainly includes all types of Sidhe, undead skeletons and zombies, mirror ghosts, will-o-wisps, echoes, [rakshasas](#), qan'avars, and night terrors. The Sha'ir may spend an Action and a Drama Die to enter into a contested roll of his Panache + Spirit vs. his target's Resolve. Whichever one wins the roll inflicts a number of Flesh Wounds equal to the margin of his victory on the opponent. Wound Checks are made after this damage is inflicted, as usual.

Star: By spending one Action studying a person, spending a Drama Die, and making a contested Finesse + Star roll against that person's Wits, a Sha'ir can gain a sense of what astrological sign that person was born under, and what signs govern his destiny now. If he succeeds at this roll, the Sha'ir gains one Star Die, plus an additional Star Die for every Raise made on the Contested Roll. A Star Die can be used to increase a roll made against the person observed as if it were a Drama Die. It can also be used to activate a Hubris or Flaw, but only in the person studied. Star Dice are not Drama Dice, do not convert to Experience Points at the end of a Story, and disappear at the end of a Scene if they have not been used.

Wind: Sha'irs know that the spirits are all around them, carried on the wind, and many of them develop the uncanny ability to speak with these spirits. Once per Story, a Sha'ir may spend a Drama Die to make a Wits + Wind roll against a TN of 25 to ask the Ghost Wind one question. The question must be something the Wind can answer: the Wind is only able to see things above ground, so anything indoors or buried underground is beyond its comprehension. The Ghost Wind has a long memory, and can answer questions about the past, but it knows nothing about the future.

Game Master's Notes

Sha'iri is an amalgamation of the various Sorcerous Advantages (Rimâl, Ruzgar'canli, Sharkici, Sulimaq, and Takim'aldiz) available to some of the tribes described in the Crescent Empire book. This Sorcery should be used in lieu of those Advantages; they can be recreated in limited form by making a character Half-Blooded and only giving him access to one or two of the Sorcerous Knacks presented here.

The genie races are not allied with the Bargainers. In fact, they are opposed to those races' evil machinations, and seek to protect the people of the Crescent Empire from them (when they can be bothered to put aside their own petty jealousies). Consequently, the Sorcery of Sha'ir has a rejuvenating effect on the Barrier. The Barrier is essentially a weave of raw elemental energies: fire, earth, air, water, and spirit in their purest forms. By stripping away an shred of Wind (air) here, a tatter of Sand (earth) there to fuel their own powers, Sha'irs unknowingly purify the elements comprising the Barrier, strengthening it and making it better able to repair itself.

