

The Town Herald

Issue

14

Featuring cover artist

Asrun

A. Cruikshank



**ARABIAN
NIGHTS**

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A Note from the Heralders

Written by Mordigen

Hello Hello...

Well, Well here we are again it seems, with another bright new Herald for you all. This last issue, we know, seemed like it took forever to come around. Well, frankly, it did. The past couple of issues we have all been through a lot. Day to day life bearing down on us and our addicted Elftown time, new additions to families, new colleges, new jobs. Ever one of the Herald crew seemed to have new adventures laid before them, sorry to say The Town Herald had to suffer for it, but we are finally back. We have, once again, gone through many visual, technical and staff changes. Bringing on new members and olde familiar faces to, once again, try to revive our precious e-zine. This time, I think we have it. We're currently working on many new changes to bring the Herald back, hopefully, stronger than ever.

Our latest issue, Arabian Nights, was a trying affair between all the madness, but in the end it turned out fantastic. We have some amazing featured art and writing from the Art Corner and the Poetry Corner, some brilliant new articles and reviews from our great Herald staff, and some interesting tid-bits in our Fun & Games section. It may have taken us longer than it should have, but the end results was well worth it, and we hope you enjoy it as much as we have!

Our up and coming Issue : ReIncarantion is the perfect theme for our new look and attitude. We're weeding out some olde sections that have proven not so popular, as well as bringing back some olde faves that seemed long forgotten as well as new additions hopefully to stir your imaginations as well as ours. We're working harder than ever to try to bring the Herald back to it's original Elftown Art & writing oriented magazine, planning to feature much more of Elftown's very own artists and writers, as well as wikis and tutorials sure to lend a helping hand to everyone -- and we're also working many overtime to bring it to you quicker, and more often ;), so we hope you enjoy our latest issue and look forward to having all our reader's back again with our new adventures and trials in our up and coming issue in our new format.

Many Thanks to everyone here at Elftown, The Town Herald, and all our loyal Readers!

~~[Mordigen]

Poetry Corner

Brought to you by the Heralders & Corner Contributors!



Once again we are graced with some beautiful works from all around ET - with a much better turn out at the Poetry Corner than last issue, we see some new works, and friendly faces to bring us some wonderful Arabian Nights themed poetry. Thank you to everyone for the amazing work and participation! ~The Poetry Corner Crew!

[Chrysilla]
Arabian Slave
Songs for dark eyes (part 3)

I love you, and this is why
I want to be your slave.
I was your princess and your lover,
Now I lay at your feet
Offering you myself, my life, my soul, everything.
I want you to be my will,
Everything you want will be my command.
You to be my master, like in "Arabian nights",
I`ll be even more obedient than your gennie,
And I`ll love you with no conditions;
To make myself your pleasure,
To wipe your legs with my hair,
To make my body a pillow for you,
Always warm, always loving,
To wait patiently for your return, always smiling, always tender,
To make your house the place you`ll always want to come back
To be everything you want me to be.
And if you`ll give me a kind look
From time to time, and if you will kiss me
I will thank you
And always love, always more.
Do you accept me?

Arabian Princess
Olwen
Copyright 2007

Silently sepulchre she is dodging the sand
Arabian Princess with flowers in her hand.
He watched from the balcony
And worms his way round
The Arabian Princess
Can never be found.
She is the night which surrounds us
She is the cool breeze in our hair
Arabian nights
Give us some despair.
She wanders below ground
She wanders up high
The Arabian Princess
Alone in the sky.
We can never actually see her
For she is the feeling
Of walking alone
Sat way up high
Dominating her throne.
We wish she was closer
So we could maybe touch
Her black as night hair
But that would be too much.

[Lady of Lore]
Lamp Holder's Choice

The sun blazes in the azure sky
Looking up he wonders, am I going to die?
Alone and friendless upon the desert face
He trudges onward in unsteady pace.

Dune after dune of endless sand
Water, Water! is the only demand
Staggering alone, riches long lost
To thieves who's path on chance had crossed.

Now the only choices left to him
Die alone and be lost to a whim
Or summon the geinie he held
Bound within the sealed bronze and spelled.

Which should he choose in this hopeless plight
Does he open the lamp, let evil take flight?
Or does he take the peril to the grave
Let death claim him, a world to have saved?

[TaelAen]
Sand dance

Toe splay wide
down and round
sands of her age
clinging to ankle bells,
in and out breath
she made love to a
drum beat, with seven men
watching veils flutter
to the wind, in full view of the
moon, who laughed at them all
for loving the dunes.

[a clockwork orange]
Arabian Night
<diary:801865>

Oh, warm arabian night!
The most magical night.
The night for which
I lose my mind.

Oh, one thousand and one night
This exhilarating night
Of passion, love and magic!

And Scheherazade who tells
Her stories to the king.
I want to be in one of them.
I wanna live in Genie's lamp
And then I dream to run on dunes
Under the pale face of the moon...

[bluesoulsearcher]
The Empty Quarter

I must admit, I am not myself of late
Too many waves, not enough of that
Life-giving water, I know that my fate
Was sealed the moment my two-mast ship sank.

Ismael, I called my furry craft
An odd name upon him sat
Me until he finally laughed
I drank his water, it was rank.

A fool I was to cross this barren stretch of sea
Alone, naive, and without any guide
I bob alone in the shifting waves helplessly
The horizon gives me no hope, just despair.

A prayer to Allah, for my family, my soul,
For those I've killed, to those I've lied
Looking back my life has been full
Enough to die in Rub' al Khali, desert faire.

[shadow_of_life]
Lonely dances
Can be found at : ShadowLife

The scorched pergament
Of your skin
As you swim
In what is
The milliards of pieces
Of hidden sorrow
Turned into a desert
Praying
To the long and selfish
Shadows of the pyramids
As the black veil
Whispers something
In Arabian and French
Pushed by the wind
Praying
To the brief mercy
That is the night
When the sand
Looks

So much like the sea
And you dance like
An Arabian Siren
With no fins
Where your voice is
Crucified by the heat and cold
And it turns into water
The milliards of pieces
Of hidden sorrow
Turned into a desert
Praying
To the rain that is
Your song
To the black seaweed that is
Your hair
To the seagulls that are
Your hands
And the charred heart
Of all thirsty Arabia
Dances with the indifferent
Distant waters of the seas
In your black eyes

[Lady of Lore]

In the Dunes
A genie's fire
A heart's desire
Sands that burn like hellfire
A sky that gleams like sapphire...

This is where the sun compels,
Where the ancients without rest dwell
Where the nomads farewell,
Meeting again, only the sands of time will tell...

[Lady of Lore]
The Dancer of Bell and Veil's Lover

Moonlight crosses the darkened dune
An outline lit by silver moon
Of man, riding upon ennobled steed
Wise it would be for reason to heed
But yet he goes on, not knowing where.

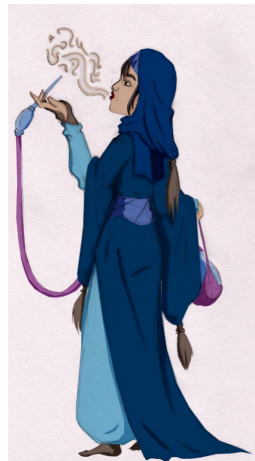
He rides from afar with tale of tears
Of darkest nights and coldest fears
To seek for the one he lost long ago
To what destination he does not know
Haunted by the veil and bells.

He seeks only to find the dancer of bells
Who twirls with veil when the music swells
Across leagues of sand he seeks
Only venture on and endless journey...

The Art corner

Brought to you by the Heralders and all the Corner Contributors!

Issue 14 Arabian Nights has been just as quiet as our last issue, if not quieter, but still some great work to bring you this issue, none the less! Once Again, thank you to everyone for the amazing art work and participation, thanks for the great work and lets see what we can get this next issue! ~ The Art Corner Team.



The submissions left to right:
Ally's "untitled"
Po & Tahiya Yasir's "untitled"
Iippo's "No magic in all lamps"
Arisonu's "Abida"
Cobi's "Shaharizad Afghan Girl"



Featured Artist - Asrun

Elftown artist Ash Cruikshank aka Asrun, interview by Kaimee

Name & Age: Ash Cruikshank, 22

Country of Origin & Residence: Canada, Toronto

Work: Office Asst., Framer, part-time illustrator, full time student

Hobbies: art, music, design, fashion.

Education: full time student at the Ontario College of Art and Design, Degree: Design, Major: Illustration. Certificate in Art Fundamentals from Sheridan College.

[Kaimee]Q:What are your favourite Medias and Techniques?

[Asrun] Digital, watercolour, acrylic, inks. No favourite techniques, I just play around.

[Kaimee]Q: Who are your favourite authors and books?

[Asrun] Neil Gaiman, Stardust, American Gods. Kate Forsythe, Witches of Eileannan series.

[Kaimee]Q:What story, artwork, author or artist are most inspirational to you?

[Asrun]I'm really inspired by the visuals in Pan's Labyrinth right now. They are equally beautiful and terrifying. I also love Tim Burton, but what illustrator doesn't? Kozyndan are amazing as well. They are a couple out of California (Kozy and Dan) that do some amazing work. Check out their bunnies.

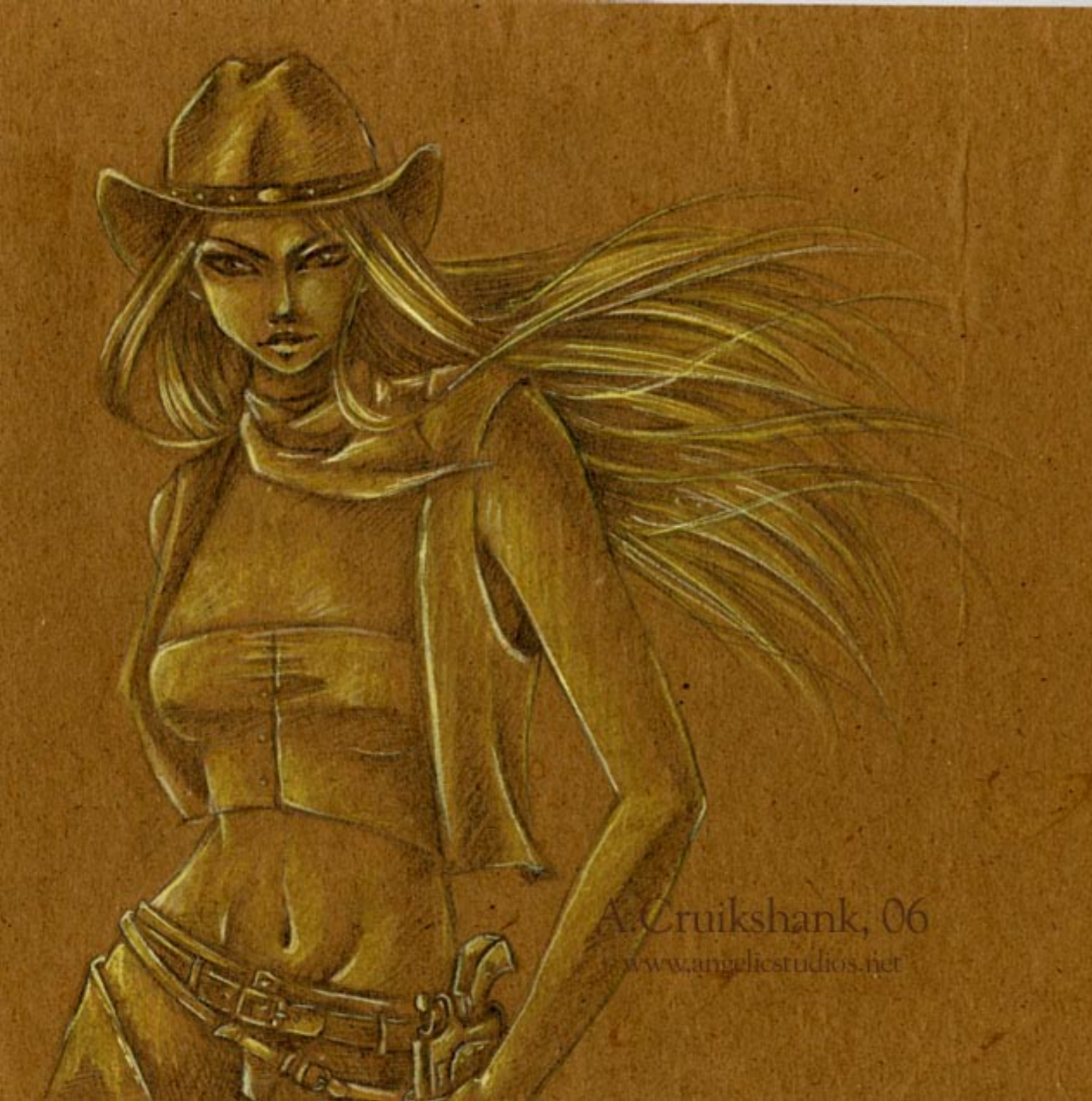
[Kaimee]Q:Has your work been published, and if so, where can we find it?

[Asrun]First published at age 12, in a nationally syndicated magazine (Owl, December 1997). I'm embarrassed of the drawing now. :P Since then I've only 'published' work online for companies such as SmartPhones inc.

[Kaimee]Q:Where is your work is available for sale?

[Asrun] fearn.deviantart.com/store





[Kaimee] Q:Where can you be contacted professionally?

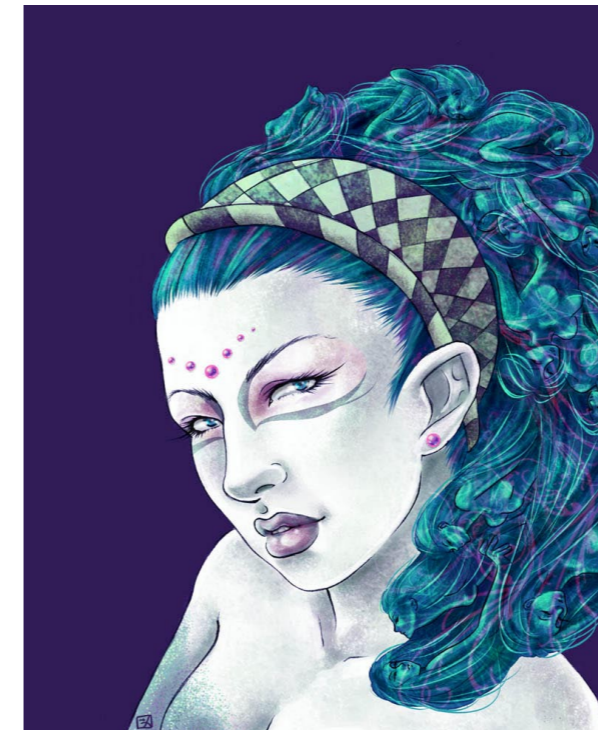
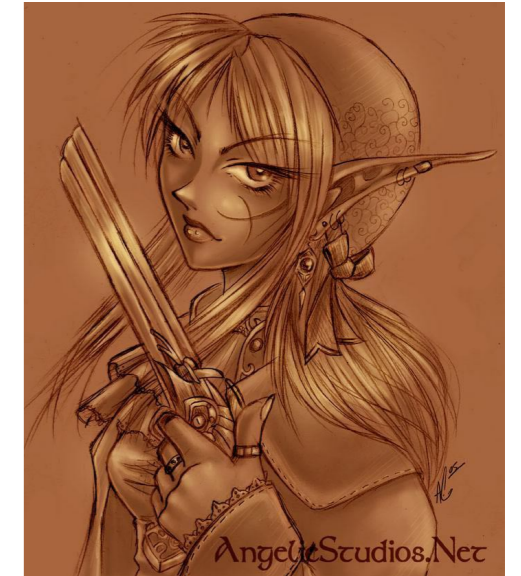
[Asrun] ash.cruikshank@gmail.com

[Kaimee]Q: How did you get started with your art, how long have you been drawing?

[Asrun] I just started drawing... I sucked. Seriously. I was always being yelled at for not drawing between the lines and not cutting on the lines. Then all of a sudden, stuff started looking 'okay'. I started showing actual talent between the ages of 12-15, but even then it was very average work. I just made sure that I drew every day and kept refining my work.

[Kaimee]Q:How would you describe your pieces in general, and what they mean to you?

[Asrun] My pieces are usually dream and fantasy imagery. I like pretty things, I'm not going to lie. I'm trying now to incorporate some concept, cause if I don't my instructors fail me. My pieces as of right now, don't mean a lot to me. I'm still learning, so I see them as stepping stones to hopefully, something greater.



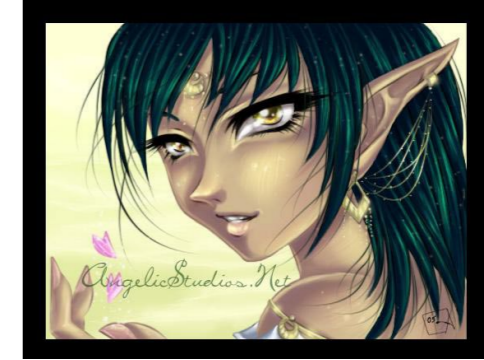
[Kaimee]Q:What sort of technique do you use when painting or drawing?

[Asrun] I use different techniques, so it's hard to settle on just one. Right now, I'm enjoying digital collage with texture pieces using layer modes over and under my line work.

[Kaimee]Q:What would you consider your favourite or best piece and why?

[Asrun] I have two. 'Morella', cause I like the painting a lot and I proved that yes, I can draw and paint without the computer. And one I just finished tonight 'Fauno' which was inspired by Pan's Labyrinth.. I just think it looks pretty neat with the textures.

[Kaimee]Q:Where do you see your art going, are there any different styles, artists or subjects you'd like to experiment with?



[Asrun] I see myself going more conceptual. Mostly because I have little choice, cause that's where the market is for illustration. I experiment all of the time (most of these I don't post) and I try to utilize what I learn from these experiments into my work.

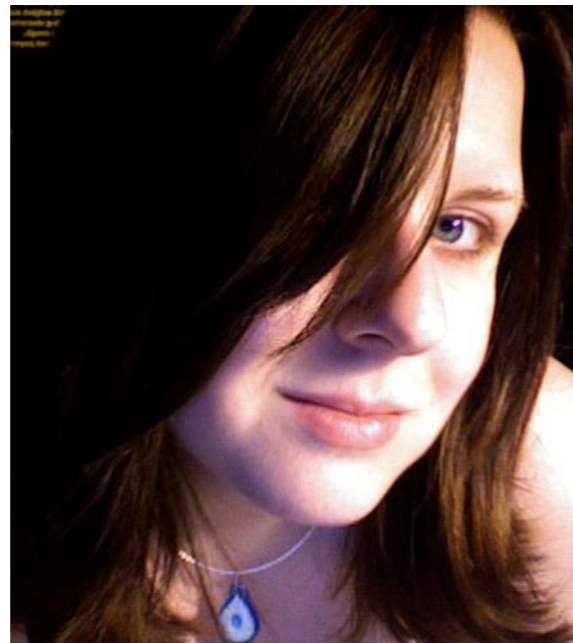
[Kaimee]Q:Will you stay with your fantasy subjects, or do you think you'll branch out?

[Asrun] Heck no! I have lots of work that isn't fantasy that I choose not to post on Elftown and Elfwood (being fantasy communities). I love drawing humourous stuff and images that make people think. I'm not there yet, but I'm learning. I like getting a laugh out of people. I also want to explore political activism in my work. Such as what Sue Coe does.

[Kaimee]Q:What is it that makes the genre of Fantasy special to you, what makes it so magical and capturing for you that most of your artworks spring from it?

[Asrun] I like the unreal, and the idea that the unreal may actually exist, even if it just inside of ourselves.





[Kaimee]Q:And, finally, What do you have to say to those aspiring Elftown fantasy artists and writers? What would you love to see from them, what do you warn them against, and what do you think they should remember?

[Asrun] Mostly that asking other artists "how do you draw?!" really is a silly question! You just draw. You draw ALL the time. Draw stuff that you don't like, that you do like, just draw. I have 5 sketchbooks on the go at any given time. Believe me when I tell you that less than 4 years ago, I couldn't draw. I was rejected from illustration at different colleges. I was told that I would never be able to handle it. Sure, it brought me down, it hurt, but if you truly love something and have the passion to do it, you'll be able to get something from it. I have one year left of illustration at OCAD and I'm one of the top in my classes now, I even had one teacher this year tell me that I couldn't draw. I worked hard to bring myself up to the level I'm at now, and even though I'm far from the best, I'm learning from a lot of great people and finding my own way. Just remember to that it's important to follow your passions and your dreams, and if you work hard enough you'll be able to overcome obstacles in your life you never thought you'd be able to.

Kaimee

What are the Arabian Nights?

“Is it possible, that by telling these tales, one might indeed save one’s self?”

That quote might indeed sound weird. What magical tales could those be? How can you, by telling stories, save your life? It might sound impossible, in fact perhaps it is, but you should over think that thought before you say it out loud.

For many years ago a young woman did save her life simply by telling tales. Scheherazade was the name of the woman who accomplished that.

The name might ring a bell, for yes, the tales she told are indeed known as the Arabian Nights (or the 1001 Arabian Nights, if you prefer).

Scheherazade told the stories to the sultan, the one who gave her her death sentence, so she could live a bit longer.

Those stories have been rewritten and republished again so they can figure as a main source of inspiration for writers all over the world (and inspirational for the theme of the herald this month!).

The amount of stories though has only grown since they were translated. Not only are they about adventures that set place in Asia, India and Arabia but also in China, North Africa and if I can remember good even Greece!

A lot of civilizations contributed stories of great variety to the Arabian Nights collection, and most of them set place thousands of years ago.

The tales can be adventurous, about the truth, the good defeating the bad, romances, legends, fairytales and other fantastic things that brings your imagination to a state of Moksia.

Sometimes the tales are beautiful and are fitted to be used as bed time story, but others can be brutal and have mature content. Though the varying situations that are presented in the Arabian Nights tales, there is a strong core that keeps them together. It were tales that Scheherazade didn’t only tell to keep herself alive, but also to give the sultan a hint that a human life is worth more than he assumes I suppose.

The moral of the stories is that life is always worth living, no matter what, and that the abilities and strength of humans are wonderful things.

Even their bad sides can be fascinating.

There are hundreds of tales from the Arabian Nights, and since they are public domain they shouldn’t be hard to get your hands on somehow.

Thank you to our own dear Herald [Sanaz Sattari](#) and to [Austin Cheney](#), whose art can be found at <http://cheneymac.deviantart.com/>



There are, for example, versions translated by Andrew Lang and Edward Lane. A few popular examples of them are The seven voyages of Sindbad the Sailor and Alladin and the wonderful lamp.

The storytelling point of these tales is also highly present, for they make you believe that is a jewel that when in contact with humans, it changes them.

The jewel is the art of storytelling, and is a beautiful jewel to be seen.

It is symbolic of course, but when you think about it quite true. How else can it be that when you tell someone a story about the most outrageous things, the listener can totally be washed away into your world of fantasy in which everything can happen.

If there is a purple sky in your story, the listener shall believe. If animals can talk in your tale, the listener shall accept. There is a change in his mind.

A good storyteller can chance people, a symbolic touch with a jewel to make them believe.

“There is neither strength nor power except in God the Highest, the Mightiest.”

- A book of tales from a Thousand Nights.

Have a wonderful and inspirational time reading through this edition of the Herald.

Slavork

Hi!!!11!1!

I'd like to start with a little social experiment. It's a hypothetical day in Elftown, and for the sake of argument, we'll say the hypothetical you, browsing around on your merry way, is a user who isn't a great fan of the 'hi' message. In fact, you positively detest them and have a whole section of your house devoted to explaining this fact to your visitors. A few clicks, some wikis and forums, and look at this - Wheee! A new message!. "Woot", you may or may not exclaim, and hasten to your mailbox to read it. And it's then that your spirits sink. It's the dreaded one-worder: "Hi", "Hey", " `sup" , "whazzup", "lol" ... something like that, whichever one you like. However I suggest you pick the one most likely to boil the hypothetical blood, so to speak, for the purposes of the next step.

So here's our situation, someone dared to send you such a message, and you're poised and ready to react. Do you:

- a) Send a reply stating what an idiot the person is for sending you such a message (I mean, can't they read?!?), throw several insults in there for good measure, and block the individual adding them to your personal wiki hate-list so all know to avoid them in future.
- b) Carefully compose an essay explaining why you don't like one-word messages, the many reasons why this individual shouldn't have sent them to you, concluding with a threat to report them to the guards should they do it again. This should take up at least 10 minutes of your time. This option may also include adding them to your wiki 'dungeon'.
- c) Ignore the message, and get on with your life.

I haven't included a 'reply with "hi" also' option, because we're assuming you're the type who doesn't like, and hence won't reply to, such messages. If you are, then feel free to imagine a bit!

So, which one of the above options is the simplest and least time consuming? I think, regardless of opinion on the hi-message, most would agree that option c takes the least amount of time and / or stress. But somehow I don't think that's necessarily the option that a reader of this might follow. Even if you don't fit into one of the (purposely) over-reactionary above situations, are you still one who resolutely ignores every such message you get?

Take wikis (aka dungeons, idiot lists, should-never-breathe-in-your-direction-agan-if-they-want-to-keep-their-vital-organs lists) of offenders for example. Many Elftowners have them, and why not? Somewhere to vent your frustrations, make an embarrassment out of those foolish enough to violate your rules / terms of service / guidelines / death threats. And then you and your friends put each other's lists on watch so when you receive a hi-message you can copy and paste it into your wiki and have a good old laugh about it with them. Just as when they receive the same, all their friends are instantly informed about it in wiki-changes, and hasten over to add their opinion to the growing list of doomed / cursed / damned (oh thesaurus how I love thee)...

Now is it just me, or does this all seem a tad counterproductive? Perhaps people sometimes lose sight of why they dislike such messages so much somewhere along the line.

Surely the fundamental reasoning behind it is that a conversation that starts like that will often not go very far and descend into one-word messages back and forth until one side finally gives up, and so be classed a waste of precious time.

If the time of the individual really was so precious, surely they wouldn't give the message a second thought? Perhaps take the time to click the block button on the sender, to avoid wasting time with any further forthcoming hi-messages from said individual.

But certainly not all the fuss and bother of cutting and pasting, writing long replies, rewriting your 'rules' to make them sound even more sinister (the "no one will dare message me now!" mentality). Who exactly are we kidding here?

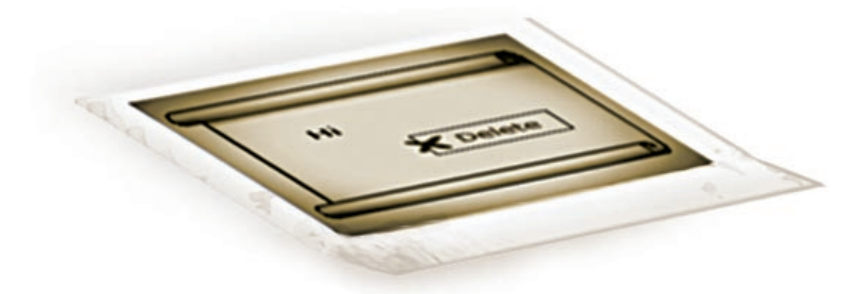
Now before being labelled a serious hypocrite, I'll point out that I think having a (short!) set of message guidelines (or whatever, though Follow these or die in large h1 letters probably isn't the best start to such a paragraph) is actually an okay idea. Hint: shorter ones are more likely to be read through, as opposed to ones which consist of the entire description and then some. I've had them myself, and probably still will. For those that do read them before messaging, they might know you're

not interested in cybering, hi-messages, text-speak, etc. Saving them the time and you the grief. If you include things you would like to be messaged about, then they might even find they share a common interest with you and would love to talk it over.

We should though, give those who send hi-mail a break sometimes too. Many Elftowners who've been here a while know the difference between Elftown and an instant messaging service like Msn or Yahoo. But not everyone might, particularly those new. Messaging is, after all, one of the easiest features to get to grips with when you first join, and seems the easiest way to get in touch with others and potentially be friendly. It is unlikely that you're being sent a 'hey' purely out of malice to piss you off because they know you hate it so. Come now, surely they'd be a bit more imaginative than that?

Of course there are assholes, who will send insults for no other reason but that they can. Feel free to report them to the guards, and they'll probably swiftly learn they're not welcome here. But if you get a message that happens to annoy you but doesn't really, lets be honest, break any Elftown rules (as opposed to house rules), how about just ignore it and move on? After all, there's so many better things to do, particularly in a town as diverse and complex as ours!

Shotokan_gal



Aside: This article is not meant as an attack on any individuals, wikis or otherwise. It's just the thoughts and opinions of [shotokan_gal] written, scribbled out, re-written, spell-checked... (etc) and put into vaguely coherent form. Any similarities to particular individuals and / or wiki names are purely coincidental and all that.

Arabian Proverbs

Cultures from all over the world have their own traditions and beliefs and ways of upbringing - From these we find Proverbs, that help enlighten and open the minds of young and olde alike. These olde sayings, sometimes riddles and eldar wisdom and knowledge help people to rethink their lives, overcome their problems and change their outlook on life and grow in wisdom and experience. They are the little things that help us see ourselves and the things around us more clearly. With the simplest of words, they speak wonders. For this issue we bring you a collection of some of the more inspiring proverbs from Arabia - A land that has become shrouded in doubt and controversy, but has ancient and sacred roots that is an ocean of inspiration, salvation and deep, awe inspiring history and beauty, and as you read through these words today, we hope you find a little piece of your own enlightenment and inspiration...

-[Mordigen]

"A little debt makes a debtor, a great one an enemy."

---unknown

"All mankind is divided into three classes: those that are immovable, those that are moveable, and those that move."

---unknown

"If you have much, give of your wealth; if you have little, give of your heart."

---unknown

"Know each other as if you were brothers; negotiate deals as if you were strangers to each other."

---unknown

"The difficult is done at once, the impossible takes a little longer."

---unknown

"A kind word can attract even the snake from his nest."

---unknown

"A fool may be known by six things: anger, without cause; speech, without profit; change, without progress; inquiry, without object; putting trust in a stranger, and mistaking foes for friends"

---unknown

"The enemy of my enemy is my friend."

---unknown

"When you have spoken the word, it reigns over you. When it is unspoken you reign over it."

---unknown

"A horse of good breed is not dishonored by his saddle"

---unknown

"A promise is a cloud; fulfillment is rain."

---unknown

"The one-eyed person is a beauty in the country of the blind."

---unknown

"At the narrow passage there is no brother and no friend."

---unknown

"A chameleon does not leave one tree until he is sure of another."

---unknown

An Arabian History

“A man profits more by the sight of an idiot than by the orations of the learned.”

---unknown

“Do not tell a friend anything you would conceal from an enemy.”

---unknown

“Knowledge acquired as a child is more lasting than an engraving on stone.”

---unknown

“An army of sheep led by a lion would defeat an army of lions led by a sheep.”

---unknown

“Dwell not upon thy weariness, thy strength shall be according to the measure of thy desire.”

unknown author/speaker; The Qaran

“He who has health has hope; and he who has hope, has everything.”

---unknown

Resource Credits:

The Qaran

World Book Encyclopedia, V.I; V.X; V.XIII & V.XV

www.worldofquotes.com

www.thinkexist.com

www.talkislam.com

Special Thanks to:

Mr. Ahmed Elghotni - Arabic Teacher

Abdullah Al Jabbar - Friend and Syrian Activist

Mr. Hamsaa Benson - Professor of Arab Literature

Whenever we think of Arabian Nights, our thoughts drift to magic carpets, the genie of the lamp, the glamorous palaces of Baghdad, the bustling marketplace of Damascus, Caliphs and their harems... But how many of us think of the way such things came to be?

For this issue, I have taken the liberty to wander off my usual column to tell, in as concise a form as I can, the story of the great Arabian State of old; its rise, its glory, and its downfall.

So, have a seat by the brazier and a cup of Arabian coffee and let us go way back in time to the Arabian Peninsula, to a time long ago, a time of paganism, of warring nomadic tribes, the period known unto Arabs as “Al-Jahiliyya” (the word is a derivative from the noun “Jahl”; which is Arabic for ignorance).

In the Jahiliyya people didn’t believe in God, they had a pantheon of gods which they worshipped, they took slavery for granted, and they partook in rampant orgies. The strong tribes raided the weak ones, slaughtering the men and taking the women prisoners.

A brutal and shocking practice that arose from the need for strong males for work and battle was a deplorable practice known as Wa’d; live burial of newborn girls because they thought that a girl was a handicap, as resources were scarce and she would just be one more hungry mouth to feed.

However, not all the practices of Jahiliyya were barbaric, fine poetry was composed by poet warriors who battled with verse as well as the sword, not to mention that there were strict codes of chivalry and tribe/family solidarity.

Time passed and a man appeared unto the people of the Arabian Peninsula, a man who would change the region’s history, that man was the Prophet Mohammed (peace to him), the last of God’s prophets (peace to them all).

Mohammed (peace to him) invited people to set aside the corrupt ways of Al-Jahiliyya, to embrace a new faith that banned slavery, that protected the weak, that strictly forbade Wa’d, that urged people to improve themselves and to accept one another.

In short, he invited them to embrace the Islamic faith.

Many followed, while many more declared war on him and strove to kill him. Mohammed (peace to him) and his followers traveled throughout the land which is known today as Saudi Arabia. After much travel and fighting (it should be noted that there were powerful people who plotted against Mohammed (peace to him) and gathered armies to see him dead, the battles he fought were to defend himself from them. He never declared war for the sake of fighting).

Mohammed (peace to him) died, but Islam lived on, and people embraced it. Soon, an Arabian state flourished, consisting not only of Muslims, but of others as well, mainly Christians and Jews, who were equals in every way to their Muslim counterparts. This state expanded (after a relative state of isolation) and mingled with other cultures, such as the Greeks, Indians, Chinese, and Spanish to name a few.

The Greeks in particular had a dramatic impact on the Arabs; with their highly advanced sciences, literature, and philosophy. Greek books were translated to Arabic and the Arabs strove to add contributions of their own in all the fields of knowledge. Philosophers as Ibn Rushud, doctors as Avicenna and Al-Razi, men of science as Ibn'ul Heitham (optics), Khawarizmi (mathematics), Jaber Bin Hayyan (chemistry) and many many more learned and taught through the Arabian state, a vast empire stretching from Egypt to as far as India and even extending to Andalusia in Spain. It should be noted that poetry remained an integral part of the Arabian society throughout the state's history.

Throughout its history, this Arabian state was governed by a Caliph, and the Arabian state which we know was the centre of the Arabian Nights was the Abbasid (as it was governed by the Abbas dynasty) state with Baghdad being the capital (it was preceded by the Umayyad state whose capital was Damascus).

Though the Arabian state was centre of knowledge and freedom of speech (something unheard of in Dark Age Europe back then), there was political corruption. Caliphs focused on hoarding treasures and harems (which they filled with concubines; charming women skilled in the arts of music, song, dance, love, as well as deception. Many of them played important political parts as well). Regional governors put personal gain as a priority, and petty struggles for positions of power came to exist between the squabbling candidates.

While the body of the Arabian state seemed sound, the head was deranged, and the fearsome Mogul hordes loomed in the east, poised to strike at the now-decadent Arabian state. The Caliph at the time was soft, inexperienced, and apathetic to all except his own amusement; so he didn't bother to fight the enemy, who overran the nation, burning, killing, and plundering everything in his wake. The Caliph said, "Let the Moguls take whatever they want, Baghdad is enough for me."

Sure enough, the Moguls reached Baghdad and sacked the great city, they took all the riches they can take, gold, precious stones, fine Persian rugs, and anything they could lay their hands on. Sadly, the greatest treasure of them all, knowledge, was wasted. Libraries were of no use to the Moguls, so they were destroyed. Innumerable manuscripts were lost; and it is said that the rivers ran black with ink, not red with blood. This was followed by 400 years of occupation under the yoke of the Turkish Ottoman Empire.

Now, our story comes to an end, and I hope you enjoyed reading this as much as I enjoyed writing it. So if you'll excuse me, my magic carpet is waiting outside and I must get going.

The Red Baron

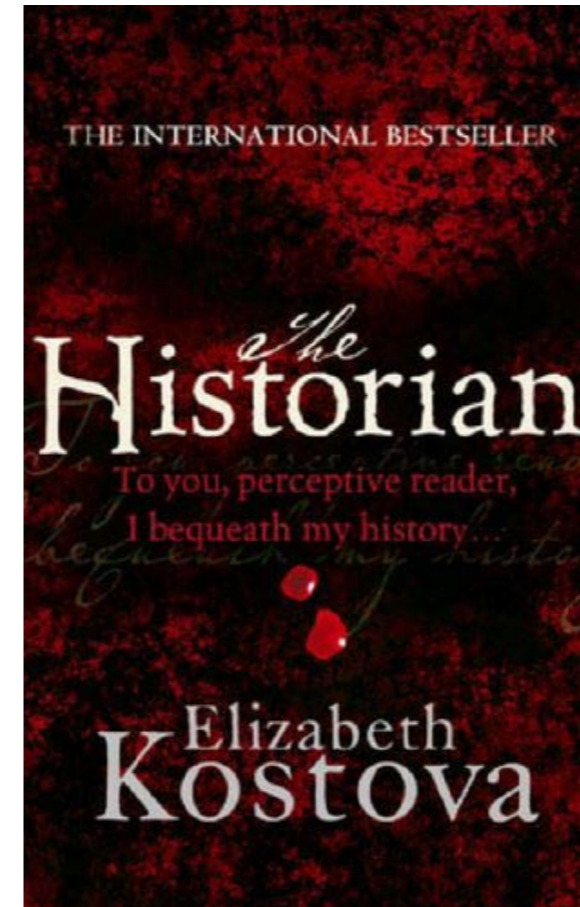
The Historian

By Elizabeth Kostova

“My dear and unfortunate successor...”

These words pull you into *The Historian* from the start. In 1972, a teenage girl (the narrator) finds an old mysterious book and letters in her father’s library. The letters are addressed to “My dear and unfortunate successor” and the pages of the book are empty except for the woodcut of a dragon. This piques her curiosity and her widowed father, Paul, reluctantly tells the story behind the book and letters. Twenty years earlier, the book mysteriously appeared in his work alcove in the library. He took it to his graduate school mentor, Bartolomew Rossi. Rossi has a book just like it and explains to Paul the book’s connection to Vlad Tepes and his quest for the truth about Vlad/Dracula. Rossi disappears that night just after confiding to Paul that he is certain that Dracula - Vlad the Impaler - is still alive. Using Rossi’s notes, Paul sets off to find him. He collaborates with a fellow student, Helen Rossi (the unacknowledged daughter of Bartolomew Rossi and the narrator’s long dead mother). Paul relates the story of his and Helen’s quest for his mentor and her father - then he disappears himself. Paul leaves his daughter more letters and using them, she searches for her father. So there are three basic story lines - one from 1930 when Bartolomew Rossi begins his research into Dracula, one from 1950 when Rossi’s student Paul searches for his mentor and becomes obsessed with finding Dracula, and then the main narrative from 1972 in which Paul tells the story to his daughter, and his daughter searches from him. Whew.

I enjoyed it immensely. The book is suspenseful, and even the minor characters are written vividly so that they are all memorable. And Dracula is chillingly frightening from the moment his name is even mentioned. She does such an excellent job weaving the story with fascinating historical information. There is just enough to make the story more gripping, to get the reader more involved - yet not bore non-history buff people. It imparts a sense of how real historians work (sifting through archives of ancient ledgers to find that crucial and revealing letter, etc.) and relates to the reader a sizable chunk of information about Central Europe’s ravaged past as a borderland between Christendom and the encroaching Ottoman Empire. Also the way Kostova reveals information through the letters, bit by bit, is very clever. It often had me looking ahead to see how long one particular letter was and then saying “I’ll just read one more tonight.” Finally, the Western European countries she takes the reader through



on the searches take on an almost mythical quality - not too different from Middle-earth. She describes them eloquently, somehow evoking memory-like images with only a few words.

“The Historian” has been compared to the DaVinci Code frequently. And though it lacks the exciting chase scenes and “aha” moments, the characters are much more 3-dimensional. By then end of the book, you truly care about the heroic narrator and her father. I recommend it.

Irulan

Dragonfly in Amber

By Diana Gabaldon

Picture the vast, untamed highlands of northern Scotland, all brackish forest and sweeping moorlands. Now picture the pristine and gilded court of Louis XV in Paris. The two are as far apart as 20th century England and 18th century England. The marvels of technology compared to the wonders of history and how cultures have evolved over time. To base a novel in all four scenarios and still manage to intertwine the readers with the plot is a monstrous task, a task which Diana Gabaldon tackles with great enthusiasm.

Dragonfly in Amber picks up twenty years after Outlander, the first book in the series, leaves off. Claire Randall Fraser has been back in the twentieth century for just over twenty years and throughout the decades, has kept her secret close to her heart. After arriving in her own time from the sixteenth century, Claire was faced with the fact that her twentieth century husband, Frank Randall, didn't believe her story. She raised her daughter, Brianna Randall, and lived out her life until Frank's death before deciding that it was time to reveal the truth. Traveling back to her native England from America, Claire hires a historian, Roger Wakefield, to research the Battle of Culloden and gather information on survivors from Lallybroch. While taking part on this research, Claire finds out a bit of information that wipes all plans of telling Brianna the truth from her mind. In a moment of weakness, Claire begins to allow the story to unfold.

She briefly explains how she had stepped through the stones and found herself in sixteenth century England. After quickly recapping events portrayed in Outlander, Claire moves on to describe how her and James Fraser, Red Jamie, had traveled to Paris. Here they dipped their toes into conspiracy, intrigue and espionage in an attempt to prevent the ensuing Battle of Culloden. Jamie befriends Charles Stuart and the Bonnie Prince soon confides in the Scottish rogue. As Claire and Jamie gather information, they meet many people along they way, some playing famous - and infamous - roles in history, some, more subtle pieces.

Quickie Reviews

By Irulan



Fantastic Four

Fun and entertaining, pretty people in tight bodysuits, and some kitschy one-liners - everything a super hero movie should be.



The Upside of Anger

Completely uninteresting, so much so that I don't remember who was in it and I only vaguely recall that it was intended to be a romantic comedy.



The Puffy Chair

Cleverly written, a little overdramatic at times, but you have to love a character that calls his girlfriend "dude" in the middle of a heated argument about their future.

From the gossip ridden court of King Louis XV, they gleam the information needed regarding Charles Stuarts funds, or lack thereof.

With no surplus of money and no banks, French, Italian, or otherwise, willing to loan the exiled prince a sufficient amount, Claire and Jaime feel they have completed their task.

No money means to way for Prince Charles to fund a revolution, no revolution means no Battle of Culloden.

The rebel pair are now free to go back to Lallybroch and live with their family. Unknown to them are the facts that still lead to the rising in '45.

After a brief period of peace, Claire and Jamie are once again immersed in Jacobite politics. Now in a race to ensure the success of the Bonnie Prince's campaign, they find themselves facing challenges only previously dreamt about in nightmares.

Events soon spiral out of their control and it becomes clear Culloden will still take place. In a desperate plea to save Claire as well as the unborn child she is carrying,

Jamie sends her back through the stones.

Here she lived for twenty years, all the time believing that her beloved Red Jamie perished in Culloden along with the hundreds of others.

With the help of Roger Wakefield, Claire Randall Fraser was able to find out that Jamie didn't die in Culloden but lived on for many more years.

After having told Brianna all that she can, it is now up for the daughter of James and Claire Fraser to come to terms with the knowledge. In the mean time, Claire is bound and determined to return to the sixteenth century and Jamie.

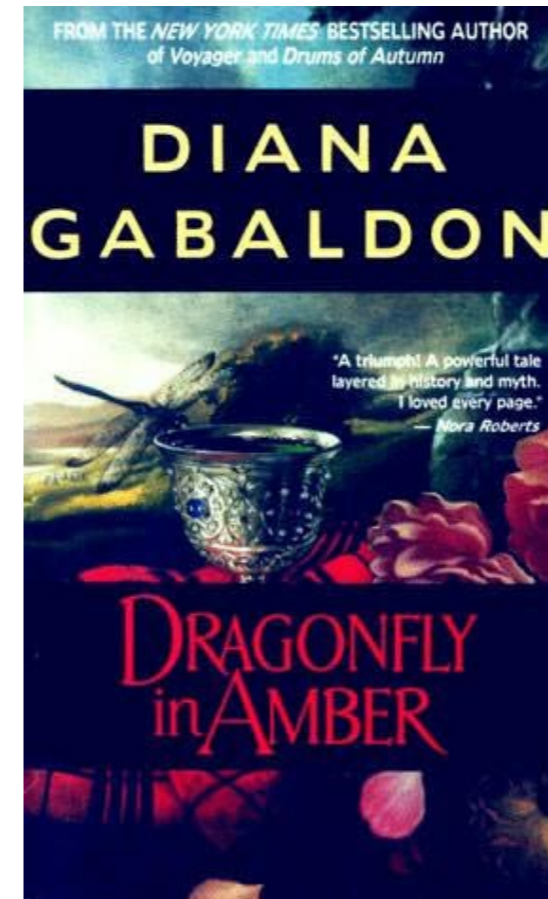
She travels back through the stones and the scene is set for the next novel in this captivating series, *Voyageur*.

Dragonfly in Amber was a thoroughly captivating read. It had little bits of everything to carry a reader forward - the supernatural, historical, politics, romance, something to appeal to a piece in all of us. However there were times when the plot became stagnant.

Much of it was focused on happenings in Paris and the events became dry and somewhat repetitive.

The jacket of the book proclaims a rich love that survives battles in the feral Scottish Highlands, to find the characters in Paris for so long seems dull in comparison to the original anticipation.

The participation in Paris does contribute to a fuller appreciation of the "action" moments in the novel though.



When the scenes are converted back to Scotland it does come in handy to have a good comprehension of the trials faced in France. It lends a more rounded view of events and readers are more confident in their interpretation of happenings and feel that their opinions are more concrete.

Gabaldon leads readers through the story with great articulation and skill.

At some points it is necessary to slow down and really allow the choice of diction and portrayal of events to sink in. It will definitely pay off in the end.

The novel lives up, and in some instances, surpasses, its prequel and sets an undeniable anticipation for the next installment of the series.

The mechanics and knowledge are subtly submerged in the skillful writing and the characters are intriguing and captivating.

Dragonfly in Amber is a work of literature that many readers will appreciate, no matter what their preferred genre is.

A definite recommended read and a novel, and series, that deserves a position on anyone's shelf, and not just as a dust collector.

Blaithin

Arthur & The Invisibles

www.arthuretlesminimoys.com

Landed in the cinemas on the 15th of December, the movie is based on two books by Luc Besson, "Arthur and the Minimoys" and "Arthur and the Forbidden City".

Arthur (played by Freddie Highmore, who has also played Charlie from "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory") lives with his grandmother.

He spends his time reading his missing grandfather's memories from the time he was in Africa.

This is how he finds out about the tiny Minimoys and about the treasure, belonging to his grand father, that they guard in their kingdom under the ground of his garden.

As his grandmother's house is in danger of being sold, Arthur decides to find the entrance to the country of Minimoys and ask them for help.

To arrive there, he must solve the riddles left by his grandpa, Archibald, find the key and turn into a 2 mm tall Minimoy.

Once he gets there, he meets the King, his beautiful, courageous, impulsive and bossy daughter, the Princess Selenia, heir to the throne, and the adorable younger prince Betameche.

After helping them win a battle against their ancient enemies the Soldiers of Maltazar, he receives the King's help to go find the treasure, hidden in the Forbidden Lands of Maltazar, from where no one has yet returned.

Selenia joins him, and they decide to find and kill the Kingdom's enemy, M the Cursed One – as they call Maltazar.

Of course the young Betameche cannot miss such an adventure, so Selenia must look over him during the dangerous journey.

Following the three little heroes, we discover a new perspective of our world, where a garden becomes a huge territory, the scene of deadly battles, where insects turn into frightening monsters, where a bush is the shelter of many fantastic creatures, and where size doesn't matter when it comes to show courage and save a world.

Actors

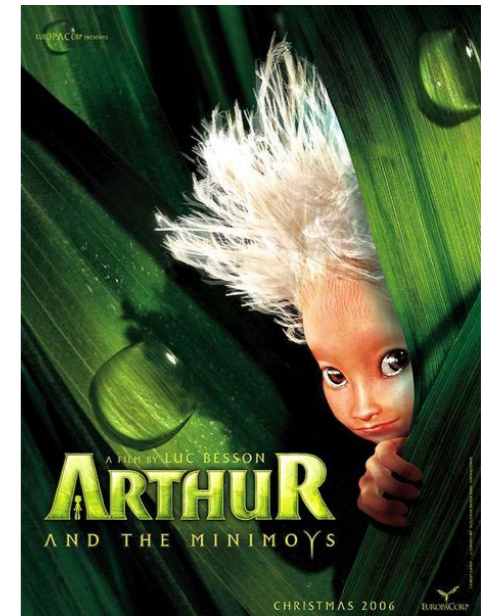
Freddie Highmore - Arthur
Mia Farrow - Arthur's Grandmother
Calvin 'Snoop Dogg' Broadus - Voice of Max
David Bowie - Voice of Maltazard
Penny Balfour - Arthur's Mother
Madonna - Voice of Princess Selenia

Writers

Luc Besson - Screenplay (adaptation)
Celine Garcia - Source Material (from original idea)
Luc Besson - Original book "Arthur et les Minimoys"

Producers

Luc Besson - Producer
Emmanuel Prevost - Co-Producer
Luc Besson - Director



Although more than half of the movie is 3D animation, it is closer to "The Chronicles of Narnia" than to other animated features such as "Toy Story", as Besson claims.

"Arthur and the Minimoys" is both a fantasy movie and a lesson of respecting the other and the nature.

Will Arthur find his grandfather and the treasure in order to prevent the house from being sold and the garden, along with the Seven Kingdoms underneath, from being destroyed?

Will Selenia stop the evil Maltazar, the one so feared that no one dares to pronounce his name?

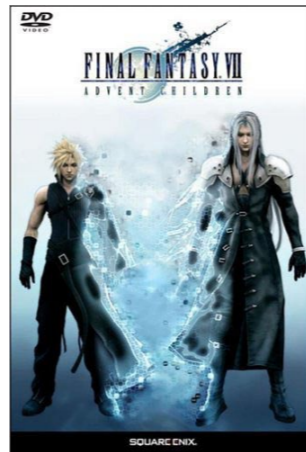
Or will he succeed in winning over the Minimoys and becoming the Ruler of the entire garden?

Find out by watching this movie, a fantastic piece of fantasy that mixes real actors and 3D characters, integrated in a real background and realistic 3D nature elements, a movie that required 2 years of intensive research, 5 years of work and 70.000.000 euro to create a fantasy and fantastic world orchestrated by Luc Besson.

Chrysilla

Final Fantasy VII

Advent Children



If one is a fan of computer-generated imaging, or CGI, one will appreciate greatly the work of the phenomenal animators involved with the recently released (in North America) movie entitled Advent Children, a follow-up to the events in the legendary game by Square, Final Fantasy VII (FFVII).

To put it bluntly, the graphics in this movie were no less than amazing. From the texture of skin to the glow of materia, and down to the flow of every strand of hair on a character's head, the animation is flawless. With edge-of-your-seat fight scenes and long-winded explanations, a limited knowledge of FFVII is not necessary, but does prove helpful.

Although the voice acting for the most part was excellent, there were some awkward pauses during a character's line simply because of the translation from Japanese to English.

Plot Summary (I'll try not to spoil too much)

In this movie, we follow Cloud, who has been plagued by a new disease called geostigma. He simply wishes to be left alone to live out his life, until he gets a call summoning him to Healin Lodge, the current residence of Rufus Shinra. Shinra tries to recruit his former SOLDIER in order to begin an investigation into the mysterious sadistic quest of a man named Kadaj.

Throughout the adventure, we watch Cloud meet up with his old friends: Tifa, Barrett, Vincent, Cid, Yuffie, Red XIII, Cait Sith, and his two 'associates' from the beginning, Reno and Rude. Many battles are fought, and won. Let's just say that it's better watched than described.

When I first heard about this movie from my friend, I thought it was going to be another run-of-the-mill anime film about a bunch of video game characters revisiting a game-plot. But when I saw it, I appreciated what he said when he said it would be the greatest movie I'd ever seen.

Poindextra

Mission Impossible III - Action/Thriller

Tom Cruise appears again as our very dear Ethan Hunt in the third installment of Mission Impossible. This time the price is a biological weapon of some sort dubbed "Rabbit's foot" and it's worth a bundle of cash but not its weight in gold.

The plot thickens as Ethan gets married somewhere in the movie and widens the blast area that swallows up his wife as collateral damage.

Remember the 'man on the wire' move he did in the vault in episode one – he does it again on the wall of the Vatican.

Yup, we fly to Europe and then Asia and back to the United States in another game of 'beat the clock' and 'Spy vs Spy'.

The thing with the guy is that if he is not in a building, he will find one, climb it and jump out a window just for effect. The action is intense and delivers on the promise you see in the trailers.



Directed by
J.J. Abrams

Starring
Tom Cruise - Ethan Hunt
Philip Seymour Hoffman - Owen Davian
Ving Rhames - Luther Strickell
Billy Crudup - Musgrave
Michelle Monaghan - Julia
Jonathan Rhys Meyers - Declan
Keri Russell - Lindsey Farris
Maggie Q - Zhen

Runing's Rating - 3/5

Runingwhispers

The Matador - Crime/Drama

What's worse than an assassin going through a midlife crisis? Making a movie about one of course! In my opinion this would have made a great book where we could explore philosophical arguments about morality.

In this R rated movie our assassin, played by Pierce Brosnan, meets a guy in a bar and develops a unique friendship with him over the next few days.

To add to the mix he has trouble finishing assignments until his sloppiness has to be taken care of by putting a contract on his head.

He devises a plan to solve all his problems but only at the cost of involving his new friend and rattling his quiet life a bit.



Directed by
Richard Shepherd

Starring

Pierce Brosnan - Julian Noble
Greg Kinnear - Danny Wright
Hope Davis - Carolyn 'Bean' Wright
Adam Scott - Phil Garrison

Runing's Rating - 3/5

Runingwhispers

16 Blocks - Action/Drama/Thriller

A beat up cop trying to get home to his bottle gets assigned at 8am to take a witness across town where a Grand Jury is waiting to hear his testimony by 10am.

The trouble is that he will be testifying against a cop, and it's Mosley's (Willis) own friends and ex-partner behind the crime. After a failed attempt to take out the kid the stakes get higher and the chase is on. For someone that is not completely sober and walks with a limp, he seems to know his marbles

well. There are several standoffs in the movie including a hostage situation involving a bus and over thirty passengers.

Bruce Willis looks tired in the movie but holds his own quite well, how things turn out in the movie is interesting to note since Willis went from playing 'good cop/bad cop' to 'smart cop/tough cop'.

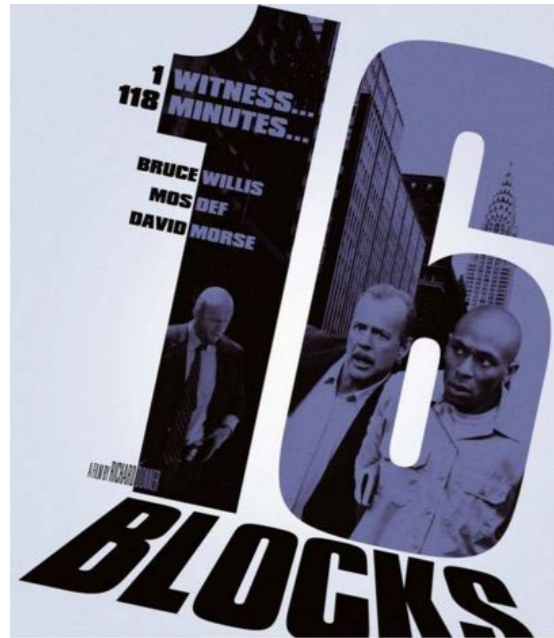
This is one of the best thrillers I have seen this year.

Directed by
Richard Donner

Starring
Bruce Willis - Jack Mosley
Mos Def - Eddie Bunker
David Morse - Frank Nugent
Jenna Stern - Diane Mosley

Runing's Rating - 4/5

Runingwhispers



ALCON ENTERTAINMENT AND MILLENNIUM FILMS PRESENT AN EMMETT FILMS AND TREVOR ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTION
A SCOTT PICTURES MERCHENTON FILM A FILM BY RICHARD DONNER "16 BLOCKS" STARRING BRUCE WILLIS MOS DEF DAVID MORSE
CASTING BY JILL ASHLEY MILLER COSTUME DESIGNER STEVEN WINKOVICH EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JEFFREY CRANE PHILIPARY GREYMAN JEREMY WELCH
PRODUCED BY DAVID HOFFMAN BRIAN READ EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS TREVOR SHOOT PRODUCED BY DAVIDSON GEORGE PERLA HAZEL REAR ANDREAS TREHMED JOSEF LAUTENKUCHER
WRITTEN BY PAUL LEWIS RANDALL EMMETT JOHN THOMPSON ANDREW HYUN JIM VAN WYCK PRODUCED BY RICHARD MENZ DIRECTED BY RICHARD DONNER
MARCH 3 DOLBY DIGITAL

Underworld: Evolution - Fantasy/Horror

The dark tale of Vampires and Lycans continues in the sequel of Underworld. We trace the origins of the feud that has raged for centuries and make discoveries that call to questions what we thought was the truth. They make earth shattering discoveries about their blood lines and race to end the war and Markus who has been awakened and has memories/knowledge of what has happened...



Directed by
Len Wiseman

Starring
Kate Beckinsale - Selene
Scott Speedman - Michael Corvin
Tony Curran - Marcus Corvinus
Shane Brolly - Kraven
Derek Jacobi - Alexander Corvinus (as >Sir Derek Jacobi)
Bill Nighy - Viktor
Steven Mackintosh - Andreas Tanis
Zita Görög - Amelia
Brian Steele - William Corvinus

Runing's Rating - 3/5

Runingwhispers

Aphrodisiac Treats

For when you run out of Arabian Fairytales!

The famous book known as "Arabian Nights" (The Book of One Thousand and One Nights) contains a myriad of famous middle-eastern stories... but it is not just a compilation of fairytales and myths! The stories are told by a queen, every night, to her evil (or just misunderstood?) husband the king, who intends to execute her. Because she leaves him in such suspense by the end of the night from the exciting stories she tells, he delays her execution! A very clever plan, but talk about doing things the hard way! Perhaps what these folks needed was a little aphrodisiac to get them in the mood for something other than stories, but just as exciting! And so, I bring to you... these aphrodisiac treats! All recipes serve two, of course.

Poindextra

Choc-Almond Figs

Ingredients

4 figs
1 block of chocolate (100-200g depending on how much you would like)
Slivered almonds to taste

Method

1. Break the chocolate up into pieces and put it in a mixing bowl that will fit on top of a saucepan without falling in or falling off.
2. Sit the mixing bowl on top of a saucepan with water in the bottom of it, and put that on the stove. Heat the water, and stir the chocolate occasionally with a wooden spoon as it melts.
3. Peel and chop the figs into bite sized pieces and slice up the slivered almonds while the chocolate is melting
4. Once the chocolate is all melted, take it off the heat.
5. Dip the fig pieces into it so that they are half-covered in chocolate, or even fully covered if you like chocolate a lot.
6. After you have dipped a fig piece in chocolate, roll it in the chopped up slivered almonds so that they stick to the chocolate
7. Sit on a plate to cool, then serve.

Suggestion: It's best not to eat more figs than this in one go, especially if you are planning some bedroom acrobatics... while figs are known as an aphrodisiac food, they are also known as "nature's laxative".

Honey Nutmeg Pineapple

Ingredients

1 small (440g or less) tin of pineapple pieces or crushed pineapple in natural juice (or syrup if you have a sweet tooth!)
Honey to taste (I recommend about 2 or 3 tablespoons, once again depending on presence/absence of sweet tooth)
Nutmeg to taste (best to use a nutmeg spice shaker)
Glace cherries (optional)

Method:

1. Drain the pineapple and place in a bowl. Add the honey and stir.
2. Chop up the cherries and stir them in if you like them.
3. You can either add the nutmeg now and mix it in, or serve the pineapple and shake it on top. Garnish with a glace cherry on top.

Ideas: This recipe can be varied by using golden syrup or maple syrup in place of honey, and other spices such as cinammon and mixed spice as well as or in place of nutmeg.

Stuffed Grape Leaves Recipe by Kileaiya

Serves : 8 people

Ingredients:

2 1/2 cups white rice
1 large bunch finely chopped dill
1 large bunch finely chopped parsley 15 cloves of sliced garlic
1 can (15 oz) of tomato sauce or 2 lbs of freshly crushed tomatoes
2 medium onions finely chopped
2/3 cup lemon juice, freshly squeezed
1/3 cup butter
Salt and pepper for taste
1 lb -grape-leaves-jar, de-stemmed and rinsed
1 lb of ground beef/lamb (optional)

Put on tablespoon of butter in a pan and sauté one chopped onion for a minute

Add the ground meat and half a cup of water and bring to a boil. Cook until most of the water is absorbed, stirring frequently.

Simmer for 20 minutes or until the meat completely is cooked.

Mix the cooked ground meat, rice, dill, parsley, tomato sauce, and remaining onion, 1/3 cup of the lemon juice, butter, salt and pepper in a large bowl.

Lay 4 or 5 grape leaves flat on the bottom of a flat pot to prevent burning the stuffed leaves. Lay the grape leaf shiny side down.

Add a large teaspoon of rice mixture in the center near the stem end and roll to the end of the leaf.

Start folding in the sides and continue to roll keeping stuffing secured inside.

Lay the end of the roll down in the pot. Repeat until all stuffed grape leaves are side by side close together, to keep them from opening during cooking. You can place up to 4 layers.

Pour over leaves the rest of the lemon juice, garlic and enough water to reach top layer.

Bring to a boil and cook on high heat for about 10 to 15 minutes or until almost all water is absorbed.

Continue cooking on a very low heat for about 45 minutes or until the rice mixture inside the leaves is cooked.

Remove from burner.

Using a spoon, you can layer the stuffed grape leaves on a platter.

Cooking with Kids by Kileaiya

Alright all you chefs! It is time for another instalment of cooking with kids.

Arabian Nights Cake

Ingredients:

5 tablespoons butter
3 eggs
1/2 cup sugar
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 cup flour, plus
1 tablespoon flour

For topping:

1/2 cup butter
1/2 cup sugar
1/3 cup honey
1/2 cup slivered almonds
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

1st. Have the kids butter a 8"x8" square glass baking dish.

2nd. Have an adult preheat the oven to 400 degrees F.

3rd. Let the kids beat the eggs, sugar and vanilla together until the color "lightens" slightly;

4th. Have an adult melt butter, add to egg mixture and mix well.

5th. Have them combine the flour and baking powder, then add to the egg mixture; mixing gently but thoroughly.

6th. Then have them the pour mixture into the prepared dish and bake for 12 minutes

7th. Meanwhile, prepare the topping by having an adult melt the butter in a small saucepan, then add the sugar, honey, almonds and cinnamon.

8th. Have an adult bring to a boil, stirring constantly until thickened a bit (it doesn't need to reach a particular temperature).

9th. After the 12 minutes of baking, have an adult take the cake out of the oven (it will look a lot like custard at this point) and let the children gently pour the topping onto the cake.

10th. Have an adult return cake to the oven and bake for another 15 to 20 minutes.

English Blunders

By lady nytmare

Pointless labels that appeared on actual products

- Do not iron clothes on body
- For indoor and outdoor use only
- Serving suggestion: defrost
- Why not try tossing over your favourite breakfast cereal? (on a packet of raisins)
- Sliced ham with vegetarian cheddar
- Whole chicken medium fresh
- Peel tomatoes easily by standing in hot water
- Keep out of children (on a Korean kitchen knife)

Insane headlines

- Kids Make Nutritious Snacks
- Limbless Hit Out At Rise In Living Costs
- Mine Strike Ballet To Go Ahead
- One-legged Man Competent To Stand Trial
- Panda Mating Fails; Veterinarian Takes Over
- Queen Mary Having Bottom Scraped
- Red Tape Holds Up New Bridge
- Stiff Opposition Expected To Casketless Funeral Plan
- Two Sisters Reunited After 18 Years At Checkout Counter
- Use Of Heroin Shooting Up
- Victim Tied, Nude Policeman Testifies
- Workers finish Boring Sewer Tunnel

The Three Wishes

Traditional retelling by Blue Highway

It happened once upon a time in the old Persian town of Isfahan.

The slender silhouettes of numerous minarets were painted against the blue velvet of the darkening sky.

The copper-plated domes of the many mosques, with their lucious courtyards and fountains, decorated with geometrical mosaic figures, were a feast for the eyes.

Salesmen were sitting behind huge piles of tomato's, onions and exotic fruits, baskets filled with fresh herbs, tiny crystal bottles of perfume, and velvet and silk by the yard, recommending their merchandise.

A heavy fragrance of flowers, mixed with the smoke of wood fires where kebabs were being roasted, filled the air.

The whole town breathed an atmosphere of luxury, wealth, and the famous Arabian mystery.

In a poorer quarter of town, where the houses were greyish and crooked, built of wood, the holes filled with dried manure and plaster.. where the less well-to-do citizens had to walk a long way to the nearest water pump, and could hardly afford a little oil to keep a lamp burning, an older couple was having an evening meal, a watery lentil soup.

The man had spent his day begging for copper coins at the entrance of the biggest mosque, while the woman had been roaming the streets of Isfahan, digging through the dirt and garbage, in search for anything edible and valuable, or at least good enough to be sold.

One of the treasures she had found today was an old and busted oil lamp that had known better days before it was thrown in the mud and forgotten.

She pulled it out from under her clothes, and used a tip of her skirt to rub off the dirt.

Immediately, a strange light filled the little room, and in a sudden puff of glittering smoke, a Genie appeared.

Overwhelmed by fear, the woman dropped the lamp, and both she and her husband moved backward quickly, their horrified eyes fixed upon the fearsome creature, until they felt the walls against their backs.

They trembled and shivered all over their body, paralysed, not able to move or even scream.

But the Genie spread its ghost-like arms in a hearty gesture of good will, and when it spoke, its voice was low and deep and awesome.

It proclaimed: "Fear not! I will do you no harm, indeed, you are my saviours! For centuries I've been imprisoned inside this lamp, captivated by the curse of an evil sorcerer, and finally now, I'm free!! You deserve to be rewarded, and the reward has to be an appropriate one... We Genies have a great power of magic. I will grant you three wishes. Three wishes to be made before midnight, and to be fulfilled immediately!"

In the eyes of the man, fear was suddenly replaced by the malicious shining of greed... he looked at his plate filled with watery lentil soup, rubbed his stomach, and said: "Lentil soup... lentil soup, every day... no meat in it, no salt, not even an onion... how can it be expected to fill the stomach and warm the blood of a hard-working man... I wish I had a huge lamb-chop, brown and crisp outside and juicily-pink inside!"

Another "puff!"... and a lamb-chop was on his plate, hot, spicy and spreading a scent that made his mouth water.

With two big steps he was back at the table, grabbing at it with gluttonous fingers, already anticipating its flavour to caress his palate.

"You idiot!!!", his wife shouted behind him, and the hand with the lamb-chop in it froze on its way to the man's mouth.

"You bastard!! You greedy ne'er-do-well!! You stupid fool, carrying your brains inside your stomach!!

What do you think you are doing??? Look what you've wished for!!! Look!! All our life, we have lived in poverty. We don't have a decent house, we don't have nice clothes, we hardly have anything to eat.. .we have NOTHING!!! We could have wished for GOLD, for Allah's sake... and all you can think of is an abominable LAMB-CHOP..?? How could you be so thoughtless!! I wish... I wish... that this lamb chop would be growing on your NOSE!!!!"

A chuckle could be heard coming from the clouds of radiant smoke leaving the nozzle of the magic lamp, and "puff..!", the second wish was fulfilled...

In great horror, the woman stared at her husband's bearded, lined, and now deformed face, the huge lamb-chop dangling from the middle of it.

She buried her own face in her both hands, moaning, wailing, crying in remorse about what she had just wished for. The man squinted at the strange object blurring his sight now, got very pale, and suddenly didn't feel hungry any more. His hand reached for the big knife that was on the table to cut the stale bread they usually had with the lentil soup.

His fingers surrounding the handle, he raised the knife.

His wife shrieked, and tried to push herself yet closer against the wall, convinced that he was going to cut her throat with it after what she had done.

But the man grabbed the lamb-chop with his other hand, and with one hew of the flickering blade he cut the cursed piece of roasted meat off his nose.

Just to see another lamb-chop grow from it again immediately. He cut the new-grown one off too, and another, and another.

He cut like a possessed one, until finally he sank down on his chair, completely exhausted, his face dripping with cold sweat, staring at a towering heap of lamb-chops, squinting at the one still dangling from his nose...



Arabian Nights Trivia

Trivia from the animated movie Aladdin

Aladdin has no nipples.

For a moment, all that could be heard was the silence of horror and despair, but then the silence was disturbed by the voice of the muezzin on top of the minaret of the nearby mosque, splitting the velvet night with his piercing voice, calling the faithful to midnight prayer.

Midnight... the Genie had said that the three wishes had to be made before midnight. The woman turned her head toward the smoke, towards the place where she expected the Genie's grinning face to be, looked at him spitefully, then looked at the deformed face of her husband. It was a face that she loved, the face of a man that through the many years of marriage she had learned to appreciate in spite of his flaws and weaknesses. With a sigh, hardly audible, she muttered: "I wish my husband's nose to be back to normal..." ...puff...!

For a couple of seconds, the Genie listened to their stifled sobbing and moaning, and then he said "Man, woman... behold... truly you have been given a great reward for freeing me from the magic lamp... Not richness like gold and gems... but the awareness of the terrible consequences of your own greed, as a warning for life... and enough lamb-chops to invite the whole neighbourhood for an abundant meal tonight... Bon appétit..."

And in a whirl of smoke, it disappeared into the Isfahan night.

In the original theatrical release of Aladdin, the opening song, "Arabian Nights" was different. American citizens of Middle Eastern descent took offence at the line referring to the Middle East as a place where, "They cut off your ear if they don't like your face, It's barbaric, but hey, It's home". This version still survives on the original music cassette release of the Disney Music, "Songs from Aladdin" tape, as well as on the movie soundtrack. The cassette was released the week of the movie in retail stores. The written lyrics are also in the various original Disney Music Publishing "Score from the Movie Aladdin", sheet music books. In the video release, the song was looped in with new lines "Where it's hot and immense and the heat is intense, It's barbaric, but hey, It's home".

In the scene where the Sultan is building a tower of animal figures right before Jafar comes barging in and makes it fall apart, one of the animal figures in the tower is the Beast from Beauty and the Beast. The king crab the genie pulls out from his cookbook is Sebastian from The Little Mermaid

The director allowed Robin Williams to ad lib through most of his voice recordings, as long as he stuck to the script where it was necessary. He was free to make his own jokes - the art crew then animated the Genie based on the best cuts of Williams' recordings.

When the tiger kitten transforms, if you watch it frame by frame its head bears a striking resemblance to Mickey's head. There is a long standing tradition for Disney to put 'hidden Mickeys' in their movies.

Disney created the fictitious Agrabah for the film because the story is traditionally set in Baghdad. This was done because of the notoriety of Iraq (whose capital is Baghdad) in the Persian Gulf War a year before the film's release.

In the first draft, Aladdin had three friends (Babkak, Omar, and Kassim), a magic ring and two genies.

The first part of the theme of 'Prince Ali', the parade song, is (unintentionally, I'm sure) almost chord for chord and note for note the same as 'To Life' from "Fiddler on the Roof." Duplicated chord structures are extremely common, and similar themes certainly aren't rare, but this is an unusually blatant example.

Following a dispute over his voicing rights for merchandise, Robin Williams decided not to return to voice the Genie in the film's sequel, "The Return of Jafar." The Genie was instead voiced by Dan Castellana. Williams later returned to the role for "Aladdin and the King of Thieves."

Early scripts included Aladdin's mother, who sang a song called "Proud of Your Boy", and another song for Jafar called "Humiliate the Boy". Jafar's song was cut, as it was considered too cruel for Disney.

Trivia for the movie *Arabian Nights*

Filming on *Arabian Nights* began November 16, 1998 near Goreme in the Cappadocia region of Turkey, 400 miles southeast of Istanbul. Thirty million years ago, three volcanoes simultaneously erupted in Cappadocia, spreading a thick layer of ash which hardened into towering, cone-shaped rocks called Fairy Chimneys. Churches, monasteries and underground cities were subsequently carved out of the porous rock. George Lucas used this stunning, utterly unique terrain for the moonscape scenes in *Star Wars*.

In Goreme, cast and crew were billeted in caves which had been turned into pensions. Because the nights are so cold, the caves were heated. The \$19-a-night "cave charge" included a traditional Turkish breakfast of olives, feta, cucumbers, tomatoes and boiled eggs.

After two weeks of filming in Cappadocia, the entire 235-person *Arabian Nights* company moved to the newly-built Antalya Studios, near Antalya, Turkey. *Arabian Nights* was the studio's first tenant. It features a giant soundstage (32,550-square feet) and an expansive back lot where many of the exterior scenes were shot.

An astonishing 48 sets were built on the Antalya soundstage during the 15-week-long shoot. Why so many? Because *Arabian Nights* encompasses six stories: the linking tale, starring Dougray Scott as Sultan Schahriar and Mili Avital as Scheherazade and five others which take place in different periods and in different places.

"Aladdin" played by Jason Scott Lee, is set in the Chinese mountains; "The Three Brothers" in the Yemen desert; "The Hunchback" in Constantinople, "Ali Baba" played by Rufus Sewell, in the mountains of Syria; and "The Sultan and the Beggar" set in Cairo. Six distinctive "looks" were needed.

The first-unit team numbered 190 (unusually large by either feature film or television mini-series standards); the second-unit was composed of 45 hard-working souls. Four Arriflex cameras were used during the production.

After Arabian Nights wrapped in Turkey, a slimmed-down unit of 30 flew to Erfoud, in southeastern Morocco, on the edge of the Sahara Desert. All the Lawrence of Arabia landscape scenes were shot there over an intensive four-day period.

In Morocco, 150 camels were drafted for use during the filming. They were recruited from throughout southeastern Morocco.

Because Arabian Nights encompasses six quite distinct stories; an astonishing 4,750 costumes had to be created. They came from a variety of sources. Some were rented in Rome, London and Los Angeles. The vast majority, though, were custom-made in Turkey. Ten Italian tailors, embroiderers and seamstresses supervised a small army of 42 Turkish artisans during the Herculean project.

Proverbs about deserts

Sunshine without rain makes a desert. (Arabian)

Talent without skill is like a desert without an oasis. (Arabian)

Don't demand that what you write in the Nile will be read in the desert. (Ethiopian)

When the Nile knows a secret the desert will soon know it too. (Ethiopian)

Working on the land is better than praying in the desert. (German)

Pearls are of no value in a desert. (Indian)

All sunshine makes the desert. (Saudi Arabian)

Any water in the desert will do. (Saudi Arabian)

Who preaches in the desert loses his sermon. (Spanish)

Harem Trivia

Plains zebras establish harmonious harems. Harem masters have exclusive mating rights with up to six mares. Zebra harems are so stable that the mares remain associated with each other for life. Their foals have the added protection from the family stallion's readiness to defend his wives and offspring against all threats to their survival.

During the seventeenth century, the Sultan of Turkey ordered his entire harem of women drowned, and replace with a new one.

In parts of Malaya, the women keep harems of men.

Rocky Mountain Elk Bulls form harems consisting on average of 1 bull, 6 cows, and 4 calves in the early summer months.

Queen Kahena, a Berber in Northwest Africa kept a harem of 400 male athletes in her lockup.

Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses II had his own harem at age 10.

Eunuchs were often used to guard harems.

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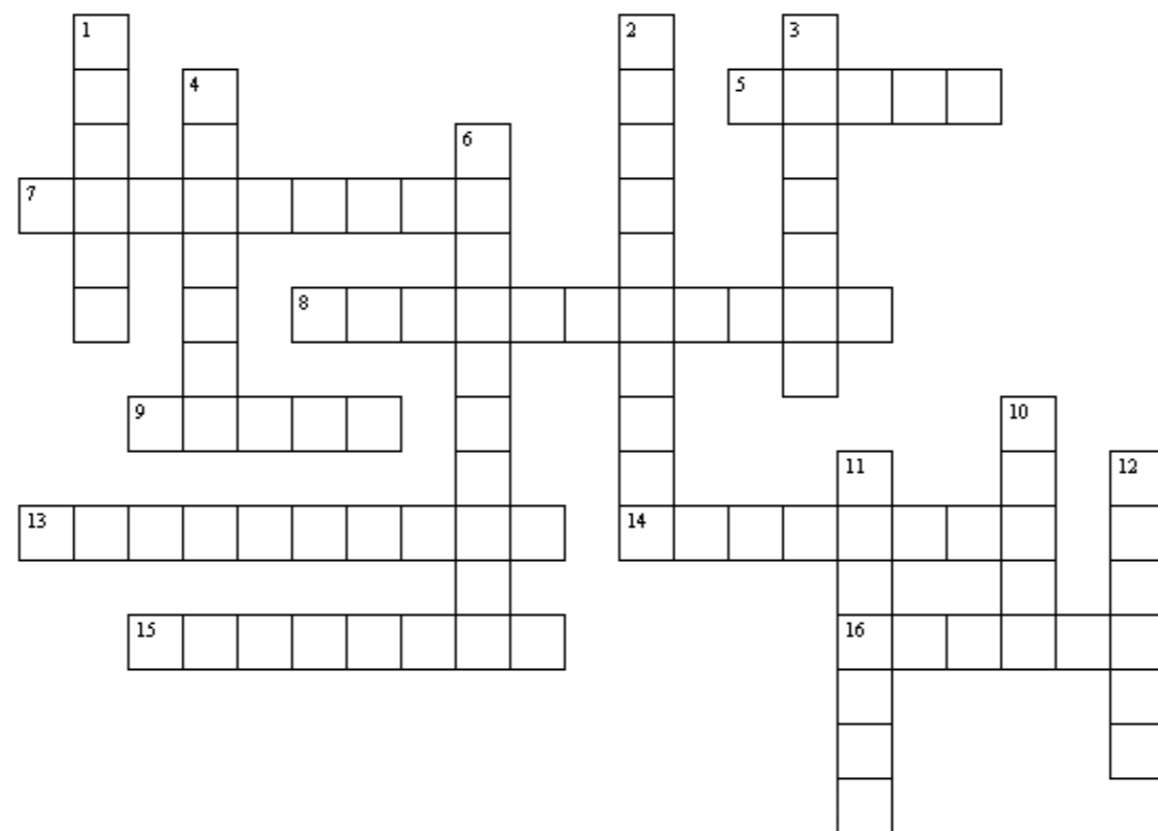
Arabian Proverbs

www.creativeproverbs.com

*A book is like a garden carried in the pocket.
A borrowed cloak does not keep one warm.
A fable is a bridge that leads to truth.
A fat woman is a blanket for the winter.
A good deed dies when it is spoken about.
A good man is one who rejoices in the well-being of others.
A good orator makes us see with our ears.
A grateful dog has more worth than an ungrateful man.
A heart free from care is better than a full purse.
A lazy man will be an astrologer.
A learned man without work is a cloud without rain.
A man cannot be a good physician if he has never been sick himself.
A man who was always complaining was quite rightly sent to hell. "Why are you burning damp wood?" was his first comment.
A man's worth depends on his two smallest organs: his heart and his tongue.
A mule can go to Mecca, but it will not come back as a pilgrim.
A mule who goes in search of a fine set of antlers, will come back with his ears cut off.
A poor man would like to have some fun, but he cannot find the right place.
A promise is a cloud; fulfillment is the rain.
A scholar's ink is worth as much as the blood of the martyr.
A small tumbledown house is better than a communal palace.
A sponge to wipe away the past; a rose to sweeten the present; a kiss to greet the future.
A thousand curses never tore a shirt.
A woman's belly is a garden with many kinds of fruit.
A woman's mosque is her home.
Act like you are an idiot and everyone will respect you.
Advice given in the midst of a crowd is loathsome.*

*After lunch, rest; after dinner take a walk.
All earthly goods we have only on loan.
All kinds of fame belong partly to others.
An army of sheep led by a lion would defeat an army of lions led by a sheep.
An eloquent cock crows as soon as it comes out of the egg.
An imbecile can manage his own affairs better than a wise man the affairs of other people.
An insult is but a short garment: it reveals the one who wears it.
An old lion will be mocked by the dogs.
An unjust king is like a river without water.
Another man's bread will not fill your belly.
Ask advice of an ignorant man and he will think you are his enemy.
Ask for your wife's advice and then do the opposite.
Ask me what are my virtues, not about the color of my skin.
Ask the experienced rather than the learned.
Attend funerals avoid weddings.
Be sure to have a controversial opinion, and men will talk about you.
Beauty doesn't exist, men only dream it.
Beauty is power.
Beauty never travels in a group.
Better a handful of dry dates and content therewith than to own the Gate of Peacocks and be kicked in the eye by a broody camel.
Better a thousand enemies outside the tent than one within.
Better make profit out of manure than losses with musk.
Better to be a free dog than a caged lion.
Better to have bread and an onion with peace than stuffed fowl with strife.*

Arabian Nights



ACROSS

- 5 Women's apartments in a home the female members of a man's household.
- 7 What does a genie pop out of?
- 8 Persian term for a high-ranking religious and political advisor.
- 9 A fertile or green area in an arid region.
- 13 A Mediterranean dish of marinated meats
- 14 An uncastrated male horse
- 15 Middle Eastern vegetarian salad
- 16 An arid land with usually sparse vegetation.

DOWN

- 1 An optical illusion
- 2 Famous series of tales
- 3 Dish made of small, deep-fried croquettes or balls made of highly spiced, ground chickpeas.
- 4 The fictional woodcutter who discovered 'open sesame'
- 6 Discovered by Ali Baba
- 10 A djin or a a magic spirit believed to take human form and serve the person who calls it.
- 11 The most famous tale from Arabian Nights
- 12 A king or sovereign especially of a Muslim state.

Horoscopes June 2007

Courtesy of www.astrology.com

aries:: Honesty is a very, very, very good quality. And in fact, it may very well be your best quality (though you are good-looking, talented, intelligent and charming too). Still, the 1st, it's your bestest of best qualities (honesty) that's going to be coming up. While you want to take advantage of your natural gifts (and be honest!) you don't want to exploit them or abuse them -- say, by being brutally honest, or way, way too honest or unnecessarily honest about something like somebody's lousy new post-break-up haircut. By the 5th and 6th, if you've been a teeny bit tactless, you might have to make up for it; buy them flowers. The 9th and 10th, you can do no wrong, and the 15th and 16th, you've hit a critical point. Keep up the good work and you won't regret it. The 21st, you and a friend should make a point of having some quality 'together' time, and the 26th, you could be in for a little bit of very intense romantic attention (whoopee!). The 28th, it's time for you to take stock of just what you've got going for you and what you've got to work against, both within yourself and in your external world. The 30th, count your blessings -- and be honest about how lucky you are!

taurus:: If, as the month begins, you feel like you're in a barrel rolling down a very intense series of rapids (that is to say, you feel all topsy-turvy, like you just don't know which way is up), don't despair. All this action is just a sign that a whole lot of opportunities are on the horizon. By the 2nd and 3rd, you're already feeling calmer. Maybe those rapids have changed into a nice, babbling brook. Take advantage of this peaceful period to scan the shores for some new opportunity. Maybe you could put the barrel to better use on land? Brewing lemonade for passing river rafters, for example? The 8th and 9th, you really want to make sure you are busy doing something that makes you feel productive, whether it's teaching water safety or opening a shoreside lemonade franchise. By the 14th and 15th, anything you put your mind to is bound to go swimmingly. The 20th, spend a little quality time at home (your nearest and dearest would like to see a little more of you!). By the 25th and 26th, you want to market your message (whatever it is), and the 30th, be sure you have a little bit of fun. Actually, make that a lot of fun.

gemini:: You've been working hard lately, and the 1st, it's really time for you to loosen up, let go and enjoy the ride. Yep, you've been busy: tuning the engine, rebuilding the muffler, painting the outside of the car, maybe even installing a glassed-in roof so that, rain or shine, you can feel like you're in a convertible. Even if you've only been doing all this metaphorically (say, in your work life with your career, as opposed to in your garage with your hot rod), there's no two ways about it: You're ready to hit the coastal highway and cruise on into the sunset. Whoo-hoo! Go for it. By the 5th, it's time to stop the engine, pull over and set up a nice campsite in the woods. You're due for some serious rest and relaxation, far from the pressures of the civilized world. The 10th and 11th, you come to a big decision. Is it about love? Work? Both? By the 17th, you'll know you made the right choice. The 23rd and 24th, you have to make another big choice. Follow your gut. The 29th, you should make sure to check in with your loved ones to let them know how you are; and as the month ends, the 30th, get out on that highway of life, crank up the tunes and cruise

cancer:: The 1st, it's really important that you get connected -- and stay that way. Yep, you want to make a few calls. Send a few emails. Heck, write a letter. Whatever it is you have to say, now is the time to say it. Chances are whatever it is, is really pretty darned important. The 4th, 5th and 6th, you are incredibly busy. Don't worry, it's a good thing. But you do really want to make sure that you're taking enough time for yourself in all this. That means don't skip the gym. Don't fill up on donuts. Don't cut out too much sleep. The 11th and 12th, spend your days reconsidering what exactly it is you want from your relationships (whether it's your relationship with your friends, your family or your partner). The 13th and 14th, look inside yourself for some of the answers as to why your relationships are the way they are, good and bad. By the 20th and 21st, you're ready to implement a big change. Make those demands. Hold up those expectations. If some people get mad, let them get mad. It's high time you figured out what you need and demand that you get it. The 25th, you're ready to take even more control (maybe this time at work). End the month, the 29th and 30th, with a well-deserved couple of catnaps

leo:: Have you just been dying to enter the local amateur sand castle-building contest, but you've always been too shy? Well, this year is the year to stop hiding your talent under the sand bucket. Yep, make this summer the summer you get out there with your pail and your shovel and your little plastic tools that can make clam shapes and starfish shapes in the sand and show those sand castle builders what you've got. And what better day to sign up for the competition than the 1st? By the 2nd and 3rd, you could already be a little nervous, but don't let those jangling am-I-ready-for-the-sand-castle-big-time nerves get to you. Call a friend or two for support, then get to designing. The 8th, you are in super-self-expressive mode, and yes, it probably has something to do with the creative space you're allowing yourself to explore with this whole sand castle thing. Way to go! The 12th, write down all those good ideas you have, and then go out on a date. By the 16th, you'll nip a problem in the bud, and the 17th and 18th, everything but everything is going your way. Great! The 22nd and 23rd, everything gets a little bit easier, and the 28th you are feeling more creative and fantastic than ever. That is sure one beautiful sand castle you've got going there. And who's the cutie on your arm?

virgo::The 1st, you're at a kind of crossroads. Whether you're making career changes or considering moving to a new city, or you're thinking about taking the next step in a relationship, you're thinking hard. Don't forget to consult your feelings and your intuitions as you consider all of this too. Often, it's the non-brain parts of us that do our best thinking and decision-making. By the 5th and 6th, you may not have come to a final decision, but you will have realized that it's good to talk to people close to you and to share your questions and concerns with them as you go about trying to make a decision. The 11th, you spend the day in busy mode, and the evening in stock-taking mode. Great. Both will help you arrive at your decision. The 15th and 16th, you see some of the problems that have been holding you back, and the 17th, you start to tackle them. The 19th and 20th, you could sense a real turnaround. Yep, you still may not know exactly what to do, but you feel more secure about the process of finding out. And that's major. The 25th and 26th, the sooner you accept things for what they are, the sooner you'll be able to progress to the next step of your decision-making process. By the 30th, you're ready; now's the time to really take control. Good job this month!

ibra::The 1st, you're all about balance. Yep, you're balancing your checkbook. You're balancing your lifestyle. You're balancing your emotions. You're balancing for a count of sixty on one leg in the eagle pose -- if you made it to yoga class (here's a hint: to stay balanced, be sure to get yourself to yoga, or the gym, or the track, or the field). Spend the first day of the month getting as balanced as possible, then spend the rest of the month fine-tuning, and you'll have kicked off one heck of a summer. By the 5th and 6th, you and your oh-so-balanced self are more than ready for the romance that's coming your way. So when they call and leave a message, call them back! The 11th and 12th, enjoy two days full of beauty, but watch out for disturbances below the surface. The 17th and 18th, get active with your friends, whether that means a river-rafting trip or a private group yoga session. By the 22nd and 23rd, you are in a super 'right-on' kind of space. Could it be that all this balance is really affecting how you're feeling? The 28th, spend some time exploring a terrific idea that's been simmering in the back of your mind for a while. End the month, the 30th, by really using your newfound balance to progress past an old and no-longer-useful limitation

scorpio::You could be tempted to take a real risk on the 1st. Whether it's a business deal or asking somebody you really like out on a date, trust your instincts as you proceed. If a little voice inside your head says you should abort the mission, go ahead and listen. On the other hand, if your gut tells you you're doing the right thing, it probably knows what it's talking about (that old gut instinct is usually pretty darned savvy). The 5th and 6th, it's important that you make an effort to achieve harmony at home. Whether you live alone, with roommates, with family members, with a partner or some combination of these, you need to check in on the domestic front. If you live alone, ask yourself if you need to clean more regularly. If you live with others, well, ditto. The key to harmony is sometimes as simple as clean dishes. By the 10th, you could encounter a teeny tiny conflict situation (have you maybe not stuck to the new dishes routine as diligently as you could? No time like the present to make a change!). The 16th is an excellent day to get what you want, and the 21st, it's really time to make sure you know what it is you want (so you can ask a friend to help you get it). The 25th and 26th, you are the apple of the universe's eye, which means that you really do get whatever you want (and you look really cute doing it). The 30th, end the month by implementing at least one of your most spectacular ideas.

sagittarius::As the month starts out on the 1st, there's only one way to describe how you feel: fantastic. Yep, you are full of good vibes and good ideas. Your friends love you and you love them. This is a great time to put something you've been considering into action, whether it's a romantic move or a career improvement. The 4th, 5th and 6th, you impress the people you come into contact with, so make sure you're networking as actively as you possibly can. After all, the more people hear your message, the more you'll get your message out there. By the 11th and 12th, it's time for you to look hard at the little picture. Yep, those details will get you if you are always thinking big picture (good thing you're so good at attending to the little things too!). The 17th and 18th, you're feeling super creative, and if you bet on yourself now, you'll be collecting the winnings for years to come. The 21st, somebody could drive you crazy; try not to let them get under your skin. By the 25th and 26th, you're in a really incredible space as far as deep thinking goes. Sometimes deep thinking is a little exhausting, so rest up before the totally fantastic days coming your way the 27th and 28th.

capricorn::Sometimes dreams can seem as far away from reality as, well, dreams. But as the month begins, the 1st, your dreams could quickly become part of your everyday life. All it takes is a little perseverance and a lot of imagination, and you'll be living the life of a dream catcher before long. So whether you've been really, really wanting to go out to sushi with your favorite ex, or all you really want deep down in your heart of hearts is to open your own hat shop, this is a great month to believe in yourself and make it happen. The 2nd and 3rd are particularly propitious, and by the 8th, don't be surprised if all your intuitive and creative and emotional talents are in high gear and pointing you just where you want to go. The 13th and 14th, you want to be careful -- your enthusiasm is catching, but you might be picking up a few hangers-on along the way. Lose the dead weight. By the 19th, 20th and 21st, you really want to devote some time to the nuts-and-bolts planning (no dream ever came true without it!). The 26th, use your judgment to resolve a problem, and the 30th, you'll end the month in a way that can only be described as dreamy.

aquarius::When you get out of bed on the 1st, do your best to remember to take a nice, deep, long breath. Then slowly breathe out, then take another long, thoughtful, slow, deep breath. Bring the fresh air to the very depths of your lungs. Expel it completely. Breathe in again, down to your toes, and then breathe all the stale air out. Throughout the day, whenever you have a moment, stop and concentrate on your breath. Is it free and easy? Shallow? Labored? Do you hold your breath when you're stressed? Don't! This is the month to focus on expanding and contracting -- and that goes for both your lungs and your life. The 5th and 6th, you'll already be feeling the awesomely oxygenated effects of all this expansion. By the 12th, you'll discover something new about yourself (and possibly also about somebody else). The 17th and 18th, you could have to compromise in a power struggle. Take a deep breath and do it. The 21st, stay grounded (and keep breathing). The 26th, you could well discover a deep feeling you didn't know you had (is it about someone in particular?). By the 30th, it's time to check back in and make sure you're still breathing deep. If you aren't, it's time for a little self-discipline. You'll like the results!

pisces::The 1st, trust your instincts: If an authority thinks they know better and you know they don't, stick to your guns. Stay true to yourself and luck will be on your side. By the 4th, 5th and 6th, your winning combination of dreams and intellect will have won you a number of admirers. You are attracting some romantic admirers with your stunning good looks, as well. The 7th and 8th, everything you touch sparkles like the eyes of the person you've got your eyes on. By the 12th, you are very ready to receive a love letter, which is a good thing, because it looks like one is on its way to you. The 16th, a little mystery goes a long way, and somebody is going to want to solve yours. The 21st, you get analytical about a relationship, and the person in the relationship with you might not be so eager to hear your critique. Decide how important it is to you to share your opinion before you do. The 26th, watch out for somebody who might be a little too negative a little too often. You don't really need that, do you? The 30th, you end your month with a little help from a friend in a high place.

Mordigen