

RULES OF PLAY



SULTANS OF Karaya

A game of intrigue for large groups

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Published by MJ Games

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<http://www.mjgames.ca>

For 5 to 15 players

Age: 12 to adult

Playing time: 45–75 minutes



Introduction

Far out in the Indian Ocean lies the archipelago of Karaya, too small to appear on any map. Each of its many dozen islands is its own tiny country, with a handful of citizens, led by their Sultan.

It's a good life for the Sultan, with slaves to do his bidding, fresh fruit, fabulous wealth and beautiful dancers to keep him entertained. No wonder everyone's lining up to take a shot at stealing the throne!

Contents

- ♦ 16 character cards
- ♦ Wooden tokens (blue, red, yellow, white, gray and black)
- ♦ Rule booklet

Object of the Game

Sultans of Karaya is intended to be played as a series of rounds of variable length. Each round is won by one of two teams — the Loyalists or the Rebels — but these teams are ever-changing, based on which character card each player holds at a given time.



Terminology

For simplicity and clarity, we will use the following words throughout these rules, in place of longer explanations:

- ♦ **Hidden:** A player is hidden if their card is face down.
- ♦ **Known:** A player is known if their card is face up.
- ♦ **Revealed:** A player is revealed when their card becomes known.
- ♦ **Hide:** A player hides when their card becomes hidden.
- ♦ **Active:** The active player is the one whose turn it is.
- ♦ **Adjacent:** Adjacent players are ones sitting next to one another *ignoring any dead players in between them.*
- ♦ **Free:** A free player is one who has not been captured by the Slave Driver, nor detained by a Guard.
- ♦ **Spare:** The spare is the face down card in the center of the table, which belongs to no one.

Setup

The table on the following page shows the correct number of each card type to use for a given number of players. Shuffle the four neutral (green) characters separately and add the correct number of them to the deck at random, sight unseen. Choose new neutral characters for each round.

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Players	Sultan	Guards	Assassins	Slaves	Neutrals
5	1	1	1	3	0
6	1	1	1	3	1
7	1	1	1	3	2
8	1	2	2	3	1
9	1	2	2	3	2
10	1	2	2	3	3
11	1	2	2	4	3
12	1	3	3	4	2
13	1	3	3	4	3
14	1	3	3	4	4
15	1	3	3	5	4

Once you have separated out the correct number of cards, return the unused cards to the box, shuffle the deck, and deal one card to each player, face down. There should be one card left over: place it face down in the center of the table. Players should look at their own cards, but keep them hidden.

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Game Play

If this is the first round, determine randomly who starts, and play proceeds clockwise from there. Play continues in this way from round to round, i.e. the player to start the next round is the one to the left of the last active player from the previous round.

The basic play is very simple. On each player's turn, they must take one, and only one, of the following actions: Peek, Switch/Hide, or use a Character Action. Each of these is detailed below:

Peek: The player simply chooses one hidden player, and peeks at their card without showing anyone else. Players may not peek at the Spare.

Switch/Hide: The player chooses one hidden player, and exchanges cards with them, without peeking first. Both players may, of course, look at their new cards after the switch is made. Players *may* switch with the Spare, which is the only way that card enters play. Players *may not* switch with a player who switched with them on their previous turn.

If the active player is hidden, the switch is made publicly, but with both cards remaining face down. If the active player was known, he Hides instead (see next page).



When a player hides, they flip their card face down, and then all other players must cover their eyes. The player may now switch their card with any other hidden player's, or the Spare, or even keep it! Once they've made their switch, they announce that they are done, and the other players may open their eyes and check their cards to see if they were the one switched with.

Note: Be sure either to be very quiet when making the switch, or to make some "decoy" noises, as otherwise it may be possible for some players to figure out what switch was made based on hearing.

Character Actions: Each character has one or more special abilities, described briefly on the cards and in more detail on pages 11–18. The ones called Actions can only be used on the player's turn, and take up that turn.

In order to use an Action, the player must reveal themselves if they were hidden, flipping their card face up. It remains face up until the player hides or the round ends.

Some characters also have Reactions, which can be used at any time (as permitted by the abilities' descriptions) and do not take up a turn. Using Reactions also reveals the player, however.



Being Killed

Any player may be killed by the Assassin, while some can also be killed by a Guard or the Sultan. When a player is killed, their card is revealed, and both they and their card are removed from the game for the remainder of the round. The player no longer gets a turn, and cannot score any points in the current round, regardless of which team wins. They are also considered to be removed from the seating order, so that the players who were on either side of the dead player are now considered adjacent.

The Spare

The game is always played with one more card than there are players, and the extra card is always face down in the center of the table.

It belongs to no one, is adjacent to no one, cannot be peeked at, and cannot be affected by Actions or Reactions. It is, however, possible for a player to Switch with the center card (whether publicly or when hiding). Thus, there is one character out of play at all times, but that character will re-enter play (and another character will leave) when someone Switches with the center.



Sharing Information

Sultans of Karaya is a game of information, so the sharing of that information is encouraged, even necessary. However, deception is also a very important part of the game! Therefore, it is very important that *information may only be shared verbally*. Players may not voluntarily show their cards, whether to one player or the whole table. Players may only see one another's hidden cards by peeking and switching, or through the use of character abilities.

Teams and Victory Conditions

Characters' alignments are indicated by the background color of their portrait, and the gems on either side. The Loyalists have a blue background and gems, the Rebels have red, and the Neutral characters have green.

The Loyalists: The Loyalist team consists of the Sultan and his Guards. Their objective is to make sure the Sultan continues to hold the throne, either by creating a situation in which it is safe for him to make his identity public, or by neutralizing all threats to the throne. In game terms, this means that the Loyalists have two possible ways to win.



1. As soon as the Sultan is revealed for any reason, place a white token in front of the active player (who may or may not be the Sultan himself). The next time this player becomes the active player, or play passes over them (due to them having been killed, detained or captured), the Loyalists win, unless the Sultan has died or hidden in the meantime: in other words, after one full turn around the table. If the Sultan hides, remove the counter.

2. The Loyalists win if there is no longer any chance for the Rebels to win: that is, if all Assassins are dead, and no more than two Slaves are still alive and free.

The Rebels: The Rebel team consists of the Assassin(s) and Slaves. Their objective is to overthrow the Sultan, whether by killing him or by staging a revolution. In game terms, this means that the Rebels also have two ways to win.

1. The Rebels win if an Assassin succeeds in killing the Sultan.

2. The Rebels also win if there are ever three or more *known*, *free* Slaves sitting adjacent to one another. This is known as a Slave revolution.

The Neutrals: The Neutral characters belong to neither team, but can win with either. See their descriptions on pages 15–18.

Scoring

A round ends when one team's victory conditions are achieved. All living players affiliated with that team score points: one point for those whose identities are still secret, and two points for those who have revealed themselves and helped actively in the team's victory.

For a basic game lasting 45–75 minutes, the game ends after five rounds, and the player with the highest score wins. Ties are won by the player who most recently earned 2 points in a round. If this is a tie as well, the result remains a tie.

Experienced players may wish to adjust the length of the game: It is entirely possible to play for a greater or lesser number of rounds, or to play to a certain score, e.g. the first player to 8 points wins. It's even possible to keep a running score over multiple sessions, if always playing with the same group of players!

An example of scoring at the end of the round is given on pages 19–20, after the character descriptions.

The Sultan

Accustomed to a life of luxury, he isn't happy about having to keep hidden from the Assassins. His goal is to stay alive, hold the throne, and get back to ruling the sultanate.

Alignment: Loyalist

Action — Execute: Kill any one known Rebel. You may not attempt to execute hidden players, even if you have peeked at their cards and know them to be Rebels. You may not execute Loyalists or Neutral characters under any circumstances, even if they are supporting the Rebels.

Reaction — Take the Throne: You may reveal yourself at any time.

Reaction — Avoid Detention: You may reveal yourself to avoid being detained by a Guard. They may not take another action.

Special Rules: When the Sultan is turned face up for any reason, place a white token in front of the active player. If the Sultan has not gone into hiding, nor been killed by the beginning of this player's next turn, the Loyalists win.



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The Guards

The Guards know that the Sultan isn't such a bad guy, and that he rewards his loyal followers well. All they have to do is keep their eyes peeled for Assassins, and at the end of the day, they can enjoy the perks of court life.

Alignment: Loyalist

Action — Detain: Choose any one player, whether hidden or known, and place a gray detention counter on their card. That player skips their next turn. Remove the counter once their turn has been skipped; they will take their next turn as normal.

Note that if a Guard attempts to detain another Guard or the Sultan, that player may reveal themselves in order to avoid detention.

Reaction — Kill an Assassin: If an Assassin attempts to make a kill and you are adjacent to *either* the Assassin or his target, you may prevent the murder *and* kill the Assassin in the process.

Reaction — Avoid Detention: You may reveal yourself to avoid being detained by another Guard. They may not take another action.



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The Assassins

The Assassins are in the employ of various court nobles, who wish to bring about a change of power directly, by having the Sultan killed. A revolution on the part of the Slaves would be satisfactory as well, but for the Assassins, killing the Sultan is Plan A.

Alignment: Rebel

Action — Assassinate: Kill any one player, whether hidden or known.

Note that if a Guard is adjacent to either you or your target, he will be able to prevent the assassination and kill you in the process!



The Slaves

The Slaves truly have the worst of it in Karaya. Born into servitude, their only hope for freedom is to organize themselves and overthrow the Sultan. That, or hope that an Assassin slays him on their behalf.

Alignment: Rebel

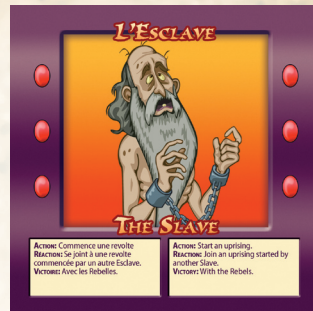
Action — Call for Revolution:

This action has no direct effect other than to reveal yourself.

However, it allows other Slaves to join the revolution as a Reaction, potentially resulting in a successful revolution and a win for the Rebels.

Reaction — Join the Revolution: You may choose to reveal yourself immediately when another Slave calls for revolution.

Special Rules: Known, free Slaves are always considered to be participating in a revolution, regardless of how their were revealed. If, at any time, there are three known, free Slaves adjacent to one another, the round ends immediately in a Rebel victory.



The Slave Driver

The Slave Driver is a shifty character. When hidden, he is a black marketeer, looking to turn a profit when the winds of power change. But if he decides that the current regime is more to his advantage, he may start rounding up the rebellious Slaves to preserve law and order.

Victory: With the Rebels if hidden at the end of the round. With the Loyalists if known.

Action — Capture: Place a black capture token on any one *known* Slave. You do not get an extra turn when Capturing known Slaves in this way.

Action — Hunt: Choose a hidden player. If that player is a Slave, they must reveal themselves. Place a black capture token on their card, and take another turn. If they are not a Slave, they are not revealed; your action has no effect and your turn is over.

Special Rules: Captured Slaves no longer get to take a turn, and cannot participate in a revolution. The capture tokens are removed if the Slave Driver hides or is killed; this can potentially cause a successful revolution. The Loyalists win if there are no Assassins and the Slave Driver captures the third-to-last Slave.

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The Belly Dancer

No one suspects the Belly Dancer of being a Rebel sympathizer, and that's exactly why she's dangerous. While hidden, she's just another girl around the Sultan's court. By putting on a seductive dance at the right moment, however, she can make sure the Guards' eyes are averted when an Assassin strikes!

Victory: With the Loyalists if hidden at the end of the round. With the Rebels if known.

Action — Dance: When revealed, you begin dancing. As long as you remain known and free, any Guards adjacent to you may use neither their Detain action, nor their Kill an Assassin reaction.

Special Rules: The Belly Dancer's effect ends immediately if she is killed, hides, or is detained by a Guard. In this last case, the effect begins again as soon as the detention counter is removed on her next turn.

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The Vizier

Valuable, but untrustworthy, the Vizier is a schemer to the bone. He knows everything going on at the court, and stands poised to force the action, while attempting to get close to those in positions of power.

Victory: When hidden, wins if adjacent to any player earning 2 points for the round, regardless of which team wins. When revealed, will win with whichever team he has chosen to support.

Action — Manipulate: First, declare which team you intend to support and indicate this with a red (Rebel) or blue (Loyalist) token. Next, reveal one hidden player, and force them to use their Action immediately, as if it were their turn. Place a yellow Vizier token on their card; they will still get to take their next turn (and remove the token at that time), but may only Peek or Hide, not use their action a second time.

Special Rules: The targeted player (not the Vizier) makes all decisions related to their action. The Vizier's allegiance is permanent until he hides; he may not change teams even if he uses his action again. If he hides, however, he loses his allegiance and may join either team later.

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The Fortune Teller

She's no psychic, but she's an expert at psychology and the art of a self-fulfilling prophecy. If she can successfully predict the outcome of the struggle, she'll win favour with the victors, and if not, well, people's memories are short — she can always lie low for a bit and try again later.

Victory: Cannot win while hidden. When revealed, wins if she correctly predicted the winning team.

Action — Predict: First, peek at any three hidden players' cards. Next, make a prediction about which team will win. Indicate your choice with a red (Rebel) or blue (Loyalist) token. If the round has not ended by your next turn, you must Hide.

Special Rules: If there are fewer than three hidden players, the Fortune Teller may peek at all their cards. She may not peek at the Spare.

The Fortune Teller must still hide on her next turn even if she was forced to make a prediction out of turn by the Vizier. If detained by a Guard and unable to hide, she her prediction remains in effect for as long as she is known.

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End of Round Example

Sultan (Dead)



Slave (Known)



Assassin (Dead)



Guard (Known)



Guard (Hidden)



Slave Driver (Spare)



Vizier (Known)



Dancer (Known)



Slave (Hidden)



Slave (Hidden)



Assassin (Known)



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This round has just ended with Player 6 assassinating the Sultan (Player 1). The Guard adjacent to the Sultan (Player 10) could not prevent the kill because he was distracted by the Belly Dancer (Player 9). The Vizier (Player 5) had chosen to assist the Rebels by causing the Belly Dancer to use her power. Thus, it is a Rebel win and the players score points as follows:

Player 1 (Dead Sultan): 0 points (dead)

Player 2 (Known Slave): 2 points (known, on the winning team)

Player 3 (Dead Assassin): 0 points (dead)

Player 4 (Known Guard): 0 points (on the losing team)

Player 5 (Known Vizier, assisting Rebels): 2 points, because he is assisting the winning team. Note that if he were hidden, he would still get 1 point for being adjacent to Player 6.

Player 6 (Known Assassin): 2 points (known, on the winning team)

Players 7 & 8 (Hidden Slaves): 1 point each (on the winning team, but hidden). Note that Player 8 has been detained by a Guard (Player 4), but this does not impact the point he gets for the round.

Player 9 (Known Belly Dancer): 2 points, because she wins with the Rebels when she is known.

Player 10 (Hidden Guard): 0 points (on the losing team).

Because the active player at the end of the round was Player 6, Player 7 will take the first turn in the next round. Note that the three neutral characters in the next round will not necessarily be the Vizier, the Belly Dancer and the Slave Driver, as they are chosen anew for each round.

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Strategy Tips

When you Peek, only you get information, whereas when you Switch, the player whose card you take will know who you are. If you need to Switch, doing it with the Spare ensures your identity will be secret, but only if you're the first to do so.

Don't hesitate to Switch if you think you're likely to be on the losing team, or if you feel you can't play your character effectively from where you're sitting.

Talking to the other players and sharing information is very important! But don't forget that you can and should lie about your card (or cards you've peeked at) if you think you can trick the other team into making a mistake.

Be careful about revealing yourself too early! Neutral characters might get away with it, but Rebels and Loyalists are likely to get killed by the other team once their identity is known.

Questions?

Though the basic gameplay is simple, some of the character interactions might be confusing. If you're unsure about anything, check out the FAQ at <http://www.mjgames.ca/>