

GUILDHALLS of the DEATHILES

World of Darkness


a sourcebook for

MURDER
the
CURSE



GUILDHALLS of the DEATHLESS

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**Coming Soon for Mummy: the Curse
Cursed Necropolis: D.C.!**

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INTRODUCTION TO HOUSE DIVIDED

All is theft, all is unceasing and rigorous competition in nature. The desire to make off with the substance of others is the foremost—the most legitimate—passion nature has bred into us, and without doubt, the most agreeable one.

— The Marquis de Sade

Never let it be said that we made it easy on ourselves.

If the release of the core material for **Mummy** can be likened to kicking off the start of a new school year, then it can be fairly said that we went and scheduled a giant exam for the second week of class. Theoretically, our first scheduled supplement *could* have been something else. In theory, it could have been something lighter, shorter... less final exam-y... than the book you're reading now. It wasn't.

Instead, you get *Guildhalls of the Deathless*.

The role that factions or organizations play in the average World of Darkness game is typically a large one, but that might just be an understatement when it comes to mummies. After the Rite of Return itself, the guild is the central pillar of Arisen existence. It binds them not merely to one another, but also to their purpose and to their past. Imagine being part of a secret, six thousand-year professional and mystical society; now overlay a powerful religious worldview onto it, and then, for good measure, add a dash of good old-fashioned sibling rivalry. If we had five sourcebooks this size, we'd still be hard-pressed to explore all the important and valid ways in which a mummy's guild potentially shapes his legend. Alas, we only have the one book to cover all five guilds, but boy, did we pack it chock full of creepy goodness. It's got new powers, guild secrets, a brand new magic sub-system... even a complete, ready-to-run story.

While future supplements are sure to address additional guild-based concerns, this tome represents a one-stop shop for all the basics of playing a socially active member of the five Arisen guilds. Because guild functionality is so different outside of a proper nome, this material naturally focuses on those situations where guild matters are both active and pressing, and that means a focus on nome existence. Certain realities come into play when mummies congregate in places of vibrancy and living power, and while Arisen hermits can escape the social impact of those realities for a time, the rest is just as programmed into their existences as the very rite that drove them together in the first place. If you are a mummy, your guild may not be a permanency in your long life, but it remains no less inescapable for it.

Welcome to your guildhall. To *our* guildhall. We trust you'll find your way around.

THEME AND MOOD

It's hard to effect a meaningful discussion of theme in a few paragraphs when one is doing so in the context of not one ethos, but five different ones, all wrapped up in a new, independent ethos that becomes a greater whole than the sum of its parts. For all their similarities, each guild ultimately focuses on different principles, both thematically and philosophically, and that allows players and Storytellers alike to use guild choice itself as a guide in determining which sub-themes to explore or disregard. If a player decides that the idea of 'progress' will be essential to the thread her character carries throughout the chronicle, then the masons might make a more direct vehicle for that idea than, say, the Su-Menent. Even the overall theme of the guildhall experience will vary from guild to guild, as each guild conducts its affairs, rites, and ceremonies under a different set of customs and principles than does the others.

The mood of *Guildhalls*, as a sourcebook, is similarly broad and need-dependent. The climate of guild interaction will vary as much from nome to nome as it varies from guild to guild, and should rationally derive from the overall set-up and tone of whatever chronicle it serves. That being said, a couple truisms can be safely laid as groundwork for any default view of the overall mood of a guild-driven story. Institutions of any kind (let alone those of such advanced age) beget two things in spades, especially in the context of occult horror narrative: *competition* and *paranoia*. As mentioned in the core material, the most common form of genuine conflict among the Arisen tends to arise from within the Five Guilds. Mummies steal from one another, judge one another's worthiness and/or loyalty on a daily basis, and ultimately, barring exceptional personal will bent toward the contrary, yearn to stand above one another. That's quite a climate in which to work toward an ostensibly common, cooperative purpose.

BURIED TREASURES

Like the core material, we've divided the 'gilded' goods neatly into two halves: The first half is material that's player-friendly, focused almost exclusively on the known inner workings of the Five Guilds; the second half compiles guild-derived material that the Storyteller is entrusted with introducing into and/or adjudicating within his particular game. Players who don't wish to be tempted by the secrets contained therein will have the option of picking up just the player book, while their Storytellers will have both.

BOOK ONE: THESE HALLOWED HALLS

The first half of *Guildhalls of the Deathless* is an in-depth examination of the Five Guilds, each addressed in turn, chapter by chapter. Presented within is detailed information on each guild's inner workings, from ritual structures to internal currents, to key personas and politics, and more.

Chapter One: The Masters of the Servants takes you inside the whispering corridors of the Maa-Kep, the would-be bearers of not just the engraved, but of Irem's lost grace.

Chapter Two: Faces of Gold, Fists of Bronze pulls back the veil on the power brokers of the Mesen-Nebu. How do lost Irem's vaunted alchemists see themselves? You may be surprised at the answer.

Chapter Three: To Write Upon Eternity unrolls the Scroll of Ages to shine a light on those who judge the Judges' chosen: the scribes of the Sesha-Hebsu. For what true secret is not a product of the Word?

Chapter Four: The Chorus of the Verse is a sermon from the mount itself—the steps of the priests' temple—illuminating the ways in which the Su-Menent shepherd the chambers of the Deathless.

Closing out Book One is **Chapter Five: Builders of Destiny**, a thoughtful treatise on the youngest-minded and most progressive of Arisen, the master masons of the Father of Idols.

BOOK TWO: THAT SACRED VAULT

In *That Sacred Vault: The Guildhalls Storyteller's Companion*, the Storyteller finds everything he needs to bring the Five Guilds, in all their dread glory, to vibrant life in his game. Some of this material, including the systems for Guild Status resolution and the new Affinities and Utterances, will eventually find its way to the players, but since the administration of how that happens falls to the Storyteller, it goes herein.

Chapter Six: Keys to the Chamber presents the systems for three major elements of a typical **Mummy** chronicle: the ritual trial of Obloquy, the design of the Arisen talisman, and the functionality of Unison—the means by which multiple Arisen work to unleash a single, more powerful spell.

Chapter Seven: Beyond the Door is, of course, where one finds many of the vault's most precious pieces, from

Titles, Titles...

As each of the Five Guilds is an august body with a (very) long and rich tradition, each has its own system of ranks and titles, so the Arisen unify only those terms that are truly universal to them all. These include the three general designators of status in any guild—apprentice, journeyman, and master—plus those titles derived from the shared structure that is the Arisen nome: nomarch, Priest of Duat, and of course, guildmaster. Almost all other titles or designators of rank in a guild will, as you'll see in the pages to follow, derive from the unique nature and character of their own particular guilds.

All except one, that is.

Perhaps the most important title an Arisen can carry is the one he divined for himself. While there's no *official* term for the honorific itself, the custom is no less honored for it: Over the millennia, a mummy's eternal legend acquires for itself an appellation, usually two or three words (though longer and more narcissistic ones have appeared on occasion). No prescription exists for how one might come by one's personal 'legend,' but when it comes, it tends to stick. Certain events of great upheaval can cause an Arisen's legend to shift, resulting in a new appellation, but by and large, they're forever. They're also, as it happens, more or less unique: For example, hundreds of scribes roam the world, but only one is called the Prince of Glass (and his name is Antu-Herap).

Some deep-seated part of the Arisen soul—in their writings, certain mummies have linked it to their defining pillar—needs the legend; to cement itself in time, to root itself in the world while it yet lives. And for this and other reasons, the Arisen encourage the custom respectfully, while rarely paying much active attention to the names themselves.

new relics to a sampling of new Guild Affinities, from new, guild-exclusive Utterances to the quiet might of Four-Jar magic—a secret occult tradition unique to the Shepherds of the Chamber.

Chapter Eight: Crucible of Fate—The Avarice Chronicle (Part I) rolls out the first story in a series called *The Avarice Chronicle*, designed to give Storytellers a pre-written exploration of one of the game's premiere mysteries: the rumored state of Apotheosis. In "Crucible of Fate," the meret attends a great conclave held in Washington, D.C., and in the aftermath, finds itself set upon a dark new course.



CHAPTER VII

THE MASTERS OF THE SERVANTS

In our town, there was a Gestapo officer who loved to play chess. After the occupation began, he found out that my father was the chess master of the region... and so he had him to his house every night.

— Bruno Schulz

Who are the Maa-Kep, the congenial assistants who eschew glory and embrace teamwork? Are they truly disinterested in personal reward, caring only for the cause or mission, working humbly to advance those they choose to serve? Or is there a deeper identity at work within the guild, a secret superiority that chuckles up its sleeve at its own pose of meekness, marveling that its pawns can be led so readily?

The answers: Yes, no, and not exactly.

While others regard the Maa-Kep as a guild of laborers, it's crucial to understand what an over-simplification that is (at least until one looks at the term symbolically and thematically). In Irem, the guild *oversaw* the laborers (who were either non-members of the guild and/or slaves put to work under the guild's overseers). Many of the Maa-Kep recall experiences of directly standing over someone with a whip to enforce another hour of effort. The adaptable acquiescence to those they consider superior is matched by implacable demands on their subordinates.

Many Maa-Kep truly believe that restoring "deathless Irem" is the greatest good imaginable, and that the unity of all guilds is essential for humankind's future. Others respect their fellow Arisen (because, after all, *no* soul that rose again from Duat is deserving of contempt) and even regard them with considerable affection... but it's the affection of a trainer for a fine horse, more than anything. Certainly the horse is stronger and larger, and can run farther, but there's a reason that one pulls the chariot and one pulls the reins, after all. Some, worn down by the weight of ages, are disillusioned with the other guilds (and possibly their own, and possibly even with the Judges themselves), continuing in pursuit of selfish comfort, or perhaps simply because it's easier to acquiesce to the bondage inspired by the Rite of Return. If a lash on the back yields an hour of toil, what whip compels labor for thousands of years?

The ambiguity of the Maa-Kep varies, while their usefulness tends to be considerable, no matter what position

an outsider occupies. Some from other guilds regard the laborers as the finest of lackeys, and may even be correct. Others consider them selfish manipulators, perhaps even false to the revered Shan'iatu. *They* may be correct as well. But of course, whether a Maa-Kep be guilelessly helpful or profoundly Machiavellian, the Arisen they offer assistance tend to be those most inclined to trust.

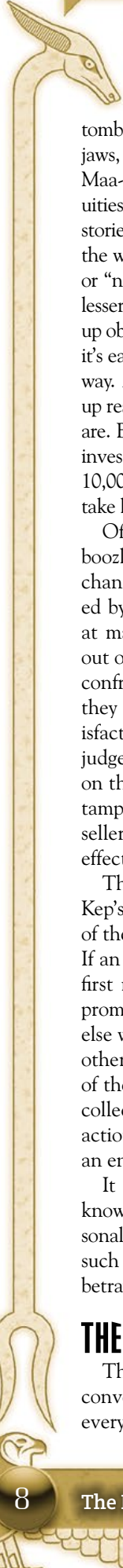

DIRECTIVES

The Bearers of the Engraved wish to serve their masters and help their fellows, either without subtext or as a cloak over deeper goals. But is that all? What are the specific directives behind those vague ambitions?

TITHE TO THE UNDERWORLD

The most immediate and concrete purpose for all the Arisen is to gather objects of mystical importance and render them unto the rightful authorities in the Underworld. The orthodoxy of the Maa-Kep is that the Shan'iatu cut the courses by which the energy of the world can flow into containers. Even if Irem's masters didn't create *every* relic by hand, the process by which many relics are made is proprietary to them. After all, one doesn't have to build every car that drives on a road in order to be entitled to a toll from it. It is exactly the same in this instance: The seeds originated with the Nameless Empire, and if some grow wild, it is still the duty of that nation's tenants to harvest them. Especially since, if the Arisen don't do it, those wild objects are almost certain to ruin lives, possibly whole communities, and not inconceivably entire nations. Retrieving these items is not just their right, it's morally right.

Iremite artifacts are the most prized, naturally, but the Maa-Kep guild doesn't want to only respond to thefts from



tombs. Those are rare (though, by the Devourer's bottomless jaws, not anywhere near as rare as they *should* be). Awakened Maa-Kep and their followers keep a keen eye on the antiquities trade, on art markets throughout the world, and on stories of "haunted" objects and cursed locales. If you type the word "cursed" into eBay, followed by "painting" or "ring" or "necklace," you get a lot of hits. The Maa-Kep (and, to a lesser extent, other guilds) support that market, often buying up objects that look like they *might* be genuine simply because it's easier and cheaper to purchase it than to find it any other way. Almost all of their \$50-100 artifacts are crap, winding up resold or warehoused or simply burned as the rubbish they are. But it only takes one lucky find to make a million dollar investment worthwhile. For a million dollars, you can get over 10,000 objects that *someone* claimed was cursed, and it doesn't take long to separate the wheat from the chaff.

Of course, some Arisen don't appreciate being bamboozled, and at their request a list of repeat sellers of "enchanted" devices has been amassed, their addresses located by IP-savvy private investigators (or simply by looking at mailing labels). The Arisen won't generally take time out of their busy schedules to make a separate journey and confront these parasites, but if they happen to be near one, they might make a side trip in the interest of personal satisfaction. Some Arisen find the sellers of fake objects and judge whether they're sincerely deluded, or just preying on the gullible. They might issue a forceful warning about tampering with occult forces. Or they might just beat the seller to death. Both options are more satisfying *and* more effective than a one-star review.

This process, of course, means that inevitably the Maa-Kep's mortal arm finds some genuine articles without any of the Arisen on hand to examine and safely handle them. If an object's curse is obvious, it's usually presented to the first mummy handy—particularly nasty effects may even prompt cultists to resurrect an Arisen just because no one else wants to handle a piece of paranormal plutonium. But other devices are less obviously dangerous, and stockpiles of them exist on every inhabited continent. They're small collections, and only occasionally does a vessel/relic interaction end up throwing a pall of unprovoked emotion over an entire community. But it's been known to happen.

It also happens that mortal cultists, who really should know better, get greedy and either hoard an object for personal use or sell it for cash. If discovered, the penalties for such behavior are often harsh, so a cultist who's going to betray usually takes steps to betray as thoroughly as possible.

THE DUTY OF UNITY


The idea of unified action between guilds is not just a convenient bromide that the Maa-Kep trot out to remind everyone how good and nice they are. They are serious as

Qaheter?

Symbolized by hieroglyph for "qa" (to rejoice), a man with arms upraised, and "heter" (friendship), which is two men clasping hands, the word "qaheter" simply means "One Who Rejoices in Friendship." It is not, perhaps, a fully accurate description of the position.

Arisen have what one might call a purpose-driven half-life. Neither entirely living nor dead, they rapidly run down into inertia (like the half-life of highly radioactive isotopes, which are also rare and dangerous to human health). They are called back to retrieve objects or repel enemies, not just hang around. If a mummy returns because an artifact is in the wind, it's hardly in keeping with her inclinations to put a pin through that project and stop by the local Sesha-Hebsu guildhall on the off-chance that she can make herself useful.



Envoys, however, are different. In addition to the summons of their cults, or the instinctive resurrection in response to intruders, qaheter arise at the behest of other mummies, mummies in their associated guild. Envoys make use of particular Affinities that bind them to particular allies (p. 95). When a chosen associate (called a "uaqeb") rises, the envoy may return as well. Of course, the mystic connection is a two-way street...



cancer about inter-guild cooperation. How serious is that? In the 1400s, when they found a pair of Arisen within the Mesen-Nebu who were plotting against the Tef-Aabhi, they first approached them and tried to talk them around. But when careful analysis of their next few risings (over the course of 200 years) indicated they were still pursuing their grievance, the Maa-Kep decided that, rather than permit the situation to fester, they would just crack open the alchemists' tombs, pillage every single relic inside back into the Underworld, and either repurpose or destroy their cults. Those two Arisen have not been summoned since the year 1622, because the Maa-Kep decided that it was the Judges' true will that those Arisen be suppressed until the Sothic Turn. They're prepared to ensure that the rebels' Sothic experience is as brief as possible, too.

Effectively neutering two Arisen is no light task. Doing it for another guild? That's no small thing. But the Maa-Kep have *hushed up the whole matter*, because they'd rather keep the two other guilds on good terms than score points with the masons or humiliate the Mesen-Nebu. They're *that* serious.

They're serious enough that, unlike every other guild, a liaison position to a different work-group is a formal and cherished role. These Maa-Kep, known in English as "envoys" and in the Old Language as *qaheter*, formally present



themselves as assistants to each of the other Arisen unions. The specialties they offer (above and beyond “handling dangerous amulets”) make their offers tempting, even to Arisen who consider them nosy busybodies.

THE COUNTERS OF COIN

Those who pledge aid to the Mesen-Nebu believe in the principle of Dedwen almost as much as those Born-of-Gold. But what does a great artist need, one who has amassed tremendous wealth and who can command the essences of matter? The answer is, to be freed of mundane concerns that, while essential, are not directly tied to the Great Work of the oldest alchemists. The Alchemists’ envoys (known to some as the “counters of coin”) are not quiet valets and accountants—the Mesen-Nebu have cultists for that. But while the golden nobility of the Arisen are well equipped to cope with mystic challenges, physical struggles, and any situation where it helps to be the center of attention, they are less well-adapted for discretion (or, one might suggest, deceit), ambiguity, or sudden and radical changes of loyalty. The Alchemists would say it’s to their credit that they do not instinctively suspect betrayal or consider it as an opportune tactic, and their Maa-Kep aides might well agree. But those who would never unsheathe a betrayer’s blade can still die on them. To free the Mesen-Nebu to be pure and focused on things of great value, the counters keep an eye on shaky acquaintances and make deals the golden might refuse, if they knew about them. No matter how necessary those arrangements might be for the larger goals of Irem.

THE PAPYRUS PREPARERS

There are few Maa-Kep whose affection for the Sesha-Hebsu is great enough to lead them to link their fates, and even fewer Sesha-Hebsu who are eager to let one of the laborers into their private counsels. (While the scribes, like all Arisen, admit that there must be some quality at play in the souls of those who resist the Underworld’s pull, there are no few who, nonetheless, regard the Maa-Kep as either sweaty brutes with the bare minimum cunning required to escape the duties of a farmhand, or jumped-up parvenus greedy for authority they’re too dim to properly use.)

For all the general air of sniffy mistrust, however, the Arisen are individuals and tend to be damn stubborn when they make up their minds. So a few Maa-Kep have reached out to the quill-wranglers, and a few scribes accept that having a deeply practical associate can make their tasks of judgment and recording far easier and (sometimes) even clearer.

The Maa-Kep assistants to scrivener mummies are known as “papyrus preparers” or, even more humbly, “reed-cutters.” The greatest poet, after all, has better things to do than mash and dry his own paper pulp. Maa-Kep envoys go be-

fore their associate, often accompanied by his cult. The cult makes things more convenient and defends against ordinary threats. The reed-cutter prepares the way by watching for occult attacks and removing extraordinary obstacles.

The Sesha-Hebsu are, of course, no slouches in the area of discernment, so inviting a protector to serve as a backup is common only for the most cautious of scribes... or those whose duties have led them to expect a lot of subtle, tricky, and relentless opposition. Moreover, the Maa-Kep have, in some instances, exhibited a certain pragmatic moral flexibility that those most fixated upon the law would find repugnant were they exposed to it. In the spirit of “set a thief to catch a thief,” some Scribes accept the protection of a slippery, deceitful, inconstant, brutally practical Maa-Kep bastard.

THE DELVERS


The Su-Menent funeral priests are not the most glamorous of companions, but they were central to and emblematic of the Iremite enterprise in a way that only the Shan’iatu themselves surpassed. Of all guild members, the Shepherds of the Chamber are most likely to share the mainstream Maa-Kep conservatism about the rightness of the Judges’ reign and the necessity of maintaining ideological purity.

That’s not to say they’re tight buds: The Su-Menent fixed their eyes on the ages while the Maa-Kep were attending to the next morning. One is a high-caste group of insular priests whose main concern is the realm of the dead. The other is made up of slave-drivers (or, if you want a less-charged term, middle managers) pursuing their practical agenda through compromise, surveillance, and manipulation. Yet when they can get past their differences, they form a strong hybrid. To put it in the modern idiom: one’s a canny, street-smart spy with a heart of gold, the other has unshakable faith and a legion of undead servants. (Together, they fight crime.)

Maa-Kep envoys pride themselves on filling in the gaps for every guild, and the hole in the Su-Menent’s bag of tricks is a rather glaring one. Bluntly, they’re really not very good with the living. The Maa-Kep, on the other hand, are glad-handers without peer. Many, mortal and otherwise, who would give their last breath resisting the dark intimidation of a death priest have found themselves disarmed by the mild good cheer of one of the Maa-Kep. Sometimes they even end up as allies. Other times they’re dispatched from behind before they even have a chance to suspect.

TIME’S GUIDES

Of all the guilds, the Tef-Aabhi most readily accept the suggestion that they’re so wonderful, members of an entirely different organization are entering their orbit just to help out. But what could the master planners require, whose views span decades?



The answer arises from the inevitable weakness that their strengths cast, like a shadow behind their light. The Tef-Aabhi plan and fuss and guide and strive to get everything *just so*. This gives them a natural intolerance for sloppiness. They don't like loose ends, unexplained interruptions and sudden reversals. The Maa-Kep, from Irem unto the modern day, have had to deal with the unexplained, unexpected and disastrous because no one else wanted to. The masters up top have people to handle that, and the servants on the bottom look up for guidance. Sandwiched in the middle, the Maa-Kep specialize on being there with a mop when the shit hits the fan.

Neither guild would describe their interactions in such a fashion, of course. The Maa-Kep allied to the Father of Idols call themselves "Time's Guides," a title their colleagues are happy to use. They keep things on schedule. If they need to cajole someone into agreement and grease a palm or two, that's fine. If they need to take some ugly shortcuts to catch up, that's par for the course. The Maa-Kep can go from back-slapping to back-stabbing with easy confidence, after all. All they ask in return is access to the greatness of the idols—and not even any credit.

VIGILANCE AGAINST HERESY

Backing the other guilds in their missions is one side of the Maa-Kep coin. Flushing out treachery and deviant ideologies before they can take root and spread is the other side, the side they prefer to keep secret. (In this, the Shan'iatu are their best allies: Memories of a Maa-Kep's accusations are often the first thoughts rinsed out as a Descent ends.)

The great question of "who watches the watchmen?" has an answer that shows Maa-Kep are, for all their protestations of humility, not entirely free of the pride that was such a strong flavor in lost Irem. They watch themselves. The Maa-Kep freely discuss philosophies that would concern them coming from outsiders, and (when alone with one another) dare ask questions that would get any Alchemist or Scribe put on a Maa-Kep watch list.

For all the Priests' pomp, it is an article of faith for the Maa-Kep that they, and not the Su-Menent, are Irem's most loyal servants. They can think what is otherwise unthinkable because they are shielded by their devotion. Other guilds, while splendid in their way, can't be trusted with such seductive errors. Just look what happened to the Deceived, after all.

WHAT DO THEY LOOK FOR?

They are few and the world is large, so they are reduced, by necessity, to only guarding against the most obvious heresies. Things like Amkhata and Shuankhsen are obviously beyond the pale, and *every* mummy stands in opposition to

them. The mission of the Maa-Kep is to seek out subtler disloyalties.

- Casual suggestions that the Judges are fallible.
- Disrespect to the Shan'iatu.
- Repeated questions about the necessity of vessel recovery.
- Use of vessels to stave off Descent in any but the most dire of circumstances.
- Espousing the idea that continued glorification of lost Irem might be bad.
- Excessive display of Bane Affinities.
- Any suggestion that the Shuankhsen were once betrayed by the Shan'iatu. (A perverse and ridiculous idea that *somehow* seems to crop up again and again...)

WHAT DO THEY DO ABOUT IT?

The options for dealing with an immortal heretic aren't often pretty, as the middle ground between "brutal enough to disable a servant of the Shan'iatu" and "light enough to ignore" is pretty thin. Generally, the Maa-Kep try to guide their wayward cousins back to the straight and narrow path, and the severity of their actions often depends on how well the Maa-Kep like the target. If someone speaks up for you, you're much likelier to get a slap on the wrist. If you've offended the guild, on the other hand, your actions or opinions get judged that much more harshly. In ascending order of seriousness, the Maa-Kep's general schedule of response goes like this.

- Increase surveillance—infiltrate the target's cult or keep an eye on her tomb. This is handled with mortals typically, unless the tomb or cult has yet to be identified. Then the decisive hand of a mummy may be required.
- Infiltrate associates—with their knack for casually earning trust, the Maa-Kep may sound out other members of the suspect mummy's meret to see if these are just aberrant thoughts, or a symptom of something more serious.
- Casual warning—the suspected traitor is warned, gently and subtly, that there are serious doubts about his dedication to the Judges and their mission. Often it's insinuated that his cult, tomb, or other prized belonging might suffer if he doesn't change his ways.
- Confiscate mission vessels—this step is only taken if three Maa-Kep are in agreement that the target



mummy is highly suspect. One of the three must be a journeyman, at least. Vessels may be removed from the target by stealth or by force, depending on circumstances. This is more likely to be undertaken if the vessel is an amulet, as the Maa-Kep can claim a proprietary interest. These vessels are delivered to Duat by Maa-Kep who serve the same Judge as the suspect, if possible, or at least delivered with reverent expediency otherwise (and always with some form of prayer or votive).

- Confiscate personal vessels—again, a council of three Maa-Kep must agree that transgressions and treasonous speech merit this step, and all three must be Journeymen or better. This usually involves breaking into a tomb, so all three Maa-Kep who decide on the mission generally are on the hook for the robbery.
- Formal intervention—with hard proof of serious transgression (such as sedition, repeated vessel violation, or frequent dereliction of duty), the perpetrator's presence is requested before a council of three Maa-Kep artisans (who may need to be summoned specifically for the trial). The traitor is informed of his guilt, though not given any chance to offer an explanation. He's then offered the choice of submission to judgment, or denial. If he submits, he's required to hand over any personal vessels (usually the ones that summon him!) and instruct his cult to permit oversight by a chosen Maa-Kep and her cult. If he denies judgment (or just refuses to show up), it's open season. Any Maa-Kep who wants in is encouraged to pillage his Tomb and consign to Duat any vessels held within. The traitor's cult is, additionally, open to destruction or conversion.
- Secret intervention—should two artisans and a master decide that a mummy, tried in absentia, is guilty of treason and is, moreover, too influential or personally powerful for formal intervention, they may just agree on a secret intervention. The subject is treated as if she'd denied a formal intervention, only she gets no warning before the Maa-Kep try to take away everything meaningful in her existence.

THE UNREAD RECORD

The ideal of selfless service is easy to the Arisen. All you have to do is succumb to the Rite, relax, let go of the burdensome memories of life and behave like an automaton. The cruel irony is that most servants who relied on their masters for strength could not, alone in the underworld, press on and declare a decree. Therefore, the process itself winnows out the most subservient.


This leaves the Arisen as the outcome of a process that's designed to produce the most loyal of servants, but which only those of great inner fortitude can survive. Nowhere is it more acute than within the halls of the Maa-Kep. Fortunately, they can sever the knot of paradox with the sword of... hypocrisy. Behavior that would be highly suspect if the other guilds did it is accepted as a necessary ugliness by the guild with the unmatched tolerance for moral compromise.

The most glaring double standard is the Maa-Kep project called the Unread Record. Laborers write down their observations about colleagues of other guilds and dispatch them under high security to a central library in what is now Libya. (The library is about 94 miles due south of the oasis village of Al-Jaghub, or 90 miles southwest of Siwa, in Egypt. It's staffed by a pair of mummies whose tombs wound up nearly adjacent during the French invasion in the late 1790s. Speaking French within the Unread Library's confines is generally considered unwise.) The documents are encoded, and the librarians are the only Maa-Kep of artisan rank not entrusted with the cipher. Their duty is to maintain the archives, not read them. The scrolls of behavior are only brought forth and read if a mummy is suspect and is being considered for a formal intervention. Note that the scrolls are not permitted to leave the library, nor to ever be copied, so anyone who wants to really throw the weight of the guild against a suspected heretic has to travel to the library to check the records for previous bad behavior.

The Unread Record was established way back during the second Turn (though at that time it was housed under the city of Per-Bast), so its use is now familiar to the Maa-Kep. The unintended consequence of establishing it was this: Many Maa-Kep realized, upon consulting records in order to ruin their current rivals, just how great the lacunae in their own memories were. In the 9th century AD, a Maa-Kep whose name has been stricken from records and monuments called upon her allies and associates to record their every Descent for personal consultation on subsequent awakenings. Referred to disdainfully as "the Diarist," her practices became popular and widespread among the laborers before the then-powerful Hall of the Scorpion Dawn, together with a hardline Su-Menent cadre, declared them heretical. Any who pursue her legend in the modern times soon learn that she began as a scribe before transferring her loyalty to the laborers. Maa-Kep willing to talk about the subject at all often suggest that the Diarist returned to that guild after becoming *persona non grata* among the Maa-Kep.

Despite the public crackdown, the damage had been done. Maa-Kep were taking notation about their missions and experiences, and secreting them in their tombs for later





reflection or consultation. Even those who publicly never endorsed her ideas could easily practice them in private, possibly even with the aid of cults (who have every motivation to record glorious legends of their mighty patrons).

Being one of the Arisen, of course, she's still around, though it's unlikely that she still publicly acknowledges being the mummy who was drummed out of the Maa-Kep.

PLOWMEN IN THE SOIL OF HISTORY

Considering themselves the most faithful of Irem's mummies, the Maa-Kep take it on themselves to prepare for the return of the Shan'iatu and the governance of the world by the Judges' undying wisdom. If their direct and immediate goal is recovering vital Sekhem for the gods of Irem, their abstract and century-spanning objective is to make Earth a world worth conquering anew.

Not all Maa-Kep are fervent about this sort of intervention—the South American guildhall openly objects to the idea, considering it serious overstepping, practically a usurpation of the Shan'iatu's role. Yet it is the dominant philosophy in the powerful European faction, and the Unwavering Eye have a powerful influence over the Northern Bear and Middle River Halls.

The strategies the Europeans and their co-thinkers pursue are often utilized by more neutral Maa-Kep organizations as implements of their will, but only those who are fanatical about handing a gift-wrapped world to their deathless royal priesthood pursue these strategies as ends in and of themselves.

INFORMATION CONTROL

Information is power, and the Maa-Kep have known that ever since watching the Gutenberg revolution. Hell, a few of them still have vague memories of True Name magic, and far more have niggling, half-formed suspicions that controlling their memories gives the Shan'iatu the finest form of control.

Enamored with the idea of knowing everything about everyone, the Maa-Kep have been enthusiastic about government record-keeping for centuries. They like to know who is whom, and from where, and what their interests are likely to be. It's far easier, after all, to manipulate with good background than it is to try and persuade an enigma.

Modern Maa-Kep (and their cultists) greedily eye the databases of credit bureaus, banks, and political pollsters. To them, a national census is a thing of beauty and criminal records are more to be treasured than rubies. Their antique mindsets make these objectives hard to control, but it only makes them covet them more. Of course, this puts those mortals who *can* stay current on data monitoring squarely in the crosshairs of Arisen paranoia.

TRANSPARENCY

The Maa-Kep don't like secrets. They don't even particularly *like* their own secrets; they just think their own secrets are a necessary evil. The idea that the little people of the modern world might have private information tucked away somewhere is disquieting. Being mementoes of an age where "social equality" or "human rights endowed from birth" were not even conceivable thoughts, the most reactionary Maa-Kep assume the only reason to hide anything is due to laziness or some other attempt to steal from or undermine their masters. The Maa-Kep were slave-whippers, remember.

In the modern era of London's "Ring of Steel" and TSA body searches, there's a sense that essential privacy is being lost. This brings us full circle to Irem, where slaves had no rights to any hidden thing, any more than a right to their own bodies.

Note well that this is not something the Maa-Kep or any other Arisen "did." The reason people can be cyberstalked is that technology outpaced legislation: It was a *fait accompli* before authorities even realized it was a problem, and now large and profitable businesses have adapted to it. Was the ease with which your phone number and address became available to the networked world greased by the Maa-Kep? Well, their highly-placed Bilderberger associates certainly didn't fight it very hard.

IDEOLOGICAL ALIGNMENT

The notion that "information wants to be free!" plays firmly into the Unwavering Eye's dream of a panopticon totality, as do plummeting prices for miniaturized cameras. Unfortunately, the same broadband info-glut drags their final and most important objective ever-farther from realization.

Their hope is for a single, unified government—a standard assumption about "how people are organized" that unites the world under one banner. They aren't terribly concerned about whether it's Communism, Republican Democracy or Authoritarianism. They'd prefer that it be as far to the repressive end of the spectrum as possible, but even a liberal setup would be fine, as long as *everyone agreed*. They have blithe confidence that if the world were only organized into pulling in the same direction, the Shan'iatu could return and take its reins. They could win (or fix) any election, subsume any oligarchy, replace any tyrant.

But the same technologies that make it easy for some weirdo in Indonesia to look at your rooftops with Google Earth make it easy for you to put up your opinion in front of a potentially vast audience. The information is uncontrolled. Notions go viral without any authority's control or consent, and attempts to make such repugnant pluralism impossible rob the system of the same omnipresence that brings the first goals closer than ever.

This is the dilemma of Maa-Kep who want to reformat the world in their image: They're trying to chase three rabbits at once, and one is running in the opposite direction of the other two. Anything that brings the world closer to total informational access inevitably drives it away from control and conformity.

ORGANIZATION

Organizing mummies is a bit like herding cats, if cats were asleep almost all the time, awoke with purposes and missions strange to humankind, and were inclined towards utter callousness toward human life. (Perhaps it's *exactly* like herding cats.)

In all seriousness, what kind of structure can contain entities of great power whose agendas vary greatly and whose awareness is, at best, intermittent? The answer is, one that is both loose and robust. "Looseness" means it has room for a variety of Arisen to pursue a variety of goals, with the guild both extracting its needs from them while they're awake and providing them with the aid they need to accomplish their tasks in a timely fashion. After all, when one of the Deathless can fulfill her summoned duty with dispatch, that gives her more opportunities to work for the good of guild and nation in whatever time remains before the Descent's inevitable claim.

The Maa-Kep framework, then, is primarily geographical. In this guild, each continent is considered a single "guildhall"—the Maa-Kep are rare, and awakened Maa-Kep rarer still. A single guildmaster oversees the actions of each hall (note: only those taken expressly *as a guild*)—though in some instances this oversight takes the form of broad, vague mandates to be followed while the guildmaster is in Duat. In almost every case, the local concerns of a given nome still fall to the guildmasters of that nome.

With the Deathless so often inert, the Maa-Kep halls are forced to rely on (1) cult structures and (2) whichever Arisen happen to be active at the moment. The cults have continuity of experience, but are subordinate and lack a mummy's power. The Arisen's problems are exactly the opposite, plus they're saddled with amnesia and compulsions to pursue whatever it was that brought them back. The common compromise, then, is for the cult to suggest courses to the Deathless, who often don't care or understand and just let the cult do what they think is best. When the Deathless *do* care deeply, the cults defer with alacrity—the mummies *are* the leaders, after all. They're just leaders who take a hands-off attitude, pretty much by necessity.

The exception to this trend is when cultists awaken a mummy to guide them through a crisis they can't resolve on their own. It is during those times that the Maa-Kep act with decisive speed and ruthless precision.

AFRICA ("HALL OF THE SCORPION DAWN")



Emblem: A black scorpion in front of a rising red sun on a black field.

There's a tendency in the West to regard Africa as a benighted shit-hole, where, if you're not perishing of dysentery, you're getting your hands machete-hacked in tribal genocide. While that sort of crushing poverty and brutal political unrest do occur (and more often in the wreckage of colonialism than elsewhere), it's hardly the whole story. Africa is a big, diverse continent that's been at the crossroads of human history for as long as there has *been history*. Indeed, Irem herself traces her roots to North Africa. There are prosperous, modern African cities, ranging from Lagos to Johannesburg to Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. Crime can be a problem in them, but they are relatively politically stable. So to judge all of Africa by Rwanda or Somalia is as much of mistake as assuming that Juárez and Quebec are alike because they're both in North America. (It's an imperfect comparison: Africa is three million square miles larger.)

The continent's size, diversity and deep layers of history make Africa challenging to the Maa-Kep. No matter what group they try to guide, there's a rival trying to do the same thing better, an enemy trying to destroy them, and a greedy foreigner trying to steal their resources. No language, culture, or cause unites its people.

Nowhere are these problems more apparent than in Egypt, which has been (at various times) occupied by Greeks, Romans, Turks, Muslims, then a different *kind* of Muslim, and then of course the British. That's without really counting the various shorter-term invasions by France, Italy, and Germany. The Arisen of Cairo barely had time to get used to Nasser's coziness with the U.S.S.R. before Sadat came along and switched channels to the U.S., and then in an eyeblink, was assassinated and replaced by Hosni Mubarak. Mubarak's thirty-year reign gave assorted Arisen factions the time to get their hooks into the government, before the Arab Spring threw everything into chaos again.

The Maa-Kep cult in the Egyptian military was heavily out-performed even during the Mubarak years, so they diversified, founding Dahabiisi Petroleum in 1988. That was just in time for the U.S. Bureau of Land Management to start leasing public lands for drilling, but never mind—the real purpose of Dahabiisi was to provide cover for a lot of African travel and cash-spreading, and for that use a struggling oil company was actually preferable to a prosperous one. Supposedly "Dahabiisi" was coined as a contraction of the Swahili words for "black gold," but it's actually a word from pre-dynastic, *Iremite* Egyptian meaning "unwelcome encouragement." Any of the Arisen can recognize

the word, but there are plenty of linguistic coincidences between Iremite and modern tongues. The Iremite phrase for “horse urine” sounds remarkably like the name of a popular Japanese soft drink, for example.

Dahabiusi Petroleum provides a front for Maa-Kep meddling anywhere in Africa that oil might, conceivably, be found, and its associated development NGO “Synergie Afrique” starts random-seeming development projects elsewhere. But their resources in Irem’s native continent are woefully thin. The day-to-day is so constant, they have practically no time for deep political meddling. Not like Europe.

In an ironic development (or perhaps evidence that Fate has a sense of humor), Dahabiusi has had to rely on loans extended by the financial services arm of Hubbard Chemical, a multinational whose clients also include Last Dynasty International. The movers and shakers of two Sekhem-seeking conspiracies unwittingly share elevator rides to Hubbard Financial’s suite in Paris’ Tour Maine-Montparnasse.

The signature Maa-Kep, a pensive hermit named Sefet-Qam, was once guildmaster of the Scorpion Dawn, but abdicated willingly in December of 1922, when he vanished into the great white North.

ASIA (“HALL OF THE MIDDLE RIVER”)



Emblem: A red river with white foam splitting two black shores.

The Maa-Kep presence in Asia is not as fragmented and desperate as in Africa, but it faces its own problems. The guildmaster of the Hall of the Middle River felt that the closest modern match to the tyranny of Irem was Communism, so she concentrated on the parties of the U.S.S.R. and China. Her Russian minions were a statist old-boys’ club who couldn’t penetrate the KGB despite decades of effort. When the Soviet Union dissolved, the Russian cult of Maa-Kep fell from power and scattered, unable to compete with the Mafiyahs and the new oligarchs.

The guild has had considerably better luck in China, where influential members of both the Ministry of State Security for the People’s Republic of China (the *Guoanbu*) and the Ministry of Public Security for the PRC (*Gong’an Bu*) have joined an organization called the *Yuzhou Zhi Mi* or “Cosmic Mysteries.” *Yuzho Zhi Mi* claims to be a renaissance of lost knowledge, sciences suppressed from different ages and distant cultures. For most cultists, it functions simply as a social arena in which they can network, gossip and get Beijing real estate tips—sort of a Shriners’ club for Chinese secret policemen. (Despite the nominal femininity of the Asian guildmaster, *Yuzhou Zhi Mi* remains stodgily sexist in that antiquarian way.) Only those with access or promise are introduced to deeper levels at which they learn that “external intelligences” are attempting to return to this “dimen-

sion” in order to restore the proper rule of Earth. It’s all very pro-Communist, as the unity of the people is presented as the greatest good attainable, with an association with the “Secret Masters” as the surest route to that unity.

Although numerically small (like most mummy cults), *Yuzhou Zhi Mi* has access to a great sprawl of information, being fastened not only onto China’s internal security apparatus (a finely honed implement for suppressing dissent) but also its extensive network of spies in foreign nations. The data the Arisen pirate from *Gong’an Bu* and *Guoanbu* tends to be Sino-centric, but then again, so does much of the regional economy.

AUSTRALIA

The Maa-Kep have basically written off the whole continent. It does not show signs of taking over the world any time soon. Its Western attitude towards personal liberty is irksome. Arisen can’t pass for members of its dominant cultural elite. Most importantly, the nation’s wide open spaces make the kind of unified police state they long for unfeasible. A few mummies hide out there—most hunting *Shuankhsen* or disguising themselves as Aborigines when the need arises. A couple guildmasters have laid down roots in Melbourne and Sydney, but most Maa-Kep ignore the land entirely.

ANTARCTICA

None of the guilds have any official holdings in Antarctica. However, the continent’s desolation and relative remoteness from human civilization make it perfect for secret libraries, relic caches, and other hidden treasures. It would be most foolish to think the Maa-Kep would pass up such an opportunity.

EUROPE (“HALL OF THE UNWAVERING EYE”)



Emblem: An eye, black, on a red field, with black lines converging beneath it, forming a road or a pyramid.

A dense, rich population? Check. Unifying financial and political operations that require a lot of oversight and negotiation? Check. Cosmopolitan cities in which an ancient Iremite won’t immediately stick out like a sore thumb? Check. Heavy cell phone infrastructure and rising reliance on technological monitoring? Indeed. Cultural emphasis on collectivism, “fraternité,” and “gemeinschaft?” Not quite as heavy as in China, but way more than in the U.S., with its miserable “frontier spirit” and exaltation of individualism. Europe has just about everything the Maa-Kep want.

However, Europe has had some bad experiences with loud groups touting nationalism, socialism, and the collection of occult artifacts. While some Arisen still don’t understand what the big deal was with backing the Nazis (other than



“they lost”), the Maa-Kep instinct for social function has promoted leadership more inclined to guide with a light hand on the reins than seize power with an iron fist.

Guildhall Europe is the largest, most prominent, and most powerful of the continental Maa-Kep guilds. Currently led from Switzerland, it is also the most interventionist in attitude. The guild in Europe does not just want to sweep up relics; it wants to actively lead humankind into societies more like Irem of old. You can read the section “Plowmen in the Soil of History” for details, but the short version is they want agreement, conformity, and transparency—with “transparency” being their preferred euphemism for “the end of all privacy, forever.”

In Europe, they’re pursuing this—not by force, but through gentle suggestions to the frothiest cream of the power elite: The Bilderberg Group.

For those unfamiliar with the Bilderbergers (as they’re also known), it’s a group of about 140 Western billionaires, politicians, and a few economists. Named for the Swiss hotel where they first met in 1954, the stated purpose of the group is (essentially) to get these people together where they can talk in private without worrying that some asshole is going to stick their unguarded comments up on YouTube. It’s not an executive organization, it’s simply a once-a-year chance for the movers and shakers to put their heads together for some

serious wonk-talk without worrying about Joe the Plumber getting huffy because they spoke with someone from the Socialist International and didn’t come to blows.

Absent the mummies, it wouldn’t be terribly sinister—at least, no more so than any politician’s smoke-filled room—but the Maa-Kep use Bilderberg meetings as an opportunity to recruit, seduce, and attach themselves to influential intellectuals, business tycoons, and finance ministers. At least a half-dozen Maa-Kep have their cults *specifically* awoken them *just* to go to the Bilderberg meeting, where they can bring the world closer to one culture, well-watched, under the banner of the lost scorpion.

NORTH AMERICA

⟨“HALL OF THE NORTHERN BEAR”⟩



Emblem: A white bear, rampant on a red field, with black bars to the left and right.

Ta-Em-Sertu (“Earth-in-Rejoicing”), the guildmaster of the Hall of the Northern Bear is, in some ways, a Maa-Kep’s Maa-Kep. Unlike his fellows in Europe and South America, he’s happy to sacrifice long term policy for expediency *now*.

(It has been suggested that in this, he is *extremely*



American.) He is the newest of the Maa-Kep guildmasters, the last guide of the Hall of the Northern Bear having been removed in the sixties for a perceived failure to keep the culture of the United States unified. Ta-Em-Sertu has carefully lowered expectations of cultural unity, allying with the radicals united under the Jagged Pyramid to protect himself from his predecessor's fate. It doesn't hurt that he truly believes a unitary culture has to emerge organically—you can't force it. He thinks McDonald's and Disney have a better long-term chance of creating a one-world culture by following people's trends than anything that attempts to impose them from above, or trick citizens into liking something they don't.

The Maa-Kep of the U.S., Mexico, and Canada have focused largely on the U.S. as a fine potential candidate for "unifying Empire." More specifically, the current guildmaster sees information technology as the means by which the Judges of Duat could maintain a hold on a world so much more populous than the realms of his birth.

Accordingly, his guild has spent the last several decades building up InfoTerm, a venture capital firm focusing on computers and communications. Most of the companies he's cultivated have been bought out, first by Microsoft, then by Google and Facebook, now by Apple. But InfoTerm has kept current with its alumni, gaining valuable access to those informational giants.

While InfoTerm (and lesser Maa-Kep associated cults) see an American-run panopticon totality as a dream worth fighting for, they are primarily just trying to track lost artifacts and validate Amkhat sightings. To the Jagged Pyramid faction, this is a blessed relief, while to the American Bilderbergers, it's effectively a bloody waste of potential.

SOUTH AMERICA ("HALL OF THE JAGGED PYRAMID")



Emblem: A red step-pyramid on a black field.

South America has a rich history of religious syncretism, with Umbanda and Candomblé mixing African Orishas with Roman Catholic saints. The Arisen of the region (particularly Brazil) have found it worthwhile to use those same saints as masks for the Judges of Duat themselves. For example, Akhi, who punishes the wrathful, is represented by St. Michael the defender. St. Patrick is conflated with Khem-Inhu, due mostly to their use of serpents as symbols. Fentu, the bull-headed thief-taker, is routinely blended with St. Luke, who also uses a bull as his emblem. And on it goes.

The continent is also known for the strong social justice element of its religious practice, and while the Arisen are deathless beings from before the age of Columbus, the

Maa-Kep cults of Brazil and Venezuela have managed to either influence their masters towards a more humanist bent, or to attract those Maa-Kep who were already most tolerant of mortals and their individuality.

A *Ingreja dos Espíritos de Julgamento* ("The Church of the Spirits of Judgment") began in Brazil and, as *La Iglesia de los Espíritus de la Sentencia*, it spread to Venezuela and through the continent's Spanish-speaking nations. Between its Orisha elements (believing a life-force guides you through the worlds, a lengthy list of spirit mediators) the trance experiences common to many faiths, and the demonstrable power of relics and the Arisen, a *Ingreja dos Espíritos de Julgamento* has drifted so far from its Catholic and Egyptian roots that it is, in many ways, uniquely separate from its genesis. One element common to mummy cults everywhere is the belief that the righteous can call protectors back from death itself. In this system, they're called *anjo múmias*.

The guildmaster for the Hall of the Jagged Pyramid was known in ancient Egypt as Pestem-Aah ("Shining-Forth-From-the-Moon"). Generations in Brazil have known her only as a *Senhora de Pesar*—the "Lady of Regret." Pestem-Aah regrets most of all the cruelties she inflicted on slaves during her mortal days, and has restored sufficient memory of the briefly-glimpsed ages in between that she truly believes it is possible, now more than ever, to have a successful national economy without a disposable, permanent underclass. This notion is wildly optimistic to mainstream Arisen, let alone the typically by-the-book Maa-Kep, but Pestem-Aah is persuasive, and the laborers are, perhaps, the foremost proponents of "whatever works."

The Jagged Pyramid, then, is the hotbed of humanist Maa-Kep thought. It's rarely spoken aloud that the Shan'iatu are *never* coming back, and that the division between underworld and living realm is as firm and inflexible as it has ever been. But it's a common thought, and while the Maa-Kep in this guildhall are happy to serve their Judges' principles (as well as their craving for vessels), many have quietly gone native, viewing their times in the physical domain as a welcome respite from the uneasy dreams of Duat.

The most fervent of South American mummies struggle to undercut the fascist ambitions of the Unwavering Eye, but their mainstream simply thinks that trying to unify a world so vast and populous is a fool's errand. It's like trying to put the juice back in the orange. That's the lesson *they* take from Africa.

DUTIES

Organizational busybodies in life, the Maa-Kep are happy to maintain clearly defined responsibilities afterwards. While the foremost project of almost every waking mummy is that mission that called them from rest, the Maa-Kep designate their members into particular positions so that they can know what *else* they ought do with their wakeful days.



APPRENTICE

The duty of the apprentice is to serve, of course, but that's the role that all Maa-Kep take (or, at least, how they present themselves). What distinguishes apprentices from other laborers is simply the question of whom they serve. Apprentices serve their fellow Maa-Kep.

This makes a great deal of sense from a perspective that couples humility with a drive to accomplish. The Maa-Kep want to achieve without drawing attention, either for failure or success. Their most junior members are generally most likely to fail, so why expose them to outsiders? Better to keep them close until they're trained up and have proven their mettle.

The job of the apprentice, then, is whatever the more senior members say.

Initiation: The initiation for a mummy who joins from another guild simply requires the new apprentice to walk down a corridor of torches in a white robe, pick up an iron chisel, and make a mark on a stone tablet indicating his new allegiance to the Maa-Kep. This is overseen by at least one journeyman, who adds his mark to the inscription. After that, it's just congratulatory speeches and toasts in the closest approximation of Iremite mead that can be procured. It's a slight ceremony, fitting for the regard most Maa-Kep hold for new joiners. They're happy to have them, of course—their insights into the workings of other guilds are quite valuable, and it's encouraging to see someone leave their side for yours. But they expect little, always a bit surprised by displays of exceptional loyalty.

FLAIL-BEARER

In the old days of Irem, a “flail-bearer” was, bluntly, the guy who flogged the slaves when he felt they weren't pulling bricks with sufficient alacrity. They got things done, regardless of how ugly the means (or the ends) involved might be.

The title of flail-bearer, then, hearkens back to that to indicate that this is where commitment gets ratcheted up a step. But for those who've imbibed liberal humanism over the last several thousand years, the good news is that there's little call for torturing imprisoned laborers in the 21st century. The bad news is, flail-bearers are still on the hook for physical abuse, and they're just as likely to be receiving as giving. They are now expected to throw themselves into fair fights. (Fair fights if they're *lucky*.)

An awake and aware flail-bearer is the mummy the apprentices flee to when something supernatural thwarts their missions, and the flail-bearer's duty is to engage and defeat it—no matter how weary she is and how heavy the Descent is upon her. Cults may resurrect flail-bearing Maa-Kep specifically to sort out some kind of physical threat to the guild. Those instances tend to work out much better.

Not all Maa-Kep of Guild Status 2 are flail-bearers per se, but all flail-bearers have Guild Status 2.

Initiation: The flail-bearer initiation is a bit more serious than the first rites for apprentices. First off, one does not simply *request* the honor. Arisen are expected to wait patiently until a trio of journeymen (or better) accept that his qualities exceed what's demanded of apprentices. When such a triumvirate convenes and agrees, the new flail-bearer is made to present some tangible token of his worth—usually a vessel found *in addition* to any other mission, but sometimes evidence of a victory over a worthy foe—approaching the trio promoting him while blindfolded. The journeymen take the token and, in exchange, they offer a silver chisel. They remove the blindfold and use it to bind the chisel into his hand.

JOURNEYMAN

“Journeyman” is the most numerous guild ranking, and little wonder: It's a comfortable place to be. Those below it are subordinates taking orders, or soldiers on call for monster incursions. Those above it suffer the burdens of organizing idiosyncratic Arisen. The Maa-Kep are more prone to discipline and teamwork than some, and even so—running the show is no picnic. Thus, most laborers stay at the middle level of the middle-man guild.

Journeymen have considerable latitude in accepting or refusing requests from their superiors (though declining a personal request from a master could be risky, if anyone could remember the last time someone did so). They also have the clout to push around any apprentices who happen to be active, or even to summon a flail-bearer should they have a threat to face.

The limit to journeyman authority is this: While they can ask others to help them, they can't order people to do important things *for* them. They may demand petty stuff that's effectively a waste of their time, but really, that's what mortals are for. A flail-bearer awakened to battle an Amkhat is going to fight the beast side-by-side with the journeyman summoner, not *instead* of him. Journeymen can lead apprentices into danger, but they can't send them into it.

Initiation: Mortal rites for crossing social thresholds often involve suffering and physical ordeals, but such things hold no terrors for those immortals who have staked a decree in the underworld. To take on the rights and responsibilities of a journeyman, the mummy must suffer and sacrifice, but it's no mere mortification of the flesh.

To elevate properly to journeyman status, a Maa-Kep should rightly be sponsored by another of greater Guild Status than he, a move that is often accompanied by lengthy paeans to the promoted mummy and his accomplishments. But sometimes it's just done quietly, perhaps out of a sense that someone has waited long enough. Patience is hard to measure but still valued, after all.

The new journeyman is informed of his good fortune and, should he accept the honor, he is asked to sacrifice something precious to him, to demonstrate that his loyalty to the guild exceeds his love of cult or meret. In times previous, sacrificing one's own high priest was the standard, but in the more enlightened modern era, a financial devotion suffices (usually something that reduces Resources by a dot, or that erodes a cult's Reach by a point). Mummies who perform exceptionally heroic deeds may find the sacrifice requirement waived, especially if their actions directly benefitted the guild.

The journeyman ceremony is held, if possible, in the new journeyman's own tomb. He kneels before the other artisans, who cut his palm with a sharp golden chisel. (Actually, it's gilded steel—gold-plated iron in olden times.) He takes the tool and marks the foreheads of the artisans with his blood as a sign of fealty. The chisel is marked with the new journeyman's title or cartouche, and secured in the tomb of one of the sponsoring artisans.

ARTISAN

Artisans comprise perhaps 10 to 15% of the Maa-Kep guild. Unlike flail-bearers, who are more of a role than a specific rank, *all* Guild Status 4 members of the Maa-Kep guild are known internally as "artisans." Ostensibly, they have the

authority to send any mummy of lower Guild Status on missions (or errands) without personal accompaniment. This is rarely abused, since it's terribly embarrassing to give an order that's refused, and a guildmaster who judges an artisan to have abused her authority can initiate proceedings to reduce her to journeyman status (Storytellers, see Chapter Six). If this happens, the guildmaster(s) has the further option of reclaiming her gold chisel and destroying it.

To match their considerable authority over others, artisans take considerable responsibility. When a guildmaster is in Duat, it's the artisans who rule the house when awake, and artisans who are awakened in a crisis. (Among guild members, only artisans have the authority to ask a guildmaster's cultists to summon him from slumber.) They are tasked with growing and protecting the guild's resources and influence, managing agreements between Maa-Kep houses and between other local guildhalls. They are expected to take the long view and do what's best for the Maa-Kep, their devotion to it second only to the Judges and far beyond any selfish interest.

Finally, artisans are trusted to learn the cipher that conceals the contents of records in the Unread Library. Keeping notes on how these ancient records can be decoded is officially forbidden but, given the vicissitudes of mummy



memory, almost every artisan has some sort of cryptic cheat sheet of reminders.

Initiation: Becoming an artisan isn't easy, as one must be nominated by a chapter master and any other master or artisan can try to veto the proposal. This sort of immaculate political reputation may sound impossible to maintain, but the loophole is this: Any slumbering Arisen is presumed to accept the nomination. So to qualify as an artisan, all one *really* has to do is get the master on board, and then wait until one's rivals are all interred.

The initiation ritual is held before as many awake mummies of the local guild who can attend, and the artisan who holds the candidate's gold chisel is summoned (if not already awake). If the gold chisel has somehow been lost or stolen, another is crafted, but it's considered a terrible omen if the chisel cannot be recovered. Some masters won't even consider promoting a journeyman whose chisel was destroyed. After a lengthy recitation of the new artisan's fine qualities, he lies flat upon a wooden surface, and the master drives the gold chisel through the palm of the artisan's right hand. (This inflicts a point of aggravated damage, even though it would only be lethal in the normal course of events.) The chisel is then given the artisan to keep forever.

MASTER

Becoming master—the unquestioned highest authority of a Maa-Kep guildhall—is not easy. To be master, one must be considered to have devotion to the guild equal to the bonds owed his Judge. A master can remove himself from office through voluntary retirement, in which case he retains his master's chisel and the “master” title while still having only the authority and responsibilities of an artisan. Alternately, if more than half of the *total* membership of a Hall demand resignation at the same time (members *period*, not members awake), then the master stakes his chisel during his hearing. If he loses his case, his chisel is broken and his name is excised from documents and records, with a title inserted instead. In a few hundred years, few Arisen outside the Maa-Kep will know or even care that the artisan was once far more powerful, but rivals within the guild can have inconveniently long memories for insults...

Note well that the requirements of awake participation mean that changing masters is terribly difficult outside of

New Merit: Fixed Journeyman (••)

The Fixed Journeyman Merit can only be purchased at character generation, and it implies an interesting history to the character. While it only costs two Merit dots, it works *exactly* like Guild Status (Maa-Kep) •••. The only difference is that the character's status can *never* rise.

This Merit means that the Status •• Maa-Kep *used* to be an artisan. Maybe she was even one of the few masters who was removed from office. So, although the character now enjoys the prestige and access of a Maa-Kep with Status •••, it implies disgrace, misfortune, and powerful enemies... perhaps enemies entirely forgotten.

Sothic Turns; which means that mass awakenings, like the one just now starting, tend to be times of great volatility in Maa-Kep politics.

Initiation: As an artisan, a mummy holds on to his own golden chisel. For the rite of mastery, he presents it to a prominent artisan of his choosing in front of the entire Hall. Failure to attend a master's initiation is a dire matter. Not every guild member has to be there, but inability to attend is a mark of bad fortune. Having a more urgent mission is an acceptable excuse, though one likely to be greeted with skepticism. As for refusal... well, that's a bold political move, and probably foolhardy.

The new master makes a pronouncement accepting the election, and then has his chisel hammered through the fontanelle of his skull into his brain. This injury, inflicted during this rite, *immediately* ends the master's Descent. He is returned to his tomb, gold spike still in the crown of his skull, and left there.

If the Judges accept the new master, he returns the next night, at the height of his powers, with his golden chisel transformed into a gem inscribed with his name or cartouche. Every master's chisel is a relic amulet, infused with powers the Judges felt necessary for that master's personality and situation.



CHAPTER TWO

FIRES OF GOLD

FIRES OF BRONZE

There is only one real sin, and that is to persuade oneself that second best is anything but second best.
— Doris Lessing

Alchemy is no place for lies. It apprehends the divine essence beyond all masks.

Yet, some masks are beautiful. They should be taken, appreciated, and traded for power.

When an Arisen is Born of Gold, he sees the world in flows of *Dedwen*, the guild's term for inherent value. Beauty, material strength, and even human skill all manifest *Dedwen*, carrying it from one phenomenon to the next. When fools ignore the chain of causes, they believe they “create” value instead of transforming it into some form that their limited perspectives can comprehend. A superior soul recognizes invisible value, harvests it, and gives it a recognizable mask. He can't conjure it from nothing, but if he spies *Dedwen* in veins of ore, in the callused hands of a master craftsman, or in the blood of a slave, he deserves his prize.

He cannot make; he can only take, concentrate and reshape. This may be the only thing that separates alchemists from thieves, but it is a gulf as wide as starry A'aru and formidable as a river of molten bronze. His skill is the basis of all authority and righteousness. He earns the world for his Judges so that they might give him a world to come clad in golden glory.

THE ALCHEMISTS' WAY

Alchemists inherited the craft that produces advanced civilization. They selected the stones of Irem's pillars, smelted the bronze for its spearheads and cut gems to decorate its nobles' coronets. Raising power from the world's bones, they learned that power's true nature, hidden behind the forms stamped by craftsmen: *Dedwen*, channeled by artisanal discipline. All Mesen-Nebu philosophy grows out of the insight that power is a finite commodity for creative wills to gather and transmute. In Irem, the Shan'iatu used this secret to transmute riverside tribes into a Name-

less Empire. The sorcerer-priests studied *Dedwen* deeply, following it to its dark roots in other worlds, where the true gods dwelled. They established a divine right no successor could ever match.

The Empire never fell. To those schooled in the secrets of alchemy, it merely transformed, concentrating power in the Arisen, mystic vessels, and occult phenomena that ripple across the earth. Some vessels were crafted past Irem's vanishing, and young ghosts howl in foreign tongues, but they all partake of the eldest, primal channel, opened by the Shan'iatu. The true civilization lives—it just needs to be reclaimed. The Arisen's mission is a Great Work of alchemy that transmutes false cultures into vassals of the true, progenitor civilization.

EVERYTHING TO THE DESERVING, NOTHING WITHOUT EFFORT

After Irem vanished, alchemists believed that their art could turn lead into gold through science and mysticism, or that it was an allegory for self-cultivation, where the “gold” represented enlightenment. These notions were but fragments of alchemy's true scope. Alchemy is *payment*.

The secret patterns of the universe reveal an infinite marketplace: a Subtle Bazaar offering anything to those willing to pay the price. Mining buys gold from the earth with toil. Gold buys weapons. Weapons purchase slaves with violence and the slaves mine again. Payment transmutes *Dedwen*, the primal force of value, into forms an alchemist uses to seize her desires. Converting lead into gold and spiritual comfort are both possible, but aren't the whole story. Focusing on metal, stone and souls creates a limited perspective, beneath the ambitions of the original Art. Iremite alchemy turns slaves into lords and mystic words into bound ghosts. It's all a matter of finding one's way in the Subtle Bazaar, and making the most advanta-

Aren't Alchemists Bastards?

As members of a proud, ruthless tradition, alchemists are easy to pigeonhole as totally unsympathetic, exploitative aristocrats. That's intentional. They entered Arisen existence under the heel of tyrants, and have only just begun to reclaim a part of themselves that defies their monstrous natures. Sometimes, they really are bastards.

Mesen-Nebu want to be rich princes and dominate the best and brightest, but they don't believe they have any *right* to rule that isn't conferred by knowledge and ambition. They believe in the Judges' innate supremacy, but beyond that, beings rise and fall via actions, not privileges. They don't even think the Shan'iatu were blessed—only that they were *brilliant* in a way all beings should aspire to be.

For a kinder angle, emphasize the alchemists' pragmatism and meritocratic beliefs. They despise failure, but reward accomplishments other Arisen overlook. If a mortal rises above adversity to serve his cult, his master seats him at her right hand. When fellow Arisen save her from danger, she quietly curses her weakness—and repays the debt in full.

geous deal. Social class, ethnic background, gender and sexuality are irrelevant factors. Ingenuity is all.

Anyone can transmute Dedwen through the Subtle Bazaar, but they must bring it as both payment and the object to be transmuted. The Bazaar's gates are open to any being: mortal, god, Arisen . . . or other. Few mortals possess the awareness and self-discipline to understand that they have anything to offer—and this is entirely their fault. Everyone possesses the Dedwen of their own brute labor and a certain capacity to learn. Those who harness it to attain wealth deserve it—and so do those who harness *other peoples'* assets with threats, politics or force of ownership. Disciplined beings deserve all the power they can seize if they awaken their potential and fearlessly transform it into skill the creativity they need to win.

NO INHERITANCE BUT A'ARU

As true gods, the Judges of Duat regulate Dedwen as Sekhem: the life force from which all power proceeds. In the allegory of the Subtle Bazaar, they're the market's guardians, preserving it from theft and fraud. They balance the mystic economy with ruthless infallibility. The Nameless Empire was their first and only mortal institution, bound to directives sent from the afterlife.

With perfect justice, the gods of Irem commanded Arisen servants to regulate living Dedwen, returning stray shards of power to the gods. Perfect justice binds the Judges of Duat to pay loyal servants the supreme reward: an eventual afterlife in A'aru, Azar's celestial dominion. A'aru is as pleasurable as Duat was tortuous. A'aru's value far exceeds the price of service, making it the only true gift one of the Mesen-Nebu can hope for.

A'aru will only come once the Great Work has been completed. For now, alchemists must indulge themselves with worldly wealth and the supernatural vessels their Judges allow them to retain. Indulgence doesn't lead to complacency, because mere ownership is meaningless. Fixed Dedwen serves no particular purpose. Even transmuting it to satisfy base pleasure is preferable to owning a gloomy hoard. If an alchemist only contemplates his riches, he loses the right to own them. They become decor, not concentrations of power. A Mesen-Nebu regards Dedwen as a river that must flow until the world's end. He confirms his right to wealth and mastery by seeking more, proving his power isn't mere adornment, but a reflection of his inner self. If he falters in this mission, his guild may censure or demote him. On every Arising, it expects him to affirm his strength through action.

EXCELLENCE IS THE GATE OF PROSPERITY

In Irem, the Mesen-Nebu built their House of Gold and Bronze with a gate that demonstrated the highest metalcraft despite its rude, rough shape. Passers-by saw crooked bars of bronze soldered onto a frame of pyropus (**Mummy: The Curse**, p. 224)—one for every living member of the guild. On either side of the gate beyond the outer wall, slaves maintained smelting fires, tools and piles of raw ore. Anyone could enter the House of Gold and Bronze by taking the materials at hand, refining bronze from tin and copper ore, and soldering it to the gate. If the candidate succeeded, he was deemed fit to undergo further trials, and perhaps enter the guild. It didn't matter if you were the Pharaoh's cousin or his slave, a general or maimed prisoner of war. If you added a bar to the gate, you entered the guild's house to become an apprentice if you passed the final trials. If you failed then, the guild tore your bar from the gate, and fashioned it into a collar. You became a slave, but a wealthy one: a member of the guild's elite servant corps.

The guild still considers itself to be a strict meritocracy. Competence is a form of subtle Dedwen, and those who demonstrate it by earning wisdom, wealth and influence rise to high station. Mesen-Nebu teach these values to their cults, urging members to acquire skill and influence themselves, instead of riding on privilege alone. Some sift through poor and oppressed communities to find individuals of uncommon talent; others recruit prodigies from schools and corporations.

The Subtle Bazaar

The Subtle Bazaar appears in later Mesen-Nebu writings as an allegory for the concept that anyone can transmute Dedwen. An alchemist needs to control enough power to trade for her desires, and must understand the process of exchange. This is not a supernatural ability, nor does it require divine permission or any other magical privilege. If she makes the right bargain, she can earn all of these, transforming creative will into mystical might. A superficial observer might see a stolen papyrus, a payment in gold and a blood sacrifice, but it's all alchemy. It changed one power into another.

The Shan'iatu proved that human beings could completely master their own power, and lesser sorcerers demonstrate how educated efforts might shift Dedwen into miraculous forms. They struck "good bargains" in the Subtle Bazaar. Alchemists point to Irem's mining slaves as people who made "bad bargains." They used the Dedwen locked in their labor to "purchase" gold from the earth, and spent it to "purchase" food and mercy from their overseers. They could have risen up, but they didn't. They lacked the bravery to command their own power, and that's why they deserved to be slaves—not because of Irem's divine right or the notion that overseers belonged to a superior tribe. Only the gods walk with inborn divine power. Azar and the Judges of Duat regulate Sekhem: the purest known form of Dedwen.

After the 10th Century, some Mesen-Nebu mystics write of the Bazaar as a literal place, hidden in the desert, where skilled souls can bargain for true love, magical gifts, or deep occult secrets. The writings say desert *jinn* manage such transactions, demanding fees as strange as the goods and services to be had. Of course, when someone allows another being to transmute power for her, she won't get a good bargain. Customers end up with poisoned gold, mad lovers and the thrones of rebellious kingdoms.

Alchemists don't disdain privilege, but challenge the privileged to prove they can hold on to what fate generously gave them. They weed out decadence, keeping only those "princes" who listened at their father's feet and know how to manage their property. As Irem's Mesen-Nebu prepared their children for the trials of apprenticeship, modern elites may do the same for their own scions. Thus, alchemists' cults tend to recruit from privileged backgrounds anyway—and though they may not admit as much, they

know that a rich, connected dolt can still be of use. When individuals don't deserve their wealth, Mesen-Nebu take it. That makes it justice, not theft.


Yet Mesen-Nebu reward skilled engineers, financiers and artisans in proportion to their abilities, even if they entered service with rags, loyalty and determination. The guild selects Sadikh from these elite mortal allies. Some of them understand the Art to such a degree that in another age, the guild would induct them into their ranks. Innovators and rare prodigies from other useful fields also join the Mesen-Nebu's Sadikh, and their masters give them the resources and time they need to perform at the pinnacle of their disciplines.

THE ESSENCE ATTAINS GREATEST POWER AT ITS MOST MYSTERIOUS

Mesen-Nebu know that Dedwen is real. Beautiful things, masterful speeches and expressions of sublime skill stir the heart, expressing a single power behind manifold appearances. Alchemists long imagined that Dedwen's shapes fall into a hierarchy, from base matter to noble, occult forces. This concept survived millennia, in stories of dross transforming to gold or drunken hermits growing into immortal sages. Compared to its successors, Iremite alchemy is a vast field encompassing matter, energy, psychology, politics, economics and esthetics—and beyond, to truths buried in the black otherworld of Duat, howled by the choirs of demons and their ruling Judges.

The guild's masters compile lists of manifestations, purporting to rank their place on the cosmic ladder, but no two hierarchies agree. Nevertheless, Mesen-Nebu believe in rough categories of Dedwen. At the bottom, raw matter and energy produce the sands, rivers and rough stones of the world. Given the spark of Sekhem, they transmute into the lowest forms of life: a category the ancients identified with vermin, but educated, modern alchemists interpret as simple microorganisms. Human will may also combine with base material, producing pure metals, alloys and the other refined gifts of the earth, all of which Mesen-Nebu believe represent higher forms. Tools and complex life further ascend the ladder of being, as do precious metals and gems which possess innate beauty and thus, power.

At some point, tools and sophisticated life produce humanity: an animal with the power to contemplate its own worth. Men and women aspire to more than survival. They develop the skills to conquer their world, concentrating Dedwen within their souls to become better hunters, craftsmen and lords. They develop grand metaphysical schemes that beg the question of some fundamental power. Along the way, mad dreams inspire art and science. They climb these runs on Dedwen's ladder in search of universal virtue and find . . .



The Banebdjed

Some alchemists use the image of Azar's (Osiris') spine to describe the hierarchy of Dedwen. This is the *banebdjed*: the "pillar of the divine ba," incarnate as a ram-headed god, the sacred pillars of Irem, or the Nile itself. The banebdjed contains the hierarchy of alchemical transmutations. At its base, low material forms of Dedwen languish until Sekhem and will transmutes them. It is sometimes said that like the waters of the Nile, occult processes flood and fertilize earth, base metals and lower organisms, concentrating them into more beautiful, useful forms.

Mesen-Nebu rituals often invoke the forms of the banebdjed in ways that might be comparable to the Cabalistic Tree of Life and other symbols of the *axis mundi* – even the Christian cross. Unlike those patterns, the banebdjed's "stations" do not invoke angels or Hermetic intelligences, but the Judges of Duat, to whom the alchemist must bow and give appropriate sacrifice if she is to transmute dross to gold, or cult efforts to temporal power. Alchemists especially prize regia that resemble these holy forms, such as the Minor Djed listed on page 225 of **Mummy: The Curse**, as they are believed to be particularly auspicious for ritual purposes.

... the Mesen-Nebu don't know. But magical Sekhem is close—*so close*—and exalted above all other forms, even as it imposes a paradox. Sekhem is shapeless, but known through the shapes its spells carve into the world. It represents the pinnacle of being but is the essential life force, present in the most primitive organisms.

WILL PURIFIES SEKHEM

As far as the Mesen-Nebu know, Sekhem is the only imperishable power. It radiates into Pillars, concentrates in vessels and can be formed into earthshaking Utterances, but it always returns to its primal state. Arisen reclaim the Sekhem they expend during the Descent, but other beings possess a fraction of their life force, as the rest bleeds out through their breathing days. Then they die, and their lost power flows into other beings. This is the mystical root of ecology: natural alchemy.

Nevertheless, Sekhem is not the ultimate expression of value, of Dedwen. Intelligence and desire possess the power to rule Sekhem by choosing its transformations. The Shan'iatu accomplished this by creating the Arisen and the other wonders of their occult empire. Despite their imper-

fect knowledge, mortal sorcerers wield a fragment of this ability. Sekhem without will turns the blind wheel of nature. Without Sekhem, even the most dedicated wills may only produce impotent dreams. Desire requires energy. The purest power in the cosmos must result from some marriage between the two, officiated by the highest mystical knowledge.

Mesen-Nebu believe the sorcerers or Irem deserved to rule because they understood this ultimate truth. They were not gods, and anyone who beheld primal Dedwen as they do could attain the same power, and claim a seat at the senate of a renewed Nameless Empire, but that is not the will of Duat. The Shan'iatu were not gods, but obeyed them. They abased themselves before Azar, and honored the Judges of life and death. If even Irem's rulers bent the knee, their Arisen successors should do the same, and the Judges have whispered to the Mesen-Nebu that their mission to claim vessels and obey other, cryptic orders take precedence over conquest.



On the other hand, the Judges do not *forbid* it.

Those Born of Gold taste the apex of power when they arise, and know that like tombs beneath the sand, their Utterances are one exposed corner of a greater revelation—not enough to equal the Shan'iatu, but more than sufficient to justify an approach to cults that is part teacher, part overlord. Any being could master alchemy and claim, as they do, to sit two steps below the dais of the gods—just beneath the ones who created them. (The less idealistic whisper that it is quite *convenient* that no alchemist will admit to ever meeting a mortal "equal.") In their ignorance, their blindness to Sekhem, mortals deserve to be ruled.

Why don't Mesen-Nebu overthrow their inferiors, replacing presidents with immortal kings? Rumor and warped Memory whisper that in previous Cycles they actually did so, but lost their thrones to Descent, wars with rival Arisen, and other, obscure misfortunes, attributed to unknown magical forces. No irrefutable traces of their works survive. Given this record of failure, the power of mass communication to coordinate rebellion, and the fact that the Judges just don't seem to care about who rules the Earth, alchemists restrict themselves to the small dominions of cults and mortal pawns.

EXCELLENCE IS THE COIN OF HEAVEN

Mesen-Nebu do not just identify the ultimate, pure form of Dedwen with sorcery. They see will and Sekhem conjoined all around them, in the unity of an expertly conducted orchestra, the brushstrokes of Renaissance masters, and the powerful, efficient movements of Olympic athletes. Athletes, artists, intellectuals and scientists harness their personal, fleeting Sekhem into acts of brilliance and beauty. Only sorcerers and a few especially insightful (and often mad) individuals understand that these acts represent transmutations of life force, and sublime expressions of Dedwen.



Arisen cultivate excellent action in themselves and expect it in their closest mortal servants. Skill is but a shadow of sorcery, but worthwhile all the same. Slaves flee, gold can be spent and vessels stolen, but skill remains constant—only laziness and death can take it. Ability is a higher form of Dedwen than material wealth, and is the gate to true mastery of sorcery. The Shan'iatu weren't just weavers of spells but engineers, tillers of soil, and heroes who sang metal from the earth.

Sometimes, Dedwen concentrates in certain individuals with special talents. Untutored women demonstrate mathematical genius or perfect pitch. Handsome men inspire jealousy and adoration, and “outsider artists” move witnesses with naive paintings. Mesen-Nebu accept natural talent as part of the mystery of Dedwen, and don't consider it a challenge to their meritocratic notions. Dedwen is an infinitely flexible commodity. When an alchemist does not possess the talents of a prodigy, she should bring them under dominion as a cultist or other catspaw. Their virtues become hers.

LEARN THE VALUES OF THE AGE

Like living things, excellence and wealth stumble through growing pains but when properly exercised, enjoy a long, muscular prime. These manifestations of Dedwen share the mortality of the truly alive, too. Skills grow irrelevant, and coins lose value when the kings on their faces fall. Those Born of Gold arise to worn monuments and tarnished treasure prepared to regenerate them, making them as powerful and vital as the reawakened Deathless.

That means they need to get to work as soon as they shake off the first blurry, mad moments of Arising. Alchemists study the world intensively, concentrating on economic, technological and political factors. Few Arisen would ignore the time they're thrust into, but Those Born of Gold distinguish themselves by looking for the levers of power in any new society, and transforming themselves into individuals wise enough to pull them. The guild's emphasis on personal accomplishment—and its punishments for backsliding—drive them forward, eager to master novel skills. They believe power belongs to the deserving. If their servants hold the upper hand in navigating the modern era, it implies that they are servants no longer. That can't be allowed to happen.

Since Mesen-Nebu cults recruit the most accomplished individuals they can attract, a competent alchemist should find herself surrounded by the necessary teachers, though instruction itself is a delicate matter. No Arisen wants to look vulnerable in front of her cult, and alchemists have been taught to always rest uneasily on their thrones, even against mortal challengers.

Beauty Entombed

Because their theory of mystical power extends beyond Sekhem, the most doctrinaire alchemists try to send subtler forms to the Judges of Duat. They offer beautiful art and exceptional mortals to their gods in an ancient tradition that recalls kings who had regalia and slaves buried with them. Mesen-Nebu acquire rare paintings and even kidnap creative mortals as offerings, but if the Judges appreciate these gestures, they do so quietly—these sacrifices have no supernatural effects.

Mesen-Nebu believe that the process should be little different from sacrificing a vessel to the Judges. Like all Arisen, Those Born of Gold instinctively understand how to send a vessel's power to Duat. Although they have studied the process intensively, they cannot yet modify the operation to transmit the elusive energies of art, beauty and excellence. This doesn't stop them from trying however. Their occult theories believe it should work, and their guild's ethos prevents them from giving up.

It is said that a few Asen-ranked members of the guild have discovered the secret of sublime sacrifice, and the Judges reward them when they send artful things and people through locked caskets, ritual pyres, or whatever else the true rite requires.



BRONZE IN SWEAT, GOLD IN BLOOD

In any era, hard labor generates the seeds of value, but workers rarely cultivate them into true power. Overseers, traders, priests, kings and now, CEOs harness power from the earth, concentrating it into engines of personal ascension. Yet it is part of the nature of this process to deny it; masters either grow prideful enough to believe in their independence, or cautious enough to obscure the path that turns rough rock into golden crowns. As a culture matures, this blindness becomes a tradition that only violent revolution can cure—and that's good for the people, but bad for business. Fortunately, once the masters of a culture ease into the notion that they create wealth instead of yoke it to their desires, it helps aspiring alchemists slip in to take what others manage so poorly. And in the process of taking a cut, alchemists make the hard decisions necessary to delay workers' rebellions. This keeps Mesen-Nebu rich and preserves the illusion that the executive class is actually in charge.

The guild teaches members that upon arising, they should investigate the supply chain of wealthy organizations right down to the roots, where workers harvest materials to pro-

cess. Since the days they supervised mine slaves, alchemists have always possessed a superior appreciation for the foundations of industry—but not its workers. Yet unlike traditional kings and capitalists, they hold no illusions about their place. Miners, tillers of the soil and modern factory workers *could* manage their own trades and shrug off their masters. They don't need management, but merely deserve it for being too weak-willed to stand up for themselves. Alchemists pluck would-be leaders from the working class to serve them, or eliminate them out of self-interest.

Thus, Mesen-Nebu master the supply chain out from under mortals who believe they control wealth. They find hidden efficiencies, implement them and take a cut of the profits. To avoid what they inflict on their marks, Mesen-Nebu either invest these earnings “close to the earth,” in natural resources, or hunt for things which the current society chronically undervalues. And they create stability by knowing the truth behind wealth, but preserving the lie.

PROFIT FROM THE ILLUSIONS OF A NATION

Those Born of Gold treat cultural alienation as a virtue. Though civilizations confound them with varied innovations and heresies, they also lay open their biases to anyone looking in from the outside. In the age of the global village

they are often the *only* true outsiders. Even if other immortals exist, they would have fallen prey to centuries of accumulated civilization. Arisen offer a truly fresh perspective. They aren't invested in any of the social conventions rulers use to gain consent from the ruled and despite Memory's ever-fading touch, they know what the whole structure of culture depends on – they helped build it, back in the days of Irem. Furthermore, they explore the repercussions of their actions on time scales that mortals may describe, but can't intuitively comprehend.

Mesen-Nebu dig up opportunities in the madness that causes civilizations to pay a dear price for trifles and ignore what they truly need. In the 17th century they might have bet against the Dutch tulip craze; in the 20th, they would have shorted dot-com stock. They would have bought oil, precious metal and rare earth elements. Now, the Asen, masters of the guild, advise their protégés to study the economic consequences of a visibly sickened environment. Fossil fuels will trend upward as mortals employ more desperate measures to harvest them. Long shot investments in alternative energy show promise, but if the situation is dire enough, social collapse may make it impossible to profit from them. A billion sweating survivors are unlikely to respect the intellectual property rights of innovators.





SPEND AS MUCH AS NECESSARY

Mesen-Nebu are wealth-conscious but not miserly. Money is the most successful form of alchemy the mortal world has ever known. Through it, ordinary people manipulate Dedwen with greater ability than the guild could have imagined, turning paper and coded motes of electricity into food, shelter and weapons of horrifying ingenuity. The ability to transmute Dedwen to serve one's will is the only true measure of power, and as the Descent steals their Sekhem, Mesen-Nebu race to not only accumulate wealth, but use it to demonstrate their worth. There's no such thing as an ostentatious display of power. If it displays power, that's the *point*.

Alchemists spend money on the finer things in life, but not so much that it would interfere with their objectives. Still, it's important to say to the world that you're not afraid of your own power, especially in front of your cult. Mesen-Nebu cults keep gilt, bejeweled ritual regalia as a matter of course. But no intelligent alchemist would let pageantry interfere with the duties conferred by his guild and ruling Judge. If she must spend every ounce of gold to seize a vessel, she will. If ten cultists wander to their death in an enemy tomb, the eleventh justifies their sacrifice by finding the treasure in its heart.

YOU CAN'T STEAL FROM YOUR OWN TOMB

Neither frugal nor wasteful, the Mesen-Nebu ethos implies confidence. An alchemist isn't afraid of expending his power on a worthy goal. His personal excellence endures. He should be able to build an imperial fortune out of a sliver of gold, creativity and will.

Once he gathers intelligence and formulates a plan, he should devote all necessary resources until he achieves his objectives or his actions reveal some flaw in the scheme. If the latter, he retreats, reformulates and attacks again. It's the alchemists' way. If he obeys this method, he can never truly waste his power. He wins or learns. And as they enjoy displays of power, quests for vessels and maneuvers against enemies succeed or fail in spectacular form. Well-armed cult commandos storm enemy tombs, and their masters massacre boardrooms to advance

Truth be told, alchemists would rather enjoy victory than benefit from the "achievement" of learning through error. Fortunately, the guild values members who admit their mistakes as long as they gather intelligence from the result. Where they fail, other Mesen-Nebu may prosper.

THEFT IS PROPERTY

Guild culture discourages expressions of self-doubt or caution. Those Born of Gold must dress and act the part, or else they tell the world that they're not worthy of their achievements – and when they don't deserve their power, someone *else* does.

So Mesen-Nebu indulge an ambivalent attitude toward theft. They believe power belongs to the deserving, not people who happen to grasp or embody one of its varied forms. This truth lies embedded in the Arisen's basic mission. They don't care about the property rights of a vessel's would-be owners. They act on behalf of the Judges and their greater claim. So it is with all Dedwen. Workers relieve themselves of the right to profit when they accept lords and managers, and even Arisen relinquish their rights when they exercise them unskillfully.

Alchemists don't steal from other mummies all the time—just when a victim has failed so thoroughly that a bystander might quietly approve of these forceful redistributions. This principle applies to fellow members of the guild, but Mesen-Nebu don't seize their comrades' property by force or stealth. They ask someone senior to both themselves and their intended victim for approval. The elder sets a specific fine, such as a vessel or cult holdings, and leaves the "thief" to take it. Other alchemists aren't allowed to intervene either way. If the "failure" successfully protects the property she's proven it was hers all along. Either way, the disputed resource finds its way into worthy hands.

STRUCTURE

Part aristocrat, part entrepreneur, Mesen-Nebu claim noble privilege on the basis of excellence, not birth. Even at the lowest Memory, they recall demanding initiations. Allegorical dreams and fragmented visions reveal their toil. They mastered secret formulae and teased metal from the impure earth, confirming their right to be reborn in the House of Gold and Bronze. If their parents belonged to the guild they remember being welcomed again, acknowledged as true sons and daughters. They might even remember how when siblings failed, their parent-masters wept, but sent them to the slave pens nonetheless.

Dedwen is many things: gold, bronze, beauty, skill—but it isn't compassion. The Mesen-Nebu seem ruthless because they observe the world without the customary veil of sentiment. For every son sent to the slaves, a slave entered their halls by reciting the secret of bronze. Gender, age, sexuality and initial social class dissolve before the power of individual skill.

Arisen demonstrated their worth by being selected by the Shan'iatu and returned by the Judges of Duat. They deserve mortal worship, but not guild accolades. Not yet. They must pass its tests: tests that never stop. Ideally, Mesen-Nebu elders attain their station because they bent more Dedwen to their will than lesser members. They're the richest, the greatest artisans, or the most brilliant alchemists—preferably all three, in fact.



When We Speak of Missions

Descent, the Judges' doctrines and the links sorcery forged between them make Arisen highly goal-oriented creatures. Despite their immortality, they possess a limited time in which to understand their era, locate vessels and fulfill their instinctual missions. Mesen-Nebu doctrine pushes an even more powerful focus on structured goals.

To the Born of Gold, simply obeying their natures as carrot and stick inducements represents a minimum effort, hardly worthy of merit. The guild expects better. Besides, extra effort secretly pleases the Judges—or at the very least, comrades in the guild who ceaselessly judge each other's accomplishments. Most Mesen-Nebu develop at least one goal-oriented scheme beyond the basics. If nothing else, they develop a political and economic agenda to satisfy the guild's focus on wealth.

Alchemists with a basic degree of Memory (3 or better) know this well enough to start plotting the moment they arise to coherent thought. The guild's ethos lays out a general plan, and its structure decides who they can lean on for help. Between guild culture and basic Arisen demands, alchemists are very, very busy.

Smart alchemists delegate and systematize as much of their labor as possible. In the current age, many flock to information technology and modern management techniques. Those Born of Gold understand the ethos of capitalist management well. They already know that they should reward achievement and punish failure, but the modern culture not only provides ways to specify criteria for both, but embeds them in enough administration that no cultist or unknowing flunky can fully understand how their performance gets reviewed. This generates motivation through paranoia—a less time consuming tool than the physical punishments of old.

MENTORSHIP

Mesen-Nebu know that Arisen cults, duties, and the vagaries of Memory make it difficult for Arisen to seek perfection by themselves. Thus, an alchemist bonds with one superior and one inferior within the guild—though in the case of Copper members, his inferior is an exceptional mortal cultist.

The superior partner in the relationship is supposed to drive her charge to excel at tasks related to guild business, but not so much that the junior partner grows to rely on

her for motivation. She provides suggestions not direct help: where to learn new skills or how to squeeze an informant for information about a regium.

The superior's second duty is to determine when her charge fails to adhere to guild ideals. She reports his failings to Gold-ranked Arisen, berates him for hiding in his tomb, and may even confiscate resources to return when he proves himself worthy. The guild frowns upon it, but some Mesen-Nebu enjoy sticking it to their “protégés,” even to the point of seizing their valuables. Alchemists do *not* approve of this form of theft, which demonstrates laziness and cannibalizes the guild's strength.

DEGREES

Based on the fragmented recollections of members and cult traditions, the Mesen-Nebu maintain a pecking order based on the metals the Iremite guild trusted initiates of a certain rank to work. Demonstrating skill on some masterwork isn't enough, however. An alchemist must continuously act her rank. According to the guild, Dedwen manifests everywhere, but truly belongs to those who can shape and concentrate it beneath their will. An alchemist must demonstrate her craft constantly, confirming her right to the world's wealth. If she fails to do so, her inspiration must be waning, and her rank might get revoked.

HEMT: THE RANK OF COPPER (STATUS -)

As the most junior rank, Hemt (Copper) belongs to all initiates of the guild, as a minimum honor that only traitors and apostates can lose. This rank requires no special accomplishments beyond basic membership in the guild, and is conferred as soon as an alchemist demonstrates the Divine Flesh Affinity.

Senior Mesen-Nebu enjoy demonstrating their power, but draw the line at abusing Hemt. In any event, Copper alchemists deserve honor for entering the House of Gold and Bronze at all. Mesen-Nebu only denigrate comrades who fall to Hemt from higher stations, and only if they continue to betray their full potential. Alchemists pity the ignorant, but hate the lazy.

Guild tradition holds that junior alchemists were given the tedious, painstaking task of crushing, sifting and burning copper out of raw ore. Although they were expected to know how to do it by hand, industrial scale refinement required slave labor. A Hemt alchemist learned to assert his superiority before the unruly prisoners of war and heretics under his command.

At Copper rank, the Mesen-Nebu also studied the Dedwen of human worth. Working with slaves, he was in the best position to identify those with exceptional qualities. He recommended the most intelligent for initiation, the most beautiful for household service, and certain strong or omentouched individuals for the guild's secret experiments.



In subsequent cycles, Hemt Arisen extend these duties to the front line study of material wealth and human potential. Superiors expect them to uncover new loci of economic power and prepare briefings that allow elder mummies to comprehend their nature. In the current Cycle, many Copper alchemists study information technology and the globalized labor force, but the guild's ancient biases also direct them toward chemistry and new materials. They explore the Dedwen of aerogel, carbon fiber and semiconductors.

Hemt Arisen recruit and indoctrinate cultists for their superiors. The guild views cults as more than collections of warm bodies taught to bark forth rites and fetch conveniences. The ideal cultist comes to the Arisen to explore her potential through channels that would normally be unavailable. Gender, poverty or locale prevents her from excelling, so the cult eliminates those barriers. If she dabbles, but refuses the opportunities given her, the alchemist must dispose of her.

HESMEN: THE RANK OF BRONZE (STATUS -- TO ---)

Hesmen are guild journeymen, trusted to pursue their immortal duties without the hindrance of workaday, Copper concerns. They can't ignore economic or human factors completely, but trust the guild to mind these things while they pursue vessels and deal with supernatural threats.

If an alchemist serves the guild well, she qualifies for Bronze rank, but she can only earn it if she acquires a regium earned through her own efforts. If such a vessel lies within her tomb, she may claim Hesmen status on a provisional basis, so long as she won the vessel through some past exploit, and didn't just inherit it from the Shan'iatu.

Of course, the definition of "reasonable amount of time" varies from one immortal to the next, and much as they would deny it, this is a situation where the subjective morass of personal relationships stains the guild's meritocratic ideals. Only a master alchemist may strip rank from others, so much depends on how a particular Hesmen gets along with his superior. Generally speaking, if a Hesmen spends an excessive amount of time on Copper-level tasks and tardily responds to the appearance of a vessel, he can expect a warning before facing a hearing on Guild Status.

A Bronze alchemist's outward focus includes developing relationships with the other guilds. Mesen-Nebu believe that in the time of the Empire, the masters sent Hesmen to negotiate with the other craft-houses and barter over both the price of raw materials, and the well-made crafts they might expect in payment. Their modern counterparts fill much the same role, except that the focus has shifted from creation to recovery. A Mesen-Nebu of any rank may ally with Arisen from other guilds, but the Bronze may do so without fear of abandoning petty duties.

As masters of metal and jewels, Irem's alchemists pioneered the idea of precious currency in an age when commoners only valued what could help them eat or kill. The Born of Gold released a sliver of the secret of Dedwen, initiating everyone into the idea of abstract wealth. Bronze-ranked alchemists controlled the flow of precious materials used for this purpose, releasing enough metal and gems to circulate, but not so much that inflation would destroy the guild's economic base.

In the current age, Hesmen study the economic information given them by Copper-ranked alchemists and manage material investments to enrich themselves, their cults and their superiors. Most pay the Hemt who provided the necessary information too, but some believe the Copper ones should "stay hungry," motivating them to win their own wealth.

ASEM: THE RANK OF WHITE GOLD


(STATUS TO)

The guild says its members were born of gold: divine flesh. Its masters could not only purify the metal, but change its nature. Mesen-Nebu commemorate this power by calling their masters Asem, after the word for electrum—the "white gold" ancients valued above normal gold. The Nile Valley had always been blessed with gold, but silver—the other component of the alloy—was much less common. Irem's slaves mined a few naturally occurring deposits of silver and electrum, but the Empire won most of it through conquest. The Asem earned their title by learning how to meld foreign silver with native gold, creating a metal to stand for Irem's imperial ambitions.

Innovation, high ambition, and mystical symbolism still capture the attention of master alchemists. Responsible for the long term health of the guild, they preserve its history against the failings of Memory. Asem record the deeds of other Mesen-Nebu on the walls of their tombs, and chronicle guild triumphs on stele and golden disks. Mesen-Nebu are no scribes, however, and write as they were taught to during the Nameless Empire. Their texts mix alchemical symbols, pious propaganda, and visions of what *should* have happened along with genuine facts. Deciphering them is an art itself. Asem will often draw an alchemical riddle from these writings to test whether a subordinate is worthy to learn new Utterances.

Asem study the mystical underpinnings of the Arisen's great mission, viewed through the alchemy of the soul. They believe the Judges drive them to greatness, challenging them as they themselves would press subordinates to excel. The ancient Shan'iatu were exemplars of occult potential, believed to be human beings who earned their supreme station. Asen believe the Arisen, and Mesen-Nebu in particular, should become their successors. In the lost years after the





fall of Irem, the sorcerer-priests' Dedwen scattered across the earth, falling into unworthy hands. Once it has been returned to the Judges, they will reward alchemists in the next world. But in the lands of life, worth springs from concrete sources: mines, factories, corporations and parliaments. Alchemy relies on mystical sympathy; to earn mansions in the next world, Asem build them in this one.

Like Hesmet, Asem cannot rely on reputation alone, but must prove their right by crafting a talisman and demonstrating its use before at least one other Gold-ranked Arisen. Once he fulfills these requirements, other masters of the guild treat him as an equal—but he must continually prove his worth by accumulating Dedwen for the guild in the form of wealth, political power, and mystical vessels.

TRANSMUTATIONS OF THE SOUL

A mummy's decree influences his approach to alchemy—whether Dedwen must be coaxed out of matter and soul, or subjugated like a stray servant. The dominant element of a mummy's soul affects his magical powers and approach to the Mesen-Nebu philosophy.

AB: LION-HEADED ALCHEMISTS

Emotional intelligence prompts Lion-Head Arisen to see it as the core Dedwen of human excellence. Artists do not achieve greatness without passion, and generals develop faulty strategies when they don't believe their war is just. Mummies of the Ab decree believe prosperity flows from motivation, and invest in it to develop formidable cults.

Lion-Headed run into trouble when they entangle themselves in the lives of human assets. Mesen-Nebu doctrine holds that everyone is a conduit for Dedwen, but a strong Ab imposes the tendency to treat people as ends, not means. Lion-Headed hate the dispassionate choices required to manage their holdings. They don't want to send minions to their deaths or discipline allies for weakness. Even so, they excel at assessing and managing personnel. They treat their inferiors too kindly, but inspire them to pursue their master's goals with uncommon zeal.

BA: FALCON-HEADED ALCHEMISTS

Bold and pragmatic, alchemists of the Ba decree prefer concrete wealth to the subtle powers of symbolic Dedwen. Slippery, mystical talk about beauty and excellence take a back seat to temporal power. Truth lies in action; a painting's power manifests at auction, not in a gallery. Falcon-Headed Mesen-Nebu concentrate the people, wealth and magic at their command into tools and weapons, leaving less accessible modes of power to brethren of other decrees.

Falcon-Headed pragmatism sets them at odds with the Mesen-Nebu love of beauty and visible wealth. They prefer

functional tombs; their cults resemble military units instead of religions. Alchemists use ostentatious displays to help set the pecking order, and Arisen of the Ba decree often fail to keep up appearances. They spent their money *getting things done*. Fortunately, this epitomizes the doctrine of "Spend what you need to," even if it isn't for the sake of beautiful things or long term influence in the mortal economy. Falcon-Headed fall into the role of dedicated journeymen, seizing regia for guild glory through daring, violent means.

KA: BULL-HEADED ALCHEMISTS

Centuries erode Memory like stone against sand, but cannot grind away a Bull-Headed alchemist's schemes. The lords of Ka use immortality to patiently unearth the riches of this world. Alchemists of the Ka decree used to be derided for slow, deep schemes that presented little payoff, but centuries later, they stand ready to pluck the fruit of their labors. Their small, timid cults have grown into complex conspiracies. They've just begun to dig up the hoards of Pharaohs and Crusaders.

Now that it's all coming together, Bull-Headed sprint from the guild's junior ranks to senior positions in the Bronze and White Gold tiers. Lesser servants of the Ka arise to discover they have a part to play in their elders' plans. Bull-Headed work together because of the patient, resolute values they share, but as they approach the apex of power, they risk being buried in the accumulated momentum of their own plots. Most Bull-Headed alchemists pursued what they believed to be the most stable forms of Dedwen, locked in precious metals, gems and aristocratic bloodlines. They've largely failed to seize the opportunities in corporations and new technologies. Oil is a fad. Gold is eternal.

REN: SERPENT-HEADED ALCHEMISTS

The Shan'iatu gave the Arisen the most precious gift: not the world they held in trust for the Judges or magical vessels, but ageless life and eyes tuned to magic's subtle light. Irem's lords gave them the time and power to discover the true nature of this living world. They can mine secrets out of sand, and hammer them into crowns.

This does not limit them to the past, however. They scour the world for hidden connections, plugging themselves into conspiracies that shape the world's wealth. Serpent-Headed alchemists use espionage to find freshly-forged vessels and paradigm-cracking technologies. As the Shan'iatu came out of the desert with the secrets of fire and forge, they will find equally dramatic innovations—or more often, steal them from the labs and board rooms. Dissatisfied with the simple investments, raw materials and public political processes, they prefer to earn their keep by harnessing things that have never been seen before.



SHEUT: JACKAL-HEADED ALCHEMISTS

Jackal-Headed alchemists tend to surprise their comrades with sudden wealth and political connections. They know that if you follow secret power far enough, you'll find more accessible manifestations. Sorcerers have bank accounts; ghosts remember forgotten treasures. Mesen-Nebu of the Shadow are more likely to harness supernatural forces to acquire even ordinary wealth—a risky habit, but one that often slips past the opposition. Where other alchemists weave a web of blackmail and complex investments to dominate an industry, the Jackal-Headed interrogates the ghosts of industrialists, and commands them to sabotage rival factories.

BROTHER GUILDS

Mesen-Nebu don't believe they belong to the greatest guild because regia is superior, but because they produce the greatest individuals. They take complete responsibility for their destinies. Every guild represents a useful art, but alchemy *must* exist for any of the others to thrive. The Born of Gold sift power out of its raw components. They turn rock into metal, gems and ritually purified stone. Even ink is theirs, made from crushed, purified minerals. Physical alchemy isn't the most powerful craft, but the powers of all others rely on it—all but Naming, but that isn't to be spoken of.

Alchemy is the art of fundamentals, including the slave labor that turns rough tribes into conquering states. The alchemists don't pretend that labor is fair, but believe that it is just. Effort belongs to its masters. They look at civilization from its bloody bones up; other guilds should heed their insights.

Nevertheless, Mesen-Nebu individualism compels them to recognize excellence regardless of affiliation. A true alchemist would rather lock his fate to that of an ingenious outsider than a dullard from her guild. In fact, Asen court impressive Arisen from other guilds, hoping to recruit them for the Born of Gold or compel lasting friendships. Alchemists routinely shower prospects with wealth, but more often succeed by offering the opportunity to rise or fall on merit alone.

MAA-KEP

Maa-Kep don't waste time with egotistical goals. They defer to competent leaders—ideally, Mesen-Nebu—and concentrate on concrete goals. While Mesen-Nebu study essences and energies, Maa-Kep devote themselves to the million details that escape high level thinking. Where an alchemist studies the great forces behind a corporation's rise to power, a laborer learns the name of a CEO's rebellious son, or the leaders of workers ready to strike. Mesen-Nebu never *say* that big picture thinking might push ambition ahead of careful planning, but must admit that a Second Hand always seems to firm up the details and communicate critical facts at just the *right* time.

This also makes Maa-Kep excellent spies, forcing Born of Gold to ponder their flaws—they should discover their own weaknesses before a Second Hand does. They don't like that. Every Maa-Kep could be a steadfast ally or slippery blackmailer, depending on who gains the upper hand. Laborers don't look ambitious, but people who want to rule from behind the throne always act humble. If a Second Hand discovers that his "friend" failed to reach a vessel after burning through cultists and gold, or that she hoards waning power instead of building more, he wields the power to shame that alchemist before her peers. Where others distance themselves from laborer spies, alchemists prefer to eliminate their weaknesses and leave nothing to report—then let the Maa-Kep boast of their gold-faced greatness.


SESHA-HEBSU

Alchemy's Mystery mandates two sets of laws: one for scholars of Dedwen and one for everyone else. Dedwen is the eternal flow of power, and its principles are the high code. Sessa-Hebsu command lesser laws: the codes of a vanished empire, and survivors who rely on social niceties instead of personal strength. As far as the Born of Gold are concerned, scribes are entitled to their domain. Let them pretend to command the true law. Alchemists know better, but shouldn't upset other Arisen by admitting it. Mummies should believe in the right to own and rule through titles and petty claims. That helps them organize their resources for easy exploitation, once an alchemist directs them to worthy goals.

The scribes keep exhaustive records. Born of Gold doctrine commands them to gather intelligence when they arise, and the simplest way is to gain the respect of a canny scribe, see what his magic has revealed, and read what he wrote in old scrolls or digital tablets. The trick is to convince the Sessa-Hebsu that their alchemist brothers deserve access to this information. The scribes believe they're still judges. The alchemists don't. In Irem, they resisted Closed Book interference. As far as they were concerned they served the sorcerer-priests and their Nameless Empire with special dedication. They didn't deserve to be judged by the same functionaries that catered to the exploited classes, then. Why should they submit now, when Irem is a withered memory? They respect the Shan'iatu, but they're *dead* now. Clearly, the Judges of Duat cleared the way for an Arisen age, not a memorial to the past. Still, sometimes one must play along with lesser laws to obey the great law of alchemy, and arbitration can be exploited to seize Dedwen efficiently.

SU-MENENT

Alchemists and Shepherds of the Chamber are almost ideological enemies. Both guilds revere the Judges, and that's enough to tie them to common missions. Mesen-



Nebu study the ever-shifting nature of power. Su-Menent believe that change is not inevitable, but imperfection. They hold wealth and political might in contempt because they're abstract, mercurial things, not the test of virtue so beloved by the Born of Gold.

These disagreements express themselves the strongest in philosophical discussions and deep occult workings. Both guilds exercise discretion when it comes to explaining their high mysteries, however, so members rarely get to argue the virtues of eternity versus change. Instead, the opposing theories express themselves in a grating sense of difference. Su-Menent are simply *annoying*. Alchemists see cloying modesty and asceticism as marks of weakness. Shepherds of the Chamber revere the Judges a little too loudly, replacing the substance of accomplishment with empty fervor. Fortunately, these irritating characteristics leave room for the guilds to stay out of each other's way. Alchemists seize the riches and influence embalmers ignore, and the Born of Gold are happy to give Su-Menent all the ransacked corpses they can handle.

TEF-AABHI

The Asen say that long ago, an offshoot of the Mesen-Nebu devoted themselves to building beautiful things. They modified their mystical philosophies to fit their new focus and strayed from the full knowledge of Dedwen. These makers of effigies reduced the complex flow of Dedwen to one aspect: the internal *heka*, possessed by artists. Now they pretend to be better than their "arrogant" ancestors. The accusation stings more than the Born of Gold admit, because within their limited domain, the Tef-Aabhi proved worthy—they graduated from sect to guild. Mesen-Nebu raised the first holy pillars of Irem, but the Masons finished the job.

As far as those Born of Gold are concerned, the Masons sacrificed a grander vision to become mere artists. Artists always believe they set civilization on its course, that they draw a path for the world to follow. But no artist ever succeeded without materials and patronage. They owe everything to aristocrats who identified their potential and gathered Dedwen for them to shape. Therefore, there's no point insulting the Tef-Aabhi's rogue philosophy. The best thing to do is to smile, offer the patronage and recognition artists crave and through that, exert control. She who controls the artist controls the art.

ENEMIES AND OTHERS

The Five Guilds are not the only powers that stalk the World of Darkness, and so the Mesen-Nebu deal with them according to their nature.

THE SHUANKHSEN

As parodies of true Arisen, Shuankhsen arouse curiosity and contempt. Alchemists entertain theories about them that drift from the elaborate metaphysics to black humor. A popular, commonsense explanation holds that they're early, failed Shan'iatu experiments. Those Born of Gold believe the Priests of Duat were mortals of tremendous ability, but mortals still: men and women who needed to work at any art to perfect it. The Deathless are necromancy's supreme achievement, so it's reasonable to assume that these Lifeless were a necessary, unsatisfactory stage on the road to perfection. Other alchemists believe that after the Nameless Empire collapsed, foreign sorcerers used their imperfect knowledge to create Deathless servants, and ended up with the Shuankhsen instead.

No matter the truth, the broken, desperate results speak for themselves. Mesen-Nebu normally respect anyone who can wrest power from its owner, but Shuankhsen are no more qualified for admiration than leeches or carrion birds. They serve instinct, not will. The ethics of power only apply to persons. A Shuankhsen no more qualifies for consideration than an Amkhata beast.

THE DECEIVED

Alchemists take pride in belonging to the "only necessary guild." They made what was necessary for every craft to function.

Thanks to the Deceived, they're allowed to get away with this lie.

Arisen barely remember the lost guild, and master alchemists don't *want* to remember. Ancient Mesen-Nebu devised the theory of Dedwen by studying matter. They extrapolated its beauty and value into a general theory of supernatural potential capable of unthinkable variety and subtlety but always returned to matter because it offered the most fundamental inspirations, drawn from earth, breath and flesh.

But one can't harness matter without naming it. Names draw closer to the source of all things. The Born of Gold must admit that long ago, the lost guild walked close to the light of ultimate truth and were Deceived.

It not only shames the Mesen-Nebu that the Deceived's knowledge of Dedwen may exceed their own, and that they sign to channels of power that creep close to the supreme truth, but that this lore, this proximity might be the cause of their corruption. Perhaps they were tested by the Judges at the ultimate threshold, rejected, and in resentment, turned against them. Perhaps a *thing* not of the Judges guards the keys to A'aru.

Maybe the Judges don't have all the answers. *That* possibility is the most frightening of all, and a blasphemy that few speak, but more suspect.



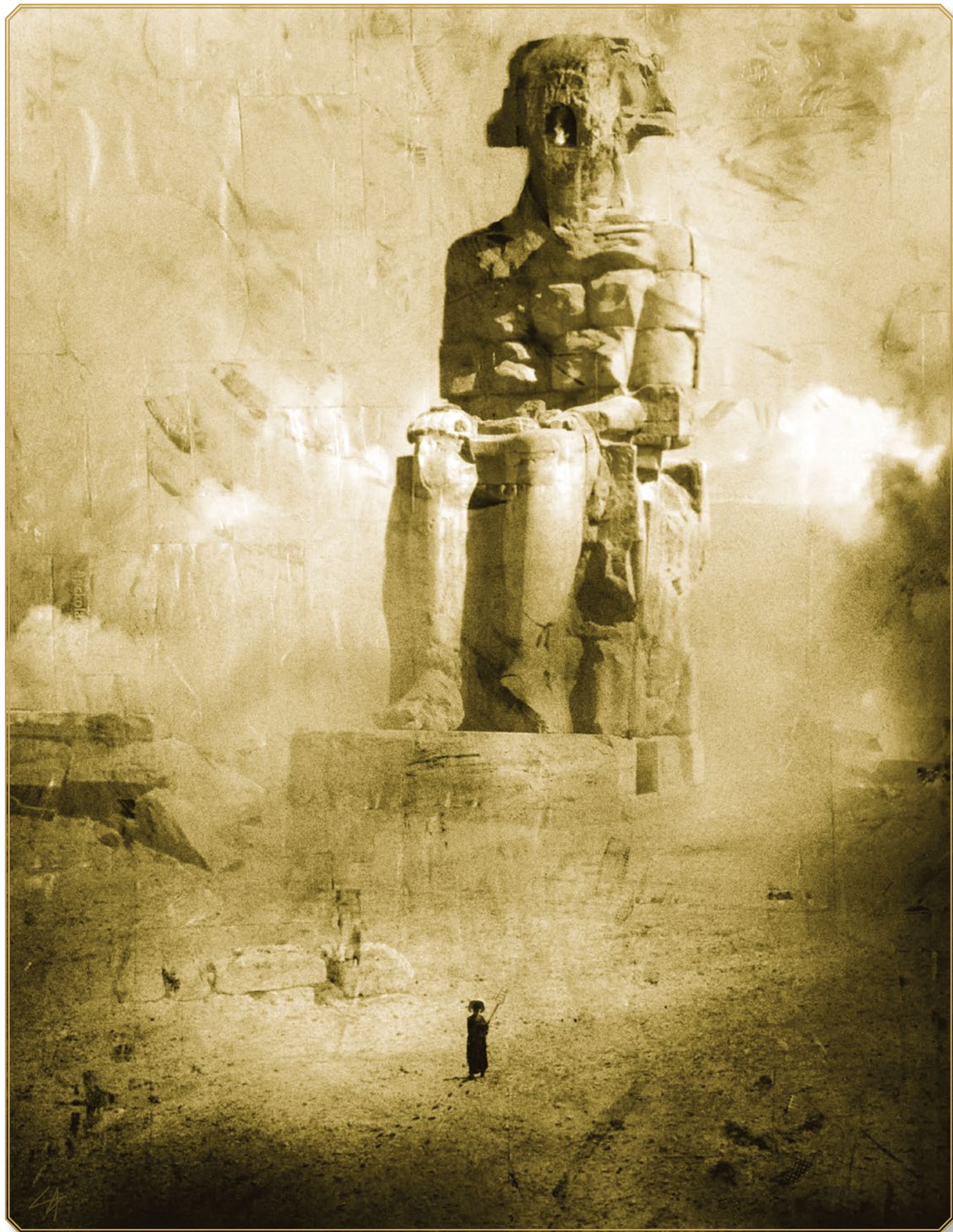
THE REST

Alchemists place supernatural entities into two categories: the intelligent and the instinct-driven. Sorcerers concentrated will and scholarship into an elementary command of Sekhem, so they deserve respect, though never friendship. Their power belongs to the Judges, so it's only natural for them to desperately cling to it by any means necessary. Mesen-Nebu won't rule out alliances with these beings, but these end as soon as the alchemist believes she can take control of her "partner." On rare occasions, a sorcerer or other free-willed being impresses an alchemist

enough to make her leave him alone. Power belongs to the deserving. This is a relative measure, so when one of the Born of Gold feels she's gathered enough power to change the relationship, she'll test him again.

Instinct-driven creatures merit no such consideration. This category includes ghosts, Amkhata and other beings who exercise supernatural power through some sort of low cunning. Mesen-Nebu place Shuankhsen and most vampires in this group as well. Even though such parasites possess some intelligence, they only maintain power through instinctual feeding—and honestly, those Born of Gold just hate them too much to treat them as people.





CHAPTER THREE

TO WRITE UPON ETERNITY

*On the pavement of my trampled soul, the steps of madmen weave
the prints of rude, crude words.
— Vladimir Mayakovsky*

True language separates humans from beasts. This is not just a matter of complexity, but scope. Animals howl in pain and triumph. They claw territorial markings. Only humans describe the universe with words. Every glyph and utterance refers to the secret nature of all things, in the way territorial lines on a map follow rivers, mountains and secretly shunned, magical places.

The scribes called Sesha-Hebsu refer to this fundament as the *Scroll of Ages*. All writing defines the universe in one way or another, but to knowingly write upon the Scroll, as these Arisen do, is to tattoo the body of a god. One must consider every line and make corrections, when necessary. When one writes in lives, one must erase their mistakes with death and sorcery. Thus, a scribe's duties possess dangerous, magical aspects.

In the age of Irem, Sesha-Hebsu were the first bureaucrats, given the tedious task of describing the state of the Nameless Empire's granaries, the number of able-bodied subjects ready for labor or war, and the debts of artisans, farmers—even exalted Priests of Duat. Although each possessed immense wealth, the Shan'iatu bargained among themselves for specific valuables: slaves, precious materials or strange items that ledgers listed in a circumspect fashion: "that which is necessary to placate the Screamer," or "the substance blessed under the red planet's gaze." Members of the senate were rivals as often as friends, so they relied on scribes to not only truthfully record the state of the empire, but honestly account for trade at the highest levels.

After recording the empire's assets, the guild of Closed Books uncovered theft, fraud and dereliction of duty. Some of these irregularities signalled incipient rebellion—soldiers and necromantic horrors responded to these. The Shan'iatu left the scribes to deal with other problems, expanded their mandate to include the commoners' crimes and disputes. The Sesha-Hebsu used their records to guarantee consistent decisions. Much admired for their pragmatism, the scribes nevertheless bound their work to the mystical principles of the Scroll of Ages. So today, every word and judgment marks the body of the cosmos, and the subtlest god of Word and Will.


THE SCRIBES' CODE

The Closed Books believe that written language is divine, and that it imposes codes that none may deny without casting themselves into damnation. As much as these Arisen remember the torments of Duat, they believe that disobeying divine law invites even greater suffering, for there are beings outside the Word and Will who do not torture to purify, but out of raw spite and pleasure.

But like language itself, divine law is flexible, ambiguous or paradoxical. The Word always requires an intelligent Will to interpret it. This is the nature of the cosmos, embodied in the Judges of Duat: beings of supreme wisdom who guide Descents with subtle corrections and complex agendas. Devout scribes would never say that they're closest to the Judges—the gods are nothing like their Arisen servitors—but aim to emulate them in their own, humble way, applying the old codes of Irem as best they can to fellow Arisen. They apply precedent and contemplation to fit ancient laws to contemporary problems, from electronic espionage to the problem of murder among Deathless beings.

The Word requires interpretation, which leads some to believe that Closed Books slant judgments to suit personal interests. It's no lie to admit that this happens at times, but the guild holds that even though the law requires interpretation, it is never subjective. One need only observe the reality of Duat, its precise punishments and omnipotent Judges, to see that the code born of their sorcerer-theocracy must be divine and incontestable.

So scribes arbitrate, judge, and when they cannot find functionaries to do it for them, punish. In ancient days, one of the Closed Books would never lay a finger on anyone brought for judgment, nor would she handle any wealth intended to pay a fine. Long after Irem's fall, they still view direct intervention with some distaste, and prefer to recruit Arisen from other guilds to fulfill their "proper purpose." In unusual cases, a scribe may even recruit a mortal to deliver justice, so long as he never learns more than he should. Unfortunately, respect for



the old law faded with Arisen memories, so the Closed Books learned to deliver their own judgments. A significant number became scholar-executioners—and some are exceedingly skilled at it. After all, they learned the laws of an age where justice was the cousin of torture: as brutal as Empire. Their nation has fallen, but their law, their Word, is an immortal god. They make His will reality with words when they can, or fire and sharp khopesh when they must.

THE LIE OF MA'AT

At this point, we must remark upon the concept of Ma'at: a principle of cosmic order that informed all aspects of historical, ancient Egyptian life. Universal equilibrium depended on every member of society attending to its appointed role. Farmers work the soil, soldiers defend the nation and gods command sun and seasons to give life. Do what you were born to do with mindfulness and moral discipline, and the gods will grant passage to A'aru—as Ma'at demands.

Born before Ma'at, the Arisen kept order in an age of fluid customs and violent struggle. Every conquered tribe battled for status in the eyes of the Shan'iatu senate. Such a society would have seen Ma'at as an idealistic indulgence. The Closed Books view Ma'at as a heresy that shows how far civilization fell from the Scorpion Banner: a twisted version of the Scroll of Ages. It entangles gods in the laws they create, hinders the security of the state, and prescribes a naive sense of duty to solve social ills.

Scribes believe the Scroll of Ages might be a god but definitely isn't a moral code. There is no pervasive duty beyond the burdens given to Arisen by the divine Judges. The masters of Duat don't issue directives to satisfy a moral purpose above themselves, but create morality itself. Their commands are inherently just, no matter how repugnant they appear to ordinary sensibilities. No action inspired by loyalty to the Judges can defile the Scroll. By obeying them, the Shan'iatu made their Nameless Empire the only legitimate state.

The gods of Duat gave their priests the secrets of nation-building to set history on its proper course, writing a holy destiny into the Scroll of Destiny. Deviating from Iremite tradition defies the will of the Judges and stains the Scroll with its impurity. Left unchecked, it could unravel the world's proper fate. Azar and the Judges of Duat gave to the Shan'iatu history to write, Arisen to protect, and the Closed Books to correct, by protecting the old customs. So guild doctrine holds a Legalistic or Machiavellian aura, concerned with the traditions of an empire that may have fallen to mortal eyes, but remains the only nation anointed by the true gods.

THE SCROLL OF AGES

A secret god writes and is written upon with all that is, was and ever shall be. This is the whole of the god's nature, so much so that he (or she; this deity is genderless, though often personified as male in guild rites) never interferes in the world or issues edicts for his servants. This is the Scroll of Ages.

Closed Books justify their reverence for the Scroll by emphasizing that it has a different nature than the other gods. The Judges are active personalities, influencing the cosmos to align itself with mystical truths. The Scroll is the recorder and recipient of those truths, so it is possible to serve both. In fact, by heeding the lords of Duat, a scribe glorifies the Scroll of Ages. The Scroll is composed of everything it records: every thought, word and deed ever enacted. If history ran off course it would corrupt the Scroll—defile the god. Some Sesha-Hebsu believe that it could even rouse the mutilated Scroll to act upon the twisted events written on its holy flesh, allowing unutterable creatures access to the lands of the living and the dead.

Instead, it must always be that the Judges act, their servants obey, and the Scroll records. Blessed with a fuller understanding of this cycle than members of other guilds, Sesha-Hebsu sense the presence of occult texts, and develop abilities gleaned from secrets that flow into the Scroll. As Arisen, they feel the Judges' wills in their Sekhem but as scribes, they sense the silent god watching them, recording the movements of nations or the caress of wind on the dust. The Scroll of Ages conceals itself from others, but Closed Books are able to read its endless writing.

The scribes' god is ultimately indescribable, inseparable from the course of history. Thus, the guild believes it is acceptable to honor his aspects through false gods. Other Deathless honor little beyond Azar, the Judges of Duat, and certain demons—and the scribes prefer it that way. Therefore, they conceal his rites in popular superstitions to blend into new eras and protect their traditions from other guilds. In the ancient world, Closed Books sacrificed to Thoth and Hermes. They wrote liturgies to Gnostic angels and scholar-saints. These facades also provide a basis for scribes' cults, as they are tailored to attract the most learned members of any society in which these Arisen find themselves.

Modern Sesha-Hebsu extend the Scroll's aspects beyond the religious into philosophy, mathematics and information theory. In some ways, they feel closer to the new Sothic Turn than others, for this is the first to propose that information lives, grows and dies, and might be the fundamental unit of reality.



MARKING THE SCROLL

When scribes speak of Marking the Scroll, they refer to a metaphysical duty with practical benefits. When a Closed Book writes of her journey along the River of Truth, she wrestles its flow into the pattern required by the Judges, inscribing it upon the Scroll of Ages. The result is a metaphysical code that not only recalls the past, but sets history toward the eventual triumph of Duat, when every scrap of Sekhem will return to its rightful owners and under their command, revive the Nameless Empire.

For now, Marking the Scroll simply helps Arisen remember their identities and traditions. Although the scribes are best known for compiling statutes and precedents to maintain the continuity of Iremite civilization, their work goes far beyond laws. They write testaments from all Arisen to keep for the ages. In some cases, this helps other guilds remember their traditions in spite of failing Memory. When a scribe earns the deep trust of an associate, she might even act as his biographer, chiseling deeds into stone so that upon Arising, the mummy discovers critical information from his past on a coffin or wall.

At times, a Sessa-Hebsu records events as they *should have been* in defiance of the facts, but never for personal advantage. History is a set of instructions for the future, writing itself on the body of a secret god. It cannot be allowed to profane the Scroll of Ages, so a scribe may omit events with blasphemous implications or change troubling enigmas into accounts which confirm the supremacy of the Judges. Given the real divinity of the Judges, anything they witness that defies known theology must be a product of flawed perceptions.

Beyond chronicling the Iremite diaspora, scribes Mark the Scroll by making the history they want to write—acting with purpose. Literal writing may be a powerful way to shape the secret god, but all events are known to him. The greatest inscriptions are stories written by lives expended on deliberate, virtuous actions. When a mortal fills her time with bare survival and trivial pleasures she leaves an incoherent, half-faded record on the Scroll of Ages, but when she concentrates on accomplishing a great deed and forges her life into a *story* that might be retold in wonder or fear, she leaves traces more likely to influence the future. Scribes pause passive studies to Mark the Scroll with these quests.

THE LAW OF THE SCROLL

Closed Books look to the Scroll to justify their authority internally, though they proclaim the will of the Judges when they deal with outside Arisen. The silent god entrusts Arisen with inscribing a history in accord with the

Judges' designs. The scribes first codified Shan'iatu proclamations, tribal tradition and logic into true law, so that divine will might flow from its source to its ultimate fate, to be written upon the Scroll. In Irem, Sessa-Hebsu judges declared that to disobey the law not only insulted the state, but the cursed criminals' souls, consigning them to the Devourer. In this, the Devourer serves a purpose, for anything it destroys will fade from the Scroll. The events and words may leave a light mark, but lack a supporting soul—it's been eaten.

To say that Closed Books believe in punishment instead of rehabilitation oversimplifies their position. The Judges of Duat prove that torment is part of the cosmic order, and guild metaphysics state that the Judges can not only help set history in motion, but compensate for rebellion and forgetfulness by applying the correct tortures. These punish through pain and mark the universe with suffering as the symbol of law. Rehabilitation occurs, yes, but the object is the Scroll of Ages, who may be purified with the screams of offenders, broken according to ritual.


Iremite punishments combine the sadism of a primitive state with ceremonial magic. Closed Books impose suffering with the precision of calligraphers or elite programmers. They select the proper symbols and write them with whip and brand.

THE DIASPORIC CODE

Sessa-Hebsu believe Irem's law should apply through all time, but must admit that Sothic Turns and the Arisen condition mandate certain adjustments. The faithful can no longer appeal to Irem's sorcerer-priests, and a mummy's immortal form diminishes the effect of many traditional punishments. Even ceremonial purity must bow to the pragmatic purpose of the law to keep Arisen working together, toward their common purpose. To that end, the scribes devised a less elaborate code to govern how Arisen should treat each other and move through the changed world. Arisen call it the Diasporic Code or something similar, avoiding a formal name so as not to presume upon the true law of Irem.

When it comes to the Code, Closed Books find themselves acting as half-authority, half-evangelist; many Arisen believe that since the Nameless Empire vanished beneath the sands, personal authority reigns supreme. If the Judges want it otherwise, they can hasten their servants' Descents. Nevertheless, many nomes support the Code because it urges resident Arisen to deal with each other fairly, and although many proclaim that Sessa-Hebsu have no power over them, they cannot deny the scribes' reputation for wise arbitration.

Free from complicated statutes, the Code was designed so that even untutored, forgetful Arisen can govern



themselves according to its principles, but Closed Books could extend it into a body of common law reasonably compatible with ancient tradition. The scribes wrote five verses, keyed to the soul decrees of Arisen to help them remember and honor them.

THE HEART LAW

Interfere with the cults of other Deathless if you would fertilize the sands with mortal blood under the gods' silent gaze.

Meaning: Closed Books discourage Arisen from sabotaging each other's cults, but don't forbid it outright. Rivals may set cult against cult as they please, as long as they don't break a vow to submit to arbitration, entangle other Arisen and their cults, or directly attack another mummy's mind, body or soul. (These forbidden actions invoke the Spirit Law.) If one cult damages another's interests, their masters *should* report the dispute and adhere to the arbiter's decision. Sesha-Hebsu empathize with mortals caught up in these disputes, but the Code is designed to maintain the long term stability of Arisen society, not the ephemeral fortunes of their pawns.

Reality: Most Arisen respect the Heart Law because it's practical. Nobody wants to see the cults coalesce into huge, violent factions that might escape the control of their masters, so it's good to let them clash a little, to eradicate the weakest and hinder the strongest. Unfortunately, modern Deathless cults are more evenly matched than they used to be. Virtually all work as conspiracies instead of openly influential religions. Most weak cults have perished, and too-strong ones have long since split between Arisen patrons. When one cult runs up against another over some temporal concern, they're likely to find themselves in a stalemate, tempting them to break deadlocks by attacking the ruling Deathless.

THE SPIRIT LAW

When desires clash, submit to arbitration or suffer judgment.

Meaning: The Spirit Law describes the heart of the Code's jurisprudence. Arisen who come to the Closed Books for judgment should be better served than those who reject them. If two Arisen argue over the ownership of a vessel, a scribe might give it to the candidate with the greater claim, but bid the other to pay restitution in the form of services, resources or a promise to give the loser another vessel in the future. If only *one* of the aggrieved steps forth, a scribe should give that claimant's argument greater weight—they don't necessarily win by default, but the absent party may not offer a counterargument at a later date. The scribe is also duty-bound to enforce her judgment by recruiting other

Obey or Ignore?

Sesha-Hebsu claim the right to judge other Arisen, but lack the collective power to force others to submit. You may wonder, then, why would other Deathless respect the Diasporic Code? It's a good question. Where the guild is weak, mummies mock self-styled arbiters and convince them to quiet down using shame, murder and everything in between. Yet these rogue nomes are the minority, like lawless towns in the Old West. When the guild believes its local representative has failed to convert a nome to the Code, it may send a battle-hardened agitator to reclaim that protectorate.

However, most nomes cede the Closed Books and their Code respect because the guild has *earned* it. In Irem, scribes built a reputation for honest, fair decisions. Mummies who rebuild their memories enough to remember prior Sothic Cycles likewise remember Arisen willing to spend their Descents discovering the truth, applying it to tradition, and combining them into incontestable judgments. Closed Book rulings might include brutal sanctions, but these almost always grow from fact, precedent and logic—never personal feelings. Corrupt scribes must exist, but the guild either quietly expels them or otherwise ensures that no fallen Sesha-Hebsu from a previous incarnation is known to exist in the modern day.

No mummy can rely on personal power alone to protect her from enemies. An immortal's Sekhem can collapse on a Judge's whim. So most nomes encourage their subjects to respect the Diasporic Code and consult Closed Books to settle grievances.

Arisen or if necessary, taking matters into her own hands. If the decision involves retribution, the non-participant automatically suffers an additional punishment beyond an eye for an eye for refusing to submit to justice.

Reality: Practically speaking, Closed Books may only enforce the Spirit Law if they possess enough personal power and trustworthiness to sway Arisen to come to them. The Deathless ignore weak or foolish scribes, and have been known to pay little heed to those they suspect are nearing the end of their Descents. Sesha-Hebsu rely on guild unity to shore up poor confidence, so that ignoring one member's judgments invites the wrath of an entire tribunal. Maa-Kep and Mesen-Nebu are infamous for ignoring this law completely. Maa-Kep use social manipulation to solve disputes outside the domain of formal justice, and alchemists believe arbitration is often used by the weak to steal from the strong.

THE ESSENCE LAW

Do not break the seal of a holy tomb unless you wish to offer its treasures sevenfold.

Meaning: A mummy's tomb is his only true home: the place where his soul returns to the well of immortal Sekhem, and where he ritually channels it back to Duat through sacrifice. Entering a tomb without leave is blasphemy unless it must be done to enforce the law. Even then, an invader must strictly obey the conditions of a judgment. Otherwise, tradition dictates that the offender should not just offer compensation, but suffer additional fines and torments. He might be forced offer a vessel (on top any he might have stolen) to its ruling guild, suffer judicial mutilation, or accept the decimation of his cult. Scribes design these punishments to be severe, but tolerable—the guilty Arisen will still be able to serve out his Descent. Unlike disputes covered by the Spirit Law, voluntarily submitting to judgment does not guarantee leniency.

Reality: This law enjoys popular support because virtually all Arisen hate the idea of having their homes invaded. On the other hand, intelligent Deathless manipulate the system by issuing complaints against the owners of wealthy tombs under the Spirit Law, thereby acquiring a sort of “letter of marque” allowing them to plunder without courting punishment. If other Arisen discover the deception, it damages trust in the Code, so a Closed Book's fellows are quick to censure her if she falls for this trick. Arisen burglars operate in secret to avoid hatred and punishment, forcing zealous scribes to conduct lengthy investigations when tombs have been violated—a fact that can be used by enemies to waste their Descents.

THE NAME LAW

Make no alliance with the Lifeless or usurpers of Irem's lore, or you will worship at the altar of 42 Torments.

Meaning: Any Arisen who shelters, assists, or bargains with the Lifeless for any purpose other than ensuring their destruction forfeits his Descent. The Deathless should also fear the gravest punishment if they aid mortal sorcerers, for they seek to replace the lost Shan'iatu. The traditional punishment impales the offender within his tomb. He then witnesses the destruction of his canopic jars (if available), the desecration of his home, and the removal of the hands, eyes, and tongue of every cult ritualist. Torch-bearers burn him to death and scribes scatter his ashes in each cardinal direction, over the horizon from his former tomb. If the sentence is carried out correctly, the offender cannot arise again for a great long while.

In ideal circumstances, a full tribunal of three to seven

Closed Books (and allies) carry out these so-called 42 Torments. The sentence serves the Judges and may reset the Descent, but slaying one of the Arisen risks *immediate* Descent. If the rite requires several “murders,” it's best to spread responsibility around.

Reality: Applying the full 42 Torments may be a logistical impossibility, so pragmatic scribes might just find and kill the same offender repeatedly, and enjoin other Arisen to do so by offering them his spoils. In any case, the punishment is severe enough that scribes must consider the evidence carefully, lest they condemn an innocent. Furthermore, defining who is a “usurper of Irem” can be a tricky thing. If a cultist learns original sorcery under the inspiration of his master, has its Arisen master committed a crime? What if a mummy helps a mortal craft a Relic with the intention of offering to the Judges? Devious Arisen may use these edge cases to frame rivals,

Unspeakable Crimes

Scribes wrote Diasporic Code to help Arisen govern themselves with basic decorum and steer them clear of certain temptations, but its authors assumed that two crimes were so repulsive to a loyal Iremite soul that they need not be spoken of. They are sacrilege and *lese majeste*, the acts of insulting the Nameless Empire or its religion, respectively. Strictly speaking, they're really one crime with two faces. Pharaoh was the mortal *bau* aspect of Azar, and the holy senate of Irem spoke for the Judges of Duat. The traditional punishment, immolation, symbolically called the Devourer to eradicate the heretic's soul, barring him from Duat and A'aru.

The Closed Books could once claim that no Arisen had ever committed these acts, though this was through a bit of metaphysical legerdemain; Redacting the Word (see p. 115) made this true, after a fashion. But swift years and tattered memories allowed these greatest crimes to go unpunished.

Truth be told, the guild itself has relaxed a bit on prosecuting these “unspeakable crimes.” Tradition prescribes death by burning for any doubt or irreverence aimed at the old theocracy, but modern scribes are more likely to forgive minor offenses, writing them off to lost Memory and psychic strain. Close ties between the Lost Guild, Closed Books, and Apotheosis lore may also play a role. The scribes know Irem was the chosen state of the true gods, but some suspect that the divine might offer mysteries even the Shan'iatu never spoke of.



and Closed Books would be honor bound to consider their arguments, even though the law is really intended to prevent mummies from being swayed by Shuankhsen and heretical magicians.

THE SHADOW LAW

Grasp the sunlit flail of rule and you shall be condemned to the dark sarcophagus.

Meaning: Arisen may pursue as much secret influence on mortal society as they like, but shouldn't become open god-kings. To do so would constitute a threefold error: First, it would damage the plans of fellow Deathless, whose cults and true natures might be exposed. Second, it might set the mass of humanity, who are now all rebels from the Nameless Empire, in open war against their natural rulers. Finally, it would reveal that magic is not disorganized, ineffectual superstition but an ancient science, and inspire mortals to study it without the guidance of Irem's gods. The standard penalty is death by and within a sealed coffin. After that, the Arisen is expected to pay any fines due to mummies who've been inconvenienced by the misadventure, including any who were forced to cover up these indiscretions.

Reality: The Shadow Law is not often invoked these days, but was a more serious matter in centuries past, when believing in magic and supernatural beings didn't just entail adding stories to coincidences and shadows, but palpable reality that could be worshiped and invoked. Back then, some Arisen believed they could get away with directly ruling their own nations. Most of these "god-kings" fell to sorcerers, Shuankhsen, or mobs of their own subjects. In the modern age the observant not only understand that a fad for democracy makes divine rule less attractive, but that mortals can communicate and destroy with greater ease than ever. Words fly by radio; death sings through bullets.

SANCTIONS

A mummy's Deathless nature changes punishments that were handed down during the age of Irem. Death is but a pause, but pain may send as potent a message as ever. In the modern era, these sanctions fall into the following categories:

FINES AND CONFISCATIONS

The Closed Book forces the offender to part with something valuable. In the case of a fine, the valuable goes to



the aggrieved party. Otherwise, it goes to the scribe where it is either held in safekeeping or given to the nome's guildmasters to use collectively. Seizing material wealth is considered a minor punishment, since riches come and go as stars turn through the centuries. Scribes seize vessels for serious offenses such as theft from another Arisen. When the guilty party is a repeat offender, the guild takes one of his canopic jars or four vital organs, which may be returned after a period of repentance, or destroyed in retaliation for shameless disobedience.

SERVICES

The most common forms of arbitration bid one Arisen to do set favors for another, redressing an offense or balancing a settlement that can't reach equilibrium by other means. If one mummy must give a Relic to another as part of such an arrangement, the scribe may ask its benefactor to procure another in return. The Closed Book records these obligations and sets a time limit for fulfillment, after which she investigates how it's coming along and if necessary, modifies her judgment to reflect current conditions.

DESTRUCTIONS

The scribe supervises the elimination of something valuable to the Arisen under judgment. Executing cult members used to be a common outcome, but modern record keeping has made it easier for people to notice murders, so this is less often done. As noted earlier, a scribe may order the destruction of one of the Arisen's four organs or canopic jars to punish past disobedience, and discourage it in the future.

EXCRUCIATIONS

Arisen suffer under physical torture, though not to the same degree as mortals. Pain passes as they seal the flesh. Nevertheless, excruciation possesses symbolic importance to the guild, as it mirrors the purifying torment of Duat. Thus, it is often prescribed alongside another punishment, to drive home the point that crime not only harms the nome, but offends the masters of Duat.

EXECUTIONS

Closed Books call for death when they believe a crime requires the immediate attention of the Judges, but not to such an extent as to demand the 42 Torments. The method of execution ritually signals the victim and Judge as to the nature of a crime. Impalement symbolizes treason against the nome, chopping blades represent violent crime, and burning indicates heresy—in the old days, fire was the Devourer's sign. Other crimes call for crushing (invoking Shezmu) or ritual cannibalism of the sahu. The last punishment censures another party believed to be

complicit in the crime, as they are forced to eat the corrupt flesh of the accused—a meal that even starving dogs refuse. In severe cases, the highest scribes demand total destruction of both sahu and corpse form, to force the offender into a new body, but this is almost never carried out due to the danger of producing a Shuankhsen.

THE RIVER OF TRUTH

To judge or write of the world, one must study it deeply, without biases. Other guilds scour nations to harvest its beauty, political opportunities and cultural mores. By the time they start looking at what they've seized, they've blinded themselves to fundamental information. Scribes dedicate themselves to raw facts beyond the fragments they can exploit. This is obviously most important when Arisen call on them to arbitrate disputes, but they'll investigate any important or strange phenomenon to uncover its underlying causes.


The guild calls this process the River of Truth to bring home its nature and power. A river never stops moving. Every droplet pushes the next to its destination; uncountable small causes drive a greater phenomenon. Even though millions of minute chaotic actions urge it forward, they combine into great, predictable events like the flood that gave ancient Irem life. The river always moves; the truth changes with time. Sesha-Hebsu study chains of causality, and how large events coalesce from many lesser influences. Experience is both a gift and temptation; the observer learns to sharpen her senses, but may see the routines she expects, not the surprise that happens. After all, sometimes the Nile *didn't* flood. She must combine trained eyes with a naïve heart to see the world as it is.

The senate of Irem charged its scribes with writing accurate records. From there, their duties evolved to encompass tax collection, civil arbitration and criminal justice: a mighty portfolio to test the most diligent truth seekers. This forced the guild to gather information from allies in the other craft houses, each according to their specialties. Nevertheless, the Closed Books never fully trusted the other guilds to report the truth, as their brothers cared about material and social advantages, not pure knowledge.

KNOWING THE SCALE

In the Nameless Empire, scribes sent junior members called M'shakabiu to survey the state's holdings: its mines, fields, storehouses, and conquered tribes. Common people knew them as tax collectors and census takers. In those days the division between "peasant" and "property" was hazy at best, both being recent inventions. M'shakabiu also quietly investigated mysteries that required a lighter





touch than Irem's military could manage, though they possessed the authority to command soldiers at need. As state officials, their ability to administer punishments for tax evasion extended to other crimes—to them, all offenses stole something from the state anyway.

The Sesha-Hebsu still use M'shakabiu as the lowest rank of the guild, where they serve as investigators and wandering judges. They're the closest thing Deathless have to a police force, but they study anything they believe could be relevant to the Arisen mission—potentially, anything at all. They perform the first task of the scribe, to Know the Scale. The tax collector must know what the peasants owe—or why one of them has gone missing, and ghosts frighten the rest away from labor.

As scribes ascend to the ranks of Kenbet and Seru, their responsibility to Know the Scale deepens beyond literal facts, into religious and metaphysical contexts. They must consider how their actions Mark the Scroll, and account for the will of the Judges when they intervene in disputes. As a Sesha-Hebsu embraces his guild's mysteries, he often moves from a rigid interpretation of the world to more relaxed approach, tailored to the situation around him. An M'shakabiu eradicates angry ghosts, a Kenbet puts them to rest, and a Seru recruits them as servants. Similarly, superior knowledge might transform punishments into rewards, provided they create desirable results. There are many ways to write upon the Scroll of Ages, and an enlightened Closed Book knows the subtlest inscriptions, drawn to balance an array of forces.

TO SEEK THE IMBALANCE

The Sesha-Hebsu demand two unshakable duties from every member of the guild: to inscribe the truth and exercise their duties impartially, according to the tenets of ancient law.

Yet the River of Truth meanders down strange tributaries, and the law exists to sustain Arisen through an immortal journey, not hinder them with arbitrary rules. Some of the scribes' rulings defy common sense notions of justice, and their texts deceive readers with omissions and slippery descriptions—and sometimes, words that just don't fit the facts.

Closed Books hate corruption, but define it differently than modern societies. Even Arisen from other guilds find it difficult to understand the heart of the law—in ancient days, they lived on the other side, obeying rulings, not making them. Aware of their unique understanding, Sesh-Hebsu sometimes roar about the inviolable Word and their holy statutes, to cover for the fact that these matters are a more subjective than they'd admit.

The law exists to uphold the Nameless Empire, not ensure fairness or balance “cosmic scales”—there are none.

The Judges know how to regulate the universe. They don't need any help, and no power rules *them* except Azar. Ancient laws were designed to protect an expanding empire against its raucous citizenry; the Diasporic Code exists to maintain a remnant of its glory, dedicated to eternal service.

Fairness usually serves the state by keeping its people loyal, but if a fair judgment would harm the Nameless Empire's legacy, it violates the premise of the law. When two Arisen argue over a vessel, the superior claimant might lose if he squandered past prizes by senselessly burning their Sekhem. If a loyal daughter of Irem steals from a borderline heretic, a Closed Book might impose a pitifully small punishment on the offender to let witnesses know that faith overrides fairness. Naturally, the guild enjoins members to associate with the most dedicated Arisen, so the scribe may strike up a friendship with this loyal Iremite. It doesn't look fair, but it serves the Judges. And there are times when the best way to serve the Judges serves the guild, or even the scribe assigned to a case. If his power grows, he can use it to bring order to a lawless nome, or demand allies in the pursuit of an enemy.


Outsiders also misunderstand the guild's devotion to truth, believing it to be a social duty, but Sesh-Hebsu pledge themselves to the truth for the sake of the Scroll of Ages, not the Arisen community. Again, there's usually no conflict; conducting an investigation for her nome often serves the Scroll, prompting actions that inscribe the correct history on that hidden god. But if the truth would inspire faithlessness or chaos, a scribe must keep it hidden. If a lie nudges history along the correct path, where all of Irem's mystical remnants will be given to the Judges, it is form of *divine* truth. When history suggests heresy, the facts are wrong. They should be changed.

Despite these rationales few scribes twist pronouncements for selfish ends. If they acted too boldly, the other guilds would abandon them. Senior Seru start to play the game but Kenbet master it, weaving fact and precedent with deceptions compelling enough to escape the notice of all but the most attentive critics.

Lesser scribes may try their hand at creatively interpreting the facts and cases brought before them, but at significant risk. If they do it for self-serving reasons, the guild expels them after a series of painful sanctions—including the 42 Torments, if their corruption aids the Lifeless. If they honestly intended to work the will of the Judges and the Scroll but do so in a clumsy fashion, the guild might punish them anyway—if a scribe dishonors the guild, she weakens it as a tool of the Judges.

THE WILL AND THE WORD

Out of the scorpions' desert precincts Shan'iatu brought the arts of empire: of pure metals, taming ani-



mals, and planting seed with the river's cycles. There were all products of a primal science, shaping intent into something sharper than flaked obsidian, and expressing it in myriad forms. Thus, their ancient magic was made of two components: the Will, that gave desire a specific shape, and the Word, which wrote it into the world. Like poets, the necromancers of Irem could imagine the Will in novel configurations, and design the Word to express it with a moment's contemplation.

Their students in the guilds lacked such agile spirits but then again, were never taught the creative art of sorcery. The Shan'iatu taught functional "sentences" of sorcery, not foundational "grammar." Withholding access to the roots meant that even though highly placed servants might be able enact a working by rote, they could never invent novel forms—their masters kept this secret to themselves. Even so, the plan of empire required functionaries with a somewhat more advanced understanding of the Will and Word, to transform every outpost into a ritual space, and concentrate its mystical powers to serve the senate's needs. The guilds responsible for such tasks learned how to adapt the rites to unusual situations.

The Sesha-Hebsu learned certain secrets of the Word, for they were entrusted with reproducing the mystic scripture used to purify and adjust magical energies. Even historical records possessed magical significance, for they made the Nameless Empire's achievements immortal, revived by every reader to come.

Only one guild exceeded the Sesha-Hebsu's access to core magical principles. The scribes knew the Word but received it from the vocabulary of Will, entrusted to the Lost Guild. The vanished lords of Nomenclature dealt in concepts and ideas, speech and screams. The fact that Arisen spells are known as Utterances is a testament to their lore.

Thrown across time by the Sothic Wheel, scribes preserve Irem's magical art as best they can. Their scrolls describe Affinities and Utterances by their effects, associated symbols, and the omens they suspect surround their use. Yet they know their understanding is half-complete. If they conquered the arts of the Deceived as well, they might rediscover the old magic. They search for signs of the Lost Guild and study mortal sorcery when they encounter it, hoping a dabbler might stumble on greater secrets. The guild calls this responsibility the Weight of Words. They investigate the secret mass of truth and seething magic beneath ink and chiselled stone, always aware that their Word is a gate for the Will, and that to revive the Nameless Empire, they must discover what lies beyond.

The Weight of Words demands that they seek signs of the Lost Guild, so scribes don't talk about this duty with

Apotheosis and the Weight of Words

Most Arisen know nothing of the Lost Guild besides the fact that it existed, was suppressed for heresy, and has been linked to Apotheosis teachings. This is no surprise to the Deathless, as Apotheosis is *also* heresy. Believing one lie, it's no surprise that the Lost Guild would fall to another or invent deceptions to lead Arisen away from their true purpose.

The Weight of Words commands scribes to recover the Will of magic, driving them toward the Deceived and their false teachings. Thus, Closed Books often know more about Apotheosis teachings than other Arisen. They qualify everything they record about it with marginalia pointing out its falsity, and lengthy apologetics for the orthodox faith or Irem, but that doesn't repel Arisen who have been seduced by the promise of a healed Memory and balanced Sekhem. Some scribes only write about Apotheosis in code, or immediately pass their records up the hierarchy for safekeeping by the Kenbet masters.

Despite these precautions, Sesha-Hebsu tombs remain favored targets for Apotheosis-seekers, including rogue members of the guild, who might study the lie so deeply it seduces them.

outsiders. They don't deny that the Weight of Words exists, but dissemble on what they must do. Other guilds might accuse the Closed Books of corruption for seeking renegades or worse, believe the scribes discovered some critical secret they refuse to share with their brethren. Every guild desires the original Art. If they thought one knew it, but refused to share it, the resulting war would shake Arisen society.

ORGANIZATION

Sesha-Hebsu membership begins with the group. The lords of the Nameless Empire gave them a duty to know and judge, and to do it, they must remain incorruptible. Where one may stray from righteousness, three or four can watch each other, and put the eternal state above selfishness. A strong group is also necessary to pass on guild lore. Even an immortal would be hard pressed to understand the whole canon of Closed Book statutes and metaphysical texts. Each nome encourages its guild members to specialize in certain fields, share their expertise,



and act together with combined knowledge and wisdom.

The guild organizes itself much like a law firm. Junior M'shakabiu go out into the field, searching and studying to help the Seru or "full partners" who assign tasks and make rulings upon matters brought to them. The eldest members of the guild represent their nome, and gather with colleagues from other nomes to form *Kenbet*: large, regional tribunals. Each rank lessens the scribe's strictly defined responsibilities, replacing them with a freedom to act for the good of the guild and the Iremite diaspora. Like a law firm, this often generates resentment; juniors burn through their Descents to serve elders who at first glance, don't look like they have anything in particular to do.

M'SHAKABIU (STATUS - TO ---)

Despised in ancient Irem, M'shakabiu were often accused of corruption after they descended on villages to claim crops, corvee and precious things to fuel the Nameless Empire's bureaucracy. They were tax collectors when the taxation was an unwelcome novelty, considered nothing more than primitive racketeering—and sometimes, their critics were right. The guild says that its front line agents were never venal, but allowed to employ a great deal of discretion in pursuit of revenue. As scribes they understood the state's need with uncommon precision, and weren't afraid to squeeze a little more out of a successful village to fund an important project.

M'shakabiu were also shunned because in ancient times, they acted as wandering arbiters, judges and the closest thing to police besides the empire's soldiers. If they didn't come to collect taxes, they were there to investigate an irregularity that locals were afraid to admit: a blasphemous neighbor, local bully or even a raging ghost. They shook tribal loyalties, shamed elders in front of their children and if necessary, threatened witnesses with torture or with slavery in the mines.

Most scribes belong to the M'shakabiu rank today, balancing educated refinement with the rough pronouncements of wandering judges. Although it's possible to advance to higher rank by demonstrating an understanding of the old statutes, many prefer to remain in the field, asking questions and righting wrongs according to pragmatic interpretations of the ancient codes. The guild appreciates that some of its wisest members prefer to stay in the field, but still limits their status; elders should make room for the Closed Books' mystical agenda as well, and in any event, the line between scribe-aristocrat and wandering judge grows thinner with time. In the Iremite Diaspora, all are called to seize power from the living world. The lesser scribes of the guild simply busy themselves with nome politics as well.

Scribe Tribunals

Theoretically, Closed Books should decide all matters other than voluntary arbitration in tribunals of three to seven scribes of at least Seru rank, but the Arisen are not so populous that this is an easy thing to arrange. These days, few nomes can boast of even three senior scribes, yet the law of Irem is clear. The Closed Books themselves suggested this system to their masters so that the people could never accuse the guild of rashness, or of twisting the law to serve one judge's motives.

Fortunately, scribes may follow the tradition's intent by ruling immediately, then approaching other Closed Books to uphold the decision. Even an M'shakabiu can exact justice with a clear conscience, provided she honestly intends to approach three Seru or Kenbet for post-hoc approval. Of course, it may be possible that these elders will say she judged wrongly: a serious enough crime to merit a fine or even an excruciation before the errant scribe returns to correct her mistake. So, Closed Books who need tribunal approval think carefully before exercising this privilege.

The guild prefers tribunals to reach consensus, but they may issue rulings by simple majority. In the latter case, Iremite tradition demands lesser punishments for those accused of crimes. The Will of such a judgment has not been "written deeply" with the Word, though it is worthy of no less respect. The more serious the matter, the larger the tribunal, in order to inscribe the Word as deeply as possible. If a judge renders a particularly controversial decision alone, she often seeks out more than the two or three senior scribes she needs to back her. Doing so not only builds confidence in her decisions, but sends a message to outsiders that a significant number of powerful Arisen will oppose anyone who tries to undo them.



SERU (STATUS ----)

Upon demonstrating a mastery of Iremite statutes and the sigil of that forgotten language, an M'shakabiu may become one of the Seru: a member of their nome's tribunal. In nomes where the Sessa-Hebsu have converted Arisen to the Diasporic Code, this confers a considerable amount of power. If called by complainants or an M'shakabiu investigation, they must pronounce judgment on the matter before them. Guild tradition forbids them from refusing to hear a case, though they have been known to punish Arisen who bother them with trivial matters. In disputes between Arisen, the Seru support

something that almost resembles modern adversarial systems. Each party presents an argument, then takes another round to respond to each other's claims. The adversaries may suggest witnesses and evidence, but the Seru performs any related examinations. Iremite law distrusts the notion of two opponents trying to wheedle lies out of allies and intimidated victims, so only judges ask questions, and only they determine whether any evidence is worth considering.

"Criminal" matters, where the act is believed to offend the nome, all Arisen or the Judges themselves, are handled differently. In these cases, Seru become inquisitors. They lead missions to the River of Truth in such matters, sending M'shakabiu and allies from other guilds to unearth proof, one way or another. Until judgment comes, suspects are neither guilty nor innocent—no custom can replace the truth—but are *distrusted*, on the principle that if such a person appears before the Seru, some ineffable force of Will may have brought her there. That makes it time to coax out the true Word. Torture isn't out of the question, but its results aren't considered to be truthful, either, unless the Seru decides it is.

Not all nomes respect the Seru, but in most, these greater scribes can at least expect welcome as master ar-

biters. In this role, they break deadlocks in the nome's ruling council. In nomes where Arisen defy the guild, Seru believe themselves lone voices in the wilderness, calling back Deathless who have forgotten how to honor their faith and civilization. In the 21st century, more Seru than ever before play the part. The other guilds fall to the temptations of mortal thinking more readily with each cycle, especially as their cults introduce them to wealthier, softer members of the ruling class, or whisper renegade ideas about democracy and due process.

KENBET (STATUS -----)

The great Kenbet lay claim to Irem's supreme tribunal—save for the senate of sorcerer priests, the Nameless Empire recognized no higher legal authority. Selected by Shan'iatu patrons, ancient Kenbet came from the most populous nomes to sit at the base of one of the great pillars and judge the most complex, weighty legal issues to be found among the common people. Despite their exalted stations, they were not permitted to judge the sorcerer-priests. Those men and women were the gods' *bau*: divine emanations upon mortal flesh. Nevertheless, there were times when the masters of Irem voluntarily asked the Kenbet to issue an opinion on some dispute between them. Every sorcerer knew unutterable secrets,





but not all of them understood the pragmatic principles of negotiation.

The Shan'iatu often described their conflicts to scribes using code and allegories, trusting that Kenbet wise enough to infer the secrets they contained. Thus, the Sesha-Hebsu learned of the Scroll of Ages, when their masters suggested that every deed might be written upon a living, divine medium.

After initiation into the Deathless, Kenbet gathered again out of instinct and faded familiarity, reproducing their old position in far off times and places. To spread the law, the Kenbet have decreed that only one scribe of their station may reside in each nome, to guide local Arisen in the ways of the law. Yet they must gather at times appointed by the Descent. When a Kenbet senses his power won't wane for at least half a lunar month (i.e., Sekhem •••••) guild tradition demands he seek out his colleagues. Kenbet tombs typically contain engraved, coded instructions leading the way to lairs and waypoints in the wilderness where tribunals have agreed to meet. M'shakabiu and Sadikh watch these places and relay messages to help the elders gather. They travel light—Kenbet are expected to memorize the ancient statutes—and waste no time debating ancient law and the Diasporic Code. They share significant judgments and mystical insights into the Word and Will.

Otherwise, Kenbet gather to express the guild's position *ex cathedra* when there is a pressing need. This may happen when one of the Deathless betrays the memory of Irem in some unforgivable fashion, but escapes punishment within her nome. The Kenbet tribunal makes it clear that no matter how strong, charming or influential the traitor, she deserves to burn. The assembled Kenbet may also discipline an Arisen for repeatedly refusing to heed the Diasporic Code, constant infighting, or loud, heretical opinions, but only do so if they believe these actions seriously hinder the Deathless mission. If these pronouncements would serve no purpose, the Kenbet remain silent. In defiance of the lie of Ma'at, they know the law is not an end in itself, but a tool to ensure the smooth functioning of a society. Yet this tool was given to them by those who spoke for the gods, so that their Deathless servants will write righteous deeds into the Scroll of Ages with every noble act.

SOUL OF THE SCRIBES

A scribe's decree influences the way she inscribes the Scroll with her actions, but it also determines what portion of the guild's lore she's expected to master. Some Kenbet and Seru formally divide guild lore, but for the most part decrees gravitate to particular subjects naturally, driven by the temperament they defined during the Rite of Return.

AB

Lion-Headed Sesha-Hebsu are those most likely to compose biographies to support an ally's Memory, but also concern themselves with personal narratives of all kinds. Susceptible to the "Great Man" theory of history, they frame it as a clash of mortal passions. Leaders dominate followers. They marshal forces against each other and the gods until the winner smashes against the will of the Judges, is tamed or dethroned, and becomes a lesson written in the Scroll of Ages. In matters of law and arbitration, Lion-Headed scribes prefer cases that turn on emotions over material gain. They moderate crises born from love betrayed and other sincere vendettas.

Their cults promote a lifestyle completely immersed in the ways of the sect. Closed Books of the Ab use their social intelligence to devise comprehensive ways of living for followers. These cultists often live together in remote compounds or large, shared houses, dealing with each other according to their masters' doctrines. These living arrangements are less likely to be exploitative than their mortal-run counterparts—or at the very least, avoid situations where cultists exploit each other. The cult's Deathless master is exempt from these considerations. She created their way of life and deserves obedience.

BA

Falcon-Headed M'shakabiu are less likely to rise through the ranks than comrades from other decrees, but earn a great deal of respect for their zealous pursuit of knowledge. The scions of Ba struggle with demands that they study ancient texts, or spend time contemplating the balance of law and right behavior. To them, the River of Truth moves swiftly. Mount the chariot to chase down a critical droplet or lose it to the dark earth, forever! Falcon-Headed hunt mysteries first—writing down what they discover is an activity for idle times. While they produce less written lore than scribes from other decrees, their material tends to delve deeply into a single subject: the mystery of a stolen vessel, or the extent of a Lifeless conspiracy.

These narratives tend to be disorganized and particular to a time and place, but are so detailed that they convey a surprising amount of widely applicable information. No Falcon-Headed would describe an enemy without enumerating the powers she manifested, attaching theories as to their nature, or specifying her crimes in Iremite law and the theory of justice that applies. The scribe writes detailed descriptions of the tombs, vessels and other notable encounters. Thus, disorganized Charioteer records hint of new Utterances, strange Lifeless and other secrets learned over the course of an investigation. Finding them in archives of their quests is the challenge.



HA

Scribes of the Essence study the world beneath the illusions of mortal civilizations. Given patience by their decree, they look at the epic of civilization not as students of conspiracy, delving beneath easy explanations. All empires begin with a few harnessing secret knowledge. The Shan'iatu inscribed this pattern upon the Scroll of Ages. All great civilizations spring from the template but its masters hide the truth, to keep usurpers from using the formula against them. Therefore, the Bull-Headed scribe's preferred field of study encompasses the rise and fall of nations and the supernatural forces behind them. They keep records of foreign cults, strange magic and the ways they influence cultures. Beyond conspiracy theories, Bull-Headed believe these sects reveal patterns about the nature of the supernatural: common elements that arise when prodigies rediscover sorcery. These records may help the guild reconstruct the original, Iremite Art.

Like other Closed Books, they act as arbiters and judges as well, but gravitate toward the relatively easy duty of deciding what to do about outsiders who cross paths with the Deathless. The pragmatic nature of the law is clear: Destroy threats and take command of errant sorcery. The Nameless Empire invented magic for its own use, and magic should serve it again, instead of being wasted by petty successors. Their work resembles threat assessments, not legal pronouncements, though they may recommend sanctions for Arisen who fail to deal with outsiders appropriately.

REN

Scribes who declare for the mystical Name hold a special place, for they invoked the primal Will. They said "I am," and fixed their soul upon an immutable magical identity. The Lost Guild learned to apply this act of Will to the rest of Creation, providing the vocabulary Closed Books use to express the Word. Sessa-Hebsu believe the Lost Guild must have been founded by those who would be accounted as Serpent-Headed during the ordeal of Duat. Therefore, scribes of the Name may find the secrets of Will again. Where other decrees look for lost secrets, they attempt genuine discoveries. The guild sends them in search of the unwritten and even unnamed things of the world: oral traditions, direct, ecstatic experiences, and strange phenomena.

As lawgivers and arbiters, Serpent-Headed scribes deal with the conflicts born of these mysteries. When a mummy makes a deal with an unknown supernatural being, or Arisen struggle for control over an enigmatic supernatural power, Ren-bound Closed Books discover the truth and rule accordingly. Despite voluminous writings on the subject, Apotheosis is thought to belong to these un-

confirmed mysteries. It's *some* kind of lie, but what does it conceal? What actually happens to fools who pursue these rumored "ladders" of enlightenment?

SHEUT

All law comes from the land of the dead. Jackal-Headed scribes claim that by studying Duat and the ghosts who wander between it and the living realm, they may better contemplate the will of the Judges, and how they wish Arisen to serve them. Thus, holders of the decree of Shadow approach the law as an extension of Irem's theology. The Judges shaped death according to their needs, so even the Deathless should act in accord with its nature. Why else would the Rite of Return follow the cycle of life and death? It contains vigorous youth, senescence and a return to the unliving darkness. The lords of Duat gave scribes the power to study the cycle endlessly so that they could apply the insights gained to governing their kind.

Jackal-Headed arbiters apply these cycles to their work. They know that in spite of their immortality, time remains a precious commodity for all Deathless. When they punish their own, they ask the offender to sacrifice time, expending Sekhem on worthy deeds. Although this has given them a reputation for gentle judgments, mummies on the receiving end would often prefer quick torture—that way, they can shake off the pain and get on with the Descent. Sheut-bound scribes also turn to ghosts for testimony more often than other members of the guild, taking into account the obsessions that prevent them from attaining the afterlife.

THOSE WHO SUBMIT TO JUDGMENT

A scribe who stands alone has failed, for none respect her judgment enough to say that her pronouncements are anything but personal opinions. The Judges of Duat set the parameters of the law and the Scroll of Ages receives the results of judgments, but only willing allies can clearly carry the divine message from its dark root to its inscription on the rolls of eternity. Sometimes, Closed Books must sacrifice clarity for effectiveness, however, forcing alliances and when necessary, doling out punishments to the obstinate. In these cases, the guild uses tactics tailored to its counterparts.

Outsiders are simpler to deal with. The basis of the law is the Judges' will, followed by the best interests of the Nameless Empire in exile. If a scribe upholds this doctrine, her actions should stand beyond reproach, except to suggest how she could have acted more *efficiently* to bring Lifeless and other strangers under Irem's yoke.





MAA-KEP

As amulets adulterate the purity of writing by channelling it into charms, the Maa-Kep thin the potency of the Word with political maneuvers and diplomatic doubletalk. Scribes communicate certain truths in code, but Maa-Kep seem to revel in clouded language, telling people what they want to hear. The law cannot afford such misinterpretations. Thus, while scribes routinely ask Maa-Kep to help them when they must pursue the truth through social connections, they never rely on them to execute the judgments that follow. Laborers twist rulings to suit their social compulsions. They won't confiscate valuables from allies as a Seru ruling demands, but borrow them, hoping to convince the arbiter that such an arrangement is just as good and besides, the Maa-Kep will throw in a service of his own to "balance the books." They don't respect the idea that punishment is an end in of itself despite the fact that the Judges embody the truth that torment is divine. It is not a mere social function.

MESEN-NEBU

Vulgar and arrogant, those Born of Gold have disdained Sesha-Hebsu judgment ever since the time of Irem, declaring that power was its own justification. It's easy enough to convince a prideful alchemist to demonstrate her might by assisting a scribe, because such accomplishments bring her prestige among her own kind. Mesen-Nebu excel at interrogation, as it appeals to their domineering instincts, but view compromise with distaste. They belong to a culture with clear winners and losers. It's even more challenging to convince one to put the nome before her own agenda—as far as she's concerned, if her will triumphs, it's a clear sign that the nome should follow *her*. The question is not whether a Mesen-Nebu will overstep her bounds, but when, and whether she's clever enough to avoid Closed Book scrutiny. When the moment comes, it is often more effective to demand services as punishment, as it gives the alchemist another opportunity to prove herself, saving her dignity while confirming the supremacy of the law.

SU-MENENT

The lore of the shell teaches Su-Menent that although the sahu is immortal, it can suffer mortification. Scribes often employ them to deliver judicial torture. They rarely sentence Su-Menent themselves to these sanctions because the lore of the Shell teaches its students that although the flesh can be made eternal, its feelings and energies will soon pass, drifting away with time and the Descent. In other words, torture just doesn't *bother* them as much as other Arisen. Even when physical punishment seems to be the best symbolic option, practical matters override the ritu-

als of justice. Instead, a wise scribe masters a Su-Menent by threatening social sanctions such as exile. Su-Menent cultivate the appearance of morbid hermits, but Closed Books believe this is just a pose that disguises their political fragility. Nobody *likes* them much, so even a minor social sanction can deprive them of political capital. This opinion may have its origins in the fact that the Su-Menent is the traditional destiny for scribes who shame the guild. Closed Books will not offer friendship for these fallen, but support their retreat into penance and self-mortification.

TEF-AABHI

The guild of effigy-makers combines an Alchemist's pride with a laborer's obsession with the social realm. Artists believe in the intrinsic value of their work, and the prestige they believe they deserve for creating. Deathless Tef-Aabhi are extremely sensitive to the fact that they *used to be* artists. The Rite of Return removed their ability to create true effigies, leaving them with ramshackle Affinities and Utterances that rely on the magic bound by ages past. It's easy to punish this type of fragile arrogance but better to harness it in an alliance. Properly motivated Tef-Aabhi act with zeal and attention to detail, because their pride demands nothing less.

THE DECEIVED

Scribes hunger for Naming: the art of the Will. If they wrestled the secret from the Lost Guild, they could reconstruct the roots of magic. Other Arisen consider this to be a dangerous, intriguing aspiration. Learning the Shan'iatu's art might be heresy, an attempt to replace them in the order of things. Beyond the moment of the decree, the Judges of Duat have never given the Deathless direct communion, or the ability to alter the magic they've been given. Yet if the true Nameless Empire should rise again, it must produce new sorcerer-priests—and these could build vessels to sacrifice to the Judges. Born of the Lost Guild, the Deceived prove that seeking out the Will might lure Arisen down a false path.

Closed Books chase rumors of the Deceived but remind anyone who will listen that they do it not to chase Apotheosis, but harvest occult knowledge. This is not to say that they believe the Lost Guild still operates, but that they may have shared their secrets along with the lie of salvation outside the Judges. Yet despite loud denials and internal discipline, scribes are more likely than other Arisen to explore that path. The guild suppressed evidence of errant members, but cannot deny the evidence, including the prevalence of Apotheosis texts inscribed in the guild's signature style. Despite its non-magical nature, the *Dreams of Avarice* displays all the scholarship of the Sesha-Hebsu work—the same apologetics and legal-



isms, written upon the premise that the Arisen, not the gods, deserves the highest honor.

THE LIFELESS

Sesha-Hebsu approach the Lifeless as investigators, not judges. Lifeless have no standing in Irem's diaspora. They're a plague to be eradicated. Scribes study how these twisted beings arise, and sanction Arisen who refuse to deal with them, but Shuankhsen and other aberrant coils of Sekhem are targets, not defendants. Sesha-Hebsu focus their interests on Amkhata and stranger creatures because it's almost always possible to trace their origins back to some form of sorcery. Sorcerers know something of the Will, so their creations may contain secrets that will allow scribes to revive the old magic.

OTHER SUPERNATURAL BEINGS

Thorough scholars, Sesha-Hebsu possess detailed records about many other supernatural beings, especially

if they were common to North Africa or the Middle East. These scrolls may contain knowledge that even their subjects have forgotten: demonic bloodlines and secret words of power. The trick is to *find* these texts. Lapsed Memory, theft, and the grind of time has scattered this lore, so a scribe may know that a certain book describes certain secrets, but has no idea where a copy might be located.

Therefore, the goal of any scribe who encounters a strange supernatural being is to look for signs he remembers from ancient texts, or can describe to colleagues. Armed with this knowledge, he can copy and organize this lore, better preparing the Deathless for future interactions. Otherwise, scribes maintain a policy of studying strange entities as closely as they can without revealing themselves. In any interaction, information should flow one way—all for the Closed Books, none for the target.





CHAPTER FOUR

THE CHORUS OF THE UTTER

A man must swallow more belief than he can digest.
— Henry Brooks Adams

The Silent Guides, the Prophets, the Unwavering, the Murmurers, the Black Conduits, the Shepherds of the Chamber—the Su-Menent have many names, but ignore all titles as an inferior shell of their real purpose. Names only embody an attribute or a facet. Names are naught but a mask, and the priests are so much more than that.

Or so they claim. The truth is more complex than that, something between an overestimation of their own worth and everyone else's underestimation of the true horror of the powers with which they truck.

SOME BASIC TRUTHS

Among the already grim Arisen, the Su-Menent carry through their cycle with a frightening, cold dignity. The other guilds believe it is because the Shepherds handle uter, the flesh of the dead, that it's tainted them. The Su-Menent, however, claim they aren't grim. They just understand the dangers better than most. They are masters of death, or more specifically, what happens to all living things when blood no longer colors skin and flushes the heart. And if they appear "grim," it is because emotions color uter. It draws the attention of troublesome ghosts and spirits that are naught but the embodiment of passion. It also taints the Sekhem sent to the other side, creating unintended side effects seen in no other vessels.

There is a third truth to this, however. The Su-Menent work on behalf of gods that are alien and unknowable, for to truly understand them is to dabble in madness. The Su-Menent claim that it is not to them to know or to understand the Judges of the Duat, but what if this is an excuse to protect their already fragile state? That to truly understand the nature of something alien, one must become something alien....

Another distancing factor is that in relation to modern society, the Su-Menent are "archaic," encompassing a system of beliefs in an era when belief has become synonymous with ignorance. Science has stolen their candles, and with it, the masses who flocked around its light. "Archaic," however, is a two edged sword, for what the world considers mythology the Shepherds know exist. The world has forgotten how to pro-

tect itself from the shadows, but the Su-Menent remember. Perhaps that is their greatest ace-in-the-hole among many Arisen who are ready to discount their use.

Recent events and their newfound anonymity have placed the guild directly at a crossroads. Some see the cresting of this new Sothic Cycle as a blessing, a time when the Su-Menent must gather together and codify the will of the Judges before Irem grows too far distant in memories. For others it is a terrifying, frightening time as the future seems poised to push them into the shadows of obscurity, the same shadows whose bite they know and fear. The world cannot afford to forget or overlook what they know about the other side, even if the world will never believe them. And for a few (who the guild condemns) it is a time of personal exploration and, the Su-Menent First Prophets whisper, Heresy. For among conformists, even a little rebellion can breed... sacrilege. But sacrilege, some rogue Su-Menent argue, is the first step in true epiphany, for epiphany comes from exploring those places where others fear tread.

Unfortunately, the heresy the Su-Menent fear is already in their ranks. It may run deeper than history implies, and it may not be as simple as right or wrong. Nothing is ever as simple as right and wrong with the Shepherds, and therein lies their failing.

PURPOSE IN FUNCTION, DISTRACTION IN FORM

The uter that forms a hand has a different sort of mystical chemistry than the uter of fingers, and fingernails, and finger joints. The Shepherds understand this well. Where the Mesen-Nebu explore the nature and interrelations of all things through alchemy, however, the Su-Menent are only interested in how something serves the Judges. Like the ritual texts they study, the meaning behind the words is unimportant. Only the words themselves matter. There is comfort in that sort of linear thinking, for nothing defeats a well-reasoned and impassioned philosophical argument like, "I don't care."



THE PAST: BURIED BONES MUST BE PURIFIED

In the days when Irem was a solitary torch in a sea of shadow of the world, and even under the auspices and keen eye of the Shan'iatu, people still feared a great many things. They feared as common people did, for their children, for their meals, for their family. Most of all, they feared what came next, when they died and they stood before the Judges and weighed their actions and deeds against a feather. And they believed, because it was too terrible to consider otherwise, that there was more than this brutal fragile life.

At this time, those who would become Su-Menent were at their height of influence as priests, their powers assured. In this role, they were far more traditional. With feet in both worlds, people came to them to feel comfort at the knowledge that more lay beyond their five senses, that there was balance and purpose to life and not just a one-sided exchange. They prepared the living for death and the dead for the journey. They facilitated the blessings of the gods upon the people by encouraging worship, and temples, and great monuments. They served as conduits to the venerated ancestors, allowing the living to entreat with their dead family members.

In this era, the priests were almost compassionate, for they brought comfort, and such a thing cannot help but touch one for the better. It also cannot help but open them up to exploit, and the compassionate will always suffer twice as much. They were tender, fragile, almost sweet with innocence and almost as vulnerable as their charges. Almost. Their willingness to serves the Judges and the Shan'iatu exposed them to too much too fast.

As the priests grew in power, their understanding of death and the corpus of the dead deepened. The veil lifted slowly, and with it the horror of what lay beneath. With that came a withering maturity and an increasing grimness. As living, they learned how to step across the threshold of death. They visited the other side, but in the land of the dead, there are no such things as tourists. Many returned changed. They carried with them the knowledge that more frightening ordeals awaited all who crossed over and any misstep would not just wound the body, but shatter the many spirits of a man. His ba might flip dispositions and make him a mockery of who he was. His ka might wander the land of the living, forever ravenous. His khaibit might turn on him like a mad dog and tear out the ka's throat.

The more they understood of the gods they worshipped, the less certain they became. Their gods were fearful things, incomprehensible and alien. The priests could not grasp them, mere words shattered in defining the indefinable. And yet they must serve. The priests learned of these things and many more terrors...

...and how it harrowed them.

In their youth, the priests suffered a crippling crisis of faith before the Shan'iatu stepped in to save them the only way they knew how. They taught them that only absolute faith and trust in the Judges could save them. Doubt was a snake sent to poison them. Obedience was the torch to drive it away. But to teach them this lesson, the Shan'iatu brought them even deeper into the mysteries of the Afterlife, deeper than any others had ventured or would dare go. So the priests honed their focus, past the painting into the very brushstrokes, for the brushstrokes did not convey the entirety of the painting, did not transmit the message.

That journey and understanding traded their innocence for a heart of stone, but even stones crack....

THE PRESENT: NOW IS THE FULCRUM BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT

The new Sothic Turn presents a very troubled beginning for the Su-Menent, a reflection perhaps of the inner turmoil they face. The Shepherd prophetess Sacmis is missing and presumed destroyed, her organs in at least two locations devoured by some mysterious agent. The same agent gutted her temple and butchered her cult to the last. Nobody knows what happened or who committed this, but it seems a poor portent in a time of ill omens.

The Shepherds once provided the torch, illuminating the path ahead for others. They navigated the tunnels into Duat, knowing every twist and turn, though never bothering to ask who built the passageways. That has cost them, for without knowing why, they cannot know why things changed either.

This is tricky, for the Su-Menent consider themselves immutable. Naturally, the Mesen-Nebu would probably take that bet even though the other Arisen only know half the truth about their Su-Menent brothers and sisters. What everyone knows is that Shepherds always fall back on their dogmas and their belief in the Judges as their default position. This has made them certain and stubborn and secretly proud in the face of so many millennia of historical turbulence. What few realize, however, is far more insidious. It is the truth that nothing, nothing remains immutable. Even mountains are weathered and seas dry. And if the Su-Menent won't bend, then they will break. What the guild is beginning to see now may well be the fractures that will topple their temples by the rise of the next Sothic Turn....

Since the Renaissance, the Su-Menent watched helplessly while science whittled away at the institutions of faith. Not that the triple-braid of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam hadn't vexed them already, but at least the Shepherds could play on religions to mask their activities. Science, however, accepts no gods, and the Su-Menent failed in one aspect of faith: Showmanship. It is not in their nature to cure the



blind and turn water into wine. To them this is a collection of crass tricks that started when that showboating Moses pulled frogs and the plagues from out of his hat.

The Su-Menent are faltering and cracking because they could not have possibly envisioned a future of self-determination and science. For the first few thousand years, society advanced slowly enough that they could still place everything within the framework of their beliefs. But over the last century, the last few decades, the last ten years even, society and technology have accelerated far beyond their capacity to place them in context.

Yes, the Su-Menent understand the function of things, but without the guidance of the Judges or the Shan'iatu, they'll never understand how these things fit inside the general cosmology. Can a cellphone or portable computer carry the word of the scribes? How does biochemistry affect the Alchemists? What of evolution, extinction, and discovery? The horn of the Scimitar Oryx, for example, formed powerful uter when the carcass was sacrificed to the gods first, but this creature is now all but extinct. And more animals have taken their place, animals the Su-Menent are desperate to understand like the massive Galapagos Turtle, or the Polar Bear, or the Kangaroo.

The Su-Menent fool themselves with the argument that if the Judges wanted them to know about these creatures, then they would know about them, but more Shepherds secretly mourn the fact that they have no time to investigate all the species that are discovered in one awakening and extinct the next.

Then there is the matter of longevity and funerary rites. The people of their age lived to 30 or 40 years, but today's populations live double that number and prefer to profane their identity through cremation. This is madness to the Su-Menent, a destruction of the khat.

Within the need for answers, even if the need is subconscious or the question never vocalized, the mind still wanders looking for it.

This leaves the Shepherds with their absolute and unswerving fealty to the Judges, the one anchor in their existence. But even that's been undermined by the fact that the Su-Menent secretly fear the very gods they worship, and fear what they may have forgotten about them. The Shepherds understand just how foreign these beings are to their own experience, and some among them believe that the loss of their own memory is a ploy by the old sorcerer kings to connect them more to the Judges and less to human beings. But if that is the case, then what precisely were the Shan'iatu grooming them to become?

Outwardly, the Su-Menent do not betray their hesitations, but it's there, like a raw wound ready to be poked and prodded and taken advantage of. Moreso, the crisis exists because the Shepherds are not the share-their-

emotions kind of Arisen. They keep things bottled up, and that means they don't even discuss these things with each other. That's allowed the doubt to fester, because none of those affected want to seem weak. With doubt has come the potential for heresy and schism among the Su-Menent, and the fate of the guild may be slow to arise and quick to unfold.

THE FUTURE: TOMORROW IS A DISTRACTION FROM DUTY

So, for a guild that doesn't hold much faith in the future, what can the future possibly hold for them? That is the unspoken fear amongst these Arisen. The future looks bleak. Science disproves faith and magic not through a body of evidence, but by the dearth of it. Gen-Y's sense of privilege demands satisfaction and immediate gratification instead of a promise of a more fruitful afterlife after a righteous here-and-now. Then there's the matter of religions so absolute in their commitment to a faith that all others are treated worse than heretics... they are considered terrorists.

Muslims are the common enemy at the moment, and that serves the Su-Menent well just on the fact that the prophet Muhammad (in cleaning out the ancient Ka'ba in Mecca) disposed of several powerful Iremite relics. The fact is that the Su-Menent find homes more easily in the world during times of religious strife. It doesn't take much to fuel the fires of mistrust and capitalize on people's fears. It doesn't require much to offer an alternative to the existing religious structures.


But is it enough for a guild that has nearly lost sight of its way and desperately hangs to what remains like flotsam in a deep ocean. One of the core issues that the Su-Menent haven't readily admitted to yet is that they learned through rote that everything has its place in the world. They were never taught to apply deductive reasoning to their duties, so have little way to apply it now.

HEM-NETJER: SERVANTS OF THE GODS

The Hem-Netjer is the original priesthood from which the Su-Menent hailed, which did not originally adhere to the notion of hierarchy based on region. They defined the roles within each temple, yes, but the region was more like islands in the sea... temple-states serving a god and ruled by a High Priest and his or her entourage. This was their role as guides to their flocks. The people would visit the temple that best suited their needs, and the priests knew well the ways of that particular Judge.

Within a temple, the High Priest assumed mastery, but any matters that required temples to adjudicate amongst themselves went before the Shan'iatu. That changed, however,





before Irem's fall and sorcerer-kings created the position of High Prophet. Few Arisen remember the exact circumstances behind it. Only that the Shan'iatu created a new position to serve as adjudicators before the Rite of Return came to light.

Regardless, the hierarchy remained insular, each temple its own domain and visiting priests afforded the privilege of ranks, but little of the actual power. The only ones this did not apply to were the High Prophets and the High Priest, who sometimes ruled over multiple temples, thus making the priests within those temples much like extended family. That changed following the fall of Irem and the Arisen's diaspora around the world.

Currently, the Su-Menent don't number enough for each Judge to receive separate homage in every city, and the Shepherds must cleave together to maintain temples. Most metropolitan areas might have two temples, while megacities like Tokyo, Mexico City, and New York would have up to four. In most cases, multiple temples may have the same High Priest overseeing them.

That said, an Arisen of an inferior rank will always give a Su-Menent of a superior rank the proper diffidence, whether or not they are members of the same temple. That much has remained the same.

FIRST PROPHET

The First Prophet didn't exist until near the end of the Nameless Empire, but most of those named Prophet went on to become Arisen. Nobody recalls exactly why the role came to be except that it happened shortly before the fall of the sixth guild. All that the Su-Menent remember is that the Shan'iatu, in their wisdom, created the role to serve as non-partisan arbitrator of religious conflicts and as the torch around which other Shepherds gathered.

The Shan'iatu only named seven First Prophets, seven being the most venerated number in the Iremite cosmological worldview. That is hardly enough to manage the needs of the Su-Menent globally, so now the existing First Prophets effectively serve one per continent, in that territory's largest city. Often, it's one of the megacities of the world where the human population numbers ten million-plus. By default, this influence spreads beyond the city to encompass a geographic region that might well constitute several nomes. Examples include New York as lynchpin for most of North America, Rio for South America, Tokyo for Asia, etc. Now, why don't the Su-Menent name more Prophets to help cover the regions, one might ask? It's because the Shan'iatu never gave them leave to do so.

The First Prophets are also Su-Menent guildmasters of high regard. Not all guildmasters can become First Prophet, but all who serve as Prophet are guildmasters. Almost all of this rank have served in this position since the Nameless Empire fell into dust, though two exceptions exist. The first is the

First Prophet Tef-Re who vanished in Third Turn during the sacking of the Serapeum and had to be replaced. The second is Sacmis, a recent victim of this Sothic Turn, whose disappearance is a center of great intrigue. The position remains empty, and the Prophets are considering convening to choose a worthy candidate. The call for a grand conclave to pool guild knowledge seems like an apt time to conduct this.

Function: The First Prophet can pool guild resources across a continent to address a common threat, and to force cults to cooperate toward a common purpose. They can settle matters of disputes between High Priests, even though they cannot end animosity between them. That said, the guild has rarely called on the Su-Menent to act as a whole, especially since they awaken at different times, but the crest of previous Turns has seen a Prophet call upon the Shepherds' resources across one of the continents. As of yet, there hasn't been a calling across the different land masses, but that's about to change.

The Prophet is also responsible for sanctioning temples to the Judges, and that means reviewing whether a Su-Menent is qualified to call her location a Temple to a particular Judge of the Duat. Naturally, this is a difficult time, and often falls to a Sothic Turn for Prophets to find the temples created over the last millennia and to vet them. This often creates friction within the guild as an Arisen who has cared and fostered a temple for the last 1,000 years suddenly discovers his temple is no longer sanctioned. There is also intrigue as temples vanish, leaving a Prophet and his cadre to investigate the disappearance, or as one Prophet vets a temple in another Prophet's domain.

Finally, the First Prophet is also responsible for investigating claims that a Su-Menent is not acting to the benefit of his guild or the Judges. It falls to her to look into the matter, to weigh the evidence, and decide whether sanctions must be undertaken against the offending Shepherd. This includes the Arisen's dismissal as Deshr Hry-Tp (a Red Magician, which is to say someone skirting heresy but who hasn't fallen yet). Should any Arisen become an accursed Shuankhsen or go contrary to all the Arisen, then the Prophet sees to their capture and that "creature" vanishes into the temple of the First Prophet, almost never to be seen again.

SECOND AND THIRD PROPHET

These are "honorary" positions initially given to royalty and even Arisen of other guilds, a holdover from an era when the Su-Menent relied more heavily on the help of their peers. Thus, while rare, it isn't uncommon to find a Maa-Kep Arisen, for example, with the title Second or Third Prophet for some great service they rendered the Su-Menent.

Other times, when there is no First Prophet awakened to handle a guild issue or dispute, the guild can name another Arisen as Second or Third Prophet to act in their

stead. The title is purely an honorific, however, but it forever remains with the Arisen as a token of the prestige of their temporary office and the power they wielded.

The position of Second and Third also serves as an honorific given to Su-Menent guildmasters who haven't earned the First Prophet ranking.

HIGH PRIEST

The High Priest is the master of a temple, large or small, dedicated to the worship of a specific Judge. In communities with several temples, this Su-Menent may serve as High Priest for two or more temples, or the temple might serve two or more Judges. Either case is fine, so long as it adheres to worshipping two, three, five, or seven Judges or multiples of those numbers... essentially sacred numbers to the Nameless Empire.

The High Priest oversees the day-to-day needs of the temple, organizing and directing the people under him or to necessary tasks. He also heads the ceremonies when one is required, though this is mostly perfunctory. Any Su-Menent Arisen can manage a ceremony or ritual, but when success is critical or in auspicious moments, the High Priest steps in.

Function: The High Priest is responsible for a number of tasks within a specific temple, be it carrying out the daily rituals necessary to honor the Judges to ensuring that the


temple itself is kept running smoothly. There's usually a cult associated with the upkeep and protection of a temple, and that cult is often the High Priest's, though there are exceptions. That said, any location can serve as a temple so long as it meets the guild's criteria, and any Arisen can become its High Priest until a Prophet decides otherwise. Even among the Su-Menent straight arrows, there is a slight rebellious streak in the unspoken rule that says "Apologize later," which is the same as saying "It is better to seek forgiveness than permission."

That said, on a more social level, the High Priest is a sort of confessor to other Su-Menent, and is often sought after for advice or even blessing of an undertaking that a particular Shepherd of that nome is about to pursue. A High Priest may even decide to lend his or her resources to a Su-Menent's endeavors, but that always carries a price.

SHEMSU

This is one of the few roles that began as a part of the Wab Priests that was later brought into the Hem Netjer. The Shemsu originally served as guards for the temples when the temples acted as economic lynchpins for the cities. As the priests learned more from the Shan'iatu, they divested themselves from economics and focused on the greater secrets of the gods. As they did so, they needed





protectors who wouldn't balk at their shadow rituals either, protectors almost as versed in their arts as they were.

The Shemsu went from being temple guards to becoming the personal enforcers and assassins of the High Priests. When the Su-Menent came about, the Shemsu became full members of the guild, equally privy to their secrets and still serving as guild enforcers to the wills of the Prophets and the High Priests. Unfortunately, few temples have the luxury of a resident Shemsu, and only the largest might employ one dedicated to the Judge or group of Judges they serve. Instead, the Shemsu might serve her own cult as well as other High Priests or First Prophet on a contractual basis, so long as it serves Su-Menent in their service to the Judges. Naturally, that's a tricky line, one easily crossed through a variety of justifications.

Currently, Prophets, High Priests and their cults can call upon a Shemsu Arisen to act as an enforcer. A First Prophet might have an Arisen Shemsu or two exclusively on his payroll, as might the occasional High Priest with a number of temples to oversee, but more often a Shemsu Arisen operates on contract. That's not to say that Shemsu are incapable of performing rituals... they can. Their experiences, however, mark them better suited for matters that require physical action or violence, like hunting the lifeless. This is especially true when they must deal with other Arisen and confrontation is in the cards. His first obligation, however, is always to his duties as an Arisen.

Function: While all Arisen serve as guardians of sorts for the artifacts they protect and for their cult's needs, the Shemsu also operate on behalf of the Prophets or the High Priests. In this matter, the Shemsu is an enforcer when the guild needs an internal matter dealt with. They rarely handle external matters, unless it is guild-specific business (and the Shemsu's involvement is part action and part message) or the reason why they were awoken by their cult. Often, the message is that the Shemsu's actions are sanctioned by the Su-Menent as a whole and action against one is war with all.

In larger, better-populated nomes, the Prophet may even send more than one Shemsu to ensure a task is done to spec. This could be closing down an illegal temple, taking back powerful utter or unsanctioned arcane craft from a powerful adversary, etc. What Shemsu are not sent on are missions to secure stolen artifacts that another Shepherd has lost. Losing something like this is a mark of shame, and most Su-Menent would prefer to deal with that privately.

Some Shemsu are given the sole task of keeping tabs on former Su-Menent that have been decreed Deshr Hry-Tp, or Red Magician. The Shemsu's mandate is to watch, but once someone has been disbarred from the Su-Menent, the guild believes it is only a matter of time before they fall completely. In this situation, the Shemsu is allowed capture the offending Red Magician and bring them before one of the Prophets.

TP-A PRIEST

It's easy to think that the Su-Menent would be less concerned about memory loss and its impact on their identity because they serve the Judges with such devotion, but the Tp-a Priest (tip-AH) is one position often reserved for those Arisen with a clarity of their past lives. The Tp-a began as priests who specialized in the ancestral worship of ancient Irem, in preserving a family's legacy, in reminding people of their duties to their ancestor, and in acting as intermediary when someone wanted to ask advice from their ancestors.

Following the Rite of Return, the Tp-a within the guild took on a more important role to Arisen. She became a historian of sorts, remembering the guild's past and assisting those Su-Menent in ancient research. As such, a Tp-a Priest is both highly respected by many within the ranks of the Shepherds, and is seen by Arisen as neutral... above the immediate politics of the guild. It might not actually be true, but it remains the perception. They are often guests of various temples within a nome, and entertained frequently.

There aren't many around, and it's not easy being Tp-a since they walk a fine median line. If they remember too little, they have little to offer the guild in terms of specialized function. If they remember too much, Tp-a often become iconoclasts who eschew the guild almost entirely. These latter Tp-a either cloister themselves from other Arisen and focus on arcane research, or they work exclusively for one of the Prophets on secret errands. While only a handful of Su-Menent, much less Arisen, understand what these secret projects might actually be, a popular rumor among Shepherds is that these Tp-a are exploring their own memories, trying to find something of their days in Irem and their experiences in Duat. That some Tp-a have been reputed to have gone insane, the rumor may not be far off the mark.

Function: In short, the Tp-a Priest is the guild's "living" historian, archivist, and respected researcher. They remember their past more clearly than others, and thus can chart more accurately their past lives and what unfolded during previous Sothic Cycles. They also remember more about the use and manipulation of utter, and are often called upon to review the specifics of particular rituals before a Prophet or High Priest conducts an important ceremony.

WAB PRIESTS

At one time, the Wab Priests were the priesthood's administrators and beyond the pomp and circumstance of holy ritual. The role served as a place of honor for administrators and soldiers working with the priests, assisting them in the logistics of the temple. Those who would become Maa-Kep helped administrate the day-to-day commerce carried out from the temples; those destined to become the Tef-Aabhi helped build the priest's temples and provided them with the labor. As the Shan'iatu brought the



Shepherds deeper into the fold, however, the priests slowly dropped the practice of incorporating outsiders. Soon after, as the guild coalesced into a unified body, the Su-Menent put their human cult members in these administrative, builder, and soldier roles. This allowed them to focus on their duties... supposedly. More likely, it further alienated them from the peoples and societies around them.

Regardless, it became impractical to call the cults "Wab" because the Su-Menent were rarely around to guide their cultists from one generation to the next. If they left the transmission of knowledge to their human followers, they would awaken to find that mistakes had crept into doctrine and practices. Sometimes this happened when war or strife scattered or killed their cultists, creating a shortage of manpower. Sometimes it happened because people would skew the message through the lens of their own experiences or that of society around them. Eventually, the Su-Menent took back the role of Wab and kept it.

Currently, most of the Arisen who call themselves Su-Menent do not have a specialized function within the guild, rather a function when the need arises. When the temples were aplenty and the priests legion, it made sense that everyone had a purpose within the orthodoxy. Such was the nature of bureaucracy, and the priesthoods were the red tape of their age.

The Shepherds are no longer legion, however, and the temples are often not a stone's throw from one another. The Su-Menent have been forced to adapt, and each serves multiple functions to the much diminished flock of his own cults.

Function: Wab Arisen have two principle responsibilities. The first is that they serve as all Arisen do, protecting their cults, protecting the artifacts in their care, and providing an uninterrupted flow of Sekhem into the Duat. Their second responsibility is to maintain the fraternity of the Su-Menent as fellow priests. This latter responsibility means they can choose to help or barter for their services when a Shepherd needs their help, but they must answer a High Priest's or High Prophet's call when the need serves the guild or the Judges.

IN-IRTY

This special rank is reserved to a unique and hal-
lowed cult member of the Su-Menent... someone who is blind. The blindness can be natural or it can be ritualistic through The Blessing of Mechenti-irti, but the end result is that these cultists must be blind for the duration of a Shepherd's rituals so that they are spared the horrors of what they must witness.

Those of Irem were among the first who cared for the blind, and that practice carried into ancient Egypt itself. The priests, however, created a privileged class within the Wab Priesthood that not only cared for men who were blind, but trained them to attend to the priests as they

performed rituals to deal with the Judges. These rituals involved peeling back the veil to reveal a glimpse of the beyond, an experience that would terrify most mortals. The In-Irty proved best suited to that duty as the priests themselves entered strange trances or needed someone to hand them the tools of ritual as they focused on the ordeal.

In the modern age, finding a blind man or woman to serve as In-Irty is all but impossible, so the Su-Menent have proven surprisingly adaptable in creating alternatives. Some traditional Arisen prefer the authentic experience of using blind In-Irty, but others are happy to temporarily blind chosen cultists through The Blessing of Mechenti-irti or even through eyeless Duat Masks that mortals must wear during certain rituals.

The presence of the In-Irty has become all but tradition among the Su-Menent, one upheld by High Priests and Prophets to indicate the importance of the ritual itself and that rite's connection to the Judges. There is a legitimate use of In-Irty, however, and that is when the Arisen needs help in something that is danger of triggering Sybaris... or worse.

HERETICS: DESHR HRY-TP


Priests fall. They venture from the path of providence and commit sin against the gods themselves. This happens, and the Deshr Hry-Tp (desh-erie-TEP) are the Red Magicians accused of sharing the knowledge of the sorcerer kings with people or using magic and Sekhem for their personal gain and not the glory of the Judges.

It takes much to fail the Su-Menent, and solitary transgressions or errors are not enough. It has to be something considered a sacrilege to the Shepherds, be it perverting the worship of the Judges, hoarding Sekhem for personal use, or harming the guild as whole. And normally, it is only a guildmaster, and often a Prophet who decrees who becomes Deshr Hry-Tp. Now smart people realize that last condition is a dangerous one because it becomes a means to eliminate enemies within the guild. Admittedly, it is a heavy-handed option, but an option nonetheless.

Red Magicians fall into two camps. Those who knowingly and willingly went against the precepts of the Su-Menent, and those who believe they acted to the benefit of the guild even though it still went against the way the Su-Menent operate. One could cite the road to good intentions and where that leads, but honestly that's a bit of a cop-out. The Shepherds are faltering, and many priests are examining ways to bring back meaning to the Su-Menent. They might believe that a portion of Sekhem must remain here where it can help the Arisen serve the Judges longer.

There is a rumor among those Su-Menent engaged in intrigue, however, that some Su-Menent have gone Deshr Hry-Tp at the behest of a Prophet. The reasons vary from pursuing texts that normally remain outside the Su-Menent canon, to





investigating rituals and powers that border close to heresy, to the study of Apotheosis, to a very troubling rumor that some Red Magicians are experimenting on any Lifeless they catch and perhaps even crafting uter from them.

Regardless, Red Magicians are not actively hunted, but may seek entry into other guilds. But the guild watches them closely via the Shemsu, believing that these former Shepherds are on a slippery slope and seconds away from falling all the way down the hill. It is for this reason that those denounced as Deshr Hry-Tp often vanish, using the passage of time and sleep to hide, or relocating entirely.

INTERNAL CURRENTS

As a result, three factions have slowly emerged amongst the Su-Menent, though admittedly, “factions” is a generous word. It’s more like three currents that have more to do with coping rather than anything dogmatic. That could well change, though, and if it does, the schism may tear the Su-Menent apart.

THE TRADITIONALISTS: STAYING STRONG

Get the language right. There is no cause, only duty. There is no belief, only piety. There are no questions, no doubts, no emotion. There is only service.

Su-Menent Arisen are stubborn, and their current plight has made them more entrenched in their philosophy. They ignore doubt and face fear by deafening and blinding themselves to its voice. Any threat against their dogma or duty is dealt with in a manner that borders on overkill; they will not hesitate to punish transgressors severely, all in the act of staying true. And they crush any dissension with threats of declaring the dissenting voices as Deshr Hry-Tp. This is partly for show, to teach others a lesson; this is mostly to prove they’ve never wavered in devotion, though who they’re trying to convince, the Judges, the Arisen, or themselves, is up for debate.

Some are extremists, so enraptured by the words and their place in the Duat that this life only exists to prove their devotion. Others become hermits, isolating themselves to better commune with the Judges and reflect upon their existence as loyal servants. Regardless, traditionalists are more likely to force the world around them to adapt to their methods. These are the Arisen who refrain from much contact with the outside world, a profane place in their eyes. They try and maintain old habits and traditional ways, but the danger is that they do so in a vacuum; they are priests to none but their own cult, and severely demanding of them. That said, they are equally dependent on their cult to deal with a world they publically call profane and privately fear because they understand little of it.

The Traditionalists are among those who believe that the slow erosion of memories is ordained by the Judges

themselves so that the Su-Menent may embrace the nature of their gods rather than the nature of ordinary mortals who come and go by the billions.

THE CONTEMPORARIES: FORCE PEOPLE TO COME TO THEM

We started as intermediaries between men and the gods. That part hasn’t changed, so why does it matter how we facilitate that bridge as long as we keep it open?

These Arisen still follow traditional paths, but recognize the shortcomings of the past in the face of the present. That doesn’t mean that they’re ready to abandon their history either, but they understand the merits of using honey to attract the flies.

These Arisen are more apt to find a need in the society around them that caters to their abilities, and exploit it. Their familiarity with death sees them working as morticians and doctors; their facility with uter might place them in the role of occult practitioner, magic store owner, or even taxidermist; their religious leanings might see them working as a storefront priest or tent show revivalist preacher. The roles are many, but they share one thing in common... the need of the people who seek them out often involves physical or spiritual succor. In this, the Su-Menent are forever shepherds, just shepherds garbed in the clothing of their surroundings, but rarely straying far from the dictums of their past. What has changed isn’t the function, but the form their function takes.

These Su-Menent believe that they are a bridge between a very alien set of gods and the people who once worshipped them. There is a sense of fatalism among this lot, a sense that they enjoy the role of martyrs and outcasts a bit too much. But to them, they are protecting people from something that damn near swallowed their own sanities whole. What memories they have of the Judges and Duat are scattered, nightmarish fragments enough to turn the hair on a corpse white.

FINDING ANOTHER WAY

Being human is about compromise and questioning as a way to adapt. Those who cannot question cannot adapt. Those who can’t adapt die out or are forced into irrelevancy. The world is a constant reminder of that.

Some Su-Menent adapt in small measures, finding ways to interpret the three lotus paths in such ways as to remain functional and true to their purpose. It is their job to remain relevant, not because it services them but because it serves the Judges and the people.

These Shepherds are the most progressive and forward-thinking of their ilk, within Su-Menent reason, of course. They are also most in danger of being censured by the guild’s High Priests or Prophets as Deshr Hry-Tp, which is a red mark in their records that is hard to remove. Ironically, these individuals possess strong memories, and that includes remembering what it meant to adapt to circumstance.



Unfortunately, their individualism also paves their path in a whole lot of shiny good intentions. They might dabble in heresy, not because it benefits them... no. They do so because there might be some pearl of wisdom that the Su-Menent overlooked or dismissed outright. They might study the mechanisms of what makes someone Shuankhsen or ways to force Amkhata from out of amxaibit or even create Amkhata loyal to the Su-Menent. It might be philosophical pursuits like the study of Apotheosis or ways of awakening themselves rather than relying on theft and cult to bring them back. Regardless, the Su-Menent as a whole judge according to action rather than intent, and most the guild's so-called modernists are often under the greatest scrutiny.

The Su-Menent of this outlook tend to take on leadership roles or positions that might serve them as guides. It need not be spiritual, but it is almost always in a position of friend, mentor, or authority figure. They rely on their cults because of their connection to the current era, to the things people want and need in today's day and age. The metaphysical might push them into positions like spiritual advisor or teacher of the arcane, but they aren't afraid to dabble in less worldly pursuits, using their powers to promise material gains to the company director looking for an advantage to become CEO or the starlet with the fading looks who needs that certain *je ne sais quoi* mystique to land roles. This enables them to build stronger, more diverse cults, and remain better connected to the world around them. True, it doesn't give them greater insight into understanding their own past, but it can help in the protection of their relics, in laying the groundwork for the next time they Awaken, and in buying rare tomes and artifacts connected to Irem and their own history.

Naturally, more traditional Shepherds may see this as a gross dereliction of their real purpose, but these particular Su-Menent are more inclined to define their own purpose by stretching the guild's definition.

CULTS

It's not easy belonging to the cult of one of the Arisen, and doubly hard for those working for the Shepherds. If it is the duty of the Su-Menent to obey, they expect no less from the cults at their disposal. That said, the Su-Menent are greatly dependent on their followers to survive since their understanding of a society or of a generation is more than just the vicissitudes of culture. To the Su-Menent, they must equally understand how religions have changed as well, since their language is one of faith, and surviving in the new age means navigating the minefield of competing ideologies.

FOUNDATION

It's easy to assume that the Su-Menent would orient their cults towards religious aims and trappings, but that

would be ignoring their administrative and even commerce beginnings. And if people have begun to fall away from religions, well then the Su-Menent would find other avenues of "worship" condoned by society, avenues that promoted the wish and aspirations of the masses.

To them, aside from the true and righteous worship of the Judges, there is little difference whether they gather cultists looking for a glimpse beyond the curtain of death or those praying for a better life and wealth. All that matters is that they appeal to the seekers in life, to the need for something greater, and to propagate the cult to better protect the relics in their care.

The Su-Menent also focus on another element within their cults, perhaps only second to the Maa-Kep in this regard. They are interested in the forming the foundations on a new temple, but in a spiritual sense... in the sense that a group of people belong to something greater than themselves and strive towards a unified goal. The Su-Menent are less concerned with individuality, and more with contribution that benefits the whole.

TRIBAL

Tribal cults are the smallest and truest to the original intent of the Su-Menent who once ruled within the confines of a temple. Each Arisen serves as the cult leader, the vessel through which greater knowledge flows to its members. Like other tribal cults, the members desire someone else to inform their daily lives and absolve them of decision making.

Fortunately for the Su-Menent, tribal cults based around religious currents are growing in popularity as the mainstream religions drive people from their ranks. The Su-Menent take advantage of religious yearning and soul searching, though they are admittedly puzzled by the use of suicide bombers. To obliterate one's Ha or body, their very physical identity, remains an abhorrent notion to the Su-Menent and one that they would never encourage their cult to pursue.

That said, many Su-Menent steer their cults away from the public eye. With paranoia growing over cult activity and such events as the Aum Shinrikyo subway attacks, the burning of the Branch Davidian compound, and the mass suicide of the People's Temple cults, the Su-Menent are neither interested in garnering that level of attention from the authorities or in killing off its members. The longevity of the generations is what matters, and that means the two-fold doctrine of guiding its members *and* seeing to its prosperity across the decades.

Su-Menent tribal cults draw members not just for life, but for generations, and a hallmark of these groups is unswerving obedience.

Another angle some Su-Menent choose to pursue are the growing militias in North America and Europe. In the United States alone, militias have grown from 149 in 2008





to over 1,200 by 2012. As economies falter, as social hardships spike, and as military personnel are released from service with little to show for their commitment, militias will attract the disenfranchised. Some Su-Menent are more than willing to foster those cults that train against an inevitable collapse, because when societies collapse as the Arisen have seen time and again, they want and need their holdings well protected. And frankly, in the fight against government interference or a perceived social upheaval or disaster, who wouldn't want a mummy in his corner?

That said, some militias as simply too toxic for the Su-Menent to ever consider touching. It's not the fact that some are anti-Muslim, or anti-immigration—the petty fears of individuals and societies never change. The ones with connections to Aryan or Neo-Nazi movements, however, are intrinsically dangerous to the Arisen, who hail from the cradle of humanity.



CONSPIRACY

The Su-Menent are often best suited toward this style of cult, using their knowledge and access to forbidden secrets to tantalize the imagination of their cultists. Unlike other conspiracy based groups that rely on elements of spycraft and intrigue, essentially more modern secrets, the Su-Menent pander to a more mystical bent and those bits of knowledge

considered ancient. Think the Priory of Sion over the Bilderberg Group, the Cult of Isis over the CIA, and the secrets of Solomon's temple over Monaco's power brokers. Thus, they are more mystery cult than conspiracy cult.

Mystery cults are all about the levels and mysteries within the cult and the secrets without. With this group, the Su-Menent cater to people who yearn to glimpse the power behind the veil of reality, those who want a portion of that power for themselves. Naturally, all the trappings of a mystery cult are there, down to the labyrinthine internal structure, the elaborate rituals and customs, the secret handshakes, the forgotten words spoken in whispers.

The core of a Su-Menent conspiracy cult isn't the Arisen herself, but the secrets she weaves around her. Knowledge of the Arisen may be the ultimate revelation to those who penetrate the cult's inner circle, leaving the road to that point littered with shadowed truths, bits of spell and ritual that can affect the real world, and even custodianship of a relic. The mystery cult plays on giving out enough questions to intrigue the cultist and pull him along on a journey of theory and discovery. If a tribal cult specializes in someone else providing the answers and decision making, a Su-Menent mystery cult is about seeking out answers and willingly diving deeper into the cult's secrets.



Another fundamental difference between tribal and mystery is that tribal demands obedience, while a mystery cult demands secrecy. And the cultist who delves deeper into his group's enigmas is also tested along the way with earth-shaking falsehoods and gossip alike, to see how well they can keep quiet. Those who reach the inner circle of a mystery cult have likely been vetted for over a decade, and the mummy who awakens to greet her new followers can be sure she is surrounded by men and women who can keep their mouths shut and who displayed a certain ingenuity.

ENTERPRISE

If the watchword of the tribal and mystery cult is obedience and secrecy, then the enterprise is ambition. The Su-Menent may claim they are above such trivial things as "getting ahead," but even the game of priests is one of political maneuvering and politicking. Catholic popes, for example, are chosen behind closed doors, and the moment a door is closed, one can be sure it's to hide the secular practice of lobbying.

Politicking was always a reality of religion and the priesthood of Irem, but the practice became doubly important among the Su-Menent as Arisen. The reason is that political candidates rose and fell as Arisen slept, and the Shepherds saw too many parties rise and fall in gap between their active states. Whigs, Federalist Party, Socialist Labor Party, all gone or out of favor, sometimes in the span of a single election or revolt. What was the point investing in something so fluid? The political machine of religion, however, is far longer lasting. Ever since the days of the Vatican sending envoys to advise and entreat with kings, ever since the Prophet Muhammad said that the best Jihad one could wage was offering a wise word to a despot, religions have influenced the politics of their times.

It is for that reason that Su-Menent entrepreneurial cults stress ambition with a marked focus on the political engine of a religion. There is a certain daring in high-jacking one religion's lobbying power to serve the Judges of the Duat, and it wouldn't be the first time an organization was rife with "corruption." The Su-Menent like most Arisen, however, focus on the long-term gains of being entrenched rather than on the short-term gains of pilfering money or influence. With cult members constituting an undercurrent of influence inside the religious organization, they maneuver themselves into positions of steering and swaying political figures.

There are Shepherds who are exceptions to this style of cult, with the second most common type of enterprising cult being crime syndicates. Like religion, there are certain trades that are both immoral and immortal, and so long as there are laws, there are laws to break. Criminal enterprises are appealing in several manners. They keep to the shadows, they have their own labyrinthine structures that make hiding within so much easier, and they have private

networks for communicating and transport. All this allows the Arisen to move around unseen. Criminals are also forward thinking, anticipating a need to better capitalize on it, and they run empires that can last for many generations.

Su-Menent that use crime families are not adverse to slavery or drug use. Both were legitimate enterprises in their day. They provide the Shepherds a connection to modern societies that allow the crime family to adapt while keeping their core philosophies intact. The Yakuza, the Mafia and Russian Mafiyah, and more such organizations have histories as old as a century and older.

SU-MENENT INTERNATIONAL

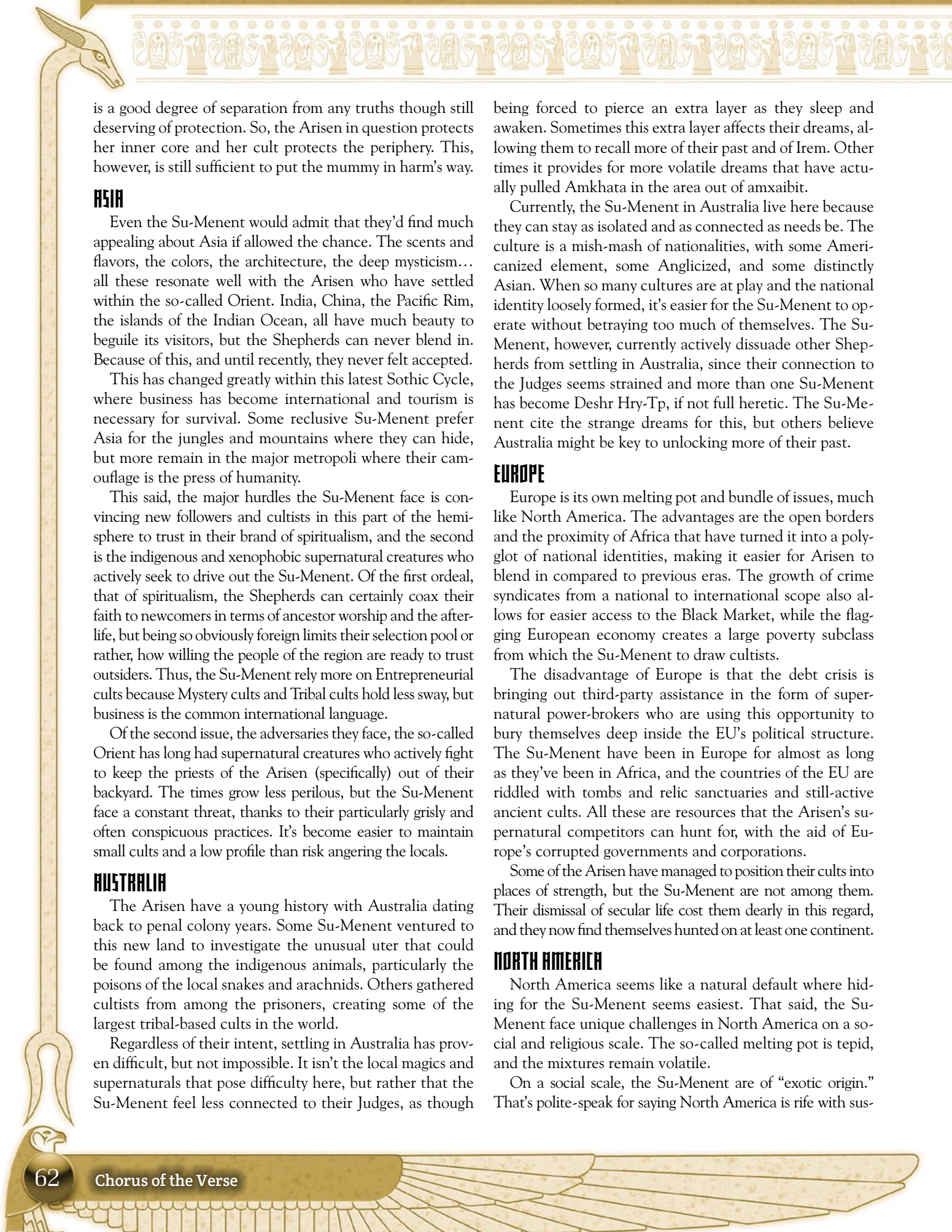
History has flung the Su-Menent far and wide. Sometimes they followed after the pioneers tamed the new frontiers, and sometimes they settled in distant lands well before "civilized men discover" their far-flung retreats. Regardless, the Su-Menent have always adapted in their fashion, most often allowing the ocean to rage around them while they weather the storms.

AFRICA

Mother Africa is home. It is comfort to many Arisen, a connection they feel to no other place on Earth. The Su-Menent who settled on the continent have become overly protective of their home, involving themselves far more in the lives, religions, and politics of the people around them than in other places. How could they not? They have witnessed Africa's rise and steady fall, despite the best attempts of her peacemakers to raise her high.

The Su-Menent rarely involve themselves in the lives of the people around them, but they were human once. Finding a new tragedy on the continent every time they awaken affects them deeply no matter how divested they grow. Centuries of slavery, desertification, massacre after massacre, war, revolution, famine, tribal butchery, dictatorships, and disease have wracked the continent and the Su-Menent of Africa have awoken more times than any of their ilk elsewhere. Their cults are almost always in dire peril or the Arisen's tomb suffers from the constant threat of robbers or intruders or even squatters looking to hide.

Africa is a difficult issue because the Su-Menent want to help but find themselves blocked for a number of reasons. Moreso than North America and Europe, other supernatural entities rule small fiefdoms of influence, and the Su-Menent's aborted attempts to help have been somewhat akin to the fighting in Stalingrad... block by bloody block. The best the Su-Menent can do currently in the face of such crushing poverty and blight is extend their cults so that the tribe has an inner core and a periphery. The inner core is privy to the mummies they serve, but the periphery



is a good degree of separation from any truths though still deserving of protection. So, the Arisen in question protects her inner core and her cult protects the periphery. This, however, is still sufficient to put the mummy in harm's way.

ASIA

Even the Su-Menent would admit that they'd find much appealing about Asia if allowed the chance. The scents and flavors, the colors, the architecture, the deep mysticism... all these resonate well with the Arisen who have settled within the so-called Orient. India, China, the Pacific Rim, the islands of the Indian Ocean, all have much beauty to beguile its visitors, but the Shepherds can never blend in. Because of this, and until recently, they never felt accepted.

This has changed greatly within this latest Sothic Cycle, where business has become international and tourism is necessary for survival. Some reclusive Su-Menent prefer Asia for the jungles and mountains where they can hide, but more remain in the major metropoli where their camouflage is the press of humanity.

This said, the major hurdles the Su-Menent face is convincing new followers and cultists in this part of the hemisphere to trust in their brand of spiritualism, and the second is the indigenous and xenophobic supernatural creatures who actively seek to drive out the Su-Menent. Of the first ordeal, that of spiritualism, the Shepherds can certainly coax their faith to newcomers in terms of ancestor worship and the after-life, but being so obviously foreign limits their selection pool or rather, how willing the people of the region are ready to trust outsiders. Thus, the Su-Menent rely more on Entrepreneurial cults because Mystery cults and Tribal cults hold less sway, but business is the common international language.

Of the second issue, the adversaries they face, the so-called Orient has long had supernatural creatures who actively fight to keep the priests of the Arisen (specifically) out of their backyard. The times grow less perilous, but the Su-Menent face a constant threat, thanks to their particularly grisly and often conspicuous practices. It's become easier to maintain small cults and a low profile than risk angering the locals.

AUSTRALIA

The Arisen have a young history with Australia dating back to penal colony years. Some Su-Menent ventured to this new land to investigate the unusual utter that could be found among the indigenous animals, particularly the poisons of the local snakes and arachnids. Others gathered cultists from among the prisoners, creating some of the largest tribal-based cults in the world.

Regardless of their intent, settling in Australia has proven difficult, but not impossible. It isn't the local magics and supernaturals that pose difficulty here, but rather that the Su-Menent feel less connected to their Judges, as though

being forced to pierce an extra layer as they sleep and awaken. Sometimes this extra layer affects their dreams, allowing them to recall more of their past and of Irem. Other times it provides for more volatile dreams that have actually pulled Amkhata in the area out of amxaibit.

Currently, the Su-Menent in Australia live here because they can stay as isolated and as connected as needs be. The culture is a mish-mash of nationalities, with some Americanized element, some Anglicized, and some distinctly Asian. When so many cultures are at play and the national identity loosely formed, it's easier for the Su-Menent to operate without betraying too much of themselves. The Su-Menent, however, currently actively dissuade other Shepherds from settling in Australia, since their connection to the Judges seems strained and more than one Su-Menent has become Deshr Hry-Tp, if not full heretic. The Su-Menent cite the strange dreams for this, but others believe Australia might be key to unlocking more of their past.

EUROPE

Europe is its own melting pot and bundle of issues, much like North America. The advantages are the open borders and the proximity of Africa that have turned it into a polyglot of national identities, making it easier for Arisen to blend in compared to previous eras. The growth of crime syndicates from a national to international scope also allows for easier access to the Black Market, while the flagging European economy creates a large poverty subclass from which the Su-Menent to draw cultists.



The disadvantage of Europe is that the debt crisis is bringing out third-party assistance in the form of supernatural power-brokers who are using this opportunity to bury themselves deep inside the EU's political structure. The Su-Menent have been in Europe for almost as long as they've been in Africa, and the countries of the EU are riddled with tombs and relic sanctuaries and still-active ancient cults. All these are resources that the Arisen's supernatural competitors can hunt for, with the aid of Europe's corrupted governments and corporations.

Some of the Arisen have managed to position their cults into places of strength, but the Su-Menent are not among them. Their dismissal of secular life cost them dearly in this regard, and they now find themselves hunted on at least one continent.

NORTH AMERICA

North America seems like a natural default where hiding for the Su-Menent seems easiest. That said, the Su-Menent face unique challenges in North America on a social and religious scale. The so-called melting pot is tepid, and the mixtures remain volatile.

On a social scale, the Su-Menent are of "exotic origin." That's polite-speak for saying North America is rife with sus-



picion when it comes to anyone “off-white.” They could be criminals, they could be terrorists, they could be... Muslims. Even Canada and Mexico are under the umbrella of suspicion with terrorists using their common border to enter the US and plan Democracy’s downfall. The United States is under the fear of terrorism and anarchy on a domestic and international scale, so much so that it’s become a surveillance state, and the Su-Menent have much to fear from their skin color to their cults (which might constitute a conspiracy or militia).

When it comes to religion, the Su-Menent are also on tricky footing, though perhaps less so. It’s easy to found a cult and gain members based on religious principles, because life is such that there are many lost souls in North America looking for answers and guidance. That said, North America is gripped in several schisms: Religious vs. Atheist; Christian vs. Muslim. The sides are not as clearly drawn as it looks, with polar extremists being the most vocal, but it has fostered mistrust among the ennui-afflicted North Americans. They are less guiled by words and highly suspicious of anything that smacks of religion, cult, or militia. The Su-Menent are capable of swimming these waters, they have before. But they are difficult waters to tread.

The Su-Menent have found common cause, however, in one element. Poverty. Even Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. considered poverty one of the great social inequalities of his age. With the poor, there is no color, but distinction based on the haves versus the have-nots, and the Shepherds have found it easier to operate their cults among the poor who are desperate for anything that resembles hope or spiritual succor.

MIDDLE EAST

The Middle East is a bittersweet region for the Su-Menent. It should have been the natural heir to Irem, but the desert engulfs all and the region has seen the shadows of Irem flicker on the walls of history before guttering out. The Su-Menent could have abided all this, but then Islam overtook the Middle East and in the span of a century, the Arisen watched their home turn hostile to once pagan beliefs.

Islam has almost never abided polytheism, and only tolerated Christianity and Judaism at its high points. The worship of the Judges, though not understood as such, smacked of paganism and idolatry. Muhammad cleaned out the Kabbah in Mecca, and in doing so destroyed a wealth in relics and Sekhem. For that alone, the Su-Menent have never truly forgiven Islam, and have been at a loss to explain how this upstart religion could become such a global force. In the centuries since, Islam has actively sought out heresies and crushed them in secret, mostly due to other supernaturals keeping old bloody traditions alive and well.

Fortunately for the Su-Menent, many of their relics and artifacts are often mistaken as Ancient Egyptian and thus protected as archeology finds. Unfortunately, that some-

times includes them when their cult fails to survive the years and nobody is left to protect them.

For a time, when the Middle East gained its independence from the Colonial powers, and the region was growing more Westernized, the Su-Menent spread out again to strengthen their cults. That all changed when extremism tainted Islam and terrorism became the preferred tool of change. The Su-Menent have had an easier time of finding cultists and support among those disillusioned with Islam, or those angry at the lack of jobs. But the war on terror has exposed their finances to scrutiny and their tombs and their cultists to surveillance and seizure/rendition. Why? Because the very whiff of secrecy these days equals terrorism in the eyes of Western Intelligence agencies and their agents in the region. Worse, perhaps, is that all this paranoia is now a weapon for various World of Darkness interests to play off another.

SOUTH AMERICA

The Su-Menent are entrenched deep inside South America, and see the continent as a second home after Irem. That the Middle East no longer holds that distinction surprises nobody. The Shepherds love South America for the distinct cultures and languages, for the religious leanings, for the swaths of rugged wilderness and the climate, for the bustling compact cities, for the raw passions of its peoples. It isn’t ancient Irem or Egypt, but the sensations are both exotic and familiar beyond the Arisen’s ability to connect to the modern world. They feel at home and don’t stick out as they might in Asia; the peoples of South America are Indian, and African, and European, and all the mixes in between. And the Arisen fit in with little effort.

The Su-Menent arrived in South America long before Europe had a pope. Ancient Egyptian traders rounding the South African Cape on their merchant routes sometimes grabbed the wrong current as they left the northward-moving Benguela and hit the South Equatorial current to find themselves off the coast of Brazil. The tale of the fortune handful who made the journey back across the South Atlantic current reached the ears of the Su-Menent, a couple who made the journey themselves.

There were Su-Menent in South America and Brazil when the Europeans landed, the Arisen hidden in tombs and temples. Some awoke when their cults of natives awoke them to fight off the intruders, and others awoke on their own when the Spaniards and other Colonialists robbed their tombs. Regardless, the Su-Menent were forced to make space for their new neighbors, and witnessed a time of great turmoil as their followers went from being proud warriors and masters of their own civilizations during one awakening, to being sick, dying, and wiped out in the next. Perhaps this too connected the Su-Menent to the native Indians of South America, as they seemed to be witnessing the tragedy of Irem anew.



Fig. 13

Rockola

Rockola

CHAPTER FIVE

BUILDERS OF ETERNITY

The greatest achievement was at first and for a time, a dream. The oak sleeps in the acorn, the bird sleeps in the egg, and in the highest vision of the soul, a waking angel stirs.

— James Allen

Young and ancient. Goal-driven, but lovers of process. Proud and humble. Shapers of the world around them, who can obsess over the tiniest of details. They are an apparent contradiction, but only for those whose vision is embedded in the now, and in the world immediately around them. The thoughts of the Tef-Aabhi are simply on a broader scale than those of most other mummies, which is at once their greatest strength and their most profound challenge.

The very patience that gives them the time to think at a vast scale is also a curse, once they have trodden the path of judgment, and passed through the Rite of Return. They may be Deathless, but that does not mean their time amongst the living is generous or endless. They have vision, but only bursts of time with which to achieve it, and long periods of absence, during which their efforts can fail.

Despite—or possibly because of—these grand visions, the Hall of Masons has no interest in clawing their way back to some idealized history of their kind, and they place less store by the great past of the Arisen than most. They even have no interest, as such, in rebuilding lost Irem. If it was fit for purpose—if it was to last through eternity—it *would have done so*. It did not, and so it was only an early essay, a step on the way to building something bigger. Just as the older guilds were a step on the way to the coming of the Tef-Aabhi, lost Irem was the first step towards a greater work.

They do not dwell on the past. Some even see their patchy recall of their own histories as vindication of that. The past is only relevant as long as it informs the present and the future. Acknowledge your mistakes. Learn from them. *Move on from them*. Do better next time. Irem is gone. They have moved on. They *will* do better next time.

The vision of the Hall of Masons is a bigger one: to reshape the world in a way that echoes the lines, streets and patterns of that lost metropolis. They wish to bring the world to Irem, not to return Irem to the world. Those that remember the city often perceive it as much as a set of guiding principles whose earliest expression has been lost, but whose form can be shaped in the whole world with the right plans and the right labor. When the plan is perfect-

ed, when the sacred geometry is just right, then, and only then, will a new Irem emerge, one that will last through eternity and change the world utterly.



For the world is full of *heka*, for the wellspring of that *heka* is humanity, and it grows ever more numerous. Each Sothic Turn sees a world with many times the population of the last. The places where people gather need to be shaped in ways that harness that power, that bend it to the purposes of the masters of the Hall of Masons. There are few in the world with the ability and the art to shape and direct their own *heka* through material expression—and the majority of them can only do it unconsciously. It falls to those with the skill, talent and wisdom to use the things they create to harness the *heka* of others to reshape the world. The guild seeks no less than to reshape the world to its masters' designs through harnessing the *heka* of every living thing.

That was the power of lost Irem, imperfect as it was, and while it might be gone, the designs that shaped it are not. These designs must grow ever more intricate. Where once the Tef-Aabhi had but a single city to shape, now the whole world is within their grasp. Even the furthest part of the planet is but a day's ride in an aircraft. And what of flight paths those planes take? Are they not patterns shaping the flow of *heka* around the planet? Should they not be harnessed if the Tef-Aabhi are to serve their purpose?

The answer, of course, is "yes", and the aviation industry has found itself a surprisingly welcoming home for several of the guild. The walkers in the Hall of Masons pride themselves on their ability to learn. Their obsession with their youth as much reflects their desire to hold on to the mindset of the young, that openness to new ideas and concepts and passion for change that defined them in a youth that ended millennia ago. Form begets function begets form. Conceive of yourself as young, and you will think in a young way. This is their magic.

THE PLAN FOR RETURN

To the Deathless – the rest of the Deathless, at least – the pride the Tef-Aabhi take in being the youngest of the guilds is



a mystery. While those that tread the House of Masons take pride in their (relative) youth, they rarely take the time to explain—those of them that remember, at least — why that might be the case. Greatness takes time to achieve (time better spent on that than on pointless explanations), and it stands on the shoulders of others. At a very deep level, the mummies of the tradition of the effigy understand that they are those whose dedication to learning and experimenting surpassed those of their peers. Others turned to the task of *doing* rather than the craft of *learning* so much sooner. The members of the Tef-Aabhi were not content to merely execute the skills that they had learned, but to develop them, and work with them on a grander scale. They do, and learn from that doing, and they then do once more. The cycle continues.

They do not look down on the other guilds, but view them as a successful child might view her parents — the bedrock of their growth and development, beloved and cherished, but a little behind the times.

The Tef-Aabhi see themselves very much as the planners and strategists of the Deathless, always looking at the big picture — often very literally. Their plans encompass cities and continents, and decades of time. Cities and civilizations aren't shaped in weeks, and architects must be content to let their plans sit on the drawing board, and be refined over time, before they finally take physical form. Long terms plans don't easily sit with those whose memory comes and goes — but it must work, for the guild has endured, and that which is worthy endures.

The heart of this riddle is patience. The Tef-Aabhi are the patient ones—the Arisen who are content to think, to plan, to strategize, before they act. Their confidence — their self-identity perhaps — stems less from their skills as much as their vision. It's the vision that gives those skills context and meaning. They certainly see plenty of room for the skills of the other guilds. After all, someone must execute on the vision, and the architect can't deal with every little fiddly structural detail themselves. The slow — and rather erratic — accumulation of centuries of knowledge and experience has certainly added to their sense of themselves as visionaries. If a mummy is defined by his purpose, a walker in the Hall of Masons always carries some element of long-term vision in his purpose, and with it the patience to know that he must endure many Descents and many periods of memory loss to achieve it.

THE PLAN FOR EXECUTION

That is not to say that the Tef-Aabhi can't work very well together. Indeed, as long as one — somewhat challenging — stipulation is met, they can be amongst the most effective of the guilds. That stipulation? One of their number must be very clearly in charge of whatever endeavor they are engaged with. The Hall of Masons is populated



Patience

This very quality also makes the Descent hard for many amongst the Tef-Aabhi to bear. The consciousness of the clock ticking down to their return to unknown worlds of the dead, and of their driving need to achieve the purpose for which they returned, informs their every decision once the initial rush of Sekhem has passed. Being trapped in an eternal mind that values vision and long-term planning and a deathless body that must return to the rest of calm oblivion sooner rather than later births a conflict in every Descent, as the mummy has to make painful choices between devoting time to long-held goals, and rushing through their Descent, or surrendering to the impulse to serve their short-term agenda that drive them through this return to the world. The war between process and goal, between method and result, between the simple and complex, is lived out in every single Descent, and most mummies pass back to their Sarcophagus having passed through a stage of deep frustration and panic, as their brief time back in the light passes from their grasp.

Ironically, for the Deathless, the Tef-Aabhi feel the terror of mortality again and again, as the Descent reaches its end, and they sink into whatever lies beyond death, knowing that things will not be as they left them when they return—whenever that may be. Did they do enough with their cults? Did they progress their larger goal far enough? If their Descent was fast, then the answer is most surely “no”. They are patient. They are long-seeing. They are Deathless. And yet, they never have enough time.

For all their pride in their “youth”, there is also something in the Tef-Aabhi that is jealous of the simplicity of the visions of the older guilds as they see them, a touch of largely illusory, uncharacteristic nostalgia for what they might perceive as a simpler vision for simpler skills.

This conflict is not eased at all by the Hall's firm conviction that the way that they achieve their goals is as important as the goals themselves—so much so, in fact, that a “success” achieved in an improper form might easily be perceived as a failure by one of their number—and her fellows. The Rite of Return was only the beginning of a process of judgment that infects the whole guild, and makes their ability to work with one another fraught. Form and function, motives and actions, results and methods are as one to the Tef-Aabhi and each Arisen must practice their art, contribute to their vision, in the sustained and focused judgment of all his peers. Their existences are a never-ending exam, a test that will drive them through all eternity, and which previous successes count for nothing — especially when many do not even remember them.



with those whose focus is ever on works, which transcend the scale of man in ways both visible and invisible. These projects will — and do — fail in short order if competing visions of how this thing should come to be are distracting from the precise process of executing them and executing them perfectly. Just as the guild ultimately serves the vision of its masters, each project must have its own master from amongst the number working on the project.

These roles are not fixed in stone, and over the centuries relative positions will change within each nome. Indeed, the guild's focus on strategy informing action informing strategy gives most of the Hall of Masons a calm acceptance of the reign of power only being in their hands for limited periods. The Tef-Aabhi are pragmatic enough that, within certain acceptable bounds of political strife, the most suited for the job should be the one leading it. Damaging political strife undermines the purity of the vision's execution, something many of the guild find deeply distasteful on what would be a visceral level, if their bodies still operated that way. Once that execution is impure, the result is imperfect. And if the result is imperfect, the vision cannot have been good. A position of leadership is inherently transitory, and lasts for as long as their work is needed. Of course, some will seek to shape the work so as to guarantee that they will be needed in the very, very long term—and that's perfectly acceptable to most guild members, as long as that process aids the execution, not hinders it.

The ability to switch from leader to follower without resentment or rancor is found more widely in the Hall of Masons than amongst others of their kind—but it is not universal and it is not perfect. It's common for Arisen whose time leading in a nome has come to an end to make arrangements to move to another nome, where they can serve in a project that interests them, and where they don't have to take orders from those who were once their subordinates.

And, as memory erodes between Descents, sometimes the line between leader and follower gets eroded by nothing more than lost memories. A leader may come from the tomb with an imperfect memory of his purpose. An imperfect vision is a failed vision, and thus they might be expected to surrender primacy to a subordinate with better recall.

Delegation is desirable, with each mummy given a core part of the project to guide. A well-architected structure around a nome helps encode needed information within the very organization of the guild. Should elements of purpose or direction be lost in the long, empty sleep between Descents, that insertion of function into form helps bridge the gap. It is, to be sure, an imperfect record of intent, but if function enters form with enough artistic meaning, it will work. The guild has plenty of evidence for this. They are still using this working method, as they have for centuries. It works, therefore it endures.

In short, the Tef-Aabhi can work equally effectively as a leader or a follower, as long as that role is clear and defined. Uncertainty, debate and power-struggles are merely a sign to them that the wrong individual is in charge, and a very, very clear signal that it is their duty to attempt to wrest control of the situation, or ensure a favored ally does the same.

Conflict within the guild tends to be sharp, quick and focused, and with a very clear outcome. A struggle between two would-be architects can rapidly lead one or the other back to their sarcophagus in short order—and it's not uncommon for both to end their Descent shortly thereafter. A vision struggle between the unusually high numbers of mummies of the Hall of Masons operating in parts of Europe after the Second World War lead to the end of the Descent of several guildmasters at a time when responding quickly to the disruption wide-spread bombing had brought to the sacred geometry of the cities of the continent was paramount.


Indeed, nothing brings out conflict in the guild like time pressure. As much as they pride themselves on their adaptability, sudden, catastrophic events can throw off the most careful of plans, destroy objects of beauty and power and derail everything the guild has worked for. The clock ticks. How many Descents will it take to right this wrong?

THE IGNORANCE WE KNOW

Most mummies only get the sense that they are serving a greater plan at moments of high Memory. The Tef-Aabhi on the other hand, almost always have this sensation. That doesn't mean that they have any clear idea whose plan it is—their own, or someone else's?—or indeed, what that plan is in any but the most immediate detail. They have no advantage over the other guilds in knowing this, it's just a facet of who they are as a body of people, and it is often a source of frustration for them—they feel the loss of memory more keenly when they can see the hole in their minds where the knowledge should live.

THE PLAN FOR CHANGE

The Tef-Aabhi are not rigid, inflexible planners, unable to adapt their plans to changing circumstances. Indeed, millennia of execution in short bursts of activity have merely reinforced the tendency of many of the guild to view everything as a work in progress. A plan is a roadmap of the way to perfection, but you deal with what you encounter on the road as necessity demands. Plan. Do. Plan once more. That handful of the guild that have found their way into the software industry have found resonance between their guild's working practices and Agile methodologies. Tighten up the cycle of planning and doing to keep it as short as practicable. Review and



adjust the plan as you go, based on what you've just done. Keep the wheel turning.

The increasing pace of change in the modern world is making this harder, though. Each Descent is now accompanied by a clawing worry that the mummy is missing out: that there is simply not enough time to learn everything they need to, and achieve what they need to do. Technologies evolve faster. The state of the art in computing at the end of one Descent can be a museum piece by the beginning of the next. Buildings are rendered obsolete faster than ever, and replaced or (worse in some ways) refurbished in a manner that destroys their role in *heka* workings. The current Turn finds the servants of the Father of Idols more dependent on their cults than they have been at any time in their existence. Delegation comes easily to this guild. Trust does not, but they find that they need to trust their cultists to be the ones who understand the new world they awaken into, and provide them with the distilled essence of what they need to know. After all, trivialities pass into dust quickly. Fads and trends are of little interest to the Tef-Aabhi, as they are only interested in those things that last. If they last, their form is right and the *heka* of those that conceived this idea, that invented these objects, gives them longer lives than those shaped by lesser artists.

It's in this context, for example, that some of the Tef-Aabhi are coming to view digital technology as a tool that is worth bringing to their carefully nurtured toolbox. In the surging of electrons around silicon pathways, unleashed from the minds of those who craft the device, and shaped by those who use it, some mummies who have passed through several Descents in the last two decades, are finding a concept with a close resonance to the idea of *heka* surging around a temple. Their mental model of computing power is that of programmers and chip designers infusing these crafted objects with their own *heka* in such a way that others, less talented souls who lack the skill to understand what is occurring, to manipulate that energy for their own ends. The smartphone in someone's pocket is oddly close to a relic for the masses. Some, though, are troubled by this notion. Is this process the beginning of a diminution in the significance of the Father of Idol's arts? Will they slip down to the status of other guilds, building things that are no more than tools for the use of others?

Those very few who have wrapped their ancient brains around the internet are at once fascinated and horrified by it. Did one amongst their number conceive such a thing? Or are there other forces at work here? What is the internet but a vast machine for channeling the *heka* of countless mortals through an intricate architecture of silicon, copper and fiber optic cable? To what ends is this being channeled, and by whom? Each and every time they Descend, they again find themselves taken aback by the speed with which it has

developed, to the point where it has found its way into the pockets of a majority of the living. The minds of the Tef-Aabhi are well-equipped to see that the inherent incongruity of something that is at once tiny and personal, and yet global and pervasive is a great, great magical working—possibly greater than anything they envisioned themselves.

BUILD THE TEMPLE AS YOU WOULD THE NOVEL

The tomb of one of the Tef-Aabhi is more than a place for their bones to rest between Descents, and far more than a place for their followers to call them back from death. It is more even than a place to realign themselves. It is an expression of who they are, their art and vision for themselves, and as such they are never finished. They are ever evolving pieces of work and perhaps the closest thing to a hobby anyone of the Arisen has. They plan changes to their tomb, they implement, they improve their plans and the cycle continues.

Often without realizing they are doing it, the Tef-Aabhi will reshape their tomb based on their state of memory. Objects and decorations whose significance they no longer recall are moved away from the central chambers into secondary space. A very low memory mummy's space might reflect the concerns of the modern world far more than those of antiquity. Conversely, a high Memory Arisen might build a tomb up to a splendor that reflects the homes of lost Irem—but improves on them.

Whatever their aesthetic balances at any time, these spaces are always ruthlessly functional, while also being exquisitely beautiful. Form is function for the guild. The concealing panels of traps will be beautiful to the eye, deadly to the touch and yet also serve as records. Somehow, they will also manage to look threatening without being obvious. No space is wasted practically, magically or aesthetically. There's a sense in which the Tef-Aabhi have come to view their tombs as extensions of themselves, rather than somewhere they dwell. They are the personality of the mummy—what's left of it, at least—and their purpose made stone. Their own struggles to regain some sense of who they were and are will be reflected in their constant redevelopment of their own tombs.

Any decision to move location is a huge undertaking, and is usually only happens in *extremis*. A deposed guildmaster may feel compelled to move, or the summons of a cult might require it. A wise cult will already have made some preparations, for the new tomb will need to be as integral to the mummy as his existing one. It will need time to design, and resources to construct, and even more time to be completed.

In short: if you're playing one of the Tef-Aabhi, take pleasure in your tomb design. Planning it out in conjunction with your Storyteller, sketching its looks, and tinker-



ing with its design between stories to reflect changes in your character can be one of the best ways of getting into the head of this guild. And, on that inevitable day when danger seeks you out in your tomb, those scenes will be all the more vivid in your head...

THE CITY PLANNERS


The Tef-Aabhi like structure, and they like structures that are flexible and enduring. It's both their purpose and their practice. Good structures are flexible—they can twist and turn in the wind, when the earth-shakes, when disasters happen. But they do not break. They last. They build their relationships as they build their cities, to be a perfect expression of both their aims and their methods.

Their organizational structures always have a point of command, a final arbitrator of decisions, the architect whose vision will win out. Even in nomes with a sufficient population to warrant two guildmasters, one will clearly be the senior partner. The more senior Arisen takes the role of planner and visionary, the junior takes charge of the execution. The role of every other mummy in the city is carefully allocated, with precise areas of responsibility. When changes in events brings the roles of two or more members into conflict, they are expected to resolve it quickly, ef-

ficiently, and without any compromise to the project the guild is engaged in. Anything less will bring down the critical judgment of their guild-mates on both participants. Attempts to assign blame are *never* accepted. Process matters as much as achievement, and when process goes wrong, all achievement is undermined. Everyone is expected to take responsibility when this occurs.

To other guilds, the Tef-Aabhi of the city can look like a frighteningly united front. It's only their relentless focus on the bigger picture that stops them dominating day-to-day activity in the nome. But this unity is, in effect, an illusion, one of the greater pieces of strategic planning of the guild. Each city's group of masons is, essentially, a voluntary dictatorship in the work of purpose. Many of the members may disagree dramatically with the vision of their senior guildmaster, but that disagreement is sublimated into the single-minded purpose of achieving that vision—or, at least, in delivering their assigned portion of it. It's hard for the enemies to make much of this disagreement, because the mummies themselves are used to pushing it from their own mind. It's not that they don't have an opinion — it's just that their opinion is not the predominant one at the moment. If it was the best one, it would be the dominant one right now, wouldn't it?





The guildmaster quite literally speaks for his guild members, as they have assigned large-scale decision making to her. They focus on their own projects instead. The problem inherent in this structure is that communication with others of the Arisen in the nome is limited by the communication skills of the guildmaster. That works acceptably if they're prepared to hive off a section of their precious time away from achieving their own goals and into communication. This is not a frequent occurrence. All too often, the works of the architects are made harder by their lack of awareness of the other guild's agendas.

Beneath the guildmaster(s) are the senior architects of the guild's work in the nome. They are, in effect, the project managers, with clear edicts to deliver certain parts of the guild's vision for the city, in a manner that wins the approval of their peers. They work largely independently, under the scrutiny of other Masons, but not in direct coordination with them except when the need arises. For the majority of nomes, that's as deep as the structure ever gets, with the work of cultists and unwitting employees or tools of the cults filling the warm body count at the bottom of the hierarchy. In larger cities, occasionally a third layer is needed, with the senior architects delegating to a small team of architects below them, each having their own clear areas of responsibility. This is not a position that the Deathless aspire to. They gain all the responsibility for the work of others that a guildmaster has, without any of the power to implement their own vision. Such structures only tend to last for short periods of time, and are responsible for more intra-guild conflict than anything else. Of course, with the mass risings that accompany the latest Turn, such arrangements have suddenly become significantly common, with all the Tef-Aabhi of many very large nomes all over the world are becoming pressure cookers of conflict between masons on a scale never seen between the Turns of the Wheel.

Guildmasters react by exerting their authority more strongly, as they see the extra resources as a rare opportunity to implement more ideas faster than they ever could before—and the balance between achieving the perfect process and keeping the perfect result grows ever more precarious as the numbers involved increase.

Even in quieter periods of the cycle, nome gatherings of Tef-Aabhi are business-like affairs. Opinion has little place in these debate, which are about progress, method and achievement. The vision is not up for discussion—each participant's performance in her assigned role in the work is. The guildmaster's own work is not open for public judgment or discussion, unless one of the other Arisen is prepared to open the formal challenge of vision process. This, by the Arisen's very nature, has to be fast. It's a distraction both from their summoned purpose and their long-term

goals, and a rapidly accelerating Descent awaits the local population if the matter cannot be resolved quickly.



Once a formal challenge is declared, all guild members are given a week to prepare to talk to their own vision for the group's work. Then in a single day, each vision, is debated, assessed and judged. No formal vote is ever taken. There is no need. Whoever has been the most persuasive will have gathered the most followers, and the others will recognize that. After all, the best vision will endure, through its own virtue, right? If the old guildmaster was deposed, some will stay in the nome, others will make preparations to leave the area, probably at the end of their Descent, which will probably come extremely rapidly. When they arise again, they will be in a new nome, with only partial memories of what they lost, and often take on the roles of junior guildmaster and one of the city's nomarch. Such mummies often spend several Descents concentrating on their purposes they were summoned for and a little advice to their new guild peers before fully settling into their new nome.

Interestingly, the Tef-Aabhi seems to have an unusually large number of people of guildmaster status, but who lack rank or privilege. They are often a crucial part of inter-nome communication, Deathless with the experience and rank to talk with other guildmasters as equals, but whose travels do not distract them from keeping works on track. The rapid increase in speed of national and international travel has steadily increased the amount of communication between groups of guild members, and while this contact is far from universal, it has made elements of trans-nome communication more feasible, with more regular contact maintained through the phone and Internet.

IDOL REFLECTIONS

The makers of idols are not as prolific in the creation of effigies as they once were. Where once they wove great magic from large works of public "art", now such workings are more likely to be conducted through architecture, urban planning and infrastructure design. They are proud of this — they have moved beyond their early roots, and kept their magic vital through expanding it to match the statements of the modern world. You can shape a person through manipulation of their image, but how much more powerful is it to reshape a culture through the landscape that is inextricably linked with their self-identity?

The old skill of effigy-making is very much a personal art these days, reserved for those occasions when one of the Arisen turns her very focused attention onto an individual, place or even a small organization. Such workings are small, private and intensely focused. To be invited to work with one of the Tef-Aabhi on such a project is a token of deep trust, strong shared cause or desperation on the



part of the mason. This is not a work they involve others in lightly. These targeted projects are a sense of intense relief and power to the Arisen. They allow them to work without the burden of managing the cult for which they are dependent for anything larger. It can be an almost meditative practice, and for that reason it is often practiced more by mummies with high Memory scores. It gives them a sense of reconnection with who they once were, even if the daily practice of their skills looks utterly different from what they did in lost Irem.

However, the current Turn has seen a number of the more technologically-minded arisen start to turn their attention back to smaller, more focused workings. These progressive mummies — often the selfsame ones who have lead the guild in acquiring new skills down the centuries—are exploring the idea of 3D-printing as a means of creating the physical component of their work. The materials are limited, of course, but the Tef-Aabhi are nothing if not adept in working within the restrictions imposed upon them by materials. Those who are working with the technology are finding the ability to create objects of incredible precision easily and comfortably within a few hours—rather than the days, weeks or months it might take with traditional or industrial crafting methods—to be a profound change to the way they operate. Such design and build timescales are so much more Descent-friendly that they have the ability to achieve more supplementary goals in the limited time they have to work with.

A few have even started experimenting with larger works, which involve many printers working in unison, often through the support of their cult (and certainly the clubbable nature of much mortal maker culture makes the creation of *ad-hoc* or new cults in this field more than feasible). With careful planning, skilled support in computer design and modeling and a rapid assembly process much can be achieved in very little time. How could that not appeal to one of the time-pressed?

A very, very few are starting to experiment with co-ordinated use of the technology across the world. Never before has such a useful crafting technology's development coincided so very neatly with a period when so many of the Arisen are active. To neglect the possibilities inherent in this new tool would be to turn their faces from their long-held code. They're not relying on it just yet, but who knows what the next few years will bring for the makers of idols?

BRICK UPON BRICK

What of the four principles the guild is built upon? Its purposes and its practices are deeply intertwined. One could swap the two purposes for the two practices and still have something that made perfect sense—and which defines the guild as it is now. Thought and action are not

separate concepts in the guild's default mindset, but two things that have been rendered into one beautiful whole through centuries of practice and development. Practice and purpose are as one.

WHAT IS WORTHY SHALL LAST

If there's one word that one would not use to describe the Tef-Aabhi, it's nostalgic. They are ruthless in casting aside what does not work. Utility is all, and is inherently tied up in function and longevity. Conversely, they are good at avoiding the trap of neophilia as well. Just because something is new doesn't make it good. The ultimate goal of the guild is utterly wrapped up in this tenet; they ultimately desire to build those things that are worthy and will last.

More prosaically, his tenet serves two core purposes. It discourages innovation for innovation's sake, a weakness some of the guild can fall pray to. You can build the new with reliable and tested tools and ideas—and that works. Too much change at once can be unmanageable within the context of the brief glimpses of the living world Descents allow.



It also frees mummies from attachments to the past. That which failed was not worthy. Because it was not worthy, it failed. Learn the lessons from that failure, and next time build something worthy. An architect who struggles too long with a clearly failing concept or tool will quickly gather the disapproval of her peers. Results matter—but so do working methods. If the result is failure, the working methods are unworthy. This tenet is a clear call for mummies who have failed to reexamine their whole process, determine their errors, and perfect themselves as tools of creation.

Despite their own distaste for conservative thinking, this tendency can make guild members cling on to outmoded tools and ideas for slightly too long. There is an inherent inertia in assuming something is fit for purpose solely because it always has been—and a risk in adopting a new tool before it is properly tested. Finding the point of balance between the two is critical and very difficult. And that's why the next tenet exists:

ESCHEW NO PROVEN TOOL, RELY ON NO UNPROVEN ONE

Two words are doing a lot of work in this tenet, and they are chosen well, with an eye to function and longevity: “eschew” and “rely”. This is not a call to conservatism, but one to experiment, with risks managed. You should not eschew proven tools—but that does not mean you always have to use them either. You should not rely on unproven tools, but there's no reason for you not to try them.

This also makes the guild surprisingly co-operative with others of their kind, especially in conjunction with the first



tenet. The other guilds are proven tools, and they have lasted. They are, in their way, worthy. There is a practical, rationality to this approach to their endless existence that makes the guild as a whole productive.

Proven cults are not lightly abandoned, but changes and variations on a theme often practiced. Established comrades are rarely abandoned, but newcomers are forced to work hard—and very, very long—to establish themselves. This tenet alone illustrates just how hard it is for mummies to join the Father of Idols.

The guild is, essentially, progressive. It builds on proven successes, uses tools that work, and experiments with new possibilities as they arise. If these experiments are failures, they are never catastrophic ones, and they can move on quickly from them. If they succeed, all the better, for their repertoire has grown. Note too, that the effectiveness of a new tool does not need to be proven by each mummy in turn. Another of the guild's proof adds to their body of knowledge, and can be enough to move something into the trusted repertoire. Their guildmates have endured. They are worthy.

PLAN TO PURPOSE, BUILD TO PLAN

It's easy to categorize people as inherently "thinkers" or "doers." The Tef-Aabhi reject such a distinction. Planning without action is void of purpose, while acting without planning is a surefire model of failure. Action and planning are part of a whole, a circle which turns like the Sothic Wheel, like day and night. You plan and you act and you plan and you act. Their existence is endless so this wheel will turn forever.

That's the ideal. The reality of the Descent does not make this easy. How can you plan when the harsh demands of your summoned purpose tugs at your consciousness? How can you act to plan when you were pulled from your tomb for reasons not of your own choosing? What might have been once a reminder not to lose yourself to the theoretical delights of planning, or the easy satisfaction of action, now serves as a prompt to try to rise beyond the immediate urgings of their present. They cannot ignore such purposes entirely—that would see them descend too fast—but they can try to keep some focus on the plans they have, and the actions they must take now.

However, it can also act as a focus for activity during the Descent. If the mummy arises in anger and violence, she should then take time to plan. As soon as the planning is done, it should flow smoothly into action. They soothing flow of thought and action can take away the gnawing uncertainty of their existence — for at least a little while.

NOTHING IS BEYOND UNDERSTANDING

...but do you have the *time* to understand it? For the first time in their existence, the Deathless are feeling acutely their short-

age of time. Not just the pressure of the accelerating Descents that mark their returns, but a sense that the sum of important information has become too vast and complex to master.

Is this just a facet of the Turn—something they must endure, learn from and adapt to? Or is this Turn the ones that breaks them? Has mortal society evolved to the point where it changes more quickly than the Rite of Return allows for? Has this tenet reached the end of its life and proved its unworthiness?

DEVIATING FROM THE PLAN

What would drive one of the Tef-Aabhi to walk away from their fellows, to abandon the execution of the great plan after millennia of loyalty and struggle? Even a mummy can long for rest. The relentless grind of rebirth into a short burst of activity amongst the living that must walk the knife-edge between "that which I must do now" and "that which I must ensure continues" drives some Arisen to wish for a simpler Descent, one that is focused only on the task in hand.

Indeed, it is often mummies with high levels of Memory that make the decision to leave the guild. They recall snatches of a time in early Irem, where they were craftsmen and nothing more, and they long for it. Having found themselves again, they long to once more lose themselves in the simple act of creation, or communication. Their departure rarely troubles their peers. They are acutely aware of the need for more doers than planners. If one amongst their number wishes to confess his lack of vision, and return to a more suitable level for himself, why, that's one less voice to vie with for control of the vision for a nome.

That's not to say that they're resistant to those whose vision starts to grow beyond that of their existing hall. The Rite of Return gifts the returnee with a unique perspective on time. They see the passage of history in flashes like a manic slideshow that highlights trends and patterns far more easily than individual events. Over the centuries, even the most single minded of craftsmen can come to see the world through more strategic eyes. The terrible price they pay in memory aids this process—when the details are lost to you the patterns are easier to make out. The shape of the wood is clearer when you can't quite recall what a tree is, exactly.

However, a new sense of vision is not enough on its own. The mummy who wishes to join the ranks of the Tef-Aabhi must also stand up to the eternal judgment of his peers. It's here that the majority fall down. To live under constant judgment, where your precise way of working is as important as the results is a terrible strain, especially without practice. Any signs of conservatism, or a lack of ability to learn new skills and develop new ideas is judged harshly. Habits and rigid thinking will rapidly see the new Tef-Aabhi iso-



lated from the important work of the nome. Many would-be transferees assume that this is an initiation period, and only discover with time that they are very, very wrong. Some will adapt, become part of the guild and perhaps, if they are very lucky, and memory loss is very kind to them, be treated like a true member, not an incomer. More often, the attempt fails and the Arisen finds themselves slowly drifting back into their own ways, until the day they rise once more, and all memory of their time with the Tef-Aabhi is gone.

THOSE WHO EXECUTE

If you wish the sense of security that comes with the feeling that you are part of something greater than yourself, a contributor to a scheme that will make a manifest difference to the world long after you yourself have passed away, you will find membership in the cult of Tef-Aabhi a rewarding experience.

If you aren't great at following orders, and find that you tend to take a little too much initiative, you'll find it a brutally brief one.

The Tef-Aabhi need their cults. They are planners who exist in brief snatches of time, and their only way of bridging those snatches is to have a cult you can trust, through experience, transaction or instilled terror to do what you need them to do. As noted above, the modern age has made that even more critical. Technology, societal mores and even cities change so fast that a good cult is the only shorthand they have to understanding the changes in the world since they last Descended without wasting time. They can be a sifting mechanism, making clear which innovations and skills are worth pursuing, and which are fads. In the end, they're also going to be the ones who do the majority of the work implementing the mummy's plans.

A Mason with a weak and ineffectual cult isn't an architect at all—he's an ineffectual dreamer and a waste of eternity.

Delegation is critical to the way the guild operates. They are attempting to execute long-scale plans with bursts of activity and awareness—and often only partial recollection of what they're trying to achieve. To this end, many mummies embed the nature of their plans within the very structures of their cults, in much the same way that the guild's structure in a nome will attempt to embody their objectives, to ensure execution accurately both in their times of absence, and in those times when they are present but lacking clear memory of exactly what they are working to achieve. A well-run, well-organized cult can be a powerful tool in pursuit of goals, but also a useful crutch against a fading memory.

How, though, can they be sure that the embedded goals of their cult remain the same between Descents? Memory is a fickle thing for the Arisen, and trust is hard to bestow

without the evidence that things are as they should be, or as they were planned to be. Trust is vital to achieving the mummy's goals, but hard to bestow and verify with ever-fluctuating recall.

There are good reasons to be cautious: those who rise to power in cults tend, very naturally, to be those who seek power. And most who seek power have a strong desire to wield it. The more they wield it, the more they wish to wield it. How does the old saying about absolute power go, again? It's an easy cognitive step from enforcing correct adherence of any plan on others, to modifying that plan to "improve" it—in the eyes of the cult leader, that is. This is particularly prevalent in corporate cults in recent years, where the "cult of the CEO" has grown to such a point that many forget that their cult is not their own, and start implementing changes that can lead to a brief, bloody and definitive boardroom battle in the early hours of the true cult master's return.

Yet, given the long periods that the cults must operate without their patron's guidance and advice, initiative must be taken to adapt to changing circumstances. Events occur—either through the hostile actions of others or merely through happenstance—that rely on adaption and evolution of plans, just to keep the overall goal on track. The Arisen need those who can do this, but it is a constant burden to them during their Descents. After all, the line between initiative in the service of the plan, and initiative in service of an individual's plan, is wafer thin, and easy to mistake even with a mummy's intuitive sense of when events during their Descent are straying from their plan. Some loyal, but creative, cult leaders have lost their posts and lives unnecessarily, while some more megalomaniacal ones have successfully directed their patron into serving their own interests as much as the plan for several Descents—causing issues which can take years to untangle. Newly-risen mummies are never good, empathic judges of character and mistakes are easily made. When the Tef-Aabhi plan on such long timescales, even small mistakes can have major consequence decades hence. Sometimes, the Arisen's worst enemy might be her own cult leader, who is already long dead, but whose works live on, encoded into the way the cult the mummy relies on operates.

For centuries the Arisen have relied on written documents to aid them in this process of keeping their cults in check, but the digital era, with its ability to transform documents into digital entities that can be changed all but invisibly has created a new challenge for the Arisen who have only descended infrequently in the last decade.

THOSE WHO TOIL

A clear majority of the cults of the Tef-Aabhi are corporate—but of course many of them didn't start that way.







Anyone with the power, money or influence to shape the physical environment, and with it *heka* flows, is of interest to the guild's Arisen. There are clear lines of continuity from the treasurers of petty rulers centuries ago, to the major landholders of today. Skilled guilds of history are reformed as corporate businesses or consultants (or other, less licit organizations—see below). The face of the business changes—and continues to change—through the centuries, without ever changing the actual business being transacted at the heart of it.

The nature of much corporate life—the mix of ambition without too much ambition, innovation without too much risk—attracts the sort of people whom the Arisen value; hard-working, driven, independent enough to make the decisions that are needed, but not too independent that they become a problem. A wise Arisen knows how to feed his ego and sense of self-importance within the context of their “employment.” That’s the carrot. The stick, of course, is the most brutal of boardroom firings...

In the early 21st century, property developers and investors are a powerful force in implementing the plans of the Tef-Aabhi's masters, and many established names with long-term freeholds held for centuries have mummies lurking in their core. Real estate tends to move in cycles that the Arisen find comfortable working with—long-term development arcs and plans, which can be established early and clearly, and then left to others to execute. The problems that arise—zoning disputes, planning changes, government intervention, or natural disasters—are often ones that are not easily handled during a single Descent, unless the mummy handles her Sekhem with extreme care. A good working relationship with the public management of the company is critical, and mistakes made in the early moments of the mummy's return can create complications down the line. Meetings with core legal, planning, or other field specialists are scheduled for a comfortable time after the mummy is awakened...

For centuries, though, the interests of the Tef-Aabhi have spread beyond the merely physical to those forms of human, goods, and information flows that seem to carry with them significant *heka*. An astute student of trade history might spot the connection between the once-legitimate slave trade and the real estate development it funded, and make some worrying connections about wholesale reshaping of *heka* flows around the world that started centuries ago.

Through the natural process of societal evolution, most of the Tef-Aabhi have developed corporate cults



which focus on the infrastructure businesses of the world: architecture, construction, logistics, aviation, and distribution. Some of the more trusted cult leaders have successfully made acquisitions in the fields of online infrastructure, too: the routers, switches and fiber-optic cabling that make up the internet backbone are as pliant to the benefits of sacred geometry as other forms of infrastructure, and such investment have proven very useful during the current Turn of the Sothic Wheel.

Other industries that reshape the world catch their attention, too: mining, forestry, and agribusiness. Have you ever wondered about how and why mobile phone masts are placed where they are? You would not be alone in that.

THOSE WHO BELONG

If corporate cults are one offshoot of earlier historical iterations of the Tef-Aabhi's support structure, the other are the more tribal craftsmen's guilds. They are predicated on the idea of belonging, and are most powerful amongst those professions who think of their work as something that's inherent to who they are, not just as something that they do during the working day. While a corporate cult is a way of harnessing a large number of 9 to 5 workers to your ends, the tribal cult works with smaller numbers of intensely committed people, driven by the human need of belonging, of social identity. Think of dozens of small, tight craft guilds, posing as regional trade associations, clubs for particular professions or charitable bodies—or even a family who seem to have their fingers in a lot of pies, and connections with a lot of related families. They are respectable on the outside, for the few who are aware of them and care enough to pay attention, yet full of ritual and superstition on the inside. The Freemasons are perhaps the best known of this sort of organization—but a body so well known for its unusual rituals and membership restrictions would be of little use to the Arisen. They'd be better served by a corporate, if such a public face is needed. Mummies who prefer to work through influence rather than direct action tend to develop these sorts of cults. Why, for example, should you invest in buying and developing property over the decades, when you can get the same effect by controlling the thought processes of the local architects—or the planners that approve, reject, or set specifications on the design? Why buy airlines, when you can control the people who allocate flight plans and landing slots? Sometimes the subtle pressure can change the world in the greatest of ways.

This is not just about targeting high-level tradespeople, either. Sometimes the same ends can be reached with less attention through the people who do the work. A drinking club of construction workers which has a very specific inner circle can have as much effect on the fine details


of a city's layout, from a *heka* point of view, of course, as the urban planners believe they do. The sense that you are more than just a laborer, but part of an ancient order that really controls the city/country/world, can be an enticing prospect to someone who spends his days doing much the same task day in, day out, while taking orders from someone who he just doesn't respect. These cults are staffed by little people whose insecurity won't let them acknowledge that, and who grasp onto any opportunity for that feeling of inclusive specialness, however bizarre it may seem at first glance.

Such cults require less inherent deception on the mummy's part—there's less need to try and assume the role of a little-seen managing partner when the inner circle of your cult are already introduced to the idea that they are serving a very explicit, very incarnate higher power. The same subtle touch that defines these cults can often be seen in their management. Why keep people loyal through threats of physical violence when subtle pressure on their livelihood can be just as effective? When commissions dry up, bills don't get paid and redundancy threatens, people quickly come around. Even if they don't, who is going to believe that their business failure is down to a hidden cult of space planners, rather than their own inadequacies as a businessman?

Cult leaders in these bodies wield significantly more power over individual members than their corporate equivalents. Business is not done through corporate hierarchy and the chain of command, but through subtle influence and direction. The cult leader has to be able to be a convincing voice of the Arisen between Descents, and astute enough to see changes, and recruit the right people to counter them. Such people want reward, of course, and no wise mummy will make too much of a fuss if a certain amount of the accumulated influence goes into making sure that the leader's own nest is well-feathered. Such concerns—and people—are transitory, and irrelevant as long as the plan is maintained...

THOSE WHO COLLUDE

It takes a certain kind of mind to achieve long term plans through a few, quiet, surgical moves. There are those amongst the Tef-Aabhi who think in exactly that way, and they need cults to support them who have the ability to apply pressure in exactly the same way. Sometimes, you don't need financial resources; sometimes you don't need the people who do the work. You just need to apply very focused, very powerful pressure on the right person. And the right decision gets made. This has grown harder for the Arisen as the centuries turn. The happy days of decades-long absolute rulers, and century-long ruling dynasties have



long passed. Secular power passes through too many hands too quickly for the comfort of most Arisen. A presidential term of eight years is little more than an eyeblink against the light of eternity, and little enough time to cultivate any sort of useful influence over them. What, then, to do?

Know their secrets, know their weaknesses, and then ruthlessly exploit them for what is needed.

Such cults broadly fall into two groups: the analysts and the actors. The analysts are the heart of any such cult, working to maintain the progress of events that their Arisen master has set in motion, and spotting any significant deviation from that plan. Their job is to spot where the impediment to progress is, analyze him or her, learn about them and remove their negative influence, through pressure or more direct means. The actors then step in, using more direct means, from delivery of incriminating documents, honey traps or simple bribery, through the ultimate sanction of elimination. A difficult politician can be removed by a carefully timed release of the sex scandal they've been hiding to the press. A spouse with a drug "issue" can easily be persuaded to change their partner's mind when the right rewards are offered.

These cults leave their fingerprints nowhere. Their actions are unseen, and their results attributed to more normal processes. Their patron's abilities can be called into play at both the analysis and the action stage, if an extra supernatural edge is needed against a particularly recalcitrant problem.

Only a very few cult members will have any sense that they're working for something out of the ordinary. In most cases, they'll be under the impression that they're just working for a very well-funded, very well-run criminal enterprise. The cult leaders will help fund the organization between Descents—and between times of need—by contracting out the basics of their services to criminal organizations, or to the less scrupulous business types in the meantime. This keeps their skills sharp, money in the bank, and helps create a confusing smokescreen of activity should anyone start suspecting their existence. Those other contracts are random elements that obscure the pattern (but which can occasionally backfire in a way that requires the cult's patron to be called back...).

Equally, many members of the cult are unaware of their role in its work. From the politics journalist who gains tips on the foibles of major figures from a trusted source, to the surveillance expert who gets regular commissions from an organization that always pays well and quickly, the small core membership is supplemented by an extensive network of contacts and contractors that do most of the work.

SALIDJI, LIFE OF THE CITY

Quotes: "People are so free with their heka. It would be rude not to use it."

"It's all in the details. Mend a window, reshape the city. That's always been our way."

"Let's get a guerrilla gardening project going on that derelict land."

Background: If the grounds of lost Irem had gardens, then Salidji would have been a tender and planner of those gardens. For her, the living elements of the urban infestation urge are as important as the materials that shape the buildings. Effigies in context have so much more power that those removed from it, and a well-sculpted piece of landscaping works powerfully upon the effigy. That may have been her role, once. She has no idea. All that she knows is that shaping the people of the city to shove their own environment is a powerful tool indeed.

Decay, ruin, and abandonment corrupt the city's heka flows. They make workings harder, and tend, through the broken window effect—which suggests that lack of maintenance on the part of a few residents will lead to a general deterioration amongst the population as a whole—to erode the effect of previous work in shaping the city.

Only the very closest members of Salidji's cult understand that she's anything more than a particularly persuasive advocate of the guerrilla gardening movement, but something more powerful, and far, far older. Most buy into her image as an ancient spirit of the planet, bringing life to dead spaces of the city, without ever noticing her almost complete disinterest in "natural" spaces outside the city.

In recent Descents, she's taken to acting as an urban trouble-shooter. Her cult of followers has grown markedly through strategic use of the Internet, and a few well-viewed talks online, which have led to the establishment of copycat projects around the world, which Salidji, via her cult, is called upon to consult about. In some cases, that's meant co-operation with the residents of the nome she's visiting—and in a few, outright conflict.

Description: Salidji endeavors to look smart, and takes advice from her cultists on appropriate "business casual" for whatever region she's working in. She's no good at it though, and she always looks slightly like a young teenager playing dress-up in her outfits. It does, at least, go some way to throwing her opponents off-balance—the mortal ones, at least—who tend to expect a hippy or a middle-aged earth mother.

Storytelling Hints: Her manner tends to switch between focused intensity when in conversation on a subject that interests her, to distraction and often complete detachment when her attention drifts. She very quickly gets



distracted by the environment around her, analyzing, planning, turning possibilities over in her mind, to the point of missing the gist of a conversation entirely. She often prefers to work around this by playing second fiddle to one of her cultists, letting them be seen as the public face of whatever project they're engaged on, and gathering the information she needs, while Salidji focuses on the big picture. When she does engage, she's incredibly intense, passionate, and persuasive.

Concept: Urban Interventionist

Decree: Heart

Judge: Shet-Kheru, the Orderer of Speech

Guild: Tef-Aabhi

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 2; Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2; Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Skills: Academics 3, Computer 1, Crafts 4, Drive 2, Expression 4 (Oratory), Persuasion 4, Science 2, Survival 3 (Foraging)

Merits: Cult (Tribal; Reach 4 Grasp 2), Enigma 1, Guild Status (Tef-Aabhi) 3, Inspiring 3, Tomb (Geometry 3, Peril [Curse] 1)

Affinities: Godsight, Guardian Wrath, Living in Now, Model Lifeweb, Pharaoh Reigns Anew

Utterances: Blessed is the God King, Command the Beasts, Obedient Clay

Pillars: Ab 4, Ba 3, Ka 2, Ren 4, Sheut 2

Sekhem: 7 by mid-2013

Willpower: 4

Memory: 4

Virtue: Faith (Salidji truly believes in the idea that the Arisen in general have a purpose, and that the Tef-Aabhi have a role to play in that. She believes that her interventions, at their best, serve a part of that purpose few other architects turn their minds to.)

Vice: Pride (Salidji sometimes loses track of the major purpose behind her work, reveling in the process of carving out something of meaning from spaces in the city rendered devoid of purpose. Her purpose and practice can become ends in themselves, leaving her work a vanity project, whose role in the greater scheme of the city is trivial or obscure.)

Initiative: 6

Defense: 4

Speed: 11

Size: 5

Armor: 0

Health: 7



CHAPTER SIX

KEYS TO THE CHIMIBER

The measure of a man is what he does with power.
— Plato

The Arisen are Deathless at the expense of certain aspects of life. As foremost among these, their endless cycle of Sekhem cannot replace one facet of the creative spark: the genius required to make mystic vessels. Every Arisen feels the passions of an artisan, of a *maker* of things. The Rite of Return didn't dim that ambition, but forced it to express itself in new ways. Against obscured Memory, Arisen guilds weave occult lore into their traditions. They can't make new relics, but they *can* bind them to initiated souls and further refine their own occult practices through proprietary Affinities. They haven't mastered Shan'iatu sorcery, but have adapted their houses' timeless rites into powerful Utterances.

It remains to be seen whether these efforts will liberate the Arisen or open a road to unimagined hazards. The Five Guilds have endured the ages through preservation of ancient secrets and innovating new solutions to the ever-shifting hazards of the time. Along the way, these organizations have amassed considerable stockpiles and records of their own power. Although the specifics and ritual trappings vary, each guild remains first and foremost an occult organization dedicated to its signature magical craft.

This chapter takes an in-depth look at three of the largest expressions of guild power: the time-honored custom of Obloquy, the crafting of special tools called talismans, and the way of cooperative unleashing.

OBLOQUY

In a very real way, Guild Status forms one of the more potent magical resources the Arisen might command, as their measure of political station comes bundled with tiered access to restricted Utterances, guild-exclusive Affinities, and the opportunity to access the lore and treasures of their guild. For a mere mortal, a sudden loss of status is a crushing event—a loss of confidence and opportunity. How much more so, then, might mummies cling to their titles when so much more rides on doing so?

The process by which the Arisen negotiate the reduction of such an important Trait in their guild-mates is a rit-

ualized tradition they've come to call Obloquy ("OB-luh-quee"). Essentially a specialized hearing, Obloquy can't be conducted in absentia nor may it be convened against an Arisen's subordinates; only with the accused present to stand for himself. In addition, an Arisen's guild-mates can't force his cultists to summon him purely to face an Obloquy hearing; indeed, doing so is a mild form of heresy, since it's a naked corruption of all Arisen purpose. The lone exception to this is when a mummy has shown to his guild-mates' satisfaction that he intentionally disregards calls to stand for Obloquy. In this circumstance, if they get support from both a majority of the nome's guildmasters and a plurality of the local scribes, they can take steps to ensure that the accused rises to face his accuser, but it's understood that physically intruding on the sanctity of the accused's tomb must be, to put it mildly, the very last resort.

THE NEGATIVE CONFESSION

As noted on page 81 of **Mummy: The Curse**, a guildmaster cannot approve or deny changes in a guild-mate's Guild Status as a unilateral action. Instead, any member of a guild may initiate a ceremony to challenge the rightfulness of a guild-mate's Guild Status. To do this, one must speak what is called a *negative confession*. In order to issue a negative confession, one must first be A) an active member of the guild in question; B) in possession of something negative to confess about his would-be accused; and C) sponsored by a guildmaster of his guild. This means that guildmasters can initiate Obloquy as they like, but for a lower-ranking member to do so, he must first play some politics with his superior(s).

An Obloquy hearing takes many hours and is a solemn affair in which all relevant evidence is considered and weighed by those in attendance—a number that must include not only at least one guildmaster, but at least one member of the Sesha-Hebsu, for any trial result is neither official nor recorded without one. The local guildmaster of scribes determines which of his guild-mates hears the case; if there isn't one, the scribe with the most Guild Status decides. If there aren't *any* scribes local to the nome,

the guildmaster of the guild at the center of the hearing must call for a scribe from elsewhere to hear it.

At the end of the negative confession, the challenger (called a *confessor*) and the respondent (formally called *suppliant*) make contested rolls using [Any Social Attribute] + Occult + Guild Status, though the sponsoring guildmaster can make the roll instead if he wishes to put himself behind the confession fully. Each side might also add up to +3 dice in equipment bonuses for favorable circumstances, such as clear evidence of misconduct or a litany of accomplishments (the Storyteller remains the final arbiter of bonuses allowed on both sides), and the respondent can spend a Willpower point to gain +3 on her roll. Note that only tangible offenses to one's guild can result in a loss of status through Obloquy; the vast majority of matters that are exclusively or largely personal are not fit to be heard in tribunal, and will not be rewarded by any scribe whose ruling hasn't already been predetermined through corruption.

RISK VS. REWARD

Once in every Descent, an Arisen can issue one negative confession on a guild-mate of lesser Guild Status than he without fear of risking his own status (though losing a particularly major Obloquy hearing might turn out to help motivate a rival's subsequent challenge). To challenge an equal or a superior, or to personally challenge more than once in a Descent, the confessor must have "skin in the game" by risking one dot of his own Guild Status. If the challenge succeeds, the target loses the dot and is formally stripped of rank by the ceremony. If the challenge fails, the confessor might lose one, instead. (Note that when a guildmaster makes an Obloquy case [and roll] on a guild-mate's behalf, it is still the original confessor's Guild Status that's on the line—if a master rolls poorly, that master suffers no ill result.)

Whether a challenge succeeds depends on two factors: The result of the roll and the opinion of the presiding scribe. Consult the table below for possible results.

Barring some extraordinary crisis, custom deems it uncouth for a given Arisen to issue more than a single negative confession on his own behalf per Descent, even if and when he could find sponsorship from a guildmaster for more. Mummies arise to fulfill sacred and immortal purpose, not to drag one another before their (equally enjoined) peers *ad infinitum*. In addition, if a local guild has no members at Guild Status 5, its mummies can't even initiate Obloquy, since they have no guildmasters to do so. (The scribe requirement is easier to manage, since unlike guildmasters, scribes will gladly travel for Obloquy.) In no event should a given Arisen speak the negative confession against a particular one of his fellows more than once per Descent, whatever the outcome of the first—even if he's willing to risk status on it.

This process functions in reverse when Arisen wish to petition for a raise in Guild Status. The opponent is whichever rival chooses to oppose the promotion, if any wishes to risk a dot of Guild Status to do so; a guildmaster (only) may oppose a Guild Status promotion on his own behalf at no risk to himself, but only if he has support from *all* his other guildmates in that nome besides the petitioner. If he opposes the rise in Guild Status without that support, he risks going into experience debt (see below). If the challenge is upheld, the suppliant's player retains the unspent experience points and her mummy can't raise his Guild Status until the end of the story. Multiple hearings can't be held on the same issue, so if a mummy survives one challenge to his promotion, he's survived them all, at least for the current story. Absent opposition, success is assured and allows for a Storyteller-approved purchase to raise Guild Status by one dot. It is considered uncouth to seek personal promotion more than once per Descent (although, naturally, the stigma is lessened for each additional guildmaster who supports the idea).

STATUS AND THE MASTER CLASS

The title of *guildmaster* is a specific guild rank bestowed on a particular Guild Status 5 member (or, in some nomes,

Roll Result	Scribe's Ruling	Guild Status Loss
Confessor wins	For confessor	Suppliant
Confessor wins	For suppliant	None**
Confessor wins	None (abstains)	Confessor decides if suppliant loses a dot
Suppliant wins	For suppliant	Confessor
Suppliant wins	For confessor	None
Suppliant wins	None (abstains)	None
Tie	Determines winner, if any	Winner (if any) decides if loser loses a dot

** If the suppliant's roll ended in a failure or dramatic failure, the confessor can override the scribe's ruling and *insist* on the loss of Guild Status for his guild-mate (assuming he's willing to make a new rival).

two members) of a guild; the title of *Priest of Duat* is an honorific conferred on any Guild Status 5 member who is not also a *nomarch*. A non-guildmaster Priest of Duat may be just as learned and wise as her guildmaster, but she won't direct the guild or its resources, as the guildmaster does. Guildmasters, then, enjoy a number of benefits that their underlings, and even arguable equals, do not. And thus, sooner or later the time will come when one or more

The Cost of Crying Wolf

The custom of Obloquy exists to serve the greater glory of lost Irem, not to make a mockery of it. A mummy who abuses the negative confession will find himself fast reduced in status among his peers; a mummy who abuses it even further will only find it that much harder to once again rise within their estimation.

Apprentice Arisen are discouraged from initiating Obloquy proceedings (since it's proper to bring one's concerns before a higher-ranked guild-mate when one is new or inactive, himself), but technically they're allowed. When a mummy with Guild Status ● fails in an Obloquy challenge and would otherwise lose his only dot, he does not (since that would effectively 'evict' him from the guild—something Obloquy isn't empowered to do).

Instead, his player finds that the experience cost to raise the mummy's Guild Status goes up by a multiplier of +1 (typically, from x2 to x3). If the apprentice again issues a challenge before raising his Guild Status, and again fails in that challenge, the cost for the Merit goes up again (to x4). If he does it *again*, it goes up to new dots x5, at which rating his right to speak the negative confession before his guild is suppressed. The possible penalty maxes out at x7 (at which point, the mummy is probably encouraged quietly to just defrock himself and go apprentice himself to another guild for a while).

Spending the extra experience to raise one's Guild Status reduces the current cost penalty by -1 (e.g., x4 to x3), reflecting an added effort to re-earn credibility and respect. Doing so removes the threat of additional experience penalty from one's next Obloquy (since one is no longer at Guild Status ●), but any remaining cost penalties still apply. Needless to say, initiating Obloquy proceedings *against* apprentices purely or largely for the purpose of driving up the cost of their advancement in the guild isn't just frowned upon, it's heresy, and anyone suspected of doing it has much bigger problems in store. At that point, one is actively working against the greater purpose of *his own guild*.


among a local guild's members will seek to strip their own guildmaster of his vaunted status (and Status).

Generally speaking, guildmasters never risk their title or Guild Status as confessors, only as suppliants. (The negative confessional space itself is largely theirs to oversee.) When a guildmaster would otherwise risk his own Guild Status to speak as confessor, such as when opposing a guild-mate's rise in the same, it isn't Guild Status he risks, but experience debt. If he ever loses such a challenge, rather than lose his own Guild Status, he must instead put his next 10 experience towards paying off the social debt incurred by failing to challenge whatever it was (often an underling's hasty promotion in the guild) *successfully*. Note that this can only happen when the presiding scribe also rules against him, which makes the reality of a guildmaster going into experience debt a decision that rests almost entirely in Sesha-Hebsu hands.

A cardinal rule is the a guildmaster can't be forced out of his role and position *without* a full Obloquy trial and resulting loss of face and status (unless he abdicates voluntarily); his guild-mates must *prove* that he deserves unequivocally to be replaced. The Obloquy process, grandiose and severe in the mildest of circumstances, takes on a "Trial of the Century" character when it involves the possible removal of a master from his high seat. In order to stage such an affair, three conditions must be met:

- The challenge must be voiced in unison by a majority of non-master-rank guild members in the nome (though they must select a single name among them to serve as confessor and speak the confession).
- The challenge must be approved by a majority of the total guildmasters in the nome. (If a nome doesn't have a guildmaster of a given guild, its members can invite a non-local one to participate.)
- The hearing must be presided over by a Guild Status 5 scribe who is *not* local to the nome.

A guildmaster who loses an Obloquy trial has an option his underlings do not: If he stays in the nome, his Guild Status drops to 4 and he abdicates his role as guildmaster for the time being, but... if his desire to retain his status exceeds his desire to be an active part of the nome, he can instead choose to leave the nome. Doing so still means abdication of his local guildmaster rank, but *he remains at Guild Status 5*. If he elects this option during the trial but *doesn't* leave town, his Guild Status will drop to 4 at the end of his current Descent, and he might face an additional negative confession thereafter for his lack of honor, which could in turn reduce his Guild Status to



3. If, after leaving, he later returns to the nome, he'll do so as a visitor, not resident, and if he chooses to again take up residence in that once-abandoned nome, he can never again occupy the title of guildmaster in that nome without first losing that dot of Guild Status.

Whichever local guild member has the best claim to the title becomes the next guildmaster. If the guild had two masters before the trial, the remaining one is often deferred to on the subject of who among the rest has the best claim. If more than one Priest of Duat remains to fill the role, and they both want the rank and title, the two can engage in a supplementary, 'mini-Obloquy' to determine which one ascends the high seat, using the same guildmaster of scribes who presided over the preceding hearing.

TALISMANS

Arisen scavenge the relics they once helped manufacture and steal counterparts made by mortal prodigies the world over. They can often forget their unnatural state until confronted with the fact that true life includes a subtle creative power denied them by the Rite of Return.

But in the millennia since the fall of Irem, Arisen steeped in the lore of their guilds learned to bypass this restriction, after a fashion. Through a form of occult cannibalism, they created *talismans*. They learned to sacrifice a fraction of Sekhem to a relic of the maker's guild—a ready-made vessel for Arisen Sekhem. In this way, the Deathless modify relics to manifest novel abilities and enhance their innate powers.

Sesha-Hebsu say they discovered talisman-making in their research and shared it with the other guilds. Scribes might deserve praise for releasing this knowledge, but according to rumor, they unearthed it by investigating the Lost Guild and the Deceived. (Thus, some think creating them may call the same forces that led others astray.) Suspicious mummies don't have any evidence, and the Judges do not punish Arisen who make talismans. Most treat the craft as a morally neutral if risky pursuit with undeniable rewards: mighty Utterances, Sekhem, and bulwarks against weakness and destruction. Some benefits go to the talisman's maker, others work for almost any being, and others still... are best used by thieves.

CREATION: BRINGING SOUL TO THE CRAFT

The following section describes how the Deathless create talismans. To even make the attempt, a mummy must possess at least Guild Status •••. For Arisen, this Merit partly represents mystical initiations and occult "trade secrets" that may be called to her mind, but are bound to her Sekhem. Guild Status also deepens the mummy's connection to her guild's relics, allowing the required

transfer of life force. If a mummy's Guild Status drops below •••, she can no longer create a talisman and may experience difficulty invoking its powers.

Once a mummy creates one talisman, she may not create another until she has withdrawn her Sekhem from the first (see below).

STEP ONE: ACQUIRE A GUILD RELIC

Finding a suitable relic is the most straightforward part of the process. The relic must align with the mummy's guild specialty. Vessels lack the magical "sturdiness" and connections to guild lore to serve as the basis for a talisman. Some Arisen utilize the first relic they were permitted to retain, but this practice is discouraged by the Mesen-Nebu, who see it as lazy, and by the Tef-Aabhi, who believe in finding a relic that expressly symbolizes the mummy's intention. The stronger the relic, the more potent the talisman; each dot supports one supernatural *manifestation*. The mummy may create a less powerful talisman than she might be able to with a given relic, but cannot go back and add manifestations later, unless she first wipes her Sekhem from the creation.



STEP TWO: ATTUNE AND SACRIFICE

Artifact in hand, the mummy retreats to a tomb with a Geometry rating no less than the relic's rating. Arisen who intend to bind and attune powerful relics may ask to enter the sacred space of a close ally. Every guild has traditions encouraging members to open their doors for this purpose, but a few Arisen, fearing betrayal, look outside the guild to friends who might perhaps be less tempted by the vessel.

In that sacred space, the mummy begins a ceremony to bind her soul to the relic. This ritual draws upon the Arisen's guild-based connection to the relic. She meditates and whispers the secret lore of her guild. After performing the ritual for [two hours per dot of the relic], she sacrifices a dot of Sekhem. This dot now belongs to the talisman. If the Arisen retains the talisman on her person or in her tomb, she doesn't lose this dot, which is not subject to any form of Descent. But if she loses it . . . the consequences are explored on p. 85. Arisen may not sacrifice multiple dots of Sekhem on a single talisman, or change the properties of a talisman made by another.

STEP THREE: BIND MANIFESTATIONS

Each relic dot allows the talisman's maker to bind one manifestation. At their core, manifestations consist of Utterance tiers and special conditions called *keywords*, similar to those listed with certain Utterances in the **Mummy** core rulebook. These keywords modify Utterances, making them more potent or otherwise useful. In contrast to the ritual that prepares the talisman, the binding is a straightforward act of will, shaped by the mummy's guild initiations.



Finally, the mummy's player spends experience at the rate of 3 points for each embedded manifestation. Once she completes this step, she has crafted herself a working talisman.

PROPERTIES

Once it has been bound and attuned, the talisman is effectively a part of the mummy. It feels like a limb or beating heart. Her soul extends into the object, and that's the basis of its abilities. Certain powers, called properties, belong to all talismans, while others, called manifestations, bind themselves according to a particular maker's desires.

Unless noted otherwise, the following properties—relic source, bound Sekhem, soul resonance, spirit organ, talismanic record, and talismanic resurrection—are common to all talismans.

RELIC SOURCE

The talisman retains all of the powers and curses of the relic used to create it. When used by a member of a guild devoted to that type of relic, its curse weakens or vanishes as usual. (Note that unless the relic description says otherwise, activating a relic as a *talisman* rarely activates the bound relic's curse; activating or making use of the relic itself, however, remains a trigger.)

Reclaiming Talismanic Sekhem

A talisman's maker (and no other being) may reclaim sacrificed Sekhem through direct physical contact, though at a price: one *dot* (not point) of Willpower. Willpower dots lost in this fashion may be reclaimed by spending 8 experience points per dot.

Without Sekhem, the talisman loses its properties and manifestations. It reverts to a normal relic, except that the mummy who once gave it Sekhem will always possess an *Entombed* or *Nearby* kepher relationship (**Mummy: The Curse**, p. 145) with the relic, regardless of what happens to her or to the relic.

It is rumored that Shuankhsen have been seen *eating* talismans. (The effects of such experiments may be explored in future **Mummy** books, but for the purposes of this tome, such horrific edge cases are left to Storyteller imagination.)

BOUND SEKHEM

When a mummy makes a talisman she “loses” a dot of Sekhem. It blazes within the talisman. When any Arisen—maker or not—keeps it by his side or in his own tomb, he adds that dot of Sekhem to his total. This makes talismans attractive targets for thieves, as the maker recoups her loss while the thief enjoys unearned power. The owner's Sekhem still snuffs out when it drops to zero, even if keeping the talisman would increase it to 1. Personal Sekhem also determines when Descent rolls occur. In all other cases, she uses her personal Sekhem rating *plus* the Sekhem dot of a talisman in her possession. Note that while within her own tomb, the mummy needn't be within arm's reach of a talisman to draw on its Sekhem.

Although she can only craft one at a time, a mummy may *benefit* from multiple talismans, but only if they are relics of her own guild. At Guild Status 3, she may channel Sekhem from two guild-aligned talismans; at Guild Status 5, she may benefit from three talismans, for a total of +3 dots of Sekhem.

Nothing may raise a mummy's actual or effective Sekhem rating above 10.

SOUL RESONANCE

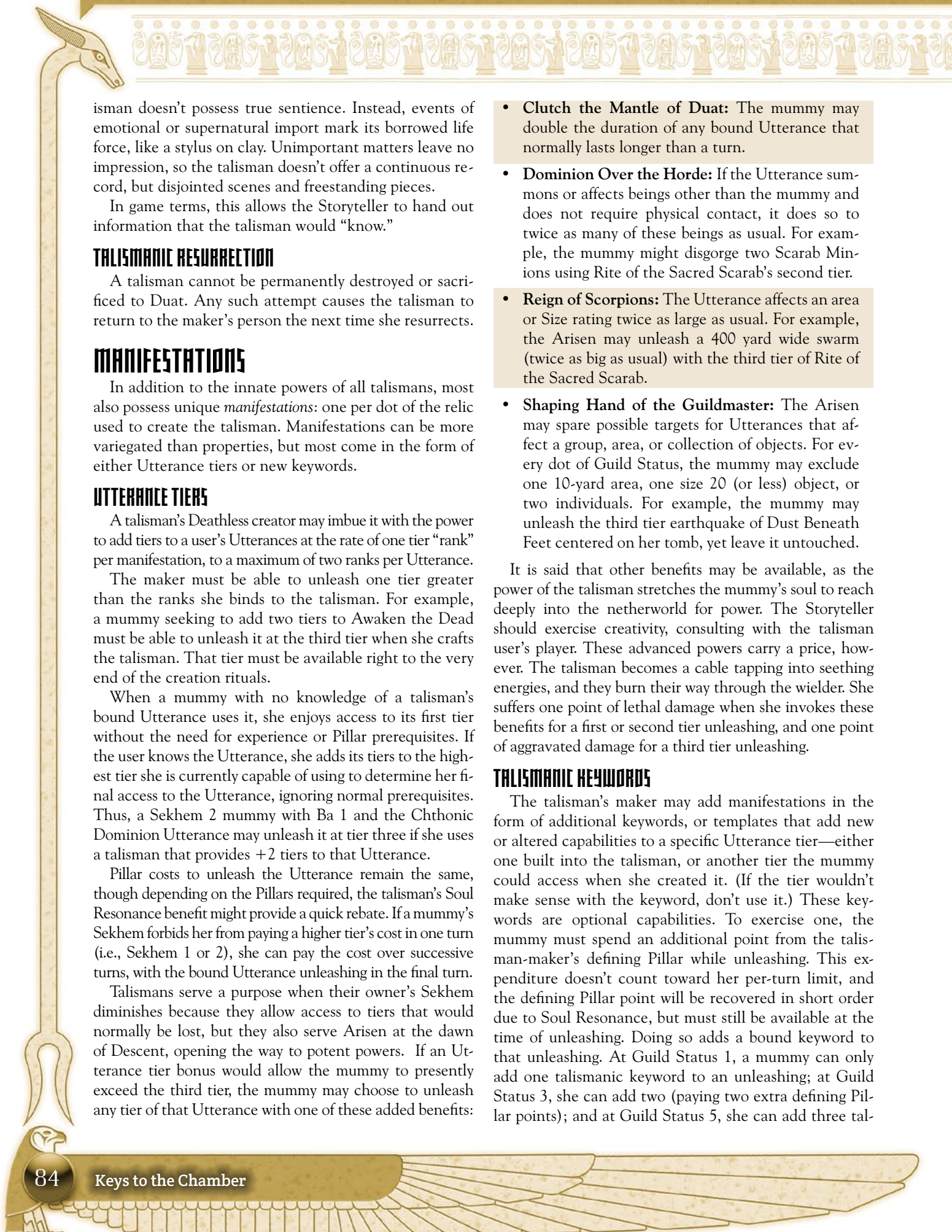
A talisman possesses a shard of Sekhem but not a true soul, much less the complex spiritual powers granted by the Rite of Return. Still, the talisman is made of the living world, and channels a trickle of its energy through the gate of the maker's decree. It doesn't have Pillars, but if the mummy brandishes a talisman and spends from the Pillar defined by its maker's decree, she will regain one of those spent points by the next scene or an hour later, whichever comes last.

SPIRIT ORGAN

The talisman becomes a new “vital organ” for its maker, supplementing her four canopic organs. If she uses it for resurrection, her sahu reforms holding or wearing the talisman, wresting it out of anyone else's grasp with unstoppable force. If necessary, the talisman even seeps away in the form of black, bloody liquid, or phases through Twilight. Therefore, a mummy who chooses to resurrect around her talisman always regains possession of the talisman she made.

TALISMANIC RECORD

An extension of its maker's soul, the talisman “imprints” events that occur around it, whether the maker is active or in repose. These experiences supplement a mummy's investigations and Memory, but only when the current owner benefits from stored Sekhem, closing the mystic circuit and transmitting that information. A tal-



isman doesn't possess true sentience. Instead, events of emotional or supernatural import mark its borrowed life force, like a stylus on clay. Unimportant matters leave no impression, so the talisman doesn't offer a continuous record, but disjointed scenes and freestanding pieces.

In game terms, this allows the Storyteller to hand out information that the talisman would "know."

TALISMANIC RESURRECTION

A talisman cannot be permanently destroyed or sacrificed to Duat. Any such attempt causes the talisman to return to the maker's person the next time she resurrects.

MANIFESTATIONS

In addition to the innate powers of all talismans, most also possess unique *manifestations*: one per dot of the relic used to create the talisman. Manifestations can be more variegated than properties, but most come in the form of either Utterance tiers or new keywords.

UTTERANCE TIERS

A talisman's Deathless creator may imbue it with the power to add tiers to a user's Utterances at the rate of one tier "rank" per manifestation, to a maximum of two ranks per Utterance.

The maker must be able to unleash one tier greater than the ranks she binds to the talisman. For example, a mummy seeking to add two tiers to Awaken the Dead must be able to unleash it at the third tier when she crafts the talisman. That tier must be available right to the very end of the creation rituals.

When a mummy with no knowledge of a talisman's bound Utterance uses it, she enjoys access to its first tier without the need for experience or Pillar prerequisites. If the user knows the Utterance, she adds its tiers to the highest tier she is currently capable of using to determine her final access to the Utterance, ignoring normal prerequisites. Thus, a Sekhem 2 mummy with Ba 1 and the Chthonic Dominion Utterance may unleash it at tier three if she uses a talisman that provides +2 tiers to that Utterance.

Pillar costs to unleash the Utterance remain the same, though depending on the Pillars required, the talisman's Soul Resonance benefit might provide a quick rebate. If a mummy's Sekhem forbids her from paying a higher tier's cost in one turn (i.e., Sekhem 1 or 2), she can pay the cost over successive turns, with the bound Utterance unleashing in the final turn.

Talismans serve a purpose when their owner's Sekhem diminishes because they allow access to tiers that would normally be lost, but they also serve Arisen at the dawn of Descent, opening the way to potent powers. If an Utterance tier bonus would allow the mummy to presently exceed the third tier, the mummy may choose to unleash any tier of that Utterance with one of these added benefits:

- **Clutch the Mantle of Duat:** The mummy may double the duration of any bound Utterance that normally lasts longer than a turn.
- **Dominion Over the Horde:** If the Utterance summons or affects beings other than the mummy and does not require physical contact, it does so to twice as many of these beings as usual. For example, the mummy might disgorge two Scarab Minions using Rite of the Sacred Scarab's second tier.
- **Reign of Scorpions:** The Utterance affects an area or Size rating twice as large as usual. For example, the Arisen may unleash a 400 yard wide swarm (twice as big as usual) with the third tier of Rite of the Sacred Scarab.
- **Shaping Hand of the Guildmaster:** The Arisen may spare possible targets for Utterances that affect a group, area, or collection of objects. For every dot of Guild Status, the mummy may exclude one 10-yard area, one size 20 (or less) object, or two individuals. For example, the mummy may unleash the third tier earthquake of Dust Beneath Feet centered on her tomb, yet leave it untouched.

It is said that other benefits may be available, as the power of the talisman stretches the mummy's soul to reach deeply into the netherworld for power. The Storyteller should exercise creativity, consulting with the talisman user's player. These advanced powers carry a price, however. The talisman becomes a cable tapping into seething energies, and they burn their way through the wielder. She suffers one point of lethal damage when she invokes these benefits for a first or second tier unleashing, and one point of aggravated damage for a third tier unleashing.

TALISMANIC KEYWORDS

The talisman's maker may add manifestations in the form of additional keywords, or templates that add new or altered capabilities to a specific Utterance tier—either one built into the talisman, or another tier the mummy could access when she created it. (If the tier wouldn't make sense with the keyword, don't use it.) These keywords are optional capabilities. To exercise one, the mummy must spend an additional point from the talisman-maker's defining Pillar while unleashing. This expenditure doesn't count toward her per-turn limit, and the defining Pillar point will be recovered in short order due to Soul Resonance, but must still be available at the time of unleashing. Doing so adds a bound keyword to that unleashing. At Guild Status 1, a mummy can only add one talismanic keyword to an unleashing; at Guild Status 3, she can add two (paying two extra defining Pillar points); and at Guild Status 5, she can add three tal-

ismanic keywords (although doing so still only costs two extra defining Pillar points).

- **Prepared:** The Utterance tier may be “charged” ahead of time with an hour-long ritual that takes it to the edge of unleashing, then holds it there, waiting for the mummy to release it with a thought. The player rolls for the Utterance at the time of preparation. If the tier would normally be resisted by subtracting Defense, a resistance Attribute, or similar Trait from the mummy’s dice pool, her player chooses the number to subtract. Any future target with a higher Trait to subtract *automatically* resists the tier’s effects. Any target with the same or lower Trait dots is affected based on the player’s dice roll.

The mummy may hold the Utterance for a number of hours equal to her (Resolve + Composure). In that time, she cannot regain Pillar points spent on the Utterance—they seethe in its matrix of power. At any point during that period, the mummy may release the Utterance as a reflexive action. If time runs out, the Utterance unleashes automatically, affecting a target chosen by the Storyteller, if applicable, unless the mummy spends a point of Willpower to dismiss it. A mummy may carry a number of Prepared tiers equal to the lower of her Stamina or Sekhem, but may only reflexively unleash one of them per turn. If this defining rating falls while the mummy is carrying her maximum number of Prepared tiers, she must pick one to discard without benefit.

- **Sympathetic:** The Utterance tier must be unleashed at a distant target that possesses some mystical connection to the talisman. Consult the kepher relationship table (**Mummy: The Curse**, p. 145) but reverse the context—find the description that best fits the target’s past relationship with the relic that is now a talisman, ignoring references to proxies. Apply the listed penalty to the roll to unleash that tier, with the exception of the *Rumored or Unknown* status—these distant connections cause Sympathetic Utterances to fail automatically.

Unlike standard uses of the tier, a Sympathetic use requires more time—the mummy shakes the secret chains that bind all things, and must wait for the ripple to reach its target. This causes a delay in unleashing equal to one turn per rank of the tier, or if the tier requires an extended ritual action, one hour per rank. (If a Sympathetic Utterance is also Prepared, the delay “clock” starts as soon as it is unleashed.) In that time, the “gate” between mummy and target opens. Sybaris from the Utterance floods the target’s location. A target who detects this Sybaris might

evade the Utterance, and with a successful Wits + Occult roll (subtract the mummy’s Enigma dots) a supernatural being or mortal sensitive/Witness may become aware of the mummy’s appearance and location. Some entities may even be able to reach *back* through the connection.

- **Synchronized:** Talismans are unique, but ultimately, they’re all still relics and can be empowered to act as such. By means of this keyword, the mummy may also call upon any Pillar-activated power of the *relic* through which her Utterance is unleashed, when it is unleashed. Any Pillar cost(s) for the relic power must be paid in addition to the defining Pillar point required to add this keyword. (If there’s little to no reasonable way for the character to use both a particular Utterance tier and a particular relic power simultaneously, the Storyteller can rule to disallow the addition of this keyword to that particular unleashing. Ultimately, story is paramount.)

CURSES AND DISADVANTAGES

Talismans retain the curse of the relic used to make them, naturally, but they also impose additional disadvantages on their creators or other keepers.

SEKHEM LOSS

As noted, the talisman’s maker invests a dot of Sekhem in her creation. If she keeps the talisman by her side, she adds that dot to her total except as pertains matters related expressly to the Descent. If she must restart the Descent, she returns with her Sekhem reduced to 9.

FROM INITIATION COMES POWER

Any Arisen may wield a talisman, but only initiated members of the same guild as the maker may do so reliably. Lacking the guild’s imprint on the soul, others risk unleashing twisted energies, unbound by the magical principles known to students of the maker’s craft. Those versed in the guild’s high mysteries display greater facility with their guild’s talismans. Consult the following table to determine the effects of a character’s metaphysical nature and Guild Status.

SAMPLE TALISMAN:

HAND OF THE WALL BREAKER (UTER ●●●)

Durability 4, Size 1, Structure 4

Covered with hard-angled, black tattoos, the withered Hand of the Wall Breaker once belonged to a thief from the eastern edge of the Nameless Empire. The bandit



Being

Non-intelligent creature,
ghost

Mortal

Talisman Effect

These entities may not use talismans.

Non-supernatural mortals suffer Terror Sybaris upon touching the talisman. They may operate it as a relic, but cannot use its other functions. If they use the talisman's relic powers, the sub-intelligence within floods their minds with fragmented images of Duat. On a failed Resolve + Composure roll, the wielder acquires a derangement for the scene. On a dramatic failure, the mortal also acquires a permanent derangement, though it is not always active. Apply a cumulative -2 penalty to the roll for each subsequent use of the talisman. If the user acquires five permanent derangements, the talisman's Sekhem consumes his soul. He becomes a Corpse Thrall (**Mummy: The Curse**, p. 114) bound to the talisman's maker, with an instinct to return it to her. Upon delivering the talisman or being separated from it for 24 hours, the Corpse Thrall erodes into black fluid and fragments of desiccated flesh.

Supernatural being
(including mortal sorcerers)

"Alien" supernatural beings are attuned enough to the talisman's invisible energies that they may utilize all of its manifestation abilities, except one—the Storyteller selects the missing manifestation for one, a group, or all users in this category. Innate powers belong to Arisen and Shuankhsen, and are thus unavailable.

Roll the user's (Resolve + Composure); failure imposes an active temporary derangement for the scene. Apply a cumulative -1 penalty to the roll for each subsequent use of the talisman. Upon a dramatic failure, the wielder also gains a permanent derangement (that is now always active) but cannot gain another.

Unleashing an Utterance through the talisman inflicts dice of aggravated wounds equal to the talisman's relic rating on the user, for he channels energies never meant to be wielded by his kind. Furthermore, this deviation from the Judges' plan attracts their *attention*. The talisman's maker faces an immediate Descent roll for allowing her power to fall into profane hands, and the maker's ruling Judge takes note of the user's existence . . .

Shuankhsen or
Arisen of a different guild

Shuankhsen and Arisen who do not belong to the maker's guild may carry and use the all of the talisman's powers except for one manifestation ability, selected by the Storyteller. Roll the user's Resolve + Composure whenever she unleashes an Utterance aided by the talisman. Failure imposes an active temporary derangement for the scene—one possessed by the talisman's maker is most appropriate, though not mandatory. In the case of a one-manifestation talisman, only innate powers are available, and if the user does not unleash an Utterance aided by the talisman, she does not risk derangement.

Arisen, Guild
Status • to ••

Lesser Arisen of the maker's guild lose access to one of the talisman's manifestation powers, selected by the Storyteller, but suffer no other complications.

Arisen, Guild
Status •••

The mummy may operate the talisman normally, without special complications.

Arisen, Guild
Status ••••

The mummy's guild knowledge brings her into particular harmony with the talisman. She gains +1 on all talisman-based Utterance rolls.

Arisen, Guild
Status •••••

Guild mysteries embedded in the soul allow the mummy to command this talisman flawlessly. She gains the same +1 on talisman-based Utterance rolls, plus the 9-again benefit on those same talisman-based rolls; the +1 bonus applies to *all* Utterance rolls when she openly brandishes the talisman while unleashing. Multiple talismans do not provide a cumulative benefit here.



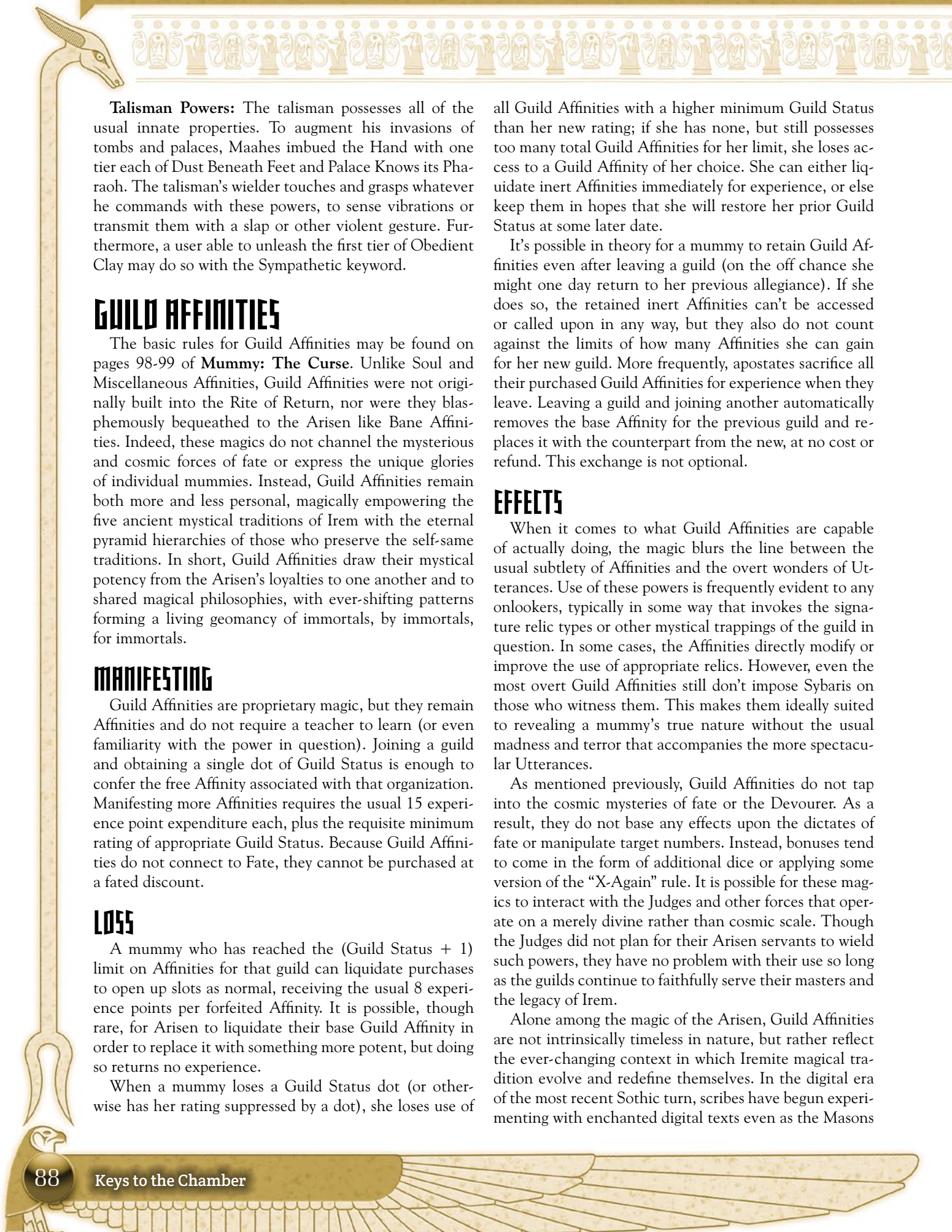


smashed into dwellings to murder and steal from their owners—a practice common enough that many ancient civilizations thereafter called thieves “wall breakers.” After he was slain by a military patrol, the guild of the Shell took an interest in the bandit’s reputed strength and preserved the hand for future experiments. They planned to attach it to a mutilated slave but since the Rite of Return, discovered it was an ideal tool for Arisen use. Grafted onto the left arm, the Hand allows its user to crush and smash inanimate objects with ease.

In 890 BCE, Maahes of the Su-Menent took possession of the Hand, using it as its owner had—except this time, his targets were the tombs of other Arisen, many of whom had not yet left the Nile Valley. Taking advantage of a period of lawlessness in Egyptian history, Maahes used stolen relics to support a petty kingdom. He ruled openly, Sekhem failing as he strayed from his Judge’s desires. To shore up his fading power, he made the hand his talisman. In the end, a Sesha-Hebsu impaled and burned him, but the flames spared the Hand, and the scribes carried it off for safekeeping. They’ve forgotten whether the Hand of the Wall Breaker remains in some hidden vault, or returned to Maahes, whose destruction may have turned him into one of the Shuankhsen.

Relic Power: The Hand of the Wall Breaker affixes itself to any fresh amputation of the hand. Once it does so, the owner may inflict +2 lethal damage with the Hand—it’s as tough as steel, and its fingertips hit as hard as striking edges of a flanged mace. Furthermore, it ignores the first two points of Armor or Durability possessed by anything it strikes. When used to grasp a person or object, it does so with 2 Strength more than its owner. This is not useful for striking lifting or pushing, but does apply to grappling attacks and defenses (see *World of Darkness*, pp. 157-158).

Relic Curse: The Hand is not a tool for delicate action, but seizing what its owner desires. When the owner sees or is made aware of an object (not a person; the Hand carries its owner’s materialism) in his immediate area that could be used to satisfy his Vice, roll Resolve + Composure. Failure indicates the Hand tries to swipe the object, pulling its owner with it into the task. If anyone gets in the way, the Hand batters him into submission. The curse lasts until the hand’s owner accumulates five successes in an extended Resolve + Composure roll—a reflexive action, rolled each turn. Su-Menent may nullify the curse by spending a point of Willpower. Otherwise, the owner may spend Willpower for +3 to rolls to avoid or resist the curse.



Talisman Powers: The talisman possesses all of the usual innate properties. To augment his invasions of tombs and palaces, Maahes imbued the Hand with one tier each of Dust Beneath Feet and Palace Knows its Pharaoh. The talisman's wielder touches and grasps whatever he commands with these powers, to sense vibrations or transmit them with a slap or other violent gesture. Furthermore, a user able to unleash the first tier of Obedient Clay may do so with the Sympathetic keyword.

GUILD AFFINITIES

The basic rules for Guild Affinities may be found on pages 98-99 of **Mummy: The Curse**. Unlike Soul and Miscellaneous Affinities, Guild Affinities were not originally built into the Rite of Return, nor were they blasphemously bequeathed to the Arisen like Bane Affinities. Indeed, these magics do not channel the mysterious and cosmic forces of fate or express the unique glories of individual mummies. Instead, Guild Affinities remain both more and less personal, magically empowering the five ancient mystical traditions of Irem with the eternal pyramid hierarchies of those who preserve the self-same traditions. In short, Guild Affinities draw their mystical potency from the Arisen's loyalties to one another and to shared magical philosophies, with ever-shifting patterns forming a living geomancy of immortals, by immortals, for immortals.

MANIFESTING

Guild Affinities are proprietary magic, but they remain Affinities and do not require a teacher to learn (or even familiarity with the power in question). Joining a guild and obtaining a single dot of Guild Status is enough to confer the free Affinity associated with that organization. Manifesting more Affinities requires the usual 15 experience point expenditure each, plus the requisite minimum rating of appropriate Guild Status. Because Guild Affinities do not connect to Fate, they cannot be purchased at a fated discount.

LOSS

A mummy who has reached the (Guild Status + 1) limit on Affinities for that guild can liquidate purchases to open up slots as normal, receiving the usual 8 experience points per forfeited Affinity. It is possible, though rare, for Arisen to liquidate their base Guild Affinity in order to replace it with something more potent, but doing so returns no experience.

When a mummy loses a Guild Status dot (or otherwise has her rating suppressed by a dot), she loses use of

all Guild Affinities with a higher minimum Guild Status than her new rating; if she has none, but still possesses too many total Guild Affinities for her limit, she loses access to a Guild Affinity of her choice. She can either liquidate inert Affinities immediately for experience, or else keep them in hopes that she will restore her prior Guild Status at some later date.

It's possible in theory for a mummy to retain Guild Affinities even after leaving a guild (on the off chance she might one day return to her previous allegiance). If she does so, the retained inert Affinities can't be accessed or called upon in any way, but they also do not count against the limits of how many Affinities she can gain for her new guild. More frequently, apostates sacrifice all their purchased Guild Affinities for experience when they leave. Leaving a guild and joining another automatically removes the base Affinity for the previous guild and replaces it with the counterpart from the new, at no cost or refund. This exchange is not optional.

EFFECTS

When it comes to what Guild Affinities are capable of actually doing, the magic blurs the line between the usual subtlety of Affinities and the overt wonders of Utterances. Use of these powers is frequently evident to any onlookers, typically in some way that invokes the signature relic types or other mystical trappings of the guild in question. In some cases, the Affinities directly modify or improve the use of appropriate relics. However, even the most overt Guild Affinities still don't impose Sybaris on those who witness them. This makes them ideally suited to revealing a mummy's true nature without the usual madness and terror that accompanies the more spectacular Utterances.

As mentioned previously, Guild Affinities do not tap into the cosmic mysteries of fate or the Devourer. As a result, they do not base any effects upon the dictates of fate or manipulate target numbers. Instead, bonuses tend to come in the form of additional dice or applying some version of the "X-Again" rule. It is possible for these magics to interact with the Judges and other forces that operate on a merely divine rather than cosmic scale. Though the Judges did not plan for their Arisen servants to wield such powers, they have no problem with their use so long as the guilds continue to faithfully serve their masters and the legacy of Irem.

Alone among the magic of the Arisen, Guild Affinities are not intrinsically timeless in nature, but rather reflect the ever-changing context in which Iremite magical tradition evolve and redefine themselves. In the digital era of the most recent Sothic turn, scribes have begun experimenting with enchanted digital texts even as the Masons

revel in aviation. Such experiments will certainly culminate in manifesting Guild Affinities oriented around the use of such technology.

GUILD BUSINESS

One concept that sees repeated use in Guild Affinities is the notion of “guild business” as a system term. A mummy is considered to be engaged in guild business while carrying out duties assigned by her guild and its leadership. If an assigned task directly goes against the purpose, traditions or ritual trappings of the guild in question, the Storyteller may veto the actions as guild business and require significant reforms to the guild before a strange new path can be valid. History has its own inertia to it, and all the more so when that history spans millennia.

Admittedly, this is a subjective call, but Storytellers should endeavor to decide fairly and in keeping with the overall spirit of the guild. Guild business isn’t an excuse to do anything that might be useful to an Arisen’s guildmates, but rather to carry forward the legacy of Irem into the future. Similarly, Storytellers should be wary of attempts to pass off personal matters as guild business. The lines can blur, particularly in the case of guildmasters with the authority to assign official duties that happen to benefit them as individuals, but even the highest-ranking leaders cannot indulge in corruption and expect their magic to empower such.

COMMON GUILD AFFINITIES

The Affinities listed below comprise a very small sampling of what is possible and known to the Five Guilds. More examples will be provided in future **Mummy: The Curse** supplements.

ARTIST’S INNER EYE

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Any) • +

Effect: Mummies from any guild may purchase this Affinity, as it is technically five different versions of itself with identical powers linking each guild to their appropriate relics.

- The Arisen applies the 9-again rule on all rolls to activate kepher.
- The mummy can join hands with other members of his guild in a circle and all activate kepher together. The roll uses a dice pool of (highest Sekhem rating among group), adding a bonus of +2 dice per additional participant. The roll applies the best target number and “X-again” rules that any participant brings via magic (such as this Affinity’s previous power).
- While touching a relic appropriate to the mummy’s guild, the mummy automatically receives exceptional success when activating kepher to track

a proxy who previously had a connection to the item. This helps him backtrack how it came to be in his possession.

- Whenever the mummy fails or dramatically fails to deliberately activate kepher as an individual and not part of group, the result is treated as a dramatic failure except no second Sekhem roll is required—the kepher automatically results in a false vision leading dangerously to an object of Sekhem. In short, he cannot call upon his kepher without it leading him somewhere interesting and toward something he should find. Some who manifest this Affinity feel their heightened sensitivity is a curse, while others feel gratitude that they need not waste precious Descent time at a dead end. There is a more practical benefit, however. If a mummy follows a false vision and perseveres through danger and adversity to find an unexpected relic of her guild, she automatically earns a reset of her Descent countdown.

RELIQUARY WELLSPRING

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Any) • +

Effect: Mummies from any guild may purchase this Affinity, as it is technically five different versions of itself with identical powers linking each guild to their appropriate relics.

A Guild of One

Mummies can leave a guild voluntarily. In extraordinary circumstances, they might even be forced out. What they cannot do is decide to take their ball and go home, proclaiming themselves guildmasters of some hypothetical new guild in order to devise their own Guild Affinities. The six guilds of Irem spent centuries if not thousands of years discovering, refining, and practicing their craft beneath the sorcerous guidance of the Shan’iatu. In this time, the guilds wore the metaphysical principles of their existence into the universe like a flowing stream carving a deep canyon.

It may well be that additional guilds come to exist one day, and perhaps Apotheosis is the doorway to this emergence. But if it happens, it will happen gradually and very slowly. In other words, good luck making your own guild in the normal span of a **Mummy: The Curse** game. Deathless relics of bygone ages are great at preserving traditions—not so good at making new ones.

- The Aisen gains an additional pool of (Guild Status rating) points that can be spent as though they were Pillar points to activate a guild-appropriate relic or as Willpower points to resist the effects of such an item's curse. The mummy cannot spend these points for any other reason. This pool automatically refills itself by one point each sunrise, replenishing itself from the nimbus of metaphysical power flowing through the relationships of the Aisen's guild.
- The mummy applies the 9-again rule to all attempts to gather or recall information about a relic appropriate to her guild, such as performing research, convincing witnesses with information to cooperate (by whatever means), forensic analysis, etc. This bonus does not assist rolls to activate kepher or otherwise employ magical means to find a relic.

SILENCED UTTERANCE VESSEL

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Any) •+

Effect: Although the Aisen cannot create relics, they are not without powers of enchantment. The guilds each know the trappings and forms by which magic can be encoded into substance. Applying such knowledge, they may use this Affinity to "bottle" an Utterance unleashing into the likeness of a relic for later use. Silenced Utterance Vessels is technically five Affinities, one per guild, all identical in allowing mummies to store their miracles for later use.

To activate this Affinity, a mummy must be touching some inanimate object appropriate to the relics of her guild (see below). The item cannot have existing magical properties, including another enchantment via this Affinity. Her player then spends one Willpower point while simultaneously unleashing a single tier of a known Utterance and paying all costs to do so. The added Willpower seals the magic into the item instead of allowing it take effect normally. She may designate a word or other activation ritual that must be performed by someone holding the artifact in order to access its power, but the default assumption is simply an act of will. A given ritual may be complex, requiring hours or days to enact, or so simple that a reflexive action suffices.

Aisen cannot store a tier that requires a Pillar rating higher than their Guild Status, meaning that only the highest ranking members wield the metaphysical clout needed to bind the greatest unleashings. Moreover, items cannot store a tier requiring a Pillar rating higher than their Resources value. Only true treasures may contain true wonders. It is not technically necessary for a mummy to have personally crafted the objects she enchants, but it is customary to do so as a matter of pride.

Mummies can only empower a single artifact to contain unleashings using a particular Pillar. This limits them to a maximum of five such artifacts. Using this Affinity over the

limit removes all power from the existing item for that Pillar, keeping the count at maximum. Aisen who bottle an unleashing within their own tomb may anchor the enchantment to the magic of the location instead of their Pillars. A tomb can hold a number of such items equal to its owner's Guild Status rating, regardless of the Pillars involved. If items bound to the tomb are removed from the tomb's boundaries, they lose all power instantly as their enchantment is undone. While they are vessels, silenced Utterances are not relics and do not count as such in an Aisen tomb.

Apart from removing a tomb artifact, stored tiers endure indefinitely until used or the item storing them is destroyed. Using one of these artifacts requires a character to hold the object (and perform the activation ritual if one was designated). Her player spends one Willpower point, at which point the stored tier takes effect that turn as though unleashed by the Aisen in question using her dice pools and statistics at the time she bottled the magic. The user does not need to pay Pillars, as that cost has already been paid. Once its power is expended, the item reverts to being a non-magical object and may be enchanted anew. However, objects remember the magic that filled them. Once an item has held a particular tier, it cannot hold another and can only be "recharged" with another stored unleashing.

FAITHFUL SERVANT'S BLESSING

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Any) ••+

Effect: Mummies from any guild may purchase this Affinity, as it is technically five different versions of itself with powers solely limited to the affairs of an Aisen's own guild.

- The mummy applies the 9-again rule on all rolls that directly carry out guild business or convince others to assist with such endeavors (by whatever means). By spending a Willpower point on a valid roll, the Affinity's magic applies 8-again instead. This does allow her to sense whether actions she expects to receive this bonus do not, revealing such orders as corrupt or invalid (though not why or how).
- The Aisen adds a +2 dice bonus on Social actions solely targeting members of her guild with a lower Guild Status rating than her own.

GUILD UTTERANCES

Guild Affinities are truly proprietary magic, empowered by a relationship and responsibility that cannot be faked or stolen. A Maa-Kep cannot decide to round out her powers by manifesting the Guild Affinities of her Tef-Aabhi friend, even if said friend were willing to betray the secrets of his guild and somehow teach the magic in



question. Moreover, Guild Affinities cannot be stolen and misused by apostates, as those who leave their guild forsake the powers of that allegiance.

None of these things can be said for standard Guild Utterances, which are just Utterances that have been preserved by a single guild and carefully controlled to prevent the knowledge from being spread. Any mummy can learn a standard Guild Utterance with a teacher, just as mummies learn any other Utterance. Thus, the proprietary nature of Guild Utterances is superficially ephemeral, more akin to state/corporate secrets than a metaphysical principle belonging to the guild in question, but that doesn't mean that the restrictions against their use outside their respective guilds are any less real. Certain kinds of Guild Utterances (such as Four-Mar magic, presented in the next chapter) qualify as 'non-standard' Guild Utterances, and in most cases, are distinguished by being mystically exclusive, too.

Utterances designated as standard Guild Utterances may be recognized by the minimum Guild Status required to learn them. This indicates what rank a mummy must reach before the guild will entrust him with the magic in question. A mummy who does not meet this requirement has either stolen the knowledge somehow (making him an enemy of the guild he has robbed), or else he has fallen in rank from the esteemed status that once merited such lore. One who falls below the required rank in Guild Status can still use standard Guild Utterances, if he knows them, but is forbidden from both using that Utterance in public and from teaching it to anyone. Violating these taboos is cause for an Obloquy trial.

Examples of Guild Utterances may be found in the next chapter. More will appear in future **Mummy: The Curse** supplements.

IN UNISON

Laboring under the scorpion of Irem, the guilds evolved from secular craft-houses into centers of magic and faith. The Shan'iatu taught their guilds the minimum amount of sorcery required for their duties, but even that was enough to transform them from gangs of artisans to philosophers and mystics. Masters heard the secret keening of blackened worlds beyond the veil of time, and apprentices saw their works of bronze and stone twitch at moonrise, or drip blood at the ascension of Mars.

To work with the breath of demons at their cheeks, they required solace and security: rituals to assert their limited magical power and build morale. The guilds became mystery cults, elevating trade secrets to signs of enlightenment and adapting magical symbols into fraternal signs. Each guild developed an occult philosophy and rituals to

present it as a living myth. These rites incorporated gestures and tokens, invoked hidden powers and (as it was mandatory to avoid impalement) praised the true sorcerers who gave them patronage. Mesen-Nebu expounded the theory of Dedwen behind golden masks; Su-Menent flensed skulls before the pillars of Azar.

A few mystical souls reached beyond the theatre and politics of the guild as a cult. They reached beyond the Shan'iatu's lessons. They touched *something* in the ineffable dark. Some Arisen believe they snatched the first Utterances from the chaos between life and Duat, taming them to serve their guilds. Others think the Shan'iatu carved Utterances into Deathless souls, or only did so for lesser spells—the greater tiers were invented by guildmasters. But virtually all agree that between life and Deathlessness, the guilds alone breathed power into their special symbols and philosophies, and developed high rituals to claim it. The guilds unveiled the divine might that Arisen may wield alone, and the far greater power they could unleash together.

UNISON KEYWORD

Some Utterances were intended to allow mummies to work together and pool their power in some fashion. Tiers designed to work this way list the "Unison" keyword in their Pillar requirements and explain in their descriptions how participants must contribute and the benefits for doing so. An Utterance is considered a Unison Utterance if any of its tiers have this keyword. Participants in a Unison unleashing assume specific formal roles explained below, each of which comes with special rules associated with that function.

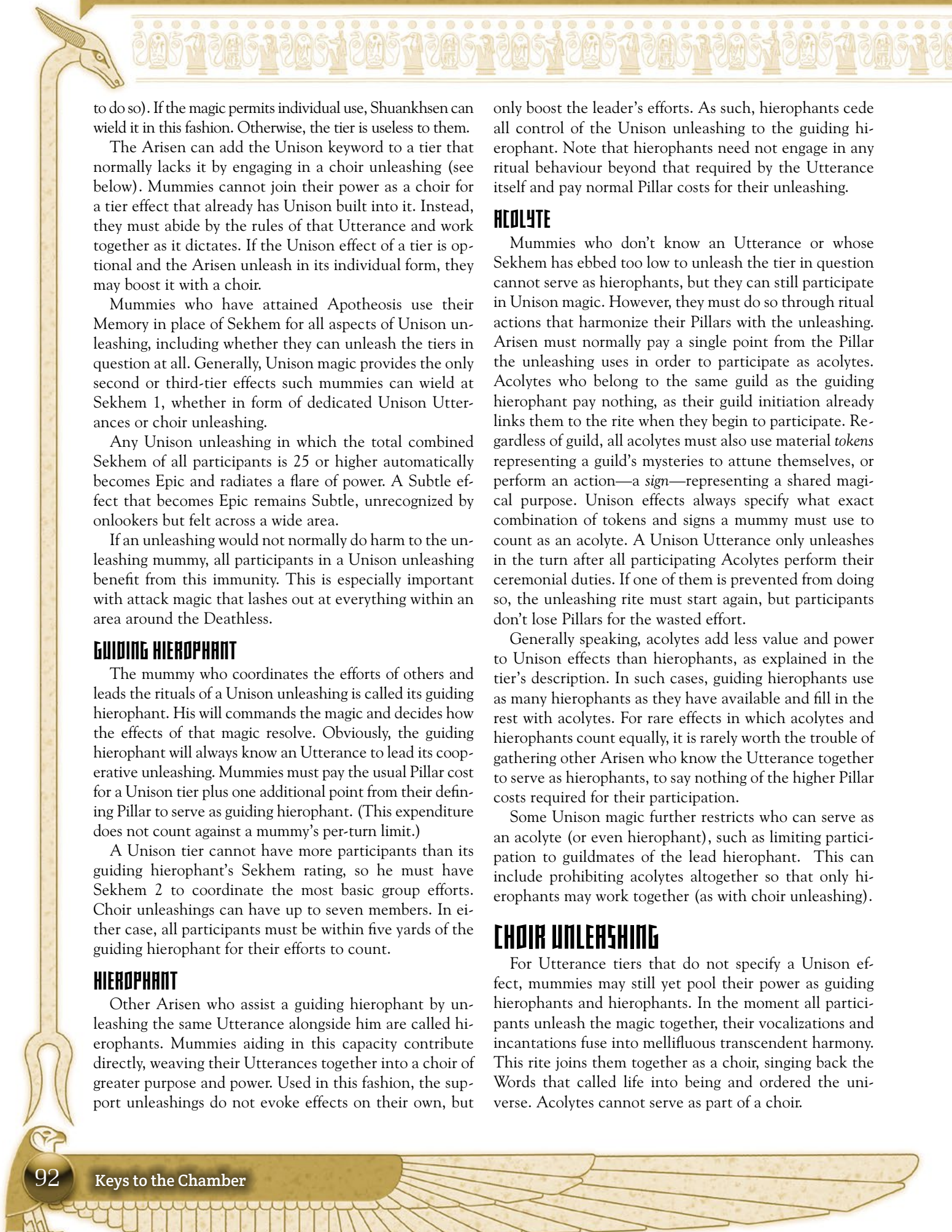
In some cases, Unison tiers require teamwork to function at all. Usually, however, Unison tiers operate at a base level when unleashed solo and rise in potency with additional participants. Tiers in which their Unison function is mandatory rather than optional tend to be more powerful to compensate for the limitation. Utterances rarely contain more than a single Unison-mandatory tier and never more than two.

Most Utterances with the Unison keyword are also Guild Utterances, as the guilds jealously guard the fruits of their cooperative labors. Some of these Utterances have been stolen or generously shared, breaking guild monopolies until they ceased to be Guild Utterances altogether. Some have remained Guild Utterances, reverse engineered and passed around, but still technically associated in each version with a specific guild, sometimes with differing Guild Status requirements attached.

SPECIAL RULES

Only the Deathless are capable of unleashing Unison tiers cooperatively. Shuankhsen cannot rise above their own hunger to pool their power, nor aid the Arisen (were they inclined





to do so). If the magic permits individual use, Shuankhsen can wield it in this fashion. Otherwise, the tier is useless to them.

The Arisen can add the Unison keyword to a tier that normally lacks it by engaging in a choir unleashing (see below). Mummies cannot join their power as a choir for a tier effect that already has Unison built into it. Instead, they must abide by the rules of that Utterance and work together as it dictates. If the Unison effect of a tier is optional and the Arisen unleash in its individual form, they may boost it with a choir.

Mummies who have attained Apotheosis use their Memory in place of Sekhem for all aspects of Unison unleashing, including whether they can unleash the tiers in question at all. Generally, Unison magic provides the only second or third-tier effects such mummies can wield at Sekhem 1, whether in form of dedicated Unison Utterances or choir unleashing.

Any Unison unleashing in which the total combined Sekhem of all participants is 25 or higher automatically becomes Epic and radiates a flare of power. A Subtle effect that becomes Epic remains Subtle, unrecognized by onlookers but felt across a wide area.

If an unleashing would not normally do harm to the unleashing mummy, all participants in a Unison unleashing benefit from this immunity. This is especially important with attack magic that lashes out at everything within an area around the Deathless.

GUIDING HIEROPHANT

The mummy who coordinates the efforts of others and leads the rituals of a Unison unleashing is called its guiding hierophant. His will commands the magic and decides how the effects of that magic resolve. Obviously, the guiding hierophant will always know an Utterance to lead its cooperative unleashing. Mummies must pay the usual Pillar cost for a Unison tier plus one additional point from their defining Pillar to serve as guiding hierophant. (This expenditure does not count against a mummy's per-turn limit.)

A Unison tier cannot have more participants than its guiding hierophant's Sekhem rating, so he must have Sekhem 2 to coordinate the most basic group efforts. Choir unleashings can have up to seven members. In either case, all participants must be within five yards of the guiding hierophant for their efforts to count.

HIEROPHANT

Other Arisen who assist a guiding hierophant by unleashing the same Utterance alongside him are called hierophants. Mummies aiding in this capacity contribute directly, weaving their Utterances together into a choir of greater purpose and power. Used in this fashion, the support unleashings do not evoke effects on their own, but

only boost the leader's efforts. As such, hierophants cede all control of the Unison unleashing to the guiding hierophant. Note that hierophants need not engage in any ritual behaviour beyond that required by the Utterance itself and pay normal Pillar costs for their unleashing.

ACOLYTE

Mummies who don't know an Utterance or whose Sekhem has ebbed too low to unleash the tier in question cannot serve as hierophants, but they can still participate in Unison magic. However, they must do so through ritual actions that harmonize their Pillars with the unleashing. Arisen must normally pay a single point from the Pillar the unleashing uses in order to participate as acolytes. Acolytes who belong to the same guild as the guiding hierophant pay nothing, as their guild initiation already links them to the rite when they begin to participate. Regardless of guild, all acolytes must also use material *tokens* representing a guild's mysteries to attune themselves, or perform an action—a *sign*—representing a shared magical purpose. Unison effects always specify what exact combination of tokens and signs a mummy must use to count as an acolyte. A Unison Utterance only unleashes in the turn after all participating Acolytes perform their ceremonial duties. If one of them is prevented from doing so, the unleashing rite must start again, but participants don't lose Pillars for the wasted effort.

Generally speaking, acolytes add less value and power to Unison effects than hierophants, as explained in the tier's description. In such cases, guiding hierophants use as many hierophants as they have available and fill in the rest with acolytes. For rare effects in which acolytes and hierophants count equally, it is rarely worth the trouble of gathering other Arisen who know the Utterance together to serve as hierophants, to say nothing of the higher Pillar costs required for their participation.

Some Unison magic further restricts who can serve as an acolyte (or even hierophant), such as limiting participation to guildmates of the lead hierophant. This can include prohibiting acolytes altogether so that only hierophants may work together (as with choir unleashing).

CHOIR UNLEASHING

For Utterance tiers that do not specify a Unison effect, mummies may still yet pool their power as guiding hierophants and hierophants. In the moment all participants unleash the magic together, their vocalizations and incantations fuse into mellifluous transcendent harmony. This rite joins them together as a choir, singing back the Words that called life into being and ordered the universe. Acolytes cannot serve as part of a choir.



INCREASED SEKHEM

All members of a choir raise their effective Sekhem rating by a number of bonus dots equal to the total number of the participants, minus one. Thus, a choir of four raises the effective Sekhem of all participants by three dots. Effective Sekhem still remains capped at 10 members, and talismans have no impact on Unison unleashings (even if every hierophant has one). The benefits of effective Sekhem are as follows:

- A choir member's effective Sekhem determines what tiers she may unleash, which may be what allows the choir member to participate in the first place. For example, the bonus Sekhem dot from two participants with Sekhem 4 allows both members of the choir to collaboratively unleash a third tier Utterance requiring Sekhem 5.
- The guiding hierophant uses her effective Sekhem rating for all effects of the unleashing itself. Since any references in the Utterance to Sekhem refer to the guiding hierophant's rating, it behooves a choir to let their highest-Sekhem member lead.
- For each dot by which the lowest-Sekhem participant's effective Sekhem exceeds the minimum

required for unleashing the tier, the guiding hierophant may augment the tier's effects as per a single application of Clutch the Mantle of Duat, Dominion Over the Horde, or Reign of Scorpions (p. 84). Normally, each such benefit may only be applied once.

- A choir containing one or more of the following combinations has the potential to be more potent: all participants belong to different guilds (capping the choir at five members), all participants have different decrees (capping the choir at five members), all participants belong to the same guild, or all participants have the same decree. From difference and sameness flows the power of great patterns. The guiding hierophant for such choirs may cumulatively apply any of the augmenting bonuses explained in the previous bullet up to three times each (i.e. doubled area becomes quadrupled, then octupled).
- Mummies in a state of Apotheosis add the Sekhem bonus to their Memory instead of Sekhem for the purposes of determining if they count as the lowest-Sekhem participant in the rite.





CHAPTER SEVEN

BEYOND THE DOOR

One of the secrets of life is that all that is really worth doing is what we do for others.

— Lewis Carroll

This chapter collects all the new Storyteller goodies—guildmaster secrets, key NPCs, plot seeds, and all the various mechanical offerings, including new relics, Merits, Affinities, Utterances, and even a new sub-system of magic—in one convenient place. Where noted, this content effectively supplements the more player-friendly material presented in Chapters One through Five.

How and when all this new information gets seeded into a given game is, of course, the prerogative of each individual Storyteller.

LABORERS: GRAVEN TREASURE

The Maa-Kep are the first to admit that their magics are less flashy and impressive than the towering powers of the alchemists or the versatile mastery of the scribes, but, in their humble (or falsely-humble) way, the laborers have found ways to work their will on the world. That often means working it on their fellow Arisen, as well.

NEW AFFINITIES

The signature powers of the Maa-Kep include forming metaphysical bonds with other guilds, effective slave management, summoning burning walls of undead-searing fire from amulets and doing whatever it takes to find the right truths and bury the rest.

GUILD ENVOY (VARRIES, SEE BELOW)

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Maa-Kep) ••+

Effect: This is actually a cluster of four separate Affinities, each connecting the Maa-Kep to another of the four guilds. The specific names for each are: Accounting the Corroded (Mesen-Nebu), Cutting the Reed (Sesha-Hebsu), Digging in the Dirt (Su-Menent), and Bind the Sunset (Tef-Aabhi). Rumors of a fifth Affinity that can link one of the Second Hands to the Deceived are hopefully just that, else that means the Deceived indeed exist and worse, the inevitability of further betrayal by the Maa-Kep is inscribed upon the magic of the guild.


It is possible for mummies to manifest more than one Guild Envoy Affinity, but exceedingly uncommon outside of those who dedicate almost all their available time to diplomatic endeavors. Specialty is far more practical, as it is generally better to be seen as one guild's special friend and not simply a mystically affable, honey-tongued schemer.

Once an Arisen has a version of this Affinity, she may spend an hour crafting a small amulet out of metal and precious stones—typically as some form of jewelry—using a successful (Intelligence + Craft) roll. The amulet in question must evoke artistic themes appropriate to the linked guild, so iconography related to text or writing for Sesha-Hebsu, etc. The act of creating the amulet also empowers it as a conduit for the Affinity's power. Up to (the Arisen's Maa-Kep status) copies of each amulet type hold their power at a time; creating a new one while at the limit also removes all power from the oldest enchanted amulet. Each amulet has (Durability 3, Size 1, Structure 4); destruction ends its power instantly.

While an empowered envoy amulet is carried or worn by a mummy of the correct guild, the Maa-Kep can rise whenever the bearer does (unless he is roused by a disturbed tomb). The mummy's player chooses whether to exercise this option, but the character does not consciously choose this. In addition, each version of the Affinity grants the Maa-Kep additional powers over current amulet bearers as listed below. Thus far, other guilds only suspect these powers, as Second Hands claim the devices allow them to render aid to trusted friends and colleagues and feel no particular need to mention any fine print. Envoys are expected to show extreme discretion in the use of these powers so as not to provide their fellow guilds with definitive proof of ulterior motives.

Accounting the Corroded: The Maa-Kep adds +2 dice to Subterfuge rolls solely targeting her Mesen-Nebu uaqeb. In turn, such characters suffer a -3 dice penalty on Subterfuge targeting the envoy.

Cutting the Reed: Whenever the Arisen or his Sesha-Hebsu uaqeb would take a lethal or aggravated wound in



the last box of his wound track, the mummy intuitively this fact (across all distance). The Maa-Kep may then choose whether to apply all damage from this event normally or pass it on to the other party in the relationship. For example, a killing wound that inflicted three points of damage to the Second Hand could be permitted to kill the intended target, or do no harm to him while inflicting three points of automatic damage to an amulet bearer.

Digging in the Dirt: The Maa-Kep adds a +2 dice bonus on Subterfuge, Persuasion and Socialize rolls whenever in the presence of one or more Su-Menent uaqeb who have stated agreement with the envoy's spoken position or designated the envoy as speaking on their behalf. Such pledges of support must have been made earlier in the same scene. The Maa-Kep may also reflexively spend a Willpower point to silence one of her Su-Menent uaqeb she can perceive, preventing him from making any vocal noise for the rest of the scene. A silenced mummy's player can restore his speech by spending one Willpower, precluding further imposition of silence that scene. Throwing away or destroying the amulet does not prematurely end a bout of silence.

Bind the Sunset: Whenever the Arisen and one or more of his Tef-Aabhi uaqeb join combat together (as allies or enemies), the Maa-Kep may choose one of three options. First, he may allow initiative to go ahead normally. Second, he may apply a -3 dice penalty to the initiative roll for any number of his target uaqeb in the fight in order to add +3 dice per targeted uaqeb to his own initiative roll (effectively stealing speed from friends). Third, he can give any number of his Tef-Aabhi uaqeb in the fight a +3 dice bonus to initiative while suffering a -3 dice penalty to his own initiative per target (donating his speed to allies).

FLAIL OF SCORN

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Maa-Kep) •••+

Effect: Though it may seem unseemly in modern society, the Maa-Kep have neither forgotten nor forsaken their duty as slave drivers. Sometimes, tasks must be accomplished regardless of the cost to labor or the sacrifices that must be made. Manifesting this Affinity grants the following powers:

- Whenever the Second Hand strikes a character with a Brawl or Weaponry-based attack that successfully inflicts one or more points of lethal damage, he may show mercy. Should he do so, the attack only inflicts a single point of bashing damage, but the victim loses one point of Willpower.
- If the Maa-Kep possesses Affable Aid (as normal), whenever he breaks the bond established by that

Affinity through attack or overt treachery (see **Mummy: the Curse**, p. 34), his player can spend an additional Willpower point. Doing so inflicts a bout of supernatural misery and hopelessness upon the betrayed, causing her to lose two Willpower points (and become immune to further Willpower drain from Flail of Scorn for the rest of the scene).

- Whenever the Second Hand benefits from Teamwork (**World of Darkness**, p. 134) as the primary actor, if he firmly directs the actions of all subordinate assistants (such as in the manner of a slave driver), his efforts are enhanced. As a result, his ultimate roll gets a +1 die bonus for every assistant, even if their players roll no successes or even produce a penalty. His authority ensures effective labor.

EVER-PERTINENT AUTHORITY

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Maa-Kep) ••••+

Effect: The Second Hand gains additional power over the amulets her tradition commands. Manifesting this Affinity provides the following capabilities:

- If the Maa-Kep presents an inanimate object to other characters as though it were a badge of office, government or private identification document, or a similar such totem of clear identity/authority, her player can spend one Willpower point and make an opposed (Manipulation + Subterfuge + Guild Status) roll against the highest (Resolve + Composure) of observers present. Arisen and Witnesses are immune to this trick. Using an actual amulet relic as a badge applies the 8-again rule to the mummy's deceit. If the mummy wins, all witnesses perceive the object as whatever it is presented as, and treat the Arisen as though she were who her "identification" claims her to be. Direct and obvious evidence contradicting a presented identity makes the magic fail, so additional disguises or props may be required if apparent gender or other perceptible details don't match up. In short, implausible guises hold up while impossible ones collapse under the weight of disbelief.
- The Arisen can hold any small inanimate object in the palm of her hand that rightfully belongs to someone else. This includes objects that were stolen or lost, but not intentionally gifted or thrown away. With a reflexive action, the mummy can perceive what Specialties (if any) the owner possesses and may choose one of them. The Arisen's player rolls (Manipulation + Larceny) with a dice penalty equal to the owner's Composure. If successful,

the target temporarily loses the Specialty in question and the mummy gains it. After one day, the Specialty returns to its owner. In lieu of a Specialty, the Arisen may take some abstract but useful piece of information that doesn't neatly correlate to a Skill, such as the location of good Thai restaurants in the area or basic biographical information like where the target went to school or what town he grew up in. No important secrets may be gleaned this way and the Arisen cannot take another piece of knowledge while holding onto stolen memories.

WATCHER OF WATCHMEN

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Maa-Kep) •••••

Effect: Guildmasters of the Maa-Kep perform acts of breathtaking ruthless practicality, their very presence encouraging discovery of veiled truths and all lies that don't serve the guild. Manifesting this Affinity confers the following powers:

- The Maa-Kep's player may spend one Willpower point to focus on the moral compromises demanded by the guild's sordid affairs. For the rest of the scene, the mummy's effective Memory rating is lowered by his Guild Status rating to determine whether sins prompt degeneration checks. However, this reduction only applies if sins in question serve official guild business. Otherwise, the moral compass of his true Memory rating must guide him normally.
- The Maa-Kep's presence radiates out within a mile radius. In that area, all uses of Subterfuge suffer a -1 die penalty unless the deception in question serves Second Hand guild business. All rolls within the radius using Investigation to discover the private secrets of non-Maa-Kep apply the 9-again rule.

NEW UTTERANCES

The pursuit of new Utterances is less popular among the Maa-Kep, many of whom feel that their very nature skirts the edge of their principle against being noticed, but ultimately they too are creatures of Sekhem (and for the most part, pragmatists), so they do what they must. What follows are a few Utterances the laborers have opted to keep to themselves.

BOUND AS FINGERS IN A FIST

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Maa-Kep) •+

Tier 1: Ka • (Subtle) **Tier 2:** Ren •• (Subtle) **Tier 3:** Ba •••• (Subtle, Unison)

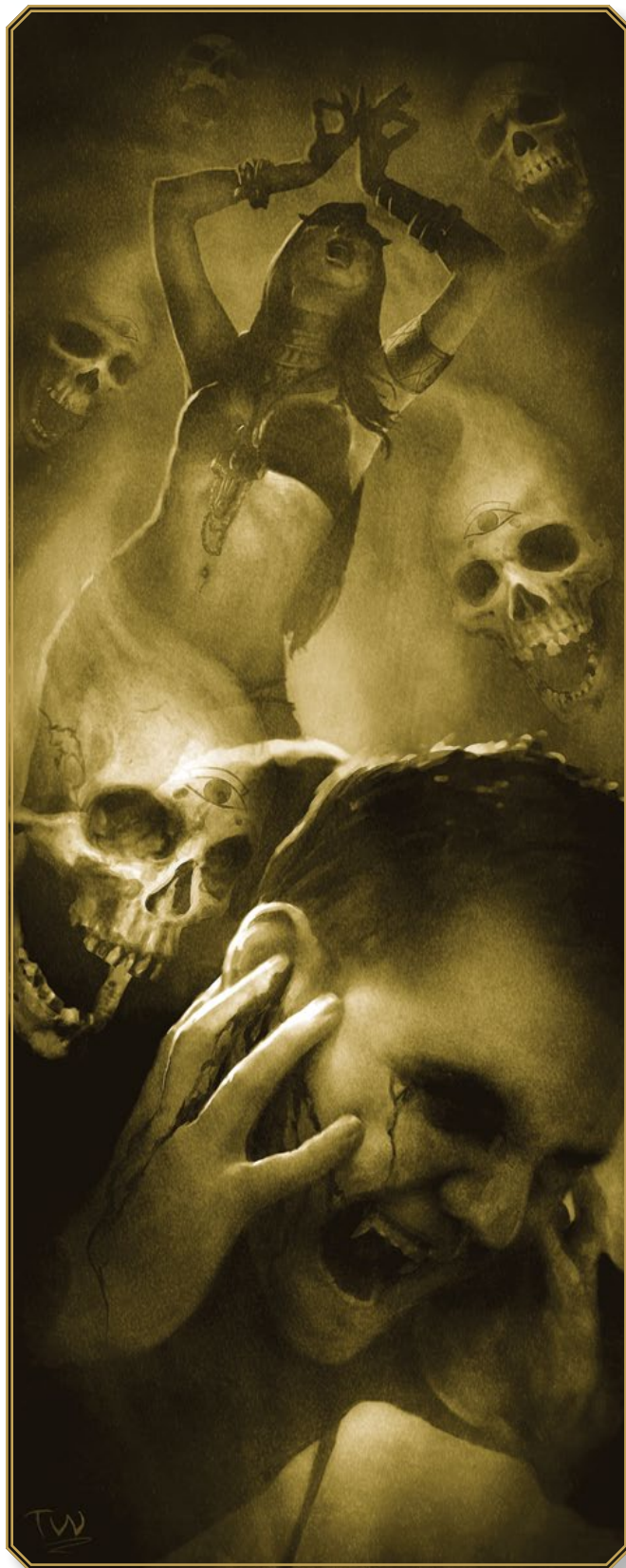
Tier 1: In times of crisis or danger, the Maa-Kep regard themselves as natural leaders. Not in the modern sense of being the man on the white horse who earns *gratitude* by issuing commands, but by knowing what's going on and making the right decisions, no matter who gets the credit. One of their secrets is that doing *anything* together is often a better idea than letting a group scatter as each tries his own hare-brained scheme. This Maa-Kep Utterance makes that principle even more ironclad.

When unleashing the first tier of this Utterance, the mummy selects a number of companions up to his Ka rating he can perceive within a 10 yard radius. For the next hour, if the designated companions partake in an exercise of Teamwork (*World of Darkness*, p. 134) that focuses on the unleashing mummy as the primary actor and the effort succeeds, each participant regains a point of Willpower (unless they're already at their natural maximum). The primary actor is included in this restoration. Only actions that require real effort and offer genuine challenges and/or dangers to the participants can restore Willpower; the Storyteller should veto awards that seem intended to cheat the spirit of the unleashing.

Tier 2: The Maa-Kep prepares a number of charms or pieces of jewelry up to his Ren score, and shares them out among colleagues he can perceive immediately before activating this Utterance. The items have (Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2). Once empowered by the unleashing, the ornaments unify their bearers and maker on a spiritual level for six days. If the trinket is broken or taken away, that individual is removed from the communion, but the thief does not enter it. Ornaments may be reused and empowered with a new unleashing, provided they remain undamaged. While the magic lasts, it grants the following benefits:

- Each can intuit where the others are, regardless of distance. Only Duat is shrouded from this sense.
- Each can send silent messages to another or to all the others. Neither the sending or receiving party can be in Duat. Communication can take the form of verbal telepathy or broadcast psychic images.
- Each has a continuous passive sense of what the others are doing—eating, fighting, resting, arguing, suffering, etc.
- Each can donate a point of Willpower to another once per turn.
- Each adds +2 dice on rolls to resist mind-altering magic.

Tier 3: Unleashing this Tier has unusually understated effects for an Utterance, but they're no less profound for their subtlety. The power of the enchantment reaches out to a radius of 100 yards, affecting all within that bubble who did



not participate in the unleashing. The Arisen's player rolls (Manipulation + Empathy), applying a dice penalty equal the highest Composure among all affected individuals. If successful, all targets temporarily change their Virtue and Vice to match the mummy. Because he now knows exactly how to appeal to them, the Arisen also gets a +2 die bonus and benefits from the 9-again rule for the next hour when targeting them with social actions.

When laborers work in unison, the Utterance becomes both more versatile and substantially more powerful. For each additional hierophant who participates, the following benefits are gained:

- The additional mummy gains the social bonuses as well.
- The unleashing lasts for an additional scene.
- The range of the unleashing increases by an additional 100 yards.

Acolytes do not increase the range, but otherwise count as hierophants by performing the requisite sign of murmured incantations that evoke sin and conscience. The occultic prayers take half a minute to perform and a successful (Manipulation + Occult) roll to ensure they are vocalized correctly without drawing undue attention that would spoil the rite.

The additional Maa-Kep's Vice and Virtue can be considered for assignment to the crowd. For instance, if two mummies with different Vices and Virtues cooperate on this tier, they could assign the Vice and Virtue of one to the crowd, or of the other, or they could assign one's Vice and the other's Virtue. This can't give the crowd members extra Vices or Virtues, of course.

DISCIPLINE THE OBSTINATE

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Maa-Kep) ••+

Tier 1: Ab • (Curse, Unison) **Tier 2:** Ren ••• (Curse, Epic) **Tier 3:** Sheut ••••• (Curse, Epic)

Tier 1: This abominable word blasts the flesh and shakes the souls of outsiders who hear it. Anyone within 10 yards who is not completely deaf or behind a soundproof barrier suffers one point of damage and subtracts one from his initiative count. The type of damage taken depends on the nature of the listener. Mortals and non-magical animals suffer aggravated damage. Supernatural beings suffer lethal wounds. Mummies suffer bashing damage unless they share the unleashing mummy's guild, in which case they're unharmed and don't even lose Initiative. This damage ignores mundane armor, but may be stopped normally by supernatural defenses.

The more mummies chanting this blasphemy against life, the worse it gets for outsiders listening.



Each additional user of the Utterance does another point of damage and pushes enemies farther back on the Initiative queue, but that would happen even if the Arisen just did it serially. When they speak this curse in unison, each additional participant who shares the guiding hierophant's guild adds an effect to it:

- The first additional participant forces the injured to step back away from the guiding hierophant a number of feet equal to twice the number of participants.
- The second imposes a -1 die penalty to all non-reflexive actions on anyone who has suffered injury from this tier. The penalty from aching spiritual pain lasts for an hour and does not stack with itself.
- The third costs listeners a point of Willpower at the moment the penalty from pain goes into effect, a result of crushing depression. Characters cannot suffer further Willpower drain this way until the penalty wears off and is applied anew.
- The fourth deafens everyone injured, for a number of scenes equal to the total number of participants. This deafness only kicks in after a minute so that the Utterance does not block itself from being unleashed upon a target again in rapid succession.

Tier 2: At this level, the mummy curses everyone who speaks his name or discusses his business without permission. Exclusions can be made—"everyone in my meret," "my guildmates," "members of my cult," or all the above and more. The exclusions are defined when unleashing the Utterance.

Everyone else within a mile radius is affected for a number of days equal to the mummy's Ren. If anyone so afflicted speaks the mummy's name, he takes a point of lethal damage as blood courses from his mouth. If he tries to write it, his hands cramp and the skin of his fingers blisters (again, causing a point of lethal damage). Someone who knowingly discusses the mummy's plans or activities (even without knowing the name) is similarly hurt. The curse does not harm those who talk about it ignorantly—"Wow, those weirdos in the red robes are really freaking out!" is safe, but "The disciples of Nakhti-the-Soft-Voice-of-Poison are on the prowl!" earns a point of damage. It's up to the Storyteller to adjudicate edge cases, often in accordance with the course of fate.

The magic ensnares everyone present when spoken, and continues to harm them even if they leave its radius in the interim. (Those who enter the zone after the fact can speak the forbidden name in safety.)

If pronounced as a death-curse, the Utterance only harms those who had some direct hand in the mummy's demise. But in that case, it's permanent: They take damage *every time* they say his name or speak of his deeds.

Only encountering him arisen anew undoes this other-wise lifelong curse.

Tier 3: In the wrath of the slave-driver, darkness descends. As with the previous tier, the Arisen can exclude individuals or classes or folks as he prepares the Utterance. Once he speaks it, everyone within one mile for every two points of Sheut goes blind, except those excluded.

Afflicted mortals just go blind, period. Their sightlessness lasts for an hour per point of the mummy's Sheut, and the experience provokes Terror Sybaris.

Supernatural beings roll (Composure + Resolve + Advantage Trait) against the Arisen's (Presence + Intimidation). For every success by which the mummy exceeds the victim, she suffers immediate and total blindness for one scene.

Arisen roll (Composure + Resolve + Sekhem) against the unleashing mummy's (Presence + Intimidation) if they're not excluded from the casting. Blindness lasts one turn for every success by which the unleashing mummy exceeds the victim.

In addition to *blinding everyone*, the Utterance deactivates all light sources within the radius. Fires smaller than a bonfire snuff out instantly, their final smoke inexplicably perfumed. Light bulbs burn out with spectacular showers of sparks. New lights may be turned on, but for a moment, all is dark.

WAR-CHEST OF THE MAA-KEP

The duty of the Arisen is to return relics and vessels to Duat, obviously. Clearly. But there are exceptions permitted, like their priceless master chisels, and the relics that center a tomb's lifeweb. Surely (the most pragmatic laborers would argue) this indicates a certain flexibility about the *obligation* to return *every* relic, no matter how useful. Certainly that's a wise policy for those other guilds, who had so many problems that the Maa-Kep were commanded to watch them for heresy. But the laborers don't need to be held to so strict a standard, do they?


Not if everyone keeps quiet about it.

THE DIAMOND CHISEL OF TAUSRET-WHO-BINDS-THE-GAZE-OF-MEN (AMULET -----)

Durability 5, Size 1, Structure 6

The Maa-Kep guildmistress for the Hall of the Unwavering Eye is a dark and terrifying figure even to her allies. In life, while driving a herd of slave-warriors to the front of one of Irem's interminable battles, she was taken by surprise by enemy partisans who unveiled their own sorcery against her. Weak by the standards of the Shan'iatu, it was sufficient to conjure a cloud of flesh-eating locusts. Tausret rallied her charges and overcame the enemy, but the scars on her face





and forearms never healed in her life, and her memory of them have only made them more prominent on her sahu.

Elevated after spending her last Sothic Turn breaking the power of the Ostrogoths and cementing Maa-Kep influence over the Lombards, she has governed the European guildhall ever since.

Power: The diamond chisel decorated with her car-touche is an object of awe and dread, for with but a gesture, she can use it to pry open the secret recesses of a victim's soul. The sensation of its scrutiny is like having an icicle slammed between the hemispheres of your brain while centipedes march in organized lockstep through your most private emotions and deeply-held beliefs.

The chisel provides telepathy (though Tausret refers to it as "Ka-ravaging"), and its yield and side-effects depend on how deep she digs.

A shallow profile of one's surface thoughts wreaks no havoc, costs her nothing and automatically succeeds unless the victim spends a point of Willpower to resist. (Targets of Ka-ravage can sense even this light touch as a frosty intrusion.) Resisting the probe lets one fight as if it was a moderate profile. If the chiseler wins, however, she only gets the shallow insights.

Moderate profile resistance means rolling Resolve + Composure + Supernatural Advantage against her Presence + Manipulation. If she succeeds, she not only knows one's surface thoughts, she intuits someone's Virtue, Vice, and Morality (or its replacement), understands their general values and personality, and can determine the target's true reaction to one statement ("Irem shall rise again!"). Succeed or fail, the target loses a point of Willpower and the chisel user knows which (if any) Derangements are lurking in the target's soul.

A profound profile is like having your soul chewed up by icy fangs, then digested. There are no secrets left. It's resisted like a moderate profile, but it costs the chisel-bearer a Willpower point as well. Moreover, violating someone's identity so intimately is a rank 5 crime against Memory. If her roll fails, she only gets the insight about Derangements. Should she succeed, she knows that target as well as she knows herself. All her future Social rolls against him are at +2. Moreover, the target not only loses a Willpower point, he is psychically shattered and unable to act for the remainder of the scene except to defend himself.

Curse: The last brutal fillip of the Diamond Chisel is that it exacts its curse on the targets of its horrid intrusion. The deeper the intrusion, the more psychically wrecked the victim is afterwards.

Shallow: Victim takes a -1 die penalty to Resolve and Composure rolls for the next 24 hours, or until he amasses 6 successes at an extended Meditation roll.

Moderate: As shallow, only he also takes a -1d penalty to Intelligence and Presence and it lasts 48 hours (or until meditated away with 10 successes).

Profound: All Mental and Social Attributes are at -1d penalty, *no time limit*, until the target successfully amasses 20 successes while meditating.

Naturally, no *other* benefits redound from this mental reorganization.

If the amulet is used by anyone outside the Maa-Kep guild, the user suffers the same penalties as the victim.

THE LAPIS CHISEL OF KHYAN THE UNSURPASSED (AMULET -----)

Durability 4, Size 1, Structure 5

Master Khyan's title, 'the Unsurpassed,' is rarely spoken today, as it has the tone of ironic mockery in the mouths of those who know that he received his Master's Chisel as the first Master of the Unwavering Eye, and that he kept it by stepping down when Tausret made her move during the Third Sothic Turn. The intervening centuries have obscured the dishonor to everyone but Khyan. While his tomb is safe under the Adulis dig in Eritrea, he has begun his Sothic Turn by overseeing Dahabusi oil exploration (p. 13) in Ethiopia's Omo river valley, near the triple border with Kenya and Sudan.


Khyan opposes the European Hall's objectives of creating a completely overseen populace because (1) he was more active than many mummies in Nazi Germany; and (2) he believes the secrecy of the Arisen is imperiled by the surging growth of information access, and he's done a lot of his best work unobserved. Most crucially, he wants the Unwavering Eye to fail because they rejected him for Tausret, whom he hates with every fiber of his being.

While her Sothic awakening won't start for another ten months or so, Khyan was subjected to the Rite fairly early, and he's not delaying. He had his cult awaken him in 1995 just to get a sense of what was going on, and he has vague ambitions of using the Arab Spring as a platform for a new wave of pan-African racism, guided by a resurgent Scorpion Banner.

This time, however, instead of ruling a guildhall he's going to work behind the scenes. As a good Maa-Kep should.

Power: The skill of the Lapis Chisel's bearer is unsurpassed by anyone he encounters. If, for example, Khyan meets someone whose Computer Skill exceeds his own, he can invoke the chisel's power to mirror his rival's education. It only works for one Skill at a time, and only for one visible individual. So, if he's trying to pursue someone whose Drive Skill is •••••, he can make those rolls as if his Drive is also •••••. It works for Physical, Mental and Social Skills. Not only that,





cannot be willingly undone before they run their course, so the choice to invoke its power must be done carefully. The precision and prudence of an alchemist who masters this Affinity is intended to prove he is worthy of wielding it.

Activating this Affinity costs one Willpower point. The mummy's player chooses up to two dots from Skills the character possesses and sacrifices them to the magic. These can come from the same or different Skills. The player then chooses one different Skill for each dot chosen and one Specialty for that Skill. The alchemist gains one dot in each chosen Skill (to a maximum of five dots) and the attendant Specialty. This shift in Skill dots lasts until the end of the current episode and then reverts back before it can be reapplied in a new configuration.

EQUIVALENCY PRINCIPLE

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Mesen-Nebu) •••+

Effect: The core precepts of alchemy are simple enough. One thing becomes another. Nothing is created or destroyed. These ideas seem almost mundane in a world whose science has proven conservation of mass and energy and built wonders upon the certainty of these truths, but it was not so long ago that the alchemists of the Mesen-Nebu were among the few on Earth to understand how transmutation actually worked. Manifesting this Affinity provides the following powers:

- The mummy can reflexively assess the Resources value of an object he can perceive. His intuition for value is actually more refined than this, enabling him to differentiate subtle gradations of value. Moreover, he can sense how much of that value has to do with ephemeral market conditions (i.e. shortages, local scarcity, new fads, etc.) and how much of the value has staying power. For instance, the price of gold rises and falls, but tends to remain precious to human beings across cultures and eras.
- By touching an inanimate object no larger than his body, the Mesen-Nebu can catalyze its transformation into something else of equal value. Neither the starting or end form can be intrinsically magical. The end result also cannot exceed the alchemist's size and must be something he is familiar with and understands. The Storyteller may call for an (Intelligence + Skill) roll to create anything complex, using whatever Skill most associates with the item. Rare objects may even impose a penalty of -1 to -5 on this roll according to how much specialized understanding is required to imagine them. Initiating transmutation costs one Willpower point and spectacularly morphs the target into any other object

with an equal or lesser Resources value. It explosively melts and freezes its inchoate mass into its new form. Transformation is subject to the ambient metaphysical interplay of market forces, so a prized collector's item at the height of a fad will provide considerably more to work with than it will a year later after that fad ends. It is not uncommon for Mesen-Nabu to archive their possessions in forms like gold or precious stones between Sothic turns in order to ensure maximum retention of value.

BLESSED CATALYST

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Mesen-Nebu) ••••+

Effect: The alchemist imbues her Sekhem into a solution of purified water and a precise mixture of dissolved minerals. With this Affinity, she may do any of the following:

- By spending one Willpower point, the alchemist ritually destroys an item by dissolving it into the pure water and the power of his Sekhem. This process takes one minute of furious bubbling and glowing. The resulting mixture can be drunk or bathed in to apply its magic, conferring a Merit of the mummy's player's choosing when creating the substance with a rating equal to the Resources value of the sacrifice used to endow it. The enchanted inchor loses its magic at the end of the scene if not used, wasting the Willpower and sacrificed item. Merits conferred this way last for (mummy's Guild Status rating) days before fading away. Bestowed traits appear, warping reality as necessary to make themselves true. A character does not simply become wealthy, but has reason and backstory to have been so by this point, however implausibly. Characters cannot receive Merits they would be incapable of purchasing normally, apart from permitting Merits normally only allowed during character creation.
- A Merit endowed by this Affinity can be sealed into its user and made permanent through an immediate expenditure of experience. Alternately, the beneficiary can cannibalize dots from Morality and/or Physical Attributes to yield experience points equal to what the lost dot(s) cost to replace. The character keeps any leftover experience not used to purchase the bestowed Merit.

REFINED PURITY OF PURPOSE

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Mesen-Nebu) •••••

Effect: The guildmasters of the Mesen-Nebu are both a blight and blessing upon the community they call home. They are glorious and worthy paragons to dwell there,

adding their inestimable worth by presence alone. But there is more. In the vicinity of the guildmaster, anyone driven enough can rise to greater success in life, either seizing opportunities granted them by force of will or moral compromise. Out of such magic have many great economic hubs grown to new heights. By manifesting this Affinity, the Arisen gains the following:

- He obtains Resources X for free as though bestowed by Blessed Catalyst (see above). If this Affinity becomes inert due to lowered Guild Status, his Resources falls immediately to whatever it would be without this magic transforming reality. His player may spend one Willpower after depleting phantom Resources through a large purchase in order to reassert his wealth at its full rating.
- He applies the 8-again rule on all rolls to negotiate matters of business or politics.
- Within a mile radius, his presence subtly transforms the heights of what is possible, allowing materialistic ambitions to flourish. Those inside the radius may purchase dots of the Resources Merit with only the slightest pretext of plausibility, either paying experience or cannibalizing traits to do so (as per Blessed Catalyst). Nothing forces this to happen, but prosperity becomes so easy that it happens frequently.

NEW UTTERANCE: HARVEST THE DIVINE FLESH

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Mesen-Nebu) ••+

Tier 1: Ka •; **Tier 2:** Sheut •••; **Tier 3:** Ka ••••• (Epic)

Tier 1: The ancients knew that precious stones and metals represented spiritual energy. Their gods had golden skin and eyes of lapis lazuli. Arisen and mortal souls lack divine might, but alchemy can still condense the power in their flesh into such materials—though not to their advantage. The mummy may unleash this tier reflexively whenever she touches her target's bare skin (see **World of Darkness**, p. 157). She must choose a specific target (see **World of Darkness**, p. 165). Roll the Arisen's (Ka + Sekhem), resisted by the target's (Stamina + Sekhem). Smoking black fluids erupt from tears in the mummy's skin and sink into a body part, which becomes heavy and useless as it turns to gold or another precious substance. The rigidity and weight of the target's precious flesh imposes a -2 dice cumulative penalty to physical dice pools, and additional effects depending on the body part affected:

- **Torso:** Weighed down by golden skin and muscle, the target cannot breathe. Mortals are prevented from vocalizing and begin to suffocate (see **World**

of Darkness, p. 49). Naturally, this is more of a nuisance than danger for Arisen.

- **Head:** Ears of gold and gemstone eyes remove the ability to see and hear. The target becomes completely blind and deaf.
- **Arm:** The target's golden arm can no longer grasp or hold objects, and loses its sense of touch. He automatically drops anything he carries and cannot muster sufficient coordination to pick anything else up.
- **Leg:** The target's leg seizes up; he must succeed at a reflexive (Dexterity + Athletics) roll or fall prone. The target suffers the effects of the **Lame Flaw** (see **World of Darkness**, p. 219). If the target already possessed this Flaw (due to this Utterance or another circumstance) he acquires the **Crippled Flaw**.

This tier's effects last for a number of turns equal to the mummy's (Ka + Sekhem). If the Arisen's player rolls an exceptional success, the Utterance also inflicts one point of aggravated damage, as the transmutation runs deep into bones and vital organs. At the Utterance's conclusion, this flesh returns to normal, even if it's been severed from its target. All deleterious effects end at this time, excepting actual damage.

Tier 2: The mummy chants the secrets of alchemical transmutation over her bound and helpless, living mortal target. Animals are not valuable enough to serve as valid targets for the magic. At the conclusion of this hour long ritual she forces the target's mouth open and seals it with her own. The mummy vomits the smoking black fluid Duat's demons use to shape soul-stuff into weapons and vestments. Roll (Sheut + Sekhem), resisted by the target's Stamina. Each success inflicts a point of aggravated damage that cannot be treated by medical science except through amputating affected regions. (Magic remains effective, however.) The mummy chooses which body parts transmute into precious materials.

Each success generates precious gems and metals sufficient to make one Resources •• purchase (roughly \$2,000 in modern times). Two successes may instead be invested to grant Resources •••, or four successes may be invested to grant Resources ••••. One need only hack off the transmuted parts, inflicting one point of lethal damage to the target per occasion. Optionally, the mummy may drain the target's blood, which becomes an alchemical agent capable of adding an equivalent value to metal, jewelry or certain works of art—it turns costume jewelry to the real thing and forged art into perfect copies.

Dead targets cannot be harvested further, and supernatural beings cannot be affected by this Utterance.

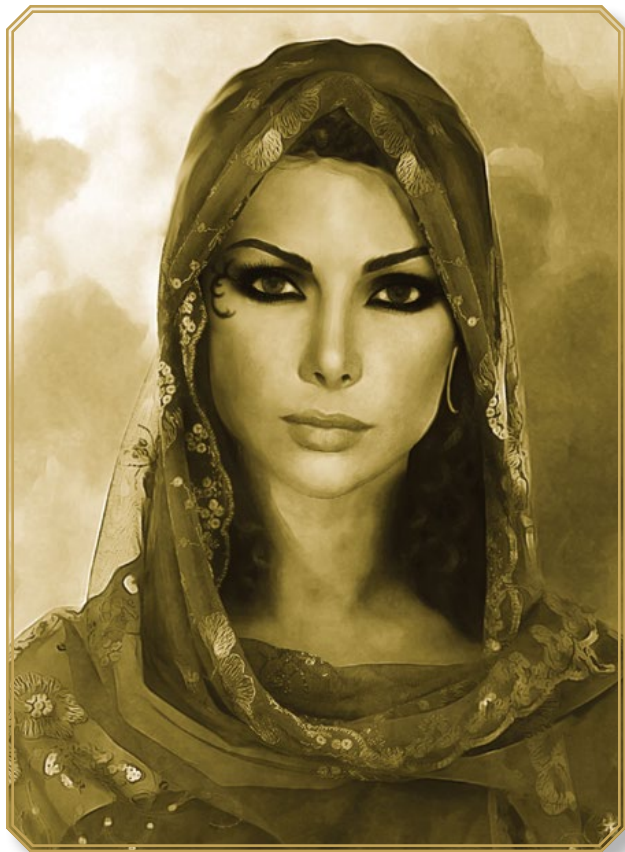
Tier 3: The mummy transmutes into something like a sarcophagus out of an unspoiled tomb, with golden flesh, precious stones for eyes and kingly regalia, including the Scorpion Flail of ancient Irem. Her presence carries metaphysical “weight;” she’s made of the stuff of the gods, more real and solid than the mundane universe around her. Her body isn’t weighed down by this transformation, but glorified; a golden heart pumps Sekhem as fluid, soaking her body in a continuous alchemical transformation. This confers the following powers for a number of hours equal to her Sekhem:

- Her golden body blazes with power, as if her presence is as essential as the sun. She cannot conceal her supernatural nature and affects all witnesses with Sybaris as if she had Sekhem 10. As a living objet d’art, she gains the four dot version of the Striking Looks Merit, and as a manifestation of divine power, she adds her Ka score to her Presence.
- Her metal and mineral flesh is far more durable than flesh, giving her Armor 3/3 with no attendant penalties or strength requirements. She also halves the number of points of damage she actually suffers from each separate injury from heat or flame, rounded up. That leaves at least one point from any burn that would result in actual damage, but increases how long she can last in the face of such injury.
- Her new form possesses tireless power, granting two bonus dots of Strength and three of Stamina.
- The mummy’s metaphysical strength extends to beings in Twilight. She may perceive and physically interact with them as if they could be touched in the material plane. Her attacks against beings in this state automatically inflict aggravated damage and reduce their target number by one.
- The mummy may now unleash the first tier of this Utterance at range by “touching” targets she can perceive within 20 yards with a luminous gold flare of Sekhem. This “touch” uses a dice pool of (Wits + Occult)—contact allows the tier to activate and invoke its usual transmutation.

MEREW-TJAW, THE ANOINTED ONE

Quotes: “Are you worth your weight in gold? Someone check what it’s trading at.”

“They told you I’m wrathful. That’s a good word, wrath. It implies divine purpose, not spiteful punishment. I test souls to destruction or divinity—your choice. It’s always your choice, child.”



“I don’t recall those days. They must have been unimportant.”

Virtue: Charity. Merew-Tjaw extravagantly rewards cultists who meet her high standards, or even strangers who impress her with skill and discipline.

Vice: Wrath. This upstart civilization already indulges too much softness. Excellence comes from the desert, burnt by the sun and callused against sand. These days, she needs to provide the adversity that so many mortals lack.

Background: Merew-Tjaw never got anything the easy way. Irem’s slavers captured her nomadic family. She traded desert hardship for roped hands, tough mines and the whip. Fascinated the polished metal her masters wore, she spied upon them to learn how it was made. Once she knew their secrets, she stole food and ran to the desert again. Three days later she returned to demonstrate her knowledge at the alchemists’ gate.

She remembers little of her initiation and work after that, except that she returned to the mine and was given her own family to lead—a test of loyalty, perhaps. She did not waver. They were savages and she, a worker of metal. Just because she had once been one of them didn’t mean they were still kin. She belonged to a different order of

being, remade by her own hands. She entered the Rite of Return with enthusiasm, believing it to be a new reward: exaltation into an even higher tier of existence, farther from deserts, mines and suffering.

But Duat taught her that no accomplishment wards off pain. It is a continual test, changing the soul the way a smith expels impurities from metal. She made her decree for the Ka, and eternal endurance on the path to transcendence.

Ages passed.

She awoke in 2011 and was told that she had instructed her cult to do so—she anticipated the great arising of the new Sothic Turn. Yet she remembers little of the intervening centuries. She knows she built a wealthy cult calls the Limitless Pillar. Its zealots believe that under her direction, they rise through the Order of Being to eventual godhood, and in the process amass wealth and personal excellence. In 2012 she moved from a country estate in Greece to the Bridle Path neighborhood of Toronto, Canada to abandon Greece's financial uncertainty for nation filled with natural resources.

Carrying out these plans has strained her cult's normally infallible loyalty, as she commanded them to restart her Descent twice. Her close followers have seen her at her most glorious, but also as she struggled to invoke miracles. A few silently recognize a pattern, and believe she may not be a goddess, but some creature bound to her own laws--and wonder if they can harness those laws to take advantage of her.

Description: In her mortal guise, Merew-Tjaw appears to be a tall woman of Egyptian descent with defined, knotty muscles born of hard labor. Even in the guild, she never left physical challenges to others. A burn scar from her mortal days looks like a single white tear on her left cheek. Viewed through the cloud of Sybaris, she possesses the golden horns of her decree, with molten copper flowing in lines across her body.

Storytelling Hints: You lifted yourself out of the worst of life and expect others to do the same. Dream, endure and triumph. Abandon anyone who turns away from smelting heat and stinging desert winds. When a determined individual pursues a vision across a path of suffering, they experience ecstasy and insight. You cannot supply the vision, but you can provide nurturing torment that rewards those who make the crossing, and consigns those who do not to their proper, servile role—or death, if they're weak enough. You're not a sadist, but a teacher devoted to patient precision. The desert is harsh, but the water on the other side is the sweetest of all. You might let the weak burn, but you help the strong drink deeply.

Concept: Conspiracy Queen

Decree: Essence

Judge: An-Hotep, the Bringer of Sacrifice

Guild: Mesen-Nebu

Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 2, Resolve 4, Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Presence 4,

Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Skills: Academics 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Crafts 4 (Metallurgy), Expression 4 (Speeches), Intimidation 4, Larceny 3, Occult 3, Persuasion 3, Politics 3, Survival 4 (Desert)

Merits: Cult (Conspiracy; Reach 3, Grasp 5, Obedient 1, Ritualistic 1), Guild Status (Mesen-Nebu) 5, Language (English, Greek) 1, Tomb (Geometry 3, Peril [curse] 2), Resources 5

Health: 9

The Lost Years

Merew-Tjaw once possessed a higher Memory and a more compassionate view of the world. Some Arisen remember her as one who cultivates mortals so that they may excel and prosper in their chosen fields. She ran her cult as a benevolent society, where pain was only prescribed in the confines of ritual ecstasy.

That changed during the Dark Ages. She controlled a prosperous Roman settlement then, and although political unrest drove many to the relative safety of her territory, it brought an enemy, concealed in a gang of workers: her brother. Mekaw was one of the Shuankhsen. He never escaped the family's slavery, but survived the mines and occult experiments that had been his lot ever since Merew-Tjaw abandoned them. Although he could not speak of what had brought him to the ranks of the cursed immortals, the Anointed One guessed soon enough, and for a second time she betrayed her own blood. She burned his body, killed his followers and abandoned her compassionate ways.

Merew-Tjaw changed her personal ideology to justify actions from both her mortal and Arisen days. As she dedicated herself to her Judge, she saw Mekaw as a fitting sacrifice. He was weak enough to stay a slave, so he was made one eternally. She eventually forgot the reasons for these beliefs and in time, her cold personality expelled the memory of Mekaw entirely. Sometimes, in the moments before a death cycle, she dreams of a family of faceless people, bent and cowering: people she should help, somehow, but never does.

But Mekaw has returned. He remembers it all.



Willpower: 8

Sekhem: 6 by mid-2013

Memory: 3

Affinities: Charmed Lives, Divine Flesh, Enduring Flesh, God-King's Scepter, Paragon Shames the Weak

Utterances: Blessed is the God-King, Harvest the Divine Flesh (see p. 103), Rebuke the Vizier, Rite of the Sacred Scarab

Pillars: Ab 1, Ba 3, Ka 5, Ren 3, Sheut 1

Size: 5

Speed: 10

Defense: 2

Initiative: 7

Armor: 0

Notes: Merew-Tjaw's wealth allows her to acquire any piece of equipment she wishes, but she rarely carries weapons. (That's her cult's job.)

CULT OF THE LIMITLESS PILLAR

Conspiracy; Reach: 3, **Grasp:** 5, Obedient, Ritualistic
Failure is the sign of the animal. Excellence is the responsibility of a human being. True understanding is the power of a god.

BACKGROUND

Merew-Tjaw's mighty cult believes its living goddess when she says its traditions date back to Egypt's Old Kingdom. This is true, but the cult possesses only fragments of its history before the 8th Century CE, and they include confusing testaments of their Anointed One, where she preaches about "wealth in forgiveness." Merew-Tjaw says some of these are forgeries, and others may be genuine, but their doctrines were limited to a particular time and place. Harsh days require gentleness, but the modern cult enjoys the decadence of accumulated civilization, which coddles the weak and distracts the strong from the path of excellence.

The Limitless Pillar has existed in secret because its doctrine can unseat kings and turn peasants against priests. The Anointed One says there is no divine right, but the right to become divine. It's the business of civilization to deny the strong their natural rights. Long ago, a few prodigies—exiles from the nameless first civilization—decided they would stop midway on the path to divinity and hold the rest back. They traded the risks of self-deification for the chance to be mere kings.

Along with certain allies, the Anointed One chose a different path. She made herself holy by her own hand,

and chose to share her secrets to a talented elect—the more talented, the higher the mysteries she would reveal. These are steps on the Limitless Pillar: the path to divinity illuminated by the first god born of mortal flesh, Osiris. The Anointed One has climbed further up the Limitless Pillar than her cultists, but anyone can follow her.

For millennia, the cult used this ideology to attract recruits from the middle of society: artisans, bankers and merchants who succeeded without aristocratic honors. This group included criminal conspiracies, but the Limitless Pillar doesn't have quite as much pull with them, as the Anointed One recommends competition through fair play—killing a strong rival is cowardly. This investment in the middle paid off. "Self-made" individuals create dynasties of their own. As the aristocracy fails, merchant-princes take their place.

Merew-Tjaw allowed her followers to interpret cult doctrines through the lens of local cultures. Members see themselves as destined to become venerated ancestors, saints and spirits. Some of these sects developed into completely separate societies. Although the Limitless Pillar takes credit for the Bavarian Illuminati, White Lotus Society and other famous organizations, members like to boast, and even they don't take every claim seriously. Nevertheless, the cult has tendrils in hundreds of exclusive clubs, think tanks and executive boards, including a few that conspiracy watchers know well.

The Limitless Pillar uses these groups for money, influence and camouflage. They give dupes in these groups a few favors and secret signs to make them feel special, but don't count them as real partners on the journey to godhood. That privilege belongs to a core of no more than 84 members, each chosen for their ability to keep a low profile alongside personal power. Some enjoy ostentatious stunts, but always in such a way that they'll appear decadent and useless, instead of the real decision-makers behind their wealth.

Although she enjoys the prestige of commanding what may be the most powerful cult in her guild, Merew-Tjaw knows that its strength comes in no small part from the fact that it runs itself competently. It doesn't really need her. This falls in line with the alchemists' doctrines she adapted to create the Limitless Pillar, but fills her with unease all the same. She half-consciously meddles with the cult to make it depend on her, provoking resentment from its inner circle.

RECRUITMENT

The cult selects successful people with aggressive personalities—winners who want to keep winning. They also monitor people demonstrate excellence in a field, but face barriers to material success. Deciding on the suitability of



talented but poor candidates always provokes arguments. The Limitless Pillar won't take anyone who seems to be devoted to self-sabotage, or commits to an ascetic belief system, but a few hardliners feel that this should rule out nearly anyone who doesn't look like they're on a trajectory to make his first billion—race, gender or growing up in a failed state should be no hindrance for anyone destined to join the elite. Over the last few centuries the cult has allowed fewer and fewer “charity cases” into its ranks, and the artists, engineers and scientists who make the cut tend to be treated with patronizing disdain.

In both cases, the Limitless Pillar watches potential members from a distance, quietly opening doors to wealth, and linking to the slightest suggestion that it's being provided by a benefactor. Once the prospect joins one of the cult's front societies this assistance stops; it's up to him to prove he can not only swim with the sharks, but smell where the blood is coming from. If complains about greed, talks up socialism or says anything similarly foolish, the cult hides itself, and lets high society eject the mismatch for it. If shows them compatible values and sees the Limitless Pillar behind handshakes and closed door meetings, a representative welcomes him into the fold.

DOCTRINE AND OBJECTIVES

The Limitless Pillar believes that anyone can become a god. The methods were concealed because they're so simple. You don't need to turn into an ascetic or undergo some moral transformation. You just need power. You need to bring other human beings under your dominion and command the world through its wealth. Gold and servants don't turn you into a god by themselves, but symbolically shape the higher, divine realm. Power in the phenomenal realm creates a god-form in the invisible noumenon, and opens a conduit for its magical power.

Deep down, everyone knows this truth but long ago, early aristocrats and priests invented false beliefs to control the urge. But the ruling class now believes its own lies. Members of the cult cast off the false paths imposed by millennia of convoluted deceptions. They don't bother with charity, mindful meditation, or ethical contemplation. Humans naturally aspire to become gods, and will do so when they recognize that their materialistic ambitions are holy drives.

Long ago, Osiris lost his kingly privilege, but returned from death to earn true rule, creating a son to overthrow the usurper Seth. He became a god-king by his own hand, murdered on earth, but reborn, immortal, from his divine form in the higher realm. (In cult lore, Isis is a servant, not a significant power of her own.) Myths that talk about him being reborn without genitals represent the idea that Osirian kingship isn't passed through the blood, but

earned. The spine of Osiris is the Limitless Pillar, a map to divinity that cultists also depict as a lance of flame. Moses followed the same fire, which was not God, but the potential for him to become a god, by becoming the holy ruler of a people.

Therefore, every cultist strives to achieve as much political power and wealth as possible. As a network of influencers and allies, the Limitless Pillar helps members achieve these goals, and provides a pecking order to motivate them, because the Anointed One teaches that divinity comes in degrees. Ambitious prodigies groping for opportunities in the dark, but they can rise to the level of the Anointed One, who binds the golden fire of Osiris.

ORGANIZATION

The Limitless Pillar encourages competition with four degrees of initiation. Unlike other secret societies, these aren't all permanent honors. Only the fourth degree lasts a lifetime. Its eight ruling initiates, the Ogdoad, issue promotions and demotions every eight years in a ritual called the Weighing. This inner chamber judges other members based on their life accomplishments, cult service, and the presents the give--bribes are not only permitted, but encouraged. Past rank also figures in the decision, and it has long been the practice to only promote or demote by more than one rank in the most exceptional circumstances. Furthermore, the cult possesses a limited number of positions: 36 at the first degree, 24 and the second, 16 and the third, and (as mentioned) eight for the fourth, who may elect replacements to join them when one of their number dies.

Any member who proves either unable to keep a secret or too incompetent to even merit first degree membership is supposed to die, but until the Anointed One returned, the Limitless Pillar hadn't meted out this punishment in living memory. But Merew-Tjaw thinned the ranks of the “useless” herself, and the cult is eager to recruit replacements to please her.

The degrees are:

- **First Degree—Walker in the Darkness:** The bottom of the cult is still an impressive position, as even the lowest members enjoy admission to influential organizations and significant wealth. On the other hand, they spend the most time managing these connections for their superiors. According to cult doctrine, they have found their way to the darkness surrounding the flame-pillar of divinity. To approach any closer they must not only enrich the cult, but demonstrate a significant personal accomplishment, laying claim to a fortune built from nothing, or acquiring influence over a major city's government or other significant institution without leaning on cult connections.



- **Second Degree—Tender of the Flame:** Through their achievements, Tenders of the Flame affirm a belief in potential divinity. They share a portion of their “flame” of excellence with the cult. A ten percent tithe or equivalent is expected, but as it comes from their resources they are judged the most fit to manage it. Each Tender supervises one to three Walkers in Darkness whenever the cult needs her wealth or connections.
- **Third Degree—Guardian of the Bronze Gate:** The Priests of the Ogdoad appoint Guardians from the most impressive Tenders of the Flame. Guardians develop strategies to increase the cult’s collective power or protect it from harm. While there are no hard and fast rules about who may employ lethal force in the cult’s interest, the Guardians belong to the minimum rank to do so without attracting special scrutiny from the Priests, since killing is only good for business when it takes place far away. Guardians

The Right Hand Throne

Merew-Tjaw keeps an impressive throne room in the basement of her estate, with an enormous jeweled throne on a dais of intricately carved Egyptian granite. A smaller, silvered bench sits at the foot of the dais, dusty and tarnished. This Right Hand Throne is reserved for her Sadikh, known to the cult as a semi-divine being who rules the Ogdoad Priesthood. The cult believes that a Sadikh becomes immortal through personal achievement. The Anointed One’s ritual transforms their virtue into mystic power, but they need to possess wealth, intelligence and a dominating will for the Engraved Heart to take hold. The rite would only destroy lesser individuals.

The Anointed One has yet to declare any cultist fit for the rite—a move designed to make them work harder, but which instead drives cult members against one another. As highly placed cultists consider the idea that the Anointed One’s magic might operate using patterns they can control, they also speculate that she might need an occupant for the Right Hand Throne. Therefore, she’ll have to choose between competing candidates eventually, and must choose the one who can command the cult most effectively while she “sleeps.” Victor Alexiou is the strongest candidate by a comfortable margin, but this may work against him; other cultists could put aside their differences to topple him. And while nobody’s killed anyone over the position yet, they’re sharpening their knives. Private military companies are a popular investment this year.

usually order violent intervention through duped private security and corrupt police forces, but one or two possess the skill and psychopathy necessary to kill their enemies personally.

- **Fourth Degree—Priest of the Ogdoad:** The Priests of the Ogdoad are believed to sit on the cusp of transition to true divinity. In drug-hazed rituals, they feel the fiery Limitless Pillar within them, and declare themselves to be aspects of Egyptian gods -- any deity except Osiris is permitted, because only the Anointed One may identify with him. The priests enjoy unfettered access to the cult’s vast wealth and political ties, and as well-heeled vagabonds, travel light to take advantage of them all around the world. The Priests used to meet annually to manage the cult, refresh their memories regarding its rites and scriptures, and hold staggeringly decadent parties, but Merew-Tjaw now commends three of them to attend her tomb at all times, and orders the rest to visit her throne room on a regular basis. The Priests don’t like it, but they obey with a mixture of hope and terror. Some of them doubted that the Anointed One was real. Now they know, and that means all the hymns to personal empowerment and divine ascension may be real--as might be the tortures inflicted on disloyal servants.

VICTOR ALEXIOU, THE QUIET MASTER

Quotes: “We have pursued this for many months, Anointed One. Perhaps I can help you as you... tire of the chase.”

“Between you and me, I’ve come to believe that even the gods follow rules.”

Virtue: Prudence. Victor examines the world around him for patterns others miss for the sake of capitalizing them. He doesn’t act until he feels forces have aligned to give him the advantage. That’s how he helped destroyed global environmentalism.

Vice: Greed. Aging in the cult’s embrace, Victor no longer thinks of his lust for power as anything to be ashamed of. He has an instinct for hiding it, but that’s only out of self-interest. The weak resent being used if they feel humiliated.

Background: Having served the Limitless Pillar for at least a thousand years, the Alexiou family grew complacent, expecting a handful of each generation to make the cut, with one rising to the Ogdoad Priesthood. Victor was one of three family members to make the cult, but he kept away from the cult’s power plays--he was brilliant, but painfully shy. They rise past him; he stuck to a token position and developed interests in the energy sector. After managing his introverted personality with will and



training, he decided to stay at the bottom and master his field. That move let him hide his full wealth with the cult.

Everyone knows the Alexiou family was Byzantine nobility, but most assume they benefit comes from securely invested old money, and simply maintain it for future generations. The family used the Limitless Pillar to conceal its true wealth, and Victor combined that tradition with his low profile in the cult to become a frightening powerful economic actor. Technically he's only modestly wealthy, but he controls assets to dwarf the GDPs of most nations through a series of obscure positions in corporations with forgettable names.

Victor started investing in the energy sector while he was still completing his engineering degree, growing his holdings by a billion dollars after he defended a dissertation on fossil fuel economics his advisors thought was brilliant, but he knew was a lie. He saved the real conclusions for himself. In the 90s, he used his holdings to eradicate corporate sustainable energy initiatives. Those companies lobbied green energy policies to extinction while keeping certain patents in pocket. Now Victor waits for a short-lived fossil fuel boom driven by new technologies like fracking, followed by a bust that will require traumatic conversion to the sustainable methods he controls.

Yet, he is not a god.

He's close, though. The Anointed One killed his useless siblings and promoted him to the inner circle. She troubles him with micromanagement, endless rituals and the demand that he pack up to Canada, of all places. But he has watched her, and is just beginning to understand the secret patterns that make her work. If Merew-Tjaw obeys occult laws, then they can be used to manipulate her. So Victor studies her, researches the supernatural and waits. He's uncovered four sorcerers he's reasonably sure can be bought, and floated a loan to help an obscure medical technology firm called Last Dynasty International—one of the Anointed One's immortal allies mentioned it over an unsecured line. The "gods" tend to be sloppy that way. He hopes to combine these resources into a form of self-deification that will begin when he earns the right to become Merew-Tjaw's Sadikh. He'll discover some way to circumvent the magical control he assumes she'll exert over him (because if he was going to create an immortal, that's what he'd do) and that as she weakens, he'll find a way to absorb her power.

Description: Even though he's 53 years old, Victor maintains an ageless appearance supplied by personal trainers and the best plastic surgeons. Botox limits his facial expressions, but he never used them much to begin with. His close-cropped brown hair has a styled streak of gray. He's slender, of moderate height, and dresses in simple bespoke suits. He tends to stare past anyone he's talking to, and speaks in a rhythmic monotone. He learned to talk and act this way to conquer crippling shyness, so his entire manner appears to be artificial. That makes it especially hard to hell when he's lying.

Storytelling Hints: You've spent your life surrounded by idiots who don't know how to use their privilege. At an early age, you learned it was the gate to the world's secrets: the levers that let you shape nations. You spent your life preparing for the arrival of the Anointed One, and now that she's here... well, she seems to be a particularly clever machine, really. It's just a matter of taking control of the power source. Nevertheless, she appreciates hard work and intelligence to a fault. Thanks to her, you've had to step out of obscurity. Seizing your dead rivals' possessions was practically a reflex. Your box of secret resources has been stuffed to overflowing, and now it's a matter of what you'll sacrifice to keep critical assets like occult contacts inside.

Concept: Back Room Billionaire

Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 3, Resolve 5, Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Presence 1, Manipulation 4, Composure 5

Skills: Academics 4 (Logistics), Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Computer 3, Drive 2 (Supercars), Empathy 4, Firearms 1, Investigation 4, Larceny 1, Occult 3, Persuasion 3, Politics 4, Science 4, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 5

Merits: Resources Special (one of the wealthiest people in the world), Allies 5, Contacts 5, Language (Arabic, Chinese, English, Iremite) 2, Retainer 5 (Wallace)

Health: 8

Willpower: 10

Morality: 4

Size: 5

Speed: 11

Defense: 3

Initiative: 8

Armor: 0

Notes: Victor possesses any equipment he needs, up to experimental devices that ride the edge of what science is capable of in the World of Darkness. His retainer Wallace is a former Russian military intelligence operator whose real name is Venyamin. He developed a complete cover as a Scottish national with an accent to match while he was doing government work. Victor set Wallace's sons up as import/export millionaires in Boston, earning absolute loyalty. That's why Victor plans to use Wallace as a living test bed for new "technologies" purloined from his occult contacts. The further Victor takes his plans, the more Wallace will demonstrate new, frightening abilities.

SCRIBES: IN SEARCH OF HERETICAL LORE

The high Kenbet Antu-Herap counsels the Closed Books. He pursues an unknown agenda by proxy, sending Arisen allies around the world in search of dangerous secrets—doctrines of Apotheosis, and rumors of the Deceived. This section describes the so-called Prince of Glass (the signature scribe), his warrior-herald Tarsel, and the Utterances he might teach his trustworthy allies. Outside of this political microcosm, the guild's new Affinities and Utterances provide tools for any Sessa-Hebsu story.

NEW AFFINITIES

The distinctive powers of the scribes allow them to write enchanted text, decipher truth in writing, serve as global couriers or peerless archivists, and study the secrets inscribed upon the universe while aiding those of like-minded endeavor. Just as texts are among the most flexible relics, so too are Sessa-Hebsu Guild Affinities well suited to a wide variety of roles.

SO IT IS WRITTEN

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Sessa-Hebsu) ••+


Effect: Whenever the scribe authors text via writing, etching, or otherwise marking words upon a surface, the power of this Affinity allows her to enchant her text in any of the ways listed below. She may apply as many of these effects as desired, but must pay Willpower where noted. Copies of her text do not duplicate their enchantment; only the original bears magic.

- She can cause the text to fade from sight, becoming invisible one minute after being written. When obscuring words this way, she must choose a particular action that a would-be reader may perform within a yard of the hidden text to end the enchantment and make the words reappear. Frequently, a particular word or gesture is used to provide a secure password.
- She may write a statement she believes to be true, encoding her sincerity within her artistic form. Any reader who reads such words knows definitively that the author meant them without guile or deception. Readers cannot explain how they know this fact, but nonetheless do. Should she scribe a true warning with simple meaning (death beyond here, hungry dead, cursed place, etc.), the magic ensures that any potential reader can understand it regardless of whether they can read the language it is written in. The tombs of the Sessa-Hebsu are frequently so adorned.
- If she spends a Willpower point, her mind remains passively linked to a passage of text. Whenever anyone next reads it, she experiences a vision guiding her to the reader as if that reader were a relic she had detected with an exceptional success by activating her kepher.
- Her power as a reader matches that as a writer, imbued with preternatural insight. By making a successful (Wits + Empathy) roll after reading a passage of text, she can gauge the author's overall sincerity when writing it: all true, mostly true, mostly false, entirely false. Truth is based on the author's best understanding: if deceived or just outright wrong, his words remain authentic.

LETTERS WRIT UPON RIVERS

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Sessa-Hebsu) •••+

Effect: The scribe may instantly copy or transfer text across the span of the globe. Such miracles were once unimaginably wondrous, linking Arisen across the world to one another by the secret post of the Sessa-Hebsu guild-



halls. Now, the digital age has made such connections mundane and sharply limited reliance upon such magic, yet in an era of increasing surveillance, the old ways remain undetectable and completely off the grid.

- The Sesha-Hebsu is never without an implement of writing, nor ink with which to write. He can use his fingertip as a stylus to mark any surface with black writing that smells faintly of smoke and perfumed spices. Such writing appears in a bright flash as though etched by magnified sunlight, and is indelible. It will not fade and lasts until the medium itself is defaced or destroyed.
- The scribe can touch a text and designate a blank copy of the same overall medium he can perceive (so paper to paper, papyrus to papyrus, stone to stone, etc.). The text glows, momentarily illuminated in the golden hue of the Arisen's Sekhem. He may choose to delete the original text, scouring it as though it had never been written. Or he can leave it alone. In either case, an identical copy of the text appears on the designated medium. Each copy takes only a second to make, but any number of pages or length of a scroll may be carried over in a single copy so long as it is truly the same document.
- The scribe can copy a text as above, but pay one Willpower point to replicate any enchantments upon the text instilled by Sesha-Hebsu Guild Affinities. If he preserves the original, its enchantments still endure.
- The Sesha-Hebsu can pay a Willpower point to copy a text as above, but designating an intelligent being as the target rather than a blank medium. The person in question need not be present. Whenever that individual next perceives a blank copy of the appropriate medium with sufficient length to hold the copied work, it instantly appears in a flashing trace of golden fire. If multiple documents "hang" on an individual, they appear in the order they were copied.

ASHES FOR INK

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Sesha-Hebsu) ••••+

Effect: The wise Scribe knows that what has been written cannot be unwritten. The eternal grandeur of text lies in stark contrast to the often fragile nature of its medium. By means of this Affinity do Sesha-Hebsu peruse the lost libraries of antiquity. The character must be touching a copy of a blank medium with sufficient size to contain the received document, or failure is automatic.

Activation requires a point of Willpower and a roll of (Intelligence + Academics). If the mummy knows what text she seeks, even by description or a particular identifying name, then no penalty applies. If she seeks an unknown text that is simply pertinent to her topic of interest, she suffers a -5 dice penalty on the roll. Success causes a copy of the text in question to appear upon the touched medium. This Affinity can only recall texts lost to the world. Once a copy exists anywhere (including one summoned by this Affinity), it must be found and destroyed before that text returns to the great library of the cosmos.

ERUDITE BASTION OF PERFECTION

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Sesha-Hebsu) •••••

Effect: Guildmasters of the Sesha-Hebsu bring the light of reason and meticulous perfection to their rule and environs. From their abstract scrutiny come growing revelations into the True Names of others. This glimpse of what the Deceived once mastered offers sobering reminder of how dangerous the treacherous Sixth Guild once was. Manifesting this Affinity grants the following powers:

- Whenever the Arisen encounters an object or being, he can spend a minute scrutinizing it to glean part of its True Name. This may be attempted no more than once per scene and requires a successful (Wits + Occult + Guild Status) roll. The penalty is -1 for relatively simple inanimate objects, -3 for complex inanimate objects, -5 for most animals, -8 for mortals, -10 for supernatural beings or famous/highly-symbolic objects. Mummies (including Shuankhsen) are not valid targets, as their names reside wholly within the mysteries of Duat. Once the cumulative number of successful attempts to scrutinize a specific target exceeds the dice penalty for the attempt, the guildmaster assembles the entire true name within his head. The cumulative total resets to zero whenever the target grows, changes, or otherwise alters its nature in a significant way. On its own, this knowledge gives little power. In conjunction with name magic, or in the hands of the Deceived, such information affords hideous possibilities.
- The mummy's presence encourages the right sort of enlightened thinking within a mile radius. All characters within that area apply the 9-again rule to their Academics rolls, plus all other Mental rolls that directly further Sesha-Hebsu guild business. Overlapping use of this Affinity by different guildmasters does not stack to greater effect.

NEW UTTERANCES

Only Closed Books are known to comprehend the following Utterances, but they are not limited to initiates of the guild. Born of Sessa-Hebsu research into the Lost Guild and other ancient magic, they may be learned by others willing to learn the ancient mysteries. Antu-Herap wishes to keep these secrets in the guild, and does not teach them to outsiders.

INSCRIPTIONS OF FLESH

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Sessa-Hebsu) ••+

Tier 1: Ba • (Subtle); **Tier 2:** Ka •••; **Tier 3:** Ren •••••

Tier 1: Beneath ordinary sight, energies flow in lines across all things. These lattices of power form glyphs of the ur-language used by gods and horrors to create the universe. The Arisen learns to see the “dialect” woven into living flesh: the powers that regulate muscles, nerves and even occult organs hidden from mortal physicians.

As a reflexive action usable once per turn, the mummy scrutinizes a mortal in her line of sight as the player rolls Ba + Sekhem. Each success reveals one piece of information selected from the following base points:

- The target's Physical Attributes, or Skills (and specialties), or Merits and Flaws.
- The target's current and maximum Health points or any physical ailment (disease or physical impediment) currently afflicting the target and an ailment in remission or otherwise hidden, though still present.

The Arisen understand these patterns of energy in an intuitive or comparative sense. She may not understand the modern medical function of the heart, but senses that in a case of heart disease, it will cause gasping pain and perhaps death. She knows that one woman is faster than another, and a third may run faster than them both, though at the game table, it's enough to just share Trait levels with the mummy's player.

In addition, any successes grant a +2 dice bonus to the mummy's Brawl and Weaponry-based attacks, as she understands the target's physical weaknesses and movement habits. This non-cumulative bonus lasts for as long as the mummy can remember her target's existence. The power only functions on mortal humans, but this includes mortals who wield magic. It may only be attempted once per target per scene.

Tier 2: The mummy's sight understands the flesh-language of magical and undead creatures, including other Arisen. She may unleash the first dot of this power on any corporeal creature except for materialized ghosts

and spirits, or automatons made of stone, metal or synthetic materials. Supernatural beings use (Composure + Sekhem) to resist the mummy's (Wits + Ka + Sekhem roll). Their complex forms ensure that the bonus to close combat rolls against them only lasts for a single scene.

The mummy may now attack the supernatural substrates of targets' physical forms. She mars the secret writing in their flesh, or rewrites it to their disadvantage. Every successful Brawl and Weaponry attack inflicted against scrutinized targets inflicts one point or aggravated damage on top of any other damage. Furthermore, if the mummy scores an exceptional success unleashing this tier to study an enemy, she may now inflict one of the following disadvantages with each successful attack:

- If the target carried some systemic disease or chronic condition, the mummy may intensify it so that it inflicts one point of bashing damage per turn, for a number of turns equal to the mummy's Sekhem.
- The mummy may subtract one dot of the target's Strength, or Dexterity with each attack. This Attribute drain lasts for a number of turns equal to the mummy's Sekhem, or until the target heals aggravated damage equal to the amount inflicted by the attack, whichever comes first. If the target's Strength or Dexterity falls to 0, he is incapacitated until both Attributes recover to 1 or higher.
- The mummy may force a shapeshifter or being that conceals its true form under a supernatural aura to revert to its natural form. Arisen revert to their corpse-like sahu manifestations.
- The mummy may wound the subtle channels that circulate magical energy throughout a supernatural being's body. Against beings that manifest Pillars, this drains one point from the target's lowest Pillar, which the mummy may absorb to replenish their own. Against other supernatural beings, this drains one point of a corresponding expendable supernatural resource, but the mummy does not benefit.

The mummy may unleash this Utterance with more benign intentions by studying the target as above, and then touching him with her bare hand or a non-electronic writing implement. The mummy does not need to score an exceptional success, and the target may choose not to resist. Instead of inflicting damage, the mummy grants one of the following effects:

- The mummy cures a mundane disease or debilitating condition, even if it would normally be incurable, so long as a body part necessary to the target's recover has not been destroyed or severed.

- The mummy heals all bashing damage or one point of lethal damage (one point of aggravated with an exceptional success). Mortals become refreshed as if rising from a solid night's sleep.
- The mummy reverses any of the effects (except for damage) inflicted by another unleashing of this Utterance.

Tier 3: By rewriting the mystic instructions that regulate the subject's flesh, the mummy reshapes it into beautiful or hideous forms. The mummy needs a moment to read secret names shining beneath the skin. Living tissue is both the target and the surface upon which the mummy writes. The Arisen needs to still her target. If he isn't lying still, the mummy must overpower him. The grappling maneuver of the same name will suffice, though the Arisen doesn't need to restrain her target herself.

Roll the mummy's (Ren + Sekhem), resisted by the target's (Stamina + Sekhem). If the mummy uses a knife, carving tool, or ink brush (including *Letters Writ Upon Rivers*; see p. 110), she rewrites the ephemeral words adroitly, earning a +2 equipment bonus. A successful roll allows the mummy to perform one of the following actions. Exceptional success allows imposition of two of these conditions, or the same condition twice.

- Instantly kill a mortal, as long as he has never used magic. The mummy erases or vandalizes the glyphs commanding vital organs. If the mortal ever possessed a supernatural template, used a magical ritual or relic, or demonstrated psychic sensitivity (such as that provided by Unseen Senses or Witness) the experience has changed him enough to render him immune to this unleashing.
- Inflict one point of aggravated damage per success. In case of an exceptional success, the condition may not be imposed twice for double damage.
- Add dots to target's Physical Attributes equal to the greater of the mummy's Sekhem or Ren rating. If the mummy's Sekhem drops while the target enjoys these benefits, this lowers the cap and may degrade these enhancements.
- Impose any Physical Merit (except for Fighting Styles and Merits that require training) any dot level up to the human maximum or any Physical Flaw. If these Flaws involve a non-functioning body part, the mummy may choose to cripple it, so that it may heal over time, inflict a permanent deformity, or "erase" the part, so that a blinded victim's eyes vanish, as if he was born without them.
- Reshape a part of the target into an Amkhatra Frame, Head, or Limbs. This does not convert the

target into one of the Amkhat; rather, a mummy who has mastered this Utterance knows the secret names of those flesh components, and can rewrite the victim's body to replicate them. The mummy cannot create a false ka for the victim, and the victim cannot dematerialize, sense Sekhem, or absorb it. In situations where one part is larger than a human body can typically support, other structures thicken and lengthen enough to allow the target to carry it.

- Perform another action that reshapes the target's flesh. The player and storyteller may agree on an effect about as potent as the others listed above.
- Reverse any non-damage effect from the list above.

Beings capable of supernaturally healing aggravated wounds may reverse a non-damaging condition by exerting the effort required to magically heal two points of aggravated damage. If such a being can heal aggravated wounds in oth-

Other Inscriptions

To Sesha-Hebsu, Redacting the Word and the Inscriptions of Flesh represent one "dialect" of the cosmic language written upon the Scroll of Ages. Thus, a wise mummy might glean Utterances to read and revise the others. Antu-Herap believes that inscriptions of Fire, Water, Stone, Ghosts, and the Outer Darkness all await the diligent scholar.

This lore incorporates the Closed Books' metaphysics, yet they cannot claim it is entirely theirs, for to master the Inscriptions one must recognize the true names of things. These Utterances open the way to a superficial understanding of Naming, the Word but not fully the Will. The Arisen reads her subject's internal nature, but the names revealed there have already been modified for context. Instead of the universal name of eyes, she learns about the target's eyes. The universal and particular forms bear some relationship, however, and dedicated study may one day reveal the primordial Will behind a particular Word.

Lore from the Lost Guild, who mastered Nomenclature, might open the way to other Utterances, even acts of unison that rewrite the Scroll in unthinkable ways. Antu-Herap is afraid of what this knowledge would unleash on the world, but not to the point where it cools his desire to learn it. The Name that breaks the world may share roots with one that frees him from the Judges' dominion.

ers, he can reverse such conditions in them as well, using the same rule. Mortals (including sorcerers) given Physical Merits, enhanced Attributes or Amkhata parts suffer one point of aggravated damage per hour, victims of an inhuman code that cannot sustain them. They maintain any deformities after death. Arisen shake off all conditions whenever they are resurrected, whether or not this restarts the Descent.

This Utterance may only be unleashed on normally material beings. Ghosts and other normally incorporeal entities may not be affected. Despite their ability to stalk Twilight, Amkhata may be targeted. The mummy may not target her own body, however.

REDACTING THE WORD

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Sesha-Hebsu) •••+

Tier 1: Sheut • (Subtle); **Tier 2:** Ka •••; **Tier 3:** Ren •••••

Tier 1: In a waking dream, the mummy stands before the Endless Scroll and claims the privilege of ancient scribes and historians: the power to censor. Like a Pharaoh eliminating the existence of a rival, he erases a portion of the primordial record. At the first tier, he may only eliminate knowledge, but this is no psychic trick. The knowledge *itself* vanishes, regardless of the minds that hold it. Roll Sheut + Sekhem, applying the following penalties based on the nature of what the mummy intends to erase.

This Utterance may be used to target memory of a living mortal, resisted by a Composure roll. Keep in mind that most mortals are known to at least 100 people in their social network (applying maximum penalty). How-

ever, certain individuals may have taken steps to reduce their visibility within the mortal world and inadvertently making the mummy's job easier. This Utterance may not be unleashed to eliminate self-evident knowledge ("gravity works," or "I'm standing right here") and does not affect physical evidence. Thus, when the world forgets that a hermit ever existed, they may rediscover him when his Social Security records come up.

Nevertheless, the erasure has a nearly universal effect. No mortal will remember it. Arisen with Memory scores of 4 or less also forget the information. Arisen with Memory Traits of 5 or greater retain the information. So might other supernatural beings, should the storyteller desire it. These creatures reintroduce the information to the Scroll of Ages to the extent necessary to recall it, as their magical nature brings them closer to the cosmic record's essence. The mummy may exclude specific individuals from forgetting, but this is difficult—he must not simply erase, but rewrite.

When this is used to erase knowledge deeply connected to an individual's life, that person often suffers a derangement and is aware of a dark gap in her consciousness.



Tier 2: Like a vengeful, ancient monarch, the mummy eradicates the existence of the fallen. By learning the mystical true name of a dead individual (less dynamic now that they are deceased) the mummy may eliminate non-living, physical evidence of her existence. By recording the existence of objects, the Scroll of Ages maintains their reality. The mummy erases the living anchor for that which is written in the Scroll.

Known to:

One to three people	0
Four to seven people	-1
8 to 20 people	-2
20 to 50 people	-3
50 to 100 people	-4
100 to 1000 people	-5
Each additional 1000 people	-1
Each person the mummy allows to remember it, including self	-1
Each dot of Fame Merit	-2

Type of knowledge:

Supernatural experiences or genuine lore	+2
Known to an Arisen, Memory 1-4	+2
Known to an Arisen, Memory 5-7	0
Known to an Arisen, Memory 8+	-5
Ancient	-1 per 1000 years known to mortals



This manifestation of the Utterance cannot be unleashed on the living, undead or ghosts. It does not destroy magical places or objects, such as vessels or tombs, or living things connected to the target, such as animals or relatives. It *can* affect Arisen while they are truly dead, though the Arisen's true names are held in Duat. Thus, a mummy may unleash the Utterance to cover an ally's tracks before she returns to the living world. Objects vanish in a series of coincidences. Electronic databases scramble and gravestones break. This tier does not affect memories, either, though the first and third tiers do. Cults, particularly those of tribal composition, are thus unaffected.

The mummy must acquire (or create) an image of the target such as a photograph, painting or sculpture. This item must have been created by one who personally saw the target—automated security footage doesn't work. The mummy meditates for an hour in an occult diagram that represents the Scroll of Ages. His player rolls Manipulation + Occult + Sekhem, resisted by the target's Composure + Sekhem (while she was last alive, if any—for Arisen characters, this is 1 if they finished their Descent, but may be more if they retreated to *henet* early) and penalized by -2 for every dot of the target's Fame Merit, if she possesses it (the Merit greatly increases the amount of the physical evidence the Utterance must eliminate). If the target generated an exceptional amount of physical evidence, further penalties may be levied. Heads of state and international media stars are not so easy to erase from history.

Tier 3: The ultimate manifestation of this Utterance wipes a target from the Scroll of Ages. The Scroll accommodates the deletion, rewriting the cosmic record to seamlessly conceal the fact that the victim ever existed. These changes affect the past back to the time of Irem, affecting all memories and physical signs (replicating the first two tiers of this Utterance), though with as much metaphysical economy as possible. Most of what the target did to change the world remains, but gets reassigned to other causes. Children acquire different mothers and fathers. Anyone the target killed remains dead, but slain by another cause. Even deeply personal mystic structures suddenly lack essential context as to their creator. The mummy may influence these cosmic "revisions" to a certain extent, as agreed to by the player and the Storyteller.

This tier is difficult to use for one reason: the mummy must acquire the target's true name. A typical mortal's true name includes her full legal name, all nicknames (even the most private), and a sequence of mystical syllables that describe her unique connection to the cosmos. Certain relics, such as the Lost Brush of the First Scribe (**Mummy: The Curse**, p. 230) or the Erudite Bas-tion of Perfection Affinity (p. 111), are capable of produc-

ing them. Ancient, mystic texts also contain individual true names for certain supernatural beings.

Magical beings, including sorcerers, possess inherent protections against name theft, but these may be bypassed through the use of certain occult objects or Affinities or through extremely thorough interrogation of anyone who happens to know the name. Arisen's true names have been separated from them as a consequence of the Rite of Return, though certain effects (chiefly, Apotheosis) are capable of returning their names to them. Regardless, mummies are *never* valid targets for this tier.

Once the mummy acquires the target's true name, he must ensure that her soul has been banished from the realm of the living, lest it renew its bonds with the flow of history. Mortal targets must die, supernatural targets must be neutralized in the material world; the method is not important. At this point, the mummy captures the target's soul, using it as a beacon to guide him to where the victim has written herself across the Scroll of Ages. In a vision, the mummy clutches the soul and journeys across the cosmos. Using the target's true name, he claims the right to erase her existence.

Over the hour this vision takes place, the mummy's player rolls Intelligence + Ren + Sekhem, resisted by the target's Resolve + Sekhem. If a dramatic failure occurs, the target's spirit overwhelms the mummy's and she captures him in the presence of the Scroll of Ages. The former victim may instantly slay her soul's captor and escape his otherworldly clutches.

ANTU-HERAP, PRINCE OF GLASS

Quotes: *"We were resurrected to mind the Judges' world, but that does not make us flawless beings. We've exchanged one set of frailties for another."*

"The capacity to learn these secrets does not grant you the privilege to do so."

"Blessed are the cruel, for they cry to be purified with every reflection of their acts."

Virtue: Faith. No matter what the enemies of this world or the Judges of the next declare, his Memory is sacred. He will honor it by acting virtuously, harnessing recovered human instincts.

Vice: Greed. After an eon of observation and pious service, Antu-Herap sees hints of a world beyond the Judges' grasp. The Lost Guild leaves traces, and his old comrade writes of a spiritual ladder to freedom. He wants to know *more*, and may ignore his normal caution to chase those elusive secrets.

Background: Antu-Herap believes he was the first (or one of) to be given everlasting life by the sorcerer-priests of Irem. He remembers holding a scepter of authority, and knows the scars his sahu recreates in every incarnation



are mementos of those who attacked him when he was a mere M'shakabiu. It was only fitting that the lords of the Nameless Empire select the grand Kenbet to act as an arbiter of the immortals.

He bore the pain of Duat well; he understood its function as a sacrament to the true gods. In later lives, he laughed at the false religions that came after, the pantomimes honoring too-human cosmic buffoons. Yet it was understandable. The authentic faith was cruel. In these early ages he kept away from the living, except for a circle of renegade priests and would-be necromancers who understood that the universe was ruled by merciless intelligences. He studied the occult grammar which could so easily redefine the living as the dead, the dead as the living, or with the ambiguity of language, consign them to an unnatural place between these states.

He helped craft the Diasporic Code and let Arisen come for advice. It was natural for him to resist his failing Memory but mired in piety, he met little success—in any crisis between faith and identity he chose faith, stifling moral instincts when the Judges needed some atrocity performed for their glory. He wrote voluminously to compensate, maintaining continuity by reading his own autobiography upon every reincarnation.

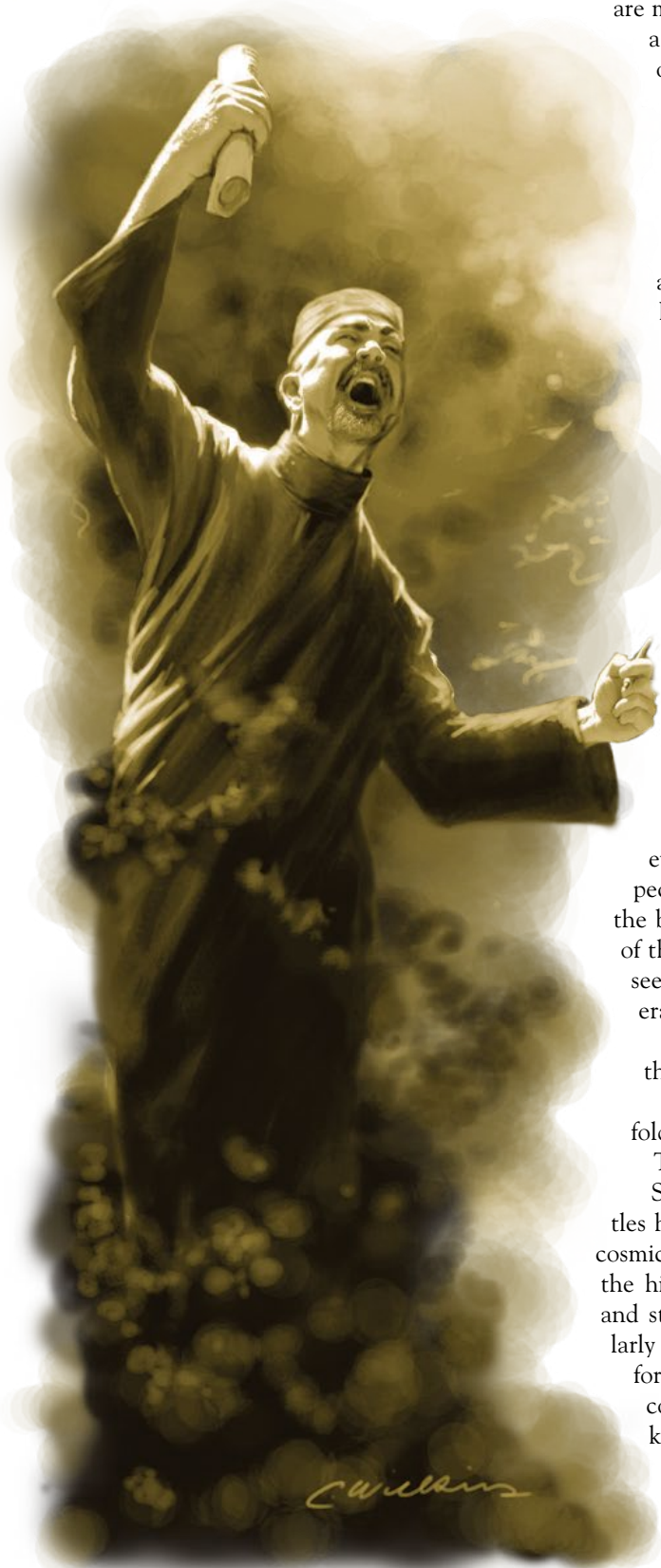
Then *he* came: the Heretic, faceless in his mind's eye still. He tries to call the face forth, for he suspects that this man was once like a brother to him. In the basement of a burning monastery during the time of the Second Turn, he met the man. They were both seeking the same scrolls: Iremite texts hidden by generations of holy men and would-be magicians.

The Heretic said, "I will give you the scrolls, or the way to remember."

He felt the Judges ripping Sekhem from his five-fold soul, but he chose Memory.

The Heretic said, "Be like a man, not a god."

So this is his quest now, and to pursue it he battles his instinctive loyalty to the Judges. Cruelty is the cosmic order but Memory is human, and compassion is the highest form of humanity. He learned to be kind, and started to remember. There are still gaps, particularly during periods he suspects he discovered secrets forbidden by the Judges of Duat. Antu-Herap craves continuity and thus, seeks out the heresies he once knew, but he does it secretly. He advises Sessa-Hebsu when they seek him out but stays away from nome politics and avoids being a social Kenbet. His powerful, subtle presence has earned him the title "Prince of Glass."



Antu-Herap is especially interested in the Lost Guild, and frequently sends Closed Books in search of their lore. He recovered Tarsset, a depraved creature that tortured generations of the same family, and made her his tool—his sublime magic erased her memory of these crimes. He does not consider her a friend, but a loyal servant who might graduate into something greater.

The Prince of Glass can no longer bring himself to create Sadikh, and his cult persists in spite of his refusal to cultivate it as a personal tool. It stays together because he unselfishly cares for its members. They believe him to be a damned sorcerer expelled from the underworld, who despairs of his evil nature. He only asks for knowledge of the outside world, which he devours voraciously. Visitors to his chambers find newspapers, magazines and e-readers scattered about—and notes recording his impressions of everything from analytical philosophy to pop songs.

Description: Antu-Herap is the quintessential scribe. He wears dark judge's robes and a short-capped black tarboosh on his head. In his office, he habitually carried the reed brush of an ancient scribe in one hand and a rolled-up scroll of papyrus in the other. This is what he uses to record his judicial decisions and opinions of the Iremite diaspora. He collects writing and calligraphy implements, using them to work on rough drafts or simply please himself with the craft of writing. He looks classically Cairene, with a wide Arab nose, thick eyebrows, and a sagely mustache. His never shouts. To him, a withering look and written admonishments are the human way—face to face conflict is a matter of animal dominance, beneath him. Once Sybaris takes hold, onlookers see a brush dripping blood and a dark cloud filled with the shadows of misshapen things and red, accusing eyes.

Storytelling Hints: Let others come to you; send your Hand when you need to act in the world. Play the part of an orthodox master, lest they see your projects as something other than an academic journey down the River of Truth. Witnessing cruelty isn't enough to break your façade—you've seen and done too much to flinch, no matter what you feel inside. Your sense of humor and appetite for trivia are more likely to give you away. Most Arisen lack the Memory to laugh like a mortal, and in the rush to adapt to new cultures, they rarely waste time with impractical knowledge. You know that an insightful rival might see past the pretense of mystery and authority, so you keep fanatics and intrigue addicts at arm's length.

Concept: Seeker of Heretical Lore

Decree: Name

Judge: Bastu, the Stare

Guild: Sessa-Hebsu

Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 3, Resolve 4, Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 4

Skills: Academics 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Crafts 3, Empathy 4, Expression 4 (Calligraphy), Intimidation 2, Investigation 4 (Documents), Larceny 2, Occult 5 (Ways of Enlightenment), Persuasion 2, Stealth 3, Subterfuge 4, Survival 1, Weaponry 2

Merits: Cult (Conspiracy: Reach 2, Grasp 4), Encyclopedic Knowledge (Full Version) 4, Enigma 4, Guild Status (Sessa-Hebsu) 5, Language (Arabic, Egyptian, English) 3, Tomb (Geometry 3, Peril [traps] 2, Obscure 1)

Health: 7

Willpower: 8

Sekhem: 7 by mid-2013

Memory: 6

Affinities: Deathstight, Enlightened Senses, Eternal Legend, Eyes of Justice, Familiar Face, Godsight

Utterances: Awaken the Dead, Chthonic Dominion, Inscriptions of Flesh (p. 112), Redacting the Word (p. 114), Word of the Amanuensis

Pillars: Ab 3, Ba 3, Ka 2, Ren 5, Sheut 4

Size: 5

Speed: 9

Defense: 2

Initiative: 6

Armor: 0

Notes: Antu-Herap once wielded the Lost Brush of the First Scribe (see **Mummy: The Curse**, p. 230) and still follows it. He prefers not to use it and invoke madness and blood, but he opposes attempts to consign it to Duat, and may resort to it to invoke the third tier of Redacting the Word (see p. 114). He has “lost” the Brush to various easily-reached mortals and locales, and is usually able to retrieve it with minor effort. If he grows too distracted by other matters, the false loss may turn true, particularly if another Closed Book senses the relic close at hand.

TARSET, HAND OF ANTU-HERAP

Quotes: “I understand your reasons and yet, the Law.”

“Information is a rebel kingdom. We ride to reconquer it.”

“I’ll study it later. I want to grab the next text while my immortal flame roars.”

Virtue: Fortitude. Once Tarsset learns about a vessel, secret or fugitive from the guild’s justice, nothing can de-



ter her from the chase. What use is this immortal body if its owner is too frightened to drive it through fire and knives?

Vice: Sloth. Tarsset isn't a careful scholar or patient arbiter. She excels at snap judgments, but resents anything that taxes her intellectual reserves. She would rather improvise than plan.

Background: Brave, observant Tarsset can't boast of an instinct for scholarship or a reputation for rulings based on a deep study of the law. The guild didn't take her in because she had a contemplative soul, but because of her persistence, though it may be an odd, inconstant form of persistence. She memorized every Iremite glyph at an early age, but took a bit longer than other scribes to comprehend the subtle meanings they could convey. As an M'shakabiu touring remote provinces, she'd chase thieves and rebels across sleepless days and nights, binding them after they collapsed from exhaustion. She meted out punishments from a simple list she devised based on her legal studies, thinking it a waste of time to let judgment arise from the petty particulars of each case.

Tarsset remembers the thrill of the hunt, of counting taxes with chalk and slate . . . but the specifics always run into the fog. They mix genuine recollection with im-

ages of other times and places. She remembers the darkness and pain of Duat, the distant, alien constellations of A'aru above, and always running, until she was captured and made her decree for the Ba.

She did not build a cult on purpose, but drew lovers from generations of the same family: mercenary police she met during the first Sothic Turn. She made her first lover into a Sadikh. He's gone, and she doesn't remember why—there's nothing but a black, sad place in her heart where his life should be. She was surprised when his descendants revived her, because she'd never taught them the ritual. This was a gift from the great scribe, Antu-Herap.

He explained that she'd made a mistake during the black, forgotten time, and he would help her correct it. He trained a cult to support her, and said her penance would begin by forgetting the mistake.

After that, Memory's mists receded to show her strange places, but the same hunt. She spoke new languages and felt the call of sacred Texts. She saw snow for the first time. In Ishepilla, she stole a Koran from the most beautiful building she'd ever seen. In Henan, she decapitated a Deathless fugitive disguised as a warrior monk. Antu-Herap commanded her to perform some of these tasks, and she always returns to him. He provides the deep thought her temperament impairs, and she gets things done when the time for meditation concludes.

Description: Tarsset's built like a wrestler, with a wide back, thick neck and a habitual bend in the knees, as if she might charge at any moment. She wears her long, tightly coiled hair in cornrows pinned and woven together to keep them out of the way. Her dark skin indicates a family that came from what would now be called Nubia. She wears durable denims, heavy boots and a keffiyeh—that scarf has hundreds of uses. Tarsset never forgets a backpack or messenger bag containing several notebooks, a calligraphy kit and a pair of antique reading glasses. She's always had slightly fuzzy vision (though not to the point of counting as a game Trait), and to her annoyance, her sahu replicates it in every incarnation. Sybaris turns her hands into talons, and falcon's wings spring from her shoulders.

Storytelling Hints: Achieve your objective and move on to the next. You should run, not walk through life. Are you running from the darkness you've forgotten? It doesn't matter. You have a purpose now, serving your guild with martial talents few of them possess. You don't care about recognition the way other scribes do. If you need to punish one of the Deathless, consult with Antu-Herap. He's got enough respect for the both of you. You bore easily, and love to travel.

Concept: Warrior Scribe

Decree: Spirit

Judge: An-Afkh, the Bringer of His Arm

Guild: Sesha-Hebsu

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 2, Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Skills: Academics 3, Athletics 3 (Endurance), Brawl 4 (Grappling), Empathy 3, Expression 1 (Written), Intimidation 3, Investigation 3 (Spot Hidden), Larceny 2, Occult 3, Stealth 2, Survival 3 (Desert), Weaponry 3

Merits: Cult (Tribal; Reach 2, Grasp 1), Guild Status (Sesha-Hebsu) 2, Fighting Style: Two Weapons 3, Language (Arabic, English) 2, Tomb (Geometry 1, Peril [curse] 1)

Health: 9

Willpower: 4

Sekhem: 7 by mid-2013

Memory: 3

Affinities: Deathstight, Eyes of Justice, Running Like Flight, Sight Beyond Eyes

Utterances: Dust Beneath Feet, Word of the Amanuensis, Inscriptions of Flesh (see p. 112)

Pillars: Ab 1, Ba 3, Ka 2, Ren 2, Sheut 1

Size: 5

Speed: 14 (including Fleet of Foot via Running Like Flight)

Defense: 3

Initiative: 5

Armor: 0

Notes: Equipment includes twin hatchets (1L); Tarses use one in either hand as part of a now-extinct fighting method devised by Iremite military scouts.

PRIESTS: SECRETS OF THE FLESH

The Shepherds are frightening, grim figures whose fascination with decaying remnants and command of undead horrors lend an ominous tone to most of their proprietary magic. Even that magic which is not in some way sinister in form or intent almost always carries a morbid grotesquery to its manifestation.

NEW AFFINITIES

In accordance with the guild's role and reputation, the Su-Menent command frightening powers over bodies, secrets thought dead and buried, the physical process of decay, blood sacrifice, ghost hunting, and yet darker arts.

FLESH-CULLED SECRETS

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Su-Menent) ••+

Effect: The Shepherds revere what lives on when life has gone. Its marking upon now-dead flesh leaves much to unveil. Manifesting this Affinity provides the following powers:

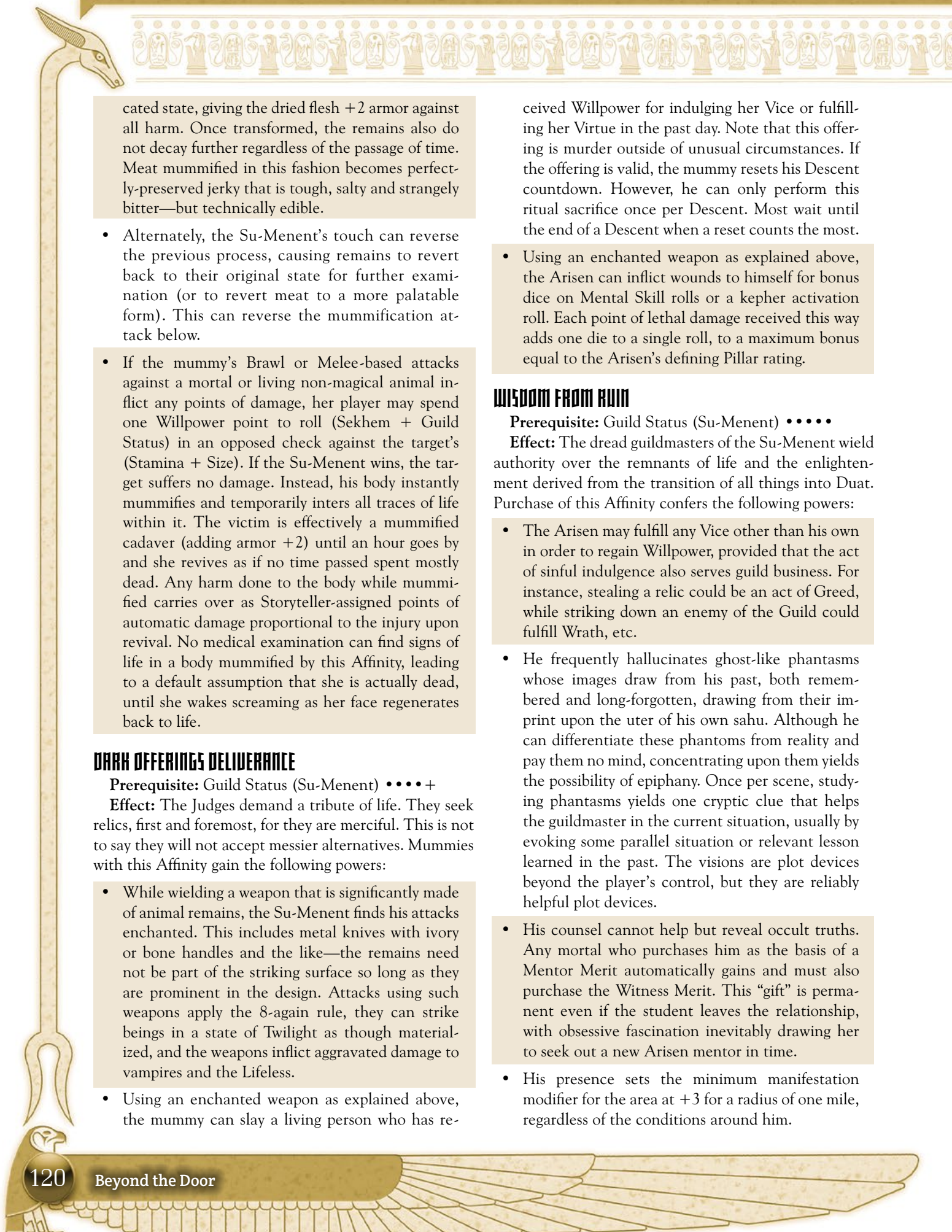
- The Su-Menent can gesture toward a mostly-intact skull he can see. This skull can be part of a more intact corpse, but it must be dead or a bestial Lifeless creature like a zombie (in which case the magic has the skull talk independently of its primary animation). The Ariten's player spends one Willpower point and rolls (Wits + Occult). Add a +3 dice bonus if the skull belonged to one of the mummy's cultists. A cumulative dice penalty of -1 applies for each previous use of this Affinity upon the skull in question by anyone. Eventually, all remains grew quiet and indifferent to priestly demands.
- For each success rolled, the Ariten may successfully ask the skull one "yes or no" question in spoken Iremite and receives a true response in kind based on what the deceased knew at the time of death (translated into Iremite). The skull's inhuman rasping voice and clattering parody of jaw movements makes the whole spectacle surreal and horrific. Exceptional success also allows a mummy to stare into the skull's eye sockets to telepathically witness the last minute of the deceased's life and moment of her death through her own eyes.
- The Ariten applies the 8-again rule on Investigation rolls to discover the remains of a person or animal. This includes objects that contain processed animal goods such as meats, leather, etc.

WITHERING JUDGMENT

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Su-Menent) •••+

Effect: The Shepherd may judge the living, for all things living must face the judgment of the dead in their time. Manifesting this Affinity grants the following powers:

- The Su-Menent can touch any non-magical animal remains and wither them through instant mummification into a preserved and wholly desic-



cated state, giving the dried flesh +2 armor against all harm. Once transformed, the remains also do not decay further regardless of the passage of time. Meat mummified in this fashion becomes perfectly-preserved jerky that is tough, salty and strangely bitter—but technically edible.

- Alternately, the Su-Menent's touch can reverse the previous process, causing remains to revert back to their original state for further examination (or to revert meat to a more palatable form). This can reverse the mummification attack below.
- If the mummy's Brawl or Melee-based attacks against a mortal or living non-magical animal inflict any points of damage, her player may spend one Willpower point to roll (Sekhem + Guild Status) in an opposed check against the target's (Stamina + Size). If the Su-Menent wins, the target suffers no damage. Instead, his body instantly mummifies and temporarily inters all traces of life within it. The victim is effectively a mummified cadaver (adding armor +2) until an hour goes by and she revives as if no time passed spent mostly dead. Any harm done to the body while mummified carries over as Storyteller-assigned points of automatic damage proportional to the injury upon revival. No medical examination can find signs of life in a body mummified by this Affinity, leading to a default assumption that she is actually dead, until she wakes screaming as her face regenerates back to life.

DARK OFFERINGS DELIVERANCE

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Su-Menent) ••••+

Effect: The Judges demand a tribute of life. They seek relics, first and foremost, for they are merciful. This is not to say they will not accept messier alternatives. Mummies with this Affinity gain the following powers:

- While wielding a weapon that is significantly made of animal remains, the Su-Menent finds his attacks enchanted. This includes metal knives with ivory or bone handles and the like—the remains need not be part of the striking surface so long as they are prominent in the design. Attacks using such weapons apply the 8-again rule, they can strike beings in a state of Twilight as though materialized, and the weapons inflict aggravated damage to vampires and the Lifeless.
- Using an enchanted weapon as explained above, the mummy can slay a living person who has re-

ceived Willpower for indulging her Vice or fulfilling her Virtue in the past day. Note that this offering is murder outside of unusual circumstances. If the offering is valid, the mummy resets his Descent countdown. However, he can only perform this ritual sacrifice once per Descent. Most wait until the end of a Descent when a reset counts the most.

- Using an enchanted weapon as explained above, the Arisen can inflict wounds to himself for bonus dice on Mental Skill rolls or a kepher activation roll. Each point of lethal damage received this way adds one die to a single roll, to a maximum bonus equal to the Arisen's defining Pillar rating.

WISDOM FROM RUIN

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Su-Menent) •••••

Effect: The dread guildmasters of the Su-Menent wield authority over the remnants of life and the enlightenment derived from the transition of all things into Duat. Purchase of this Affinity confers the following powers:

- The Arisen may fulfill any Vice other than his own in order to regain Willpower, provided that the act of sinful indulgence also serves guild business. For instance, stealing a relic could be an act of Greed, while striking down an enemy of the Guild could fulfill Wrath, etc.
- He frequently hallucinates ghost-like phantasms whose images draw from his past, both remembered and long-forgotten, drawing from their imprint upon the utter of his own sahu. Although he can differentiate these phantoms from reality and pay them no mind, concentrating upon them yields the possibility of epiphany. Once per scene, studying phantasms yields one cryptic clue that helps the guildmaster in the current situation, usually by evoking some parallel situation or relevant lesson learned in the past. The visions are plot devices beyond the player's control, but they are reliably helpful plot devices.
- His counsel cannot help but reveal occult truths. Any mortal who purchases him as the basis of a Mentor Merit automatically gains and must also purchase the Witness Merit. This "gift" is permanent even if the student leaves the relationship, with obsessive fascination inevitably drawing her to seek out a new Arisen mentor in time.
- His presence sets the minimum manifestation modifier for the area at +3 for a radius of one mile, regardless of the conditions around him.

NEW UTTERANCES

Besides their Guild Affinities, the chief proprietary magic of the Shepherds of the Chamber revolves around the use of the canopic jars shared by all the Deathless. Powerful and unique utter in their own right, the canopic jars can also catalyze mighty Utterances.

It's said that mummies who are called from Duat knowing Four-Jar magic bring a part of that dread realm back with them.

ANCESTRY OF FORGOTTEN STARS

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Su-Menent) •••+

Tier 1: Ren • (Subtle, Unison); **Tier 2:** Sheut ••• (Unison); **Tier 3:** Ba ••••• (Epic, Unison)

As they seized secrets from the ghosts of their forefathers, ancient guild masters reached back to an inhuman heritage of a different stripe. The masters theorized that in the forgotten past, gods and demons twisted the human seed for their own purposes, or bred into bloodlines predating the founding of Irem—or perhaps, these lines were made by Shan'iatu summonings, shaping guild lineages to prepare them for future duties. Certainly, other Utterances hint at a chthonic origin (see Words of Dead Fury, p. 134 of **Mummy: The Curse**). The Priests of Duat never spoke to their servants on the topic. It matters not what souls have gone before, only who now stands before the Judges and what these dead gods demand of the world to come. This Utterance is guarded by the Shepherds of the Chamber. While they have involved Maa-Kep envoys as acolytes, they are generally loathe to share the very existence of this knowledge with outsiders.

Tier 1: Officiates cut the seals of unnatural progenitors on their flesh with stone knives (inflicting one point of lethal damage) and cause the hidden, alien seed in them to flower. All officiates acquire a second, demonic “flesh” that occupies the same space as their normal bodies, but allows them to see and physically interact with ghosts and other beings in a state of Twilight. The second flesh possesses a hideous appearance to those able to see into Twilight; bronze horns, scales, supernumerary limbs and arrays of eyes erupt from the sahu. Acolytes enjoy no other benefits, but hierophants benefit from an additional dot in each Physical Attribute and Wits while interacting with creatures in a state of Twilight; their demon forms are well adapted to its strange vibrations. The transformation lasts for an hour.

This Utterance is known to every guild, though each possesses a distinct ritual. Reckon the costs and benefits of the ritual as if it belonged to the guiding hierophant's guild, and do not permit hierophants from other guilds—they don't know the correct form.


Tier 2: Officiates unlock adaptations to non-Euclidian geometry possessed by their inhuman forefathers—powers forgotten by descendants. These perceptions and angles are invisible to closed minds. The change begins in the pineal gland, which officiates must expose to air and light. Any sharp, sturdy tool will do, but the act of cutting or drilling into the skull inflicts two points of aggravated damage. The injury may not be healed while this tier is being maintained, and the Utterance may not be unleashed until every participant exposes the “third eye” in this fashion.

All officiates acquire the following benefits:

- They gain the inhuman ephemera-flesh of the Utterance's first tier and the ability to see into and interact with Twilight, but their transformations are now visible to all. This invokes Sybaris as if the officiates had revealed their true forms, but at the guiding officiant's Sekhem rating.
- They add (Sekhem + Sheut) to their Speed Trait, “stealing steps” by moving at alien angles. This also allows them to ignore environmental hindrances to movement, including material barriers less than six inches thick, unless they specifically block ghosts and other Twilight-state entities. Officiates can walk on water, or slide across a single strand of silk without causing it to bend.
- Unless a weapon or other method of attack is attuned to Twilight, it might phase through their bodies, lessening or preventing injuries. Treat the participants as if they wore bulletproof armor (see **World of Darkness**, p. 166) with a rating equal to Sheut, except that they downgrade Brawl- and Weaponry-based damage. This protection does not reduce the dice pools of initial attacks, and bashing damage may be downgraded to no damage at all.

Hierophants also gain the above benefits, as well as the following:

- The +1 bonus to Wits and Physical Attributes from Tier 1 now applies to interactions with normal matter.
- Hierophants' Sheut scores *do* subtract dice from incoming attacks as armor, as the path to strike bends indescribably on the way to their bodies. This even applies to attacks that affect Twilight creatures.
- A hierophant may step across impossible angles, to the nearest location where magic bends space: a tomb with a Geometry rating of ••••+, or another



er geographical locus of potent supernatural power, even if the location lies hundreds of miles away. The path may be followed by any being able to interact with Twilight for a number of turns equal to the guiding hierophant's Sekhem.

The effects of this tier last for a number of turns equal to the guiding hierophant's Sekhem, after which they degrade to first tier effects for the remainder of an hour.

Tier 3: Collecting the diluted aspects of their strange ancestry, the ritual officiants coalesce into a being Iremite sorcery calls the Herald of Forgotten Stars. It is a demon of collapsed, convoluted space that crawls and grasps with the modified flesh of component mummies, its many limbs and eyes appearing as if through a cracked prism, impossible to fully describe. Shepherds write that sometimes, a tall, cruel-looking man dressed as ancient royalty stands amidst the crawling chaos, half in shadow, and utters enigmatic statements somehow connected to the nearby witnesses. They do not know if he is the Herald, or a being that accompanies it.

Led by hierophants, ritual participants chant the Herald's true name over the course of an hour. It takes many voices acting in concert to replicate these inhuman syllables, and when they finish, the gathered vibrations crush the participants into one being. The Herald appears, a singular being with many copies where each officiate once stood. These are all the Herald. Officiates cease to act as individuals, and exercise the Herald's powers:

- Mortal onlookers experience Terror Sybaris for viewing the Herald. In addition, living beings without a supernatural template suffer bashing damage equal to the Herald's Ba each turn, typically by bleeding through the eyes and forehead, until they flee the area. Plant life blackens and earth gradually turns to dust.
- The Herald possesses the highest Pillars, Sekhem and Attributes chosen from among all participating hierophants, to a maximum Sekhem or Pillar rating of 10. Every participant beyond the first (acolyte or hierophant) also adds +2 Health, +2 to three Attributes of the guiding hierophant's choice, and +1 to a Pillar of the guiding hierophant's choice.
- The Herald is immune to bashing damage and cannot be incapacitated. Attackers may not aim for specific targets within the warped mass, though they may attempt to strike an object or person out of its grasp. It uses its Sheut dots as armor, and downgrades damage as if it were a hierophant benefitting from the second tier of this Utterance. Furthermore, the Herald may choose to ignore one

action that may affect it per turn as its spirit and physical form pass through inconceivable planes of existence.

Four-Jar Magic

Four-Jar magic is a special set of Utterances proprietary to the Su-Menent. The Shepherds are masters of utter, and they understand the power of the organs stored in canopic jars. By and large, Four-Jar magic is a dangerous practice that the Shepherds try to dissuade their guild from using, but there are rumors that three First Prophets use Four-Jar magic frequently and that one in particular is teaching it to those Red Magicians who left the Su-Menent to protect it from outside the guild. Regardless, its use is growing in practice among the Su-Menent, who are picking up bits and pieces of the craft. Some learn it as an extension of their own studies into utter, others learn it from ancient text, and a rare few learn it from master to pupil.

By and large, Four-Jar magic involves infusing elements of the mummy's canopic organs with the primeval energies of Duat. Four-Jar Utterances possess certain properties that set them apart amongst the powers of the Arisen. Firstly, the canopic jars count as Silenced Utterance vessels (see p. 90) for the purposes of bottling Four-Jar Utterances, but do *not* count against the total proscribed by that Affinity. The Su-Menent may bottle Four-Jar Utterances in this manner even if they do not possess the requisite Affinity. Due to the sympathetic connection between jar and sahu, the Arisen may unleash these Utterances outside the presence of their canopic jars, even a world away from their organs. Doing so adds the Epic keyword to the tier in question, however. Unleashing a stored Four-Jar Utterance remotely causes the Epic Sekhem emanation to be centered on the chosen organ rather than the Arisen, leaving that canopic jar open to detection and predation.

Thus, practitioners of Four-Jar magic frequently put themselves in some danger by tapping into their own organs for power and enabling enemies to track them down. Moreover, if a mummy bottles Utterances into her canopic jar, she cannot resurrect around the particular organ for a number of days equal to her current Sekhem rating.

What follows is not the full extent of Four-Jar magic, but what some Su-Menent believe is just the bottom of the pyramid. Other Four-Jar magics may have different effects depending on which organ they're unleashed from.



- Each hierophant submerged within the Herald may take an action on each turn, using their individual Skills, Merits, Affinities and Utterances, though existence within the Herald may affect dice pools, tier access and other circumstances. Multiple magical actions per turn are possible. Acolytes may not take actions except to psychically communicate with one another.
- The Herald interacts with Twilight and material reality simultaneously.
- As the Herald slithers across torn space, it may act as if in close range or line of site in as many locations within an area 10 yards wide per dot of its Sekhem. Any copy of the Herald may transport itself across this radius as an instant action.
- The Herald may answer *any* question posed to it, save those dealing with the Judges and the nature of Duat and Irem's fall, in exchange for one level of Sekhem or a single human sacrifice. *Something* speaks through the participants, and may answer in riddles but always with some element of truth. The Herald may not pose a question to itself. It absorbs the Sekhem rating, for its part, adding to the total and the time spent in this Utterance.

This Utterance lasts for one turn per dot of the Herald's Sekhem, or when it loses its last Health point to aggravated damage. At the Utterance's conclusion, evenly distribute any damage or negative effects inflicted upon the Herald among each participant, starting with its hierophants.

JAR OF CLAY

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Su-Menent) ••••+

Tier 1: Ba • (Epic); **Tier 2:** Ren •••; **Tier 3:** Ka •••••

There are some Su-Menent who claim that they were never originally meant to work uter, that the Shepherds wielded the same clay from which the gods fashioned the bodies of men and women. These same Su-Menent claim that the Jar of Clay magic is all that is left to them of this once proud discipline. Still, it is enough. A Shepherd returning from Duat knowing Jar of Clay comes not only blazing with Sekhem, but with the ability to sympathetically absorb a fragment of this energy from within their desiccated organs.

Tier 1: The gods created people and fashioned their bodies from clay; thus, flesh contains a touch of the divine, and the Su-Menent can purloin this divinity for themselves. The first tier of Jar of Clay is, in many ways, the most potent.

By opening a canopic jar and handling the organ within, the Shepherd may imbue it with the Sekhem blazing within them from the Rite of Return. The Su-Menent may imbue each jar with up to two dots of Sekhem per organ. Infusing their organs with the Rite's energies borders on heretical, but many of the Shepherds rationalize this by believing the Judges prefer their servants well-prepared for the future—and if they completed their first purpose early in the Descent, well, it's no use letting that Sekhem go to waste in the repose of henet.

At any time, the Arisen may return to their organ, uncorking the jar and retrieving the Sekhem stored within as if it were a relic. This does not provoke a Descent roll, however; the Sekhem is held in abeyance, but it was the Arisen's originally. Absorbing Sekhem from the canopic jar in this manner leaves the organ no worse for wear. Other beings capable of absorbing Sekhem may profit from the energies stored within the Su-Menent's organs, but the jar is treated as a one- or two-dot relic as normal, and anyone but the owner doing so damages the organ permanently.


The Arisen may decide to unleash this tier remotely, after having bottled the Utterance with Silence Utterance Vessels—an Arisen could draw their Sekhem from halfway across the world as an instant action, as if they held a two-dot relic within their hands. This *does* provoke a Descent roll, with consequences more severe than mere lost Sekhem. If the roll succeeds, not only is the Sekhem lost, but the organ is rendered a mass of dried and ruined meat. The Arisen may no longer resurrect around it or store Sekhem within—it is lost to them, destroyed utterly. Regrettably, many Arisen desperate enough to try this are already in dire straits, and double down on their folly.

If an Arisen destroys her final remaining organ with this tier, the necromantic feedback reverberates through her soul and decree, shattering her other Pillars and leaving her with a mere Remnant of her soul. Ammut smiles as the Arisen is transformed into one of the Lifeless.

Tier 2: The Su-Menent intimately understands how the clay of his body interacts with sahu and his Memory. Using his jars as a spiritual anchor, he can refashion the necromantic clay of his own sahu, altering his appearance even if his sahu would not normally have manifested due to his Sekhem's power. Practitioners typically use their fingers to press “flesh” and sweep hair into shape, but this is not necessary.

If the Arisen has incarnated around one of their canopic organs, rather than around their mummified corpse, there is no restriction to this Utterance. If they're utilizing their corpse for resurrection, Scene-required changes and above are beyond the power of the sahu to





disguise. The following actions are divided by the length of time (in actions) required for them to be unleashed.

- **Instant:** The Arisen will look roughly similar, but not the same, as they may alter facial features (though not radically) and/or perfectly groom themselves in but a moment. Anyone searching the Arisen must succeed in a roll for (Wits + Empathy) in a contested roll against the Su-Menent's (Wits + Subterfuge) to realize it's the same person after a casual glance.
- **Turn:** More extensive remodels to the face with hair/eye/skin color added into the effect. The Arisen has the same body type as before, but looks completely different with exception to her clothing. Anyone pursuing the Arisen who didn't personally witness the transformation must succeed in a roll for (Wits + Empathy) in a contested roll against the Su-Menent's (Manipulation + Subterfuge + Sekhem) to realize a trick is afoot, though obviously clothing will still give the Arisen away.
- **Scene:** Remodeling now includes height/weight changes and gender switching, and requires a point of Willpower. The Arisen now looks completely different, and there is no hope for a pursuer to recognize the new look, unless the Shepherd is wearing a signature style of clothing. In this case (or if the pursuer is familiar with the Arisen's body language and basic nature), they must then succeed on a (Wits + Empathy) roll against the Su-Menent's (Wits + Subterfuge + Sekhem) to even have a reason to be suspicious of the Arisen.

At this level, the Arisen may decide to impersonate someone, and that means having the research on hand to make the impersonation stick. More than just knowing the person, the Arisen must have pictures or video to see the target's features in all its static glory. After spending a Willpower point, the Arisen must again succeed in a roll of (Wits + Subterfuge + Sekhem) to carry off the right look. If the Arisen has never met the target or only has a couple of pictures to rely on, she suffers a -2 penalty to the roll. If she knows the target and is going off memory alone, she suffers a -1 penalty to her roll. To play the part, is a different matter. The Arisen rolls (Manipulation + Socialize) in a contested roll against (Wits + Empathy) of anyone they meet who knows the impersonated target. If the Arisen has never met the person they're impersonating, she suffers -3 to her rolls. If she met the person or knows the target nominally, it's -1 to the rolls. Add an extra -1 to these penalties if the Arisen didn't get any successes when altering her features to look like the target.

Success or failure, all metamorphoses last for a number of hours (or scenes, whichever comes first) equal to the Arisen's current Sekhem rating, with one exception: if the mummy is Twice-Arisen, they may activate this tier on a one-time-only basis to permanently reshape the new corpse and sahu to their original body's appearance.

Tier 3: Like any Arisen, a Su-Menent can reincarnate herself around one of her canopic jars. Jar of Clay practitioners can do one better. They may construct a clay shell of themselves at the site of one of their organs, splitting themselves in two to act through their new vessel. This is a dangerous ploy, because part of the magic involves splitting one's Sekhem into two separate pools. The Arisen must gamble on sending enough Sekhem to empower her vessel, but not so much that any of it is squandered.

To start, the Arisen meditates within a temple or her own tomb. If she is in proximity of any of her other canopic jars, she gains a +2 bonus to her efforts, and rolls (Presence or Resolve + Ka) to create the vessel. Failure means she cannot try again for a number of hours equal to (10 hours - Sekhem). If she succeeds, she must then sacrifice a minimum of two Willpower dots and one Sekhem dot to fuel her double. The clay double is then seemingly spun from the ether at the other location, like a piece of pottery, until it is complete. At that point it becomes "real," turning into an exact duplicate of the Arisen who created it, right down to their clothing. Watches and electronic equipment will only be the shell of them, and non-functional. Money will look like phony bills, and credits cards won't work. Relic items are reasonable facsimiles, as are weapons (clay swords may work well, but clay guns won't fire).

The Su-Menent gives the double a short-term goal to complete (or be destroyed trying). This does not make the copy a single-minded automaton, but merely defines the length of its existence. Short-term goals are things it can complete within a day or so, including: track down the thieves to their lair, pick up a vestige from your contact and house it in the vault, protect the witness for the night, provide me with an alibi, lead the hunters away from this city with a false trail, etc.

The clay double is an exact copy of the Arisen, and not the "evil version," or some part of the Arisen that always wanted to be a dancer. For all intents and purposes, it is the Arisen herself, except that it cannot wield Utterances and it only has as many dots of Sekhem and permanent Willpower as the Arisen sacrificed. Pillars are shared from the same pool, though the double cannot meditate to refresh those Pillars. With only a little Sekhem or Willpower at its disposal, it's limited in getting out of trouble. On the plus side, potentially deleterious spiritual effects (such as a Shuankhsen eating the double) applied to the double merely kills the copy without further danger to the Arisen.



If the Su-Menent stays in meditation, she can see, hear, taste, and even speak through her double, and the double obeys, being of the same mind. The double rolls with the same skills as the Arisen. If the Arisen has other duties to attend to, however, then the contact is minimal. The Arisen can see and hear what the double is doing, but it's like having a television playing in the background with no idea of the specifics. This means the Arisen will know what a conversation is about between her copy and someone else, but she can't make an Empathy roll to know if the other person is lying. Her copy, being a reflection of her, can make that roll, but that information won't be transmitted until the connection is fully re-established.

The original Arisen suffers -1 to all dice rolls because of this mental distraction, but can spend a point of Willpower to reconnect to her copy and "download" all the information she uncovered or experienced, right down to the results of skill checks. If the copy is destroyed before the mummy can reconnect, all the fine details are lost, but not the overall actions. While connected to her copy, the mummy if meditating and cannot engage in other actions.

When the copy completes its goal or is destroyed, it cracks, then crumbles and breaks. Permanent Willpower is refunded to the Arisen, though points of Willpower are lost, as are any levels of Sekhem. The double turns into fragments, which then turn to a fine red dust that blows away. Laboratory analysis won't reveal much about it other than it's reality as clay from the bed of the Nile. The Arisen won't feel any of the wounds or injuries its reflection suffered, but she will know if the copy succeeded in its task regardless of how they were connected—she's informed of success or failure, along with the memories the double accrued, at the time of the duplicate's destruction. If the duplicate was forced to make degeneration checks, they are resolved and applied to the Arisen at this time.

JAR OF TEETH

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Su-Menent) ••••+

Tier 1: Sheut •; **Tier 2:** Ka ••; **Tier 3:** Ab •••• (Subtle)

Although the Arisen cannot remember much of their time in the Duat, something of that place remains with them, an unease that even the Su-Menent feel in their ancient bones, as reticent as they are to admit it. It is a sense that they faced truly powerful and alien things, and for it have been barred from remembering. Though their organs never faced that foreign hellscape, a Su-Menent with Jar of Teeth may share a fragment of this terrifying battle.

The Jar of Teeth is magic of fear and terror, uncorked and either used as a weapon or as a gift of insight. What it contains isn't memories of the Arisen's journey through the Duat, but the terrifying emotions that accompanied

the harrowing flight through it. Any Arisen of Memory 4+ need merely visit one of their canopic jars and spend a point of Willpower to "prime" the organ with the memories of surviving Duat.

The second and third tiers of this Utterance fail to function against Arisen or Shuankhsen (they're already unaffected by the first tier, anyways). Slaughterers rend flesh and the winds of Duat scour bones, but the sahu of Deathless and Lifeless alike seals itself immediately and without cost. It takes more than a mere fragment to harm those who have braved Duat before. Whether the Utterances affect the Deceived is largely a matter of academic conjecture, albeit a topic actively discouraged amongst the Su-Menent.

Tier 1: A controlled burst from the Arisen's canopic jar fills a mortal with Sybaris, deliberately turning him into an Oracle of Fear. Unlike the standard way that most other Arisen use to question someone afflicted with Sybaris, however, this is a purer method that puts the cultist into a trance so that he might better channel his fear-induced visions. It's important that the mortal be a cultist or someone familiar with the mummy but not someone immune to Sybaris in all its glory. Any mortal unfamiliar with the Su-Menent or mummies in general will just suffer from the terror normally and not experience this controlled vision. Unlike most other Four-Jar magics, this tier requires the Arisen to have their jar on-hand.

The ritual takes an hour to perform, with the mummy meditating and the cultist restrained to prevent them from fleeing the ceremony. Over the course of the ritual, near-effluvial vapors flow from the Arisen's jar, filling the air with an earthy-smelling miasma. The cultist begins suffering from Sybaris and begins jabbering in terror, allowing the Su-Menent to question them or glean some insight. The tier follows the Oracles of Fear and Sybaritic Omens guidelines, save that the Arisen may substitute their own Composure and Occult ratings for the mortal's (if they are higher) and that, once the ritual is complete, the cultist forgets all he saw during the Sickness.

Tier 2: The Arisen return carrying part of Duat inside them, a gift or curse from the Judges, depending with whom you speak. Su-Menent with this Utterance can trap these fragments within the Jar of Teeth and unleash it when they are injured. This requires them to first visit and suffuse an organ with their burning impression of Duat (which may be an organ under the influence of the first tier of Jar of Clay), but once they have, they may unleash this tier remotely.

When the mummy suffers lethal damage, he may reflexively activate this tier, causing him to bleed a flood of frenzied vermin from Duat out of his wounds. These are cousins to the Slaughterers, a lesser form of the demons that stalk the desert, not abominations but madness given form and flight. The effect mirrors that of the False





Ka of the Amkhata, and those who've fought the beasts are uncomfortably reminded of their power. The Ghosts of Duat rend not merely flesh, but the soul of anyone who approaches the Arisen.

Ghost of Duat

Damage
1(A)(special)

Automatic to anyone standing within 10 ft. of the Arisen.



These ghosts inflict a level of aggravated damage per turn, affecting beings in *amxaibit* (Twilight), even if the Arisen can't immediately perceive them. If the victim has Pillars for any reason, they also suffer one level of Pillar

loss per turn (randomly chosen by the Storyteller). The demons of Duat will evaporate in puffs of smoke once the wound heals, when they have inflicted 10 points of aggravated damage, or when the creatures skitter more than ten feet away from the mummy. Injuring the Arisen anew will create a new swarm. Regardless, uncorking the Jar of Teeth for this effect means that the Arisen will only continue to bleed vermin for a number of hours equal to his Sekhem or until he heals the wounds.

Tier 3: The Teeth of Sybaris are carried upon the winds of Duat. When unleashing this power, the Arisen emanates madness as though flaring with Sekhem 10, and the winds of Duat strike the target (mortal or supernatural) with a particularly potent form of Sybaris. This variant of madness has fangs, and instead of inflicting a mere emotional toll on the onlooker, it injures them physically as well. In the sweep of terror, they feel the Slaughterers biting and chewing them, riddling their bodies with teeth marks.

The Arisen points to the target and cries a word of anguish and pain. A tattered column of red-gray smoke with a hint of screaming faces erupts from the mummy's mouth. She rolls (Presence + Intimidation + Sekhem), resisted by the target's (Composure + Supernatural Advantage). Successes inflict Terror Sybaris (resisted normally by a Resolve + Composure roll) but also inflict an equal number of aggravated damage levels as the faces bite and tear at the target's flesh and soul. The same power also afflicts the target with a variant of Unease Sybaris, but only the Flood of Duat manifestation is applied, even if the mummy wouldn't normally trigger it. The Unease lasts normally (one week per level of Sekhem the unleashing mummy possesses). Even after the scars heal over, the victim will see Slaughterers stalking him in the streets, the mummy's power condemning him to months of nightmarish paranoia and insomnia. Using the Teeth of Sybaris against the same target in the same scene diminishes the mummy's activation roll by -2 dice for each additional attack after the first successful strike.

NEW MERIT: TEMPLE

Temples are somewhat akin to a mummy's tomb, though they carry less power than a tomb might because they serve the Judges first and foremost. The advantage of Temple, however, is that several Arisen can invest Merit dots into a Temple to reflect its communal nature to the mummies around it. And yes, this even means non-Shepherds may invest in it, but there are caveats.

- One investor, the original investor, must be Su-Me-nent. This Arisen serves as High Priest of that temple.



- The temple caters to the highest Pillar of the investing Su-Menent, be it Ab (Heart), Ba (Spirit), Ka (Essence), Ren (Name), or Sheut (Shadow). The temple can choose to represent one Judge or more, but they all must express that specific Pillar.
- If more than one Su-Menent invests in the temple, they too are considered original investors, and may apply their core Pillar to the temple's sanctity as well. This means they may also represent different Judges of those Pillars.
- An investing Su-Menent may open the temple to other pillars, however, if she has at least one dot in those Pillars and spends an additional Merit dot.
- Of the original investors, if there are multiple Su-Menent, the one with the highest contribution of Merit Points is the High Priest. If it's a tie, then it falls to whoever has higher Guild Status. If it's still a tie, then it's about roleplaying and voting and perhaps even getting a First Prophet to decide on who occupies the position.
- Non-Su-Menent Arisen who invested in the temple may remove their Merit dots; this represents a lack of faith in the location or its leadership. Any Su-Menent who invests in that location, however, may not reclaim his Merit dots.

So, what advantages does a temple offer? Unlike a tomb, it is not a place to rest or bind the Arisen to it. It is a place to meditate, and any Arisen welcomed into the temple can restore spent Pillars as per the Tomb Merit. Only those Pillars represented by the temple can be meditated upon and restored, however. The temple usually can't be used to any one cult's benefit since it is a communal location.

Like a Tomb, the investors may spend Merit Points among:

- **Geometry:** The Arisen must dedicate a minimum of three Merit dots for it to be considered a proper Temple.
- **Peril:** As per the Tomb Merit. Can be bought with Drawbacks. Includes new Drawback: Poisoned Sanctum (see below).
- **Endowment:** As per the Tomb Merit. Includes new Endowment: Temple Guardian (see below).
- **Additional Pillars:** (• - ••••)

Regardless of whether a First Prophet decrees the site as a worthy temple, the location will function based on the investiture of the Su-Menent. If a First Prophet refuses to decree the site as an official temple, he may try to

convince the Shepherds to close it down before resorting to other sanctions like reaching out to the other guilds to pull their investing members out of the Temple. The last card the First Prophet can play is that of threatening to condemn the Su-Menent in question as Deshr Hry-Tp. This means they are out of the guild, the temple is no longer a valid Temple (because they are no longer Su-Menent), and they are free to reclaim the spent Merit Points.

NEW DRAWBACK: POISONED SANCTUM (MINUS --)

There is something odd with the Temple. Not in a "we built it over an Indian burial ground" kind of bad, but that one of the Su-Menent's brushes with something in the Duat and or the Judges has transferred over into their investment within the Temple. If an Arisen meditating within the Temple fails a roll to restore Pillars, one of several effects can happen depending on the Pillar:

- **Ab:** He temporarily loses a point of Sekhem for 24 hours.
- **Ba:** She temporarily loses a point of Memory for 24 hours as she's drawn closer to Duat.
- **Ka:** He temporarily loses a point of Willpower for 24 hours.
- **Sheut:** A personal or nearby vestige permanently bleeds away a point of Sekhem.
- **Ren:** The mummy triggers Unease Sybaris in any mortal within a block of herself for 24 hours.

NEW ENDOWMENT: TEMPLE GUARDIAN (---)

Sometimes, a First Prophet may "endow" a powerful Temple, one where powerful relics or vestiges may reside, with a Temple Guardian in the form of an Awakened Corpse Thrall. As per the second Tier of Awaken the Dead, the Thrall exists only to protect the Temple. The Thrall carries a unique advantage called Roaming Eyes, which serves the High Priest as an alarm system in case of intruders. Naturally, there are some who wonder if the Temple Guardian isn't a mole for the First Prophet who bequeathed the gift, using the creature's dead eyes to spy upon the inner workings of the Temple. Few are stupid enough to say this in front of a Temple Guardian.

Roaming Eyes: Should the Temple Guardian find an intruder in the temple, it sends the High Priest a quick mental snapshot of the intruders and their location. It's not even an act of will or thought, but something it does automatically.

MASONS: SECRET GEOMETRY

From the outside, the Hall of Masons is an enviable thing. Its political struggles are short, with clear outcomes. Its members are good at working in unison on one goal—and have found neat ways of transitioning power. They are flexible, patient, planners, who manage to minimize the severe disruption the Descent cycle brings to their existence. Their magic supports this purpose.

NEW AFFINITIES

The Guild Affinities of the Tef-Aabhi refine their understanding of locations, structure, sympathetic resonance and the power of symbolic representation.

GUARDIAN STATUE EMPOWERMENT

Prerequisites: Guild Status (Tef-Aabhi) ••+

Effect: The mummy learns the secret of crafting small statuettes of clay or other brittle material into a crude likeness of someone. This requires a minute spent working with the raw materials and a successful (Wits + Crafts) roll and some measure of familiarity with the intended target. The mason's player spends one Willpower to enchant the item once it is made. He can use this Affinity to have up to (defining Pillar rating) such items empowered at one time. Past this limit, creating a new one drains all power from the oldest to preserve the cap. The statuettes have (Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2) and lose all magic instantly if damaged.

While they hold power, the statuettes made by this Affinity allow the person they were intended to represent to wield them as a magical defense against perceived attacks. That individual can hold one of the statuettes in her hand and focus on an incoming attack intended to cause her physical injury. Doing so shatters the miniature effigy by diverting all harm from the original to its model, ensuring the attack inflicts no harm. If the attack is a surprise or the bearer does not have the statuette in hand, it cannot protect her.

PATHS TRAD BY 10,000 FEET

Prerequisites: Guild Status (Tef-Aabhi) •••+

Effect: People's movements around a city create their own little streams of *heka*. While the Tef-Aabhi specialize in planning these streams, their awareness of them—and their experience over the millennia in working with them—allow them to quickly spot patterns and follow them through unfamiliar places. A moment's concentration is all they need to gain some sense of the lay of the land in a strange city, neighbourhood or building. It won't give them a specific address, or help them identify a target's bedroom, but it will give them a sense of where the key parts of the city may lie, where the office might be in

a house, or where the rough section of a neighborhood is. This Affinity provides the following benefits:

- He cannot easily get lost moving through or over an urban/suburban environment. As long as he remains conscious, he will be aware of where he is relative to his arrival point through the flows of *heka* around the city. Large scale disruptions of the usual pattern of the flow - a riot, protest or other unplanned gathering would disrupt this, but not the usual flows of commuters.
- Any navigation-based rolls through or over an urban/suburban environment result in automatic success, unless is occurring to specifically disrupt *heka* flows (as described previously).
- He applies the 8-again rule and adds +2 to any Streetwise roll based on the nature of a neighborhood (likely locations of dealers, fences, professional services, etc.).
- He understands the weakness of architecture and the objects belonging within structures. If he has the chance to spend a few moments studying a crafted object, he can identify its weak spot. In combat, this takes two consecutive turns, at minimum. The item can be of any size, from a building to a small pot, but must have been crafted by conscious action of a sapient being. For the rest of the scene, any action or attack by him intended to damage or break the studied object adds a bonus equal to his defining Pillar rating and applies the 9-again rule.

ripples upon the river

Prerequisites: Guild Status (Tef-Aabhi) ••••+

Effect: Skilled and experienced members of the Tef-Aabhi feel the flows of *heka* around them at all time. Every decision made generates its own little mote of *heka*, and together those form streams that flow around cities in familiar patterns. The mummy's consciousness is always aware of these streams at a low level, informing decisions throughout her Descent. She can often sense when eddies and dams form through the actions of others. This Affinity provides three benefits.

First and foremost, she is hard to surprise. People moving stealthily, the creativity needed to hide objects, or to launch an ambush all generate enough *heka* to be noticeable to the mummy. She adds her (Guild Status rating) as bonus dice to detect hidden foes, ambushes, and other unseen dangers.

When combat does come, she senses the *heka* gathering within her foes. This adds two to her initiative count.

- Her awareness of the heka within others also allows her insight into their decisions via this Affinity. This informs her arguments, reasoning, and even emotional manipulation in the way she deals with others. During any extended Social action (nothing resolvable in a single turn), she can spend a Willpower point to apply the 8-again rule to every roll targeting the same character during the same interaction. This benefit lasts until the end of the extended action or until the end of the scene, whichever comes first.

BUILDER'S WISDOM

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Tef-Aabhi) •••••

Effect: The guildmasters of the Tef-Aabhi are transcendent architectural geniuses whose monuments may proudly weather the ages. Their example inspires others, bringing a harmonious heka flow to the environment around them. This Affinity confers the following powers:

- Whenever the Arisen makes a roll to build or design an architectural structure, engage in urban planning, discover some detail about the flow of heka through an area, or pursue any actions that directly further Tef-Aabhi guild business to make geographical regions more orderly, she applies the 8-again rule. All other characters within a mile radius attempting these tasks applies the 9-again rule.
- The guildmaster synergizes the magic of up to four other designated Arisen with Guild Status 5. So long as those characters are within a mile of the Tef-Aabhi and consent to have their magic merge with hers, then she becomes the center point for all their powers that project magical effects within a mile radius. Moreover, the diameter of this combined bubble reaches (total number of synchronized guildmasters including the Tef-Aabhi) miles, expanding all of their reach. If any consent is revoked, the relevant magic ceases and the diameter of the shared radiance contracts.

NEW UTTERANCE: MASTERY OF HEKA'S BOUNTY

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Tef-Aabhi) •+

Tier 1: Sheut • (Subtle); **Tier 2:** Ab •• (Subtle); **Tier 3:** Ren •••• (Subtle, Unison)

Tier 1: The mummy inflicts token damage on the environment around her, through scuffs to buildings, or rearrangement of objects that reside within a space. This has the effect of shifting the heka in the air around her,

depriving even those who do not understand its purpose of some of its power. While the mummy gains no direct benefit from her action, those who would work against her begin to find that luck is no longer on their side.

For the next hour, each of her scuffs and scrapes enchant bubbles extending 5 yards in radius. This allows her to “paint” a corridor of affected area with intermittent marking. Anyone in the affected area who takes an action that would result in any degree of physical or emotional harm to the Arisen (if successful) suffers a -3 dice penalty. This is especially useful in setting ambushes by leading enemies into tight corridors in which bad luck is assured.

Tier 2: The mummy strategically introduces new elements to the environment, causing the heka flows to shift temporarily. The space’s “feel” shifts, disorientating people familiar with it, and making newcomers noticeably uncomfortable. They may experience a disorientating feeling of *deja-vu*, or a chilling sensation of someone “walking over their grave” that leave them debilitatingly unsettled. They may just feel that they’re not where they thought they were, or that they’re being tricked by one location being dressed up to look like another.

This tier can enchant any space no larger in any dimension than 300 yards. Within this defined space, all Wits, Intelligence, Resolve, Dexterity and Composure-based rolls suffer a -2 dice penalty. Only the mummy and allies warned in advance are immune to the penalty. The mummy may invoke this tier in an ad-hoc manner, but at the cost of inflicting its effects on his allies.

Tier 3: The mummy causes noticeable damage to the environment around her, through smashing objects, windows or doors, application of graffiti or other aesthetic disfigurement. These actions begin to unwind the web of *heka* contained within the environment, leaving loose threads of energy that the mummy can grasp. Taking hold of these threads, the mummy pulls *heka* from the air and the objects around her, draining the sustaining creative energy and bending it to her will.

Wreaking notable environmental damage ahead of unleashing this tier is required to prepare its power. The mummy can use any means to inflict this collateral damage, whether a minute of casual violence to the place or some more dramatic and sudden method like a battle unleashing or hand grenade. Without this ritual preparation, the magic cannot work.

Once the tier unleashes, objects and building start to noticeably decay, while non-Arisen grow unmotivated and listless, even as the mummy starts to perk up with added health and resolution. As the mummy’s command of the *heka* grows through the scene, the immediate vicinity starts to fall apart, with objects shattering, artwork fading and buildings crumbling.



- Any supernatural powers within (Ren + Sekhem) yards of the mummy add one to the number of “fuel traits” (Pillars, blood points, Essence, etc.) that must be spent to power them, provided they already required some cost. In effect, this is an added “tax” that must be paid to prevent the magic from being torn apart. The mummy’s own power use does not trigger this tax.
- All attacks against the mummy suffer a -1 die penalty, as the commandeered *heka* reinforces her frame.
- Mortal antagonists and allies alike within (Ren + Sekhem) yards must reflexively make a successful (Resolve + Composure) roll to continue participating in whatever actions they are engaged with. A failed roll leaves them listless and disinterested, unless their lives are directly threatened. A Dramatic Failure also imposes a derangement chosen by fate by the next day, as their creative spirit is literally shredded by the actions of the mummy. The fugue passes as soon as the mummy leaves the area.
- Any rolls to inflict damage on the landscape or structures immediately adjacent (objects within (Sekhem rating) yards, or buildings with at least one structural wall within that area) to the mummy are at two lower difficulty to normal. The mummy and her allies require two fewer successes than normal to achieve that damage.
- If this tier is unleashed as a unison effect, each additional acolyte adds an additional 10 yards to the radius of the projected “power tax” and “mortal numbness” fields.

CRACKS IN THE WALLS

It’s a compelling story: the guild that rose after the others, that chose its members purely on merit and which now shapes the world in the image of lost Irem. It’s a compelling story indeed, if only because it’s a work of fiction right now. Like so many of the Arisen, the guild have constructed a pleasant fantasy for themselves that helps shield them from the clawing uncertainty and lack of clear sense of identity that defines their condition. Maintaining the fiction requires a blindness to the inherent contradictions in their existence. If your chronicle involves the guild, either with one of the player characters or through other residents of the nome, you can play with those contradictions very effectively.

They are ancient beyond most human understanding, yet they are mildly obsessed with the new, to the point where they have a rule to keep that obsession in check.

As technology’s rate of development increases, that obsession switches from being a benefit to a burden—a running source of distraction that makes them so much less effective in each Descent, and which they may not be consciously aware of barring a growing feeling of panic.

They are long-term planners and strategists, but they can only work in very short bursts. It’s one thing to say that they’re not micro-managers, and they trust in their cults to achieve things while they sink back into death, but it’s quite another thing for that to be effective. Some cult leader feel about them much as a lone parent might about the other parent of their children, who pops in once every few year, stays around for a while, creates chaos, and then disappears. There’s an inherent tension in ownership of the work that usually plays out in subtle rather than overt ways.

It is the youngest of the guilds, according to their own mythology, but over the timescales we’re talking about, that difference is so fractional as to be irrelevant. In an era when their core methods are a distraction rather than an advantage, the “youngest guild” idea is very much a comforting lie, rather than anything win any serious relevance to the way their Descents occur.

In the end, most of the Tef-Aabhi believe they are working to some great plan, some universal design. And they have no idea what it is. Sure, higher memory may give them some glimpse, but it’s rarely more than a half-remembered impression, like a childhood memory that feels important, but which can’t be recalled.

You can never get straight in your own mind—the events and the timelines just don’t seem to match what you do know of your own past.


On the other hand, the guild’s growing obsession with global *heka* flows is a perfect excuse to explore international chronicles. International flight means that wherever they are in the world, a mummy is rarely more than 24 hours’ travel from her tomb. For Arisen with reasonable cults, money on the scale needed for air travel shouldn’t be a huge issue. If you or your players want to break out of the locale-based paradigm of many chronicles, this is a perfect excuse.

Let’s not lose track of the fact that for all their “big picture, modern tools” approach, overall the masons are not coping with the modern age well.

TEARING UP THE PLAN

Here’s the thing: the guild is *failing*. While its members sense that something is amiss, the very nature of their existence means that few, if any, of them have the perspective to understand this. Its numbers are not growing—no-one has passed through the Rite of Return since the days of lost Irem, and the slow attrition of members to





both the mummies' enemies and the other guilds has had its price: there aren't enough of the Tef-Aabhi left to effectively deal with the rapidly changing world of the early 21st century. That's not to say that this is a new problem. The rapid pace of innovation since the late 19th century has been a persistent and worsening problem for the guild and its hidden masters. The British Empire marked the last point where the Hall of Masons genuinely felt that their (nebulously remembered) plans were nearing fruition.

The planners, the patient ones, the architects are, for the first time in their long, long existence, *distracted*. Their long-held formula of watching, learning and assimilating new tools and working methods as humanity tests them out and then accepts or rejects them is no longer viable. A mummy often ends his Descent with a basic working understanding of a new tool or skill, and on his next return to the world discovers that it now already obsolete. The hard-worn balance between adhering to the driving needs of this Descent and the overall plans is shot. Too many senior Tef-Aabhi are either spending their (brief) Descents trying to feel that they have "caught up", or, worse, ignoring critical changes in an attempt to drive their vision forwards.

Their subordinates in each nome are left to push forward their own areas of responsibility without the clear oversight they have always endured. Those that remember enjoy the freedom that brings. For others, this is just

the way things have always been. There's a consequence, though. The equation of process and results is not just an attitude; it's a core component of their magic. As the process goes wrong, so too do the result, but not always in obvious ways

Could the levels of panic felt by many mummies during their recent Descents be a reflection of their patron's displeasure—or worse, an echo of the panic being felt by those hidden masters as their plans start to spiral out of their control? Those mummies who manage to achieve high levels of Memory are showing greater inclinations to switch guilds simply because that's the case.

THE FLESH MASONS

Those Arisen who have started to make the link between *heka* and aviation, or the internet, are beginning to stumble onto an idea that has defined a strong, but hidden subset of mummies within the guild. Yes, the guild without factions has one—hidden, unacknowledged, but powerful and not beset by the same problems as the rest of its guild-mates.

Its founder long ago—quite how long, he no longer recalls—had a profound and existence-shaping insight that all the guild's work was done at second remove. They manipulate *heka* through the way they shape the world, and they rely on others to release it from themselves through their acts of creation, design or manufacturing. But *heka* comes from within beings, so surely the fastest step to manipulate it (or, at least) the most direct, is to manipulate it at source, within people itself. This was not his own insight. He brought it back with him from his sojourn in the lands of the dead, and of all his experiences there, this was the only idea that he carried back. It changed everything.

The Masons have always identified individuals whose store of *heka*—or perhaps their command of it—was greater than that of other individuals. Many of them are now mummies of the guild. Could selective breeding increase their number in the population? It was an interesting experiment, and one that played to the long-term strengths of the Arisen. And the answer was "yes". The great work began.

The Flesh Masons maintain breeding programs to bring together those whose inner springs of *heka* seem more powerful than others. This is nothing as crass as breeding farms—too blunt an instrument, too noticeable—but is achieved through more subtle means. They're playing the long game. They're not trying to produce a *heka* super child, but to increase the *heka* potential of the population as a whole over the centuries. They are improving the quality of the materials to make the rest of their art easier. This can be achieved through many paths. A "chance"

Story Hook

We mentioned the link between slave traders and real estate development. In a surprisingly large number of real-world cases, those cities that did well from the slave industry in its legal days saw sustained decline through the 20th century.

What happens when a city's geometry decays? And why did it happen? If its structure was the result of long-term influence by the Tef-Aabhi, why have they abandoned the result? What did they leave behind? And what impact are those slowly decaying *heka* flows having on the population as a whole?

A cult of a mummy from any guild could easily summon their patron to help them deal with an unexpected issue in a rundown area of the city. Who knows what secrets they can find in this zone of abandonment—and what secrets the other Arisen of the city have forgotten...



and unexpected meeting on a plane leads to a romance and children. Mass migration through war and refugees brings together two populations. Unsuitable spouses are removed from the breeding stocks. A mix-up at the IVF clinic leads to the “wrong” sperm entering the “wrong” egg. A new housing development becomes available at special prices to those from particular communities. Low heka-populations are cleansed from the world’s breeding stock. This is life and death, eugenics and romance, charity and genocide as art—and it’s the ultimate expression of the ethos of the guild when all pretense to morality is stripped away.

Heka can be created, and it can be shaped. It can also be unleashed. The Flesh Masons are not above faking natural disasters, terrorists’ attacks, or accidents to allow them to unleash the stored *heka* within populations for their own workings.

Do they start wars? Do they plan terrorist atrocities? Not usually. They no more control or create these events than they actually plan a new housing development which happens to bring together the right sort of people. Instead, they work like sculptors, finding the patterns that already exist within human society and bringing them to the fore in a way that suits their aesthetic vision with a few careful taps of their chisel here and there.

In contrast to most of the guild’s operations, the Flesh Masons have no formal organization, possibly because

their goals are somewhat more diffuse than those of their peers. Instead of a strict regional hierarchy, they maintain clear notional nomes of authority that don’t easily map onto existing Arisen nome structures and which tend to be far, far larger. Many of the apparently rankless senior guild members who become nomarchs are in reality Flesh Masons, ready to leave the more mundane work to other, but still desiring to retain some relationship and authority within the mainstream of Arisen society. It is almost the perfect cover for their work, and they will rotate their home through the various nomes within their own territory over the decades.

It would be easy—even comforting—to assume that the Flesh Masons were a fringe group within the guild: heretics or rebels, pursuing a dangerous path of experimentation.

They are not.

They are the mainstream center of the guild. The work of other guild members is, essentially secondary, providing a supporting physical infrastructure that channels the *heka* unleashed by the actions of the Flesh Masons. While the lesser members of the guild work in clay, or steel or stone, the true innovators of the guild work in the most refined substance of all: sentient beings. They seek mastery of the very souls of the world, and to deliver them to their masters.





CHAPTER EIGHT

CRUCIBLE OF FATE

THE MURKIER CHRONICLES

PART ONE

I am in competition with myself and I'm losing.
— Roger Waters

"This is madness, Lisimba."

The tall man glanced in the mirror and straightened the gold scarab pins on his cuff. He shrugged his shoulders to loosen the way the jacket pinched, and admired himself; dark cashmere suit with a white silk dress shirt and breast pocket hanky, all draped on rich Nubian skin that night would find reason to envy.

"Are you listening, my friend?" his stocky companion asked, scurrying behind him, his slipper slapping against the marble. He wore a simpler cotton thawb and a red taqiyah that capped his shorn head, his brown face a knot of wrinkles and scowls. A walnut, really, if Lisimba had to put a name to the expression. He tried not to smile at the image.

"Please, Mosret," Lisimba responded in a cultured, even tone. "Around here, it's Faisal."

"You should wear your name with pride!"

"You can thank Disney for ruining Lisimba for me," he replied, turning around. "How do I look?"

"Like a Mesen-Nebu peacock," Mosret replied.

"Ouch," Lisimba said. "Well, the alchemists do dress well and it beats dressing like an angry lampshade." He gave Mosret a look-over with a casual grin and then continued. "You were saying something about madness?"

"You cannot go to this. You would compound Menmaatré's folly by turning us away from our duties."

"Erosion happens," Lisimba replied, "whether the mountain ignores the stream or not. I wouldn't even call Menmaatré foolish. At least not in earshot of New York." He held up a hand and pressed an icon on his white iPhone. He traced the veins along the marble floor with his eyes until the line clicked on.

"Yes, my Lord?" a voice asked.

"Mr. Faisal, please." He looked at Mosret and shook his head. "Send the car around," he said over the stammered apology, before clicking the phone off.

"There's talk of bringing Ankh-Nephris back to stop this."

"Let him rest. He was awake for so long, it's made him... cranky."

The anger that overtook Mosret was a sudden storm breaking over the rocks of his face. The fury of it caught Lisimba off guard. "This is not the will of the Judges!" Mosret shouted. Lisimba felt the hair on the back of his neck shiver, his nostrils smelling the anise-scent of Sekhem as it wafted from his skin and overpowered whatever cheap cologne Mosret had splashed on. Somewhere on the lower floors, a baby shrieked and a dog bayed.

Calmly, Lisimba put a measured hand on Mosret's shoulder. "My friend," he said. "The Judges are always served in the end, whether we give them their due or they take it."

Mosret shook with a small tremor, his jaw rigid like the marble under them. "The other guilds can stray from their paths, but not us. Never us! This is not why you were brought back!"

Lisimba sighed and stepped back. "Three centuries and some things never change. I sometimes wonder if you enjoy being contentious." He held his hand up. "A joke."

"We do not joke."

"We do when we want to fit in," Lisimba said, "and that's the problem. We're out of touch. I mean really out of touch."


"Despite how you dress, you will never be—"

"Let me finish, my friend. I've heard your reasons, but this Grand Conclave could save us."

"We do not need saving!"

"We do. Sacmis is gone, her cult destroyed. How much did we lose with her alone? We've drifted away from our brothers and sisters, others like us who might remember what we've forgotten. Can we afford to forget more? Can we afford to fail the Judges like this? Come on, Mosret! Come with me, see. This is to the better of us all."

Mosret shook his head. "No, this is folly. Please, do not do this. No good can come of this. You will waste time you do not have."



"There's no time like the present," Lisimba said, heading to the door. He took a moment to grab his sunglasses and the briefcase by the door. "Look, you can stay here till I get back if you want, but I have a plane to catch. I just... I wish you were coming too. It may not happen ever again, so many of us

in the same place. Tashakti's showing up. When was the last time you saw her?"

Mosret shook his head. "You say hello for me, yes?"

"Yeah," Lisimba replied, heading out the door. "Sure."



Night had overtaken the condominium, the living room a dark hole of silhouetted furniture and plants. Mosret sat on the couch, watching the streetlamps and buildings burn to life by the dozens until all that remained of the city was a quilt work of lights and dazzling colors. Finally, he sighed. It did not serve anyone to sulk like this and Lisimba was right. None of them had any time left but the moment right now. They couldn't rely on the future, and what was the use of remembering the past if it couldn't save them from themselves.

Mosret fished out his phone, a cheap burner from an alcove of a store whose name eluded him. He flipped it open with a snap, pressed a single key, and waited. The line clicked open.

"Ii-wy em hotep" a man's voice said, the tone a rasp of dry thirst whose throat would never again be quenched.

"I did as you asked," Mosret said. "He is going. But--"

"Yes?"

"He needed no encouragement. He was going already," Mosret said.

"You did well, do not doubt that. Now, it is no longer idle curiosity for him. It's more than a visit, more than an opportunity to see old friends. Now he is a champion of this and he will draw more to his cause. But he needs pressure he can feel and see to keep him from distraction."

"You have made me his enemy," Mosret said, his voice

low. "And in one stroke, you have begun moving two people to opposite sides of the board to gain ears in both corners."

The speaker was quiet a moment before finally speaking again, the words slower and obviously deliberate in their choice. "Do you know your worth, Mosret? Our kind looks at you and sees the hammer. They never realize that you are in fact the chisel."

"And you the hand? Ready to break us apart?"

"Only to get at what lies beneath, Mosret. To get at the heart of who we really are, and what we were really meant to become. And for this, I need my chisel."

Mosret nodded as the line went dead. He dropped the phone on the leather seat next to him and sat alone in the dark apartment, allowing the Sekhem to waft from him as night unwound towards the morning and the dog below continued to bark at his intrusive presence. Mosret sighed and pulled a beaten, leather-bound book from the folds of his robe. Dreams of Avarice the title proclaimed, and Mosret flipped through ear worn pages, looking for solace in the book that began him on this journey. Would Lisimba recognize him, now? Did he even know himself? Even then, only one true thought kept him company on that long march for daybreak.

"If I am the chisel and you the hand... then who is your hammer and when will he strike?"



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first major story arc of **Mummy**—an event that puts the characters center stage during a growing storm that could change the course of the Five Guilds. Following this section, the adventure will resort to an open SAS format for running scenes in a chronicle, but this initial setup is necessary to convey the background and the options available to Storytellers.

This meta-arc covers a variety of scenes meant to challenge the characters in different ways. Storytellers don't have to shoehorn their chronicles into this event. There's always the option to ignore the stories offered here, or to have the events play in the background, or to cherry-pick

specific elements, or any number of choices that don't force you to play this arc as presented.

THE EVENT

The central event in question is a Su-Menent Grand Conclave in Washington, D.C., meant to pool together the guild's knowledge of Irem and the Judges as memory slips away or plays tricks on the Arisen. Already, the Su-Menent have lost two high-ranking members, including, most recently, First Prophetess Sacmis. With her cult destroyed and she herself missing, the Su-Menent fear the worst. Moreso, her disappearance means the Su-Menent lose a valuable source of information and knowledge, and what they know or understand is suddenly more precious than ever.



Scenes vs. the Grand Conclave

The scenes that play out the adventure make it seem like the Grand Conclave only has a couple of events to work through, but Storytellers are free to interject as many additional scenes as they want to fill out interactions with chronicle-exclusive Storyteller characters and story-arcs. Play with the space and the time, and let the characters fulfill personal objectives. Play up the social elements, the guild politics and inter-group relationships. Locations that aren't mentioned in the adventure and potential scenes that play around them can include:

Scribe Rooms: Arisen are donating texts to be downloaded into an electronic library. The so-called Bennu Initiative is in the Business Center of the Grand Conclave's hotel, and all the uploaded data is available to any Arisen in electronic or hardcopy format. Scenes can involve the characters being asked to help solicit texts from their peers for the library.

Security Storage: Some Arisen come to the Grand Conclave with relics and vestiges for auction. The Arisen might need connections, contacts, favors, or even money for their floundering cult, and the auction is one place where they can set the price and get what they need. It's a strange concept to the Arisen, but one popularized by Tashakti, one of the Grand Conclave's promoters and a forward thinker. Security Storage is where those items might be stored, and scenes can include the characters being asked to validate the authenticity of an item familiar to them, or them finding something they've been looking for and being forced to bid on it with competing bidders.

Guest Relations: Tashakti is one of three Arisen organizing this event, and she plans for a stellar undertaking. Her many cultists are responsible for attending to the guests and for ensuring that none of them need for anything. Guest Relations operates outside of a small salon, and can be a great source for overhearing gossip should the characters remain unseen. Scenes can involve a cultist beginning to suffer from unease or perhaps even terror Sybaris (he's unable to cope with so many mummies in the area) and the other cultists trying to find a way of sneaking him out of the hotel without getting him in trouble. Sympathetic Arisen can be of great help in situations like this.

Underground Garage: The hotel has an underground garage where many Arisen prefer to enter and leave the hotel, away from prying mortal eyes. Relics and vestiges are likewise brought through here, as are supplies. Scenes here can include car thieves who come in expecting easy marks that the characters must frighten away without being too overt, and supernatural relic thieves trying to catch a particular shipment in mid-transit.



The Grand Conclave is the mummy version of the First Council of Nicea, when Christian Bishops gathered in AD 325 to codify the teachings and nature of Christ. In this case, the Su-Menent have opened the event to the other guilds, especially those with historic ties to the priests, like the Maa-Kep and the Sessa-Hebsu. Frankly, though, all the guilds are sending representatives. Some come as witnesses to protect their guild's interests, others to have ancient questions answered. Still others seek to reinforce old alliances or settle old frictions. Curiosity brings even more, often linked to a sense that this is too historic not to miss. There hasn't been this many Arisen in one location since the days of Irem.

THE ARC

If you are a player, do yourself a favor and stop reading. You'll spoil your fun and everyone's potential to contribute.

In true World of Darkness fashion, the Grand Conclave is more than what it appears, with multiple levels to the action and multiple factions pursuing their agendas. On the surface, the Grand Conclave is a fraternal act

by a Su-Menent mummy and First Prophet named Menmaatre, who banks on the spirit of cooperation among the Arisen to codify what they remember of the distant past and what is in danger of being forgotten. Menmaatre has supporters among the other guilds, and does not act alone, but he is one of public notables in this, bearing the brunt of a potential backlash.

Behind the scenes, however, more powerful mummies are stirring their own currents for their own reasons, centered around a "heretical" text named *Dreams of Avarice*. This body of work could split the Su-Menent along theological lines, potentially triggering a schism that will cleave the orthodoxy of Arisen thought from those willing to explore and embrace new ideas—ideas that will claim to help them break from the yolk of the Judges and the prison of the Duat. Another threat, known simply as the Roller, is on the prowl for the *Dreams of Avarice*. This monster will stop at nothing to obtain the relic text, and has proven itself smart enough to eliminate one First Prophet already....





THE BACKDROP

The First Prophets are supposed to be the paragons of the Su-Menent, and well placed in the secular and religious lives of the Arisen. At the start of this Sothic Cycle, however, First Prophetess of Tokyo, Sacmis, is destroyed. Here's what people know:

Several decades ago, Sacmis' cult in Tokyo received a strange book and became so concerned with its contents that they awoke the First Prophetess. They knew she'd want to read it herself. Sacmis studied the texts and returned to sleep afterwards, though troubled by what she'd read, according to her closest allies... troubled and secretive. Four years ago, Sacmis re-awoke, but had somehow grown increasingly reclusive and paranoid following her last journey through the Duat. Rumors surfaced that not only did she isolate herself and her cult, but that she'd destroyed several artifacts for their Sekhem in an attempt to stave off her Descent. The Su-Menent who were awake at the time didn't know what to do. The strongest Shepherds were either asleep or too far away to help her until it was too late, and the Su-Menent were loath to pull other guilds into what they thought was an embarrassing internal matter.

Then word came that Sacmis had expended her resources trying to locate an amulet and that she was ask-

ing questions about the book that her cult had brought to her attention, a book called *Dreams of Avarice*. That's when matters took a bad turn. Those who didn't know what it was became curious about it. Those who knew what it was clamped down and closed ranks; this was not something with which to trifle.

One by one, Sacmis' cult members were found murdered and three incidents of neighborhood wide Terror Sybaris (one in Manila, Philippines, one in Santiago, Chile, and one in the chronicle's city) that occurred at almost exactly the same moment, were tracked back to three hidden tombs belonging to Sacmis. Within, investigating Arisen discovered her canopic jars, the organs within burnt to cinder. Now the other guilds were involved, and just as the Sothic Cycle had begun to drag everyone into waking.

Allies confirmed that the Prophetesses cult had been butchered, its priests and acolytes not only hunted and murdered, but their souls devoured. Even Sacmis' temple had been destroyed, the vestiges within stolen and the interior a bloodbath. What troubled Tokyo's Arisen even more was that the temple had been locked and barred, and whatever killed everyone had come from within before bursting out.



So now questions emerge, and the potential answers are disconcerting to the Arisen. What happened to Sacmis, what is the amulet she sought, what is this *Dreams of Avarice*, and finally... who gave her cult the book?

The loss of Sacmis devastated the Su-Menent, the loss of knowledge staggering and incalculable. First Prophet Menmaatre of New York was quick to act, using this as a galvanizing event to call the Arisen to find out what happened and pull them together to codify their knowledge before another loss robs them of even more. He's since been instrumental in securing promises and calling in boons to host the Grand Conclave, but because the event was thrown together quickly, security and organization is not as good as it should be. And therein lies many a problem... and even more opportunity.

THE TRUTH

Sacmis is gone... corrupted beyond any hope of return. As some Arisen secretly suspect, she's become Shuankhsen, but the cause of her fall is unknown. Something burnt out her organs, almost as if her Sekhem flared and turned into a fuse that targeted her organs. There are even whispers that Sacmis was skilled in Su-Menent Four-Jar Magic, and that whatever happened was one of the lost Jar spells.

These whispers are closer to the truth than most of the wild conjecture floating around, but without all the facts, they might as well have gotten it all wrong. *Dreams of Avarice* did effect a change in Sacmis, but the change didn't happen until following her last Descent and return to the Duat. She re-awoke, remembering terrible snippets of the Duat—things that absolutely terrified her. She withdrew from other Arisen as she sought answers that the book was asking about their kind, their nature, their purpose even. *Dreams of Avarice*, Sacmis claimed, was written by a mummy.

Unfortunately, the book was incomplete without something called the Amulet of Two Fingers, and the questions it asked troubled Sacmis to the point of rattling her faith. She believed that the book was trying to tell her something, but the only way to bring the questions into focus was with the amulet. Asking about the amulet was enough to send up warning bells, however, and it brought her to the attention of an extremely powerful Shuankhsen named the Roller.

The Roller has been after the *Dreams of Avarice* for one reason and one reason alone (though that remains a secret, as yet). This Lifeless mummy tracked Sacmis and butchered her cult as he zeroed in on her. She locked the survivors away in her temple, but the Roller caught up to a Sekhem-starved Sacmis and almost killed her. In her struggle to survive, she used a rare form of Four-Jar Magic

to sacrifice her own organ for Sekhem, thus causing the flare up, but the Utterance backfired horribly. Not only did it consume her organs, but it destroyed her sahu in the process of driving off the Roller.

Sacmis tried to return to her temple, to become twice-born with the help of her surviving cult, but between her growing doubt of the Judges and her weakened state, it was enough to bring her back as an accursed Shuankhsen. Sacmis brutalized her own cult to escape, and took her copy of the *Dreams of Avarice* with her. The Roller bought himself more time in this world by defeating Sacmis, but he grows more desperate by the day. He wants the *Dreams of Avarice*...

He needs the *Dreams of Avarice*.

THE EVENTS OF PART I

Menmaatre, First Prophet of New York, is organizing the Grand Conclave in Washington, D.C. with the help of his ally Bes-Mat of the Maa-Kep of Washington. The Maa-Kep have been instrumental in handling the logistics of Grand Conclave including venue, transport, and supplying the majority of the cultists to serve as staff. Menmaatre and another Arisen of the Mesen-Nebu named Tashakti have focused their extensive contacts to create the attendees list. The logic is simple, invite their allies and the movers & shakers who owe them, and the rest will follow.

This logic seems to have worked... a little too well. The Grand Conclave is drawing more mummies than Menmaatre could have hoped for and created security issues for Bes-Mat's people. Part of this is because of what happened to Sacmis, the other because of curiosity.

While Storytellers can run whatever elements of the Grand Conclave they choose, the four sections break down as follows:

PROLOGUE

The characters are involved early in events, and must investigate the flare-up of Sacmis' Sekhem when she fried her organs. One of her hidden tombs is the site of terror Sybaris that panics the entire neighborhood, and a situation made worse when lesser Amkhata are drawn to the location and begin attacking locals.

CHAPTER ONE

The Grand Conclave has begun and everyone is talking about what happened to Sacmis. When a friend asks the characters a favor in providing security transporting a special item to the Conclave belonging to a Tef-Aabhi guildmaster named Udjat, they eventually discover the "item" is none other than the captured body of Sacmis. Now the characters must reach the Conclave safely while





Personae Cheat Sheet

Bes-Mat (Maa-Kep): One of the movers and shakers among the D.C. Arisen, Bes-Mat is a conservative mummy with very hardline views on their unswerving duty to the gods of the Duat. His philosophical debates with Menmaatre threaten to split the two ancient friends due to events during the Grand Conclave.

Lisimba (Su-Menent): Although not one of the highly placed Arisen in his guild, Lisimba is a charismatic mummy who is fluid in whatever era he awakens in. He is well-liked and although progressive in his outlook, finds ways to win arguments calmly and rationally.

Menmaatre (Su-Menent): First Prophet of New York, currently in D.C. to help oversee his brainchild. Organizer and main force behind the Grand Conclave and seen by many among his peers as a Shepherd reformer eager to make the Su-Menent relevant again.

The Roller (Shuankhsen): The monster out to claim *Dreams of Avarice* for himself. Although the Roller does not make an appearance in this story directly, his influence is felt across the metaplot and presages his appearance in *The Avarice Chronicle* (Part II).

Sacmis (Shuankhsen; Former Su-Menent): First Prophetess of Tokyo, turned Shuankhsen following a battle with the Roller when her Utterance backfired on her. Captured by Udjat, who plans to use her as an example of the dangers of heresy, she is kept imprisoned in a special container to stop her from dying and being reborn elsewhere.

Tashakti (Mesen-Nebu): A Mexico City-based Arisen with less interest in the theocratic discussions of the Grand Conclave and more in extending her own connections. Tashakti is as faithful as any Arisen, but her eye is fixed firm on the future.

Taweret (Sesha-Hebsu): Taweret is an Arisen of Paris, and like Sacmis, he received a copy of *Dreams of Avarice* from a mysterious benefactor. Unlike Sacmis, he's read the book a few times and has not succumbed to its supposed corruption. He is there to voice the questions it asks.

The Twins (Shuankhsen): The Twins are two identical accursed, born in separate eras and made twins in the afterlife. These enforcers act on behalf of Ammut, and are tasked with getting Sacmis' body back.

Udjat (Tef-Aabhi): Guildmaster of the Tef-Aabhi in New Delhi and old friend of Sacmis, he investigated the First Prophet's disappearance and captured her. A traditionalist among his own kind, he's heard rumors of *Dreams of Avarice* and is using Sacmis' fall as a warning to the Arisen of the dangers of heresy.

being hunted by two Shuankhsen called "The Twins" who serve Ammut, and three lesser Amkhata bequeathed and tethered to them through an amulet for the mission.

CHAPTER TWO

Udjat is out to prove that a very dangerous heretical text is circulating among the Arisen, a book called *Dreams of Avarice*. He points to Sacmis becoming Shuankhsen as proof of this, but an Arisen named Taweret has brought his copy of *Dreams of Avarice* to the Conclave. He too has read it, and claims that they cannot afford to ignore its message. This splits the Conclave, and the characters are caught in the social undercurrents as Arisen vie to gain support for their side or themselves. Unfortunately, the chapter ends when Taweret is summoned for a mysterious rendezvous.

CHAPTER THREE

Taweret's meeting is a trap by the Roller to get *Dreams of Avarice*. He knows he cannot attack the Grand Conclave openly without getting his unliving ass handed to him, so he's sent a powerful greater Amkhata that serves him after two targets... *Dreams of Avarice* and Sacmis' body. When the attack is underway, the Roller unleashes lesser Amkhata to stir absolute chaos at the Grand Conclave while his minions hunt through the shadows to reach their targets.

EPILOGUE


The Arisen are shocked and perturbed by the events of the last few weeks. This represents an organized initiative against them, and the *Dreams of Avarice* are splitting the Arisen into several camps when events should be cleaving them together. This split is exemplified in the strained bonds between the Su-Menent Menmaatre, Bes-Mat of the Maa-Kep, and the Mesen-Nebu Tashakti.

PLAYER INVOLVEMENT

Characters can involve themselves with events in a number of different ways, and can get involved on a variety of levels. It all depends on the Storyteller and how this arc plays into existing chronicles. What if the characters are all guildmasters? What if they belong to different guilds or the same guild? What if they are too insignificant for something of this magnitude? Or the Storyteller wants to play up another angle? Don't worry, Storytellers, this chapter has you covered, and this section is all about easing the transition into the arc, or out of it.

DIRECT REASONS FOR GOING

Now it's safe to say that the easiest fit would be if the characters are all Su-Menent, but that just serves a few chroni-



cles and not all of them. But if it seems odd why characters, potentially those of different guilds, might come together for this event, consider this: 1) The Su-Menent have a long history with other guilds from the days of the priesthoods; 2) The Grand Conclave will bring together many Arisen who haven't seen each other in centuries or perhaps even millennia (potentially); and 3) the possibility for information exchange is unprecedented.

GUILD HISTORY

The Su-Menent have a long history with the other Arisen, who were once involved in some capacity in temple and priestly life. Builders, financiers, bookkeepers, and scribes alike all had a hand in making the religion of Irem the center of life and death. With that level of involvement, the Grand Conclave will invite some guilds who shared their history closely, and as a matter of decorum, the guilds would likely accept the invitation by sending representatives and delegations. Some do so to keep the records straight and ensure their role in Su-Menent history were accounted for properly. Others to document the proceedings and report on specifics back to their own guild. This would be a time to cement ties and repair bridges, turning the Grand Conclave into a one-of-a-kind opportunity.

A REUNION

Many Arisen may not have seen each other for a few cycles. Geography and time are both inhibiting factors when mummies are only awake long enough to complete their sacred duty. Add to that the Sothic Cycles being the only time when everyone returns together, and the opportunity for reunions is limited. The Grand Conclave, however, pulls everyone to the same city. Mummies that might not travel to see one Arisen might travel to go see ten Arisen. Naturally, this isn't just a cause to socialize with long lost friends. This is an opportunity to bury the hatchet or re-open wounds or validate old alliances or foster new ones.

GUILD MEETINGS

The different guilds might also take this opportunity to have mini-conclaves of their own. With so many meeting in the same city, it's a good time to host guild-specific gatherings to reaffirm their solidarity or to discuss tactics or concerns about the gatherings. And face it, some people just like holding court, so leave it to the Tef-Aabhi to throw a great mixer with an open bar.

SWAP MEET

The Shan'iatu established a competitive situation where the Arisen don't truly need one another since all relics and Sekhem inevitably belong to the Judges. Perhaps, the more loyal mummies argue, the Shan'iatu were merely trying to make the Arisen more self-sufficient so that they

could cope with a world that was much larger back then. They didn't foresee a planet where communication would become near instantaneous and where travel would allow people to traverse the oceans in a matter of hours. But the Arisen are careful of modern day communications and they certainly won't UPS relics to their destination. The Grand Conclave gives them the opportunity, however to trade vestiges and perhaps even relics for greater favors (and mentioned with the auction idea earlier), for information on more powerful relics, for old debts, for lost lore that they might be missing, or for pooling data to benefit those who contribute (with the Bennu Initiative).

INVESTIGATE

The characters may have been witness to the terror Sybaris when Sacmis sacrificed her organs, and they are now attending the Grand Conclave to get answers about what happened on behalf of the Arisen in their city.

ALL OF THE ABOVE

Being a chronicle, it's likely that the characters are from different backgrounds and have different or more than one reason to attend. As a formality, as spies, as representatives, or perhaps they attend individually and the events of the Grand Conclave bring them together? Whatever the reason, the players should have plenty of options apiece for attending or participating.

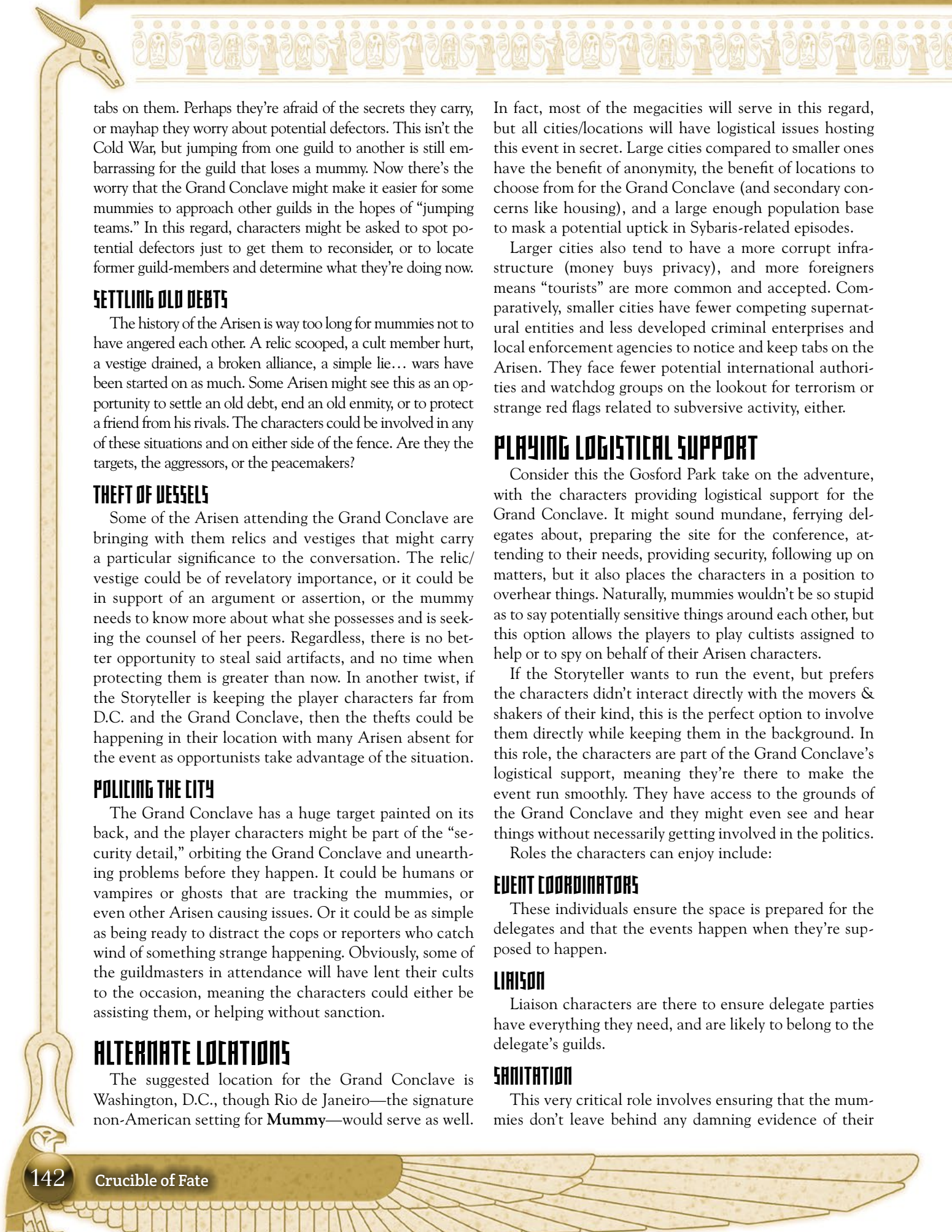
INDIRECT REASONS FOR GOING

Unlike other supernatural races, Arisen are potent down to the individual. The notion of low-mummy-on-the-totem pole isn't as much a thing considering they all hail from the same region and time-period (give or take), and they all have the same amount of Sekhem when they begin and end a cycle. Still, one's position within a guild and one's experience may both affect whether they are sent to the Grand Conclave or included in the main events. Or perhaps the chronicle is more about what unfolds in the shadows and in the background. Let's face it, the Grand Conclave is a great misdirect for Arisen and other supernatural being pursuing an agenda, and if there was ever a time to pursue something it's now.

The following are indirect reasons for going or for using the Grand Conclave to one's benefit. This means that the main event is in the background and the Storyteller is either slowly bringing the characters into the fray or keeping them involved in satellite concerns because it serves the chronicle. Options for this include:

GUILD JUMPERS

Remember that because some Arisen have changed guilds over the course of centuries, old guildmasters might try to keep



tabs on them. Perhaps they're afraid of the secrets they carry, or mayhap they worry about potential defectors. This isn't the Cold War, but jumping from one guild to another is still embarrassing for the guild that loses a mummy. Now there's the worry that the Grand Conclave might make it easier for some mummies to approach other guilds in the hopes of "jumping teams." In this regard, characters might be asked to spot potential defectors just to get them to reconsider, or to locate former guild-members and determine what they're doing now.

SETTLING OLD DEBTS

The history of the Arisen is way too long for mummies not to have angered each other. A relic scooped, a cult member hurt, a vestige drained, a broken alliance, a simple lie... wars have been started on as much. Some Arisen might see this as an opportunity to settle an old debt, end an old enmity, or to protect a friend from his rivals. The characters could be involved in any of these situations and on either side of the fence. Are they the targets, the aggressors, or the peacemakers?

THEFT OF VESSELS

Some of the Arisen attending the Grand Conclave are bringing with them relics and vestiges that might carry a particular significance to the conversation. The relic/vestige could be of revelatory importance, or it could be in support of an argument or assertion, or the mummy needs to know more about what she possesses and is seeking the counsel of her peers. Regardless, there is no better opportunity to steal said artifacts, and no time when protecting them is greater than now. In another twist, if the Storyteller is keeping the player characters far from D.C. and the Grand Conclave, then the thefts could be happening in their location with many Arisen absent for the event as opportunists take advantage of the situation.

POLICING THE CITY

The Grand Conclave has a huge target painted on its back, and the player characters might be part of the "security detail," orbiting the Grand Conclave and unearthing problems before they happen. It could be humans or vampires or ghosts that are tracking the mummies, or even other Arisen causing issues. Or it could be as simple as being ready to distract the cops or reporters who catch wind of something strange happening. Obviously, some of the guildmasters in attendance will have lent their cults to the occasion, meaning the characters could either be assisting them, or helping without sanction.

ALTERNATE LOCATIONS

The suggested location for the Grand Conclave is Washington, D.C., though Rio de Janeiro—the signature non-American setting for **Mummy**—would serve as well.

In fact, most of the megacities will serve in this regard, but all cities/locations will have logistical issues hosting this event in secret. Large cities compared to smaller ones have the benefit of anonymity, the benefit of locations to choose from for the Grand Conclave (and secondary concerns like housing), and a large enough population base to mask a potential uptick in Sybaris-related episodes.

Larger cities also tend to have a more corrupt infrastructure (money buys privacy), and more foreigners means "tourists" are more common and accepted. Comparatively, smaller cities have fewer competing supernatural entities and less developed criminal enterprises and local enforcement agencies to notice and keep tabs on the Arisen. They face fewer potential international authorities and watchdog groups on the lookout for terrorism or strange red flags related to subversive activity, either.

PLAYING LOGISTICAL SUPPORT

Consider this the Gosford Park take on the adventure, with the characters providing logistical support for the Grand Conclave. It might sound mundane, ferrying delegates about, preparing the site for the conference, attending to their needs, providing security, following up on matters, but it also places the characters in a position to overhear things. Naturally, mummies wouldn't be so stupid as to say potentially sensitive things around each other, but this option allows the players to play cultists assigned to help or to spy on behalf of their Arisen characters.

If the Storyteller wants to run the event, but prefers the characters didn't interact directly with the movers & shakers of their kind, this is the perfect option to involve them directly while keeping them in the background. In this role, the characters are part of the Grand Conclave's logistical support, meaning they're there to make the event run smoothly. They have access to the grounds of the Grand Conclave and they might even see and hear things without necessarily getting involved in the politics.

Roles the characters can enjoy include:

EVENT COORDINATORS

These individuals ensure the space is prepared for the delegates and that the events happen when they're supposed to happen.

LIAISON

Liaison characters are there to ensure delegate parties have everything they need, and are likely to belong to the delegate's guilds.

SANITATION

This very critical role involves ensuring that the mummies don't leave behind any damning evidence of their

presence on site or within the city itself. They're also called damage control.

SECURITY

The characters make sure no trouble disturbs the delegates. This means being rotated to various points in the Grand Conclave, patrolling before and after the daily events, manning the security stations, sweeping for bugs, or even being in the city at large, trying to anticipate trouble.

TRANSPORT

The characters are responsible for shuttling delegates around the city, and bringing in supplies or keeping escape vehicles at the ready for whatever reason.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

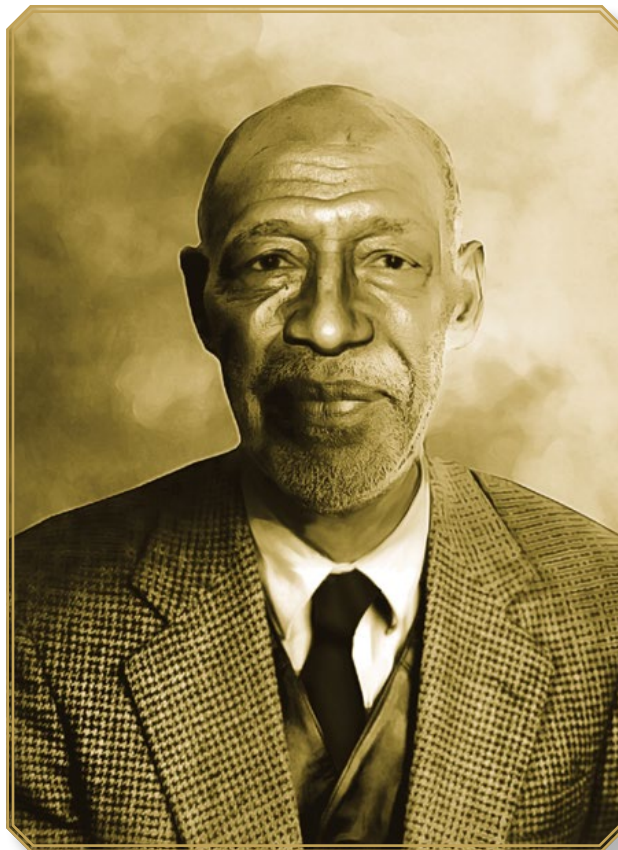
The Conclave has many personalities and enemies the characters can encounter, too many for this section to include in relevant detail. Consequently, the Storyteller characters found here are those whom protagonists may end up fighting or otherwise opposing.

TAWERET

Quote: *"Our curiosity remains intact. Why? Because the Judges meant us to keep it? No... they've taken our memories from us to rob us of curiosity, to rob us of the difficult questions we might ask them."*

Background: Taweret's memories haunted him, of what may have been once, of who he lost along the way. He watched families and their children, and felt an ache overcome him with all the sharpness of a life shattered, a life he once held and lost. What a terrible thing, he used to think, but duty above pain was all that mattered, and he was happy to watch his memories slip through his fingers over the ages. It beat being hurt by them. Irem, Cairo, Damascus, Beirut, Paris... they weren't half remembered blurs. One by one, they vanished until duty was almost all that drove him.

And then one day in September of 1914, his cult awoke him in a panic. The Germans were 75 miles away from the city and expected to take Paris. That did not happen, but in forcing himself to stay awake to protect his cult against the German threat and then the flu epidemic of 1916, Taweret slowly regained some of his memories. It was then that he began dealing in old books and antiques in the Paris Black Market as people sold their valuables for cash in case they needed to flee. It allowed him to stockpile relics and vestiges in his tomb. In 1916, at the height of the flu epidemic, a stranger sold him *Dreams of Avarice*, and by the time he'd reached the end of his Descent in 1918, at the end of the war, he'd read it twice.



Taweret has since been on a private mission to reawaken his memories and to confront his past. He's read *Dreams of Avarice* repeatedly and in his quest to find an amulet reputed to unlock further mysteries within the book, he's become reputed as a relics and vestiges dealer among the Arisen. Needless to say, the Amulet of Two Fingers has eluded him, but this deal with Sacmis and the allegation that the book corrupted her stirs Taweret into action. Since WWI, Taweret has heard other whispers about the *Dreams of Avarice*, and those that read it, don't advertise it. He's about to change that at the Grand Conclave. He's read it five times at least, and believes the questions the book asks are worthy of being asked. He also knows that it isn't the corrupting force that Udjat and other claim, but is an implement of truth.

Description: Taweret was old when he faced the Judges, and now bears the look of a kindly grandfather. He has dark brown skin and a net of wrinkles thrown over his face. His eyes crinkle often, and he smirks nearly constantly. In private moments, he may look lost or regretful a moment, his eyes shadowed by a memory before it vanishes. He dresses the part as well, his fashion sense always relaxed and perhaps a couple of decades out of date. But none of these are weaknesses or inability. They are merely part of the disguise.

Storytelling Hints: Taweret is angry. Not a seething ball of rage or anything, but angry because he remembers enough to know of the life he was denied. It's been a painful journey, because a memory rediscovered is a wound reopened. But he's still reaching further and further back, because of the memories he's certain are there, is certain that he cannot truly be whole without... his wife and human children who he left behind in Irem. This is what drives him now, and this is why he doubts the benevolence of the Judges and their service to them. He has found the truth, and now he won't let others take that from him again.

Concept: Antiquarian Unraveling Himself

Decree: Name

Judge: Neb-Imkhu, the Lord Imkhu

Guild: Sesha-Hebsu

Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3, Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Skills: Academics 4, Crafts 2, Expression 1, Investigation 3, Larceny 4, Medicine 1, Occult 4, Persuasion 3, Socialize 1, Stealth 2, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Allies 2, Cult (Conspiracy; Reach 1, Grasp 2), Encyclopedic Knowledge 3, Guild Status (Sesha-Hebsu) 3, Languages 2, Resources 3, Tomb (Geometry 2, Peril [curse] 1)

Affinities: By Steps Unseen, Enlightened Senses, Eyes of Justice, Familiar Face

Utterances: Revelations of Smoke and Flame, Rite of the Sacred Scarab, Words of Dead Hunger

Pillars: Ka 1, Ba 3, Ren 4, Sheut 3

Sekhem: 6 by mid-2013

Willpower: 9

Memory: 7

Virtue: Hope. Taweret hopes to be free of this duty, this existence he believes is only meant to serve a pantheon of gluttons. He believes he can be reunited with a family he doesn't remember but knows in his heart once existed. He wants to join them in the afterlife.

Vice: Wrath. Taweret is angry because he was denied something beautiful and precious. And he's angry because he allowed himself to buy into a lie that has since taken him further away from who he was and what he was meant to be.

Initiative: 7

Defense: 3

Speed: 10

Size: 5

Armor: None

Health: 7

Note: Taweret has already enacted Rite of the Sacred Scarab before coming to the Grand Conclave. His cult in Paris protects his Resurrection talisman.

THE TWINS

Quote: "I'm not the one you have to watch out for. I'm the distraction."

Background: The Twins remember their lives before Ammut remade them. They were neither related nor lived in the same era. All they shared was that they'd been broken on the wheel of slavery and then murdered for some foul Shan'iatu rite and sent screaming into the underworld. Ammut found them and remade them. Ammut saw in them something that so closely resembled one another that he made them into the Twins. He linked them together, he made them look the same, and he so tortured and grafted their souls and thoughts that the Twins can no longer tell which memory belongs to which.



Since then, the Twins have served as Ammut's agents. She calls upon them to assassinate specific targets, Arisen or otherwise, to procure specific relics, and sometimes even to punish other Shuankhsen who have deceived him to send them to the grave (and to Ammut) faster.

Description: The Twins prefer to inhabit the bodies of twins, identical preferred but fraternal as well. The gender doesn't matter, so long as the dead were somehow kin to one another. That said, that can't always be the case, and Ammut's little joke was to give them the ability to look similar and to sense one another. Once they find their bodies, they will always find one another. Once they do, both their visages change slowly, bridging the differences between them until they are twins because they've reached a common middle ground.

Storytelling Hints: The Twins are inexorably tied together, and they will never abandon one another or leave the other alone for long. Apart they feel incomplete and act on edge... aggressive even, like caged animals. This is Ammut's doing to keep them inseparable. If one dies, the other will commit suicide to join his/her partner or throw himself against the foe that killed one of them, in a blind rage. If one comes back, they both come back. They are always together.

Concept: Twin Assassins

Remnant: Ka

Judge: Ammut, the Devourer

Guild: None

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4, Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 4 (Biting), Computers 2, Crafts 1, Drive 1, Intimidation 3, Investigation 3, Medicine 1, Stealth 3, Subterfuge 2, Survival 2, Weaponry 2

Merits: Contacts 3, Danger Sense 2, Fast Reflexes 2, Languages 2, Resources 2

Affinities: Jaws of the Devourer (power); Shadow Rending, Blood Cartouche (each other), Guardian Wrath, Living Monolith, Miraculous Benefactor (each other only)

Utterances: Wrathful Desert Power

Pillars: Ab 2, Ka 5, Ba 3, Ren 3, Sheut 3

Sekhem: 4 by mid-2013

Willpower: 7

Morality: 4 (Derangement: Narcissism, Twin Suicide [Special: Limited use of Miraculous Benefactor and suicidal response to death of twin as described above.])

Virtue: Fortitude. The Twins are strong and capable of weathering whatever is thrown at them. Perhaps part of that is the fear of knowing what happens to those who

fail Ammut, or perhaps it is because Ammut made them stronger together than apart.

Vice: Pride. The Twins are highly capable and have almost never failed their hungry God, and for that Ammut sends them on special assignments. That pride has seeped into the core of their being, and unfortunately, pride cometh before the fall as this assignment may prove.

Initiative: 7

Defense: 3

Speed: 12

Size: 5

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
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Jaws	2 (L)	7
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Drain Sekhem 7

Health: 8

Notes: The twins usually have basic (matching) clothes and weapons, but mostly rely upon their jaws for attack. Between them, they share an amulet to control Amkhata (see below)

BLOOD COIN BELL (BANE AMULET -)

Durability 3, Size 1, Structure 4

Unlike mummies, the Judges they serve are quite capable of creating relics. They just don't choose to do so with any frequency, given that their whole purpose for the Arisen is to gather relics from the world and return them to their proper place in Duat. Yet sometimes an investment may promise a greater payoff, and in such extraordinary cases the Judges may send an Arisen back to the living world with a relic of their choosing. Such items require a suitable object to hold them, one that fits the design aesthetics of the relic type. The Judge's gift infuses and possesses the object with Sekhem as the recipient rises from Duat, transforming the item into a relic like any other. By and large, only guildmasters receive such gifts and they are expected to return them to the Judges when they are done using them.

Unfortunately, Ammut is also considered a Judge for this purpose and similarly empowered to return her favored Shuankhsen servants to the living world with dread artifacts. These so-called "bane relics" created by the Devourer parody the magical traditions of the five guilds, but the blasphemous items always bear visible signs of their spiritual corruption in the form of monstrous art, spider-like runes of occult power, and other such iconography. Even if a bane relic's physical vessel doesn't originally possess these qualities, it transmutes to gain them in the act of empowerment.

Bane relics cannot be wielded safely by any of the Arisen, even those whose guild corresponds to the relic's basic type.

Only Shuankhsen may use these devices without invoking their (usually extreme) curses. As a kindness to the world, the Judges expect mummies to return all found bane relics to Duat as quickly as possible, ahead of any other wonders.

The Blood Coin Bell is one of the most “common” bane relics the Devourer has unleashed upon the world, as its capacity for mayhem cannot be denied. The Arisen have found hundreds of the baubles scattered across the globe, waiting for foolish mortals to discover and activate them. The relics take the form of large brass coins stamped on both sides with detailed images of Amkhata devouring helpless mortals. The art is very good, but appears to move when glimpsed out of the corner of the eye.

Power: Any being who carries this tainted amulet can perceive Amkhata that are amxaibit as though they had materialized and instinctively knows what else the relic can do (see below). This ability is passive and costs nothing, though mortal bearers still suffer the usual mental health problems for witnessing such monsters.

More usefully, any bearer can take an action to sacrifice the relic’s power to an Amkhat she can perceive within 100 yards. Doing so feeds the amulet’s tainted Sekhem to the monster, removing all power from the relic. This gift feeds and binds the target to serve the one who fed it, exactly as he were a mummy who sacrificed a dot of Sekhem to it (**Mummy: The Curse**, p. 183). He must brandish the artifact at the target and proclaim his authority by the fury of Ammut, upon which the coin rings loudly like a large church bell struck by a sledgehammer. The sound fades to a minor key and distorting echoes, and then the Amkhat shivers and rushes to obey its master.

Curse: Carrying this item is its own curse, at least for mortals haunted by normally invisible monsters. However, the main curse of this relic only takes hold when it is sacrificed to bind an Amkhat. For the next month, the user attracts the fury of other Amkhata who all add a +3 die bonus on attacks they make against the one who enslaved their kind. Naturally, Shuankhsen are immune to this curse.

ARAAQ

Brought into existence in the urban desolation of Chernobyl, in the basement of an abandoned factory converted for the purpose of making greater Amkhata, Araq serves his master, the Roller without fail. The Roller made the beast. The Roller is god and father and tormentor. There is none other.

Araq is special. He has a lion’s body and claws, and a serpent’s head and maw. And it has tenh (functioning wings). What makes it completely unique is that it has a Toad Heart (Ouhmab).

Toad Heart (Ouhmab): Araq can unhinge his jaws and swallow unconscious prey and objects whole up to Size 5 in order to transport them. It must take a turn to swallow a target that large, or an action to gulp up something Size



2 or smaller. The target cannot be resisting or moving; it must be completely incapacitated/immobile/dead. Once devoured, Araq can vanish back into the shadows and bring the prey to the Roller. If the target is mortal, it can survive the journey, but Araq cannot contain something Size 3 or larger for more than three days. The Toad heart also allows the Roller to speak through Araq.

Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 4, Resolve 3, Strength 6, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3, Presence 3, Manipulation 0, Composure 2

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Stealth 3, Survival 2

Willpower: 1

Initiative: 7

Defense: 4

Speed: 21 (21 Flight)

Size: 7

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Bite	2(L)	
Lion’s Claw	2(L)	
Serpent’s Tooth	+2(L) to Bites	

Health: 9



PROLOGUE

SACMIS - THE FALL

MENTAL ... PHYSICAL • SOCIAL ..

INTRODUCTION

Somewhere far away on another continent, Sacmis is fighting for her existence against a Shuankhsen named the Roller. Sekhem-starved, Sacmis sacrifices her organs through Four-Jar Magic, a unique set of Utterances normally avoided by rational Arisen. She is destroyed, her Utterance backfiring and devouring her surviving organs in a flash of Sekhem that washes over the neighborhoods where they are stored. Sacmis always favored impoverished areas, and in the Smokey Mountain slums of Manila; Lo Barnechea in Santiago; and in the inner city of the chronicle's setting, her organs flare with Sekhem before being consumed. And the three neighborhoods that housed her canopic jars are in the sudden and sheer grip of terror Sybaris. Even worse, the ambient Sekhem is drawing lesser Amkhata to these locations and causing them to materialize for a short period.

"The Fall" introduces the characters near the beginning of the events that will spark the Grand Conclave, and it allows them to experience the principle events of this arc starting with the first time things start to go sideways.

DESCRIPTION

A flash of Sekhem in the dead of night, like a screaming beacon of energy, is enough to alert the characters that something terrible has just happened to one of their own. Now, those Arisen who are awake are heading to the last known location of the flare, but what they find upon arriving is a low-income urban scrawl in the grip of terror Sybaris.

The neighborhood is in chaos; men, women, children, the elderly, are in pajamas and less, as they scramble to flee the area. Others are huddled in the corners of their apartments, in hallways, in alleys, in cars and under stairs... wherever they can cower. Only a few have the wherewithal to stay, to arm themselves, or to protect the ones they love. In the distance, gunshots, screams, and sirens ring, the first responders slower to come to the rescue in this kind of neighborhood... but they are coming,

and with backup. The flood of 911 calls gave them no choice.

Deeper into the neighborhood, near the epicenter of the event lies a concrete block of cement, 12 stories of low-cost apartment building typical to the projects. The only lights in the building are the fires from several apartments where terror Sybaris has driven some tenets to acts of madness. And there are so many screams in the dark corridors, but within that building lies the answers to whatever unleashed that terrible flash of Sekhem.

STORYTELLER GOALS

This scene takes as long as it takes for the characters to arrive on the scene and make their way towards the center of the event. It's fortunate that the people running are running away from something, like they subconsciously know that whatever triggered the flight portion of their survival instincts is the 12-story apartment building.

Along the way, characters can try to help people or try to reach the building. It should be a difficult choice and the Storyteller should not cut back on the horror of the scene. When scared, people do terrible things. They run or mob together. They strike out in violence or go after a misperceived threat. It's a time of reckoning, and some people attack scapegoats or enemies. And for some people, the Terror Sybaris has made them temporarily and completely insane, and in that state they are capable of anything. If the characters have time, they could try to stop the man shooting at anyone who gets too close to him, the handful of people leaping to their deaths in a moment of animal panic, the mob beating a man to death, that rapist dragging the woman into the alley in plain sight, the man trying to keep a total stranger safe from the angry crowd lashing out at anything around them. This isn't a "poor" or "ethnic" thing. This is a human thing, and terror does strange things to one and all.

But there's a risk to helping. Do the characters have time to save lives? There are sirens in the distance that are growing louder, and whatever is happening is ongoing... can the characters risk the first responders getting swept up in the insanity as well? And potentially adding to the



difficulty is how far along the Descent the characters have traveled? They themselves might be creating more panic with their presence. The Storyteller needs to make this a hard choice, and either way the situation is horrible.

CHARACTER GOALS

A tough choice faces the characters. Around them, ongoing Terror Sybaris has triggered pandemonium, and while the initial flare-up of Sekhem seems to have died down, something else is feeding the fear. People are still running and fleeing, and the sirens are getting closer. The characters need to act fast and that means reaching the apartment building at the epicenter and finding the source of the incident.

ACTIONS

There are two potential avenues the characters can pursue in this scene. They can head straight for the building, dealing quickly with anyone who gets in their way, and there are enough panicked people that someone might beg them for help, or attack them.

The other option is to try to help people along the way, in which case rolls might involve talking sense into the more even minded individuals to help or leave [Manipulation + Persuasion for example], to stop individuals from attacking or committing crimes [Presence + Intimidation], to answer questions [Composure + Streetwise]. Or they might have to physically get involved by fighting off a mob or leaping into the fire to save someone.

CONSEQUENCES

This scene leads to “Epicenter,” unless the Storyteller deems that the characters took too long getting there and the area is now swarming with emergency personnel and police trying to evacuate everyone from a potential chemical disaster (this can all be blamed on a gas leak).

There’s also the chance that the Arisen are not the only investigators or even supernatural creatures in the area. Storytellers can add or drop as much as they want from this moment, knowing the nuances of the game as they do, but it’s a good idea to let the characters take center stage in solving this.

PROLOGUE

CHAPTER TWO - EPICENTER

MENTAL -- PHYSICAL -- SOCIAL •

INTRODUCTION

With chaos reigning outside, the interior of the low-income apartment building is pandemonium. Inside the basement of the building is Sacmis' emergency tomb hidden in a small secret room tended to by the building's caretaker and a cultist. When the organ within flared with Sekhem, it drew the caretaker, and it also attracted three lesser Amkhata into the area that subsequently fed on the ambient Sekhem before it evaporated and then killed the custodian. The three Amkhata have since remained in the building, feeding on all the wonderful chaos and mortal terror around them.

DESCRIPTION

The building is dark and filled with the sounds of terror. Somehow, the fear and agony is magnified here, but by what? A burst of gunfire and shouts of "it's over there" erupt from the floors above, while from below comes the shriek of something... inhuman. Whatever happened here is still happening.

STORYTELLER GOALS

The Storyteller's goal is to play up the fear and the unknown. Whether the characters go upstairs or into the basement, the Storyteller should force them into a decision. If they go upstairs to help the neighbors, then they run the risk of emergency personnel walking into this slaughter, but if they go downstairs, people upstairs could die. The question the Storyteller should ask is: Are the tenants upstairs actually trying to drive something off or in the grips of terror Sybaris and just shooting at shadows.

CHARACTER GOALS

The characters have a job to do and the obstacles are straight forward in either case, but the decision should be a little difficult. They don't know that lesser Amkhata are inside the building, terrorizing the inhabitants or feeding off the residual energy of Sacmis' power. The characters need to dispose of these creatures and fast before more people arrive on the scene and the terror spreads, but they need to find out about the threat first.

ACTIONS

The characters can either investigate the screams upstairs or the snarls and growls from the basement. Either choice puts them right in the path of at least one lesser Amkhata.

Downstairs, the characters don't need to save anyone. They can deal with two of the abominations in relative privacy. The basement is a labyrinth of pipes, heaters, storage space used by squatters who have fled or been killed. There are a couple of dead bodies lying around, victims of the Amkhata, including Sacmis' custodian who lives downstairs in a small apartment. The characters will find him at the threshold to a small tomb, hidden behind a false wall backing one of the storage alcoves. Within the bedroom-sized chamber is a pedestal on which sits the shattered and burnt canopic jar. The walls are decorated in motifs that can easily be mistaken as Egyptian to the undiscerning eye, and Iremite to the characters. The motifs are done in bright, expressive graffiti from a former cult member. Inside the room is one lesser Amkhata and its trap of centipedes. The second Amkhata hides in the basement, following the characters and waiting for them to separate and become easier prey.

Upstairs, a mother and father are holed up in their apartment with their oldest son, protecting the two youngest children from another lesser Amkhata stalking them. The family is armed... you don't live in this type of neighborhood and not arm yourselves. That said, they are jumpy as the Amkhata flits in and out of the shadows, terrorizing them, and they are likely to shoot first if the characters burst in to help.

CENTIPEDE-HEARTED LESSER AMKHATA

This is one of the creatures stalking the basement, and it has a serpent's body, falcon's head and functioning wings.

Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 4, Resolve 3, Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Presence 3, Manipulation 0, Composure 2

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Stealth 2, Survival 2

Willpower: 1

Initiative: 8

Defense: 4

Speed: 6

Size: 2

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Bite	2(B)	
Sepaab	1(B)	
Grappling	1(L)	

Health: 4

CONSEQUENCES

If the characters can deal with the lesser Amkhata, matters should nominalize quickly in the neighborhood. Otherwise, the lesser Amkhata will prey on the emergency response personnel and more people will die or fall to terror and despair. That may well create a despondency vortex in the area, drawing in all sorts of supernatural bottom feeders that thrive on the misery. And what the characters can rectify now may become something outside of their power if it festers.

Meanwhile, if mortals find Sacmis' chamber, they'll attribute it to some cult or perhaps dismiss it entirely. The characters can hide the room again... nobody knows to look for it. Meanwhile, marks and glyphs identify it as Sacmis', and coupled with events in Manila and Santiago, the Arisen will quickly realize something terrible has happened.



GRAND CONCLAVE SOCIAL THREE OPENING CEREMONIES

MENTAL (SPECIAL) PHYSICAL • SOCIAL (SPECIAL)

INTRODUCTION

The Grand Conclave takes place in Logan Circle, a historic district in Washington that was considered lower-income until the area gentrified over the last decade. Developers tore down old buildings and built new ones, bringing commerce, rising property values, and young families into the area, while driving out the drug trade and prostitution, along with the poorer families, of course. Vestiges of the area once called “The Shaw” still exist, though, like the Pennscott Building.

The Pennscott was an eight story structure of Edwardian design that went from affluent hotel, to apartment building, to cheap housing, to crack den. Investors purchased the building ten years ago, and finally after struggling with permits, zoning laws, and negotiations with the Historical Society to maintain the façade, the Pennscott has undergone massive renovations to reopen it as the hotel of old. The grand opening is a month away, and Bes-Mat of the Maa-Kep has used his connections to host the Grand Conclave here, in the nearly finished hotel.

The Grand Conclave is being disguised as an international meeting of historical scholars, which is about as far from the truth as one can get without out-and-out lying.

DESCRIPTION

From the outside, the Pennscott doesn't look like much. Heavy plastic sheets drape its exterior, though it's more to hide the Grand Conclave than to protect any actual construction work. Inside, the hotel has been nearly restored to her grand state, glaze panels for the doorways, bay windows, mahogany trimmings and furniture, intricate scrolling friezes and cornices near the plaster ceilings, wood paneled walls, and soft lights to lend an air of dignity while giant ferns hide the places where there's work to be done.

Many rooms are already occupied by Arisen guests, though some have chosen to rest offsite for various reasons. But tonight, over thirty Arisen and as many retainers gather in the large Jeffer-

son Reception Hall before a small podium, while cultists of strong will circulate among the delegates with food and drink, some modern, and some traditional fares from ancient Irem like rich pomegranate wine and various skewered meats and vegetables wrapped in flat breads. On the podium, the three chief organizers of this event, Menmaatre of the Su-Menent, Bes-Mat of the Maa-Kep, and Tashakti of the Mesen-Nebu address the gathered.

Menmaatre speaks primarily about serving the Judges of the Duat by looking to the future of the Arisen and the world they may awaken in next.

We have not seen the likes of such a gathering, even for ones such as us who have witnessed history unmade and rediscovered. Unlike any other turning of the Sothic Wheel, however, the future seems clearer than ever, humanity far more aware of its course over the next century. We must stop reacting to the present. We must prepare for the future, and to do that, we must make an accounting of our past. We must not forget.

Bes-Mat, however, says that the future is humanity's domain and its folly. Menmaatre is right in looking to the past, for the Shan'iatu already provided them with all they would need to serve the Judges.

My friend, Menmaatre is right. We must look to the past to remind ourselves who we serve and why. That is all that matters, and all this talk of where we came from and where we're going only clouds our vision. We remember enough to serve and forget everything that is irrelevant to our duty. We should trust in the wisdom of the Shan'iatu. We have survived because of them and because of the Judges. We will continue to survive no matter what direction mortals take.

Tashakti, however, treats this as less the closing remarks to the court and more to her nature.

Who cares about the past and why fret over the future? All that matters now is that the food is fresh and you have traveled to see one another. Welcome, my long lost brothers and sisters. It has been too long.

With that, the three hosts circulate among the dignitaries as Arisen talk, meet those they haven't met (or don't remember meeting), and reunite with old friends and allies.



STORYTELLER GOALS

The Storyteller is free to decide on the anchor of the scene. Is it merely social as Arisen talk and reacquaint with one another, is it to establish underlying tensions that might already exist in the chronicle, is it to introduce the characters to the movers and the shakers of their kind? Regardless, one important fact the Storyteller should play upon is that if the characters were involved with investigating one of the exposed tombs of Sacmis, then the so-called powers that be may request the characters by name. Former friends and lovers of Sacmis may grill the characters for any clues as to her fate, while others are merely curious. One or two including Menmaatré himself and Taweret will ask the characters if they've ever heard of the *Dreams of Avarice*, which will foreshadow events to come and fill in some of the backstory.

If the characters weren't involved with finding Sacmis' tomb, then they can simply circulate among the crowd, partaking of gossip, talking to allies, and keeping an eye on enemies.

CHARACTER GOALS

This is what's called a fishing expedition, and the event should be one of caution. Many of the more powerful or politically savvy Arisen may ask the characters sly questions about their thoughts on the Grand Conclave, about Sacmis, about some of their previous adventures, and even about what they think of the various delegates. That's because many Arisen already sense the fight that's shaping up, and are trying to gauge who will fall on which side. And they'll disguise their comments in ways to hide their own leanings or to see who the character speaks with next. Comments like:

- "I heard that Udjat over there was complaining about our host, Tashakti."
- "I wonder why she came at all. Everyone knows she despises Menmaatré."
- "After that thing with Sacmis, Nephher-Pa sent his cultists to every island in the Philippines, trying to find that amulet she'd been looking for."

The character goal, in this case, is to avoid being drawn into one side or another, or into betraying political and social affiliations. The game is all about listening without being seen or heard, which is rather difficult when everyone is out for information.

ACTIONS

All the actions revolve around Social and Mental roles, if the characters want to keep what they know pri-

vate and learn more about what they don't. Some Arisen are perfectly content with bartering for information and the promise of future favors/considerations. Others will use their Skills to unearth more information, with potential discussions being unraveled with the following checks (opposed, naturally).

Intelligence + Occult: 1) Information about the *Dreams of Avarice* and the mysterious amulet said to be tied into unlocking more of the book's reputed secrets. 2) Information on Four Jar Magic and the Utterance that may have backfired on Sacmis, frying her organs. 3) There has been an uptick in Amkhata and Shuankhsen activity following the event with Sacmis, but no open attacks... just strange soft probes and the lifeless sniffing around some regions.

Wits + Politics: 1) The growing tensions between the various parties with lines being drawn between the forward thinkers and the traditionalists. 2) Menmaatré and Bes-Mat arguing more frequently about Arisen and their function while Tashakti plays the well-connected neutral party. 3) The Arisen of Tokyo bowing out of the Grand Conclave at the last minute when they defeated a greater Amkhata that broke into Sacmis' sealed tomb. The event worried them enough to close ranks and guard their city against possible further intrusion.

Manipulation + Persuasion or Presence + Intimidation (active or hard approach skills): 1) Udjat, one of the staunch traditionalists, is preparing for a fight and ready to go to war to preserve the Shan'iatu vision of the Arisen. 2) For all of Tashakti's claims of neutrality, she seems to be creating an independent block of Arisen who will be strong enough to resist the current winds and step in when their support could mean victory (and the gratitude) of one side or the other.

Composure + Socialize or Manipulation + Subterfuge (passive or soft approach skills): 1) Menmaatré was trying to stay neutral for the sake of his friendship with Bes-Mat, but his friend's recent enlistment in Udjat's camp seems to have upset their relationship. 2) It's rumored Menmaatré never alerted Ankh-Nephris' cultists about the Grand Conclave so that the First Prophet wasn't brought in to tip the balance in Udjat's favor.

CONSEQUENCES

The good news is that most of the Arisen haven't drawn any lines in the sand yet, and someone seen as a potential rival one day may become an ally the next. That said, if the characters side with one faction or another early on (or worse, are seen playing both sides of the field), then any support or favors they ask for may carry the price: "I'll help you if you stand by me when the time comes."

CHIMPOR VILG

SACMIS FOUR - THE FAVOR

MENTAL • PHYSICAL • SOCIAL •••

INTRODUCTION

Udjat is bringing Sacmis to the Conclave to illustrate the dangers of heretical thinking and such tomes as *Dreams of Avarice*. Unfortunately, several of his entourage were delayed leaving Tokyo, and Udjat is shorthanded. He needs someone to secure Sacmis from the airport while he tends to a pressing engagement with Bes-Mat to discuss Conclave strategy. He doesn't want to send cultists to handle the matter; they'll be ill-equipped to the task should anything go wrong. Instead, he reaches out through his contacts and the characters are deemed the best choice (maybe because they handled the terror Sybaris incident in their home city, maybe because they are among the few who've demonstrated an aptitude for working together, or maybe they owe someone a favor who owes Udjat in turn). The characters are brought to meet Udjat himself, through a contact that they trust.

DESCRIPTION

It is the first day of the Conclave, and before the doors are opened for all Arisen to watch the proceedings, the principle guests are behind closed doors discussing business and formalities. As various Arisen engage in quiet tête-à-têtes around the Pennscott (in private rooms, in the lobby, in salons, etc.), an old friend approaches the characters.

Perhaps he reminds them of that favor he did for them at great expense to himself. Or maybe he just thinks it's worth their time to trust him. Either way, he could use their help and all they need do is listen to an offer. He won't say who the offer is from (too many prying ears), but it'll be worth their while.

He escorts them to a private conference room where they wait outside a moment. Inside, Arisen confer, the walls muting the conversation. A moment later, Bes-Mat steps out, all cocky self-confidence, and inside waits Udjat, seated in a vinyl chair set around the dark mahogany conference table and looking equally happy with the meeting. Udjat greets them respectfully, and then asks them to sit with him.

STORYTELLER GOALS

Udjat wants the characters to pick up a "package" for him that is something the Conclave must see for themselves. He will not divulge what it is because he doesn't want word leaking out and robbing him of a big dramatic reveal, but if pressed, he will admit that they will be transporting a Shuankhsen in a sealed sarcophagus.

Udjat does not take no for an answer easily, and he's been told that the characters are the best mummies for the job. He wants them. He also plans his moves in advance, and this is a test run for him to see if the characters are allies to rely upon in the future or Arisen to eventually sway to his cause. Regardless, if Udjat cannot coax the characters to help him, he will frame the issue in respect to the dangers they all face; he can't rely on anyone else for help and the characters come highly recommended.

The last enticement to doing this comes from the characters' contact, if they refuse to help Udjat. Their contact recommended them for the job and his reputation is at stake in this. Even if they don't agree with Udjat or his politics, he isn't the enemy in this. Helping him would help the Arisen as a whole and perhaps, as he claims, the Judges of Duat.

CHARACTER GOALS

The characters will likely try to get at the truth and may find Udjat less than forthcoming about matters. This establishes a certain distrust and unwillingness to help, but at the heart of it, Udjat is all about strengthening the Arisen. The only guile in his nature is politically motivated given the crux of the conference.

That said, more politically motivated characters may find the exchange interesting. Udjat understands favors and boons as a political necessity, and while he'll gladly accept help from other conservative mummies, he's equally comfortable bartering in services and promises within reason. The two principles he will never betray are his own convictions and the duty he feels all Arisen owe the Judges.



ACTIONS

This meeting is one social dynamics and haggling. Udjat starts off with small talk, asking them about their history and their take on current events. He talks a little about his concerns, all coached in terms of contemporary concerns and how some Arisen have strayed over the years. He doesn't blame them either. It's the nature of their duty and the fact that there hasn't been a central guiding authority for a long time, not that he thinks it's to them to be one. Merely that the Arisen need a reminder how who they serve and what's at stake.

This then leads into: "The Favor." Udjat needs the characters to safely escort a package for him arriving at a private airstrip outside of Washington. His own entourage was delayed arriving, and he needs people who can handle themselves. The characters come highly recommended.

The rest of the scene will likely revolve around two main issues:

- What is the package? Udjat will never tell them it's Sacmis because he considers that his ace-in-the-hole to catch opponents off guard and win arguments at the summit. He will admit that it's a warded sarcophagus and that the content is dangerous, but poses no threat to the characters. If pressed, as a last resort he'll admit that the sarcophagus contains a Shuankhsen that he captured. He brought the monster to show the Conclave the danger they face. The Shuankhsen is in a state and the sarcophagus keeps the lifeless creature unconscious so that it doesn't travel to Ammut. Beyond that, he won't reveal Sacmis' identity or even that the Shuankhsen was once one of them. He will say that Bes-Mat is aware of the situation and considers it vital to the Grand Conclave.

- What do the characters get in return? This is territory far more familiar to Udjat. In fact, whenever the characters seem ready to balk at the request to escort a dangerous package to him, he'll switch to this tact to get them to agree to terms, thus making their cooperation a foregone conclusion. Regardless of who owes Udjat what, he's willing to deal with the characters outside of previous obligations. So he can offer them a wide variety of things including 1) Information relevant to the chronicle and the characters; 2) A relic so long as the Sekhem is bound for the Judges and not personal consumption; 3) A favor or his support in any matter that doesn't undermine his own agenda; 4) An alliance in any situation that benefits the Arisen as a society in furthering their duty to the Judges; 5) Helping the characters smooth over or resolve an internal political matter. Udjat is a well-connected mummy, and what he can offer is a matter for the Storyteller to decide based on what the characters' needs might be in this chronicle.

If the characters agree to help, it is under one major caveat... they cannot allow the container to be damaged or to open it. Either one will break the wards and render the sarcophagus powerless.

CONSEQUENCES

If the characters agree to the terms, the storyline continues with "Down in the Middle of Nowhere" immediately following this section. They can pick up a van from the garage under the hotel. If they turn Udjat's offer down, it continues with Chapter II.

CHAPTER VIII

SCENE FIVE

MIDDLE OF NOWHERE

MENTAL ... PHYSICAL .. SOCIAL •

INTRODUCTION

Bearwalk Airfield is a private airstrip outside of Washington on the Virginia side of the state line. Udjat chose it to avoid customs agents and a whole mess of problems that could be solved by paying the airstrip owner a briefcase full of cash to take the night off.

On the evening the plane lands, the hangar is shut down, the solitary airstrip empty, and the fuel pump unlocked with just enough fuel to get the plane back up in the air. The pilot, co-pilot, and four well-trained security personnel are aboard, and they're all Udjat's cultists and know the way of things. The exchange is supposed to be quick, but two Shuankhsen known as "The Twins" are hiding in the forest, waiting for the plane to deliver its cargo. With them are three lesser Amkhata bound to an amulet of Ammut, and their goal is to free Sacmis so that she can appear before Ammut.

DESCRIPTION

The Bearwalk Airstrip is a lake of cleared land in a sea of pines, cedars, and hemlocks, and there's a single road that comes in or out. It's a remote, don't-ask-a-lot-of-questions, sort of place. Except for the flight path of incoming and outgoing planes along the axis of the airstrip, the forest encroaches near the edge of the tarmac, the solitary rusting hangar, the concrete shack serving as the tower, and a lonely fuel pump protected from the weather by an awning. The lights are at a bare minimum and the runway lights are off. There's no one around and the buildings are locked up for the night. It's obvious people were paid to be absent.

STORYTELLER GOALS

The Storyteller should play up the tension of the situation. The location is dark and the meeting clandestine. The only lights that are on make it harder to see past the tree line into the unlit forest. Nothing stops the charac-

ters from arriving early to scout the location, and nothing stops the Storyteller from triggering the fight before the plane ever lands. That said, the Twins and their Amkhata will avoid the characters if at all possible so that they can get their hands on Sacmis. If they cannot do that, they are to break or damage the sarcophagus so that Sacmis completes her Descent and comes into the loving embrace of Ammut.

CHARACTER GOALS

The characters have one goal. Get the sarcophagus or cargo, and get it back safely to Udjat. The container cannot be damaged in any way. Security is in their hands, and the Storyteller should reward their diligence and punish their oversights. Neither can the characters contact the inbound plane, not unless they create a massive distraction on the ground like blowing the fuel pump to drive it off.

ACTIONS

The action unfolds as follows:

T-MINUS FIVE HOURS


The Twins have no idea when the plane is landing, so they manage to arrive early in a car that they park about a mile from the field. They investigate the perimeter of the airstrip.

T-MINUS THREE HOURS

Done with their circuit and after drawing up their plan of attack, the Twins send the centipede-hearted Amkhata to hide near the fuel pumps.

T-MINUS TWO HOURS

The Twins continue patrolling until they determine the best locations to hide. They will hide behind the hangar. If driven away from the location because of the characters, they will default to the road leaving the location be-



cause it's a bottleneck. In this case, they retrieve their centipede-hearted pet and develop a new plan.

T-MINUS ANY HOUR

If the characters arrive and start scouting the location, the Twins will do one of two things, whichever the situation allows. If the party sticks together, the Twins avoid them. Instead, they'll send two of the Amkhata to lie in wait inside the characters' vehicle in *amxaibit* while they themselves stay out of sight. If the characters split to search the area, they will ambush the weaker or smaller party, either to draw them away or destroy them. This is far riskier, however, because their ultimate goal is to free Sacmis from the sarcophagus.

ZERO HOUR

The twin engine Hawker Beechcraft flies in low, circles once, and then lands.

T-PLUS HOUR – THE CHARACTERS ARE ABSENT

If the characters stayed out of sight and the Twins never saw them, then the centipede-hearted Amkhata should still be by the fuel pump. The security cultists won't unload the sarcophagus from the plane, but they will refuel in case they need to get airborne again. The Twins expend the amulet's Sekhem, causing the three lesser Amkhata to manifest just as the plane lands. The centipede-hearted Amkhata stays hidden and disgorges centipedes near the fuel pump to attack two members of the security detail that try to refuel. The other two Amkhata attack the cockpit and cabin to distract, while the Twins rush aboard to deal with the security forces. Their first act will be to kill the cultists as quickly as possible, and then trash the sarcophagus to unbind Sacmis. If they can escape with her body, they will. Regardless, Sacmis remains in the hands of Ammut.

Sarcophagus of the Five Dreamless Vessels (Special ……)

Durability 3, Size 8, Structure 11

The Sarcophagus is a rare relic among the already rare magic because it is said to be made from the crafts used to forge all five vessels. Long before Istanbul was Constantinople, it was Byzantium and it served as home for many Arisen traveling into the Roman Empire or those traveling further east. The guilds thrived in Byzantium, and five guildmasters among them set out to petition the Judges as a group. They needed a way to contain the growing threat of an individual archtraitor or apostate who might lead the Arisen astray. They needed a symbol of the Judges' power against all who would oppose them, even their immortal slaves. To that end, they made the physical shell of the sarcophagus and returned to Duat, hoping that when they next rose, the Judges would have filled it with power.

The faithful pilgrims found their prayers more than answered. This relic exists to punish Arisen by imprisoning them beyond the reach of the cults and beyond their journey through the underworld. When released to stand judgment, they would not be brimming with Sekhem, but nearly done with their Descent. In effect, it served as an isolation chamber where the Arisen could not serve the Judges and was thus punished for his or her insubordination. Only much later did Udjat and his peers realize that it could also imprison Shuankhsen and keep them from traveling to or communicating with Ammut. This often bought the Arisen time to act before Ammut learned the truth.

The Sarcophagus is a coffin built to a height of seven feet, the shape roughly humanoid. The frame is marble, the lid a bronze enameled cartouche of an old and desiccated mummy with exposed bones. The bones that show through the bronze flesh are real and belong to a white lion, invested with Uter magic to make the soul within too restless to truly sleep in death. The cartouche itself is a universal Effigy meant to indicate all Arisen as in a state of wasting uselessness. It is what stops the Arisen from refreshing Pillars and continuing their journey. The Regia was used in the making of the relic itself, and its principle use is to block the trapped Arisen from feeding on the vessel's Sekhem to fuel themselves. The Texts carved into the sides of the Sarcophagus are what defines the state of the isolation and bleeds the Sekhem of the prisoner to its barest level. Finally, the seals at the head and foot of the Sarcophagus imbue its owner with the knowledge to work the relic on someone. In effect, it's the operating manual.

The Sarcophagus is a powerful relic, but not one Arisen can use conveniently. It only works on mummies, and the mummy placed within must be immobilized. They could be on the verge of finishing their Descent or too badly hurt to move. Regardless, once sealed, the Sarcophagus begins to take effect, draining prisoners of Sekhem at a rate of one dot per hour. Once the Arisen would lose her last dot, it remains, but she floats in a nearly unconscious state, stuck inside a dreamless fever from which she cannot communicate, use Pillars, or fall into deeper slumber to renew her lifeforce. In this grim stasis, she cannot heal and emerges in the same condition in which she entered. Mummies can be trapped like this indefinitely until the Sarcophagus is cracked open or badly damaged.



T-PLUS HOUR – THE CHARACTERS ARE PRESENT

If the characters are present and haven't detected or captured the Twins, the Twins won't attack anyone when the plane lands. Instead, they send two Amkhata into the vehicle while they are cloaked in shadow, and they reposition themselves on the road leading out of the airstrip. The security detail is expecting the characters, and will load the sarcophagus into their vehicle. They do not know who it contains. Regardless, once the characters drive away, the Twins wait at where a curve in the road will force the car to slow before expending the amulet's Sekhem. This causes the lesser Amkhata to appear inside the car to attack the driver. This requires the driver to succeed in a roll for [Dexterity + Drive] at a -3 dice penalty to avoid crashing.

The Twins then attack the car if it doesn't slow down (using Wrathful Desert Power to force the car off the road or to obliterate visibility), or they try to kill the passengers if it crashes. The third Amkhata is instructed to attack the sarcophagus itself, and if the Twins can afford to or need to, they'll try to destroy Sacmis' prison before fleeing.

In all cases, the Storyteller can heighten the dramatic tension with one of the Twins yelling to his compatriot: *Don't let them get Sacmis*. That's if the Storyteller wants the reveal here, or later in the arc.

FALCON-HEADED AMKHATA

One of the creatures bound to the amulet, this lesser Amkhata has a bull's body and a falcon's head with a lion's maw.

Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 4, Resolve 3, Strength 3, Dexterity 1, Stamina 3, Presence 3, Manipulation 0, Composure 2

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Stealth 2, Survival 2

Willpower: 1

Initiative: 8

Speed: 7

Size: 4

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Bite	4(L)	
Serqab	1(L)	

Health: 7

CONSEQUENCES

There are four outcomes to this event, regardless of how the ambush plays out.

COMPLETE VICTORY

The first is the most favorable with the characters destroying the Twins, keeping the cultists from harm, and delivering the sarcophagus undamaged. Udjat is thrilled with their performance and will consider them trustworthy and even potential allies. They can certainly count on his help in the future, and he will go out of his way to repay them.

PARTIAL VICTORY

The sarcophagus is delivered unharmed, as is Sacmis, but the Twins escaped or the cultists were killed or both. Udjat is troubled by these events, but still grateful for the characters' help. He will call upon them and they can call upon him.

PARTIAL FAILURE

The sarcophagus was damaged, but Sacmis delivered safely. Udjat still has a platform at the Conclave and his ace-in-the-hole, but he's disappointed that Sacmis and whatever she knows is in the hands of Ammut. He will repay the characters for their service, but only within the wording of the agreement.

COMPLETE FAILURE

The characters lost Sacmis to the twins and Udjat has been robbed of his ace-in-the-hole for the Conclave. He is disgusted with the characters and wants nothing to do with them. This turns to hatred and a future enmity if they got his cultists killed, or is slightly lessened if they captured one of the twins. This is the default result if the characters decided not to help Udjat, forcing him to send another Arisen who was defeated by the Twins.



CHAPTER TWO

செஷா ஹெப்சு

THE MOVING PIECES

MENTAL ... PHYSICAL .. SOCIAL •

INTRODUCTION

The Grand Conclave has begun in earnest in Jefferson Reception Hall. The Arisen approach Tashakti, each speaker demanding time to address everyone. The order of business is simple. The next few days are given to statements of intentions, like opening remarks and debates on positions, but the subtext is all about the lines being drawn and who falls on which side. During those days, the first big revelation is Udjat's speech and reveal of Sacmis' fate. This galvanizes the Conclave and sets the discussions to heated exchanges, but Taweret has yet to respond regarding *Dreams of Avarice*.

DESCRIPTION

It's a full day of speakers and speeches, as various Arisen put forth memories, texts, and relics to be considered as canonical. Sesha-Hebsu scribes record the proceedings on a nearby table, transcribing notes on paper, while a delegate from each guild examines relics and texts for veracity. The speakers are given thirty minutes to make their case and then Arisen are allowed to question or challenge their assertions. Some issues meet with little resistance and they're ushered into record and the final round of approvals. Other matters meet with stiff resistance and vocal dissension, turning a fifteen-minute argument into two hours or more.

Finally, late into the evening, the last speaker is Udjat. With slow deliberation and a sense of drama, he steps to the podium and launches into his speech. It is a fiery oration, meant to sweep Arisen into the fold, or sweep them aside. He begins by saying the Arisen face a danger, of the erosion that comes with age, and that it is time to reaffirm their faith. He speaks of tradition and the will of the Judges. He talks about how the Arisen weathered many storms, including the one that rages inside the memories of each of them, to be bulwarked and survived by the teeth of their faith alone. Some greet his speech with

cries of approval, and others are quietly casting glances at Menmaatre and another emerging star of the Conclave, Lisimba. Anyone with political sense realizes the camps are circling the wagons and the subtext of the Udjat's speech isn't about solidarity, but pulling the loose strings of the Arisen back into one neat tapestry.

At first it appears to be nothing but an election speech for a group of beings that have no events, but then after a moment's dramatic pause, Udjat reveals:

Sacmis was a friend and ally, and when she vanished, it was my duty to uncover her fate. I found her and, to my heart's regret, I captured her. Sacmis has become Shuankhsen.

Some Arisen had suspected this, but the shock is still widespread and palpable. Glances are exchanged and some demand proof. More call for quiet, but it's a full minute before the organizers manage to calm everyone enough for Udjat to continue.

Sacmis fell because of a heretical text called Dreams of Avarice. The text is profane. It speaks out against our Judges, against our duty, against the holy order of things. The proof of this is in Sacmis' fall, and I've come before you to say that we must destroy this book and unmask those responsible for writing it. It is nothing but a perversion of our identity, and if we do not pull together to end this threat, Sacmis will be the first drop of a tide certain to wash over us all.

At this, the Conclave explodes; there are shouts of support, and demands of proof.

If Udjat has Sacmis' body, he will haul her out for the Grand Conclave to see in a bit of grand theater, and thank the characters directly for their help. This is a strong-arm tactic to put them in his camp. Seeing Sacmis like this upsets several Arisen who do not think Udjat has the right to use her like this for his own ambitions.

If Udjat doesn't have Sacmis' body, he casts a venomous look at the characters before stating that Shuankhsen took her body. He did not take down Sacmis alone, however, and several Arisen from Udjat's camp are willing to vouch for the battle and the Udjat's claims.



STORYTELLER GOALS

The Storyteller must tread carefully here. It would be easy to make the description itself the scene, but it is merely the context for the political wrangling that follows as the Conclave coalesces around the nucleus issues of Sacmis and *Dreams of Avarice*. Anyone capable of looking beyond the immediate issues recognizes the old guard (Udjat and Bes-Mat) using fear mongering to keep the Arisen on the straight and narrow of the status quo, and the new guard (Menmaatre and Lisimba) willing to challenge the old ways and not be bullied into a position they think will dead-end the Arisen.

Udjat's proof will naturally rest in the characters' actions in the previous act... did they agree to help Udjat and did they bring him the body of Sacmis?

Regardless, the real scene is about what follows Udjat's reveal, as the Arisen discuss Sacmis, and the growing division between the traditionalists and the progressives. It is entirely social and the actions of the characters should guide the Storyteller since this is their opportunity to involve themselves more deeply within Arisen politics. Things the Storyteller needs to ask herself are: Will the characters pick a side? Are they going to use the Grand Conclave to curry favor for personal agendas? Will they play both sides? Are they themselves undecided or do they even care?

The Storyteller should mark down who the characters address and who sees them doing it. Unlike the grand ceremony that kicked everything off, mummies are paying attention to everything, and characters capable of high Social rolls can navigate these waters without tipping off their hands or their real agendas. Social misdirection and feints are entirely possible to keep adversaries guessing.

One opportunity that the Storyteller definitely needs to explore is in regards to any Arisen enemies and rivals the characters made during the Chronicle itself. Said opposition will use this opportunity to potentially spoil deals for the characters, betray them to the other side, or block them from getting in good with potential allies. It's for this reason much of who the characters are and what they've done play a major factor here.

CHARACTER GOALS

The characters have a great deal of power over this scene as instigators, especially if they've been involved at every step of the way so far. They can push their own agendas, get in good with some of the movers and shakers, and become central to future events. That said, they need to do so with a certain amount of tact. This means doing everything possible to push the politicking and socializing to their benefit and away from prying eyes. This means watching out for campaign adversaries who may be moving against them or keeping track of who is siding with whom. Otherwise, this is the perfect opportunity to wheel and deal.

ACTIONS

As mentioned previously, the opening description is not the action. What follows is, and it entirely relies on the characters acting as catalysts for events. They need to be proactive about their actions or the scene (and how the characters are seen) can get away from them. If the Storyteller chooses who they address, she could be railroading the characters inadvertently. It's going to be hard enough for them to survive whatever Udjat embroils them in.

That said, the Arisen fall into three main groups with whom the characters can speak and bargain:

TRADITIONALISTS

If the characters helped Udjat, several Arisen will ask their opinion on the matter and what their involvement is with bringing Sacmis to the conclave. Unfortunately, Udjat's claims and gratitude places the characters in his camp whether they are traditionalists or not and they'll need to navigate carefully to extricate themselves from any perceived commitment without upsetting that camp. Meanwhile people will treat them accordingly, some suspicious of the characters' motives and others supporting them for "making the correct decision." They will have an easier time booking time to speak with Udjat and Bes-Mat, or any other traditionalist, unless they show a preference for the progressives.

PROGRESSIVES

If the characters refused to help Udjat or botched the mission, Udjat's little poisonous look during his speech will not go unnoticed, and the more progressive Arisen will see a potential ally in the characters. It doesn't help that if Udjat or Bes-Mat see the characters talking to anyone from Menmaatre's camp, it further seals their fate as enemies of the traditionalists. This avenue will score them an easier time with moderates like Menmaatre and Lisimba. The Progressives, however, are a slightly fractured camp, and have different ideas of how to approach the Arisen issues (losing touch with their past, fluctuating memories, their duty to the Judges, etc.). Menmaatre is all for a more open interpretation of their duties, for example, but others like Taweret are more willing to up-end the entire applearc.

ENEMIES OF NEITHER

If the characters have somehow managed to stay above the politics or remained neutral, they will earn the interest of Tashakti and even Taweret, who has not made his affiliations known and remains an enigma till the following night. The neutrals in this are quiet and watchful, some preferring to choose the winning side and other annoyed



by the political slant. Unfortunately, they do not cleave together as the traditionalists and progressives have, and anyone who speaks to the characters does so independently. That said, if the characters band together as neutrals, they may well form the nucleus that others can orbit.

CONSEQUENCES

The major consequences have to do with how the characters handled the situation. There is no right or wrong faction to support, but each carries the mistrust

of the opposition. If the characters really botched their encounters, that mistrust is outright hatred, but nothing that threatens them physically. It just means that some interactions might be made all the more difficult.

That said, Udjat's announcement has given the traditionalists a strong showing, and some of the undecided have flocked to his camp as a result. Now the progressives need a win, and Taweret wants to be the one to deliver that stroke. Unfortunately, his actions could potentially hurt as much as help.



CHAPTER TWO

SCENE EIGHT

COUNTERSTROKE

MENTAL • PHYSICAL • SOCIAL •

INTRODUCTION

The day continues with more speakers, much as the day before, but the Assembly is packed with the expectation of another bombshell. The gathered won't be disappointed. Many progressives make impassioned speeches about the need for open minds, but the traditionalists remain emboldened by their success the previous night. When Taweret drops his bombshell regarding *Dreams of Avarice*, however, all hell will break loose. Many progressives want to rally around his cause, but Taweret's views are so extreme for some middle-of-road Arisen that he is in danger of alienating support and of coming under attack by the staunchest and truest of the traditionalists.

DESCRIPTION

The scene is much as it was yesterday, though more Arisen stay for the day's proceedings. The reception hall is packed, the seats all taken and more standing on the edges of the room. The traditionalists are cocky and flush with their success yesterday, and Udjat is enjoying the limelight. The progressives seem more desperate, and though Menmaatre and Lisimba speak eloquently for their brothers and sisters, there doesn't appear to be a cohesive party line that unites them.

Speakers come and go from both sides of the fence; to beg for a more measured approach, to demand stricter interpretations of the texts, to bring up entirely different matters. The more heated debates lead raised voices, shouting, and assembly by the loudest. What was meant to be a Grand Conclave has devolved into a raucous and factious debate among the Arisen. Finally, the early afternoon sees one Arisen approach the podium. He is slight of build, a bookworm and unassuming even among those who know him. Like many who have spoken, he carries something for his presentation, a briefcase in this instance, and when he first speaks, many ignore him and continue whispering to each other.

I am Taweret of the Sesha-Hebsu.

He opens the briefcase and pulls out a manuscript.

And this is my copy of Dreams of Avarice.

The room falls into a stunned silence, and Taweret stares back, unflinchingly at Udjat and the traditionalists. This bookish Arisen isn't cowed, or scared, or in deference to anyone. He continues.

You have heard many untruths here today and you will hear more tomorrow. The one truth you can accept as fact is this: I have read Dreams of Avarice. Five times. Sacmis was not made Shuankhsen by this book. She wasn't corrupted; she was attacked. I know this because I have not fallen. I am not Shuankhsen, despite owning this book for over seventy years. Those who tell you this is a book to fear only fear it because they have so much to lose. Instead, I say we have much to gain if we don't ignore it, and I pose to you that we are not servants within the cycle, but trapped by it. The Judges have lied to us.

At that the room explodes in an uproar, the traditionalists demanding Taweret turn the book over, the progressives demanding he be heard. Calls for calm and order fall on deaf ears, and Taweret is being shouted down, shouted over and shouted at. Several progressives try to usher him from the podium, several traditionalists try to bar his way. Nobody has used their abilities yet, but if this continues, it will get ugly.

STORYTELLER GOALS

If the previous scene established the playing field and the opposing teams, this scene establishes just how divisive matters have become. Several progressives are trying to protect Taweret, but if the traditionalists try to stop them, a fight will break out. The scene is to approach this point as close as possible without the fight actually happening because an actual brawl with this many Arisen involved will destroy the Conclave and the hotel itself, not to mention throwing the neighborhood into the depth of terror Sybaris.

Fortunately, Udjat, Bes-Mat, Menmaatre, Lisimba, and Tashakti are well aware of the risks and social repercus-



sions. They can step in to stop the situation from getting out of hand, but, the Storyteller's job is to allow the characters to save the scene first. They must be the scene's lynchpin. The major supporting cast should only interfere as an emergency measure, and in fact may wait till the last possible moment to see who is capable of stopping the matter from getting out of hand.

CHARACTER GOALS

The characters can play the scene as they see fit. They may take a page from the major Storyteller characters to see who steps in to stop matters (just to gauge who really holds power). If they've been involved with all the different events so far, however, old allies or new friends may look to them to intervene. How they do that is up to them, but there is no right or wrong way to play the scene so long as it plays to the group's strengths and agendas.

One thing that should be evident to the characters, however, is that no matter what happens, a fight must not take place. It would be in their best interest to stop that from happening. So whether they support the traditionalists or the progressives or neither, a fight is the last thing anyone needs.

ACTIONS

Taweret is trying to leave the stage with about six progressives trying to protect him. More traditionalists have mobbed the podium, stopping just shy of ripping *Dreams of Avarice* from his hands, but they're also preventing him from leaving. The mood is ugly, and the situation a lit fuse. The characters have a chance to intervene during any of the following moments, each of which can transpire over two to five turns.

MOB PRESS

A mob of Arisen crowd around the stage, some jostling involved in either demanding Taweret hand over the book or in protecting Taweret. Any attempts to mollify the crowd are easiest at this moment because no egos have been hurt so far. [Composure + Persuasion] with 8 accumulated successes required over three turns.

BACK AND FORTH

Individuals begin to push and shove other Arisen. Most of it is inadvertent... nobody likes someone directly in their face and these are the acts of someone trying to gain a little more room. There's still hope to calm down matters, though it's a bit more difficult. [Presence + Persuasion] with 9 accumulated successes required over three turns.

PUSHING AND SHOVING

Shouts and jostling gives way to aggressive pushing and shoving. This is happening in parts of the crowd, but

everyone's on a hair-trigger now as they see the opposition as the ones "being aggressive." With the crowd getting riled up, it's more difficult to separate the groups and get them calm again. [Presence + Persuasion] with 10 accumulated successes required over three turns.

THE LAST STRAW

One of the traditionalists makes a grab for Taweret's book, and the progressives shove him back into others. What was a fight localized to two or three Arisen now encompasses everyone around the stage. Fists are about to fly. [Presence + Intimidation] with 10 accumulated successes required over two turns.

MUCH TOO LATE

A full out fight erupts and the Storyteller can either allow the mummies to start using powers against one another, or have the major Storyteller characters step in and bring their camps under control unless the characters pull out a miracle.

Naturally, all this is on the assumption that the characters are out to stop the fight, instead of encouraging it or even stealing *Dreams of Avarice* for themselves or for Udjat. If the characters are out to trigger the fight, they can actually accelerate the timetable by attacking one of the sides or by verbally encouraging matters along.



CONSEQUENCES

Tempers are at the boiling point, and there's likely some new rivalries forming. If the major supporting cast step in, then Taweret and his supporters are allowed to leave the podium peacefully, but the decision isn't an easy one for the traditionalists. If a fight breaks out, Taweret

I Got the Book?

There are several opportunities for the characters and others to steal *Dreams of Avarice*, but they'll never really get it. Taweret wasn't stupid enough to bring the original copy of the book. He has two forged copies that he's crafted containing many mistakes and outright omissions, making the copies useless to anyone who steals them. The original *Dreams of Avarice* is safely tucked away in a vault deep beneath Paris. Regardless, Taweret will never reveal this fact because he's curious to see what comes crawling out of the woodwork when he presents either of his two copies as the real deal.



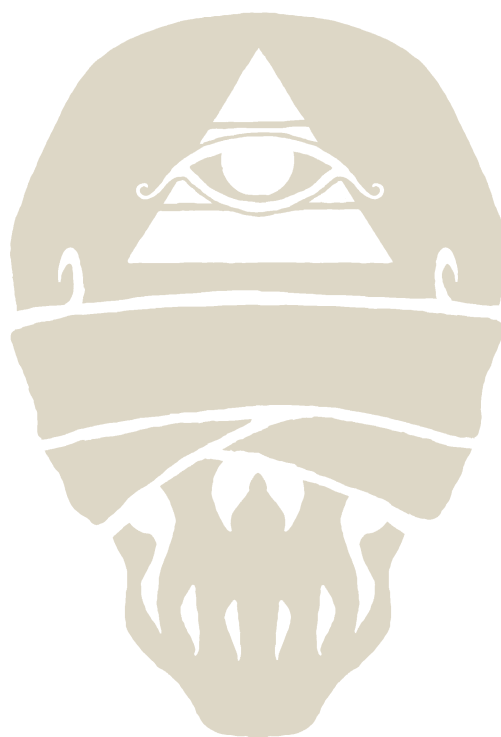


still manages to escape with the book and tensions are high as the two opposing sides break off communication with one another. In this situation, Tashakti and other neutrals must serve as bridge menders. Regardless, Udjat is quick to demand that Taweret be labeled a heretic, a move that meets with mixed reactions.

On the off chance the characters steal *Dreams of Avarice* during this scene, both Bes-Mat or Menmaatre will use their considerable influence to return the book to Taweret. The reason is that they vouched for the safety of all relics and items brought to the Conclave. A touch naïve, per-

haps, but their reputations are on the line here. That said, Udjat is more willing to turn a blind eye if the characters steal the book for him, and Storytellers can even have him hint that the book is best stolen and destroyed without saying so in a way that would incriminate him.

If the *Dreams of Avarice* stays with Taweret or was returned, continue with the next scene... The Appeal. If the characters stole or tried to steal the book, they cannot participate in the next scene and should skip ahead to Chapter III.



CHAPTER TWO

Scene III - The Appeal

MENTAL ... PHYSICAL • SOCIAL ..

INTRODUCTION

Taweret's claims have electrified the Grand Conclave. He openly claims that they no longer need to be imprisoned by the cycles of servitude to the Judges who are using them. That rather, they can break the Judge's hold on them and decide whether to serve of their own free will, no longer punished for having memories, for having their own agendas... for having a life. They'll have a choice whether to serve the Judges or to remember who they truly were in the past.

Naturally this doesn't sit well with many Arisen, progressives and traditionalists alike. For traditionalists, Taweret is what they fear as a burgeoning heresy that could infect the more easily swayed. For progressives, he is undermining their base of supporters by frightening away some of the moderates.

If the characters have proven helpful and earned the respect of a faction, then one of the major supporting characters approaches them: Bes-Mat for the traditionalists, Menmaatre for the progressives, and Tashakti for the unaffiliated. Not because these Storyteller characters cannot deal with matter on their own, but they'll need the characters help to provide extra pressure to Taweret. Or, perhaps, they don't want to be seen as weak by appealing to Taweret directly. Either way.

- Bes-Mat wants the characters to convince Taweret that for his own good and for the sake of the Grand Conclave, surrender *Dreams of Avarice*. It's too dangerous for Taweret to walk around with it especially since he's under threat of being labeled a heretic.
- Menmaatre wants Taweret to surrender the book to him or, at the very least, for him to leave the Grand Conclave. The Parisian's claims about the Judges are not the position of the progressives, and many Arisen believe that Taweret is speaking on behalf of Menmaatre and his supporters. He's undermining their arguments and their cause.

- Tashakti doesn't actually want Taweret and his book gone from the Grand Conclave. She's more than happy to have him around. In fact the extreme reaction of the traditionalists and Taweret's claims are driving more Arisen toward the middle. In effect, this serves her and the moderates... not that there is a moderate faction, but as the most vocal of the lot, she's gained a few supporters. She hopes the characters will convince him to stand his ground.
- If the characters remain unaffiliated, then it's possible all three factions or more may approach them to speak with Taweret on their behalf. This could give them insight into the factions and their undercurrents.

DESCRIPTION

Aware of the situation unfolding, the characters seek an audience with Taweret to implore him on behalf of their sponsors and for their own agendas. Taweret is currently in his room, entertaining other Arisen who have either read *Dreams of Avarice* or are curious about it. Outside his room, in the Axminster carpeted hallway, stand two Arisen guarding the door. A brief word and a statement of intent is all it takes to get inside the room.

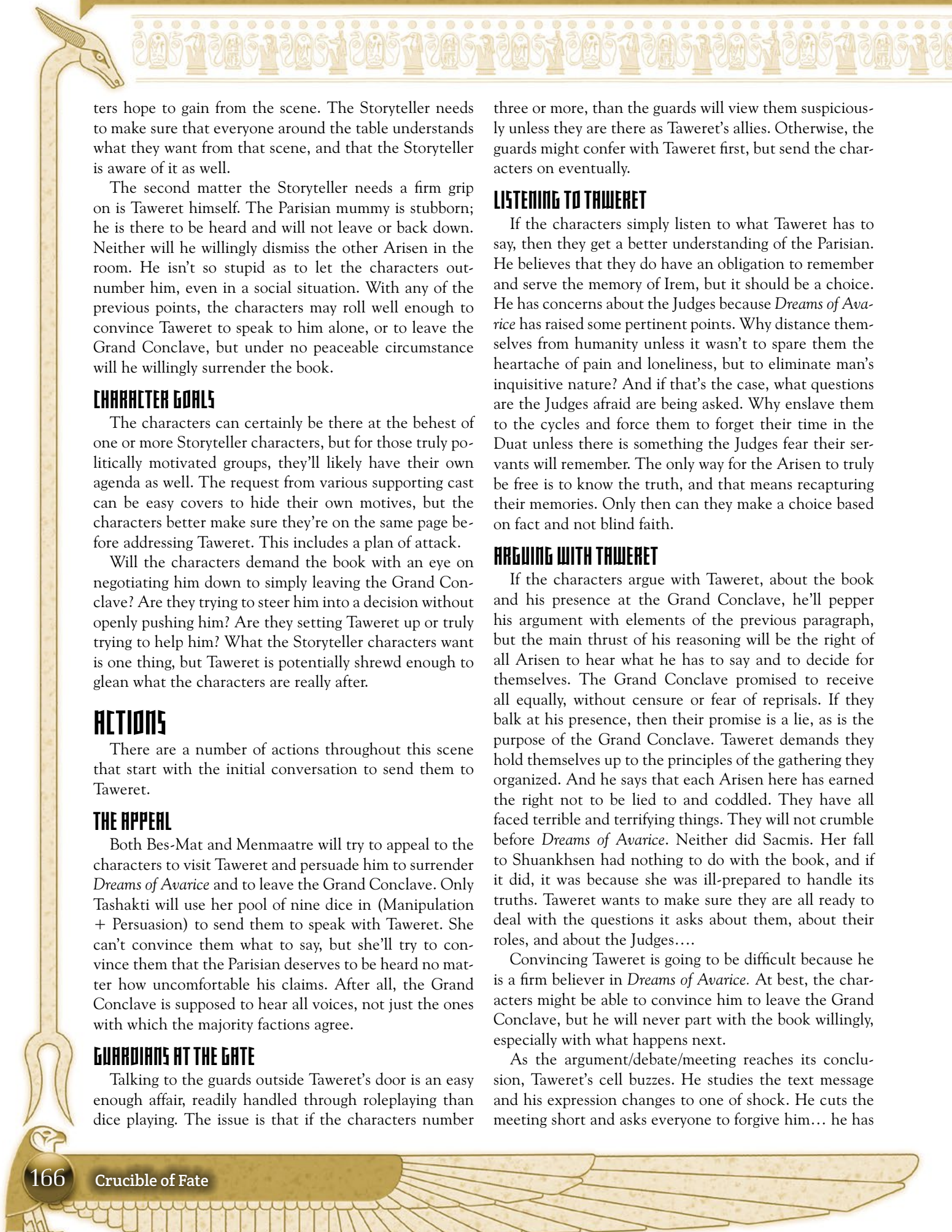
Taweret sits in an armchair, holding his copy of *Dreams of Avarice* when the characters enter. The conversation stops and he regards the characters carefully before asking:

So, are you here to listen? Or am I?

Sitting around Taweret are three other Arisen, watching the characters with a great deal of suspicion. It's the characters' turn to say something....

STORYTELLER GOALS

The scene is fluid because it depends on what the characters are there to accomplish. Are they there to listen to Taweret, are they there on behalf of someone, or do they have their own agenda? The reasons why the characters were sent doesn't matter as much as what the charac-



ters hope to gain from the scene. The Storyteller needs to make sure that everyone around the table understands what they want from that scene, and that the Storyteller is aware of it as well.

The second matter the Storyteller needs a firm grip on is Taweret himself. The Parisian mummy is stubborn; he is there to be heard and will not leave or back down. Neither will he willingly dismiss the other Arisen in the room. He isn't so stupid as to let the characters outnumber him, even in a social situation. With any of the previous points, the characters may roll well enough to convince Taweret to speak to him alone, or to leave the Grand Conclave, but under no peaceable circumstance will he willingly surrender the book.

CHARACTER GOALS

The characters can certainly be there at the behest of one or more Storyteller characters, but for those truly politically motivated groups, they'll likely have their own agenda as well. The request from various supporting cast can be easy covers to hide their own motives, but the characters better make sure they're on the same page before addressing Taweret. This includes a plan of attack.

Will the characters demand the book with an eye on negotiating him down to simply leaving the Grand Conclave? Are they trying to steer him into a decision without openly pushing him? Are they setting Taweret up or truly trying to help him? What the Storyteller characters want is one thing, but Taweret is potentially shrewd enough to glean what the characters are really after.

ACTIONS

There are a number of actions throughout this scene that start with the initial conversation to send them to Taweret.

THE APPEAL

Both Bes-Mat and Menmaatre will try to appeal to the characters to visit Taweret and persuade him to surrender *Dreams of Avarice* and to leave the Grand Conclave. Only Tashakti will use her pool of nine dice in (Manipulation + Persuasion) to send them to speak with Taweret. She can't convince them what to say, but she'll try to convince them that the Parisian deserves to be heard no matter how uncomfortable his claims. After all, the Grand Conclave is supposed to hear all voices, not just the ones with which the majority factions agree.

GUARDIANS AT THE GATE

Talking to the guards outside Taweret's door is an easy enough affair, readily handled through roleplaying than dice playing. The issue is that if the characters number

three or more, than the guards will view them suspiciously unless they are there as Taweret's allies. Otherwise, the guards might confer with Taweret first, but send the characters on eventually.

LISTENING TO TAWERET

If the characters simply listen to what Taweret has to say, then they get a better understanding of the Parisian. He believes that they do have an obligation to remember and serve the memory of Irem, but it should be a choice. He has concerns about the Judges because *Dreams of Avarice* has raised some pertinent points. Why distance themselves from humanity unless it wasn't to spare them the heartache of pain and loneliness, but to eliminate man's inquisitive nature? And if that's the case, what questions are the Judges afraid are being asked. Why enslave them to the cycles and force them to forget their time in the Duat unless there is something the Judges fear their servants will remember. The only way for the Arisen to truly be free is to know the truth, and that means recapturing their memories. Only then can they make a choice based on fact and not blind faith.

ARGUING WITH TAWERET

If the characters argue with Taweret, about the book and his presence at the Grand Conclave, he'll pepper his argument with elements of the previous paragraph, but the main thrust of his reasoning will be the right of all Arisen to hear what he has to say and to decide for themselves. The Grand Conclave promised to receive all equally, without censure or fear of reprisals. If they balk at his presence, then their promise is a lie, as is the purpose of the Grand Conclave. Taweret demands they hold themselves up to the principles of the gathering they organized. And he says that each Arisen here has earned the right not to be lied to and coddled. They have all faced terrible and terrifying things. They will not crumble before *Dreams of Avarice*. Neither did Sacmis. Her fall to Shuankhsen had nothing to do with the book, and if it did, it was because she was ill-prepared to handle its truths. Taweret wants to make sure they are all ready to deal with the questions it asks about them, about their roles, and about the Judges....

Convincing Taweret is going to be difficult because he is a firm believer in *Dreams of Avarice*. At best, the characters might be able to convince him to leave the Grand Conclave, but he will never part with the book willingly, especially with what happens next.

As the argument/debate/meeting reaches its conclusion, Taweret's cell buzzes. He studies the text message and his expression changes to one of shock. He cuts the meeting short and asks everyone to forgive him... he has



something to take care of. His speech pattern, however, is not that of a well-rehearsed man, but someone rendered almost senseless by what he's just read. If the characters manage to grab a glimpse of the text message through their abilities, by chance, or by hacking his phone (Intelligence + Computers) after, the message reads:

Unknown Caller: I possess the Amulet of Two-Fingers to the Dreams of Avarice. We should meet. "And if the questions are not considered to their fullest import, then it is better that the question never be asked in the first place, for only those who consider the question as part of the answer are ready

to face the truth." Construction site, two blocks south of the hotel. Thirty minutes.

The quoted portion is a passage from *Dreams of Avarice*.

CONSEQUENCES

This scene leads into Chapter III and the finale of the first meta-arc. If the characters realize something is up with Taweret and manage to spy on the meeting, proceed with the next scene, Ambush. Otherwise, continue with the scene after that: Assault.



CHAMPION - THIRDS

SECRET - MIMICRY

MENTAL -- PHYSICAL --- SOCIAL •

INTRODUCTION

Taweret is walking into an ambush at the construction site. He suspects as much, but he doesn't realize that the source of the ambush is a Shuankhsen or that he faces a powerful Amkhata named Araq. Fortunately, Taweret isn't carrying the real *Dreams of Avarice*. If his copy has been stolen/purloined by the characters, the Roller will go after Taweret himself since the Parisian publically admitted to reading the book numerous times.

Now one small question may have occurred to Storytellers at this point, and that is... how did the Roller know to contact Taweret? Well, the Roller already heard about the Conclave itself, and had been trying to track down Sacmis' body. But one loose string that will see play in future arcs is that the Roller has a man on the inside of Arisen society. This same contact is the one who leaves the Bleeding Ossuaries at the construction site and in following scene: Assault. So everything that's happened within the Grand Conclave is known to the Roller.

For this scene, there are several ways to involve the characters. They may already know about the meeting through their own initiative, but informers looking to get in good with Udjat, Bes-Mat, Menmaat, or Tashakti could see Taweret sneaking into the construction site and report back. That information may trickle down to the characters if they're in good with the major supporting cast (who won't get their hands dirty but are still keeping tabs on Taweret). Or maybe an Arisen tells the characters directly to get in good with them.

DESCRIPTION

A cool D.C. wind rifles through the girders of the construction site, chasing dirt across the excavated foundation pit. The plastic tarps covering portions of the construction site undulate and whisper, the sounds of traffic and streetlife distant. Taweret seems comfortable in the shadows as he steers clear of the lights and away from the heavy machines in the pit. He's obviously on edge, but not frightened.

In the center of the site is a small rectangular container

two feet long, a small ossuary with Iremite petroglyphs of death etched into its stone surface. Taweret stays clear of the artifact, but the petroglyphs glow faintly before the container suddenly cracks. The anise smell of Sekhem fills the air, as does the charge of power. In the distance, dogs bay. Above the ossuary, the air shimmers and a creature materializes. It is a greater Amkhata with a lion's body, serpent's head, and wings. The voice that follows is not its own, but it comes from deep within the beast.

Sacmis may have escaped me, but you will not. Taweret, I would know what you know of the Dreams of Avarice. I would know everything!

The creature attacks.

STORYTELLER GOALS

The goal is simple. The Roller is growing desperate because the more Ammut knows about the *Dreams of Avarice*, the more she'll realize that the Roller is trying, in effect, to inscribe his own fate. Taweret is the Roller's last link to the *Dreams of Avarice*. If he cannot get the book itself, he will get Taweret. That said, his next objective (if Sacmis is contained at the Grand Conclave) would be to destroy Sacmis before anyone (or anything) can torture her secrets out of her.

The Roller enjoins Araq with a special function... to capture targets to bring back to him. It's been ordered to harry and capture Taweret and the book he carries, or baring that, capture Sacmis in the next scene. That said, if the characters took the book, and that's general knowledge, the Roller will try to capture one of them as the objective. Like everyone else, however, the Roller doesn't realize that Taweret's book is a fake. Not yet at least.

If Araq realizes it's outnumbered or about to get overwhelmed, it will take to the air and try to escape into the next scene.

CHARACTER GOALS

Regardless of any head-butting with Taweret, he is still Arisen and still in danger of being attacked by the strange greater Amkhata. The characters' goal here should be to save Taweret and drive the creature off.



Bleeding Ossuaries

The Roller has devised two supernatural IEDs called The Bleeding Ossuaries. These one to two feet long, rectangular containers are unusual in that normal Iremite petroglyphs are meant to be read in the direction that the inscribed animals face, but the animals face in different directions. Reading them according to where the animals face is confounding and maddening unless one treats the different animals as a code in a sea of gibberish. Then the Ossuaries make sense.

They speak of spirit traps that can lure lesser Amkhata into their nimbus and bring them forth from the shadows when the owner “breaks” their seal. Or they serve as a chain for greater Amkhata. Each is slightly different, because it carries specific instructions like hunt the target, steal the relic, capture the target, etc. The smaller, foot-long ones have fewer instructions, up to two commands total, while the longer, two-foot ones have up to four commands. The targets’ names are written in blood on the inside of the lid.

Think of them as bug traps containing a small amount of Sekhem inside. They keep lesser Amkhata or one greater one trapped and inert in amxaibit until the Roller releases the Sekhem remotely. The Amkhata bound to a container is suddenly free to feast on the Sekhem. It materializes and does the ossuaries’ engraved bidding. For Araq, this was to 1) Capture Taweret’s copy of the book, 2) Capture Taweret himself, 3) Capture Sacmis, 4) Destroy Sacmis... all in that order. For lesser Amkhata (more simple-minded creatures), the orders were: 1) To sow discord in the area; and 2) to destroy Sacmis if she’s there.

Once the Sekhem is released, the ossuaries are no better than vestiges at most. The Amkhata are no longer tied to them. The Roller can key the ossuaries to break open under one of three conditions: The first is at a given time; the second is at will; the third is if the name of the target written under the lid is within a dozen feet of the ossuary.



ACTIONS

If the characters are following Taweret to the construction site, they must roll [Wits + Stealth] versus Taweret’s [Wits + Composure]. If he spots them, he’ll use the soft approach of [Wits + Stealth] versus their [Wits + Composure] to lose them before relying on By Steps Unseen to evade them. If all else fails, he confronts them and tells them to fuck off, effectively, unless they’re allies (in which case he might reluctantly allow them to provide backup).

The fight itself will be straightforward. Once Araq engages Taweret, the Parisian mummy will do his best to escape. Araq will do likewise to capture him by attacking and weakening Taweret to “consume” him for transport.

If Taweret is alone and still has the book, he tosses it aside. The gamble works. Araq goes after the book, giving Taweret enough time to escape.

CONSEQUENCES

If the characters are not involved with this scene, Taweret escapes the greater Amkhata by sacrificing the forgery. Otherwise he might escape with their help, possibly using the book to distract the greater Amkhata should it start overwhelming the characters. Regardless, once Araq consumes the book, the attack on the Grand Conclave can begin. The main objective... capture or destroy Sacmis before her former associates can pry her secrets from her.



CHAMPION - THIRDS

SCENE - ACTIVITY

MENTAL -- PHYSICAL --- SOCIAL •

INTRODUCTION

The second Bleeding Ossuary was hidden in the basement of the hotel, during the Grand Conclave the day everyone was gathered and arguing over Taweret. The Arisen responsible is a mystery; and it may have even been a cultist serving him or her who left the cursed relic there. Nobody will know. Regardless, the second Bleeding Ossuary is broken open when the Roller realized Araq has the *Dreams of Avarice* or when Taweret escapes.

The scene is one of chaos as the relic breaks and lesser Amkhata of all sorts flood the area. Some escape to terrorize the neighborhood in order to bring more lesser Amkhata forth, while Arisen in the hotel contend with the others inside the building. If Sacmis' body is in the Pennscott, she's under cult guard inside Udjat's suite. Taweret knows that Sacmis is one of the targets, and if the characters were in the previous scene and don't realize that, Taweret can inform them.

The characters can be involved in this scene in one of three ways. They were involved in the previous scene as it unfolds into this one. Taweret runs into them after the attack and warns them of the danger. Or they are in the middle of attack on the Grand Conclave when they realize Udjat's suite is under attack (if Sacmis is in Udjat's possession).

DESCRIPTION

Pandemonium erupts across the hotel a brief second after Sekhem flavors the air with its peculiar taste. Lesser Amkhata appear throughout the Pennscott hotel, scurrying and attacking Arisen and cultists, latching on to their victims for Sekhem. On the floors above and below, voices shout out in ancient Iremite, the languages of this age forgotten. "They're attack the relics!" "They are escaping outside!" "There, out that window, kill it!" "Go after it, it's escaping."

Screams erupt from outside, panicked humans gorged on terror Sybaris from the Amkhata in their midst. "Don't use your holy magics," someone shouts, but everyone understands the risks and the balances. Lesser Amkhata have swarmed the Grand Conclave and using Utterances carries a grave risk. And yet, if the Arisen don't end the threat quickly, matters could be worse.

STORYTELLER GOALS

There is one, two, or three goals here depending on circumstances. The first is the obvious attack on the Grand Conclave, and impressing upon the characters without stating it outright that this seems to be a distraction. The lesser Amkhata don't seem as interested in attacking individual targets as they do engaging in hit-and-run assaults. Regardless, the Storyteller can present the characters with a dilemma if they realize who the targets of the attack are. Lesser Amkhata are escaping the building to pull Arisen away from the location. The Pennscott is emptying fast. The number of Amkhata also depends on the needs of the scene and the type of action that Storytellers are comfortable running.

The second goal is whether Sacmis' body is within the hotel. If it is, the lesser Amkhata will try to reach her. That, however, potentially clashes with Araq's objectives. It'll go after the *Dreams of Avarice* and Taweret first, but if it has the book already, its next objective is locating and kidnapping Sacmis. The lesser Amkhata will not attack Araq if he goes to kidnap Sacmis, but if Araq must destroy her, then the lesser Amkhata will help.

CHARACTER GOALS

The characters can have multiple goals, and frankly, it may not surprise Storytellers to see the characters split up to handle separate issues that matter to them. Some may consider helping other Arisen and saving the relics to be paramount. Others may feel that human lives are at risk, which demands they help. And a few may be out just to thwart the lesser Amkhata from succeeding, regardless of their ploy.

The thing is that there isn't a wrong move here. All are valid concerns and true to the characters. The relics are important to the Judges, and saving them is serving the function of the Arisen. Humans are important to an Arisen's memory and saving mortals is saving their connection to their past and their own humanity. And understanding what the Amkhata are after and stopping them can be a validation of both identity and role. What matters is acting.

ACTIONS

This is a running fight with the Storyteller able to run a number of small pitched battles in the streets outside, in the



corridors of the hotel, and even on the highest floor where Udjat maintains a suite and where the cultists are protecting Sacmis' body. Otherwise, the next high priority target would be the relics and vestiges that various Arisen brought to support their arguments. These the Arisen have stored in various locations throughout the hotel or in the Security Storage locker for auction, and the characters can be instrumental in saving them and earning a good deal of prestige.

Meanwhile, the pivotal Storyteller characters are scattered about. Menmaatre, Lisimba, and Bes-Mat are outside, trying to contain the attacks for humanitarian and social reasons. Udjat is inside the basement garage, protecting the more powerful relic of an ally and fending off attacks on the transport van that was supposed to leave with the relic. Tashakti is in one of the salons, fighting the Amkhata there.

If the Storyteller needs to drag the characters to a location, like facing Araq or saving Sacmis or protecting the Security Storage, he can do so by the volume of screams and gunfire from panicking cultists. If the characters don't follow that sign, Taweret can then appear and reveal his suspicion that Sacmis is the target (for example) or that the greater Amkhata was heading to the aforementioned location.

If the final fight isn't against Araq or to protect Sacmis, the Storyteller can round the battle off with lesser Amkhata at the Security Storage for a last stand battle around valuable relics. Regardless, the sound and fury of battle should be all around the characters constantly, with Amkhata appearing and vanishing as the scene calls for it.

CONSEQUENCES

One question may arise with "why attack the Grand Conclave?" especially in the case of Sacmis not being present. The answer is simple. The Roller's attack serves two purposes. He's trying to get *Dreams of Avarice* and to eliminate any loose ends with Sacmis. That said, this attack also allows him to deceive Ammut by claiming the assault was to damage the Arisen strength in Washington. Mummies like Bes-Mat, Menmaatre, and Tashakti will expend much of their resources in damage control and mending bridges that may never be repaired.

AFTERMATH

And just like that, the great experiment, the Grand Conclave ends suddenly. The Arisen are forced to flee the hotel following the Amkhata influx, Bes-Mat, Menmaatre, and Tashakti calling in every resource and favor at their disposal to keep this matter from mortal attention. But there was an outbreak of terror Sybaris in the neighborhood of Logan Circle in the capitol's very heart, and that attracts attention. This forces the local Arisen to keep a low, low profile as independent newshounds and supernatural denizens discount the "gas leak" story making the official rounds.

Meanwhile, matters have never been tenser between the factions. Udjat, Bes-Mat, and the traditionalists point to this as a sign that forces are trying to actively tear down the Arisen by attacking their basic principles. And if you aren't with them, you're obviously against them and the Judges. Now there's talk that the traditionalists will approach the cults of Arisen like Ankh-Nephris to awaken him and earn his backing in the matter.

The progressives are in peril. Menmaatre and Lisimba are struggling to gain support for what looks like a sinking ship. Taweret's claims put them in bad light thanks to good old guilt through association routine. Although Taweret is not a member of the main progressive movement, he has frightened away open support for the progressives.

Taweret, meanwhile, has gained a small cadre of supporters with enough clout to save him from being deemed a heretic. But barely. His allies are asking him to tone down the rhetoric until they gain more support, and he's reluctantly agreed even though others can encourage him to talk about *Dreams of Avarice*, which he keeps safely locked away and hidden.

Tashakti appears to be the only one not embroiled in backroom maneuvering, but that's far from true. So long as Udjat and Taweret preach about their positions, and create allies of Bes-Mat and Menmaatre (willing or unwilling), more Arisen will steer clear of the fight and out of sight. Many of them approach her for counsel because she is friends with Bes-Mat and Menmaatre as well as managing to chart a course between them, and she is gaining a powerbase whether other Arisen realize it or not.

Meanwhile, the hunt for other copies of *Dreams of Avarice* continues, along with the identity of the author and the mysterious amulet said to unlock more of its secrets. The Roller is out there, his main aspirations likely thwarted, and him running out of time as Ammut peels back more layers on the rumors of the strange book that might free Shuankhsen and Arisen alike from their personal prisons.

Regardless, the arc leaves many questions unanswered for later, such as:

- Who wrote *Dreams of Avarice*, and why?
- Who is the Roller?
- Who was the Roller's ally at the Grand Conclave?
- Who was Mosret speaking to in the story and what has he to do with the future of the Arisen?
- What is *Dreams of Avarice* really about? Is it the salvation of the Arisen, or their doom?
- What happened to Sacmis' copy of *Dreams of Avarice*?
- What does the Amulet of Two Fingers unlock in a matter already rife with heresy and intrigue....





SCENE: THE FALL

MENTAL ●●
PHYSICAL ●
SOCIAL ●●

HINDRANCES

One or more PCs can't arrive on scene, yet (-1)

Distractions along the way directly pertain to one or more PCs' Judges' portfolios (-3)

HELP

One or more PCs is native to the D.C. area (+1)

STs

Use the crisis to force tough, fast choices

PCs

Quickly decide what to prioritize and do

SCENE: EPICENTER

MENTAL ●●
PHYSICAL ●●
SOCIAL ●

HINDRANCES

Apartment tenants are armed and dangerous (-1)

The sounds they need to follow can't be heard clearly (-1)

HELP

Apartment tenants are actually helping one another (+1)

STs

Play up the fear and uncertainty

PCs

Discover and address the Amkhata threat



SCENE: OPENING CEREMONIES

MENTAL

PHYSICAL ●

SOCIAL

HINDRANCES

One or more PCs has spoken openly against the Conclave organizers (-1)

Not dressed to blend in (-1)

HELP

One or more PCs is native to the city (+1)

One or more PCs is a member of the Su-Menent guild (+1 [non-Su-Menent])

STs

Special and variable (see p.152)

PCs

Gather information without being drawn in

SCENE: THE FAVOR

MENTAL ●●

PHYSICAL ●

SOCIAL ●●●

HINDRANCES

One or more PCs has recently spoken openly against Udjat (-2)

HELP

One or more PCs is of the same guild as Udjat (+1)

STs

Tempt them into aiding Udjat

PCs

Negotiate the exchange with prudence





SCENE: MIDDLE OF NOWHERE

MENTAL ●●●
PHYSICAL ●●●
SOCIAL ●

HINDRANCES

The territory is completely unfamiliar to the entire meret (-1)

The meret's only ground transportation is old or slow (-1)

HELP

One or more PCs has the Danger Sense (or similar) Merit (+2)

STs

Negotiate the ambush and drop

PCs

Get the cargo safely back to Udjat

SCENE: MOVING THE PIECES

MENTAL ●●●
PHYSICAL ●●●
SOCIAL ●

HINDRANCES

One or more of the PCs has spoken openly about the relic (-2)

HELP

None of the PCs have made too big an enemy of any other attendee (+1)

STs

Spool out the aftermath of Udjat's reveal

PCs

Politic and socialize to their heart's content



SCENE: COUNTERSTROKE

MENTAL ●●

PHYSICAL ●

SOCIAL ●●

HINDRANCES

One or more PCs has angered or attacked an Arisen present (-3)

HELP

One or more of the PCs is of the Sessa-Hebsu guild (+2)

STs

Carry the tension just to the point of conflict

PCs

Prevent all-out Arisen war from breaking out

SCENE: THE APPEAL

MENTAL ●●●

PHYSICAL ●

SOCIAL ●●

HINDRANCES

Taweret knows one or more PCs' loyalties lie with his rival (-1)

One or more of the PCs is a member of the Su-Menent guild (-2)

HELP

One or more PCs make a strong show of support or offer of neutrality (+1)

STs

Establish Taweret's role and position

PCs

Get the meret on the same page on the issues





SCENE: AMBUSH

MENTAL ●●
PHYSICAL ●●●
SOCIAL ●

HINDRANCES

Bystanders and/or Judge-related activity in or near the area (-2)

HELP

The PCs previously dispatched both the Amkhata and the Twins (+1)

STs

Carry out the Roller's plan

PCs

Save Taweret

SCENE: ASSAULT

MENTAL ●●
PHYSICAL ●●●
SOCIAL ●

HINDRANCES

Sacmis's body is in the hotel (-1)

Emergency response vehicles surprise everyone by actually showing up in numbers (-2)

HELP

Emergency response units are working to clear the outer perimeter (+1)

STs

Lay the distraction; send in the Amkhata

PCs

Decide on meret priorities, then act fast



When you come to this guildhall,
you come to learn the value of value.

We walk in the flesh divine.

Born of gold, we stride among the basest metals of man,
learning the unfixed worth of each thing...
apprehending the Dedwen of the living world.

We do this not merely for our Judge,
nor even for the greater glory of the gods,
but to manifest the unutterable greatness that is
our BIRTHRIGHT, BURDEN, and ULTIMATE BORNE.

To this guildhall,
one comes not to learn the oldest rites of burial,
nor the latest sacred scrawl, but to learn
and then embody the great lesson of greatness
—to live inside the reality that binds all things,
great or small, of value: Greatness is worth.

— Merew-Tjaw, the Anointed One

This book includes:

- A look inside the secret traditions and structures of the five Arisen guilds, from the shadowy envoys of the Maa-Kep to the forbidden arts of the First Prophets among the priests of Irem
- A host of new mechanics options, including dozens of new Affinities and Utterances, as well as systems for adjudicating changes in guild status and a new sub-type of khat-based ritual magic
- “Crucible of Fate” — a complete Mummy story that Storytellers can run alone or as the first chapter in an ongoing series called The Avarice Chronicle

