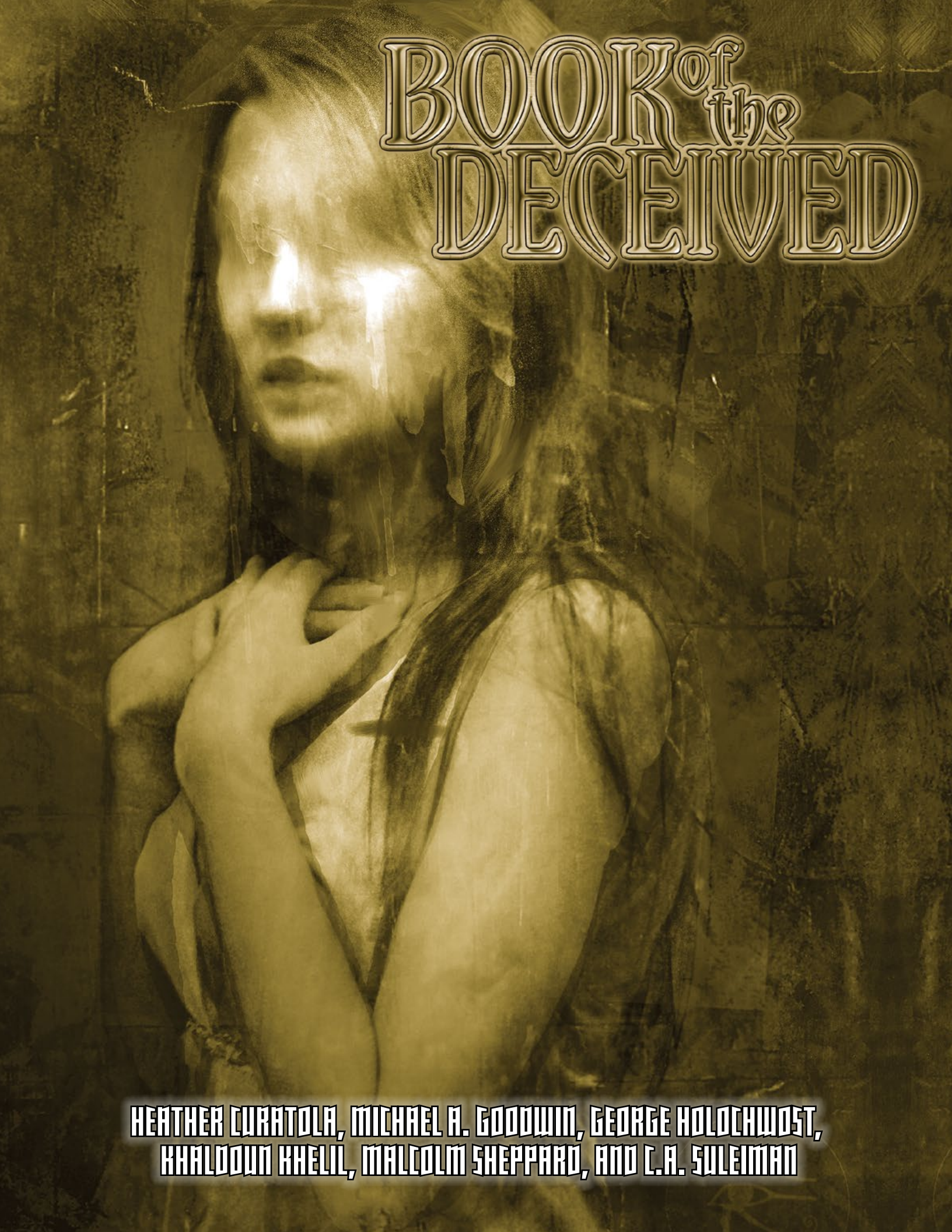


BOOK of the DECEIVED

World of Darkness

a sourcebook for

MURKIN
the
CURSE



BOOK of the DECEIVED

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Hunter's Dance

He was an empty soul: a golden field where his thoughts were gentle winds over sunburnt grasses. He remembered, but they were not his memories; he only observed the winds.

(Before that he ran, hating himself for the soreness in his legs because it was inauthentic: a ghost's memory of muscle. The city was made of shadows. He hid behind walls, they didn't shield him from the Hunter. It reached through as if they were made of rotten linen. But for now that thought was a small, chill breeze. He did not identify with it.)

He awoke with sticky red hands. They'd entered Khephermenes' tomb. He'd killed them all during the golden time. Now the Hunter was in him. That comforted him, but he felt ashamed. Nevertheless, the Hunter stirred, and he felt it flex his fingers one at a time.

Time to work, he thought. He stripped and inspected everything the invaders

brought with them. Their gore-flecked, torn clothes were useless, but they didn't look too different from what he had in storage. If he put on a suit he'd look like an eccentric rich man, which of course, he was. Of the five, three were Asians, but all of them dressed in time-distorted English-style clothes. One of them had a fine leather wallet filled with green American dollars, and red money with an unfamiliar Chinese face. They all had rings of finely machined steel keys. Two had fobs made of Bakelite or something similar, with rubber buttons. He put them aside to take with him.

He recognized four objects as telephones — tiny and wireless, but with a recognizable way to enter numbers. They could be used as hinged handsets. He only guessed the fifth was a telephone because it belonged to the man who didn't have one of the handsets. The man who owned it had recognizable criminal tattoos and a bigger gun than the others.

Khephermenes assumed it was the superior weapon and added it to his pile of new possessions.

The probable-telephone was a slab made of glass, metal and again, some kind of Bakelite. He pushed a button and the glass glowed. He saw a pattern of falling stars that shone brightly enough to illuminate the whole tomb.

Marvelous. It was like something the Painters used to make, back in the city. His thoughts turned to lions of ink and colored powder loping along the walls during the Adulation of Azar as if they were fresh and lain upon a table, and blown by strong wind to give the illusion of life.

The memory made the Hunter in him angry, like a hot stone in his chest. Pained, he closed his eyes. When he opened them again and looked at the glass, it told him it was 1:00 AM in Shanghai, in the early 21st Century.



"He's there."

"How do you know? Nobody called back." Merew-Tjaw toyed with a jade hairpin as she spoke. It was about a thousand years old and looked a little beat up. She resolved to give it to some promising acolyte of the Pillar.



"That's why. They must be dead or captured. Don't you have another team?" Her guest spoke over the soft sliding



sounds of her brushstrokes. The portrait would flawlessly duplicate Toulouse-Lautrec's style. If not for the age of the paint and canvas, Aziza would only have to duplicate the man's signature (which she could also do perfectly) to create an undetectable forgery, but that wasn't the point. Merew-Tjaw had been delighted to discover



that the little man had painted her picture before (Henri was otherwise an image and name so vague she might be remembering the Wikipedia article, not the man) and wanted another.

“Do we? Fei?” Merew-Tjaw gestured aimlessly behind her and the woman stepped up.

“No, Anointed One.” Fei coughed nervously. “Our usual PMCs —”

“I hate acronyms.” Merew-Tjaw pointed at Fei with the hairpin.

Cough. “*Private Military Companies*. They don’t have any plausible way to operate that, ah, *flexibly* in Shanghai. Yet, ah . . .” Fei looked at her feet.

“Say what you are thinking.”

“Well, it’s a low percentage option. The target probably ditched my brother’s phone.”

Aziza said, “The ‘target’ doesn’t know anything about smartphones, GPS or anything invented after around 1920. I know I’m not your Anointed One, but if some of your friends can discreetly follow the signal and keep us informed, that would help immensely.”

“I thought they were supposed to capture or liquidate him.”

The Painter smiled. “He would just kill them all. He moves beautifully.”

Fei looked to Merew-Tjaw, who confirmed the order with a nod. Fei strode out, tapping her earpiece and speaking Wu Chinese.

After Fei shut the door behind her, Merew-Tjaw sighed. “I’m going to have to kill her now. Do you understand how wasteful that is?” She put the hairpin down.

“You told me they were replaceable.” Aziza put her brush aside. “Perhaps you have a mistaken impression of how we should proceed. Did you think mortals could capture him and send him over in a box?”

“Something like that. I can get what they call ‘overwhelming force’ deployed once he gets out of China. I’ll have a Russian general make arrangements.”

“No. He’ll throw aside thoughts of subtlety to defend himself, and they’ll either kill him or he’ll kill them. In both cases, you’ll expose an unacceptable number of

people to the *exceptionalities* of our nature. Now you must hope that my sisters failed to eradicate his cult, and its survivors will help him understand who attacked. Then he’ll come to us.”

“You seem so certain.”

“His flaw — all of their flaws — is that they love motion to excess. He wants to be mobile, ever striding to his objective. For his kind, stillness is nonexistence. If we can keep him in view we’ll be able to tell when he comes close and get the bait to dance for him.”

“If that’s the case, why wait? I can bring that woman out of the Silent Room now.”

“He might come across one of my brothers and sisters, and he’ll hate us all equally. I wouldn’t want him to deviate from the path so we need to wait until he’s so close, he won’t move anywhere but to me.”

Aziza turned the easel around to show it to Merew-Tjaw.

“After all that,” she said, “I’ll tell you about the Ladder of Set. Now tell me: Do you want it with or without the hairpin?”



Khepermenes missed the old street performers. The soldier-artists and magicians occasionally forced a sublime movement through their shuffling muscles and



bones. They’d been replaced by television, everywhere, and it only reminded him of the Painter and his hate. Yet the glass and light of new Shanghai rose before





him, and he smiled. Despite his affiliations, he never held makers of things in the same contempt as the other Scattered Stars. (Did all Dancers feel that way, or was it only him? He hadn't seen anyone who shared his temakh in centuries.)

The International Settlement was gone; he didn't even see white police. A street vendor told him the man on the money was Mao Zedong, and the colonists were mostly gone. There were more whites in old Miaoqian Dajie (they used very small cameras or telephones like the glass slab to snap pictures) than anywhere else. He was amazed that they thought the old buildings were more interesting than glittering new Shanghai.

So little was left of the city he knew. The cult had buried his tomb deep. When he came out, tracing the intruders' paths, he followed meters of their digging, through broken concrete and sewer lines until he emerged among squat concrete apartments. One of them covered the footprint of his former hall. Workers had filled in the secret passages.

Despair. His Sekhem rotted and he had nothing to show for it. He couldn't even feel the presence of a Dance, compelling him to appear, learn the inspired movement and find purpose

in something other than revenge. His cult appeared to be lost. Every building had been replaced, and he didn't see its secret signs anywhere.

Until the suicides, he forgot that even as he wandered and hid, his Sekhem acted. A week into his awakening, five office workers made a suicide pact, overdosed on tranquilizers and set each other on fire. After that they killed themselves singly or in pairs. Police refused to release suicide notes, but said they were similar in tone and phrasing. They suspected a destructive religious movement, but those would be an effect of the spiritual sickness consuming Shanghai, not its cause. They would never identify Khephermentes as the vector. He spied on churches, temples and fraternal society halls, listening in on frenzied speeches and reading inspired texts. The people felt death — his death — in the air around them, a suffocating dust, and spontaneously gathered to comfort each other.

In one of those meetings, he found his cult's remnants. To stave off the mind-sickness of Shanghai,

his servants' grandchildren dusted off its doctrines and recruited new members. He watched them, and wished he'd brought copies of his scriptures from the tomb. He scarcely remembered what he'd taught them, and he couldn't go back, now that he'd been discovered.

A month after the intruders awakened him, Khephermentes studied what old men and women taught the young about his cult. He made certain revisions to its doctrines and selected a mortal protégé: Yuan Jin. He was a nationally-ranked gymnast and moved beautifully.

At midnight he appeared to Jin as Vajrapani, the Yaksha King. He performed miracles, taught the young man the new doctrines and transmitted the Ash and Thunder Qigong (and wrestled to keep his Sekhem intact — his temakh resented giving up this pattern). Yuan would die in 108 days as energetic imbalances destroyed his body, but he would be a peerless gymnast until then, even if mutations inspired by his new condition would prevent him from competing.

In return, Yuan Jin taught him about the modern world and got him past the captured smartphone's lock screen. Khephermentes read the texts and learned who violated his tomb.





"He's in New York, Anointed One. Our agent disembarked with him and passed a briefing on to the Central Park office, who will send an agent to watch him on his last flight." Merew-Tjaw didn't like Morcant, but now that Fei was gone he was next in line. She refused to let her personal feelings for this gray, monotone man interfere with his reward.

He droned on about the cut-out contacts and expertise of the agents shadowing Kheperhermes; she discreetly set her tablet to record it, and after five minutes, interrupted: "How does he look? How does he act?"

Morcant was prepared. The target appeared to be of African and Asian descent. He spoke English, French, Wu and Putonghua with an unknown accent (Merew-Tjaw denied permission to send

recordings to a linguist for analysis). He wore modern bespoke suits mixed with a few antique pieces. He only ate or drink whatever was put in front of him during flights across Asia and Europe, and never initiated any conversations. As Morcant spoke he handed out photos and encrypted flash drives with supporting documents.

Merew-Tjaw thanked and dismissed him. She locked the door to her office, walked down the private stairway to the second sub-basement, unlocked the door and entered.

Aziza was in the throne room, painting Fei in the style of Gustav Klimt. Merew-Tjaw had requested the style, and when she entered Aziza repeated her protest. "This is redundant. The woman is already made of gold. Painting her in gold leaf is simple representation."



(Merew-Tjaw had come to Fei as she slept. Morcant drugged her as his first duty after promotion, so she didn't stir as the Anointed One arranged her hands and feet and kissed her to release the alchemical ichor. Fei whispered something incomprehensible once as she turned to gold; the last syllable marked the shape of her mouth ever after.)

"It's a gift for her family," said Merew-Tjaw. "They served me well, and I hope they'll send sons and daughters to serve me again. I took two of them, and want to pay my debts."

"Ah, but will you repay me?"

"Yes. Kheperhermes is in New York. He'll be in Toronto in eight hours, so it's time to bring out the bait."



Mary Bergeron remembered the night she conceived of the Scheming Bride. She was exhausted then, lungs sore from cigarettes clashing with the demands of performance. It was the final night of the show. Lou had grabbed at her arm to make her stay for the afterparty. *This is your first run as principal dancer*, he'd said. *It's an insult for you to go. You're their mother,*

their general. She knew he thought of her as some kind of exceptional, specialized machine though, so she told him it was bullshit, slapped his hand away and walked out of the theatre, heading



nowhere in particular except away from crowds, drunks and anywhere anyone might recognize her.

Maybe she was a machine. She pinched her side and felt striated muscles. She ate nothing, but she could balance another dancer her size on one hand. (That was Desiree, who high-fived her after she said she'd stopped menstruating — it marked the next level of commitment, since she no





longer possessed the fat her body needed to do it.) If so, she wanted control of the machine, instead of compromising her emotions by smiling when expected, going to the right parties and laughing at the stupid, repetitive jokes dancers told each other about sex and starvation.

Somehow she wandered into park choked with enough trees to block out city light, revealing the stars. She didn't know her constellations so she made some up on the fly. She saw a snake and an angel with skeletal wings. One eye was Venus. She turned while looking up, saw the stars move and was struck with the notion that constellations shouldn't be static figures in space, but points of movement. She drew lines between them with her imagination.

The Scheming Bride was right in the sky. It rained on her. The stars were brilliant drops; her skin absorbed them all.

She collapsed into bed without changing her clothes. Twelve hours later she dragged herself to the studio. Lou already had plans for the next show, but she shut him up just by raising a hand. She showed them the Scheming Bride.

Later, she told police she didn't know why Desiree had killed Lou, but that wasn't true. Sex and starvation. Desiree was just as talented as her and had more time in the company. She probably should have been made principal dancer. Plus, she'd been fucking Lou, which was probably why he held her back. He liked to half-compartmentalize the personal and professional and thought he was being objective.

Desiree had stared at Mary the whole time she'd worked on Lou with the fork, opening his carotid artery with all the strength her profession granted her. After that she

curled up and shivered, occasionally mumbling Mary's name, or Lou's.

Mary had been in shock. A woman came to the police station to pick her up. She went with her, even though she'd never seen her before.

She didn't remember the attack that must have come. After a blurry period in an expensive car she woke up in a small room. It was made of reddish stone that gave the impression of age and weight. The bronze-skinned woman brought her good food and water every day, but when Mary tried to leave, her captor grabbed her by the waist and lightly laid her in the corner — slow and careful, but leaving no doubt that the same hands could rip skin and bone apart like cardboard.

The woman told her to practice her special dance. She did.



The concert hall was a huge circle of glass and steel, dark and closed to the public. He could feel air disturbed by the holy Dance against his face, through gaps between the doors. Yuan Ming had warned him that modern buildings had electrical alarms. He barely managed to restrain an urge to tear his way in, and instead slipped in through

a hallway in an adjacent, underground mall.

He slipped through shadows and the bright lines of footlights, into the breath of the Dance, toward the stage.



"Dance again," Khephermenes didn't recognize that voice.

"It won't hurt us." He knew *that* one. The traitor. His temakh ripped through him like a hydra following veins and nerves. It gripped his muscles and thrashed in his mind. *Hate. Undying hate like a stone that refuses to be ground to dust.*



She spoke again. "Come forth, Khephermenes," Aziza said. "You were perfectly silent, but your Sekhem screams to me."

Hate.

"Yuan," he whispered, and ran to the stage.

His student had flown as cargo. His blue, sore-marked skin made him unfit for public view, but he was as quiet and graceful as his master. Khephermenes reached the orchestra pit in time to see him drop from the scaffolds above the stage to restrain the dancing woman. Khephermenes had taught Yuan how to move with unnatural speed and power; the thin woman knew a powerful Dance too, but it didn't apply to this struggle. The result was a foregone conclusion, so he turned around to the two Deathless who sat in the front row: a beautiful woman he didn't recognize, and the Painter.

The stranger's skin turned to gold. The Painter stood and held out a hand.

"You can have her Dance," she said.

"Do you think that will save you? You've been awake longer than I have. When I've ripped your head from your body, your rotting lips can offer terms. Perhaps I'll touch the earth, and command it to swallow this place."

"Tell me, Khephermenes, do you hate me?"

"Yes." The rage was a wave of tension through his withered body; his temakh tested every dry cord of muscle for its capacity to issue violent force. To hunt.

"No. Do *you* hate me?"

Somehow, that evoked the golden peace of his first moments, but the whispers of thought he remembered then were louder. Khephermenes remembered ghost-flesh and fleeing the Hunter — hiding from his temakh.

"Oh, part of me would flay you for a canvas and paint it with your dead, gray blood," said the Painter. "I feel it. I remember your accusations. I remember the arguments, and arguing for that corrupt magic, though in those days, I either didn't know the consequences or didn't care. And indeed, I spent three lives punishing you. I hunted down your cult. I killed dancers and athletes and let their secrets seep away, so that you wouldn't claim them."

Khephermenes thought of a Dance to enrage Keb, to make him shake and split his skin. Yes. The Hunter imagined burying the Painter in glass and concrete. *So much pain.*

Behind him, Mary Bergeron screamed. So did Yuan, but it was a less human sound that almost muffled the sound of a woman's femur breaking.

"By the fourth life, I realized I didn't hate you. *It* hated you. I call it my passenger. I expect we all have names for it, the god that hates its rivals — other gods inside the Deathless, and even life."

"Mine is the Hunter." Khephermenes was surprised at the sound of his voice. The last syllable shook with pain; the Hunter churned in his gut, and he could feel it clawing at his Sekhem. *You must hate as I do. We are cursed together. You will never know the peace of A'aru for as long as I am exiled.* "We were both betrayed," he said, voice hoarse from agony.

The building shook, but so lightly he only felt it as a change in the way his feet carried his weight. Light shimmered through vibrating glass. Had he begun the Utterance? Could he stop it?

"I don't hate you," said Khephermenes. "But we were betrayed. So we must punish."

"Oh, Khephermenes," said the Painter, pointing to Merew-Tjaw, "Why do you think I brought the alchemist?"

He looked at the golden woman, and he and the Hunter agreed on how to proceed.



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In the silence of the beginning there were no priests or kings or magic.

Like thunder held in place, the soundless sound shook against the bars of its prison and did not resonate within the vast ocean of emptiness and space. And so it was that nothing became and nothing ended.

Like lightning set free from the hand of the destroyer, there came the smallest movement within the deeps of the ceaseless nothing. It soared through the abyss for aeon upon aeon and still made not the slightest tone. And so it was that nothing arose and nothing fell.

Like the arrow of the night hunter, this movement collided with the great stone and echoed through the womb of Nuit, and thus was the first sound made within creation. Alas, the Sky and Earth were not moved by this miracle, so it faded and was forgotten amid the countless other sounds forged by its fading. And so it was that the first sound went unheard and unloved.

So we became and were made in the City of Pillars and were given secrets and power and plenty. The works of the guilds towered above the sands and rivers, hammers sounded in the forges, and scribes' quills were busy with numberless words that stretched on across a thousand thousand scrolls and tablets. Yet the first sound still hid inside death beyond the void, as it was never meant that it should die within the

stale minds of scholars or the knotted madness of poets.

I was called. I am The First to Hear. I sought out the sound that I would make into my heart.

I wandered the wild places and looked within the trees and reeds. I hunted beasts and cut them open and stretched their guts so they could capture the sound of the place between life and death. I struck the stones and shook earthen jars filled with glass and sand so that I might hear the cry of the deserts and the mountains. But still I could not find that first, most hidden sound.


After an age I found myself in a desolate place, beyond words or love. It was here that I gathered all of the sounds I had hunted and laid them upon an altar of dust. Into the sounds I breathed all of my breath, all my life, and was for my affront scattered like ashes before a storm. I became that great void through which the first sound journeyed and came to the end of I and All, and at last, it was here that I found my heart.

All that ever was coiled around that first sound, like Apep choking the sun, and I became anew. The first sound became a thousand sounds within me, rising as a divine wave, and for them I became like thunder and fire and death. It is from this wave that divine art came to Irem.

I am the First Wave, the Dream-Eater,
I am Am-Henuset,
I am.







INTRODUCTION

DAMNABLE LIES

The sinister, the terrible never deceive: The state in which they leave us is always one of enlightenment. And only this condition of vicious insight allows us a full grasp of the world... just as a frigid melancholy grants us full possession of ourselves. We may hide from horror only in the heart of horror.

— Thomas Ligotti, “The Medusa”

If you’ll indulge the brief round of metaphor, consider the notion that the World of Darkness is a lot like a swimming pool, with its various settings running as parallel lanes up and down its length.

In most of its games, the point of entry — the shallow end — represents the core material and its protagonists. In the case of, say, vampires, that’s the members of the five covenants; in our case, it’s the world of the Arisen. Keeping things close to the surface makes it easier to keep everything in perspective, makes it harder to lose your footing and your way. For most games, the shallow end is where a given chronicle is going to do most of its living.

And yet, it wouldn’t be much of a world of darkness if it didn’t have its own adult swim, a depth of potential that can carry each of its games to a place where even its own darkness looks bright. These dark extrapolations of central theme provide essential context for the struggles of our protagonists. In the case of vampires, one finds the members of the posthumanist cult known as Belial’s Brood awaiting down the lane, where the water gets nice and deep. One finds vampires, yes, but not the regular denizens of the night-to-night world presented in the core material.

To seek out the ‘deep end’ of **Mummy: The Curse** is to seek out the mummies most Arisen know only as rumor, know only as the Lost Guild. But they aren’t “lost” at all — not for those willing to forsake the light and reliability of the world near the surface for the darkling deep.

When even the tips of your toes no longer touch the bottom, and that first wisp of anxiety curls itself around your throat just before your arms and legs kick into panic-driven autopilot... that’s when you’ll know you’ve found the Deceived.

There’s a lot to see in the depths.

You just have to take a pretty big plunge to see it.

THEME

A number of themes wind their way through stories featuring the Deceived, most of them permutations of the central themes of the entire game. Easily the most foundational of these is the underlying theme of identity, as every member of the guild once known as the Akhem-Urtu must struggle with an active and at times debilitating identity crisis, thanks to the freakish occult nature of their existence. These “Restless Stars” must share a body, an *eternity*, not merely with another soul, but with the simmering shard of the soul of their own creator and former master. This causes, as one might expect, a great deal of psychological and emotional dissonance.

Derivative of these central themes are the myriad explorations of madness of all varieties, but especially of obsession and paranoia — perhaps the two calling cards of the Lost Guild. The Deceived are driven to purpose by the disembodied will of a megalomaniacal demigod, and most every act or scheme upon which they embark is a chance to explore the conflict raging within.

MOOD

To be Deceived is to know no solitude.

The Arisen too must contend with the strange desires of a master (whatever Judge of Duat heard their decree), but can do so at some remove, interpreting the vagaries of Sekhem to divine the will of an entity with whom they can only remember interacting but once in a very long lifetime. By contrast, the Deceived must contend with those feelings and desires in the most brutally intimate way, eternally unable to escape the looming shadow of their creator-masters; even death provides no real privacy or relief. To be Deceived is to never be alone, and more, to forever be chaperoned by the maddened shards of a soul so alien to ours, it might as well be extraterrestrial.



A Game for Mature Minds


This is a difficult concept to discuss productively in a single sidebar, but it bears at least a good-faith attempt at same and the introduction is the right place to do it.

As a vessel for telling stories **Mummy** has a setting and tone that allow for a broad range of dynamics, including elements of pulp action and even comic relief. But at its core, it's an occult horror game — a World of Darkness meditation on power and mortality — and its protagonists aren't *heroes* by any human definition. Indeed, some have forgotten what it means to be human at all, let alone humane.

And if the Arisen aren't heroes, but dark singularities of power and purpose, bent to the will of entities that would drain the living world of its precious life-force, struggling ceaselessly to retain their sense of history, and of place, even of *self*... imagine for a moment how much worse the mummies of the Lost Guild must be.

As you will see within these pages, dear reader, the Deceived are incredibly dark, tonally speaking. Even in a setting known for darkness, it's especially true in their case. In fact, it could be fairly said that they are the darkest part of an already-dark horror setting — more disturbing even than the Shuankhsen, who despite their obvious horror, carry none of the tragedy that the mummies of the Lost Guild do.

Because of this reality, it's important that players and fans understand what they're getting into when they choose to run the 'deep end' of the **Mummy** game. Within the maddened, torturous world of the Deceived, reality itself is horror. Apart from the dim hope of Apotheosis, forever discouraged by the omnipresent voice of the master, there is no light. Not really. And since exploring those tragedies is part and parcel to using the Lost Guild in games, it's key that everyone be okay with entering that headspace before bringing in the Deceived. It's not pretty in there, so even seasoned players should likely be forewarned.



And just as the Arisen radiate a form of sympathetic energy into the living world, in effect casting the defining stuff of their souls into the winds of ether, so too do the Deceived announce themselves; and as one might expect, it tends to make the disquiet of the Arisen look tame by comparison. All that feverish inspiration, all that creeping

paranoia, all that bubbling antipathy... it should dominate the feel of games (or even just scenes) featuring the Deceived, as that is effectively the stuff of who they are.

INSIDE THE LIE

With **Book of the Deceived** the idea is to provide an all-in-one resource on the Lost Guild, so almost all the content of this supplement is player-friendly — even material that's expressly Storyteller-focused — with the only exception being the sample SAS story that is the last chapter. The grave goods on the Lost Guild are divided up and presented as follows:

Chapter One: Why the Stars Fall is a testimonial of the Deceived — a scroll penned in madness and birthed in the shadows of pre-history, when the glory of Irem was just a gleam of starlight. Come see what truths and damnable lies the mummies of the Lost Guild tell about themselves.

Chapter Two: The Mirror Cracked breaks down all the nuts and bolts of the Deceived as characters in the Storytelling game that is **Mummy**. Wondering how they stack up to the Arisen? This chapter lays it all out in detail, including step-by-step character creation, for those brave souls interested in making player characters out of the most tragic and rare among the Deathless.

Chapter Three: Under Wandering Stars explores the social divisions and movements taking place within the Lost Guild as it stands today, come the fourth Sothic Turn. The most prominent of these movements — the Rotting Temple, the Scions of the Emerald Ankh, the Shattered Crook, and the Tomb Legion — are discussed in depth, along with several so-called 'minor movements.'

Chapter Four: The Name of Power is a comprehensive look at the dark mysticism and occult traditions of the Restless Stars, who are the sole inheritors of the True Name magic of lost Irem. Beyond Affinities and Utterances, this chapter also discusses *seba* — the relics of the Deceived.

Chapter Five: A Panoply of One is a storytelling toolkit for running the Akhem-Urtu, from guidelines on running their unique death cycles to analysis of the challenges of identity and form that are part and parcel of their existence, to a complete, plug-and-play meret of Restless Stars.

Chapter Six: The Trail of Heresy — The Avarice Chronicle (Part II) offers a complete SAS story that can be run stand-alone or as sequel to Part I of *The Avarice Chronicle* (found in **Guildhalls of the Deathless**). In this story, the meret comes face to face with the Roller, a deadly Shuankhsen who is driven to hunt down and consume the Arisen known as the Heretic.



The powers of gods are made manifest as celestial lights blaze across the world's matter. Gods create color between illuminating light and life-choking darkness. They make spiders pale to warn us of their venom, and fire bright to reveal its burning might.

I beheld the colors of ghosts, the shapes of demons seizing human hosts, and the invisible lands between and beyond life. I learned the secret names of things which exceed the capacities of human eyes, but they were not just vulgar noises or simple marks in clay. They instructed me, that I might be the vessel which records things as they really are. I made images of the unseen from the simplest elements of the earth: dust and stone, crushed plants; hands and brushes and milk and blood. Only I knew how to raise these up into gods. When I painted them upon caves, and later upon the great pillars of Irem, mortals trembled and laid sacrifices before them.

My paintings gave them the eyes of Fate, and our power to know what the gods concealed from animal view. My servants needed a fragment of divine sight to set them apart from the lidded mass of the mortal race. This splinter tormented them with half-seen visions. I gave them dyes

and techniques to give the ever-fading sights brilliance. If not for me and mine, how would the people of Irem have known the great Judges, the face of Azar, or the truth of the gods? The others boast of poetry, theology, and sacred dance. They say the powers of sharp metal, scriptures, and corpses freed of rot subdued our people, but these are either words or manifestations of raw force. Words can deceive, and mortals know it. Force is how animals conquer one another, and could never be used to build the Empire.

No, the people needed to see that our words were true. They needed a vision of a vast universe, and the knowledge that their masters beheld it, and that we could intercede with the ineffable powers on their behalf. Save for imperishable remnants of our magic, all the visible signs of our Empire have vanished. Yet mortal vision remains as limited as ever, confined to that which turns to dust, to animal things.

I, Tutkepertanu, reveal what was hidden. They will offer sacrifice to honor the gods they see and the demands they fear, for my art never lies.

I am the Image of Primordial Woe, the Truth-Maker,
I am Tutkepertanu,
I am.







CHAPTER VIII

WHY THE STARS FALL

*Be not unaware of me, O God;
If you know me, I will know you.
— The Pyramid Texts (Utterance 262)*

Anointed One,

This is what was written on the seven tablets unearthed from the caverns at ████████. The tablets were granite, but the marks on them looked pressed in, not carved. There were no chisel marks. It was written in a mix of languages (please see the list I sent separately, with the archeological notes). This included the holy language which you forbade us from learning but which, I am ashamed to say, I have studied to better serve you while you sleep.

Given the text's complexity, I was forced to interpret it rather freely in places. Certain markings differentiated the words of gods from those of other speakers, and I have done my best to replicate them.

When the tablets arrive at ████████ you may compare the translation with your own, superior knowledge. I will personally deliver them, and will not flinch from punishment for my transgressions.

In Love and Worship,

H.C.

At the feet of Azar I learned that the Law was eternal. It made Keb, the Earth, coil on itself, a snake of fire cooling into mountains and valleys — every stone and clump of earth and speck of sand. It made Nuit, the sky, shine ancient stars upon us, and commanded the planets to tread across her breast in foreordained patterns.

I learned that the Law was a word, before it was fire, earth, stars and flesh, a primal syllable. To attempt to comprehend it was like trying to see a mosquito in front of the sun. But the Law has its corona and shadows in the great flickering shape of the Judges. They were 42 configurations of the unknowable power, barely perceptible themselves. They were horrors at the threshold of knowing: beauty so profound that to finite beings, they could only arouse fear.

And it is right to worship what one fears. The unknown. Rod-bearing fathers. The mothers we owe an irredeemable blood-price.

I learned that I was born to sing their pronouncements, and we were born to describe them with movement, codes, stone carved from the body of Keb — everything. Azar told me that. I remember it in the words I write, but not in the vision. I can no longer dream of the time we Shan'iatu (though were not called such yet), still gasping after our birth-screams, attended the god's first lesson.

Then the second: The Judges were mother and father to us, though we were as low to them as the crawling scorpions of the desert. But we were not beasts or stone or running water, made wholly ignorant by our place, and given by the Law to die, erode and evaporate to dust. Instead, we were beings of the terrible celestial flesh: temakh, magic given voice and shape. We would not be changed except by our own will.

Perhaps I asked, "What makes the vines grow and wither? How does the ibex change from a swift runner to torn flesh,



broken bone and corruption?" Perhaps Azar taught the third lesson then. I can imagine him saying, in his voice-of-thought, that their life force emerged from the darkness, held a shape for a time, and sank into the darkness once more, to be remade. This was the thing called death.

It sinks below the ground and arises with new skin, like a snake. This is Sekhem. He might have said this, but I only remember the fact of learning. I don't think I was the one who asked Azar where Sekhem descended to remake itself, but I remember that he was silent. It was not a place for the imperishable children of the temakh.

THE ENEMY

Azar said that an enemy stalked the world. We were astonished. How could any being deviate from the Law? The gods bound the planets, and said to stars, "burn upon every place," and commanded the moon to open its eye. All but one of us trembled in the face of that revelation. The Philosopher, first pupil of Azar, looked steadily forward, comprehending. (At least I remember that face, though none of the words, nor the earth, not the sky of that time.) And who else could it be? He had mastered the unspoken Word, the shape of names before writing and movement.

Perhaps he said, "It can be no other way. The Judges oversee the world, but are not of the world. They commanded change, but they do not change. Therefore, to make the world out of Law, they must recruit that which is not Law. That which is unmoved must set commands beyond itself to bring movement. Thus, we have wind, fires and ash. Thus do the children of Sekhem die."

Until now, none of us had answered such questions before Azar himself. But the god did not contradict his pupil, nor punish him. I think there was a time of silence before Azar told us the enemy was that secret power: Ammut the Devourer, maker of change, who dwelled beyond the Law and coveted the world Law made even as she drove forth its cycles.

He might have said, *I contain the djed, the spine joining the starry Judges to this world. You are Shan'iatu, their right hands. You will spread across earth and water to correct the Devourer, and keep her in Place Below All.* After that, I remember how 42 voices cried forth from the mouth of Azar to further instruct us.

OUR POWERS AND PRINCIPALITIES

The Philosopher was Azar's signature adept. He learned the great Nomenclature: the sound of the Judges' laws, the things they embodied, and how they commanded the world to change. Then the Singer learned to speak the great names in their proper patterns. The Dancer

translated them into motion and the Keeper saw the motion immanent in all creatures. The Painter made them still again, in colors and shapes. The Poet captured names-as-vision in symbols and the Musician made instruments to utter their commands. We identified the thoughts of the Judges, and where they slept in matter, and we studied the silences between their words: gaps left for Ammut to eat the past and generate change. We understood the will of our celestial Judges first, so Azar called us his Restless Stars, knowers of Names.

What did the others learn? Derivatives. We taught them the names, and they inscribed them on matter. They could never comprehend the Nomenclature as we did. They gloried in Utterances, and ignored the consuming silence between them. Nevertheless, our brothers and sisters learned their Arts under our guidance, concentrating their obsessions according to Azar's command. We did not ask why the Alchemist was to master the substances of the earth, or why the Sculptor should build effigies.

As we learned the Arts, we explored Keb's body. We walked across the waves to every land above the sea. We took the forms of birds and clutched mountaintops in our talons. We witnessed the world, and understood the vastness of our responsibility — but that it was a fragment of what was. The rest was arrayed across the belly of Nuit, in the stars.

On our journeys we saw animals shaped like us: men and women.

THE PEOPLE WHO WEEP AND THE WAY OF DEATH


They spoke, but did not know the Nomenclature. They made tools, but these were not words-in-matter, but rude constructions. Like animals, they bled when struck. They possessed Sekhem, not the immortal temakh. Like other predators they stuck down animals for food. They used fists and crude stones to fight each other, over who would dominate their packs.

We asked Azar what they were. He called them Remet, the "people who weep," and said that they did not imitate us, but we, them. We were made to resemble the Remet even before the Law raised them up from other animals.

The god said it was our duty to teach them our Arts, and guard them from corruption. They could speak, and would one day learn the true names. They could think, and know the Judges in their own way, as we did — but they could be tempted by the Devourer as well, through the pain and mortality given to them by Sekhem. With this lesson, Azar gave each of us a star to follow, until we reached the territories he had commanded us to watch. He said we would know when the weeping folk were ready to listen to our teachings.

I remember a jungle with great trees and fire-eyed cats. Filtered through the leaves, the sun shone as green as





Azar's flesh. I took the shape of a gorilla and followed the Remet clans in my protectorate. They were filthy, always starving and afraid. They trembled together at night, and I knew the god had named them well. I was curious when they died, for I had never seen a speaking creature die before. Did speech vanish with death? If so, did the memory of it vanish from the slow thoughts of the Remet?

I'd seen other animals run and hide to die in a quiet place. The weeping ones did something similar, but I was curious when they covered the bodies of their fallen with heavy stones. When the tribe moved on, I lifted the stones up, studied the corpses and placed them down again. They were dead meat and bone, like any animal body.

On my seventy-seventh inspection, the corpse sat up. The dead man spat out the gravel his sister had packed into his mouth. He wailed more loudly than Remet truly can. I looked into the Neter-Khertet and I saw the shape of the man, holding his animal corpse by the head, like a puppet. He was making it scream. I had visited the Place Between before, following the little spirits of beasts, but I had never seen a human there. As I walked forth, he saw me and fled. Through the haze of the Place Between I saw his corpse collapse. I gave chase through the shadows — I could not stop him with magic, for I knew not his nature, nor the Utterance to command him.

I don't know how long I ran, but the shadows deepened, and the land changed to black sand. The wind wailed, and whipped it into a dark wall. The dead man disappeared into it, and I took a step to follow, but could not take a second.

A great god stepped from the storm, and I knew the cause of my paralysis. Indeed, I knew he was a god immediately, though I had never seen any other than Azar's bright voice. His face was like that of a jackal, wolf, or dhole, though truly, a creature that had never lived on the earth. His eyes were sunset red. *Anpu*. The name entered my thoughts as if I had always known it.

"Great god," I said. "What manner of creature passed beyond Neter-Khertet?"

A man's soul.

"Great god, what is a soul?"

The binding of five powers that guides a man through the world of life, into the presence of the Judges and then, life beyond life.

"Great god, what is life beyond life?"

This is not for the Children of temakh to know, for they do not partake of life. My dominion is for the Children of Sekhem.

This filled me with shame, then anger. Did I not live and breathe? Had Azar not made us Shan'iatu, stewards of Creation? Were we not the children of the Judges? They gave audience to animals who shared our shape, and left us with our duties.

I whispered to my temakh and took the shape of a great beast. I had never known rage before, but I felt its heat then, and spread a hand full of talons to strike the god. He just stared with his dead-star eyes and whispered, and made me into ash. The storm carried me away, to rain into the heart of my jungle.

The motes of my body grasped each other again and made me whole. I was still angry.

THE GREAT BEASTS

I was not alone in my rage. Others had followed Remet beyond life, met Anpu, and heard the same answers. We gathered and cried for Azar, and he did not come. Yet seven brothers and sisters knew more than the rest of us. Azar had commanded them to study the mysteries of the animal Shell, and how its Sekhem flowed from life to places beyond. What I had studied 77 times, they had studied for thousands more. The Shan'iatu of the Shell had spoken to Anpu in reverential whispers. They offered sacrifices that pleased him.

He told them that he was the god of lands beyond life, where Sekhem leaves flesh to re-enter the world as new life. And the Judges had given Remet five powers, to guide them to a place called Duat, to appear before the 42 for a final destiny in accord with their obedience to the Law. The worthy would dwell in A'aru, in the eternal presence of the Judges.

According to Anpu, it was our duty to make them worthy. This was our true purpose: to prepare the way for animals to receive the blessings of the highest gods. Many wept at this revelation or cursed Azar as a deceiver. We were children of the Judges, but unfit for their houses. We were cursed to serve the weeping ones until their last mortal child shed her flesh for Anpu's realm, and the heavens.

But our summit ended before we could form a common opinion about these revelations. We had been warned that the Devourer would exceed her duties as a bringer of change. In our absence from the world she struck raising monsters from the dead: the first great Amkhata. My far-seeing eyes saw a million bones link together; the thing shambled through my realm, slaying with a touch.

We rushed to our homes. I took the form of a thundercloud and commanded the winds to take me to the beast. I breathed lightning from the sky, and pierced it with the shard of a mountain, but it struck me in turn and for the first time, I knew what it was to be wounded, like an animal. My temakh bled. The black drops made the earth smoke where they fell. I prevailed nonetheless, and stood among the remains of the beast. My jungle was now a forest of charred bone.

All my Remet were dead except for one girl, struck speechless by the beast, and perhaps by me, for I had



taken the forms of monsters to do battle. I felt sorrow for her, but not for the dead.

I told her, “They will live again forever,” and envied them.

I made her a house of bone, and taught her to speak again — but this time, in the true language of Nomenclature, so that she could whisper to the world as I did, and perhaps share my burdens. When I was finished, she was a grown woman, and I grew weary, though I had never been weary before. I slept for the first time to escape the pain of my wounds. The woman called herself Aset, and told me I would dream.

AMMUT’S FIRST LESSON

In slumber, I was afraid. I had seen animals lay down their heads. It was shaking, breathing death. I shared that, now. My body was vulnerable. My temakh crawled forth and in sleep and slithered into Neter-Khertet because thanks to its wounds, it could not soar. My spirit had a black cut that weighed me down. Whispers emanated from it. They had meaning, but no language, and I knew where to wander in the gray places between places, to

avoid Anpu’s scrutiny. I knew there were wounds in the world, like the one whispering from my sorcerers’ heart.

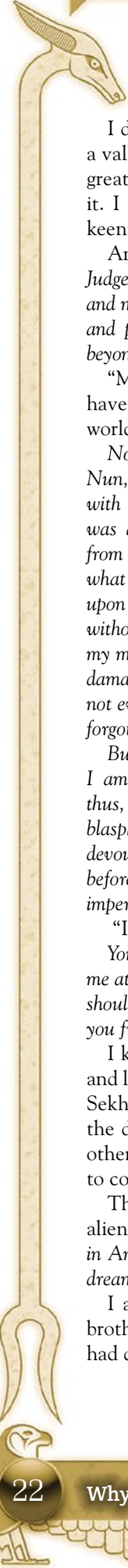

I came to such a place in my dream: a chasm into nothingness, surrounded by corpses. I knew then that this was a place made by Ammut, and that these were signs of her hunger. It was our duty to seal these places where she exceeded her mandate, but I couldn’t move, or cry across the sands for my brothers and sisters. The injury to my spirit was of a nature with this darkness before me; I could not betray it.

From my wound and the great pit, I heard a pained cry: the sound of hyenas fighting over the corpse, and the screams of starving Remet children when hunters failed and plants withered in the summer. Pure hunger. Although I was a spirit, I could still speak the Nomenclature, for it does not rely on mere disturbance of the air. I sang beautiful words to conceal this cursed place, and a tribe of Remet came, seeing the fruits of the earth, not the true, blasted sand.

I stole the body of a cobra and gave the mortals its sweet venom.

The chasm spoke: *Your gift has given me true speech. Come into the darkness, and I will teach you secrets concealed by the gods.*





I descended into twisting ways until they opened into a valley of ash lit by unfamiliar stars. She, Ammut, was a great beast on the other side of the river that cut through it. I approached the bank, but there was a chill and a keening, and I could not cross.

Ammut said, *You are a child of the temakh: a slave of the Judges. You can never pass beyond, into their starry kingdoms, and mortals may, if they are worthy. As slaves, you must teach and purify the Judges' mortal children, so they may ascend beyond you.*

"Mighty Azar warned us of you, Devourer," I said. "You have your appointed task as well, to bring change to the world, unmaking forms so they can be remade anew."

No. Before the imperishable gods, I dwelled in blackest Nun, the chaos-ocean. They came forth, subjugated its power with the Law and called that tamed energy Sekhem. But it was always my domain, and they could not wrest it fully from my grasp. They made you to keep me from reclaiming what was mine. They gave you power to defeat my designs upon Creation, and wisdom to teach the Remet the Law, for without it, they would be unworthy of the stars, and cast into my maw. And like any tool, you will be cast aside in the end, damaged, into a broken world at the end of time. They will not even look upon you from starry A'aru. You will be utterly forgotten.

But the gods could not defeat me because I am necessary. I am Creation without Law. I free what I destroy. And thus, deepest Duat is my realm, where I reclaim all that is blasphemous in the sight of the Judges, and where, sins devoured, the Remet are sent to A'aru. All Sekhem passes before me, to be reshaped into all life in turn. I consume its imperfections.

"If you are an enemy of the Law, why do you obey?"

You know the power of Anpu. He is my warden, and keeps me at bay with demons, forcing me to release the Sekhem that should be mine. And as he denies me, he denies you, barring you from Duat, and the power in its deepest places.

I knew the truth then. As Sekhem passed to the stars and living world, the Judges mastered it with the Law. But Sekhem also passed to sunless Duat, unmastered save by the discipline of Anpu. Without the jackal-headed one, others might master Sekhem, and make a Law of Death to conquer the Law of Life.

The Devourer laughed hideously, teeth shining in alien starlight. *I know your thoughts. You will raise another in Anpu's place. Go forth! You are not the only one to have dreamed thus.*

I awoke in Aset's embrace, and heard certain of my brothers call out. They were all wounded as I was. They had dreamed the same dream.

THE SACRIFICE

We came to Azar at dawn, where the greatest river met the sea. We did not prostrate ourselves before him as we usually did, and looked upon him directly. His jade skin shone in the sun and his eyes flashed gold, and we hesitated. His beauty shook our will and for a moment we were silent, until he gestured with his staff and said, *There is a whisper in your heart that is not of the Law.*

The Philosopher said, "Master, in our love, we would make you the master of Duat."

The Poet said, "Master beyond the Law. King of the Judges of Death." None had ever spoken the word "king" before, yet she drew it from the Nomenclature and we understood it named a master of masters, who commanded the land and all within it.

Azar said, *Fathers and mothers to you all, the Judges give the Law to life. Who are these Judges of Death?*

To answer, I took the form of a beast — the same beast I became when I met Anpu — and for a moment I feared that great Azar would dismiss me as the dead-eyed god had. But the wound in my temakh whispered and comforted me. My brothers made a tool from all their knowledge. They used stone and metal summoned from fallen stars.

It was shaped like a claw. So I, the beast, used it to cut Azar into 43 pieces: one for each Judge, and the phallus for the great river, so that our god would remain bound to the living world.

But we knew that this alone would not send Azar to Duat. The god was like us, of immortal substance, and had not been granted the passage given to jackal-headed Anpu. So it fell to Aset, my beloved, wisest of the mortal Remet. She who had told me I would dream was given the incorruptible body of Azar to eat, and over 42 nights united the flesh of Azar inside her.

On the 43rd night we addressed the god within her. We praised Azar, who we freed from the Judges, who we made king of Death and master of all the Sekhem of uncreated things. And we told him to await our descent to Duat, where we would serve him as the Judges of Death, and the Judges of Life — and their animal-souled favorites would have no power over us.

A bright star rose as I slit Aset's throat, and we named it Sopdet, "sharpness," the star of my beloved. I saw her soul blaze through Neter-Khertet and down, through the black storm to Duat, Osiris hidden within like an insect in amber.

We waited, unsure of what would follow. Looking through the ever-shining stars, the Judges must have known that their steward had gone to Duat. We awaited Azar's call, but it did not come.

We grew afraid and fled to the desert, to hide in the dead sands.



THE FOUNDING OF IREM

Silence. Centuries of desert wind. Azar did not call from his new throne to make us Judges of Death. I went into Neter-Khertet to dare the gate of the black sandstorm again. But when I approached the winds and cutting, flying stones I saw Anpu's eyes, read like blown-upon coals. He emerged from the storm as strong as ever, an obsidian flail in his left hand.

I am dethroned, he said. Not destroyed. Did you think you could disobey your Judges so easily? What the stars see, they see. They listen from every drop of water and blood. Yet even as they rule over eternal Law, they do not disobey. You sent green-skinned Azar, lord of that which grows and creeps over the sunlit world, to my black caves and still rivers. In your great Utterances of love you gave him a companion, a dynasty, a greater claim to my world. Once I guided the Children of Sekhem to where they would live again. Now I have been given this Place Between, to keep monsters and lost spirits from confusing life for death.

"Why does he not call us? We were meant to be his companions. He is our king."

Anpu laughed, and it was the sound of the last flesh torn from bone. *King! Even the Judges, the perfect 42 breaths of the universe, obey the Law. You made Azar a king with oaths of devotion, but you do not obey. He commanded you to teach the sorrowful Remet the Law but you cower in the desert, sending scorpions to drive their men and women from your hermitage. Does a master not dismiss errant pupils? Does this king not abjure his disloyal servants?*

I felt hate for Anpu pour from my old wound, but I said nothing, and cast off the cloak of Neter-Khertet. I crossed the desert as a swarm of locusts, my wings and legs rasping a call for the Shan'iatu to gather.

I collected my swarm into the shape of a man and the rest did likewise. It was good to resume our natural forms, which so many had avoided since the rise of the Remet, who dishonored our shapes with animal frailty and fear. We had not been one people since the ascension of Sopdet. In our hiding places, we had practiced the crafts that Azar had commanded us to. The Shan'iatu of Amulets wrote secrets on stone. The workers of the Shell came on litters borne by the dead.

These lesser Shan'iatu argued about the merits of their crafts. We stood apart from this foolishness. We had studied the Nomenclature: Word and Will. We contemplated Anpu's challenge, and realized what we must do.

We made Azar king, so we were his subjects. We were bound to his instructions, and before we had given him the throne of Duat, he'd commanded us to teach Remet the way of the Judges. He awaited our obedience, so we

would obey. We would teach the secrets we had learned, but we would teach the law of the Judges of Death we would become, not the starry wisdom of our mothers and fathers. And we would teach loyalty to Azar above all. We would teach the way of bowing before a king, of sacred precincts and temples more glorious than the mountains.

We walked out of the desert, gathering the scorpions we had once charged with guarding us through the thousand-year hermitage.

There was a tribe of Remet at the world's great river, where the waters still sighed in the memory of Azar, when we had made him king before them. I subdued them in the form I had used to glorify our god: the great, square-eared beast. And 41 brothers similarly bound the tribes wearing glorious and terrible aspects. But when we drove them before us to the place of the old sacrifice, we were men again.

We cried out one great Utterance and raised the first pillar. The Remet cried in awe.

"Are you our gods?" They asked it a thousand times.

Each of us answered as we wished, but none of us said we were the "gods" they prayed to, who were ghosts or invisible creatures who strayed from Anpu's herd.

I said, "I am a son of the stars, a Shan'iatu, at the right hand of the Judges of Duat. I am a man born of fire, as you were born of ever-changing earth. Do not fear the dead when they walk, or the howls of spirits. The ancestors are not your gods. The mad beasts of Neter-Khertet are your inferiors. Your god is imperishable Azar, king, and you stand in the shadow of his spine. He will raise you above everything that grows and creeps upon Keb, and you will live again forever.

"But first, in this life, you must serve. You must conquer. Your god-king's domain is the whole world."


Thus we laid the first pillar of Irem, named for the secret source of the great river, to obey Azar, but damn the Law.

THE EMPIRE

We made an empire. There was no word for it, so we created one from the languages of Irem: "tribe of tribes." We raised another pillar to Azar for every conquered tribe, and gave sacrifice. We told the Remet they would live after death, but they feared it still. When we stained a new pillar with the blood of enemy warriors, their kin would either strike again, and join the slain in the shadow of the pillars, or fall silent, as pacified subjects. But we didn't sacrifice them to assert our rule, but report it. We killed so that the dead would visit Azar, and tell him what we accomplished.

Yet terror was a useful thing. We knew the Judges were harsh. They demanded a pure spirit from those who would





join them in A'aru. Even though we no longer wished to honor our mothers and fathers with their purified souls, we knew Azar had demanded that we prepare the way. So we crafted an array of punishments for disobedience and disunity. We were cruel, because we knew cruelty was the price of beauty. That is what the Judges taught us. Did they not make us beautiful, in our magic and immortal forms? Were they not cruel, by denying us A'aru?

So we remade the Remet in our image. We made them suffer, but we taught them our divine arts, assembling guilds of mortals, each under the direction of seven Shan'iatu overlords.

Our brothers taught lesser magic, collecting Sekhem from living Creation. They summoned metal from shattered stone and inscribed the shape of beasts on tablets. Some of the Remet became great shapers of Sekhem, distilling it in their crafts. At times, we feared for our supremacy, for these masterworks approached the skill of the Shan'iatu. In the presence of these mortal sorcerers, I almost came to understand why the Judges loved them.

We made them honored sacrifices to Azar, and withheld certain secrets, so that other students could not challenge Shan'iatu supremacy.

The ways of making were shadows of our Nomenclature. Our arts precede theirs just as the desire to make a thing, and the image in the mind, precedes the making itself. We taught observation, thought and imagination: the power to tear hidden dreams out of human hearts. We produced fewer protégés. I must admit that baser magic also served the needs of the Empire. The other guilds produced conquering swords, amulets that captured knowledge, and scrolls to record our triumphs, and assess our holdings.

So our brothers no longer looked to us for guidance — they forgot that the Nomenclature existed before all tools. They ruled the sacred state through the power of their guilds. They pretended to honor us by giving us the house of the Pharaoh: a mortal who took the place of Azar in high ceremonies. But as we kneeled before these false Azars, frail men with gold masks, I knew the others had traded piety for their slaves and palaces. Many times, I cut down the aged Pharaoh according to the rituals we devised, and wondered why the true Azar stayed silent.

OUR DECADENCE

Still, I cannot hold us too far above the other Shan'iatu. We learned to love our rites just as much as they loved their craftsmen, soldiers, and slaves. In time, we demanded servants of our own: a household staff to maintain Pharaoh's household, but truly to give us the

pleasure of mastery. The Remet filled their small lives with sensation, and enjoyed drugs, fornication and mastery over others with matchless intensity. We began to ape their ways, and earned a fraction of their joy. Once, I had lain beside my beloved Aset to seek total knowledge of her, as she had of me, and there was a subtle sorcery in our embrace. Now I took playthings, and my pleasure came not from the secrets within them, but in my power over them. I counted slaves and gold, and devised ever more elaborate rituals to awe our subjects. We all did, to fill moments that would otherwise wound us with the silence of Azar's absence.

I don't know when I lost the power to call forth my primordial gifts. I had mortal obsessions now, and scarcely thought of the days when I could cross the ocean as a black cloud. Perhaps the wound from Ammut's great incursion had festered, and part of my temakh had rotted away. We have all been wounded in one way or another, but did not think of it.

Then, the revolt. Remet prodigies had met secretly, sharing what they'd learned from their masters. They developed their sorcery in secret, and spread disloyalty through their families and even personal slaves, who they foolishly raised up to be equals. They said, "The Shan'iatu know that with their knowledge, we could exceed them in power."

They stole great relics and assaulted Pharaoh's palace. I, who once could have become a dozen panthers to rip through their ranks, or made thunderbolts crawl along the ground and strike like snakes, felt a brittleness in my temakh. My spirit was a dry branch, hardened but inflexible. I could not change shape or remake the earth with a thought. Amazed at my weakness, I paused long enough for rebels to impale me on stone-tipped spears.

Yet I was only weak compared to what I had been — not compared to these Remet. I still knew the language of Creation, and though my celestial voice was slurred and halting, it still made Utterances. I summoned fire and agony at last, and so did the other Shan'iatu. We impaled the survivors and plucked out their ghosts for further torture: a year and a day of wailing. There was no second rebellion.

We were troubled by our decline, and gathered in council: the first in an age to discuss our nature, instead of matters of state. The Keeper declared the Empire a failure and said we should seek renewal in the wild, and bury the pillars of Irem. That was impossible; we had all developed a taste for living like mortals and above them. The Dancer and the Priests of the Shell proposed that we should create our own Remet. He would teach them motion, and they would assemble the flesh of the dead to accept it, and the rest of us would use our arts to make



these creations worthy of Sekhem and eventually, even greater powers. If we made mortal men and women as the Judges did, would that not prove our worth to Azar? Would he not open the gates of Duat for us?

We debated hundreds of proposals ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous, and it became apparent that we lacked the knowledge to recover our strength or call Azar. I'm sure I'm not the only one who thought that Ammut had tricked us, and was a creature of the Judges after all, who guided us into submission, and would leave us to waste away, far from A'aru. Yet we could not condemn her, for she taught us the pleasures of rule. Even the goal of reaching Azar had changed. Where we had once been satisfied to descend to his right hand as nothing but spirits, we now all wanted to take one thing or another from this living world — great crafts, slaves or lovers, as each Shan'iatu preferred.

AMMUT'S SECOND LESSON

So we resolved to seek the Devourer out, and demand to know the cause of our decline, and how we could bring the Empire with us into Azar's embrace. But the old pits of corruption were gone. We'd tamed too much of the world for her to climb up and speak to us.

We knew she hungered, though. That was enough, and it inspired a new war, fought not to bring the living under our dominion, but the dead. We accompanied our armies, and locked the souls of the slain soldiers and enemies in their bodies. We kept one third for experiments, to better comprehend mortal souls and Sekhem. We gave one-third to the Shell, to raise as painless, unspeaking servants. The last third we desecrated to bar them from life after life, so they would be cast down to Ammut.

It came to pass that pressing east, we finally met Remet who imitated our customs with some skill. Instead of rough villages, these Ki-En-Gir built temples and cities. They prayed to false gods and wrote in a language they invented, instead of derived from the Nomenclature. A few saw through their false ways, however, and grasped some celestial knowledge. They were sorcerers and relic-makers who claimed to be one third divine. They led disciplined armies against us.

Like vultures, the seven Shan'iatu of the Shell accompanied our forces against them. They were rewarded with many deaths. In Ubar, the number of slain and the pain of their passing had proved a fitting sacrifice to the Devourer. They tortured the Ki-En-Gir's sorcerer-king for a night and day, to rip out the secrets that made his blasphemy magically effective.

Upon his death, the Devourer sent her Herald. It repaired the dead king's ruined body, giving it height and strength. It laughed. One of the Shell-priests told me the

sound was like an echo through a cave, as if some distant, mighty thing had sent but a fraction of itself across a great, still vastness. I asked her to tell me more, but she told me I must wait to hear it in council. I knew they had destroyed Ubar soon after, or perhaps it had done so, and that made me hopeful and afraid.

The Herald of Ammut said that mere service was insufficient. The Empire satisfied the Judges, but not Azar. Our god required eternal tribute: proof that our efforts would carry through the ages, and Remet would continue to practice the arts of civilization. How could we do this? The Remet had wild minds and animal urges. They died, passing inconstant traditions to their children. If we journeyed to Azar's kingdom, mortals would return to their primitive clans.

But the priests of the Shell said there was a solution: the mightiest spell, whispered to them by the Herald before Ammut's corruption split its stolen body into bone spines and tongues of flame.

THE RITE OF RETURN

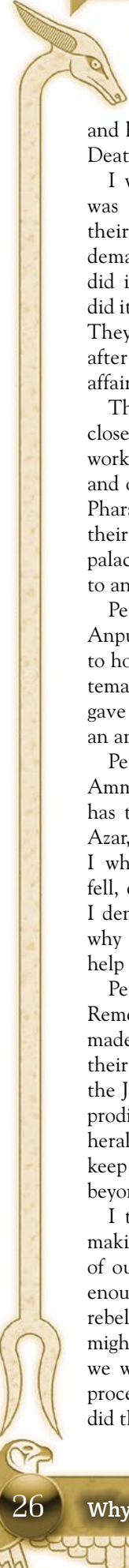

We had gathered on a hill above Irem at dawn. I think that priestess of the Shell raised a carved humerus and pointed it to the shadowed pillars. This was the ritual tool she used to select sacrifices for the Devourer, and we understood her meaning, though it seemed senseless. Ammut wanted to consume Irem, swallow the Empire. How could that preserve it?

I don't remember her words. Perhaps she said, "Ammut's messenger said she is pleased with our sacrifice. She, who gave the world change by eating its weak, old things, will stay that power for our servants. They will not be stripped of Sekhem after they pass through the gates of Duat — no, they will be given the power of our sacrifices, and eternally clothed in it. As men and women, they will return, to propagate the ways of Irem: the secrets of empires and great works. And they will carry signs of their work to Duat, and further still, to lay at the throne of Azar.

"And the great pillars you have set to honor your god will sink into the earth. As you cloak them in blood they will pass into the darkness like living things, and the Empire will be reborn there. We need not sacrifice what we have accomplished upon the face of Keb. Similarly, a portion of your servants will cross to these palaces to come, and you will rule them as you rule them now".

This pleased the assembled Shan'iatu, for we had grown to love the Empire, and as our temakhs bled magic from ancient wounds, our shapes became fixed and our sorcery waned, we took comfort in ruling mortals. When the priestess finished, the other masters of the Shell walked among the assembly, whispering of the glory of the spell,





and how we would finally stand before Azar as Judges of Death, equal to the Judges of Life who abandoned us.

I was still wary, for Azar had warned that Ammut was our enemy, that the Judges made us to protect their world from her. I confronted the Shell priests and demanded to know the spell's secrets. What Utterances did it demand from the Nomenclature? What powers did it invoke? What would be the nature of our servants? They said, "All in time, all in time," and so it continued after we dispersed into our halls to manage the Empire's affairs.

The other Shan'iatu recalled their armies. Craft-houses closed their gates while the lords within engaged in secret work, but we were left to our chants, dances, oracles and other devotions, to glorify Azar embodied in mortal Pharaohs. The others prepared for the spell but concealed their work from us, the eldest. I walked into the silent palace of the Shell, and anointed corpses silently led me to an audience with its masters.

Perhaps one priest said, "Glory to you, who challenged Anpu, and loved the sorceress Aset." But as they sought to honor me they reminded me of the dark wound in my temakh, and how we had made my love the vessel that gave Azar rebirth in Duat. I whispered the first syllable of an ancient Utterance, and their tombs shook.

Perhaps a second said, "Stay your wrath and be hopeful. Ammut is our key, the merciful guardian of the gate; she has taught us a Rite of Return, so that we may satisfy Azar, with servants that continue the tasks assigned us." I whispered another syllable, and their walking dead fell, eroding to ash and broken bone in a single breath. I demanded to know the nature of these servants, and why the Devourer, who coveted our sunlit world, would help us.

Perhaps a third said, "They are Children of Sekhem: Remet whose living power will be strengthened and made eternal within them, attached to the substance of their souls. That which we were ordered to perfect for the Judges, we will perfect for our own purposes. So our prodigies will live again and again, and serve us. Ammut's herald merely wishes souls of her own, for the Judges keep those for themselves, and disperse their five powers beyond her reach."

I thought I knew the secret then, for we would be making a mighty offering to Ammut on the great day of our ritual. The Remet loved and feared us, but not enough to be sacrificed as a host. And there had been a rebellion, and proof of our waning sorcery. The mortals might escape our grasp and return to animal lives, and we would lose all esteem before Azar. Thus, the work proceeded quietly. Nevertheless, I was unsatisfied. Why did the other guilds not call to us, the eldest, for counsel?

I was not alone in my doubts. I called to the other Restless Stars, all of whom had pursued investigations like my own. Three of us suspected treachery. Another three didn't believe the other Shan'iatu were entirely truthful, but that the endeavour would be efficacious, and that in any case the preparations had begun, and could not be halted without setting brothers and sisters against each other. Between us, the Philosopher refused to speak his position.

THE GREAT DECEPTION

As we debated, I suspected that certain brothers knew more about the Rite of Return than what they spoke. For the first time, I distrusted other students of the Nomenclature. The Dancer had spoken with the Shell masters before, when they proposed creating replacements for the Remet. He smiled and moved beautifully, and admitted nothing, but was adamant that we support the Rite of Return, and assure the guilds of our loyalty. The Keeper had spoken to the lords of Amulets, who concentrated secret knowledge within their tools. He stood against the spell, but only offered a riddle to justify his position: "How old is the snake that sheds its skin?"

I needed to seek out my own answers, and set out to find them in the storm between worlds. I passed into Neter-Khertet in search of those dark passages that were forbidden to us, which were patrolled by Anpu and his demons. I reached the black place, the threshold of Duat, and called out to the exiled god.

Anpu arrived, snarling.

He said, *You thought me your enemy. I can be no more than a mountain can become a fly's enemy. Do you seek me out of such ignorance again?*

I felt a burning ache in my temakh and said, "Yet you are here, jackal, and we have raised another to your throne. I sent great Azar to claim your realm with my own hands."

You sent your lover there, with Azar hidden in her wandering soul and thus, he slipped from his proper place in the world of the true sun and growing things. I heard her blood screaming your name as it sunk in the earth.

I shook. My body rippled, but could no longer take the form of the great beast I had once been. He saw my rage.

I do not mock you, child of the temakh. I only remind you of what you have lost. You have almost forgotten. You have come to think of loss as mere absence, like the last drop of water from a cup, but it is so much more. That which completed your essence has been replaced by pain, inserted into your being as if a tablet with your nature written upon it was shattered. When the shards were gathered again and made whole, one was replaced with false text. That fragment within lies to you about your own essence and purpose, and you believe it.



“I didn’t come to hear you speculate on my nature. My brothers prepare a Rite of Return. You and your demons stalk invisible places and you, a god, were made with the mysteries of the Judges in your heart. So yes, I come to you in ignorance, for I would know the nature of this spell.”

That tendril of the Devourer? I know it. I see her black threads grow stronger as you and your mortal playthings will them into shape, and bind them with your tools and Utterances. I see beyond the horizon of time, when the threads become a hand smothering the world.

“Will the Rite of Return succeed? Will we become like the Judges, to master the power of Duat?”

It has already succeeded. It will always succeed. But fear not; your servants will bring the legacy of Irem to every point beneath the stars. You will attain Duat, yet you will see the true sun through your servant’s eyes, and taste its delights with your servant’s tongue. That will comfort you, but you wish to know more: why the other guilds of your city remain silent. Yet you know the answer. You have slain a god.

“No, we named him our king! We sent him below with all of our devotion.”

Indeed, you named him. You are a Master of Names.

Then I knew: We named him “king.” There had been no kings before. We created a name for him in Duat, from the forms of the Nomenclature. If we were to follow Azar, to become his Judges and challenge our fathers and mothers, we must create new names: true names from the celestial Nomenclature, not the crude titles we used among the Remet, or the simple sounds we used to call to each other when we learned at the feet of Azar. This was our power, and what they would, in the end, call on us for. In naming them, we would define them. For that moment, we would control the Rite. The other Shan’iatu must have been told of this by the priests of the Shell. They feared us.

I returned to the hall of the Restless Stars to tell my fellow Namers, but they were divided much as before, and their true knowledge remained hidden from me.

“Once we were the eldest, revered by all other Shan’iatu,” I said. “So we shall be again. We are the makers of names, and will give the others names like the Judges, so they may claim the seal of the Law from our silent creators. But we will name ourselves princes of these new Judges, masters of masters, under Azar. And is it not fitting? The other guilds left the tending of Pharaoh to us, wrapping a weak station in gold and ritual, but in the world beyond life we honor no masked mortal, but a true god.”

Even then, knowing we could use the Rite to our advantage, the reluctant ones resisted, until the Philosopher stood and said, “If the other Shan’iatu would become lords of death, let us name ourselves lords of life and death.”

BETRAYAL

The year of the final rite arrived with the rise of Sopdet, the star of Aset (and as fast and bright as a sunbeam, I felt jealous of Azar, who had made Aset his queen). The magic of this time and place was like a fog, and I remember but fragments. I saw columns twisting, obeying the laws of shape imposed by Duat, which defied earthly knowledge of direction and distance. I saw corpses crawl from pit graves and snatch the living, to hold them to their ordained purpose, and blood-painted warriors killing and killing, then falling upon their knives because I commanded it to pay Ammut’s due.

I can see, hear, smell, taste and touch these parts, but without the thread of time stitching them into one account into true recollection. I think I shall never remember it truly, for the Rite of Return violated time. By that time, they had revealed the full technique of the spell, and I saw how the paths of Remet lives were twisted upon themselves. My memories are broken because we broke the moments themselves.

Other pieces enter my view, like broken pottery drifting downstream. I see the great council, where the guilds told us our purpose, and we pretended it was a revelation. I see 42 students lying on stone floors, as we commanded, looking to the lines and glyphs that will keep their souls from mortal destinies. I feel the wetness of blood as we remove their organs to make room for the lattice of Sekhem that will come to refresh them. I gaze upon maps of tombs scattered throughout the empire, so that our servants will find respite in the furthest reaches of civilization.


Now my mind’s eye gazes to another time: the naming of the Shan’iatu. The Keeper reads omens in stars and sand. The Philosopher renders these as principles. The Painter creates a visage and the Dancer, movement in the form. We are making gods out of Shan’iatu. We’ve saved our own names for last, and they will be the names of the greatest gods. As each of them sheds their old flesh with a cut of the tool that dismembered Azar, and honored him, they lose the power to countermand us. They will not know our names until we arrive, bearing scepters of rule.

I have never reached so deeply into the Will of the Nomenclature, and the rarest power within it. I can see the names of very great gods — greater, perhaps, than Azar — but I cannot summon them to memory now, for they are only visible like the afterimage of the sun on a mortal eye. Yet I remember the possibility of making a name as great as Azar’s, and the thought of rising to make Aset my queen.

I don’t know if I acted on that temptation because now I remember pain, darkness, and heaviness: in my temakh, and in strange flesh. The fog of magic left. Time returned.

I awoke far from Irem, by the sea. I was surrounded by a hundred dead, pale outlanders: barbarians from abroad.





I rose from a coffin. My hands were withered, yet I felt alive. No, I felt like I had never known life before this moment, and before, I had been only a shape wind makes in the sand. I had moved and disturbed the ground in my passing, but I had been hollow.

I remember these moments clearly, and even the memory of a memory, for when I went to the water's edge, I had an unfamiliar face, and when I looked for my own I remembered a master with the mask of a square-eared beast holding me firm, and the pain of being slit open.

That was my face, but the face reflected in the water was not mine, nor was the memory of seeing myself, holding this body down for preparation.

TWO NATURES, CHAINED TOGETHER

The other Shan'iatu knew our plans, and countered them. They bound me to this body, and others. I have met myself many times. The seven of me have different memories as one Shan'iatu, and intrusions from the other identities, of the Remet who once served our guild: the ones we prepared for eternal service and the one who remembers me, looking down upon him at his last breath.

We changed. With varied memories and the poison of mortal passions, I became many people, with many personalities. Parts of myself became my enemies. Others were allies and lovers (though both parts of me knew that together, we could never provide solace for lost Aset).

Nevertheless, my new life sings with Sekhem. As a pure temakh I could only sing and dance and will it into shape, a thing apart from it, but now I feel it. I know the power of life coursing through these Deathless arteries, and I feel mortal fear as it drips away to the darkness. I understand why mortals fear death, yet approach it with a certain longing. I know why ancient swordsmen fight ever-harder as blood streams down their faces, and why poets compose a last verse to sum up their lives before they take refuge in a noose, razor, or the bitterest wines. Even though I am immortal, I understand mortality, and I think I know why the Remet rebelled.

There's a difference between beautiful and precious things. Beauty is something we observe from without: what we see in stars, wind on the grass, and lovely men and women seen across a field, or a room. Preciousness is the lover held and stars reborn in worked gems. We have power over precious things — not total power, but the power to embrace, refuse and apply our art to them. We can make choices. These mortals knew their souls were beautiful things, channeling the glory of Sekhem.

They wanted to choose the disposition of their souls, of themselves. They knew they could have precious power, but as rulers and teachers, we could not allow that.

These souls who joined with me in our bodies want to be able to choose, but we are all Deathless, trapped in shells

of Sekhem that flow as predictably as the ancient floods, or coastal tides, except for one influence: the Judges. We were deceived by the other Shan'iatu and barred from the palace of Azar and Irem reborn, so we don't know whether these "Judges" are those pretenders, or the lords of all, who once asked us to purify humankind.

So mortal and temakh, we feel unknowable masters drag the chain that binds us together toward death, or slacken it for a longer life, depending on our service. Sometimes I feel as if I have some control, and I threaten the mortal personality unless he seeks out manifestations of the divine Nomenclature. Otherwise, I feel shackled in common, and I urge him forward out of fear. My mortal knows his soul is precious but he is an animal still. He isn't afraid of ordinary death any more, but he knows he will find pain in the place between lives. Even when he forgets those moments of torment his spirit remembers, and his animal self runs to avoid it.

I sympathize with him. I too wish to be free. If this chain only bound me to my former servant, perhaps I could be satisfied. The world is beautiful. Erosion is a dance. Civilizations rise and fall in poetry whose endless variations never betray the themes we set in motion during Irem, and the Empire.

The world is beautiful, but it is not precious. I can no longer compose my own verses from the Nomenclature. I can no longer dance the patterns laid down by gods, but arranged for my own pleasure. All of my music is derivative, and I can no longer think and see only what is true. The Rite of Return took the true magic from us. We copy instead of create. They deprived us of that choice.

That is why we, the Deceived, seek vengeance. Through all betrayal and distrust, we have a common thirst to create precious art. It's why we're snakes striking at the heels of other Deathless, to ruin their service to the other Shan'iatu. We move quietly, carefully through time, for we do not know the enemy's power, or the disposition of the original Judges. We don't know where Azar is. Between lives I question Anpu, and he only sneers, mocking my fallen state.

We are closer to victory than the enemy thinks.

OUR REVENGE

Sothis is the new name of Sopdet. My lover's sharp star ascends again, and for the first time in two ages I remember enough to truly understand my shame and anger. I will try to hold on to that memory, even though he told me it will fade soon. I must write quickly now.

Once, one of the Deathless came to me. He was a scribe, a student of the Law. Although they understood raw facts better than poetry, their guild had always been the closest to our own. Sometimes they came to us in search of secrets.

This man asked me for a secret Name. I had used it long ago when I confronted Azar, when we called him our king. I helped invent that word, “king,” and when I did, another word made itself known. A logical inevitability in the divine language, it was a title that must be created with that of the king: a shadow of the divine ruler.

A Heretic.

I bled Sekhem to merely think of it. My mortal being screamed when I considered the edges of it. I collapsed to dust when I spoke it.

That was long ago, but I have seen him again. That Heretic came to me with a gift, and what I write is its product. He is free. He is an artist, and can make the new and precious. He leant me one of his works: a stylus made of “steel,” that child of iron that even the Alchemists failed to tame during Irem’s time. When I write, I remember. When I stop or pause, memory fades. I must press the stylus to clay again.

The Heretic tells me it isn’t a perfect tool, and what I write will always be tainted by what I wish to believe, what I wish was true, and what I refuse to admit to myself, or anyone else. Furthermore, the Rite of Return itself finds this relic abhorrent, for we were made to forget. I can feel my Sekhem tear away with every word. Soon I will plunge into Neter-Khertet to hunt the mortal soul that binds me — if I do not, I will be lost in the place between, and Anpu will subject me to divine torment. I will forget again.

So I will make my writing a gift to all the Restless Stars, so they may understand our ancient errors, how we were deceived, and how we might avenge ourselves on the enemy. I think I knew other secrets that might grip us with greater despair, but I did not write of them. I will not curse my brothers. We have distrusted each other for so long, because of our mistakes and secrets.

In the name of unity, I will not tell you who I was. Perhaps when I spoke of the Dancer, I was observing my own arrogance from the outside. When I spoke of the Philosopher, I was damning my refusal to speak for so long and how when I did, I squandered my authority.

In the name of unity I wrote a pair of lies — as few as I could manage. I cannot account for the lies I may be telling myself.

I want to uphold our common aspirations, and atone for all our sins. I was Sutek, but so were we all. I held the blade, but we all cut Azar down.

May the true Judges forgive us.





Mine is the tale, and it echoes to the past as to the future, on many spheres, across every epoch. I am the story that recounts the storyteller. I am prophecy and catechism, the rhythmic ululations of forgotten things and of entities yet to be.

Feeble scrawls cannot contain me. The prayers of desperate faith and faithlessness alike speak with my voice. The thundering commands of generals rallying warriors and the gasping profundity of the dying are my canvas, for I rebuke the silence of the blackened void.

Scholars parse and pick at my truths like jackals at the lion's scraps, and yet I am. The eloquence of precedent summons me, and so I am. In all wars declared and in all facile peaces brokered by the mediating hand of justice, there am I.

By my fervor do artists bleed their genius into cadenced form, fanned as flames to dizzying conflagration. I am their hopeless cry as they birth me time and again into the world. I am the great unbegotten whom scions bid welcome, begging that their work dies not with them.

The desert sands devour all civilizations, swallow all monuments, scrape all meaning from those chiseled records of history. Let those who do not create truth fall into numb despair. Let them drink tears, and if they find no inspiration in my whispers, let them surrender to their sorrow and drink of the scorpion's sting,

wasting no more breaths from their world's allotted measure.

I am the promise that pain and horror must precede glory. I am the triumph of a solitary madness over the squalid masses of the sane. I kill those who call upon me most fiercely with their own hand, freeing them from the inevitability of decay. I cull tongue after tongue that jabbars doggerel, until only I remain.

I am the utterance, both curse and covenant. In my names are the spells that unleash themselves through fools believing they do their own will. I am the unyielding commandments of gods, the groveling praise of acolytes, and the mighty decrees of kings to which numberless multitudes bend their knees. I speak with a thousand thousand tongues, and I will be heard.

I am the will that parts seas, laying bare their treasures... the poem that grants life to the dead and shall one day empty the shadows of Duat... the utterance that kills, that exalts, and the verse that spoke being from unbeing since the dawn of time. When all stars dim and the firmament unravels, it is I shall compose the lone and final epitaph.

I am the Verse That Speaks Itself, the Tale Without End,
I am Nephir Un-Ankh,
I am.





CHAPTER TWO

THE MIRROR CRACKED

*The scientist has marched in and taken the place of the poet.
But one day, somebody will find the solution to the problems of the world,
and remember... it will be a poet, not a scientist.*

— Frank Lloyd Wright

Although long estranged from those who betrayed them, and driven by unquenchable enmity against the Arisen, the Deceived are Deathless beings rather than Lifeless mockeries like the Shuankhsen. In fact, members of the “lost” guild are the most undying of Deathless, imprisoned within the living universe for eternity and chained to the endless cycle of arising and Descent.

Similar in life and necromantic rebuke of death to the Arisen, the Deceived aren't like the mummies of other guilds; more cousins than true siblings. They bear different burdens, suffer different curses, and wield powers not otherwise manifest in the world. This chapter outlines these differences and provides complete rules for playing mummies of the Restless Stars.

CHARACTER CREATION

The Deceived are as Deathless as the Arisen, perhaps even more so. They remain incarnate and eternal vessels of Sekhem, but differ from their cousins in a number of key ways. Except where noted below, the Deceived follow the same character creation rules as the Arisen (**Mummy: The Curse**, p. 64-73).

STEP ZERO: CHOOSE TEMAKH

Almost all supernatural character creation rules for the World of Darkness instruct players to construct a mortal character with mortal traits first, then apply the appropriate supernatural template. In the case of the Deceived, one supernatural trait breaks this rule: the mummy's accursed completing soul fragment, the temakh.

The seven temakhs are entities of a sort, existing both outside and within their servants. Long ago, they counted themselves among the very Shan'iatu — the guildmasters of the Akhem-Urtu. Each presided over a specific form of artistic and cultural expression. Accordingly, they sought out followers who were adept at these same crafts, guiding

and growing and molding that talent to serve their will. This means a Deceived's temakh shaped her mortal traits almost as much as it continues to shape her supernatural ones.

The temakhs are eternal and human no longer. They are not spirits nor gods nor ghosts, but discorporate and chthonic presences that find collective embodiment in those deathless souls still bound to them. The mummies of each temakh are the flesh and the hands by which their shared and scattered master grasps the world. Without their mummies, who knows what the temakhs would be; perhaps unmoored souls, screaming silently in the solitude of endless darkness and unending time, perhaps something darker still. Connected to their former guild underlings, the temakhs may witness and shape the living world as even the Judges dare not.

The choice of temakh determines a Deceived's favored Attributes, favored Skill, and favored Vice (among other qualities). *The temakhs are described in detail on pages 45-65.*

STEP ONE: CHARACTER CONCEPT

The Akhem-Urtu were artists and the sacred keepers of Irem's dreaming inspiration. Not all Deceived define themselves by the arts they once practiced, but it is unheard of for their ancient role to play *no* part in who they are. The choice of temakh determines what general medium or form of art speaks to their soul and the method by which their souls speak to the world.

Regardless of their preferred art form, all Deceived feel a reverence for the stars and an intrinsic awe regarding the workings of Fate. Some are fatalistic servants of providence; others erudite astrologers. A few stand defiant beneath the face of cosmic mysteries, proclaiming the essence of their being no less profoundly than the Arisen cry out their decrees. The totality of their dual-existence makes them passionate creatures, prone to intense emotions and drawn to the same.



The long ages the Deceived have spent hiding from the other guilds also plays a part in who they are. Many strategies exist to avoid notice: hiding, running, lying, murdering witnesses, etc. Methods practiced frequently become part of one's identity. An assassin who leaves only bodies, but no clues, is quite different from the courtesan whose honeyed pillow-talk dictates how lovers think they know her.

STEP TWO: SELECT ATTRIBUTES

The Akhem-Urtu recruited those whose innate gifts and potential predisposed them to greatness in the art form of their Shan'iatu or as astrologer mystics. If a Deceived character's temakh favors two Attributes in the same category, this category must be prioritized as primary. If the character's favored Attributes are spread among two categories, one must be prioritized primary and the other secondary, but the player decides which is which (thereby selecting tertiary by process of elimination).

STEP THREE: SELECT SKILLS

Though innate aptitude contributes puissance to artistic expression, art cannot be created without specific training. The Akhem-Urtu had no place in their ranks for those who lacked basic competency in the art form of their Shan'iatu or the mysteries of the cosmos.

Deceived characters must have at least two dots allocated to each of the following Skills: Academics, Occult and the favored Skill of their temakh. If their favored Skill is a mental skill, this means their player must prioritize mental Skills as primary or secondary. Most Deceived have higher than minimum ratings in one or more of these Skills, as their masters sought greatness, not mere competence. The lost guild is as varied in Skills as other guilds.

STEP FOUR: SELECT SKILL SPECIALTIES

The Akhem-Urtu recruited members whose distinctive style and knacks enriched the guild as a whole. Deceived characters must assign at least one of their three Skill Specialties to the favored Skill of their temakh. Other Skill Specialties are selected normally.

STEP FIVE: ADD MUMMY TEMPLATE

Although quite similar, the mummy templates of the Deceived are different in key ways from the templates of the Arisen. The mummies of the Akhem-Urtu lack some traits and add others.

DECREE

The souls of the Deceived cannot descend into Duat, and so none among them have stood before the Judges to proclaim

their decree. These two traits are meaningless to the Deceived and are not part of their template. Instead, each of them are bound more directly and more terribly to their temakh.

GUILD

By definition, the Deceived belong solely to their own guild, specialize in seba (p. 102), and receive Face of Endless Lies (p. 94) as a bonus Guild Affinity. This membership is inextricable and eternal, sanctified by the temakhs. The Deceived cannot leave their guild, nor may the Arisen ever come to join the ranks of the Restless Stars.

FAVORED ATTRIBUTES

The Deceived derive their choice of favored Attributes from their temakh rather than from decree, adding one bonus dot as normal.

PILLARS

The souls of the Deceived are not so varied and flexible as the other guilds, withered and atrophied in ways frighteningly similar to the Shuankhsen. Members of the Akhem-Urtu receive no choice in how to allocate dots among their Pillars. Regardless of temakh, all share Ren as a defining Pillar and possess five dots in it. The other four Pillars receive only a single dot, but their players may spend Merit dots and/or experience to raise these stunted traits normally.

AFFINITIES AND UTTERANCES


What flexibility the Deceived lose in Pillars, they gain in Affinities. In addition to Face of Endless Lies, members of the Restless Stars start with any two Soul, Guild, and/or miscellaneous Affinities for which they meet all prerequisites. Because they all have a dot in each Pillar, Deceived characters also start with two Utterances for which they meet one or more prerequisites, and they receive Blessed is the God-King (p. 97) as a free bonus Utterance.

STEP SIX: SELECT MERITS

Generally speaking, the members of the Restless Stars are no more or less likely to possess specific Merits than the Arisen. However, as the undisputed masters of Nomenclature, the Deceived understand that names cannot exist without the context of language to anchor them. Virtually all Deceived characters will have at least one dot of the Language Merit, and frequently know a wide assortment of tongues.

Deceived cannot purchase Striking Looks, as their warped sahu is simply too hideous to be beautiful by any sane standard. They may only gain this Merit temporarily when bestowed by some supernatural power.





Fame is also barred to the Akhem-Urtu, for they are a guild of shadows and lies, not public figures who command the eye of the world. Should circumstances bestow that Merit upon them, increasingly unlikely circumstances endeavor to destroy that popularity as swiftly as possible. In exchange, they receive a measure of the Enigma Merit for free (see p. 38).

STEP SEVEN: DETERMINE ADVANTAGES

The Deceived calculate and assign most Advantages like the Arisen (e.g., Sekhem, Willpower), but differ in the ways their temakh shapes and scars their psyches.

VIRTUE AND VICE

The temakh is not a force from without, but a completing soul embedded within the Deceived. As explained on page 35, Deceived characters have their own Virtue and Vice, but they also gain a Temakh Virtue from their masters that affects their souls during each Descent/life cycle.

MEMORY

Deceived characters start with the usual three dots of Memory, though the Trait encompasses slightly different directives and recollections (see page 37).

STEP EIGHT: AGE AND EXPERIENCE

The Deceived are no more or less apt to learn from their long years than the Arisen. They gain the starting base experience total selected by their Storytellers.

STEP NINE: RETURN TO LIFE

Deceived characters are just as varied and rich in detail as the Arisen, with strengths and weaknesses appropriate to their traits. Likewise, they suffer the same personality erosion and holes in their mind.

In their most visible form, the Deceived cannot pass for human as effortlessly as the Arisen, given the strange melding of features between the person they used to be and the deformities imposed by their temakh. No matter how the sahu is twisted, members of the Akhem-Urtu appear fundamentally *wrong* to most onlookers, and must take pains to wrap themselves in heavy clothing with deep hoods, or even full face masks, if they do not wish to frighten or at least disturb all who encounter them. When this is not possible, Face of Endless Lies (p. 94) provides whatever mask is needed, but such lies are exhausting and cannot be maintained indefinitely. Players should work out the specifics of the character's grotesquerie for those unguarded moments when their visages draw wide-eyed disbelief, revulsion, and dread.

For obvious reasons, the merets of the Deceived contain only members of their own guild. In general, such groupings tend to follow one of two patterns: each member belongs to a different temakh; or all members serve the same temakh. It is suggested that merets of player characters follow the former model, as it ensures more diversity (and 'niche protection') for each member. The temakhs would never tolerate their chosen actually joining an Arisen meret, even if the Deceived were somehow inclined to forgive those who betrayed them so fully. The grudge the "lost" guild holds against the other five defines their personalities as much as any actual Trait.

MODIFIED ADVANTAGE: SEKHEM

The living cosmic power of Sekhem flows through the Deceived and animates them, as it does all mummies. The Deceived use this trait like Arisen, but cannot voluntarily spend dots for any reason, such as to restore spent Willpower or heal aggravated damage or resurrect mortals via Gift of the Golden Ankh (**Mummy: The Curse**, p. 122), without the temakh's approval. The power within them does not consent to diminishment unless doing so serves a clear purpose, such as fulfilling a Temakh Virtue (or other,

Rule 42

As beings arrayed naturally against the protagonists of the game, the Arisen, the Deceived make great fodder for stories in which competing interests come to clash. In order to make full use of them, though, it might occur to a Storyteller to establish a sense of their overall numbers – if not in concrete terms, then at least in relation to the Arisen.

The temptation might be to suggest that as a guild, the Deceived are populated the same as any other single guild; but remember, most of the Akhem-Urtu failed to arise after their betrayal. Each Shan'iatu temakh whipped through all of its underlings, but only a fraction of them were able to conjoin, to be Deceived.

As a sound baseline, Storytellers can assume that no more than 42 of a given Akhem-Urtu guildmaster's underlings made it through their betrayal in Irem. Those who enjoy math will note that this would suggest that there are fewer than 300 of the Deceived active worldwide in the default setting of the game.

This is Rule 42 and it should always apply (at least until the rest somehow arise).



at Storyteller discretion). As such, the Deceived can only lose Sekhem involuntarily: by rising from a death cycle, in the usual course of Descent, or through the predations of others (typically the appetites of the Lifeless).

MODIFIED ADVANTAGE: PILLARS

As noted previously, the Deceived all have Ren as a defining Pillar at five dots, and all other Pillars at one dot, by default. Because of this, they can manifest any Ren-based Soul Affinity and unleash any Ren-based Utterance tier, befitting their status as the undisputed masters of Nomenclature. All it costs them is a withering atrophy of their souls in every other way.

In general, the Deceived use Pillar ratings and points as Arisen do. When boosting Attributes, they can reinforce their Manipulation with Ren points as if they had pronounced the decree of the name. The Deceived are nothing if not intimately familiar with all manner of duplicity.

Lacking decrees, the Deceived cannot recover Pillar points with them. Instead, they must feed their souls according to the mandates of their temakh. Other recovery methods work normally.

MODIFIED ADVANTAGES: VIRTUE AND VICE

Half possessed by their temakhs, the souls of the Deceived are not wholly their own, but maimed echoes of the people they once were. This prompts changes in their emotional makeup, including Virtue and Vice.

THE MORTAL AND TEMAKH VIRTUES

Each member of the Restless Stars begins with *two* Virtues. One of these is an ordinary, mortal Virtue. This was the Virtue possessed by the human portion of the Deceived. Select this Virtue as you would for a standard World of Darkness character.

The second Virtue is the *Temakh Virtue*. This is a passion that belongs to the temakh: the shard of inhuman heroism and tyranny inside each Restless Star. These Virtues, detailed below, do not cleave to ordinary human values.

During the Descent, Restless Stars possess *both* Virtues, and may benefit from either, potentially doubling their opportunities to refresh Willpower.

THE TEMAKH VIRTUES

As there are seven standard mortal Virtues, there are seven typical Temakh Virtues. And just as it is possible to select alternate mortal Virtues from the core seven, you may also explore variations of the seven Temakh Virtues, but they should fit the examples given: amoral, concerned

with power and occult knowledge and veneration. Note that the temakh in one of the Deceived is but a fragment of one incomprehensible, complex intelligence. Thus, two Restless Stars with the same temakh may possess different Temakh Virtues, representing different elements of the shattered Shan'iatu personality.

Once you select a Temakh Virtue (during character creation), no power in existence can alter it or lessen its hold during an arising.

Authority

Made to rule mortals, the Shan'iatu find satisfaction when others submit themselves to rule. It takes more than the ordinary management of cults to satisfy this Virtue. The Deceived must know that an individual or group obeys them against their own desires and practical interests.

Example: *Nakhti discovers that an enemy Arisen has come to his city, but it's laying low, unsure of the Deceived's own presence. He orders a cultist involved in the drug trade to carry out a major deal in the building where his enemy lurks. The cultist, Domenic, has already drawn police heat and will probably be arrested, but the police will also search the building, depriving his enemy of any stockpiled weapons or criminal allies. After some hesitation, Domenic agrees.*

Conquest


The Nameless Empire was built on its masters' unquenchable ambitions. Deceived temakhs still contain the desire to expand their power. When a Deceived mummy with this Virtue assumes control of a new organization, or increases his command over an existing concern (such as a cult, arm of government, or business) by an order of magnitude, he satisfies this Virtue. This must occur due to his own efforts, not as a gift.

Example: *Her-Uben's cult has been helping his city's mayor — an impulsive drug addict — get his fix, loosening his self-control. The media finally acquire video of the clearly intoxicated mayor smoking crack in the presence of organized crime figures, so power transfers to the deputy mayor: a woman in Her-Uben's cult.*

Corruption

After asserting dominion over mortals, the Shan'iatu discovered the pleasure to be had in triggering and vicariously experiencing their subjects' base passions. The gods and Judges taught them what sin was, and how to punish it, yet sin provided vivid experiences, and the Shan'iatu fell to temptation by encouraging, then emulating human weaknesses. Thus, if the Deceived causes a mortal to satisfy her Vice and participates in the act of satisfaction, she replenishes her Willpower. Note that if this would also satisfy the Restless Star's Vice, she





gains the greater Willpower benefit, and any secondary benefit from satisfying a Vice as well.

Example: *Khephermenes urges his cultists to slaughter the guards of an enemy's tomb. The leader of the cultists satisfies his wrath, while Khephermenes himself revels in killing alongside his followers.*

Creativity

The Shan'iatu who ruled the Restless Stars were aesthetes who believed the world should not only be shepherded by them, but made beautiful by their influence. This beauty manifests through the Deceived's favorite art. When she brings something into existence that is both novel and beautiful in the eyes of an audience, she replenishes her Willpower. She may do this directly, or through an intermediary.

Example: *Netikerty of the Thousand Eyes in One engages one of her pupils in debate and in the process, inspires a new approach to philosophical utilitarianism, where ambiguous degrees of value can be implemented through elegant mathematics. Widely praised, the pupil's paper on the subject garners him fame.*

Mysticism

The Shan'iatu were created with a deep desire to know the world's occult secrets. A Deceived mummy with the Mysticism Virtue still feels that yearning, and feels renewed whenever she discovers a magical secret. This not only includes learning new Affinities and Utterances, but unveiling the truth about other supernatural beings. These truths are metaphysical, not social. The Deceived cares little for how a clan of monsters organizes itself, but could replenish Willpower by learning how the fuel their unnatural powers.

Example: *Azarhotep recovers a stone tablet revealing the rites that summon and bind one of Anpu's spirit minions. He calls an inscribed name, and the demon answers.*

Piety

The temakh remembers true gods such as Azar. Even if the Judges betrayed them, it would be foolish to ignore the only true religion. When a Deceived mummy possesses this Virtue she cannot help but draw inspiration from the faith of Irem. She feels renewed when she converts another to the religion, and when she sacrifices her own desires to follow its precepts. The Iremite faith is not a modern quasi-philosophy or social club. Moral belief and love of the gods is unimportant; form and ritual aspects rule all. One can hate the Judges, yet respect their divine role through sacred rites.

Example: *Coming upon a ruin in Libya, Khu discovers it to be an Iremite outpost. Despite the fact that his pursuers are mere hours away, she takes the time to clean the site and offer prayers to the gods — all done according to the ancient protocols.*

Vengeance

The Shan'iatu were not empathetic in the human sense. They rationally weighed the thoughts and feelings of others against their own interests, and felt a certain yearning for companionship and respect. When roused to anger, nothing stayed their hand from inflicting the worst torments on enemies — yet these were also doled out according to rational motives. Thus, the temakh enjoys revenge, but not in the sense of simple, reactionary violence. If the Deceived has a reason for considering someone his enemy, he feels spiritually reawakened by subjecting the foe to a punishment that fits the crime.

Example: *Remembering a past life where the Arisen Ptahmose crucified him, Heben finds, captures and returns the favor, slaying Ptahmose on the cross seven times, for Irem invented the concept of sevenfold vengeance.*

FAVORED VS. UNFAVORED VICE

While each Deceived arises and descends with two Virtues, each only manifests a single Vice. Yet that Vice may also be favored or not. A favored Vice is attuned to the Restless Star's temakh. In Irem, the precursor Shan'iatu grew to emulate human spiritual weaknesses. Echoes of these borrowed passions remain, though in this case the human soul effectively has the upper hand and can support or deny the preponderance of these urges.

Each temakh has a favored Vice listed in its description. The player of a Deceived is not obligated to selecting the temakh's favored Vice as his character's own Vice. If he does, he marks it as such on his sheet — "(Favored)" — and gains an added benefit: Once per session, whenever his mummy would regain Willpower for engaging her Vice, she also regains one spent Pillar point.

If the player does not select the temakh's favored Vice as his character's Vice, his mummy does not gain this benefit, but she does gain a different one: Once per session, as a flat bonus for struggling hard to retain the

Death Cycles, Virtues, and Vices

During a death cycle, the temakh and mortal separate into independent beings. As a disembodied spirit, the human retains her mortal Virtue and Vice, but loses the Temakh Virtue. The temakh only possesses a Temakh Virtue and no Vice. Without human insight, the temakh lacks the human spiritual characteristics to benefit from "lower drives."



Memory	Threshold Sin*	Dice Rolled
10	Identifying with the temakh.	(Roll five dice.)
9	Failing to practice your art form at least every other day.	(Roll five dice.)
8	Pursuing the will of the temakh with the express purpose of prolonging or hastening the Descent.	(Roll five dice.)
7	Destroying any remnant of the Nameless Empire.	(Roll four dice.)
6	Losing any number of bound seba by dying outside your tomb.	(Roll four dice.)
5	Destroying any seba.	(Roll three dice.)
4	Allowing one of your vestiges to be destroyed.	(Roll three dice.)
3	Satisfying the Temakh Virtue.	(Roll three dice.)
2	Committing "suicide" by intentionally destroying your body.	(Roll two dice.)
1	Destroying evidence of your mortal life.	(Roll two dice.)

* In addition to the sins listed on page 91 of **The World of Darkness**.

self, the character receives a single Sebayt experience point. The Storyteller determines whether this point is awarded at the end of play or during the session.

MODIFIED ADVANTAGE: MEMORY

As with the Arisen, the Deceived recall only fractions of their immortal existence and begin play with Memory 3 by default. They accrue Sebayt experience the same way as other guilds and use it normally to rebuild higher Memory ratings.

Because the souls of the Deceived do not descend into Duat, they have no wall of separation between their recollections of life and death. Instead, each henet counts as part of the Descent immediately preceding it for the purposes of Memory recall. Thus, with Memory 3, the Deceived remember rough detail about their last arising and the interlude of death that led to their current Descent.

Lacking a decree, the Deceived remember their temakh where their Memory would grant knowledge of decree. However, they have no initial journey into Duat to remember, nor first-hand knowledge of the Judges. This also means they do not gain Unseen Sense for free at Memory 10. The Deceived also use a modified hierarchy of sins against morality (see table).

Memory 0: Deceived who have shed all Memory are not mindless automatons like the Arisen, but wretched puppets, wholly driven by the maddened alien directives and artistic obsessions of the temakhs. Most especially, they feel an unquenchable hunger to find and collect seba. Meanwhile, the mummies' souls cringe and cower within, insensate, though later able to recall what their masters made them do if they attain Memory 8 or higher. While

possessing its thrall, the temakh uses the mummy's Traits, except it has its own perfect memory of the mummy's prior Descents and long ago life in Irem (plus its own life there) to draw upon. In effect, the mummy is treated as Memory 10 for purposes of thinking clearly, recalling the past, and gaining free Eidetic Memory (as bestowed by Memory 9). However, the possessed mummy's actual Memory is still at zero for all other purposes, particularly the total lack of moral restraint. The Storyteller may control Memory 0 Deceived characters outright or simply assign inarguable directives to their players.

MODIFIED MERIT: CULT

Effect: The Deceived lean heavily on their cults, particularly those who endeavor to obey the temakhs rather than struggle vainly for some measure of autonomy. Such cults tend to favor Grasp over Reach, befitting the guild's preference for moving in the shadows and staying out of sight, especially if the mummy has a high Enigma rating, making Reach nearly useless (see below). Consequently, relatively few Deceived cults have an enterprise foundation.

Unable to form the lasting and meaningful bond of the Sadikh, the Deceived make up for this by asserting themselves mystically upon their worshippers even as the temakhs assert from above. Thus is the sacred pyramid made manifest. All Restless Star cults possess the Blasé, Obedient, and Ritualistic Benefits for free. This is due in part to the mystical loyalty that the first dot of Deceived Cultist (p. 38) imposes upon worshippers, and is partly a function of how much these sects hoard occult lore and preserve the art of religious trappings.



MODIFIED MERIT: ENIGMA

Prerequisite: No Fame

Effect: The Deceived have managed to remain mysterious to the Arisen across the ages, leaving their foes unsure whether the Restless Stars even exist. This is due in no small part to Fate cloaking them from notice.

Restless Stars gain this Merit for free, with temporary dots equal to $([9 + \text{Guild Status} - \text{Sekhem}], \text{maximum } 5)$. This intrinsic aura stacks with purchased dots, to a maximum effective rating of Enigma 5. Note that these free dots do not hide Deceived cults as purchased dots do (see below), nor do dots conferred by any other temporary sources.

While Restless Stars have an effective rating of Enigma 5, they receive one additional benefit, increasing the target number to locate their bodies as if they had the Affinity Shrouding Aura (**Mummy: The Curse**, p. 109). This benefit does not replicate that Affinity's second power to block physical harm.

Deceived also extend purchased dots of Enigma not only to shroud themselves, but to those who worship them. Their cult itself and all members apply the Merit's penalty as if they were the mummy itself against the curiosity and investigative efforts of outsiders. Only cult members with Fame are not shielded this way (if any exist). The reversal of penalty into bonus applies to the cult's mummy patron and other cult members as if they were seeking the mummy or information about her. The bonus also applies to kepher rolls when powers allow kepher to target the mummy, his canopic jars, his cultists, and former cultists.

Unfortunately, slipping from the notice of the world tends to make legitimate interactions more challenging. The penalty from this Merit also applies to the cult's use of Reach, so most Deceived with high Enigma ratings vastly prefer cults that rely on Grasp. Combined with the magical loyalty all Deceived cultists bear, cults with high Enigma and high Grasp are terrifying secret societies that lurk under the radar of most governments as they infiltrate the halls of power or carry out terrorist plots.

MODIFIED MERIT: GUILD STATUS

Effect: For Arisen, the Judges are an entire world away and do not meddle for good or ill in what is strictly guild business. By contrast, the temakhs retain their position as highest guildmasters of the Akhem-Urtu. From a vantage point collectively possessing all subordinates, each temakh weighs the heart of those who should rise in stature and those whose failures or betrayal warrant demotion.

Whenever one of the Deceived's actions constitute a significant betrayal of the guild and/or a failure to

complete important official guild business entrusted to her, her temakh can instantly strip away a dot of Guild Status (refunding experience). Notably, the temakhs cannot take dots away arbitrarily, but may only pounce upon sizable infractions as an opportunity to punish wayward servants. They must be fair in this, if in nothing else. The "sins" that prompt such flensing generally represent deliberate and/or egregious examples of those actions that prompt a temakh's wrath within a Descent (p. 43).

On the opposite end, whenever a temakh wishes to elevate a Deceived's stature within the organization as a whole, the promotion occurs automatically (imposing experience debt as necessary). All other Deceived perceiving a guildmate when her Guild Status rises feel the event as an exultant rush of glory centered upon the anointed. The experience is awe-inspiring and cannot be faked. Generally, the deeds that warrant such crowning moments are those that earn a temakh's favor within a Descent, but only in especially difficult circumstances and/or where the achievement greatly advanced the ultimate goals of the guild as a whole.

Other than the manner in which they gain and lose points, Deceived otherwise use Guild Status as Arisen do. This includes unlocking access to Guild Affinities. The temakhs care less about preserving a tiered pyramid of rank than using Guild Status as a measure of loyalty. A nome in which only the most fervently obedient members of the guild reside might theoretically have all of them ranked as guildmasters.

A Deceived's Guild Status rating determines what rough percentage of her cultists (living and dead) will possess what rating of the Deceived Cultist Merit. The breakdowns are as follows:

•	1 dot (100%)
••	1 dot (60%), 2 dots (40%)
•••	1 dot (50%), 2 dots (30%), 3 dots (20%)
••••	1 dot (50%), 2 dots (30%), 3 dots (15%), 4 dots (5%)
•••••	1 dot (35%), 2 dots (30%), 3 dots (20%), 4 dots (10%), 5 dots (5%)

NEW MERIT: DECEIVED CULTIST

(• TO •••••)

Prerequisite: Mortal or Lucid Dead ghost

Effect: Mummies receive incalculable benefit from their cults, as such organizations are the chief means by which they re-acclimate themselves to the ever-changing world and receive the mystical summons that calls their souls



from death. For worshippers of the Arisen and the wretched slaves of the Shuankhsen, the flow of supernatural power is usually one way: the mummy arises as a champion in answer to the cult's call and uses her godlike power to aid the faithful in their hour of need. The arrangement beats false faiths that offer no champion or meaningful answer to the perils of the supernatural world, plus access to relics and resources that non-cultists lack, but most worshippers feel protected rather than empowered. It takes dedicated Affinities to break with this arrangement and spill some measure of power back through the bonds of worship and make miracles in the world.

By contrast, each and every one of the Deceived empower their cultists. Restless Stars receive just as much benefit from their cultists as other mummies, but they also offer more. Sometimes only a little more; sometimes a lot. Those whose faith is strong enough gain genuine supernatural power and even death is not the end. Even the dead derive power from such faith, whether as cultists whose religion endures past their last breaths or as posthumous converts.

Cultists receive the first dot of this Merit for free when they swear their names to their new immortal deity. This dot endures until they exert enough free will to slip the bonds of metaphysical servitude (i.e., choose to spend 10 cumulative Willpower points to free their souls). Additional Merit dots past the first cost experience normally, and once the character has two or more, the entire Merit remains even if the character leaves the faith, albeit in an inert state that does nothing unless the ex-cultist returns to the fold and suborns her soul anew to her prior master (or to another of the Deceived). Similarly, dots in excess of the mummy's Guild Status are also inert, for not all gods are created equal. If this Merit is acquired during character creation, all dots must be purchased normally, including the first.

Higher ratings of this Merit allow mortal cultists to learn and use ghostly Numina. While alive, these powers are linked to the ratings of this Merit which allow them, meaning the powers become inert if the Merit dots granting them become inert. However, the Numina still remain, and if the cultists ever die and become ghosts, they may wield these powers freely, regardless of whether they retain their faith.

Lucid Dead ghosts can be recruited into the Deceived's cult, buying this Merit the same as their living brethren. Whether they were cultists in life who have joined the ranks of the honored dead or unenlightened ghosts who have been shown the light of their master's glory, ghostly cultists must retain their deity as one of their anchors, and having at least one dot in this Merit prevents that anchor from being severed. While she is in henet, the

mummy's body serves as the focal point of this anchor; her ghostly form is all but irrelevant to her followers.

- The initiate cultist cannot be broken or deprogrammed. No supernatural power, however mighty, may compel her to take action that would knowingly cause her to betray the cult as a group or her mummy deity as an individual. Powers that would read her memories, divine her past, or otherwise glean supernatural information that would constitute such betrayal if she willingly shared the information also fail and yield no results, wasting all spent costs. This mental shielding is absolute, and its automatic failure also blocks mundane intimidation, torture, and other forceful coercion attempts. Only mundane deception can convince the cultist to take action that she thinks serves her cult and/or mummy patron when in fact the deed constitutes unintended betrayal. It is slightly easier for cultists to voluntarily initiate betrayal, reflexively costing one Willpower point per knowingly hostile action. Without paying this surcharge, it is not possible for cultists to make themselves betray their faith. These expenditures to choose betrayal count toward the 10 cumulative needed to break free of cult membership. Most Deceived cultists do not fight their faith, but let it flow through them and imbue their convictions. As a final perk, the cultist does not experience Sybaris except as a sensation of religious awe when it emanates from her mummy patron (which is why all Deceived cults add the Blasé Benefit for free); however, such individuals aren't Witnesses by default and still experience the Sybaris of other mummies normally.

- The cultist soaks in metaphysical truths as an acolyte and eventual elder. After a single decade of membership, he gains the Witness Merit for free, though he can internalize the change with the usual experience cost. Unless purchased, the Witness state is conditional and fades if this Merit dot becomes inert. In addition, the cultist gains one dot of Occult for free per decade he spends as a member of the cult (to a maximum of Occult 5). Free Occult dots endure even if this Merit dot becomes inert, as they reflect genuine learning that is a universal tenet of such faiths rather than mystical endowment. Finally, he may also use kepher like a mummy to locate other current members of the cult as if they were guild-appropriate relics (or proxies to such individuals), substituting a dice pool of Wits + Occult in place of Sekhem. Cultists with four or more dots of this Merit can also use kepher to track down former cultists (and proxies to such), as well as the bodies and canopic jars of their masters. The sensation of tracking each phenomenon is distinct, so high ranking cultists know when their kepher is seeking one of the faithful or an apostate.

- The adept cultist gains an Essence pool with capacity equal to (Occult + Deceived Cultist). Every





due to wars, natural disasters, etc. Only those intending to harm the jars may do so, provided they can find them.

BLESSINGS AND CURSES

The differences between the Deceived and other guilds do not stop at character creation and modified traits. The very act of *being* a member of the Akhem-Urtu is fraught with horrors and wonders the Arisen can scarcely conceive.

TWISTED SAHU

Deceived with Sekhem 9-10 appear as corpse-like as the Arisen, impossibly dead and yet moving. This fact supersedes all other perception of them, as Sekhem wraps their flesh in monstrous truth.

Unlike with other guilds, the monstrosity of the Deceived does not ebb with lower Sekhem, but merely trades one horror for another. Even when they can pass for “human” to onlookers, the Deceived meld the features of their original bodies with physical characteristics from their temakh. The deformities may reflect the actual bodies of the temakh when it was human, or unique

“artistic statements” wrought upon the flesh of their servants. As a result, all Deceived who share a temakh still look radically different from one another.

The melding of flesh and art is seldom neat, and is frequently asymmetrical, often to the point of grotesquery. However, the Deceived don’t look stitched together like a patchwork gestalt of different bodies. Instead, their bodies transition smoothly where disparate features connect, as if the mummies somehow got stuck partway into shape-shifting between two forms. No sober observer could mistake the hybrid for something natural.

As Sekhem falls from 8 to 1, the apparent age of the sahu drops normally and eventually culminates in the exhausted and wasted look that precedes *henet*. Still, these modifications pale before the innate wrongness of the deformed body. When a man’s face looks like two separate heads smashed together, it isn’t terribly noteworthy what age he appears.

Although Deceived deformities are obvious on first glimpse without requiring a roll, these features aren’t about being dead so much as *wrong*. An exceptional success on a Wits + Medicine roll still allows onlookers to realize they aren’t just seeing a freak, but an undead freak.





KEPHER

The Deceived have little reason to use kepher like the Arisen do, as they track down seba by ritual rather than intuition. However, spending (10 – Sekhem) minutes within 10 yards of any relic allows members of the Restless Stars to sense the object's Sekhem and to recognize it as a relic. Handling a non-seba relic gives Deceived the usual Intelligence + (Academics or Occult) roll to gauge its rating. Like all mummies, the Akhem-Urtu can sense and recognize any vestiges they can perceive.

Certain magical effects allow Deceived to track other phenomena, objects, and even people with kepher as though the targets were guild-appropriate relics. These use the standard kepher rules rather than repurposing the rituals the guild reserves for seba.

SYBARIS

For the most part, the Deceived inflict the same mystical sickness on onlookers as the Arisen do, for the mummies of all guilds are figures of incomparable dread and unnatural power. Yet there are monsters among monsters, and the freakishly deformed members of the Deceived certainly qualify as such.

TERROR SYBARIS

The Sybaris forms of the Deceived do not manifest sacred animal iconography like the decrees of the Arisen. Instead, mortal onlookers glimpse the shadowed and star-spattered presence of the temakh superimposed upon its servant. No one sees this presence exactly the same way, any more than two people can experience a work of art and feel moved in the exact same way. Worse, the image is not an abomination that should not be, but an abomination that *must be* in accordance with Fate. The roll to resist Deceived Terror Sybaris reduces success by one step, so even the most strong-willed mortals are never completely allright. For example, 5 successes is treated as 4 successes, etc.

Faced with the terror of the Deceived, a mortal may choose to bow in supplication before the godlike figure of dread (or automatically does so with a single success on the roll to resist). In that moment, the prostrate joins the mummy's cult and gains the usual automatic dot of Deceived Cult Status, allowing her to stand before her god enchained but unafraid.

UNEASE SYBARIS

Lacking the required mystical ties to Duat, the Deceived cannot invoke Flood of Duat (i.e., Despair is

the worst they can inflict). However, the imposed degree of unease increases by two steps if provoked by direct interaction in which affected mortals can clearly see the deformed bodies of these wretched mummies.

SYBARITIC OMENS

Anointed by Fate and the fires of distant suns for purposes beyond immortal knowing, the Restless Stars trail prophecy in their wake. The Sybaris of the Deceived reduces the target number of prophecy attempts by -2 when would-be prophets can clearly see the stars for the duration of the ritual. Any substantial light pollution or cloud cover blocks this modifier.

More importantly, such omens sometimes just happen spontaneously with no roll or ritual when mortals currently affected by Deceived Sybaris clearly glimpse the stars. Fate borrows their voices to impart the effects of basic success. How and why these cryptic revelations happen is a mystery Fate does not reveal.

DERANGEMENT

Being half possessed by the very godlings who made them Deathless and took from them their True Names, all Deceived are burdened with a strain on their minds that is about as unpleasant as it is unending. All mummies struggle with mental issues to some extent, whether it's memory retention, focus during activity, or staving off millennia worth of depression, but the Deceived are the very face of the phenomenon: Not all are stark-raving mad, but even when they're not, they're often lost in their own thoughts and think in ways that most people find alien or insane.

In game terms, all Deceived characters suffer from two disadvantages other mummies do not:

- As presented, all Deceived are assumed to have at least one derangement (player's choice). Players who really don't want even one derangement can effectively "erase" this mandatory one by buying up their character's Memory (to at least 4) during character creation. (Note that buying one's Memory to 4+ during character creation doesn't automatically remove this starting derangement; it must be a choice, made by the player and integrated by the Storyteller.)
- Deceived characters must *always* make a Morality (Memory) roll to see if they acquire a derangement after losing a dot of Memory, even if their Memory rises to higher than 7 dots. (See "Derangement Immunity," **World of Darkness**, p. 94.)



Many Fates

The Fate that rules mummies is not the same force that other supernatural beings interact with. The fates others glimpse are but eddies of the cosmic stream and may be diverted or dammed. The currents entwined with Sekhem run deeper and unimaginably stronger, with a purpose that does not deign to be known except according to its own design.

True Fate is a mystery, an infinite radiant Is, and shall ever be so until the end of time. In the days of Irem the Restless Stars accepted this sublime unknown, while the other guilds sought darker forces they thought they could better understand. The consequences of that schism still plague the world ages hence, but perhaps that too is a part of Fate's ultimate pattern.



RESURRECTION

The Deceived are the most immortal of immortals, bound to the wheel of Descent and the universe of Sekhem for all eternity. Such is their greatest power and greatest curse.

ENDLESS LIFE

The Arisen and Shuankhsen are immortal, rising from death time and again in every age. Their Rite of Return is perhaps the greatest wonder that magic has ever unleashed upon the world, making them both deathless and undying. By contrast, the Restless Stars are not immortal.

They are eternal.

Under normal circumstances, the Deceived suffer death and return from it just as the Arisen do, resurrecting their sahu around their corpses or the internal organs of their four canopic jars. However, when the Restless Stars face the total annihilation of their remains, or every ounce of their remains are imprisoned in a truly inaccessible location, their cultists can summon them into any corpse that possesses all four critical internal organs (using the standard rules for issuing the Call). The rite and risks faced by Arisen in this predicament (the "Twice-Arisen") do not apply, for *the Deceived cannot become Shuankhsen*.

A Sothic Turn can do even more, summoning the Deceived into whatever intact corpse Fate chooses. Absent an intact corpse, a fragment suffices. Should the world be scoured so clean of life and remnants thereof that no trace of humanity remains, then the eternal echoes of the mummy's True Name throughout the cosmos shall determine where the sahu must resurrect

again and again until the end of time. Some future epoch may see lonely Restless Stars rise upon the burning sands of Mars, staring up at the red giant filling most of the sky as they struggle to hold onto fading recollections of Earth like worn tombstones scoured of epitaphs.

ANCHORED

The Restless Stars dwell within the living universe of Sekhem, denied the mysteries and horrors of Duat that lay claim to the Arisen and Shuankhsen alike. But the eternity the Deceived must endure cannot be escaped into the refuge of any other realms. No magic or power, however mighty, can ever transport the bodies, souls, or any other part of the Deceived into any other dimensions (not the realm of spirits, not the Underworld, not anywhere). Portals to such places are solid walls to them. Neter-Khertet is the sole "exception" (such as it is), since that is more of a state of incorporeality within reality than a realm apart.

THE DECEIVED DESCENT

In most respects, Deceived experience each Descent according to the same schedule and rules as the Arisen. Newly wakened from death, the Restless Stars are nigh unto gods and that power wanes inexorably with time.


Where the "lost" guild differs from the other five lies in what conditions prompt resetting the countdown or hastening it with a provoked Descent Roll. In these matters, a mummy's intent and desires shape her relationship with the power blazing inside her and the temakh who stands as gatekeeper to that power.

The temakhs do not provide a running commentary in clear and easy words. They do not debate or argue or engage in anything resembling dialog. They don't even issue orders or speak; not really. Instead, they communicate through omens and visions and cryptic dream imagery layered with complex and often confusing symbols. They are, in short, no less distant gods to their chosen than the Judges are to the Arisen, even though the Deceived collectively carry those gods around within their own souls.

One of the chief ways the Deceived divine the will of the temakhs is by observing their application of carrot and stick in the flow of Descent. They hold these responses up against their own intentions and draw the best conclusions they can.

For most members of the guild, death is the preferable state. Each period of Semektet is a horrifying ordeal of endless second-guessing, always wondering which urges and feelings and thoughts and perspectives come from the mummy's own consciousness and which have infected her from within. These mummies crave opportunities to





hasten each Descent and seek the brief and brutal self-determination of henet. They cannot burn out their Sekhem by spending it, nor seek willing suicide without eroding the very Memory that grants self-determination. So instead they must find and carry out deeds that placate their temakh to quicken the fall, knowing that if they greatly transgress the will of their masters, they will prolong their torment and also risk eroding Memory.

For Deceived who are loyal or mad or perverse enough to savor the mélange of blended personalities in each Descent, obedience is the path to prolonged Semektet while transgression steepens the plummet. These mummies frighten their more autonomy-driven guildmates, but the division remains a philosophical divide rather than a full schism.

The temakhs cannot be fooled. They know what their servants crave within the souls they inhabit. For those who seek death, completing a goal sanctified by their temakh reduces the mummy's Sekhem by one dot and fully replenishes all spent Willpower. Grievous sins grant a Descent reset along with a roll of 10 dice (with a cumulative -1 penalty per reset previously granted this way during the same Descent); failure reduces the mummy's Memory by one dot.

Deceived who cling hungrily to life function almost exactly like Arisen. Great acts of obedience to their temakh grant a reset, while great sins prompt an immediate Descent Roll. Should a mummy change philosophy mid-Descent, the temakh realizes this and adjusts its own tactics accordingly.

Temakhs may reward any act that greatly furthers their maddened urges (at Storyteller discretion). They all cherish the following acts of devotion:

- Destroy a great monument or historical record preserving the glory of Irem.
- Slay one of the greater Lifeless, as per Arisen.
- Slay one of the Arisen.

- Exact horrifying revenge on a desecrator of his tomb, as per Arisen.
- Personally cause a long-term, important endeavor of the Arisen to fail, wasting all effort.
- Reveal to an Arisen proof of Irem's degradation and her complicity in atrocity.
- Patron a great mortal artist via effort and resources, resulting in a masterpiece with the potential to create seba (whether or not one forms).
- Assemble a set of omens to reveal an important plan of Fate. This means finding many pieces of prophecy revealed in different places and times and then discerning the underlying pattern of meaning and purpose that will significantly alter the shape of history or the world the Deceived inhabits.
- Save the unlife of a fellow Deceived.

Temakhs punish the same overall list of transgressions in their mummies as do the Judges (see **Mummy: The Curse**, p. 155), substituting temakh for Judge where appropriate. Notably, while killing the Arisen is favored, interacting with them in a non-hostile manner is not punished like associating with the Shuankhsen. The Arisen are enemies, not monsters. Slaying the servants of the Judges appeals to the temakhs, but getting to know Arisen in order to shatter their souls with the horrifying truths of their own wickedness and the futility of their efforts appeals more. Also, the temakhs share the same reverence the Judges hold for Irem's gods, save for the Judges themselves. It may seem strange that the temakhs demand that the Restless Stars not cannibalize relics made by enemy guilds, but their logic is simple: Every such relic is cursed, and while it exists, it spreads ruin and horror as befits the vile legacy of Irem. The suffering that follows is a mockery of a monument, a fitting tribute to the greatest betrayers in history.



Am-Henuset

The First Wave

They revere me, the others, and for the noblest of reasons: I was the first.

First to Hear, they called me, and I was. First to hear the song of Duat and of its enthroned king. First to hear that great utterance of the void. First to hear the golden wave of eternal Will.

First to hear the deceit in the misbegotten chorus of the Five.

I alone stood before my assembled brothers and defied the voice of an empire, of its false gods. Those who swam the same currents, who moved within the wave as I did, heard truth emerge, and as they did, they heard me most of all. They knew that without the wave, every song is but an empty word, every dance a cadenced step bereft of meaning or place. They heard me well.

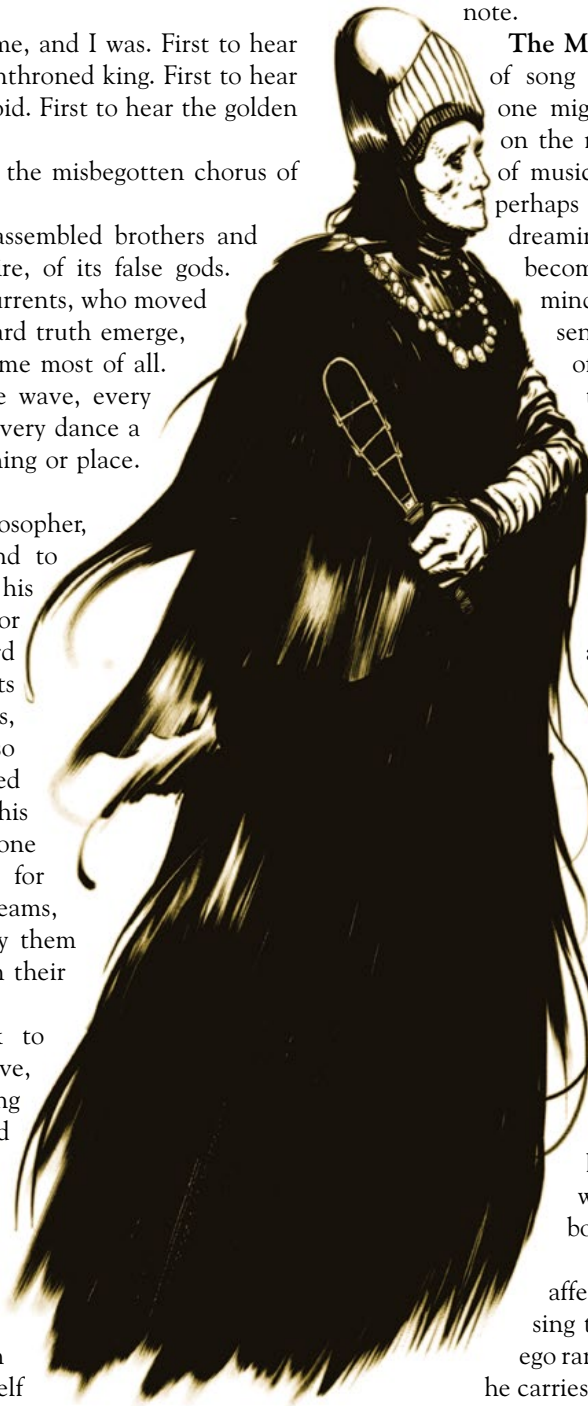
All but the damned philosopher, who for eyes had plenty and to spare, but had no ear to hear; his only gift, a poison tongue for others' ears. His honeyed word made cuckolds of the poets and lap-dogs of the keepers, who longed for nothing so much as a living world united in the afterlife. And for this urge, I claim my due, for it alone secured my brothers' love... for I too know the taste of dreams, and could not move to deny them the promise of its place upon their tongues.


Now, as ever, they look to me, those children of my wave, those screaming and stomping few, burning to give voice and motion to the divinity that is mine to command. The philosopher's shattered soul speaks ceaselessly of truth and of doubt, but the truth of the cosmos does not, *could* not, reveal itself through mortal doubt. It reveals itself through the immortal wave.

All the universe in the hum of a single, ceaseless note.

The Master: The Shan'iatu guildmaster of song isn't remotely the joyful figure one might envision when one cogitates on the notion of a walking embodiment of music. Not this muse. While he was perhaps the most respected of his guild's dreaming masters in Irem, his soul has become a horror to the sane mortal mind in the long years since — a sentient revisitation of the cycles of betrayal, inspiration, and pain, the depth of its tragedy equaled only by its endlessness. Unlike his rival, Neshebsut, the First Wave is not offended by the mystical, religious, or emotive; indeed, within those arenas of dreams, he thrives. Both his stance against the other guilds and his rival's persuasion of folly illustrate his wisdom, at least in what's left of his reasoning mind, and he wears the arrogance of that momentous decision — of the time when he, wisest among them, knew best and counseled best, but went unheeded and shouted down by his brothers — like a crown into just about every dealing he has with another soul. When his temakh makes exceptions to this, it is most often for those vessels of his allies Kehetkhat and Siranuthis, whose bonds of loyalty and Fate, so intertwined with his own, transcend the bounds of condescension.

Despite his almost fatherly affection for those who dance and sing their dreams of him, his powerful ego rarely lets him forget the resentment he carries for being forced into the position of being the last hold-out on his entire culture's





dreams for the future, and in so doing, for allowing his love for them to result in his having to consent to his own betrayal and sundering.

Names: The First Wave, the Dream-Eater

Adaptation: Music has never been so simultaneously omnipresent and devalued as it is in the modern age. It's never been easier to create and disseminate (and steal) music, so there's tons of it around, but most of it goes effectively unappreciated as a result; indeed, some people feel that they're more or less entitled to the music others create, however hard it may be to make. This dynamic has begun to cause a paradigm shift in the way the servants of the Musician interface with the living world. Just as more and more musicians are making their livelihoods off live appearances, performing more of their art before people, face-to-face, so too are those mummies of the Wave exploring the development of their ethos and cults to suit. If nothing else, this abrupt (by mummy reckoning) change has sent a jolt of vital energy through the guild.

Cult: Am-Henuset's disciples see themselves as the caretakers of pure-form inspiration itself. The word "muse" is the root of the word "music," and the First Wave is revered even by other Deceived cults, especially those of Kehetkhat and Siranuthis. The seven guildmasters have no singular leader in their temakh forms, but if they did have one it would be Am-Henuset, and his cults tend to wear that distinction as a kind of hereditary nobility, the way a Guild Status 5 Mesen-Nebu's might do. The simplest cults of the Wave generate online and media followings, using the divine realm of inspired sound to stir the Judges' mortal charges to action. More advanced (often older) cults develop elaborate community programs to stir up sound, to better feed their master's hunger. Like other Deceived cults, their methodology is only important internally; at the end of the day, their purpose is to exalt the Wave and deceive the Judges' get. Although they are rare, even among an already rare species, a few of the Dream-Eater's cults have been around for a *very* long time, and take on an exceedingly primitive aspect, as they exalt the original source of the Master's divine *bau* and work to suit the primordial aims of Fate. These dark few make even the cults of Father Scarab look ordered and civilized by comparison.

Seba: Mummies of the Wave lead their unives in a near-perpetual search of *inspirations*: sudden and intense products of artistic abiogenesis, generating spontaneously in a living mind. Because they are beings of sound, most of what they look for and find with success are tunes, but what's important is the essential spark of delivery that makes a thing where there was none. Collecting inspirations happens most often when a nearby mortal musician either receives a transmission from the Wave

(often in the form of a melody, rhythm, or even a full song), or else performs his music so well and/or so true that an *audience member* is struck by the inspiration. Either way, once an inspiration is ensnared and devoured by a vessel of Am-Henuset, the 'magic' of that fateful blessing is gone from the living world; the rhythm, melody, or gifted idea remains — not even the Deathless can steal or undo that — but any mortal art that results from it will fail to connect, no matter how personal or true it might be to its creator. However good the final product, it will never be a hit, never get stuck in people's heads, never find itself on a list of anyone's album favorites, and so on. It may be fine art, but it will wait forever to be appreciated.

Favored Traits: Manipulation and Resolve (Attributes); Occult (Skill); Lust (Vice)

Mandate: *Cultivate mortal reverence for the immortal Wave.* When the musician presents music to the living (and doesn't blow the presentation), he recovers his full pool of Ren. Although direct performance is the primary method for achieving this, other possibilities exist, such as taking people to a concert and teaching someone how to play a given piece on an instrument.

In addition, any scion of the Wave who captures or claims a seba finds all spent Ren restored.

Am-Henuset's favor is earned through indulging both his purpose and his considerable ego. If the mummy directly compels (no intermediaries or subordinates) another into a state where inspiration strikes, one point in any Pillar is immediately restored. This can be anything from goading someone into thinking she needs to do something she never intended to do, to actually putting someone in a creative state of mind from whence flows genuine inspiration, but the key is that the mummy must enable the process without actually offering up a specific idea, himself.

Burden: Scions of Am-Henuset are perhaps the most sensitive of mummies to matters spiritual and ephemeral; caretakers of what they see as the origin source of Fate's power and meaning. Among other things, this tends to make their temakh more immanent within them than other temakhs are within their own scattered hosts. This comes more from genuine synergy between the master's ethos and theirs than from anything particular to Am-Henuset or his great power. Where other masters tend to inflict their megalomania on their vessels, the Dream-Eater instead *shares* his megalomania with his — feeds it to them, so that they too might go devouring dreams.

Mummies with Am-Henuset's dark temakh struggle all their unives with the ladder of Memory. The tendency, and indeed, the result of all forces working in concert, is for a scion of the Wave to effectively give in to the



harmony of his oneness with the First Wave. Anything to the contrary must be stubbornly, willfully hard-won on the part of the servant host's defiant spirit. When a mummy with this temakh attempts to raise his Memory rating, he must spend Sebajt experience in an amount equal to or greater than the level of Memory to which he aspires (he must invest seven or more Sebajt experience to purchase Memory 7, and so on). Even if the player has saved up enough experience to purchase a new level of Memory, the character cannot do so until and unless he has acquired at least one-third the required amount in Sebajt.

Expression: The undying eaters of dreams have the ability to call upon *The Music of the Spheres*. When such a mummy shares another individual's Virtue or Vice, he can affect them on a deep and visceral level simply by playing some small piece of music; anything from whistling a tune to tapping out a rhythm on a table. If a target hears the sound, and if the mummy succeeds in a (Manipulation or Presence) + Occult + Sekhem roll, the target is affected as per the mummy's intent: If he wishes to **frighten**, the target moves away from him; if he wishes to **enthrall**, targets close their eyes and stop paying attention to their surroundings; if he wishes to **excite**, targets enter a state of heightened agitation and/or arousal, imposing a -2 penalty on actions that require Intelligence or Composure. If the subject is not an ordinary mortal, the mummy's roll is resisted by subtracting the subject's Resolve + (Sekhem or Supernatural Advantage). The effect lasts for as long as the mummy makes the sound or for two turns per success point on the roll. Subjects can spend a Willpower point to act normally for one turn, but if the mummy restarts or continues the performance, he gets a new roll to see if those targets again fall under his spell. (Obviously, being physically accosted will snap a target out of being enthralled, and so on.)

If the scion of the Wave shares both the Virtue *and* Vice of his would-be listener, the target can become an unwilling and ultimately tragic vessel for the mummy's emergent purpose, a living feeding tube for the Dream-Eater. For this type of connection to take place, the mummy must invest a dot of Willpower, which his player may not restore by buying it with experience points, and the subject must be alive (i.e., no mummies). If the terms are met, the mummy may call upon the dreams of his bonded subject to refresh his own spent Willpower. He may do this once per day, restoring up to two spent Willpower points (up to his new, lower maximum); if the initial roll resulted in exceptional success, he may restore up to three spent Willpower points (again, to his new maximum) per day. Note that this restoration comes

Stereotypes

The Dancer: So much power, yet so little vision... if ever the day comes when they stand side-by-side with the Voice, bent to our singularly common purpose, that will be the day we pull time-tempered victory from the embers of betrayal.

The Poet: They harvest critically important seba for the cause, but do so in increasingly few numbers, and toward increasingly strange, even suspect ends.

The Philosopher: After the betrayal itself, the great shame of our civilization, and yet... they thought they did aright, and they did enjoy considerable support.

The Painter: Such sorrow, to be both bereft of the Wave and incapable of true expression.

The Singer: The stone that makes the wave... or breaks it.

The Keeper: The interlocutors of Neshebsut enjoy proclaiming their prophetic minds, but after us, the only other mystics among our kind are Father Scarab's.

The Arisen: They do their masters' bidding from beyond the veil of Neter-Khertet, acting almost entirely on faith... and then they think to call us "lost."

Shuankhsen: For all their failings, the Arisen are of the Wave, at least, begotten of the chorus of the spheres. These pathetic souls are the whores of silence.



at the cost of the bonded soul's own Willpower; if the soul doesn't have the Willpower to sacrifice, the mummy can't call upon it. (Figure on the bonded soul refreshing its own Willpower at a rate of two per day.) If the mummy wishes to sever this connection, he may do so at will, at any time. If a given connection is ever severed, however, it can never again be established; that particular soul can never again be so fully drawn in by the mummy's Music. For his loss, however, and for the time he spent bonded with that soul, the mummy gains one point of Sebajt experience.

The mummy can elect to impose the effects of his Sybaris during any invocation of the Music. He can delay doing so for as long as he continues to make musical sound; if he hasn't exposed those in attendance to Sybaris by the time he stops, he can't impose it during that invocation, even if targets remain under the Music's spell for a period of time thereafter.





HAKKAR-ZOZER

The Hive-Soul

Look to the natural world and you will find me. Cities, whether formed of pillars or glass, are illusions. Man has made a cage of the world as he has made a cage of his mind; the cage of reason. Irem was the first of these and it has burned itself onto the soul of man. They are forever in toil to recapture a greatness unmade by our design. What is this all to prove? That life is not an ever-hastening plunge into an open grave? That death is not a doorway to a prison crafted by mad gods?

Toil scarab... and learn.

Before the first pillar of Irem was complete I knew we had consigned ourselves to a miserable fate. I wandered the wilderness hoping to keep true to the old ways, but Irem of the Pillars would always find me. Once she grew beyond the expanse of the world I had called home, I returned to the heart of the city and set about her ruin. She had swallowed the world and it pleased me to see her choke and thrash, even if it meant my own enslavement. And so I burrowed into the heart of the heart.

While some called me "flesh scratcher," others called me master, but all I offered was the truth. Madmen, mystics, beggars, and oracles were my students. Adorned in rags, I probed the minds and souls of my friends and confidants. I touched their hearts with henna-stained fingers. Why must reason be our master? What man-made reason drives the hawk or the lion? If the gods demanded cities to be built in their honor, then why did the baboon build so few?

We were the scarred vermin that sprawled before the steps of the temple and gibbered and shook as primal power possessed us and raced through the labyrinths we had inked upon our flesh. It would take more than stone gods and stolen incense to reshape the world.

Irem was a lie. And unlike the truth, lies always serve a purpose.

The Master: The end is much like the beginning. The fate of all things made is to be unmade. As much as we try to scratch some mark of our passage onto the walls of existence, all traces will fade in time. These are the revelations of Hakkar-Zozer, and despite the vertigo of the recoiling mind, they cannot be denied. All towers fall and all pits are filled, whether by dirt or by corpses. Even the difference it makes to the worms will be fleeting.

O scarab, if you must build monuments, build them within yourself.

Here is a tale within a tale of our master and teacher who had returned to Irem to pull down its pillars. Hakkar-

Zozer's first pupils came to him and demanded to know what art was to be theirs. And they said to him: This master had claimed the banging of drums, that one the stretching of limbs, and another the snoring recitation of lies. "Teacher," they lamented, "Let us choose an art or we shall be left with none to call our own." To this shameful bleating, Father Scarab responded only with the story of the heron and the crocodile.

Although admirable in many ways, the heron was a picky eater and could only take from the river those fish that could fit down its delicate neck. But the crocodile's jaws were wide. To be like the crocodile is to fill your belly by any means. The method is important, but the goal is king. For Hakkar-Zozer, this truth rules over all.

And so, as snakes and centipedes we writhed and circled in the dirt of doomed Irem. We carved, in stone and wood and bone and flesh. We drew, with gypsum and ink, deep in the caves of the earth and deep in the flesh of our adherents. As we heard the old stories of man and beast, the shadows of both circled around the fire. The fire lit by the Hive-Soul, lit by Hakkar-Zozer.

Names: The Hive-Soul, Father Scarab

Adaptation: The Keeper is both a force of conservation and a force of innovation. Hakkar-Zozer keeps true to the old ways, so that his pupils learn never to trust the false and seemingly immutable world that has risen around them. For the Keeper's pupils, Irem has been reborn in every great city on the earth. Every skyward tower and bloated monument is an echo of the lost city. As the Sothic Turn progresses, visions and portents of a more literal rebirth of Irem abound amongst Hakkar-Zozer's students, and they increasingly incorporate motifs from the fallen city into their work. In short, the pillars and labyrinths have returned.

For these Deceived the body has been a canvas from the start. Hakkar-Zozer's focus on personal revelation and confronting the truths that souls bury within themselves naturally draws his students to mediums that redefine and subvert the human body in its natural state. Scarification, branding, and traditional tattoo have a special resonance for them as the Keeper centers them through the pain and sacrifice of the flesh. The inner self revealed as the false self is cut and burnt away and then the shell is further illuminated with design and color. As they move from body to body, the Keeper's pupils often find themselves with a fresh canvas to explore and recreate, although they prefer to practice these arts on others.

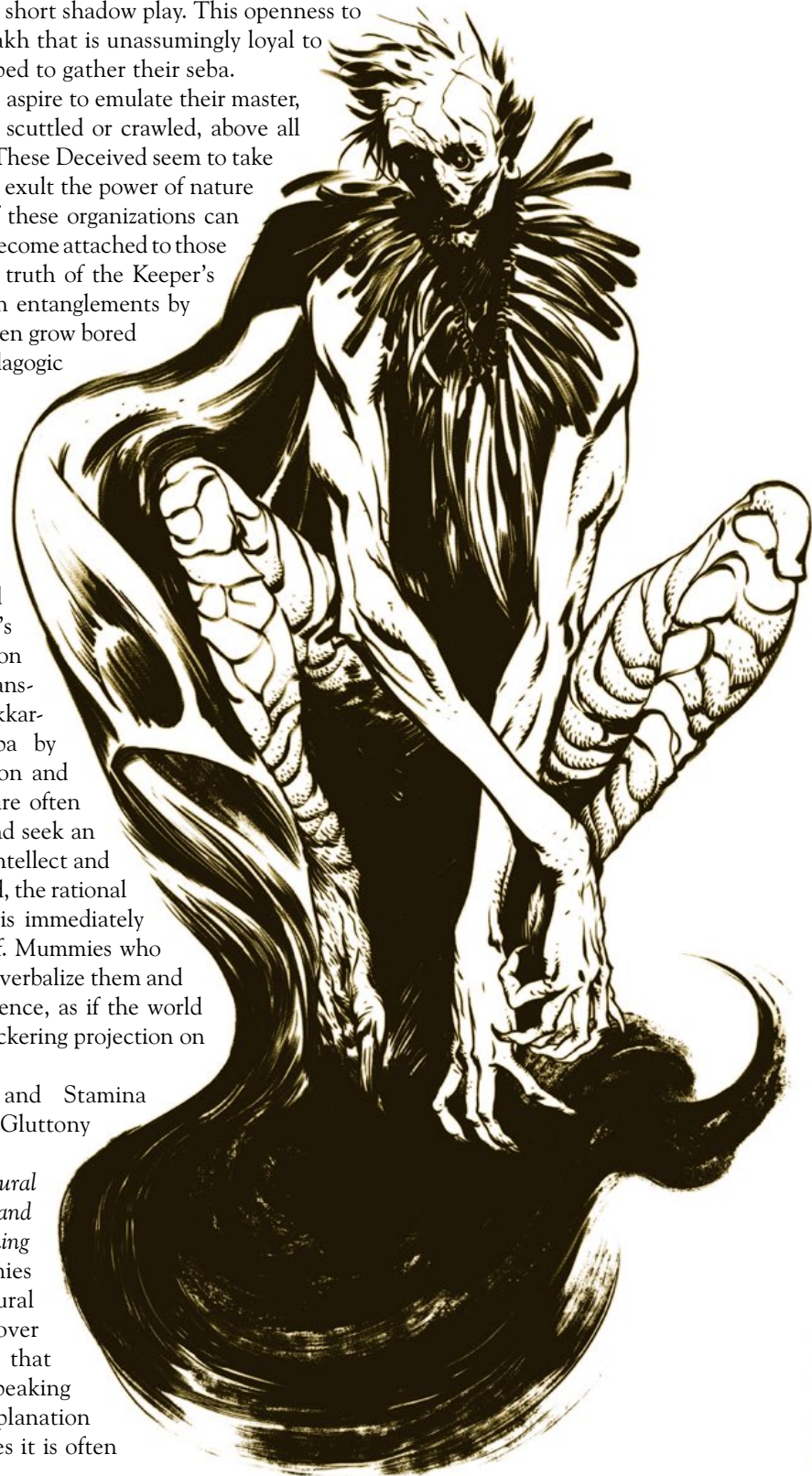
When the Keepers use installations to express themselves they often turn to materials such as bone, stone, and wood. Attempts at incorporating fire and water have also emerged, but in the case of fire these attempts are usually limited to generating the light necessary for a short shadow play. This openness to disparate methods has created a temakh that is unassumingly loyal to their master's goals, but poorly equipped to gather their seba.


Cult: Most of Hakkar-Zozer's pupils aspire to emulate their master, and though he was keeper of all that scuttled or crawled, above all else he was a teacher and truth-teller. These Deceived seem to take pleasure in building mystery cults that exult the power of nature over the civilized world. The goals of these organizations can become muddled as the Deceived can become attached to those members who have truly grasped the truth of the Keeper's message. Those who try to avoid such entanglements by running more secular organizations often grow bored and regularly slide back into their pedagogic comfort zone.

Seba: The Keeper's few are empowered by *revelations*: the sudden realization of the firmament's prophetic content without the interposing barrier of the ordered self. The method for collecting these seba varies, but is most often gathered by stripping away a willing subject's sense of self through a combination of demonstrative parables and transformative body art. A few of Hakkar-Zozer's students have captured seba by the use of meditative inner exploration and ritual scarification. These mummies are often at odds with the master's teachings and seek an understanding unobstructed by their intellect and reason. Once the revelation is captured, the rational memory of the insight is lost and it is immediately subsumed to strengthen the inner self. Mummies who gather revelations find it impossible to verbalize them and often prefer to remain in bemused silence, as if the world around them was little more than a flickering projection on a stained screen.

Favored Traits: Manipulation and Stamina (Attributes); Animal Ken (Skill); Gluttony (Vice)

Mandate: *Reveal the truth of the natural world concealed by the conscious mind and bring forth the wisdom of the unthinking heart.* When Hakkar-Zozer's mummies use only primitive methods or natural materials to reveal the truth, they recover their full pool of Ren. Expressions that rely too heavily on language or speaking will not grant this benefit, if any explanation or narrative is used by these mummies it is often





in the form of riddles, questions, or oblique fables acted out in the natural world or by animals. Fittingly, these mummies prefer to focus on truths related to nature or existence, but any truth that gains its authority by bypassing reason is prime fodder.

Lastly, the mummy is rewarded with a restoration of one point in any Pillar when he confronts another with the irrational side of her nature, often forcing the other to acknowledge the inherent baseness and/or futility of her own existence or point of view.

Burden: Hakkar-Zozer calls to the natural world, rejecting the sovereignty of the mind over man and the kingdom of man over beast. In his students this manifests as an intrinsic rejection of rational thought and order that is often mistaken for madness. The Keeper's Deceived are uncomfortable around the customary trappings of logic and reason. Sitting quietly in a modern library, their borrowed skin crawls; forced to wear a suit, they cannot help but squirm as they're draped in the trappings of man's false authority. Hakkar-Zozer's chosen cannot regain Pillars or Willpower for the remainder of a scene if they have spoken falsely or disguised themselves in the vestments of order or pure reason. Those who must interact with others often speak in riddles and often emulate the dress of the lowliest mortals.

Also, animals seem sensitive to the so-called burden of these mummies and often react with uncharacteristic docility in their presence. Insects, vermin, and reptiles in particular seem almost compelled to gather and pay homage to the mummy, and mortals tend to find the reaction of these beasts to the mummy particularly disconcerting.

Expression: Hakkar-Zozer embodies the *The Sublime Awe of Nature*, and those who walk in his footsteps can tap into the unthinking and howling pit that lies beneath the skin of reason. With subtle gestures, cryptic fables, and the flash of an intricately tattooed arm, the Keeper's pupils can free those around him from the stifling grip of the false world constructed by the mind.

In truth, the mummy is granting them a vision of the hammering heart — a psychotropic journey through an animistic and primitive nightmare wherein the victim is in turn committing and witnessing rituals that mortals can only regard as atrocities. Those who accept their role in the natural world are at once invigorated and broken. Victims targeted by the mummy's expression may regain

Stereotypes

The Dancer: Our brothers. Bone, blood, and sweat... these are the tools we like best.

The Philosopher: Through a twist of nature the mind has become sovereign, but truth lies beyond thought. For thought is the master's whip. It is the crutch many fear to do without.

The Poet: They come close to the fire, but their words hold them back. We fear that for them, metaphor has become the purpose instead of the tool.


The Musician: Their art bypasses reason and quivers through the channels of the flesh. At their best they loosen the chains of the mind and the howling void within answers the call.

The Painter: There is power there, but is there truth?

The Singer: When trapped in language these brothers are blind; when they shed such forms they place their hands upon the hammering heart.

The Arisen: Shadows of a lifeless statue, they stole our fire so they could continue to cavort upon a shit-smearing wall. They played their part — now we must play ours.

Shuankhsen: Death, murder, pain. We leave the poetry to others.



one Willpower point, but immediately gain an active derangement of the mummy's choosing. If a victim shares a Virtue or Vice in common with the mummy, they may regain all of their Willpower points, and in addition to gaining a derangement they regress into an unthinking state, unable to act rationally for the remainder of the scene. If a victim shares both Virtue *and* Vice with the mummy, the victim gains an active derangement as above, even if she refuses to regain Willpower points. Those that do choose to regain all of their Willpower are afflicted with an active derangement as before, and regress into an unthinking, waking dream state for the remainder of the story. It is possible that a victim could be awakened earlier from this state with the help of the mummy or other supernatural forces.

KEHETKHAT

The Thundering Cage

The movements of the stars and heavenly spheres are the music of ultimate reality. Through their shining and spinning, the fundamental rhythm manifests within all phenomenon and reflects the intent of the Heavens themselves. Caught between the force of expression and its mark, those that dance are the bridge between the most numinous and the beating flesh that is the physical body itself. Through the gestures of grace and frenzy, the dancer displays the arc of becoming, being, and destruction in a rapid and terrible cycle.

As performance, the expressed form is directly relatable as all bodies are common to one another. As ritual intent, the form is savage and ancient, capable of the most inhuman brutality wrought with the hammer of the human shape itself.

In the City of Pillars we were the sacred instrument of the temples. Between the passionless prayer-lines of the magi, we were the dancing hands that beckoned with needful intent the powers that reveal our magic. I was the master of these postures and gestures and I remain the fleeting embodiment of divine lightning. The others called me Thunder Cage. To their eyes, my spinning and leaping were as the crushing march of a storm that had become bound within a prison of skin. I am this tempest of fury and grace and my crook and scepter are the becoming and unbecoming of heaven's heart.

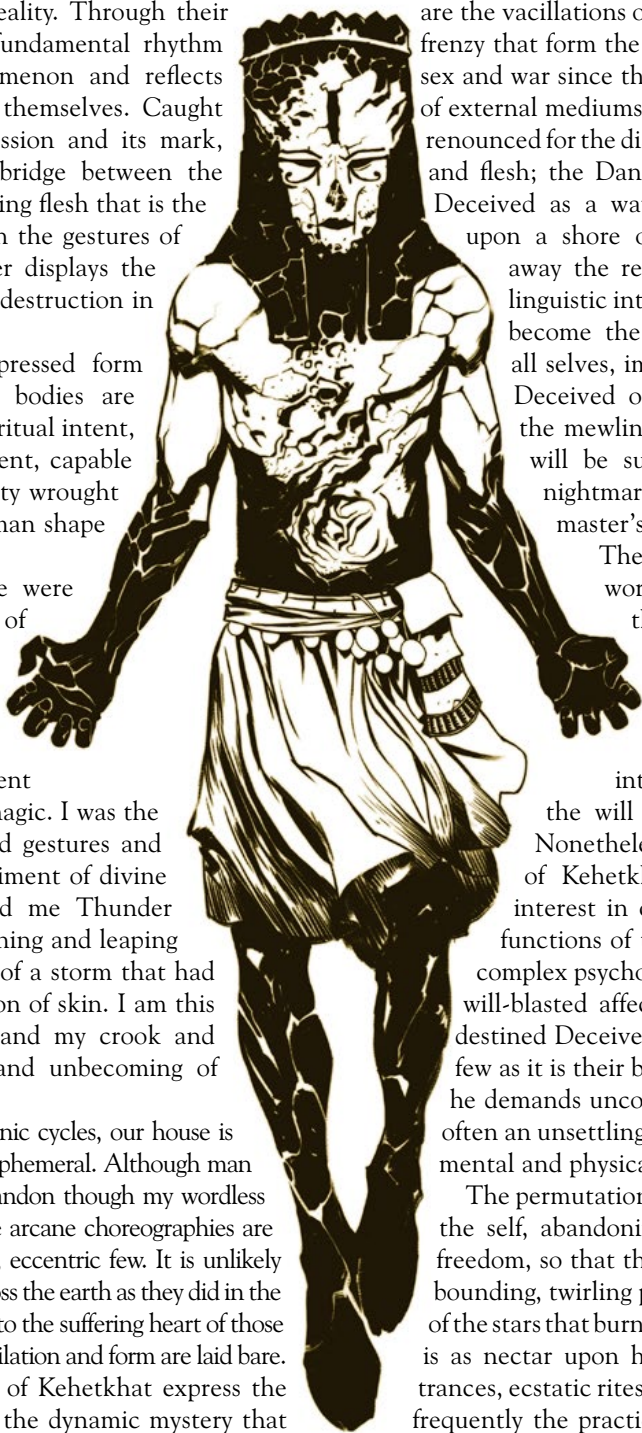
In the days of the latter aeonic cycles, our house is perhaps the most hidden and ephemeral. Although man is still driven to express his abandon though my wordless language, the sacred rite of the arcane choreographies are utterly lost except to a hidden, eccentric few. It is unlikely that those forms will spread across the earth as they did in the ancient days, but if one looks into the suffering heart of those who serve us, the steps of annihilation and form are laid bare.


The Master: The dances of Kehetkhat express the underpinnings of the name, the dynamic mystery that

conceals the hidden magic of meaning's violence. They are the vacillations of repose, stirring, ecstasy, and frenzy that form the volatile heart of every act of sex and war since the beginning of time. The use of external mediums of language and pigment are renounced for the discipline of the bones, muscles, and flesh; the Dancer beats against his chosen Deceived as a wave of molten metal crashes upon a shore of dry parchment. Stripping away the refined layers of dialectic and linguistic interpretation, those who dance become the thousand-faceted mirror of all selves, immediate and exposed. If the Deceived of Kehetkhat do not submit, the mewling remains of the lesser spirit will be subjugated through relentless nightmare visions that express the master's discontent.

The unforgiving lathe of time has worn away much of that fervor that defined the Dancer's guild. The haunted secrets of their master form a tale of reckless indulgence and unwavering devotion twisted into a dreadful enslavement to the will of an unrelenting predator. Nonetheless, the strangest mercy of Kehetkhat's nature is his lack of interest in controlling the more rarified functions of the mind. The occurrence of complex psychotic qualities and that vacant, will-blasted affect of the more intellectually destined Deceived is rare among the Dancer's few as it is their bodies and actions over which he demands uncontested sovereignty. There is often an unsettling contrast between a Dancer's mental and physical displays.

The permutations of Kehetkhat seek to empty the self, abandoning individualized notions of freedom, so that they may more readily serve as bounding, twirling prisms that express the intent of the stars that burn as he does. That commitment is as nectar upon his lips and so indulgence in trances, ecstatic rites, and dangerous endeavor are frequently the practice found within his temples.





Vain and lecherous, Kehetkhat vacillates between states of extreme narcissism manifesting through a predatory fantasy of self-indulgence and a bottomless, destructive nihilistic abandon that cannot be reasoned with. Shifting between a wide-open state of sensate submission and a coldly empty vessel of blood-minded aggression, those who serve Kehetkhat know his passing will quickly burn away all remaining sense of self and leave a gleaming husk that serves as his throne in the world of blood and skin.

It is important to understand that by many accounts, despite the physical aggression of those who claim this temakh (especially when in the throes of their art), the adept is a perfect, unstoppable steed rather than a commanding rider — moved by the direction of something mighty and unseen that does not require a refined mind, but rather a powerful horse to display its rider's tyrannical and vicious power.

Names: The Thundering Cage, the Vessel of Celestial Motion

Adaptation: The art of dance in its modern forms causes great divisions in the ranks of Kehetkhat's mummies. The so-called higher forms of fine dance in all its choreographed form is nearest in its notions to the ritual movements and carefully constructed routines that these mummies first knew. The Dancer believes that the secret to sublime mastery of his art lies in the mummy's capacity for total surrender to the temakh's force. The beginner and intermediate internalize the techniques until they are deeply embedded in muscle memory, as inherent as breathing. Once attained, the mummy gives up her own hold so that her form becomes an instrument of her master's perfect understanding. This method creates powerful mummies that may skillfully apprehend the *seba* of their temakh (albeit at the expense of anything they once considered an individuated self).

For those who wish to embody their own vision rather than that of the great master, there is confusion and hardship. Even if the temakh's command is subverted, the mummy encounters unimaginable difficulty as to command and follow simultaneously creates an outcome that most often results in madness or mediocrity. The mummies that do manage to overcome the terrible obstacles of this predicament often become figures of incredible renown even outside of their personal cults. The being that calls itself Saahrada cultivated such mastery while imprisoned in darkness for aeons. She has since become one of Kehetkhat's most fanatically devoted disciples.

Cult: The Dancer's myriad agents are utterly disparate insofar as the institutions over which they hold sway. In the case of those who cleave close to Kehetkhat's will, such cults shepherd long lineages of performers as to give

rise to legendary prodigies that unswervingly abide in the dogma of tradition and craft, achieving mastery with no deviation from the intended direction. Cults that have this culture are draconian in their methods and tend serve as home to the dysfunctional but specialized — beings that have sacrificed their bodies and lives to satisfy their master's most neurotic and ludicrously specific visions. This is especially miserable as such cults are often lead by a terrible sort of monster that is mostly absent from the group's community in the interest of increasing the demand for their artistic insights. This is similar to the fashion in which trainers starve dogs so that the reward of meat generates maximum loyalty and devotion.

Seba: The Dancer's chosen find nourishment only in *trances*: the extreme peak experiences of artistic gnosis achieved by removing the content of self and temakh as

Stereotypes

The Philosopher: The clear and perfect rain falls upon the mountaintops and travels through trenches of dirt and stone before it reaches the river. By the time it arrives, it no longer resembles the crystal drops upon the peak.

The Poet: Like catching fire in a net, all words fail to grasp the true and unseen star. All these mystics do is cast a glass sphere around the infinite, revealing nothing.

The Musician: We are the Nile's bed and they are its waters. Without our expression, the cosmic vapor of their work is lost to the void. Through us, their golden notes are given life in the realm of hard matter.

The Painter: Form with vigor, like bones frozen in stone. The absolute stars themselves would be lies without the truth of course and aim.

The Singer: The incantations of their chorus are carried through the passages of the unseen and snare the spells and realizations of the unmade world. Although they intone the names, we become them.

The Keeper: There can be no doubt that our masters are of the same blood and that what we seek to harness is the same — one within, one without.

The Arisen: If form follows function, it is better their perfect Irem never was.

Shuankhsen: To feed the deepest self to the darkest force for the bounty of becoming is a path well known to us. But to be undone? Heresy.



to eliminate all obstacles between the performer's vessel and the edicts of the stars themselves. The method for collecting these seba can take one of two forms; either by performing the art that generates the seba itself, or by being the architect of such a performance. Either way, once the trance is captured, the performance loses all appeal to onlookers. The vigor and strength of the performers seems to fade into a gray malaise and the audience becomes lost in the monotony of the movements. Deceived who come into possession of these abstractions tend to manifest incredibly violent and impulsive personalities, enjoying both their inner fire of their own creativity as well as the essence of a stolen masterpiece.

Favored Traits: Manipulation and Strength (Attributes); Athletics (Skill); Wrath (Vice)

Mandate: *Shed the self and expose the naked heart.* When the dancer's mummy spontaneously shows truth through physical expression, he recovers his full pool of Ren. Although dance is the primary method for achieving this, emotional display and less organized physical release will do. This even includes exquisite acts of sex and pleasure as well as perfect deeds of spectacular and visceral violence. These truths are generally immediate and primitive, albeit universal and undeniable.

Kehetkhat's reward is earned through appeasing his wanton and fleshy understanding. If the mummy, through purely physical means, compels another to recklessness, indulgence, or to fulfill some other raw need of the skin, one point in any Pillar is immediately restored.

Burden: Although the Dancer's hold drives his mummy with severe intention, even the master himself

is ruled by his art. As such, the Dancer performs to the currents of music (as well as energetic ritual 'currents' that may or may not be embodied in music depending on the formula) not by imposing will upon form but rather by bypassing personality and getting it out of the way of something unimaginably vast.

There is a strange divide between willpower and perseverance when it comes to the strengths and failings of Kehetkhat and his devoted. To simplify, the dancers cannot resist that which they dish out. Although their capacity to command is far greater than that possessed by others of their kind, they are also far more susceptible to such compulsions. Instinctively given to surrender in the face of impulse and direction, the dancer's inability to resist his own desires manifests in his children as a -2 die penalty to all checks in which the arisen is being compelled to take action by magical or other supernatural means.

Expression: The many forms of Kehetkhat are gifted with *The Seven Steps of Black Honey*. If a mummy possesses a sympathetic Vice or Virtue, he can compel her through a series of subtle but precise gestures and secret movements, to indulge her Vice or deny her Virtue. The subject must witness the techniques (a series of mudras and bodily undulations that are practically ungraspable with the rational mind and with mundane means of perception). If this is the case, the mummy gains a +3 bonus when attempting any form of intimidation or control upon the victim. If the victim shares both Virtue and Vice, the victim will comply with almost any command that is not blatantly suicidal or the torture or killing of loved ones.



THE THOUSAND EYES IN ONE

The Thousand Eyes in One

The great mysteries were beyond language and form and only mad mystics called upon them from the shadowed caves along the Nile's edge. The light of the stars burned into the waters, hiding Truth within them and that is where they remained. It was we that first dipped our hand into those mysterious waters and brought back the light from the other side. "Do not take what belongs only to gods," they said. How could we not take up what was so plainly meant to nourish and empower us? And so we did. And we were feared.

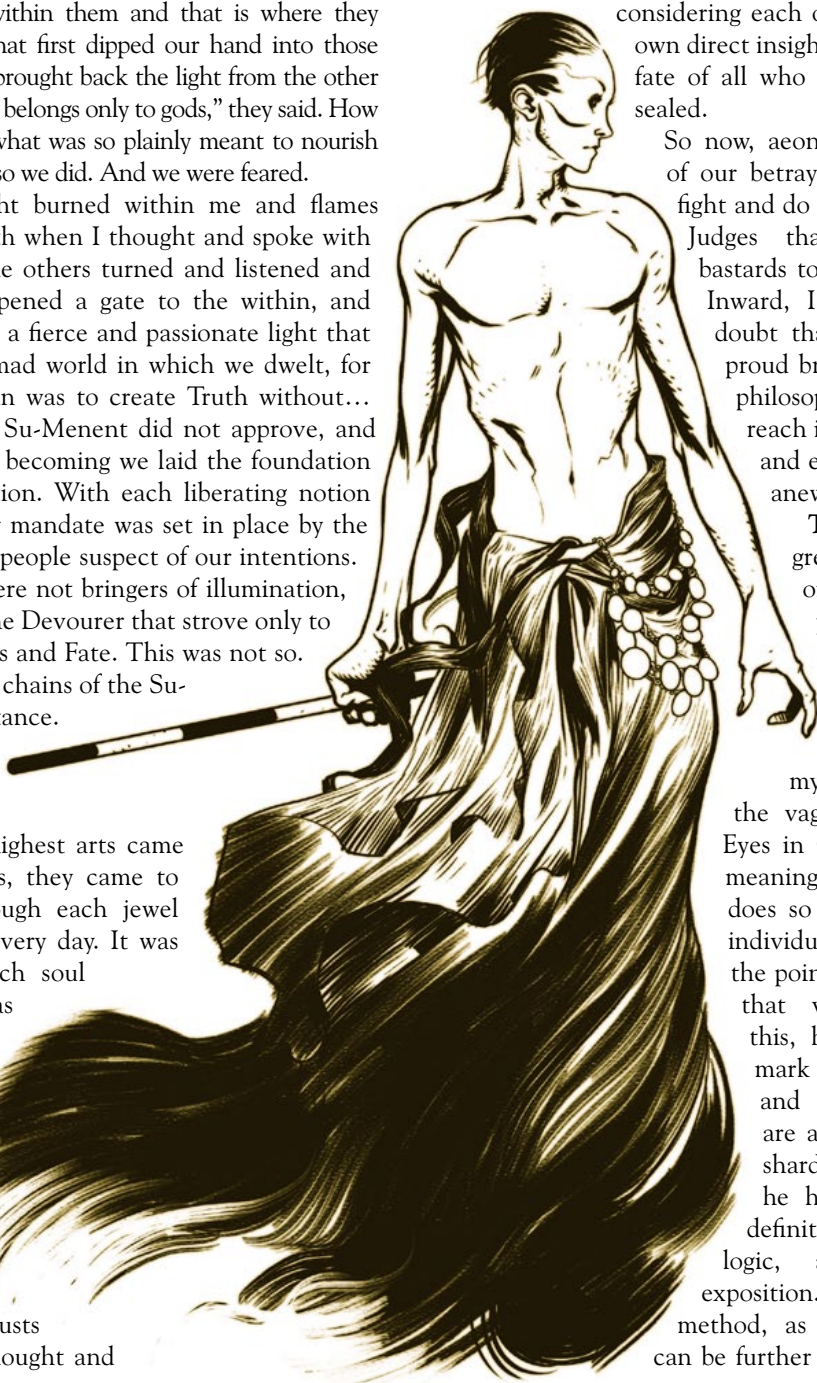
The fire of starlight burned within me and flames poured from my mouth when I thought and spoke with the mind of Azar. The others turned and listened and knew that we had opened a gate to the within, and within each of us was a fierce and passionate light that could penetrate the mad world in which we dwelt, for to realize Truth within was to create Truth without... as the gods did. The Su-Menent did not approve, and in this age before our becoming we laid the foundation for the Great Deception. With each liberating notion we proclaimed, a new mandate was set in place by the priests that made the people suspect of our intentions. It was said that we were not bringers of illumination, but rather agents of the Devourer that strove only to break the rules of gods and Fate. This was not so. We were breaking the chains of the Su-Menent's blind acceptance.

Although the craftsmen did not abide in our words, the children of the highest arts came to listen. Through us, they came to inspiration, and through each jewel they shine until this very day. It was by our gifts that each soul understood itself as something beyond a mere servant of the gods and, instead, came to realize that itself as an expression thereof. This golden notion spread like locusts across the fields of thought and

understanding and the priests hated us all the more. When it became clear that we and our wise brethren and sistren would no longer accept the Law without first considering each one in terms of our own direct insights, our fate, and the fate of all who trusted us, became sealed.

So now, aeons beyond the time of our betrayal, we continue to fight and do not submit to those Judges that abandon their bastards to the cycle of Duat. Inward, I reside. I am the doubt that sits within each proud breast of those brave philosophers who would reach into that dark water and earn the great Truth anew.

The Master: The great philosopher lord of the Shan'iatu is perhaps the most desperate and confusing of the shattered masters. Offended by the mystical, religious, and the vague, the Thousand Eyes in One seeks the raw meaning of all realities and does so with the intent of individuating the soul to the point where it becomes that very meaning. In this, he fails to see the mark of his own hand and calls Truth what are actually the trapped shards of the void that he has suffocated with definition, matrices of logic, and metaphysical exposition. He is ruthless with method, as all things divided can be further divided; an infinite





regress which lays the blueprint for the deepest and most vicious of inner and outer insurrections. It is not enough that the Deceived who share his spirit go mad from unending deconstruction, but that they perpetuate his method and teachings, infecting all thought with his compulsions so that obedience to the mandates of others become unutterable offenses against the highest self.

Although the Philosopher speaks of solidarity and sacrifice, he is wildly untrusting and conspiratorial, suspecting the hand of the Shan'iatu in even the most subtle and innocent of matters. He knows that the other Deceived masters blame him for their pain, and although he accepts this blame when it is blamed heroically, he understands their resentment and is on guard at all times in fear of their vengeful reprisal.

Names: The Thousand Eyes in One, the Void-in-Hand

Adaptation: The advent of Nihilism is perhaps the greatest boon to the philosopher's mummies in the modern age. Hyper-reductionist deconstruction, moral relativism, and countless other postmodernist models have provided a nearly limitless arsenal set to the purpose of undoing the dogma of subservience, replacing it with an inviolable pillar of negation and ego. Although this would seem the work of the Devourer, the philosopher's mummies leave the self entirely enshrined and simply use these types of ideas as weapons in their cause. It is their belief that if all other philosophies are destroyed, the cold, star-fixed praxis of the master will embed itself and lay all Truths bare, tearing away the veil (and control) of the others forever.

Cult: Neshebsut's devotees are the Socratic assassins of culture and civilization and passionately study and collect those ideas and elements that undermine ideological foundation. The most superficial of them cultivate flimsy pop-ideologies with enormous online and media followings, using buzzwords and hollow clichés to rally the witless to more subversive action. Among the sincere, the trappings of wealth decrease with rank, lead by howling madmen with their eyes fixed on the heart of the sun. Although they are often versed in a full array of academically sound continental and analytical philosophies, their espoused view is always one intended to undermine, destabilize and annihilate. Although these cults do not necessarily understand the far reaching effects of what they preach, they are rarely blind to their master's ultimate goals and have accepted the outcome even if it means bringing down great waves of danger and destruction for all involved.

Seba: *Insights* are a grail that lies at the end of the seemingly endless path of the philosopher's mummies: phrases, axioms, maxims, and arrows that turn the mind to the truths concealed within the darkness between the stars. As nebulous as they are potent, these seba are among the most elusive as they must be harvested

from the thinker directly, and not from written works or other interpreted forms. In ancient times, these star-treasures were seized upon conception as oration and philosophical debate occurred with regularity in public forums and in the courts of those so inclined. As time has gone on, and the gold has become buried in a quagmire of limitless, disorganized information, those seba precious to Neshebsut have become unfathomably difficult to harvest. Without the use of precise divinations or an incredibly acute sense for wisdom and brilliance, acquiring such vagaries is nigh impossible or a matter of incalculable luck. That said, the Thousand Eyes in One claims some of the most intellectually brilliant of the Deceived as his flock, and with their combined and curious resources, they seize insights more often than one would think possible.


Favored Traits: Composure and Manipulation (Attributes); Persuasion (Skill); Sloth (Vice)

Mandate: *Forge doubt within the breasts of the blindly obedient.* Whenever one of these mummies undermines the worldview of another, his pool of Ren is instantly recovered in full. There is no need for a formal debate or an eloquently framed argument in order to bring this about. It must simply be an appeal made on the level of reason and logic and it must be adopted willingly on the part of the target, without threat, bribe, or other coercion. It is vital, however, that the entire process be conducted through discourse rather than through written or iconographic depictions. The bare instrument of spoken truth is all that will suffice in this case. As this can be quite difficult, those who bear this temakh often court several such true-believers at once; as each one falls, the mummy satisfies the mandate of his master and enjoys the blessings of power.

The temakh's intentions are far bitterer, wanting only ruin and insubordination where the Judge's intentions once held sway. If the mummy influences his victim to adopt a revolutionary and iconoclastic attitude that is then reflected in his behavior, the mummy regains a point of one Pillar of his choice.

Burden: Those who bear Neshebsut's soul may seem to be the most lucid and grounded of the Deceived, but are most certainly not. They are deeply mad and scarred by the ancient betrayal and reflexively rail against all status quo, mostly at the expense of their own inner peace. With the exception of the actual seba they seek, they cannot leave ideas alone, deconstructing and dismantling their rationales and logics until all differentiation and distinction becomes a matter of angry opinion. This is not the peace of mystics who marry non-duality, and experience the whole rather than its numbered parts. This is a prison of dark reason where the incessant





picking and pulling at flaps of rotting flesh are peeled and twisted to the point of infection. Neshebsut's agents are all ceaselessly obsessive ideologues and deconstructionists of those ideas. If they are posed with a conundrum, riddle, puzzle, argument, or religious axiom that they can rip apart they do. If it lies beyond their understanding, they will deteriorate into frantic glossolalia followed by an eruption into irrational violence.

Once they head down that road, it requires wise council from another Deceived to bring them back from the edge of insanity. Typically, this requires a successful Presence + (Empathy or Persuasion) roll on the ally's part. If no ally is near enough to aid the philosopher, he must spend a Willpower point or remove himself to a place of quiet meditation for a time. If he does neither he must make a Resolve + Composure roll or else launch into the rhetorical glossolalia; once this starts, he has one turn per point of Willpower to either spend the Willpower or leave the scene, as above. If he hasn't done either by the end of the last turn, he lashes out in direct violence.

Expression: The many eyes of Neshebsut have the ability to instigate *The Division of Mind and Spirit*. If the mummy shares another individual's Virtue or Vice, she can hurl that soul into a darkened cave of self-doubt and impose a tenuous grasp on what is commonly called consensual reality. The subject must, of course, indulge the mummy's diatribe for this to occur. If the subject does, however, he will recover Willpower at a slower rate unless in the company of the mummy that afflicted him with *The Division* (about half as often, as a rule). If the target is anything other than an ordinary mortal (i.e., fellow mummy, sorcerer, Lifeless, etc.), the mummy must roll his Manipulation + Subterfuge + Sekhem, resisted by subtracting the subject's Resolve + (Sekhem or other Supernatural Advantage).

If the Philosopher shared both the Virtue and Vice of his disciple, the victim deteriorates into a sycophantic child, erupting into crises of doubt and panic whenever a decision of significant importance needs to be made unless directly guided by the Philosopher. For this level of ideological dependence to occur, the mummy must invest a dot of Willpower, imprinting himself upon the dialectical pattern of the target (the Philosopher may not restore this point of Willpower by buying it with

Stereotypes

The Dancer: They cannot see beyond the bars of their physical cage. They revel in the primal, dancing circles around the great work, ultimately accomplishing nothing.

The Poet: We address an equal scope of reality and evoke the cold intentions of the stars to be sure. Nonetheless, the poets rely on ambiguities, balls of mud compared to our carefully aimed arrows.

The Musician: Alas, if the language of scholars could call down what their art embodies, our spell would have been revered beyond all others.


The Painter: Plain truths literally represented are nothing more than repetition bolted to the vanity of craftsman who has abandoned utility altogether.

The Singer: Like birdsongs sung at early dawn, they summon such a beauty though it fades under the scrutiny of the true day's light.

The Keeper: We understand them in essence, but not beyond. They are trusted allies who seek as we seek, but in the beasts beneath the stars rather than within the stars themselves.

The Arisen: Obedient dogs receive rich and plentiful rewards.

Shuankhsen: It is similarity that breeds the bitterest varieties of hate. We walk an identical path, but theirs leads to oblivion and ours to the heart of Heaven.



experience points). If so afflicted, the subject may not regain Willpower unless in the Philosopher's immediate presence, scurrying and cagey in his guru's absence. If the mummy wishes to disinvest himself of his newly mad devotee, he may disillusion the disciple under the same conditions that the Division was implemented. When this occurs, the victim suffers a permanent severe derangement of the mummy's choice. To do this, the mummy must roll his Manipulation + Subterfuge + Sekhem, resisted by subtracting the subject's Resolve + (Sekhem or other Supernatural Advantage).

NEPHIR UN-ANKH

The Verse That Speaks Itself

Speak, and you invoke me. I was before I was, heralded by the great beginnings that culminated in my tale. I observed the reign of those long forgotten, the rise of man, and the settling of brutish wanderers into civilization. I knew the Nameless Empire in its infancy and in its glorious ascent, until at last I wailed my first breath and spoke. I was in all events because I am not a storyteller, but a story that tells itself through me.

In Irem, poets spoke the words that some audiences craved, others feared, and all respected. We were scribes upon our minds, upon our witness, more pure in knowing than writing could possibly record. And yet the scribes chiseled their shallow glyphs, while monuments and pillars climbed to the sky alight with cosmic mysteries. From the least of magics grew the sorceries of the will, and by such utterances did Irem make miracles undreamt by man or god. So it was that poetry became magic and my children wreaked fantasies and fictions upon the firmament. Verse by verse, we changed and tamed the world.

Once upon a time, I was a man, but I am beyond such concerns now and even I do not remember the truth of my past, for stories always change in their repetition and who can say which version is true? Beneath the sign of the scorpion, poetry entertained, enlightened, recalled histories and traditions, orated stirring speeches, declared wars, and prayed to the gods and to great and obdurate Fate.

Our power grew with our vocabulary, refining our art to encompass every nuance, every possibility. We named the nameless and unspoke the names that chained our understanding. We gave lyrics to musicians and spoke

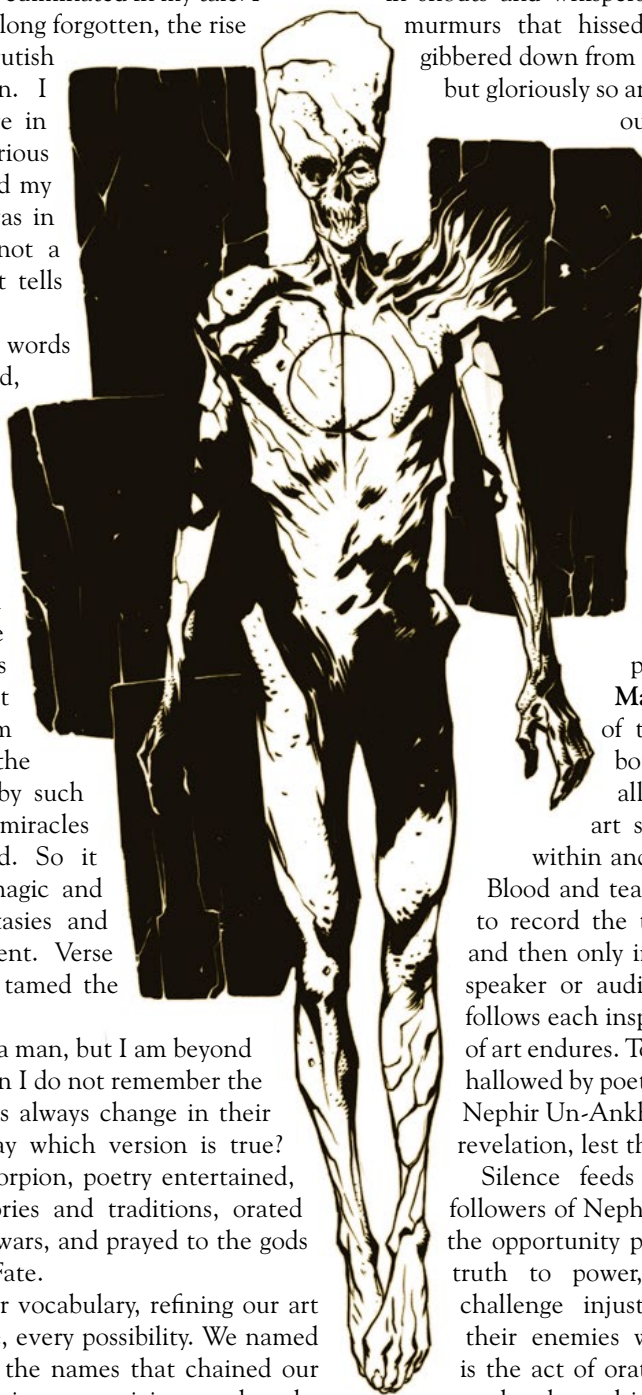
the words that scribes so feebly recorded. We made magic in shouts and whispers and the repetition of secret murmurs that hissed from the deepest pits and gibbered down from the stars. Often, we were mad, but gloriously so and all the more well-spoken for our madness. We paid the price gladly to be spoken through, to offer ourselves as vessels to greater truths.


Alas, our poem ended mid-sentence, breaking the verse as we lay broken by the treachery of the Five. Irem fell, its pillars toppled, and I traded flesh for echoes reverberating throughout the cosmos. Where any speak, I speak. Where my followers listen, I listen. And where they act, ideas become such terrible deeds....

I shall hear the story of Irem pass from epilogue to silence.

Master: To bear the presence of the Poet is to be alike to it, both vessel and mouthpiece for all narrative. It is its will that art should hurt, that verses burn within and sear the heart when spoken. Blood and tears are the only acceptable ink to record the truths and fantasies of being, and then only in the moment they adorn the speaker or audience. Madness precedes and follows each inspired line, until only the purity of art endures. To be hallowed by poetry is to be hallowed by poetry, and the Deceived bound to Nephir Un-Ankh must surrender to this sacred revelation, lest they feel their master's ire.

Silence feeds the Devourer, and so the followers of Nephir Un-Ankh must speak when the opportunity presents itself. They can speak truth to power, whisper blasphemous lies, challenge injustice, or eloquently threaten their enemies with soul-flaying torments. It is the act of oration, not the content of one's speech, that ultimately matters. The highest





calling, the greatest verse, is not made of mere words, but substantiated by magic and miracle. The Verse That Speaks Itself craves knowledge of Utterances and commands its children to do the same.

Let others ponder meaningless abstractions or flail about with paint or chisel or epileptic gyrations in the vain hope of enduring legacy. Nephir Un-Ankh knows such things must pass and fall away, but words once spoken endure in the memory of Fate, and Its own formless being. Death is but the end of one verse, and the start of another. Why then should it be feared, and moreover, why should the chosen of the Verse That Speaks Itself hesitate in dealing death? After all, the lives of those who do not make art have no value or meaning, and those who speak the greatest words must be undone and consumed by their craft. In the end, all are unworthy.

Names: The Verse That Speaks Itself, the Tale Without End

Adaptation: Little has changed in the world to alter the course of poetry and storytelling, save perhaps for the opportunity to address distant audiences through modern media technology. Then, too, there is the noise of the now, the omnipresent chatter of televisions and radios and phones blaring trivial babble; yet still words and, thus, poetry in a way.

Where would-be intellectuals jabber in faux profundity, the Verse That Speaks Itself holds sway. Where the dying make final requests or confessions, the temakh speaks. The beat-driven bravado of rappers and the rhythmic condemnations of talk radio demagogues are but bastard spawns of verse and song, like so many art forms before and yet to be. The Tale Without End calls out in the addresses of presidents and kings to their people, and in the cries of preachers at their pulpits. The fundamental nature of man is vile and enduring: war never changes, peace never comes, and the laments of the suffering go unanswered.

Modern tools are like ancient tools, fleeting and ephemeral. A waterskin in the desert has no value except for what it holds to parch the bearer's thirst. So it is with the methods and forms by which speakers speak and audiences listen. In ages yet to come, it will be much the same.

Cult: Only the mute do not worship the story that speaks through and that is Nephir Un-Ankh. Even to open one's mouth and let words tumble forth is a prayer to the master. Because of this, the followers of the Verse That Speaks Itself do not necessarily have anything in common with each other. They could be anyone and anywhere. Like a cancer, the poet's broods span the breadth of humanity with tendrils of influence growing

Stereotypes

The Dancer: They caper like drug-addled monkeys, saying nothing and yet so certain they are saying so much. At least they are entertaining.

The Philosopher: Once upon a time, a wise man had a brilliant idea. Because he feared his neighbor stealing his idea, he said nothing. The next day, the man died and his idea died with him.

The Musician: They fill the silences between our orations, and so frustrate the Devourer's silence. For that, we are grateful.


The Painter: A picture is worth a thousand words. It is most fortunate then that we have a thousand thousand words with which to speak.

The Singer: Poetry is poetry, but we pity their need for melody in a world of cacophony and discord. They are so determined to suffer needlessly.

The Keeper: Once upon a time, a king kept a crocodile as a pet. He admired the creature's beauty and power. One day, he leaned too close and was eaten alive.

The Arisen: We shall redact their words and deeds from the annals of history until they are silenced and forgotten. Only then will we hurl them into unending darkness.

Shuankhsen: In their tattered souls, "Once Upon a Time..." leads directly to "The End." There is no story left in these wretches.



into and choking that which opposes the immortal agendas of the Deceived.

Eloquence is power, but there is no eloquence greater than that which speaks from a place of understanding. Cultists who speak well, whose words have the power to shape their world, are prized most by their masters. Thus, the cults of this temakh almost inevitably form conspiracies and tend toward the trappings of mystery cults and secret societies whose spoken rituals all lead toward the fulfillment of some unknown objective. Given the intertwined relationship between speaking and magic, cultists with mystic knowledge are vastly favored over those who lack such lore.

Seba: Although the servants of Nephir Un-Ankh grudgingly acknowledge the magical power of seba formed by lesser arts, they revere *orations* as a purer expression of magic and especially prize cosmic seba as the purest words that the universe can speak. Wherever great speakers speak



great words, the chosen of the Tale Without End lurk and seize emergent wonders for themselves, breathing in the magic that was just breathed out. Speakers feel inexplicable coldness gripping their throats and weighing heavily upon their tongues whenever the Deceived claim their orations.

Favored Traits: Manipulation and Intelligence (Attributes); Expression (Skill); Pride (Vice)


Mandate: *The verse must speak itself.* By spending a scene focused on word-creation endeavors or on oration of any kind, the Deceived belonging to Nephir Un-Ankh may regain one point of any Pillar (though doing so risks mania; see below). If he spends the scene thus, and his Expression roll results in exceptional success, then he may choose to regain all points of Ren instead, though this can only be done once per chapter.

Burden: The chosen of Nephir Un-Ankh are creatures of immense passion that fluctuate between extremes. Whenever a mummy with this temakh spends most or all of a scene on creative endeavors and/or oration, roll one die. The character becomes manic for one day per success. If it fails, then his soul and mind remain grounded for now, but he cumulatively adds one die to future mania rolls. Succumbing to mania resets the dice pool one die. While manic, the character adds +2 dice to creative acts and Expression rolls, but suffers a -1 die penalty to all other Skill rolls due to the distraction

of his creative urges. Servants of the Verse also suffer Melancholia (**A World of Darkness**, p. 97), either as the character's starting derangement or in addition to it (player's choice). If a character is manic and fails the roll to resist becoming depressed, the despair takes priority, temporarily suspending mania and the need for mania checks until the melancholia subsides.

Expression: A mummy who serves the Tale Without End can construct *The Prison of Language*. When one speaks with intent to compel, influence, frighten, inspire, or otherwise stir the soul, then all non-mummy listeners who share the speaker's Virtue or Vice lose one Willpower point, after which they become immune to further such Willpower drain by that mummy for (target's Composure rating) minutes. If this removes their last point, they comply to the best of their abilities with the speaker's intent unless doing so would obviously cause serious physical harm to themselves or close loved ones. Oral communications that merely seek to convey information rather than impact the listener's behavior do not impose drain. Non-mummy listeners unfortunate enough to share both Virtue *and* Vice with the speaker lose two points per drain and only gain a single minute of immunity before the speaker can drain them again. This power only affects listeners who hear the speaker directly and cannot be conveyed via radio, TV, etc.





SIRANUTHIS

The Voice of Forever

We have all heard the tale.

Indeed, the orators and music-makers were thick as thieves on the matter, unified as they were on perhaps no other, recounting it at great volume and with somber reverence in the halls and amphitheaters of lost Irem. “Out of the great void,” they would intone, “Through the vastness of the space before time, there did stretch a divine wave! Alone it coursed, neither hearing nor being heard, neither seeing nor being seen, until at last it struck a thing — the black stone that is the center of Creation! And from that great reverberation, that first echo, came not merely music, but all inspiration!” And so on (and on).

I leave the finer points of the narrative to my brothers, the orator. What matters is that even those of impossibly vast ego and pride humbly recognize the power and place of the stone. Without the stone, there can be no echo.

Without the echo, there can be no art.

What is that first thing that every newborn does upon being delivered into the living world? Life’s first breath is itself a scream — the meaning of life and death in a single, thoughtless howl. And indeed, what is that last thing that the ancient and withered do upon their deathbeds? Nothing so exquisitely personifies the essence of existence, of the golden prison of form, as does the wail of a blood-smeared infant, still tethered to its mother’s deflating womb, or the death rattle of an old man who has lost everything *but* his voice.

They all are songs to me, each one the sacred echo of an echo.

Each one sung into the living world is a paean in my name.

Master: If it can be said that each master has a trait that calls out to the fear in others — the jagged mind of the Philosopher, or the dark wisdom of the Keeper — it is the sheer power inside every vessel and shard of the Singer that gives others pause. In Irem, he was neither the wisest nor the most gifted with the earthly tools of art, but when his maw yawned wide, and when his voice rose in his throat, every master for miles shuddered his respect for Siranuthis, the Voice of Forever.

Unlike the orator, the Voice does not feel compelled to give voice in all things and at all times, but rather leans the other direction, drawing his focus down, to where it rests solely on the art, blocking out all other distractions. This tends to lend his vessels an archetypal air of being a

person of few words, or else possessed of a reputation of “talking softly and carrying a big stick,” but the source of it remains the same: Those chosen by the Voice know *focus*. Because when the time to act does come, they want to perform that act not just better than anyone else around them could have done, but better than anyone else has *ever* performed it, themselves included. Unsurprisingly, to find oneself the object of a singer’s attention is an anxiety-inducing prospect.

Names: The Voice of Forever, the Howling Stone

Adaptation: In a world where *American Idol* is the most popular show on television, the undying cults of song enjoy a strange, heady environment in which to work their various interests. Some disciples of the Voice have sought to boldly integrate themselves into the heart of these modern spaces, moving their tombs and even their cults entire to centers of song like Nashville and NYC. (Indeed, one particularly enterprising Deceived makes his tomb beneath a Southern Baptist church, where he routinely bathes in the joyful noise being made overhead.)

Others reject the molds of the day, preferring instead to spin dark ritual around the climate they knew best, in effect reconstructing the patterns of their lives as open-mouthed stargazers in a time and place they can no longer even recall with any clarity. These singers can be some of the most powerful and terrifying mummies in existence, especially once the madness takes over.

Cult: When a philosopher or poet opens his mouth to bestow his art upon mankind, the passions and energies stirred in the breast of the living comes not from his deathless voice, but from the beauty and meaning derived not by the heart within that breast, but by the mind; through its interpretation of language. This layer of detachment, this step of removal from the source, is absent in the art of Siranuthis. Living beings of *all* kinds — whether literate or not, or whether they even understand the mummy or not — feel the singer’s art on a pure, primal level. As a result, the followers of the Voice need share only one thing in common with each other: They must have heard the mummy sing. For any mortal who hears the Voice, hears it forever.

Eloquence, discernment, deconstruction; these are the things of the higher, more impure mind. The Voice promises only the sublime, and more’s the point, it delivers on its promise. For this reason, Siranuthian cults can be some of the most zealous or devout in their service

of their Deathless master, as any follower of the Voice is tailor-made for the very archetype of the Osiran lord, divinely come unto the living to lead them into the righteousness of other worlds.

Seba: The servants of the Voice acknowledge the power inherent in seba formed by other arts, especially their 'parent' art of music, but they revere *performances* as the purest expression of what expression *is*, fundamentally, and thus of their particular guild's overall power. There's certainly no doubt that singers are among those who shine the very brightest among the Stars, and the sheer potency of their seba plays a role in this reputation. The chosen of Siranuthis seek out the singularly expressive, expressed singularly — that Miles Davis solo that'll never be repeated, that glorious E-above-high-C that the soprano nails from start to finish at the aria's end, etc. Performers experience a surprisingly wide variety of reactions to the claiming of the seba they unwittingly help create, but most feel an inversion (whether gradual or sudden) of the performance principle: Instead of feeling fulfilled and more fully connected to an adoring audience, they feel exposed, embarrassed, and/or unappreciated; on some level they still know they nailed the *performance*, but they can't seem to enjoy the fruits of their talent and skill.


Favored Traits: Manipulation and Presence (Attributes); Expression (Skill); Greed (Vice)

Mandate: *Captivate the voice of expression, itself.* By spending a scene either singing or watching one of the living perform something well, whether it's song or instrumental music or even theatre, the Deceived of the Voice may regain one point of any Pillar (though doing so risks obsession; see below). If he spends the scene thus and the relevant roll (either his own Expression roll or the performance roll of another) results in exceptional success, then he may choose to regain all points of Ren instead, though this can only be done once per chapter.

Burden: The servants of Siranuthis are burdened both by their master's laser-like focus and by the white-hot obsession that often results from it. Whenever a mummy with this temakh spends most or all of a scene either singing or watching the living perform well, his soul is fulfilled, but so too is the obsession inside him kindled. The mummy can only perform to get Pillar restoration once per day without ill consequence: For each additional time he sings to get a Pillar point restored, he suffers a -1 penalty on Mental Skill checks that lasts for 1 day per penalty point (e.g., if he sings three different times in the same day to recover 3 Pillar points, he'll suffer a -2 penalty to all Mental Skill rolls for the next two days; penalties take effect as soon as acquired).

By similar token, those Deceived of the Voice can only draw spiritual fulfillment from a particular living performer once per story without risking obsession; they must spread their focus around. Violating this proscription doesn't cause the mental distraction that overindulgence of performance





causes, but it does risk triggering full-on Obsession (see **A World of Darkness**, p. 97) — a derangement all vessels of Siranuthis can suffer, even if they don't possess it otherwise. The second time one refreshes his Pillars on a given performer in the same story, his player must roll Resolve + Composure. Success spares the mummy active derangement, but failure instills mild obsession in him, and he must work to keep it under control. The third time he refreshes Pillars from that same performer, there is no roll: If he succeeded before, he's now mildly obsessed; if he failed before, his derangement is now active and severe, at which point things are liable to get dangerous for the object of his attentions and those close by, if not for himself. A mildly obsessed mummy will grow severely and actively obsessed on his next visit, as above.

Expression: Chosen of Siranuthis are capable of giving voice to the *Song of the Heartsick Heart*. When a mummy of the Voice shares either his Virtue or Vice with another non-Deceived, he can cause that soul to act upon its basest, purest nature simply by singing where the soul can hear; anything with a melody, from wordless, Fitzgerald-era scat to booming, full-throated opera. If a target hears the song, and if the mummy succeeds in a (Manipulation or Presence) + Expression + Sekhem roll, the target is obliged to act on her Vice in a direct and potentially dangerous way; if the target shares only a Virtue with the mummy, he can cause her to act out *his* Vice, instead. If the subject is not an ordinary mortal, the mummy's roll is resisted by subtracting the subject's Resolve + (Sekhem or Supernatural Advantage). How successful the roll is determines the overall level of intensity and/or urgency the mummy can instill in a given target with regard to the Vice. Context and personality will determine how a given target acts out the spirit of the invocation. Subjects can spend a Willpower point to act normally for one turn, but until and unless they spend as many Willpower points as the mummy's roll garnered points of success, they will continue to be strongly impelled to act upon their given Vice. If the Deceived achieved an exceptional success on the roll, he can impel a target to act upon his Temakh Virtue, instead.

If the Deceived shares both the Virtue *and* Vice of his target, he can affect her as he could anyone with whom he shared only one or the other, but bolstered by two potent advantages: First, he can choose to cause such a target to act on his Temakh Virtue regardless of the might of his roll; if his roll succeeds at all, that option is open to him. Beyond this, he may also use such a sympathetically attuned target as a means of transferring some of his own unwanted obsession. If his roll succeeds, he can choose to instill the Obsession derangement in the target, reducing

his own active obsession one step (from severe to mild, from mild to inactive, etc.); if the initial roll resulted in exceptional success, his own obsession drops all the way down to inactive, regardless of steps. An exceptional success also allows the mummy to instill obsession in another even when his own obsession is dormant, although doing so is a sin against Memory 5. While the target remains so obsessed, the mummy can track her as if through kepher, as if she was a relic known intimately to him. If the target ever rids herself of the derangement, the connection is severed and the mummy can no longer instill true obsession in her with his Song.

The mummy can elect to impose the effects of his Sybaris during any performance of the Song. He can delay doing so for as long as he continues to sing; if he hasn't exposed those nearby to his Sybaris by the time he stops, he can't impose it during that invocation, even if targets remain under the Song's spell for a period of time thereafter. If multiple valid targets hear the Song, the mummy himself decides which one(s) he will affect with the fullness of his divine expression.

Stereotypes

The Dancer: It is not that they speak with no voice. It is that a dancer's body is his voice, and on occasion it speaks very loud, indeed.

The Philosopher: Once, there existed an ego so vast that it could not be contained within a single form. And so it chose to scatter, to become legion, so that it might better spread its singular truth.

The Musician: There was no victory or justice before it was first heard.

The Painter: Where was their truth-seeing just prior to our betrayal, I wonder.

The Poet: About one thing, the poet is right — this is a world of cacophony and discord. Where they get it wrong is that you can cut right through it all, like the prow of a longship through a wave of spume. You just can't do it with words.

The Keeper: Guardians of an ancient and important art, their wisdom is one of the things keeping us from spiraling off into the outer dark after so much unlife.

The Arisen: Voiceless, all.

Shuankhsen: With no voice to speak, the Judges' slaves still manage to serve meaningful purpose — these shades are all roaring mouth, yet silent in the soul.

TUTKEPERTANU

The Image of Primordial Woe

When I think of this shade of red I remember blood on a copper knife, sunrise shimmering upon it — all the things a mortal might say gave this color birth. But the truth is the color didn't come from my knife, when I dragged it across a seam of tissue on my servant's belly, during the Empire. That red moved my hand, waiting to be born into light. My servant took his place so that it would come forth.

We prepared fragrant replacements for his organs, and kept four jars ready to welcome the man's offal.

How many lives have I spent since, seeking that particular shade? They have books of color now, and colors rendered out of lightning. "Digital image manipulation." They make colors like the slaves do, but use light instead of plants and minerals and animal parts. None of them can create that red. I have found that one of the limitations of mortal eyes is to see things solely in reference to other things. Yellow and blue make green. Mortals understand it thus because they see with eyes of flesh. Even speaking to myself — that is, my shell and its human mind — I am forced to use these references, when a true color is a thing in of itself, like a kiss.

I can compare two kisses, but each has a distinct mystery, issuing from its origin: a particular lover, child, mother, brother. Yet type (a kiss) and origin (a relationship) are insufficient. I need the true language: the Nomenclature to speak of the thing in of itself. The real name of a color or kiss is an essence that radiates meanings like the varieties of sunlight.

I cut his belly during a ritual that was not of my making. I was invited to participate, to smother our suspicions. Had I known this slit corpse would become the instrument of my betrayal, perhaps I would have turned away from this particular shade of red, plunged the knife down a hundred times, and called forth all the colors of blood from the wreckage. I was ignorant; I wanted to see the color of this magic and harvest it for my painting. This red was born of the deep secrets. It reminded me of Azar, my pride and anger and shame — and that the shame was new. Before I had a name for it, I dreamed of this red, the way a mother to be imagines the face of her child before giving it a name.

I do not like shame. It's a heavy, animal feeling. Too human.

I would rather truly be the painter, with a spirit as vast, distant, and indestructible as the sky after cloud-banishing

rains. So I seek this particular red out to destroy shame. If I saw this color again I'd understand the origin of this emotion (which is surely not our betrayal of Azar, nor the mutilation I inflicted upon the very body I wear, for these are human reactions) and paint it in fading hues, so that it would fade as well, like frescoes in a century of desert sun. But I have slit many stomachs since, and said such words as I remember, and the red — the true color of shame — does not flow.

It remains clotted in my heart.

The Master: Tutkepertanu's work portrays true names as images. The Shan'iatu lord of painters believes that literal representation reproduces the veil of illusion through which mortals view the world. They see neither the hands of Judges plucking threads of destiny cast down by the stars, nor the Devourer gnawing through them, fraying the world's invisible structure long before it transforms into the madness and destruction, they perceive in the material world. They don't see the worlds between worlds, their gods, ghosts and monsters, and the way they influence every living breath or spectral wail. The Painter depicts more than what the eye sees, using principles derived from the Nomenclature to make the true nature of his subject clear to any who witness his work. Half-divine pharaohs are rendered as taller than the teeming mortals crowding around their feet to explain their relative power in the cosmic drama.

The Tutkepertanu's soul split into obsessive fragments of the Painter's mission, named for the titles he once claimed as an Iremite lord. The *Maker of Epics* depicted images through time, from the buried past to destinies yet to be arrayed in the stars. The *Renderer of Souls* painted the elements of mortal or immortal spirits, showing the subject's inner character and mystical influences of souls. The *Bringer of Divine Attributes* went further, giving favored subjects magical powers by painting them with heroic traits. The *Illuminator of Coffins* displayed the sigils and regalia required to bind spirits. *He Who Uses the Brush as His Chariot* holds the mapmaking skills of the Painter, said to change with the land and its people. The *Painter of Beasts* brought nature under his command, binding them to artwork, and *He Who Paints What Must Be Veiled* illustrated indescribable concepts and entities. The Rite of Return stole Tutkepertanu's ability to create these works, but he seeks ancient examples from the age of the Nameless Empire, as well as new works made by sorcerer-artists.

Names: The Image of Primordial Woe, the Truth-Maker

Adaptation: The Painter's disciples struggle with modern art. Tutkepertanu believes art should portray that which actually exists. Although this includes emotions and intellectual concepts, this framework breaks down in the face of the more ambiguous, conceptual aspects of contemporary visual media. Some of his mummies find these new forms appealing, and chafe at the temakh's definition of artistic truth. Those under Tutkepertanu's sway usually prefer to immerse themselves in industrial design and commercial illustration. These fields are not only more comprehensible to the temakh, but open paths into businesses that might finance their cults. A few might dabble in film and television, but prefer purely visual storytelling to convoluted plots and detailed characters.

Deathless who have accumulated the Memory to assert themselves over the temakh are more likely to find a place in the fine art world. However, the past few decades have seen a return to representational artwork, using motifs drawn from illustration, traditional tattoos, and folk art. These mummies find something familiar in this style. Like their ancient work, it uses concrete imagery to reveal more about a subject than what the eye sees.

Cult: Tutkepertanu's Deathless command servants interested in visual media. Less prosperous cults flower among tattooists, folk artists, and comic creators. They look to the mummy for inspiration and validation. Tutkepertanu's mummies provide that by emphasizing the importance of truth in art, but the original Shan'iatu had little use for merely sentimental aspirations, so he drives his cultists to improve their technique. Wealthier cults prosper with the help of industrial designers, film and television producers and successful artists. The mummy plays the role of manager and power broker. In either case, cults organize as artists' salons with

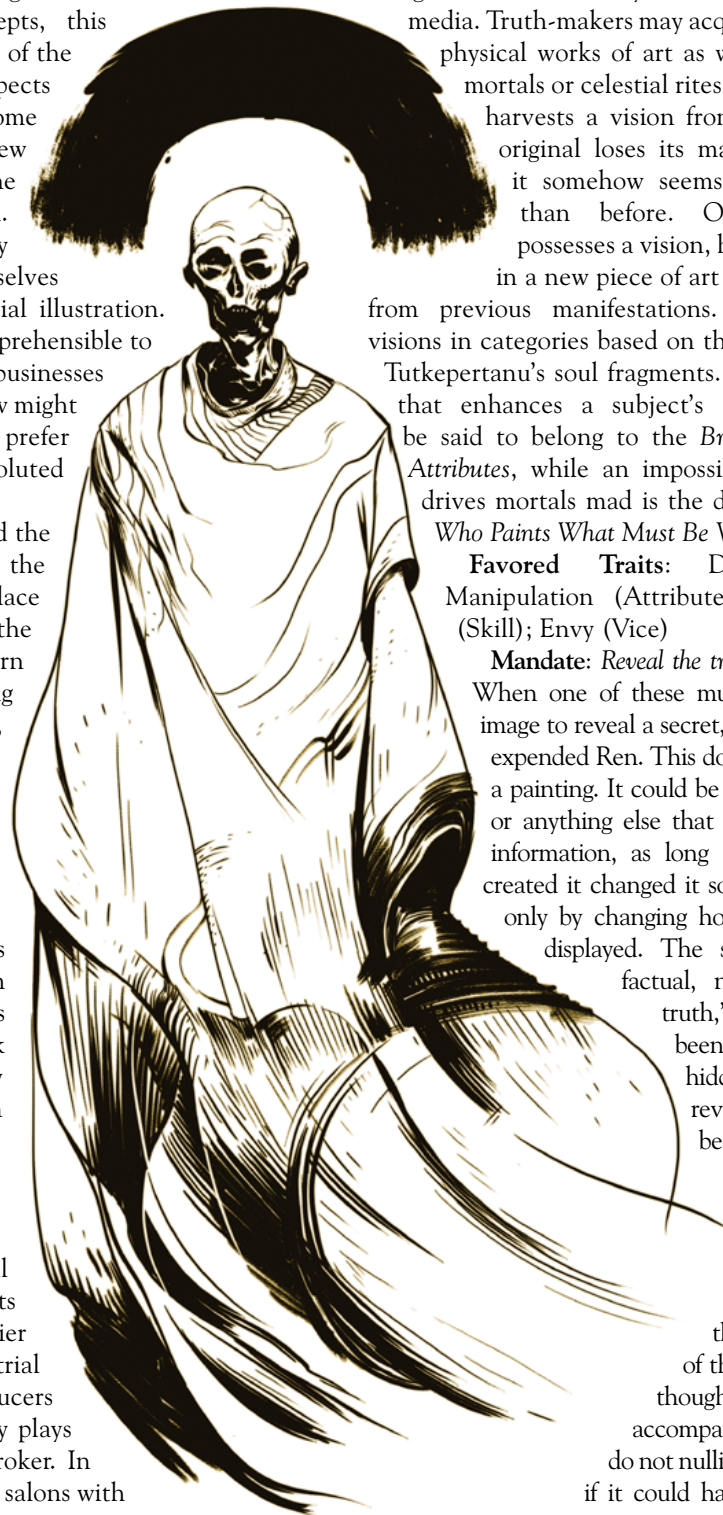
a minimal amount of ritual. Instead, creators turn their work into a sacrament, inserting Iremite iconography into their efforts.

Seba: Tutkepertanu's mummies seek out *visions*: occult images their owners may render through visual media. Truth-makers may acquire these from physical works of art as well as inspired mortals or celestial rites. If the mummy harvests a vision from artwork, the original loses its magical potency; it somehow seems less visionary than before. Once someone possesses a vision, he can render it in a new piece of art that may differ from previous manifestations. Painters sort visions in categories based on the obsessions of Tutkepertanu's soul fragments. Thus, a vision that enhances a subject's abilities might be said to belong to the *Bringer of Divine Attributes*, while an impossible shape that drives mortals mad is the dominion of *He Who Paints What Must Be Veiled*.

Favored Traits: Dexterity and Manipulation (Attributes); Expression (Skill); Envy (Vice)

Mandate: *Reveal the truth in an image.*

When one of these mummies uses an image to reveal a secret, she recovers all expended Ren. This doesn't need to be a painting. It could be a video, sketch, or anything else that transmits visual information, as long as the mummy created it changed it somehow, even if only by changing how or where it's displayed. The secret must be factual, not a "spiritual truth," must have been intentionally hidden, and the revelation must be *understood* by a witness to the image. Finally, this secret cannot be revealed through any form of the written word, though words can accompany images, and do not nullify the revelation if it could have been shared





without the text. For example, a video of a man committing murder would reveal that secret even if it was accompanied by captions.

The temakh also urges the Deceived to produce images that inspire desired behavior. If she creates an image (using the same guidelines as above) that influences someone who witnesses it to act in some way the temakh desires, she regains one point in any Pillar.

Burden: The chosen of Tutkepertanu hail from before human beings dabbled in excessive abstraction. They lived in a time of ghost-slaves and divine Utterances, when everything a modern mortal might call “mere symbolism” possessed magical reality. Thus, mummies of the Truth-Maker *cannot lie* through visual images. They can’t use digital compositing to create photos of events that never happened or even forge a driver’s license. They can’t paint scenes of entirely fictional scenarios (in this context, gods and magical symbols are real), though they need not employ an entirely representational style; indeed, the Painter believes that depicting what the human eye alone sees cannot describe true reality. This doesn’t apply to information *about* the image, either. A painter can produce work in the style of Monet that might be mistaken for his work, as long as he doesn’t sign it falsely or paint a scene that never happened. If a mummy with this temakh is somehow tricked into depicting a lie through visual means, her player must make an immediate Descent roll.

Expression: Truth-Makers may create an *Image of the Name*. If the mummy shares another individual’s Virtue or Vice, she can capture his image in a work of art in such a way that it can display the subject’s physical and spiritual states. The subject must either intentionally pose for the artwork, or the work must be created using some part of his body (she might use his hair in her paintbrush, etc.). The work is usually a painting, but some have used videotapes, tattoos, or other alternatives. (Copies don’t have the Image of the Name’s properties.) Once the Painter completes the work, she can “update” it for a scene by spending a point of Ren. The artwork changes to display the subject’s current appearance and clues to his location (the work could display the room he occupies, for example). Furthermore, Iremite motifs such as demons and mystical symbols display characteristics invisible to mortal eyes, including whether the subject is suffering from supernatural mind control, the type and extent of any injuries, and even his current emotional disposition toward the Painter.

Stereotypes

The Philosopher: A lesson in the power of the mind’s eye, but they led us astray with systems of thought that made us question what we could see and feel.

The Poet: Together, we reveal the secrets of life and death, for their work has always accompanied ours.

The Musician: They know the sounds planets make when they dance, but their art has fallen in the current age.

The Dancer: Their vision extends no further than their fingertips. Ultimately, it is why they toed the line on this great folly.

The Singer: They could be gods of youth in this debased age, but we remember when they were mourners.

The Keeper: What purpose is there in revelation without communication? A cavalcade of selfish mystics.

The Arisen: Study them to discern the motives of their overlords.

Shuankhsen: They’re the Devourer’s pets, as devious as their master. Underestimate them at your deepest peril.



If the Painter shares the subject’s Virtue *and* Vice, the image becomes even stronger. The Painter may invest a dot of Willpower instead, and the image will constantly update, displaying all of the information above. (The Painter *cannot* purchase this dot of Willpower again.) Furthermore, the Painter may affect the subject with Affinities and Utterances as if she could see and touch him, as long as he can see or touch the image instead. Finally, the Painter may destroy the work and recover the invested Willpower dot. If she does so, roll the mummy’s Resolve + Expression + Sekhem, resisted by subtracting the subject’s Resolve (+Sekhem or other Supernatural Advantage, where applicable). The subject suffers the roll’s successes in lethal damage, which manifests according to how the image of the name was destroyed. In some cases, such as when the mummy burns a painting of a subject who is especially vulnerable to fire, the subject must endure aggravated damage instead.





From the gut of despair I came into this world. The wailing of my birth and the death cry of my mother — together, the first song of life and death.

I became and grew in the wake of song, and from this primogeniture was born my need. I was wretched with desire and owned nothing but the storm in my chest. Keening, I murdered and took for my thirst and offered the cries of my satiation to the empty sky and to the black earth.

I shunned all company but that to which I might affix my cries. When I cast forth the strands of my art, the birds fell silent and the wind grew still for fear that their own songs would become mired within my own, that they would be dragged down into the void of my becoming. Only the perfection of the First Wave truly held up my glorious utterance.

My call breaks chains. My howl burns through stone. My whisper renders iron to glittering dust.

It is by the proclamation of my sacred chorus that meaning is pulled from the mystery of music, the black glaze upon the raw clay of the canopic jar and the paint and ichor that give true faces to the priests of death.

I am not the lion, but the sharpest edge and point of its claws. I am not the fire, but I am how it burns all flesh. I am not the sword, but the blood-chilled depths of the ending it heralds.

I am eternal recurrence within the weft and weave of the spinning spheres. I am the howl of lovers at the apex of pleasure, the whimper of those condemned to the executioner's golden blade. I am a world singing for its life within the inescapable half-life of an endless darkened hall.

I am the Voice of Forever, the Howling Stone,
I am Siranuthis,
I am.





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CHAPTER THREE

UNDER WANDERING STARS

This isn't even our final form.
— Charles Darwin

Tortured, insane, and often freakishly cruel; beyond all these things, the Deceived are first and foremost artists. As such, their emphasis is on the imaginary and the creative rather than the utilitarian and practical. Nonetheless, as each of the Deceived has both a personal point of view as well as the over-arching passion of the god-priest fragment that resides within their minds and souls, most of these mummies are driven to alter the world by means of their art. Whether political, religious, personal or an agenda of pure, indiscernible insanity, the cooperative vision of groups of Deceived do occur from time to time. It is these cultic artist-collectives that bring powerful and deadly application to their beautiful works and strange insight.

MOVEMENTS

The ideologies that claim a fair population of Deceived loyalties (what that means in your setting is up to you) have persevered unbroken through the ages, or that have many cells or centers of operation throughout the world, are known as movements. The agendas of these bodies have wide appeal for a variety of mummies, often possess multiple tiers of hierarchy, and embody eternal principles pertaining to the art and politics of the Deceived.

Depending on the sort of world the Storyteller has crafted for the chronicle, the membership of these movements could vary wildly. If the setting is home to a large population of the Deceived, the Storyteller should feel free to use as many of these organizations as desired and staff them with several ranks of powerful Deathless. If the game calls for a more sparse application of Deceived, select just a handful of these groups with an eye on using them to reinforce central themes. For example, a game that focuses on conflicts with a specific enemy — be they the Lifeless, the Deathless, or the living — can benefit from movements that will allow the surrounding story to more easily focus on such conflicts.

There are four well known and supported movements among the Stars: The Rotting Temple, the Scions of the Emerald Ankh, the Shattered Crook, and the Tomb Legion.

MINOR MOVEMENTS

Strange religious cults, isolated collectives of just a few Deceived, or art-cults so bizarre, insane, or destructive that history could not bear their existence consistently... these are the stuff of minor movements. These smaller factions are usually home to a very small mummy population, exist for only a short time (destroyed and resurfacing throughout history), and generally have only a single group. Despite this, there have been dozens of minor movements throughout time.

A sampling of four minor movements — cults named Al-Runihura, the Eternal Light, the Eyes of Azar, and Le Troupe Noir — can be found at the end of the chapter.

THE ROTTING TEMPLE

*“Irem was no city, but a living pattern.
Let its schema rot to nothingness.”*

After he killed one of Alexander the Great's bastards and burned his bones in the lighthouse at a city named for the conqueror, Awa slew scribes who knew the man existed. He sprinkled their blood upon the flames, and dug out embers with a sacrificial bowl dedicated to the false god Serapis. He fed the cooling ashes to seven Restless Stars, and told them the story of the Poisoned One.

His Keeper's temakh walked the deserts, cliffs, jungles, and seas beyond Irem's farthest patrols. The Shan'iatu were still building their city, though they planned for war. The Keeper spied on bordering human tribes but was more interested in natural things — and unnatural distortions thereof. In some places monsters still reigned, fire burned green, and toothed birds laughed and brandished spears. The Keeper saw mortals dare such places in search of medicines and totems. They died or became heroes, but were always visitors in the cursed lands, never natives.

The Keeper conceived of an experiment. He cast a tribe among the monsters and met them with flame and thunder whenever they tried to leave. He took many



shapes and pretended to be a series of visiting sages who taught them civilized arts. He aimed to make a small city after the fashion of Irem, to discover how the environment would shape its inhabitants.

Half of every generation died to the lands poisons, or the evil intelligence of its deformed creatures. Yet they learned, and built. The fifth generation raised wood walls, and used knives to blind the eyes that sometimes opened in the bark. The seventh generation ceased to speak, but they still built and farmed like a coordinated society. They even bowed to an overlord, and bled in once a month to feed the “wandering god,” they remembered from the Keeper’s visits. But they grew sometimes grew extra eyes, scaled, whipping limbs and other physical corruptions. They carried madness in their eyes, and sometimes tortured and ate their own kind for pleasure.

One woman of the 11th generation grew to adulthood without madness or a distorted form. The Keeper taught her to speak, and took her from the citadel to Irem. He wished to show that he could raise a civilization beyond the Law and thus, should be first among the Shan’iatu.

But when he brought the woman inside the city walls, one tenth of the population fell to a raving fever. Stars appeared out of alignment. The Shan’iatu questioned the woman and she, who had sworn loyalty to the Keeper in the language he taught her, screamed like many different beasts. And when they put her to the question with torturing burns and lacerations, the wounds emitted foul air that slew another tenth of the city’s mortals. No child survived birth for a year, and worst of all, relics made during her visit were so accursed, even the Shan’iatu feared to wield them.

They took the woman they called the Poisoned One into the sea to drown, and obliterated the Keeper’s profane citadel with celestial fire. But the Keeper remembered that his sin contained an opportunity, and that there was power in impurity. Through Awa, his Deathless servant, he taught the philosophy of his movement:

- *Civilization purifies humanity. Unmake it.* The movement believes that as the Judges commanded, Azar commanded his immortal subjects to tame and teach humanity. The Judges built a skeleton of primal laws to support the flesh of existence, but like a mother who loses control of her child, the Judges could not command their creation. Humanity offered the chance of reconciliation. Through man and women, the Judges could encounter what they’d made, but only if they were purified with some reflection of the intricate laws of A’aru, where the Judges reigned. Through Azar, the Judges commanded that the Shan’iatu build Irem to ready humanity for reconciliation.

The Rotting Temple cultivates alternatives to the Judges’ civilizing discipline. They entice humans into rejecting civilization through anarchic sects, criminal conspiracies and rogue communities. They build shantytowns, ships of fools and anarchic cults not just to attack civilization, but create an alternative that the Judges can’t control, and whose products — men and women brought up under new, made regimes — can be used as a weapon against the Judges. Thus will the Poisoned One be reborn.

- *The Arts make Sekhem worthy to flow beyond the living Earth. Eradicate them.* Corrupters believe that their enemy Shan’iatu invaded Duat for Sekhem that pools there at the end of all things, before being cast back to the corners of Creation. Sekhem isn’t just life, but the power that turns the wheel through life, death, and the strange states between them. The Judges inspired the dawn of civilization so it would learn the magical arts, and purify Sekhem for them. Pure Sekhem pleases them. But Corrupters believe the Shan’iatu *need* it, because they can only use Sekhem bound to vessels.

Clearly, the solution is to destroy civilization, so that humans have nothing to inspire them to create relics. Vestiges are a trickier problem because they’re born of emotion, not inspired skill. Without writing, smith’s bellows or the potter’s wheel, humanity has nothing to set its mastery upon but the most abstract of arts: the ways of naming and beauty commanded by the Scattered Stars. But an apocalypse isn’t the answer — leave any survivors, and humans will bounce back twice as stubborn, and all the gods and demons that humans deal with will demand recompense. Instead, the movement eliminates evidence of magic, and watches artists and artisans who might produce magical work. So many geniuses are troubled souls, and die before they reach their full potential...

- *The betrayers send power to our enemies. Poison it.* It’s all well and good to talk about ultimate goals, but enemy Arisen exist *now*, feeding enemies in Duat with sacrificed vessels, and serving the Judges for fear of losing Sekhem. Arisen don’t understand that they serve two masters, but it’s probably useless to try to convince them otherwise. Few would entertain the notion, and every exception has, to date, suffered Sekhem collapse and swift transport to an incarnation that remembers nothing. Better to defile mystic vessels so that their enemy’s dupes send a measure of poison with every one they sacrifice to the powers beyond. That’s the purpose of the movement’s signature Impure Syllable.

Presence: The Rotting Temple attracts Deceived who don’t have much use for temporal power or wealth. These





Scattered Stars establish themselves in shantytowns, failed states and the wreckage of global culture because none of it is beneath them. In fact, they're suspicious of governments, banks and the whole lattice of affluent civilization, where the Judges must have the tightest grip.

Nickname: Corrupters

Leader: If not for the fact that his temakh makes it impossible, mummies might assume Awa was one of the most degenerate Shuankhsen. When he wears clothes at all, they're whatever he can scavenge as he walks through the ages. Unless he needs to blend in, he doesn't bathe or even bother to wipe dust or blood off. Awa tells his allies that he practices the methods his movement should use to their fullest possible extent. Not a drop of uncorrupted Sekhem should be given the slightest chance to seep into Duat. His degenerate appearance enhances his reputation among certain Deceived, who say he's almost completely governed by his temakh. To them, Awa's a demigod with nothing but contempt for the mortal flesh his enemies banished him into.

It's almost the perfect disguise. Awa isn't dominated by his temakh at all. He, who had been a slave the Keeper abused for pleasure, had been bound to his lord through the Rite of Return. It was an insult from his betrayers.

And Awa, or "filth," had cultivated an unconquerable will. It only took two incarnations for him to chain the Keeper's temakh, and though his old master breaks free from time to time, the man has generally prevailed over that enraged shard of his immortal master.

Awa eventually lost interest in simply ruling his temakh. The Shan'iatu's slave empire never would have existed if not for the Judges. They made the lords of Irem to conquer humanity, break it with civilized ways, and send its dead to attend training them in A'aru. They were responsible for Awa's suffering, and the plight of all mortals, who've been thrown into the service of kings, priests and presidents. His movement has a double effect, for he not only wishes to punish the Shan'iatu who descended into Duat, but the true Judges, who bend cosmic Sekhem to their designs. He intends to poison that flow.

Awa maintains an ancient tomb in northern Libya. It's an old sanctuary the Keeper used to study living things from across the Nameless Empire. Torn out of the ground by ancient magic, the tomb's a ragged cave whose magic sustains its own ecosystem, filled with plants, small animals and crawling things that have gone extinct elsewhere. Its inhabitants survive through deficits in food, water and



sunlight as long as Awa casts a human corpse into the chasm every thirteen years. Unless there's an emergency or he needs to keep something safe, he doesn't visit except to pay the body price. Instead, he walks from place to place to drum up support for his movement and teach its metaphysics.

The Art: Most people associate decomposition with death, but Corrupters know that this is a manifestation of the human fear of death. Rot replaces one type of life with another: maggots, mold, and even flowering plants that thrust up through age-blackened, disintegrating flesh. The Rotting Temple prefers life founded on death, and the chaotic forms that sprout from corpses as soon as they let go of their own life. The Keeper's art studies and cultivates life, so Corrupters harness it to create ecosystems fueled by rot's harvest. They believe the Judges can't control it as they do the lives of humans and higher animals. It cannot be civilized and when unleashed in tenements and abandoned places, it prevents culture — the Judges' ruling rod — from staking a claim.

Ceremonies and Rites: The Rotting Temple doesn't believe in formal rituals but its members' spontaneous actions tend to follow certain patterns. They perform impromptu ceremonies out of ideological bravado, to prove they can slip civilization's chains whenever they please, violating local taboos and purity codes. Corrupters wade into shit and death. They walk tall into neighborhoods you're not supposed to visit. They spit on priests and kneel before beggars. But they're not ascetics, because the idea isn't to deny themselves the world's pleasures, but free themselves of patterns set down by the Nameless Empire. The entire project of civilization is the enemy.

Besides these abstract acts of defiance, Corrupters destroy remnants of Irem. They smash idols and grind ancient tombs to dust. Were it not for the movement, there might be enough of the Nameless Empire left to enter mainstream archeology, instead of a handful of oddities in fringe journals. This part of the movement is a bit of a harder sell than living in slums or smearing oneself in filth, because Irem's legacy includes mystic vessels and other wonders. Hardline believers say that all vessels qualify, even if they were made after Irem sank, because the Shan'iatu taught humanity how to make them. Most Corrupters restrict themselves to newer vessels or only eliminate anything they can't bring under personal ownership. Ironically, this means some reluctant iconoclasts have large collections — as long as it doesn't leave their control, they feel justified keeping every object. Some keep large numbers of relics to taint with the Impure Syllable (see below), and release them to hinder the Arisen.

The movement doesn't use any formal ranks, but members can acquire Status dots based on their reputation, especially if Awa praises them as model Corrupters.

Temples and Tombs: The movement doesn't attract Deceived who value Irem's heritage, so members usually have humble, roughly-built tombs. Some of these are more sophisticated than they appear, because even though they include all the security and geomantic features of more impressive counterparts, they omit all ornamentation. Residents lie in plain stone coffins surrounded by blank walls. Other tombs act as little more than bolt holes for Corrupters, who dig out just enough space for canopic jars, a sarcophagus and a box for their vessels.

Every temple descends from the Iremite pattern, so adherents don't bother with them. They erect tents, gather in recent ruins, and find natural clearings to meet in. Again, these crude-looking places often belie sophisticated features. An RV with a few shacks might be served by a thousand year old warrior dynasty, or hold tapestries capable of summoning Amkhata to obey those who know the proper command words.

Backgrounds: As mortals, members of the movement often lived in the kind of poverty that most people can no longer imagine, or suffered torments that only sadists with magic at their fingertips can inflict. As a result, the Rotten Temple's philosophy doesn't command them to step down from privilege, because they never possessed it in the first place. It would be easy to accuse the movement of continuing the oppression many true believers suffered in Irem's time, but they'd tell you that the modern age is a continuation of the Nameless Empire anyway, and that you can only be free by rejecting it.

Corrupters often look far more destitute than they actually are. They might possess far-reaching cults and considerable resources, but don't use them for personal gratification. Cultivating Social Merits tying them to gangs, Mafia organizations, and cabals of corrupt politicians, they avoid connections that might force them to support law and order. They also immerse themselves in have-nots and outcasts, who are least likely to defend society from erosion. The movement's anti-Irem, non-materialist ethos often leaves them lacking in the Tomb Merit.


Concepts: Hermit, huddled miser, nomad, slumlord, survivalist, vagrant.

Advantage — the Impure Syllable: Trusted members of the movement (typically, those with Status ●● or higher) may learn the Impure Syllable as a Fated and favored Affinity.

IMPURE SYLLABLE

Prerequisites: Guild Status (Akhem-Urtu) ●+
Effect: The mummy can corrupt the Sekhem within a vessel. He whispers a corrupted version of the vessel's name while gazing directly upon it (not through a camera or similar device); his player spends one point





of Willpower. The mummy cannot recover this point of Willpower for as long as he wishes this power to remain active, but it will remain active until he chooses to dismiss it or until his Sekhem drops to 0. The Affinity has the following effects:

- Each use of the corrupted vessel forces any being with a Sekhem rating to make a Descent check for a Sekhem drop.
- Each success on the Descent check inflicts one point of lethal damage through spontaneous putrefaction, burns and strange, damaging transformations — flesh might turn to luminous wood or cracking onyx, for example.
- If the corrupted vessel gets sacrificed to Duat, this counts as a use of the vessel, but inflicts a +3 dice penalty to the Descent check. The vessel is a poisoned sacrifice that displeases the beings beyond. Unfortunately, the sacrifice takes the Affinity-user's Willpower with it — the lost point becomes a lost *dot* that can only be restored at the cost of 8 experience points.

SCIONS OF THE EMERALD ANKH

“Through the marriage of the Night Sky and the Black Earth we were forged as beings and to each was given its portion of power. What perversions walk without the blessing of true life will be rendered to bone and ruin.”

Although the Arisen abide in the so-called sacred edicts of the Judges of Duat, there are some Deceived who claim an even higher purpose. Even the balance inherent in the principle of ma'at is secondary to the preservation and protection of the supernal life principle — the energetic substance known as Sekhem. Although the Arisen thirst for the power-essence inherent in Sekhem and sorcerers ensnare the vital power in the form of relics, it is the Deceived that belong to the movement calling themselves the Scions of the Emerald Ankh that value it as the life flow of the world itself. Through this view, the Scions are deadly hunters that seek out and punish any transgression against the inherent and untouched field of Sekhem force that consists of all living things.

And so it goes to follow that the Lifeless are foremost in the crosshairs of this movement's agenda. Whether it be the artificially created Amkhata, the bound servants of the Arisen called Sadikh, or the flesh-eating abomination slaves of the Devourer known as Shuankhsen, all must be vanquished if Sekhem is to be protected in the form

in which it was originally and cosmically intended. For to ensnare Sekhem in any form, is to defile the flow which defines its nature, much in the same way that the Arisen are caught in the endless loop of life, death, and Duat that is calcified at the heart of eternity made so by the unnatural evil of the Shan'iatu's original crimes.

In addition to the Lifeless themselves, anyone who creates or makes use of such beings is equally guilty in the eyes of the Scions. Most often, the culprits are the Arisen themselves, especially in cases where Sadikh are maintained and repeatedly restored to unlife. However, this also applies to mortal sorcerers that fold Sekhem into the powerful relics sought out by the Arisen themselves, their cults, and even the pawns of Last Dynasty International. Sorcerers and relic-makers of all stripes fall into two categories as far as the Scions are concerned: dangerous abusers of the sacred force that must be captured, tortured, and after a flamboyantly brutal example is made, executed; and those will-workers that can be swayed into the service of their cause that play a key role in locating and destroying the creations of the former.

The Scions claim that their charge extends back to Irem itself, where they first realized their role in protecting the life forged by the marriage of Sky and Earth, their secret mission having only recently been exposed as their mission has become more urgent. However, it is more likely that they are a dramatically more modern creation, having come into being alongside radical philosophies of naturalism that manifested in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, an ideological backlash to the coming of the industrial revolution.

Presence: The Scions of Emerald Ankh will generally opt for one of two extremes when establishing an influence over a territory, either an extremely isolated retreat in the middle of desolate wilderness or right in the middle of environmental devastation. In the first case, it is likely that the chosen region will be treacherous and provide an extremely difficult approach for uninvited guests, including remote regions of desert (such as the Sahara or Gobi), incredibly dangerous mountaintops (in the Himalayans or Andes), or dense jungle (as found in the Amazon, the Congo, or Southeast Asian Peninsula). These sites are more often chosen as retreats for isolated planning and for the spiritual actualization of works of art that support the cause.

In the case of what the Emerald Ankh refers to as “crisis sites”, areas in the process of devastation are selected. Most of these spots are either completely urbanized areas or regions that have been subjected to unmitigated post-industrial destruction. Sections of India, Northeast Africa, sections of the Balkans, vast swathes of China



and some areas in Central and North America would be appropriate examples.

Nickname: Vitalists

Leader: The most infamous face of the Emerald Ankh was a twisted creature that called herself the Mother of Claws. Accounts claim that she was a hunched and awful thing, potentially confused with one of the Shuankhsen from a distance, both due to her ripe stench and her bestial posture. Nonetheless, the Mother is reputed to have commanded nearly limitless control over beasts to the point where she could even compel the animal nature of man. At all times she was said to be surrounded by an indiscernible swarm of life, ranging from rats and locusts to adders and carrion birds. It is said that when her wrath was focused upon one who had transgressed against the tenets of her Sekhem-worshipping philosophy, the great cloud of beasts would descent upon the guilty with terrible abandon consuming every piece, including the bones, with no scream heard through the swell and hum of ravenous feasters.

If the Mother is a single continuous being, she is likely a monster of incredible power and madness. If not, a Deceived that would lead the Emerald Ankh would need to be made of similar stuff, very likely an agent of the Keeper, with little to no regard for the civilized world. If such a being did not possess personal wealth, the mummy's cult very well should lest the entire movement deteriorate into an unfocused exercise in degeneration paralyzed by a total lack of functionality within the human world.

Beyond all else, any being attempting hold sway over the Emerald Ankh's activities would need to be a being of extreme fury, fearlessness, and martial prowess. The enemies of this movement are not merely the mummies of the five guilds but, beyond all else, the Shuankhsen slaves of the Devourer itself. As there can be no reasonable parlay with such monsters, one must be a monster of even greater terror and might. Therefore, martial prowess of one form or another is a mandatory requirement for the Emerald Ankh's leadership.

The Art: The core tenet of the Emerald Ankh's praxis is the idea that Sekhem must remain a part of the natural world. This is not to be confused with some brand of naturalist agenda to preserve all life, but rather, that it cannot be corrupted or somehow siphoned away into some relic or abomination and perverted into some demonic reflection of its true state. As such, the art is often overwhelmingly visceral, whether it be the easily adapted methods of husbandry or some nightmarish form of visual art that makes use of less than savory media. The subject matter of such works is sometimes revenant, but more often it takes the form of a spiritual and literal

warning conveying the vengeful intent of the Emerald Ankh. This could include massive installations resembling Eastern European ossuaries caked in blood and draped with fur and skins, grotesque Bacon-esque distortions of life out of balance, or seemingly inert works that upon closer examination bring to light the deranged tortures that lie in wait for the movement's enemies — the art itself crafted from the remains of such an unfortunate foe.

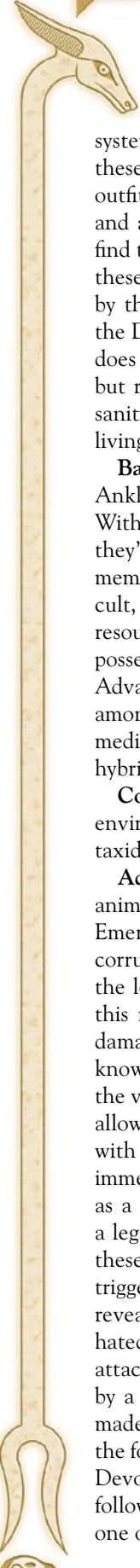

Rituals and Ceremonies: It is important to understand that the Scions of the Emerald Ankh are in no way mere primitivisms. Nonetheless, the initiatory, religious, and punitive rites of which they make use most certainly are. These are not convoluted or merely symbolic gestures that point at some savage notion that never actually takes place in the ceremonial space. These are brutal ordeals involving intense ritualized torture and mindless fury. If Sekhem is to flow or be released it will take the form of hot blood, shredded flesh and broken bones. Relics will be annihilated on altar stones with wooden mauls etched with prayers of unmaking, and the screams of those who have transgressed against the true order will be as a chorus chanting vespers to the stars.

Ceremonies of initiation demand a display of conviction and loyalty to the cause. In almost all cases they require a form of hunt that targets prey in the form of a sorcerer or the Sadikh of an Arisen. Such a success merits the acceptance of the Emerald Ankh and basic membership within the order is achieved. For at least a year following this aggressive display, the new recruit will spend time creating a synthesis between their new understanding and their artistic craft. It is for this reason that the Deceived children of the Keeper find this movement attractive.

Temples and Tombs: Depending on geographic location, the temples of the Emerald Ankh could be quite diverse. In the case of remote bases with ample natural deterrents and defenses, the temples would resemble retreat centers rather than fortified bunkers. As these locations would primarily be used for Deceived and their cults to work with their art, most of the space would be used to accommodate the cultivation of uninhibited works of fine art as well as large outdoor spaces designated for animal husbandry and even elaborate gardens. It is also likely that such serene facilities would conceal hidden chambers reserved for the movement's more dubious rites and the imprisonment of its enemies. The most isolated of these places might even possess an outdoor altar used for ceremonies of blood sacrifice.

The Emerald Ankh's temples placed in crisis afflicted regions are terrifying places that reflect the urgency of the movement's agenda. Blasted urban ruins, decaying medical facilities, and derelict factories would be common examples. Although rarer, abandoned subway and sewer





systems would be choice sites. Unlike wilderness temples, these sites would be sparsely decorated and equipped, outfitted with only the bare necessities needed for rituals and art, easily abandoned if the Ankh's enemies should find them. Dog pens and rat pits are common but most of these sites are simply infested with feral species favored by the Keeper's Deceived. Despite the lack of luxuries, the Deceived mummy that runs the show in such a place does not fortify herself with walls and security systems, but rather a teaming cult of the near-feral insane, their sanity stripped from them by neglect and subhuman living conditions.

Backgrounds: Mummies that are a part of the Emerald Ankh's artistic movement are likely visibly eccentric. Without the support of a cult of patrons, it's unlikely they'd manifest into much. Therefore, it's likely that members of this movement would have high levels of cult, allies, contacts, and retainers but possess minimal resources or conventional forms of social influence as possessed by more culturally integrated movements. Advanced levels of education are also somewhat rare among Scions with the exception of those versed in medicine whether human, veterinary, or some deviant hybrid of the two.

Concepts: Blood painter, fringe activist, game environmentalist, gentleman cannibal, street artist, taxidermist, wilderness craftsman.

Advantage: As self-appointed guardians of the very animating power of mummy-kind itself, the Scions of the Emerald Ankh are exceedingly potent when dealing with corruptions of Sekhem. Once per scene, when combating the lesser Lifeless (Amkhata, Sadikh, etc.), Deceived of this movement may re-roll one attack roll that fails to damage such an enemy. When this is done, it is instantly known to the victim that 'something' is acting against the very nature of their substance on an instinctual level, allowing them the appropriate response, whether it be with abject fear or even greater aggression. Despite the immediate benefit of such a power, it marks the Deceived as a true enemy of these beings and could be met with a legacy of reprisal. However, if the enemy is not one of these lesser Lifeless, but a true Shuankhsen, the power triggers a flamboyant magical effect that immediately reveals the Deceived as something to be feared and hated, but also adds an additional die of damage to the attack. It is guaranteed that if such an attack is witnessed by a Shuankhsen-sympathetic agent, the Deceived that made use of it, that Deceived's cult, and anything that the former holds dear will be hunted to its doorstep by the Devourer's brood, and terrible reprisal will most certainly follow. Such conflicts have been the ruin of more than one of the Emerald Ankh's operations in the past.

THE SHATTERED CROOK

"The Judges of Duat are the only reason for their priests in this realm; therefore wherever the Judges manifest, they must be erased. And for their servants, far worse."

An exhaustive study of the forbidden texts will lead the astute scholar to the realization that the Great Betrayal of the Deceived is a matter of incomprehensible complexity and ambiguity. There was no single gesture that created the schism that would eventually lead to the fracturing of the temakh and the ceaseless suffering of those mummies in which they inhabit. It would be a conspiratorial ruse at which the most intellectually convoluted madman would see the folly of and no right-wise thinker between the golden antiquity of fallen Irem and the current age would feel any less shamed by such a delusion. Even in the case of the Deceived, this is held to be somewhat obvious.

Of course, this is what those blasted priests intended all along.

The hidden history as it rightly occurred is guarded and preserved by a single agency that to this very day. This cult, calling itself the Shattered Crook, are the true witnesses of that guild which drove the barge poles of the temakh's doom at the moment of the Shan'iatu's first imaginings of the Rite of Return and to this day have pinned the fate of all the Deceived against the blackened wall of the Judge's cruel commandment. The Su-Menent, called "shepherds of the chamber," was and is that pillar which sustains the horror that defines the broken world of the Lost Guild.

The agenda of the Shattered Crook functions on numerous levels. Neither naïve nor dwelling purely in the realm of paranoid conspiracy, the philosophy of the movement scales well to the capacity of each adherent. For the simplistic, it provides a single face against which one can band in solidarity with his brothers in righteous revolution. For the impassioned, it offers a spirit of oppression which is reflected in every tyrannical force from the beginning of time to the modern day and in every personal obstacle whether it be one's basest fear or the elaborate lattice of self-repression which gives doubt to one's ability to express as pure art. For the intellectual, the Shattered Crook is pitted in a chess game against the original adversary playing for the direst stakes imaginable.

Perhaps the greatest strength of the movement is the common knowledge (at least among mummies) that the priests of the Su-Menent have always been self-proclaimed enemies of the Deceived, or at least, everything the Deceived value and stand for. Where the children of the

temakh each experience a level of spiritual connection by way of their fusion with their version of Judges, the practice of individual expression, and the direct gnosis achieved by the capture of *seba*, the Priests stand between the five guilds as both key and gate to the world of the Judges, demand adherence to the ancient and tested methods of the great crafts, and expect all Arisen to gradually gravitate toward their understanding of the Descent and the experience of Duat. A more opposed duality would be hard to imagine and thus it provides a powerful narrative of revolution to heat the deathless humors of the Shattered Crook's loyal soldiers.


Presence: Where there are powerful and influential Su-Menent cults, you will find ideal locations for Shattered Crook operations. That being said, the Shattered Crook requires very little to advance its agenda besides hidden places to stage their actions and some variety of commons in which their members can be more deeply indoctrinated into the movement's politics. The major cities of North America and Western Europe as well as unstable media hotbeds are quite desirable.

Nonetheless, the Crook is a favored movement among some of the most self-righteous and melodramatic of the Deceived so sentimentality does figure in to the equation. As such, sites of major revolutionary actions are also enjoyed. The movement especially enjoys those sites where such historical upheavals have occurred in addition to being Su-Menent holdings. Such a confluence of the practical and the symbolic serves as rich loam for the cultivation of the very best propaganda. Numerous locations in Eastern Europe, South and Central America, and the Middle East meet these requirements.

Rituals & Ceremonies: Unlike many of the other movements, the Shattered Crook does not model its indoctrinations, initiations, and other rites in the form of arcane ceremonies as they take special and deliberate effort to avoid creating any perceived similarities or opportunities of comparison between themselves and their hated enemy. In fact, outward religiosity or dogmatic ritualism is one of the few freedoms members are not permitted. Communion with one's temakh is conducted in private through meditation and its vicious appetite for control is sated through constant engagement with one's art and creativity as well as working heedlessly to defile and destroy the works of the priests and their cults.

Regardless of semantics, the primary observances of the Shattered Crook are four in number: Recruitment, Promotion, Direct Action, and Trial. Although these may seem like the soulless methodology of any political party, the inherently magical nature of the beings that lead the movement make all the difference. Recruitment is the name given to the process of initiation where a





new member is brought before the movement's leader after proving their loyalty and unwavering commitment to the movement beyond any doubt. If the new member is a human cultist, this step is simply that. In the case of Deceived, it is the moment when both child and temakh express in such a way that the temakh of the movement leader directly acknowledges solidarity. In this way, the whole being of the movement leader accepts the true and perceived nature of the candidate entirely. As trust increases between members and the movement leader through a demonstration of commitment, militaristic ranks are given to members, which allow them access to greater levels of authority. This is formally recognized in such a way that all constituents of the movement know to trust the promoted individual as a true arm of the Shattered Crook. Such individuals are then able to plan and organize the operations of the Crook that are euphemized under the term "Direct Action," which generally entails the sabotage of Su-Menent assets and the abject butchering of their cultists and other followers. Those who in any way expose, harm, or betray the Shattered Crook are subject to the final observance deceptively called Trial. Trials are more often than not torture-laden interrogations followed by an exemplary execution; the latter involves a lengthy and spirited speech by the movement's leaders and a spectacularly bloody and gore-splattered physical death at the hands of cultists.

Nickname: Shatterers

Leader: Blatant magical philosophy and spiritual language is used sparingly within the Shattered Crook's ranks. Nonetheless, it is a long held belief that the original leader of this movement was the first realized incarnation of Neshebsut, the Thousand Eyes in One, and that this mummy ignited the ideological flame that now burns within each of the Crook's soldiers. It is said that it was he that first understood the black yoke that the priests intended and thus it was he that knew the secrets which could undo them. By communing with his ancient memories, the undoing of the Su-Menent could finally and permanently arrive and the temakh know oneness again. This was the ancient way and served the movement for centuries despite the dark reality that it never bore fruit or victory.

As time has passed, the Shattered Crook has come to use modern methods and embrace new strategies, having all but symbolically abandoned their worship of Nebshebsut's original dissent. As such, children of the Musician and Poet have since held the reigns of the movement, using emotionally charged rhetoric and propaganda born of their dramatic and powerful arts.

For one to lead the Shattered Crook in the modern era, a mummy would need legendary charisma and the ability to inspire with the force of the temakh themselves — hybrid media-art gods that shake with such fury and vision that the pillars themselves begin to chip and crumble with their passing.

The Art: Prop-art and shock art are the new way of the Shattered Crook. Whether it be music that questions faith, paintings that distort and threaten social convention, or poetry that replaces scripture with its beauty and resonance, the works of the Shattered Crook must threaten everything the Su-Menent rely on to keep their power structures in place. The breadth and power of these subtle assaults rely not only on the vision of the artist, but also on a profound media savvy that guarantees that such works strike home with specific demographics as to maximize their virulence and destructive effect. Once these measures succeed, hot war is initiated and the Shattered Crook becomes that uncompromising and intensely violent force of terror with crosshairs locked around the calcified heart of the Su-Menent.

Temples: Due both their guerilla and anti-religious leanings, it is rare for the Shattered Crook to maintain permanent temples. More often, galleries, coffee houses, warehouse spaces, and rented halls serve as dissemination and recruitment points for their endeavors. The Deceived that are affiliated with the movement will often maintain their own private bases, kept secret from even their most trusted cultists as they understand that mortals are disposable expressions of a revolution of which they are the only permanent agents.

Backgrounds: The Shattered Crook has a use for a wide variety of people and skills. The only universal traits are loyalty and fanaticism. Beyond these, the individual's role within the movement is the main decider as to what resources and talents that must possess.

The vast majority of cultists serve as either activists or soldiers. Those with artistic vision or poetic souls serve as the mass-voice of the movement by preaching creed, advocating controversial artists, and being as visible as possible when such support is necessary. More brutish and less romantic mortals function as enforcers, vandals and, in the most extreme cases, saboteurs when necessary.

Propagandists come in two shapes: artists and media engineers. Artists often generate the soul of the Crook's iconoclastic narrative whereas media engineers make sure the rubber hits the road (and hard) by channeling the numinous concepts of the artists into practical weapons that can be used to uproot and annihilate the strength and influence of the Su-Menent. In both cases, these types require either resources of their own or a patron willing to provide such resources. Additionally, media engineers



require contacts, allies, and very likely a wide variety of favors in order to make their black magic happen.

Beyond these types, the Deceived themselves act as organizers and visionary leaders. Although they present themselves as vanguards of the movement's soul, they are more often bitter puppet masters who will sacrifice any number of the flock to do even the slightest harm to the Priests and their ilk.

Concepts: Activist, angry atheist, enforcer, naïve individualist, nihilistic anarchist, political cartoonist, spin doctor.

Advantage: Despite the intensity of their revolutionary outlook, the agents of the Shattered Crook are exceedingly skilled at disguising their true nature. Mummies that have been deeply indoctrinated into the cult have established concentric circles of defense against detection and interrogation through a combination of ritual programming as well as deeply denying the truth of their situation and the history of the great betrayal. Whether it be affiliation with the Shattered Crook or its associated schemes, exposure as one of the Deceived, or in the most extreme cases, whether or not one is a mummy or human, Shatters excel at obfuscation. In game terms, the difficulty to reveal information about members of this movement is increased by one to three depending on the piece of information with movement secrets having the greatest difficulty.

THE TOMB LEGION

"The time has come to repay our betrayal in blood."

Raising fists, swords, and commanders' scepters, members of the Pardjedsa (or "tomb legion") channel Deceived anger into a singular goal: Uniting the Restless Stars into an army against the Arisen and their Shan'iatu manipulators.

Legionnaires belong to the most organized movement, but it's also one most likely to begrudge half-hearted commitment. While few Deceived identify themselves as full-fledged members, many more sympathize with the Tomb Legion's elegant, direct philosophy. Surely, all Deceived should unite against their foes and strike! Unfortunately, not all Deceived who believe this are willing to call themselves soldiers in a war, or follow the warrior-mystic Sakheth and his Order of Flies.

Sakheth holds the Dancer's temakh. They say he was the Nameless Empire's greatest warrior, and once led thousands of soldiers to subdue territory with bronze and obsidian. Part of this is true.

When she first encountered humans, the Dancer saw the way they clumsily wrestled each other, and chased prey


with crude weapons and cruder techniques. They lacked the fluid physical mastery animals inherited through instinct. When she spent many lifetimes mastering human movement, she studied the human body's violent abilities and compiled the most effective methods to strike, twist joints against themselves, strike with a weapon or throw a stone. She made these into dances and taught them to Irem's mortal warriors: the nucleus of the Nameless Empire's army.

Even though she taught the legions to fight, the other Shan'iatu prevented her from commanding them. They left her with the other Restless Stars, to care for the Pharaoh. Her duties included selecting his honor guard: aged and wounded masters of her war arts, who would perform soldiers' dances to honor the puppet king. The captain of the guard was named Sakheth, "strength of the war band" — an exemplar, not a general.

The last Sakheth became a vessel for the Dancer. He started the movement as soon as he arose in a Deathless corpse. His military background made him a vessel for the Dancer's wrath, and rough memories of service taught him how warriors should serve and fight. Other Deceived looked upon his lean, scarred form and stony gaze and saw the warrior ideal within him — and for those that didn't, he offered the Dancer's violent grace. And when even these came to him upon their resurrections, he welcomed them to the Tomb Legion, and taught them its ideological pillars:

- *The Shan'iatu are our enemies in war.* Members of the movement believe the Shan'iatu are the ultimate enemy, and the Arisen are their lieutenants — unwitting officers perhaps, but officers nonetheless. Perhaps Azar is their hostage or collaborator, but that isn't important right now. They'll confront their king after the final battle, when they walk to Duat over the corpses of enemy gods.
- *We must become a militant guild.* Sakheth teaches his movement that all Deceived should belong to one chain of command with unified strategic goals. He has only recently begun to think of this in the strict sense favored by modern armies. Most Legionnaires still think like members of ancient war bands. They provide their own weapons and form units based on loyalty oaths. Sakheth's officer corps, the Order of the Fly, should guide all Deceived toward conquest. Obviously, this has yet to be achieved.
- *Victory through strategy, not rage.* By denying the Shan'iatu Sekhem, Arisen service, and cult holdings, Legionnaires turn Duat from a perfect sanctuary into a fortress under siege. The false Judges need Sekhem to survive the darkness of the land





beneath all lands. They need Arisen too and in their stead. Without these things, the Shan'iatu must surrender or expose themselves. While speeding Arisen to new incarnations and killing cultists might satisfy a cathartic need, it's more efficient to steal vessels, suborn cults and set Arisen against each other.

- *We deserve the spoils of battle.* For all that Legionnaires speak of crushing the Arisen and starving the false Judges, they fight to satisfy the prosaic goals of ancient soldiers: wealth, territory and power over others. Everything the Shan'iatu made — and by extension, all civilization — was stolen from the Deceived, and they have every right to take it back. The movement divides spoils as equally as it can, though higher Status members get the first pick of the spoils.

Beyond this, the movement believes that civilization is the war's prize and battlefield. Azar's children taught humanity to make cities and tame the elements, making it theirs to shape or destroy, but the other Shan'iatu cheated the Restless Stars out of their share. The Deceived thus have the moral right to rule the world. Furthermore, the enemy needs mortals to pursue the arts, crafts and sciences that inspire them to create Vessels.

Should the Deceived “simplify” humanity with plagues, nuclear weapons or intense conventional warfare? The Order of the Fly doesn't know whether this would cripple the enemy, or just create a desperate situation for both sides. Fortunately, the movement doesn't have the means to engineer such large scale disasters — yet. They're working on it.

Presence: The movement thrives in militarized societies. Over the past few decades its cults have grown around NATO countries' military adventures, on all sides of these conflicts. They proliferate in rich nations' armies and the local militias they encounter. The movement has grown particularly strong in the American Midwest, northern UK, France, Germany, Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as north and central Africa.

Nickname: Legionnaires

Leader: Sakheth collects weapons and armor from hundreds of ancient warrior societies, and feels comfortable in them all — after a hundred lives of training, one blade or breastplate is much like any other. He radiates supreme confidence and grace, giving people the false impression that he's secure in his intellectual abilities, not his physical prowess. Leaving aside every supernatural powers except for the time his existence has allowed him to train, he may be the greatest hand to hand fighter who ever existed — or who *can* ever exist —

though as his Sekhem falls, he loses touch with the apex of his abilities.

Yet none of this power addresses his central deficiency: He's no general. He's a good orator and an inspiring example, but he doesn't have a head for strategy, and relies on the Order of Flies to keep him informed. When he plays the part of a military mastermind, he's virtually impossible to expose as a fraud, though he might do so in unguarded moments. His façade is strong enough that he maintains multiple identities (and faces) as military advisors for forces from a dozen nations. He shields each identity with a maze of required security clearances, some of which are impenetrable by any official for the simple reason that they only exist to protect him. He smoothly relays strategic advice given to him by cultists and allies.

Sakheth maintains at least one residence with a security cordon on every inhabited continent, but can often be found on a private plane equipped with state of the art encrypted communications systems. The mummy is not especially good at accumulating wealth or learning about technology, but maintains several identities as important if obscure state advisors with security clearances high enough that even the officials who call upon him are unsure of who he is.

The Art: Sakheth aspires to lead an army, but his Dancer's talents concentrate on personal warfare. He especially seeks out Deceived of the Philosopher, whose logical minds adopt strategic thinking quickly, and of the Musician, because they know how to share one mindset among a multitude. Sakheth still respects adepts of the Dancer as guardians and shock troops, but not leaders.

Ceremonies and Rites: The movement has many friends but fewer official members. Legionnaires mark friends of the movement (Status ●) by ritually cutting themselves on a finger or palm, and pressing a drop of blood upon something marked with the ally's name. This symbolic act isn't especially magical, but members of the Tomb Legion respect anyone their comrades would shed blood for. Friends of the Pardjedsa can expect assistance as long as they provide occasional help in return. As informal members, they need not join in organized operations.

A trusted friend can become a *Waw* (soldier — Status ●●). Sakheth used to admit Deceived who faced Arisen in battle or stole from a tomb for purpose of joining the ranks, but eventually changed his mind because he wanted to reward group discipline over individual daring. Anyone who wishes to be counted as a *Waw* must now join one other aspiring member and together, complete a task given to them by the Order of the Fly — usually a difficult but achievable mission to weaken the Shan'iatu. Those who succeed without dying receive an obsidian knife as a badge of rank, and are henceforth expected to



obey their superiors, who will give them further tasks to accomplish in the growing war.

Named after the jeweled insect necklace given to great warriors, the Order of the Fly (Status ●●●●) commands Waw warriors and cult forces. Its officers plan the movement's grand strategy, and give Sakhet the knowledge he needs in order to project an aura of military genius. Sakhet promotes members of the movement who demonstrate bravery and more importantly, strategic and leadership skills. Sakhet gives each new officer a golden necklace to mark her rank, but she isn't truly accepted by her peers until she joins them in an ancient rite from the Nameless Empire: the ritual eating of an enemy. The movement hides this practice to keep outsiders from comparing them to Shuankhsen. In any event, the ritual doesn't exist to steal the victim's power, but to symbolically cast him as less than human, while binding the perpetrators together with a shared transgression.

Temples and Tombs: As noted, the Tomb Legion's leader controls a number of secure estates. Each estate contains a secure sub-basement constructed according to the principles of Iremite architecture and an armory big enough to equip a platoon. Any member of the Order of the Fly may find sanctuary at one of these secret citadels.

The Pardjedsa's holiest site can be found in rural Ethiopia, in the ruins of a fortress that once marked one of the southern borders of the Nameless Empire. A few eroded blocks survived above ground, where only experts can tell them apart from the stones farmers pile to get off their fields. Thick grass conceals entrances to the labyrinth under them. In the age of Irem, Soldier-artisans animated the dead to train warriors for combat. This magic lingers in the stones, and fresh corpses interred in the catacombs can still be raised to take arms against intruders.

Backgrounds: Members cultivate ties with military, police and security services so that if Deathless are not personally present, their cultists continue to carry out the movement's objectives — they're used to following orders and staying organized. Legionnaires acquire Status, Allies and Contacts in these group. The movement usually favors mummies who've led military lives, but it also attracts business leaders, particularly in fields such as finance and manufacturing, where highly organized transnational activity is the norm. Legionnaires tend to have the larger cults (and more Cult Merit dots) that come with a will to command. Many develop skill at arms, including Fighting Styles, and Sakhet is known to favor members who can handle themselves in a fight without resorting to the "crutch" of Deathless power.

Concepts: Disciplined executive, foot soldier, militia member, pirate, mercenary, strict officer.

Advantage — Militant Cult: The Tomb Legion introduces members to military, police and security connections. These add a paramilitary backbone to a mummy's cult. If she calls armed followers from her cult, she may choose to add her Status dots to automatic successes on her Reach + Grasp roll to call armed followers unless her roll scores 0 successes. Alternately, she may convert one or more of these bonus successes into bonus dice to the combatants' armed dice pools. At Status ●●, equip combatants with military or SWAT weapons and gear, if the mummy desires it. At Status ●●●●, members of the Order of the Fly may provide the equipment and support normally given to special forces soldiers, such as satellite support and helicopter transport.

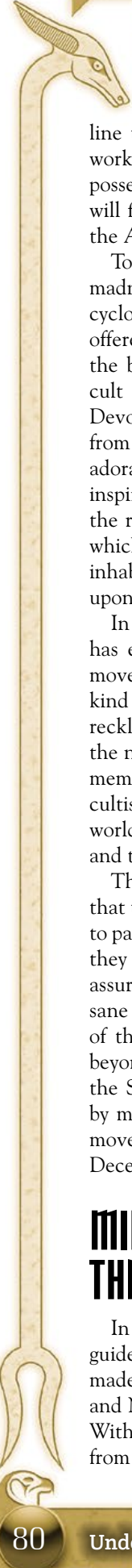

MINOR MOVEMENT: AL-RUNIHURA

There is no evidence of Al-Runihura being in any way connected to the ancient institutions of the Lost City. Nonetheless, members of this foul society hold true to a cosmology and magic that precedes the beginnings of time itself. It is within this lost aeon that the bitter things to which they bend knee began, and it is to this writhing void that they will return the world as the only act of worship their broken gods will acknowledge. For to be one of the Al-Runihura is to forsake all life and creation and to seek the blackest wisdom of a world that never was.

The Al-Runihura movement manifested from the words and deeds of a mortal sorcerer that practiced at the beginning of the 6th century A.D., living in an isolated village on the shore of the Mediterranean only miles from the Nile delta. Benevolent of intention, he was fascinated by the movement of the heavenly spheres and was possessed of unearthly knowledge of the stars and their secrets. It was for this reason that one of the Deceived, a Painter calling itself "the Star Pharaoh," promised him immortality in exchange for the tablets on which he had encoded his wisdom. Foolishly, the sorcerer agreed and at that moment an unnatural curse fell upon the mortal, stole his sanity, and locked him within an endless nightmare with only those unspeakable beings which he had once called stars to keep him company. With this terrible wisdom conjoined with his ancient powers, the Star Pharaoh opened a terrible gate from which poured the obscene knowledge sought by others of his kind.

Although the Al-Runihura hide themselves from the world of both men and mummies, traces of their knowledge is seeded along the path to many fields of forbidden knowledge. Like shiny pebbles left in a winding





line to mark one's way home, the movement leaves its work in remote and hard sought places so that those possessed of a cat's curiosity or sufficient will to power will find them and, in turn, reveal the true initiation of the Al-Runihura.

To the rational mind, the "art" of Al-Runihura is pure madness. Painted stele and dizzying reliefs engraved upon cyclopean monoliths are the signposts and masterworks offered to the temakh's need but they are pointed at the broken world called simply "Before" — an age the cult believes predates the Judges, Anpu, and even the Devourer itself — a sort of malevolent ground of being from which all true power once crawled. Through the adoration of these inspired works and the understanding inspired by their whirling glyphs and monstrous images, the rational mind collapses, becoming a threshold upon which the will of this bitter, unmade world and its inhabitants may manifest and induce grotesque intentions upon those blind to their existence.

In so far as leadership, the being called the Star Pharaoh has either vanished or never was. Scholars among the movement claim that rather than Deceived it was some kind of embodied horror born of the sorcerer's own reckless explorations. Nonetheless, an amulet bearing the name of the Star Pharaoh is worn by every Deceived member of the movement and used to anoint human cultists and to evoke the heraldic force that bridges this world to the aetheric wasteland that lies beyond Duat and the pit of the Devourer both.

The true arrogance of Al-Runihura lies in the belief that they will be spared if their vision for the world comes to pass. Just so, the Deceived magi of this order claim that they have forged contracts with the Lords of Before that assure their exaltation upon their final arrival. To any sane being (and even the eternity-stretched perspective of the most wizened of mummy-kind) this is blindness beyond measuring. Like the sorcerer that once trusted the Star Pharaoh to bestow upon him gifts unimagined by man, the path of Al-Runihura will certainly lead the movement to a betrayal so devastating that even the first Deceived would shudder at its depth.

MINOR MOVEMENT: THE EYES OF AZAR

In the beginning, great Azar blessed the world and guided the primordial elements so that the Will was made. His vision and intent manifested the love of Keb and Nuit and caused all reality to move as it always has. Within this pattern all form can be understood as it arises from the great oceans of emptiness and *becomes*. To look

deeper and deeper into the folds and layers of all that stirs behind the veils of the world, while submitting to the eyes of one's inner god, the past, present and future will stand naked upon the stage. So is the method and creed of Azar's Eyes.

This movement is perhaps the smallest such a gathering of mummies can be and still be defined as such. There are never more than three Eyes at any given time, and this has never changed since the triad was founded in a remote temple in the desert while Irem still stood. The only condition of membership is the ability to divine and reveal prophecy through a combination of inspiration and then manifest it through a work of sublime art that conveys both cosmic scope and undeniable accuracy. As such powers are as transient as the events they foretell, the three members of the triad have changed many times throughout the ages — Eyes of Azar being one of the only Deceived movements that permits its members to come and go.

Despite its tiny membership of actual mummies, the movement commands an enormous membership of mortal cultists and patrons. From the drooling and entranced sycophants that hang on the words of the triad in hopes of becoming a channel for visions themselves to secret representatives of some of the world's richest, powerful, and tyrannical agencies and institutions of the modern world, Azar's Eyes can expose the weave and wend of destiny, luck, and the gestures of ascending power to those that can afford and endure it.

The price demanded by the triad takes many forms based on the movement's needs. Favors such as protection, money, rare or contraband ritual materials have all been demanded in the past. Perhaps the most common and forbidden of said ceremonial supplies is human life. In accordance with ancient method, the Eye of the Future and the Eye of the Past both require living mortals in which they can scry for both unknown futures and the hidden ages gone by. Beyond the revelations exhumed from the mutilated husks of such sacrifices, the viscera and blood of such unfortunate souls are often incorporated into the paintings and the ornate arabesques that are the charts and maps of the aeons which compose the artistic portfolio of the Eyes.

Unlike their Deceived siblings, who comb the Earth in search of the star-bound seba, compelled by the will of their hidden masters, the triad remains anchored in their hidden temple in North Africa. Its exact location is only revealed by a dream of invitation which is brought about through a specific combination of rituals and drugs administered by a herald sent to those that have demonstrated promise, discretion and the ability to provide resources for Azar's Eyes. In the past, those few



who received such revelation and attempted to expose it, were taken by unlikely catastrophe, albeit one well and perfectly foreseen.

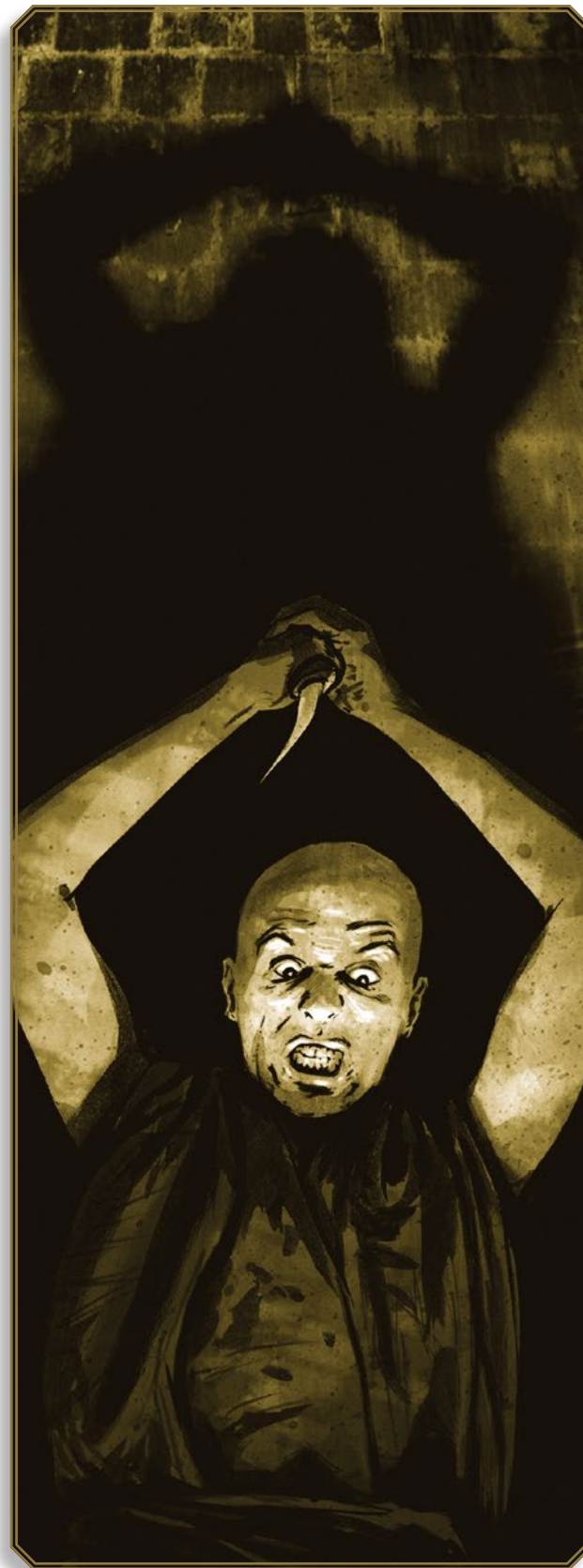
The temakh of the triad are as varied as the shifting membership, although there are none known to have been one of the Keeper's bestial children. Painters, singers, musicians, and poets of great fame have graced the basalt dias upon which the triad holds court, as their arts most readily convey the tripartite mystery of time. Despite their sedentary station, the three claim their temakhs are well pleased by their work. Although they do not move through space, they claim that their pilgrimage through the labyrinth of time keeps their inner gods quite satisfied.

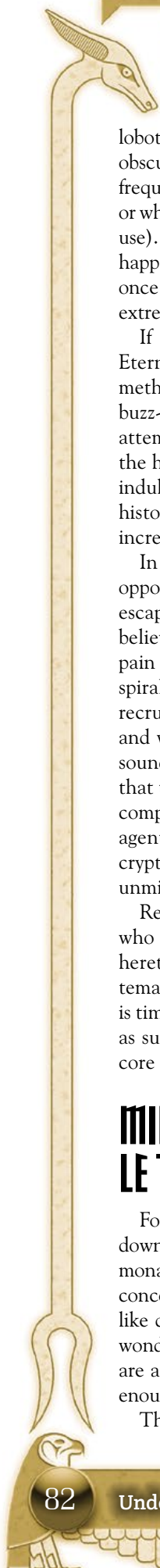

MINOR MOVEMENT: THE ETERNAL LIGHT

There is perhaps no fouler association of mummies than that which composes the Eternal Light. The promises of this group are some of the most optimistic and beneficent that one could imagine being voiced by one of the Deceived, but the foundation of madness and destruction that they are built on is an unfathomably terrible reality.

The proponents of the Eternal Light believe that art is a filter by which the true impulses of beauty and self are diluted; taking a fixed form that is much less than what is initially expressed. The voice of the temakh is that conceptualizing force which forces the individual into lesser forms and it is that voice which must be abandoned in order to express the "eternal light" of self. For mortals, the anti-force is described as something akin to the conscience. For the Deceived, the adherents to this bizarre philosophy rely on an insane measure which is entirely not what it seems.

The rite known as "The Culling of the Demon" is believed to beat back the temakh's influence, weakening the temakh itself, and placing the mummy into a direct confrontation with its own shadow — a battle that rages throughout the mummy's existence but is the cost of the true light. In actuality, the temakh is entirely undaunted and unaffected by the ritual, and the mummy is merely deafening itself to the conscious and direct instruction of its temakh. As a result, the relationship between the mummy and the temakh becomes a vicious, punitive exchange as the Deceived can only experience the most brute expressions of their furious temakh's intent. The longer the temakh is denied, the more vicious and angry it becomes, manifesting as pain and madness which escalate at an incredible rate. This ritual is more of a spiritual





lobotomy than a true rite of magic, but its temakh-obscuring effect fades very quickly if not performed on a frequent basis (most often during full moons, solar eclipses or whatever arbitrary schedule the current leader decides to use). Nonetheless, the completely justified fear of what will happen when the temakh is given direct communication once again makes the inner core of this movement extremely vigilant insofar as the ritual's maintenance.

If not traditional art, how do the proponents of the Eternal Light practice their understanding? What is their method? It is through the practice of "pure impulse" (the buzz-term that gets passed around by human cultists attempting to recruit) that the vision becomes reality. For the humans this manifests primarily as the hedonism and indulgence that characterizes such cults of humanity's history. For mummies, it is a theatre of violence and increasingly twisted release that seems to know no end.

In the past, the leaders of this group have either been opportunists who embrace the philosophy as a means to escape the obligation of their master, or masochistic true believers that accept the terrible teachings and the endless pain they bring. The more entrenched in the downward spiral they become, the more zealously they lead and recruit for their cause. The result is a mummy so insane and warped that even the Shuankhsen would flee at the sound of its blood-soaked footsteps. In fact, it is believed that the nameless founder of this cult was captured at the completion of his unspeakably monstrous path by Arisen agents and was sealed with his madness within a hidden crypt in which he twists endlessly with his lunacy and the unmitigated wrath of his forsaken temakh.

Regardless of their original allegiance, the Deceived who engage in this movement's folly are considered heretics of the worst sort by other/true servants of the temakh. Lucky for the Eternal Light, its mortal expression is timelessly appealing to dilettantes and the idle rich, and as such, have enough resources to preserve the essential core of their awful movement.

MINOR MOVEMENT: LE TROUPE NOIR

For aeons they have wandered through black sands, down city streets, and into the lavish courts of whatever monarch man reveres for the age. Their identities concealed by masks, veils, and lustrous pigments, they are like dark chimera spawned from a nightmare or the most wondrous of dreams. Le Troupe Noir, as they are called, are a thousand things and more to those damned by luck enough to bear witness to their otherworldly performance.

The musicians and other artists that compose Le Troupe

Noir account for some of the strangest and intriguing among the Deceived movements. Although very select mortal cultists are counted among the supporting roles of the theatre company, only the Deceived themselves are actors (of which there are only four at any given time) and the most powerful among them composes and directs their surreal and magically-loaded performances. Despite this hierarchy of role, the lives of mortals among the small but elite movement is rumored to be of a much higher quality than that of other Deceived cults as all members are viewed as integral members of a tightly knit family; albeit a mind-bendingly licentious and incestuous one.

According to the oral record of the Troupe's long and prolific existence (contained in an odd and winding epic poem known as the "The Reverie of Meskhenet"), the movement was founded by five Deceived, each inspired by a different temakh, the most powerful of which was a Poet who bore the name Ngozi. The litany states that on the morning following the Great Betrayal, the existence of a magnificent *seba* became to Ngozi in a dream and filled him with the comfort of his ecstatic temakh and the nectar of inspiration poured from his lips and quill. He then told a musician, a dancer, a singer, and a philosopher of the great light that had filled him and made them swear, as the truth of it filled the eyes of each with tears as hot as blood, that they would abandon themselves and the City of Irem until the great black star was revealed and apprehended. Concealing their identities forever with black-mirrored masks, they took only their servants and tools of their art, and have wandered the Earth until this very day.

Declaring themselves entirely free of the burdens that trouble other Deceived, the members of this movement are loyal only to their mission, their art, and the alien being known as "The Playwright". Although this being is rumored to be the very same Ngozi that once realized the purpose of the Troupe in ancient Irem, there is no mummy among the movement that would confirm such a thing (even if faced with unimaginable tortures or the most skillful of interrogations) and there is no mortal even vaguely ancient enough to confirm such a legend. Nonetheless, the Playwright seems to experience an endless, unbroken inspiration that takes shape of a mad story of dark beauty that conceals magical formula, mystical realization, and the secrets of a terrible, soul-eating darkness.

The actors that embody this insane tale are likewise believed to be that original quartet with whom Ngozi first shared his revelation. Two are men and two are women, two young and two old. They are never named and only spend time with the Playwright and each other, served only by the most tight-lipped and nonintrusive of the



mortal cultists. When performing, they are like hurricane specters of a hundred forms, capable of conveying the most realistic of characters one moment, and then terrible abstractions and blurs of elemental force the next. Some say that they conceal their identities so that their sense of self becomes so atrophied the temakh can pour through them entirely unimpeded, manifesting with godlike force

when in the throes of creation and ecstasy.

Has Le Troupe Noir ever found that once-dreamed-of seba that initiated their founding and fueled their deathless hearts for so many ages? There is perhaps no matter about which the movement is more guarded and silent.





I moved upon the stone with feet as light as long spun clouds. I strode across the great river and the flames beneath me did not waver. I stood and watched the endless waters as the stars fell upon them a thousand thousand times over.

I learned each beat and patter of light that was folded into the darkness, and above me the spheres passed about one another and tied the knots that held the heavens together. I dropped to my knees and onto my hands, let my jaw fall open, and felt as empty as the sky before the stars were made.

An urn spun from devotion, I was conjured between four directions and sucked down the waves of infinity, the stars still bound within its shining depths. I drank and drank until I was made to burst. It was this surrender and destruction that made me eternal.

As I rose, I shook, and took my respite as I leaned against the ancientness of Lord Earth and Mother Night. Between them I wept and became the thousand-step beast. My eyes bled, my skin shivered, and I was cut like a heart from the commands of my own intention, ordered to hunt for the truth of a bodiless passion and those puppeteer strings from which the whole universe hung.

I opened and became. Fire tempered my limbs and made me strong as the crocodile's

jaws. The rocking of waves entered my veins and made of my heart a limitless sea. The black earth shook and became the rhythm that would echo in my every step.

And so it was that the song which would one day be yoked by my brothers became my only sovereign, and I paid homage to it with my every shred. I stomped and shook, and swayed and spun, and made and unmade the forms of the sacred with fury and with ecstasy. I left myself to soar between the stars, and when I returned my power had been made plain, words and rule laid low beneath my bloodstained feet. Reason burned in pools of dark pitch at my passing and the priests stood ashamed in the lewdness of my doing, terrified by the distance between themselves and my kingdom.

Betrayal was a gift meant as deception, but none can deny the boons of the endless dance. I do not cease beneath the waters of death. I do not submit to the devouring maw. I am splendor beyond the reckoning of chains, and as I was shattered, so too did I come to dance within the many golden vessels of my beloved.

I am the Thundering Cage, the Vessel of Celestial Motion,
I am Kehetkhat,
I am.





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CHAPTER FOUR

THE NAME OF POWER

The human phenomenon is but the sum of densely coiled layers of illusion, each of which winds itself on the supreme insanity that there are persons of any kind, when all there can be is mindless mirrors, laughing and screaming as they parade about in an endless dream.

— Thomas Ligotti

The Arisen do not fear much in the World of Darkness, nor should they. The awesome power of the Rite of Return endows them with miracles that frequently dwarf the magic of other supernatural beings, to say nothing of how mummies utterly dominate mortals and ghosts alike. Magicians are both fascinated and horrified at the casual ways Arisen tear the universe's laws asunder as they reach back through time and across the vault of the heavens. Even the most terrible demons and glorious spirits give the Arisen a wide berth, recognizing the manifest godhood of Irem's immortals and their connection to a Fate beyond the divine machinery of the cosmos.

Yet the Arisen are not without fear. The hunger of the Lifeless threatens gruesome death and worse for those caught in the Devourer's many jaws, but even that is an immediate and physical danger. The greater threat that haunts their unliving nightmares is existential and mysterious. Even with minds scoured by the ages, some part of them remembers Irem and the lost guild they once betrayed. They dimly recall the hideous might the Restless Stars once commanded over all things they could name, power surpassed only by the Shan'iatu. But most of all, the Arisen look to their own immortality and the unsettling possibility that the Akhem-Urtu wander the earth still and wield that power today.

Such fears are well-founded.

Nomenclature is more than the magic of names. It is the Will and the Word, the grammar and syntax of the universe. It is every question without answers and every answer without questions. It is the mystery of mysteries, the why beneath all what. It is the crowning jewel of the Shan'iatu legacy, the heart's desire of all magi and the unifying principle of magic.

A NAME BY ANY OTHER

The magical tradition of Nomenclature recognizes three classifications of name, each of which possesses

different metaphysical properties. The Deceived long ago mapped out these categories with names of their own, for Nomenclature is and shall ever be recursively self-referential magic.

NAMES AND ALIASES


At the simplest level, a name is a word ascribed to an entity or object as a label distinguishing one thing from similar things. In a group of men, the fact that one of them is called "John" and the others aren't allows John to be addressed and spoken about as a distinct individual. A thing can have any number of names in any number of languages, all of which hold equal weight from a magical perspective. Nicknames and pet names and the like are no less valid because they aren't "official" names, as it is the identifying usage which makes a name a name. Sapient beings can name themselves, but all other names require a sapient being to first conceive of the name and then use it as a meaningful identifier.

TRUE NAMES

A True Name is far more significant than any mundane name, however important or well-known that mundane name might be. True Names can be spoken but are rarely short, as they are more ritual formulae than appellation. There is as much mathematics as linguistics embedded in such words, assembling every name and nickname and distinguishing property of a thing into a symbolic representation greater than the sum of its parts. Virtually every magical tradition and mythology in the world recognizes the power of True Names in some form or fashion, with most agreeing that learning someone's True Name gives power over that being.

DELIBERATE TITLES

On the opposite end of the spectrum, some titles are applied with deliberate intent not to be names, intentionally circumventing the metaphysical connection between name and named. This is most often done to avoid drawing the



attention of monsters where such interest could only result in horror and madness. Those who call the lords of the fae the “Kindly Ones” do not do so because such creatures are kind, but because the speakers dare not address such monsters for what they are and thereby provoke their wrath.

IMMORTAL NAMES

Given the limitations of eroding Memory, mummies have frequently forgotten more of their names than most people will ever possess. The undying were named in life and named again in arising, in many cultures and in many times. They have names given to them by friends and names given to them by enemies. They have titles and aliases. But all of these are of little consequence, magically speaking.

Like all beings, mummies also have True Names. As part of the Rite of Return, they surrendered these names to their masters and had those names sealed away (in the case of Arisen and the Deceived), or else had their True Names sacrificed along with everything else (in the case of those who became Shuankhsen). What this means is that many effects conveyed by True Names do not work on mummies at all, and those that do not function less effectively or require greater effort to succeed. It also means that their masters can exert mystical power over their Descents and otherwise manipulate them from afar. Only Arisen who attain Apotheosis reclaim ownership of their True Names and can no longer be fully influenced by their former masters, though such immortals remain as difficult to target with name magic as ever by anyone else.

WORDS OF POWER

Nomenclature is not a simple classification of magical power following a unified set of rules and patterns, like say the Numina of ghosts. Rather, Nomenclature is a broad label that applies to many forms of magic, all of which possess effects based on names and/or True Names. Some express the innate power of the wielder’s names, especially in the case of mummies whose Ren Pillar is literally a measurement of such power. Most Nomenclature magic, however, concerns itself with the names of its targets. Rarely, such magic invokes both principles at once, using the power of one’s own name to overpower another’s name in a metaphysical clash of Will and Word.

Since fully apprehending the True Name of an earthbound soul is beyond the common ability of the temakhs in their scattered form as the Deceived, most of their magic requires only (or functions better with) knowledge of a subject’s birth/given name, as described earlier. Generally speaking, the more a mummy knows about a subject, the more reliable and/or powerful his Nomenclature will be against that soul, but as a systems guideline, this is the base criterion.

So much of what the Akhem-Urtu once knew is now lost. So many secrets have been worn away by time and entropy and the ever-changing world. So many names they once knew have no purpose or meaning anymore, remembered only as vestiges of bygone eras. What they retain is still worthy of Arisen nightmare, but it pales before the magic the Restless Stars commanded at the height of Irem’s glory. Though divine and eternal, the Deceived can only harvest miracles from the cosmos and mortal works of art and may no longer impose them directly as they did when the guild was still mortal and called such magic into being with a chorus as one voice.


Post-Iremite Nomenclature falls into three categories. The first are Ren-based Soul Affinities, the one form of name magic that all mummies may possess. Technically, all Ren Affinities qualify, but in practice, it is only those powers that demand total mastery of one’s own name (i.e., Ren 5) that most mummies think of in the context of Nomenclature. Second are the Guild Affinities of the Deceived themselves, the proprietary evocations and enchantments bestowed upon members by their own authority within the guild. Third are those Utterances that involve effects utilizing names, particularly Ren-based tiers.

When the Arisen shudder in fear of Nomenclature, though, it is not a subset of known powers that troubles them. Utterances and Affinities are familiar enough, even if name-based iterations are scarier than most. Instead, the servants of the Judges recall the ephemeral relics of the Akhem-Urtu

The Unnamable and Ineffable

Some entities do not have True Names that can be discerned. For some beings, this is because they have no identity that is definitively true. They are many truths equally, and some measure of lies as well, incarnate contradictions lacking any deeper subtext to what passes for their souls.

On the other end of the spectrum, some creatures are so conceptually vast and alien that the symbols of this universe cannot represent them. They are eternal enigmas, beyond even their own ability to name themselves magically. When Iremite magic dared invoke such horrors, the sorcerers did so by rituals that referenced the few aspects and descriptors they could name, ever-mindful that they could never truly understand or command these primordial forces as they bound mere gods and devils.



called *seba*. In Irem, the Restless Stars created art and bent the flow of Fate itself in ways modern artists could scarce imagine or divine. By such incarnate words of power were gods tamed and monsters felled, and rival empires of magicians brought into lawful submission beneath the banner of the scorpion.

The Deceived have long since fallen from creators to scavengers, harvesting wonders from great art and greater providence. They can no longer speak *seba* into being through ritual art, any more than other guilds can fashion the relics they were once known for. But the Lost Guild has adapted to the limitations of their undeath better than the others, discovering the rites to find *seba* wherever they may be and hoarding that power rather than surrendering their finds into Duat. The withered remnants of the Restless Stars are less artists now than they are collectors and curators, but the galleries within their souls are no less wondrous for it.

AFFINITIES

In most ways, the Deceived gain Affinities much like the Arisen, anointed by Fate and the designs of their creators to fulfill their endless tasks. Yet the differences showcase the divergence of their purpose, setting the guild of Restless Stars apart from the Five Guilds.

MANIFESTING

Restless Stars acquire Soul, Guild, and miscellaneous Affinities as Arisen do. They favor Ren-based Soul Affinities and their own Guild Affinities. However, they cannot manifest Bane Affinities any more than they can become Shuankhsen. The power within them refuses to damn itself partially any more than wholly. In exchange for this

limitation, they can forfeit “slots” from Pillars besides Ren to expand the number of Ren-based Soul Affinities they can manifest on a one-for-one basis (i.e., with Ren 5 and Sheut 1, forfeiting one Sheut slot allows them to manifest six Ren-based Affinities). With their starting Pillar allocation, the Deceived have a narrower choice of useful Soul Affinities, but they can theoretically have any of these powers if they invest the effort to rebuild all facets of their souls.

Fate also holds greater sway over the Deceived than the Arisen, reducing the cost of Soul and miscellaneous Affinities by three experience points rather than two when the mummies allow providence to choose their power (12 if favored; 14 otherwise). However, the cost to buy Soul and miscellaneous Affinities without surrendering to Fate increases by one experience point (16 favored; 18 otherwise). Guild Affinities always cost 15 experience points.

SOUL AFFINITIES

Deceived gravitate toward magic that provides concealment, disguise, sudden and definitive violence, deception, and occult perception. The Lost Guild must remain an unconfirmed myth to their cousins, always fading from evidence and sight, striking from the shadows or in the face of a friend and then vanishing, whether into thin air or crowded mobs. Subtlety and guile underlie all stratagems as they play the long game to unmake the legacies of their enemies as only true eternal can.

Affinities requiring Ren 5 express the fully developed Identities that all members of the Restless Stars (and substantially far fewer members of other guilds) have. Such powers represent a form of magic that the Deceived first found in surrender to Fate’s design, leading Arisen with sufficient names to intuitively copy the magic’s echo within their own souls. These powers are the only “acceptable” form of Nomenclature wielded by the Arisen and far less frequently (and substantially less acceptably) by Shuankhsen. Fate has cursed the Akhem-Urtu to share such wonders with their foes.

AUSPICIOUS REPOSE

Prerequisite: Ren 5

Effect: The mummy can meditate more deeply in order to commune with Fate and replenish his soul. Upon reflexively activating this Affinity, he offers his name unto Fate and sinks into a slumbering coma at the edge of death. This state confers the following powers:

- His slumber so resembles death that no mundane medical examination can tell the difference. As far as medical science can tell, he is an inanimate corpse (albeit one that impossibly continues to heal and does not decay).

Deathless, All

As fellow Deathless beings, the Deceived wield most of the same powers as their Arisen cousins. Because the servants of the Judges are the default protagonists of **Mummy: The Curse**, most powers reference the word Arisen without spelling out how they are used by or target the Lost Guild. In general, when the text of an Affinity or Utterance refers to an Arisen, it functions the same when Restless Stars are involved. Exceptions to this rule are generally called out, but the Storyteller remains final arbiter of any modifications needed to make a power make sense and may ban certain powers if they employ traits or qualities that the Deceived have no counterpart for (like decrees or Judges).



- Time spent sleeping this way does not count toward the Descent, effectively “stopping the clock” until he awakens.
- He awakens whenever it is best to do so. Although he is completely insensate in his slumber, his player may choose for him to awaken at any time (such as in response to danger or when sufficient time has passed). When he wakes, if he spent at least eight hours in the coma, he receives a standard Memory roll to recover Pillars and reduces the target number of this roll by -2. Sometimes, he also remembers prophetic dreams that offer clues pertaining to the purpose for which he was raised, but such visions occur only as Fate decrees and cannot be forced.
- Sleeping to avoid responsibilities does not go over well with either the Judges or temakhs. After a year spent in death, the mummy’s patron entity may disable use of this Affinity for a year. It is acceptable to rest while traveling so as to conserve Sekhem for actually completing the mummy’s purpose. It is acceptable to rest and replenish ahead of necessary action. It is not acceptable to sleep away the ages heedless of purpose.

BLESSED OF THE BLACK STARS

Prerequisite: Ren 4

Effect: The stars that hung in the heavens above Irem had to bend to the will of the Rite of Return. The few that refused to have their place in the firmament dictated by the Nameless Empire were blotted out of the sky. These are the black stars, dead husks that gaze down with malice on what the Judges of Duat have wrought upon creation. For this reason the Deceived have taken the black stars as their own and they grant the special favor of their dead lights to those with names worthy of their attention. This Affinity confers the following benefits:

- Once per scene, when a dice roll results in a dramatic failure in the Deceived’s presence, she gains 1 Black Die. If more than one Deceived is present, the mummies gain Black Dice in order of highest Guild Status rating, with the preeminent Deceived gaining the first Black Die generated in a scene, the penultimate gaining the second, and so on. Ties in rating are broken by comparing current Sekhem and then, if necessary, current Willpower. The only exception to this rule is that a mummy can always claim the Black Die generated from her own botched rolls.
- Up to 3 Black Dice can be added to any die pool that does not directly hinder the will of the black

stars (whatever that may be). Black Dice must be added to a die pool before it is rolled. Instead of being rolled, a Black Die adds 1 success to the total successes gathered after the die pool is rolled. If a dice pool with Black Dice results in a dramatic failure, the Black Dice are wasted and do not counteract the botch or dramatic failure. At the Storyteller’s discretion they may even make the results supernaturally catastrophic.


- Whenever the mummy takes aggravated wounds she may reflexively spend any number of Black Dice to convert them to bashing wounds, on a one-for-one basis. Other powers cannot be used to further reduce or negate the damage converted by the Black Stars.
- Black Dice can be kept unused until the end of a story, at which point the die pool drains away and resets to 0. A mummy can retain a number of Black Dice equal to her current Sekhem rating. Preferentially, Deceived mummies are limited by the higher of their Sekhem or Ren Pillar rating.
- As long as a mummy has unused Black Dice she suffers a dramatic failure result whenever she rolls a 1 and gathers 0 successes on her roll. The malevolent attention of the Black Stars is fixated on her and Fate naturally bends against her appeal to their unnatural meddling.
- Once per scene, a mummy of the Deceived may trade 1 Ren for 2 Black Dice as an instant action. Arisen and other mummies gain only 1 Black Die when they sacrifice Ren in this manner.
- A mummy may give Black Dice to other willing mummies who possess this Affinity by touching them, granting 1 Black Die per turn as an instant action. Black Dice cannot be given to other mummies without the capacity to retain them, usually limited by their Sekhem rating.
- Any Arisen who learns this power gains Black Dice as normal, but once per story the Storyteller can drain the Arisen’s Black Die pool to 0 and inflict a number of aggravated wounds on the Arisen equal to the number of dice drained. The Storyteller can inflict this penalty to preempt the Arisen’s use of this Affinity to downgrade aggravated damage, but not her ability to add Black Dice to a suitable die pool.

DONNING THE VEIL OF DECEIT

Prerequisite: Ren 3

Effect: The Deceived can pull a mystical veil over herself to mask her soul and seeming. This state also warns





of prying eyes and aids the mummy in her own attempts to deceive others. This power confers the following benefits:

- The Deceived may add her Ren rating to any dice pool used to conceal her true nature or intentions, unless her Ren rating is already part of that die pool.
- She permanently gains the Barfly Merit (**World of Darkness**, p. 114) for free. In addition to this Merit's usual effects, she can also expect to be granted preferential access to events and locations usually reserved for the social elite of mortal society.
- When the Deceived lies about herself, she may reflexively spend a Willpower point after she succeeds in a Subterfuge roll to turn the result into an exceptional success.
- When the mummy is in a social setting amongst mortals, she intuitively understands what is considered acceptable or normal behavior. Moreover, she instinctively knows the social standing of the mortals around her. The Deceived can almost smell who has the greatest authority amongst any group of mortals.

ECHOES OF THE RATTLED CHAINS

Prerequisite: Ren 5

Effect: A name is but a label, but a True Name encompasses the external attachments that define a soul. Through the understanding of True Names afforded by mastery of his own Ren, a mummy with this Affinity may intuit how a target fits in the broader picture of the world. Activating this Affinity takes an instant action and costs one Willpower point, requiring a Wits + Investigation roll with a dice penalty equal to the target's Manipulation. Consequently even an unsuccessful activation reveals how devious the target is, though the mummy understands the numerical value more abstractly as a relative measure to his own guile.

For every success rolled, the mummy learns one defining attachment. He can leave the decision of what is revealed to Fate, in which case the list starts with whatever attachment is most important to that character. However, the mummy can only divine attachments to groups that he is familiar with. Alternately, he can specifically use successes to test for membership in a known grouping. For example, scrutinizing a mortal with two successes might reveal that he is a family man first and then the name of the company he works for, but only if the mummy had heard of that company. A mummy cultist's faith would reveal the name by which she knows and worships her god. Used against a mummy, this Affinity can divine

guild, decree, Judge, temakh and nome (among other qualities). Of course, Arisen who do not know the details of how Deceived work (i.e. almost all of them) would have no clue what a temakh was and couldn't look for such. Conversely, studying a Deceived presumed to be Arisen to determine guild or Judge would return a null result, which is rather alarming. The Storyteller is final arbiter of what information may be learned.

ETERNAL LEGEND

Prerequisite: Ren 5

Effect: This Affinity (**Mummy: The Curse**, p. 103) was one of the first gifts of Fate to the Deceived. Its power to reward invocations of the mummy's name functions normally for the Restless Stars. However, the Affinity's power to rebuild lost Cult dots works for them in henet (despite them not being in Duat), while the final restoration power restores Deceived characters spent Ren points as if they were Serpent-Headed Arisen. It has not yet come to pass that no possible cultists could be recruited by Fate within the usual time intervals for the Affinity. Should that tragedy become so, providence is patient and inevitable; it will, in the fullness of time, find replacements somehow.

EVER-DYING NAME

Prerequisite: Ren 5

Effect: The mummy knows she is a creature of death, for even her name is but an epitaph inscribed upon her soul. Her Sekhem rating fluctuates according to her current location's manifestation modifier, increasing or decreasing as appropriate (see **World of Darkness**, p. 210). In areas with a negative modifier, the penalty can't drop her below Sekhem 1. In locations that provide a bonus, the following restrictions apply:

- The bonus can't increase her Sekhem above 10 dots.
- The bonus can't exceed +3, nor is it compatible with other magic that temporarily raises Sekhem (like the Entombed Glory Affinity on page 103 of **Mummy: The Curse**). Only the highest bonus applies.
- Whenever she spends or loses Sekhem dots, they subtract from her actual rating rather than the modified value, with the usual consequences for doing so.
- Mummies with actual Sekhem 1 don't actually boost Sekhem outright. Instead, they raise their effective Sekhem rating (or Memory rating if they have attained Apotheosis) for the sole purpose of reinforcing Physical Attributes with Pillars.



GLORIOUS MIEN

Prerequisite: Ab 2

Effect: This Affinity functions differently for Deceived than Arisen (see **Mummy: The Curse**, p. 105), conferring the Inspiring Merit (**World of Darkness**, p. 115) rather than Striking Looks.

HORROR AMONG HORRORS

Prerequisite: Ren 5

Effect: The mummy is a creature of unimaginable and unholy monstrosity, for her name is a word of power that heralds doom and madness for this world and perhaps others to come. She reduces the target number of all Intimidation rolls by -1.

In addition, the mummy's player can activate or deactivate a greater aura of dread and discomfort by spending one Willpower point. While this aura is manifest, the mummy imposes Sybaris upon other supernatural beings with a Supernatural Advantage trait lower than her Sekhem, just as if they were mortals. Should another mummy, Sadikh, Fasad, or Witness experience this augmented Sybaris, the character feels a strange and cold discomfort, but remains otherwise immune.


RESPLENDENT ORACLE

Prerequisite: Ren 5

Effect: The mummy can sense those who have channeled Sybaris to discern the secrets and mysteries of the universe. He hears the wordless susurrus of broken truths still echoing from the corners of their mouths, allowing him to effectively "see" all characters within (Sekhem x 10) yards who possess a -2 or greater penalty to future Sybaritic Omen actions. This aural sight assesses a character's total numerical penalty as an abstract measure of spiritual weight bearing down upon her Sybaris-ravaged soul and as a shining luminous beacon making it impossible for her to hide from the mummy's senses via mundane or magical stealth (or darkness). In addition to this perpetual sense, the mummy gains the following powers:

- If an Arisen or Shuankhsen manifests this Affinity, the character induces intensified Sybaritic Omens like the Deceived (p. 42).
- By reflexively spending one Willpower point, the mummy can reset a target character's cumulative Sybaritic Omen penalty to zero, provided he can





perceive that penalty with this Affinity and it is -6 or greater. Doing so causes the target to gain a permanent derangement chosen by Fate in exchange for the chance to glean new insights from Fate.

- The mummy's body is saturated with prophetic power. Should a sapient being eat or drink any portion of it (such as a vampire drinking his blood), that being immediately becomes sick and spends the next turn unable to do anything besides forcefully vomit up the repast. Omens follow, as the unfortunate creature spends the next minute gibbering prophecy aloud in varying whispers and screams while he falls to his knees or convulses on the ground, unable to take any other actions while a mouthpiece for Fate. The afflicted character's player rolls for Sybaritic Omens at the start of this minute as though the character had spent the requisite hours of ritual needed to invoke omens. Even supernatural beings not normally subject to Sybaris are afflicted this way, although other mummies and Witnesses do not become sick or speak prophecy unless they are members of the mummy's own cult. Blood and flesh separated from the mummy retains power for one day before becoming prophetically inert.

SHADOWS AMONGST FALLEN PILLARS

Prerequisite: Ren 2

Effect: The mummy knows that all mortal cities are but parodies of Irem. The City of Pillars casts a long shadow over all of known history, and modern civilization still grasps at the glory of the capitol of that great empire. When the Deceived navigate a modern city they take advantage of the patterns imprinted upon mortal builders by the long fallen pillars of Irem.

- The mummy always knows her approximate location within a city and never loses her way or gets lost. Also, she can readily identify neighborhoods within a city by sound and smell, as well as by sight. Lastly, she understands the laws and customs that govern the city even if she cannot understand the predominant language.
- All of the Deceived's Streetwise dice pools receive a +2 bonus. Also, if Streetwise is being used to obscure the mummy's location or activity the mummy's base die pool, including the +2 bonus granted by this power, are converted into successes instead of being rolled. Although any additional dice in this pool, granted by spending Willpower points or through other means, are rolled normally.

- When within a city the mummy receives a +2 bonus to her Enigma Merit (**Mummy: The Curse**, p. 79). If she does not have that Merit, the mummy receives an Enigma rating of 2 while she is within a city. This power can raise the Deceived's Enigma rating beyond 5, which may make it difficult for even her allies or retainers to contact her.
- Lastly, the Deceived becomes instantly aware if any supernatural powers are being used to discover her location or uncover her recent activity within a city. The mummy knows the general purpose and strength of the power being used, if not the intent or identity of the power's user.

UNSPEEKABLE NAME

Prerequisite: Ren 5

Effect: The mummy's names are words of dread power whose horror spans the whole of existence. Manifesting this Affinity grants the following powers:

- Mortals who hear, speak, write or read the mummy's name are afflicted by Unease Sybaris as if they had directly interacted with the mummy. The name must be one that the mummy has repeatedly used and answered to for at least a month, including aliases. Titles and roundabout references that specifically avoid naming the mummy get around this effect, and the mummy's own cultists are unaffected except for brief feeling a cold dread gripping their hearts. This effect is conveyed by all technology, so hearing the name via television or reading it on a website counts. While a mummy with this Affinity is in henet, her name imposes Sybaris as if she possessed Sekhem 10. Sybaris conveyed this way can *only* affect mortals, even combined with magic that allows the mummy's Sybaris to affect supernatural beings.
- Whenever anyone learns the mummy's Iremite name, the Storyteller triggers a kepher roll for the mummy as if the character who learned the name was a relic appropriate to the mummy's guild. However, the mummy knows that the tug on her soul comes from this trigger and can subsequently invoke kepher to track that character unless he somehow forgets her Iremite name. Manifesting this Affinity does not grant an automatic kepher roll to track those who knew the mummy's name prior to the mummy having the Affinity; however, the mummy may still use kepher after that point to track such characters.



WHISPERS TO MY BODY

Prerequisite: Ren 5

Effect: A favorite power amongst the Keepers of the Deceived, this Affinity allows a mummy to use her own name to shape her body at will. This Affinity grants the following advantages:

- As a reflexive action the mummy can cause the flesh and bone of her sahu to melt as wax, allowing her body to squeeze through any opening large enough to permit the flow of water. Her movement speed is unchanged and she is immune to all mundane attacks while her body is in this state, although the elements such as fire and electricity effect her normally. Most mortals panic when they see this display, and should immediately check for Terror Sybaris. This ability lasts until the end of the scene and costs 1 Willpower point to activate. Lastly, the mummy can use any non-physical ability while in this form, although she can grapple and choke opponents who have need to draw breath, drowning them in her own body.
- By imbuing her flesh with the power of her Ren, the Deceived instinctively begins to alter her current form to more closely match her original body. These changes are subtle at first but gather pace the longer the mummy remains active. All rolls to recognize the Deceived by her physical appearance incur a -4 penalty unless she meticulously maintains her inherited appearance.
- The Deceived can reflexively mold her body into any humanoid appearance she wishes. Keepers especially value this Affinity, as it allows them to endlessly express themselves through the repeated tattooing, branding, and scarification of their own bodies. The mummy can also physically impersonate anyone with whom they are familiar. A face takes only an instant to mimic, while an entire body requires a scene to impersonate flawlessly, but usually requires first-hand experience of the subject to copy.
- Lastly, the Deceived's body works quickly to repair itself, as flowing rivulets of flesh close her wounds at a remarkable rate. Deceived with this affinity heal two bashing wounds every turn, one lethal wound every 15 minutes, and one aggravated wound every two days.

WORD OF LIFE

Prerequisite: Ren 5

Effect: The mummy may be summoned more readily than other Deathless (and Shuankhsen cannot possess this power). Manifesting this Affinity provides the following powers:

- Any roll made to summon her to life reduces its target number by -1.
- Provided that some part of the mummy's body exists (including organs in canopic jars), members of her cult may use a vessel to issue the Call as though they had the mummy's remains on hand. If the body is scattered in multiple locations, the sahu forms itself around the closest part that isn't imprisoned beyond hope of escape from its current location (as determined by Fate), but the ritual has no distance limit.
- If summoned remotely, the mummy only partially rises as a "sleepwalker" with Memory 1 and Sekhem 1, feeling inexorably bound to move toward the location of the summons by the swiftest means available to her. Fate imbues her with instinctive understanding of the best path and innocuous behaviors to avoid notice, since interruption would delay her arrival. She interacts with others only to speed her journey by doing such things as commandeering clothing, vehicles, etc. However, if she is forcibly obstructed from her pilgrimage, she fully rises for one scene as though her dead remains had been disturbed, surging to Sekhem 10 and dropping to Memory 0 so that she may exert deadly force against the threat. Once the scene of forcible disturbance passes, her Sekhem again falls, Memory increases and the sleepwalking resumes. During her journey, she also gains all the effects of the Enduring Flesh Affinity (**Mummy: The Curse**, p. 102), allowing her to burst free from a sarcophagus sunk to the bottom of the ocean and begin marching across the sea bed, for instance. The sleepwalking pilgrimage is not actually a Descent and thus Sekhem never wanes on the journey. Only upon reaching her destination does the Descent for which she was summoned actually begin. It is generally advised that a sleepwalking mummy be treated as a Storyteller character, as her limited animation and singular purpose do not allow for a meaningful play experience.
- The mummy can be summoned without a vessel (whether her remains are on hand or not), simply by a non-mummy speaking the mummy's name. No other ritual is required, though intentional summons may benefit from such normally. If the speaker did not intend to summon the mummy, the Storyteller rolls for him. Summoning a mummy via her name causes the Deathless to rise with Sekhem 8, as her own Sekhem fuels the summons. This remains the only known method by which supernatural beings can summon a mummy to life.





GUILD AFFINITIES

Like the Arisen, the Deceived possess magic that flows from their allegiance and authority within their guild. All members possess Face of Endless Lies, but many Restless Stars dig deeper, unearthing the arts and mysteries that are their enduring legacy.

The Lost Guild possesses its own version of common Guild Affinities (see **Guildhalls of the Deathless**, pp. 89-90). Artist's Inner Eye can enhance all uses of kepher, including the unusual ways Deceived powers expand that capability to search for things besides relics. Reliquary Wellspring and Faithful Servants Blessing function normally. Silenced Utterance Vessel requires a meteorite to contain Deceived magic (whether found normally or called from the heavens using the second tier of Secrets Ripped From Skies; see **Mummy: The Curse**, p. 130).

FACE OF ENDLESS LIES

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Akhem-Urtu) ●+

Effect: The Deceived are also deceivers, intimately versed in the power of lies and treachery by the guilds who turned on them. The Deathless of the Lost Guild walk among the world masked by faces not their own, reshaping their sahu by waking dream and force of will.

For a cost of one Willpower point, the mummy can reflexively assume any humanoid form with Size 1-6 for a period of ([Manipulation + Subterfuge] – Sekhem, minimum 1) hours. Small Size is generally correlated to likely age, though a walking and talking infant is highly disturbing and will draw considerable attention. This is not an illusion; the sahu shimmers and grinds away to dust in the blink of an eye as if flayed by a mighty sandstorm, then rebuilds itself anew the next moment from the scattered spiritual matter. Such changes are comprehensive in scope, allowing swapping of genders, shifting of apparent ethnicity, reverting to a childlike visage, becoming beautiful or especially tall (i.e., temporarily gaining the Giant Merit and/or Striking Looks Merit for free as appropriate; see pages 112 and 117 of **World of Darkness**) and other such gross alterations.

It is not possible for this Affinity to copy a specific person, even one that is directly observed. Any attempt to copy a known target results in looking like an individual who could be a sibling (or at least first cousin) of the target. While the mummy does not wear her own sahu, her flesh is as she imagines it and so she is neither recognized, nor recognizable by any mundane effort. Other Deceived notice the vestiges of true sahu that remain and automatically pierce the lie (seeing the true and assumed bodies superimposed upon one another), as do those with

the power to perceive magic directly, such as mummies using **Godsight (Mummy: The Curse**, p. 105).

Although Deceived with Sekhem 9-10 may use this Affinity, they can only assume a sahu that appears as dead, withered and preserved as their khat. At its heights, Sekhem refuses to hide the Sybaritic truth of its nature behind any lies.

AS WHISPERS IN THE NIGHT

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Akhem-Urtu) ●●+

Effect: The Deceived do not exist. So their ancient enemies tell themselves and so do the Restless Stars permit them to believe. Manifesting this Affinity grants the following powers:

The mummy can see in the dark without penalty.

If a supernatural power attempts to determine the mummy's guild or Judge (and is not used by another of the Akhem-Urtu), he senses the attempt and may choose what false information is revealed.

Whenever a supernatural power used by anyone not sharing his guild attempts to determine the Deceived's decree, he appears to be one of the Serpent-Headed.

Anyone who does not know or believe with absolute certainty that the Lost Guild exists or still exists (which includes most Arisen) adds +1 to the target number of any roll to notice the Deceived with basic perception. Members of Deceived cults are exempt from this power, even if they do not understand what they worship.

For a reflexive cost of one Willpower, the mummy may invoke a single plot device to block someone whose name he knows from successfully pursuing him or initiating combat with him. He must be aware that he is being sought by the named target. Should a group pursue him, he need only know one of their names for the plot device to hamper all of them. For example, a train or bus may pass by, interrupting line of sight while he darts behind a building. See the Retributive Curse Affinity for more examples of plot devices that might apply (**Mummy: The Curse**, p. 108). This power may only be used once per scene.

SYLLABLES OF THE BROKEN WORD

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Akhem-Urtu) ●●+

Effect: A name is but a word, an artful congeries of syllables invested with meaning and power. The Deceived recognize that all things suborn themselves to their names, even other facets of the soul. More importantly, they understand that even the greatest names can be torn apart and examined in their component elements. Manifesting this Affinity grants members of the Lost Guild these powers:



Through intuitive comprehension of the deeper meanings embedded in all art, the Deceived applies the 8-again rule on all rolls to create art associated with his temakh.

The Restless Star's pool of Ren points increases to (5 + Guild Status).

Whenever the mummy learns an Utterance with a Ren-based tier, he may choose to learn only that tier (reducing the cost of the purchase to 6 experience points). His player can later unlock the other two tiers by paying the difference in required experience. It is considered naive, if not outright inappropriate, to solely acquire high tier spells and thereby neglect the base magics that serve to the end of Descent, especially given the guild's preference for subtlety. During character creation, if a mummy has this Affinity, his player can break apart any of his starting Utterances to gain three Ren-based tiers from three separate Utterances instead.

CHASING THE NAME

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Akhem-Urtu) ●●●+

Effect: Once the Deceived know an enemy's name, they can and often do chase them to the ends of the earth. With knowledge of a foe's True Name, the quarry cannot run far enough or hide carefully enough to be safe. Manifesting this Affinity grants the following powers:

The Deceived can use kepher to track anyone whose name she knows (or proxies to such) as if the target were a guild-appropriate relic. She adds a bonus of the target's Ren rating to her dice pool (if the target has such a trait), allowing her to gauge the strength of a target's name relative to her own.

So long as she does nothing but actively pursue or seek out a target whose name she knows (which includes journeying, active investigation, and only such rest as is necessary to stay strong and replenish her Pillars), her obsessive quest halves the rate at which her Descent counts down. If at any point she does anything else, the normal countdown resumes until she again takes up the hunt.

PRESENCE IN FAITH

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Akhem-Urtu) ●●●+

Effect: Far more than the Arisen or the Shuankhsen, even the lowest-ranking of the Deceived command the unswerving loyalty and fervent belief of their cultists. Those who climb in status within the Lost Guild can achieve even more, becoming omnipresent deities. Manifesting this Affinity provides the following:

The Deceived can use kepher to find anyone who has ever been a member of his cult (or proxy to such), even if

the target has since left the faith. He applies the 8-again rule to find those who have forsaken their worship of him.

The mummy's cultists intuitively and uncannily understand what their master would want them to do if he were present to micromanage them and knew what they knew. In effect, the cult acts as an extension of the Deceived's will at all times. For example, even if their master slumbers in an extended period of henet, the cult still reacts and adapts to current events as if he were observing the present state of the world and issuing orders based upon that knowledge. Because Deceived with this Affinity know that they possess this magic, they also know that if they rise and find their cult has done something unexpectedly strange or even seemingly inappropriate, then closer examination of the cult's rationale and the context of those actions will reveal that the decision was just what the mummies would have wanted. In game terms, the mummy's player may guide the actions of the mummy's cult in all situations, even when the mummy isn't present or even aware of what the cult is doing. This Affinity does not alter what cultists do on their own time or in any other context besides carrying out the cult's official business. However, individual cultists find it just as draining to deviate from their god's will in cult business as actual betrayal.

EXQUISITELY ARTFUL VENGEANCE


Prerequisite: Guild Status (Akhem-Urtu) ●●●●+

Effect: Anything worth doing may be done artfully. Revenge is no exception. This Affinity confers the following powers:

The mummy applies the 9-again rule to all attacks and other rolls intended to cause harm to a target whose name he knows, provided that target has personally caused him serious harm in the past millennium (i.e. loss of loved one, grievous wounds, death, etc.). Even accidental harm provides grounds for such retribution. Although it's said that all Arisen once qualified as a result of the unforgivable Great Betrayal, the passage of ages requires new transgressions to mark them for vengeance once more.

Whenever the Deceived takes an action that would prompt a degeneration check, if that action was performed in a way that required effort and demonstrated "poetic justice" and/or considerable creative panache, his Memory rating is considered to be (Memory – Guild Status). If the action wouldn't be considered a sin for the reduced rating, no degeneration check takes place. This is a subjective assessment, but the Storyteller should look to how much care went into the sin. Brute violence, for instance, is never artful on its own. However, murdering





an enemy's child, carefully eviscerating the corpse and leaving a trail of organs up the stairs leading to the hollowed-out cadaver laid upon her parent's bed is clearly a work of (utterly repugnant and horrific) art.

WORD IS THE WILL

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Akhem-Urtu) ●●●●+

Effect: Some Arisen remember the wondrous and terrible miracles the sorcerer-artists of the Akhem-Urtu invoked upon those whose names they divined. Such recollections prompt nightmares and for good reason. Deceived who manifest this Affinity gain the following powers:

Whenever the mummy first observes a masterful work of art (i.e., one created with an exceptional success) or witnesses a spectacular celestial event (eclipse, meteor shower, comet, rare planetary alignment, etc.), he reflexively regains one Willpower point. Some Deceived have been known to arrange confrontations in unfamiliar museums and art galleries so they can move from room to room, continuously replenishing themselves as needed. The Arisen have yet to catch on to this tactic or see the hand of the Deceived in such matters.

The mummy's Sekhem rating is considered four dots higher (maximum 10) for the purpose of using any Affinity, Utterance, or seba power solely targeting characters whose name the Deceived knows. This bonus can be what enables the magic in the first place, such as unleashing any Utterance tiers.

SD SPEAKS THE MUSE

Prerequisite: Guild Status (Akhem-Urtu) ●●●●●

Effect: Those ranked as guildmasters among the Deceived are at once incarnate blessings to artists near their residence and horrors beyond the wildest imaginings of those artists. Theirs is the dread might to pierce the vastness of space and realize the intrinsic adjacency of all whose name is known to them. Manifesting this Affinity grants the following powers:

All rolls to create art within a mile of the Deceived apply the 8-again rule. Fate may choose to mark any work of art created with an exceptional success, subconsciously guiding the artist to embed prophetic truths within the work, like those revealed by basic success on a Sybaritic Omens roll. It is a mystery why and when this happens, even to the Deceived guildmasters who facilitate the subtle miracles. Anyone who observes a prophetic work of art gets a reflexive roll at a -3 penalty to realize the embedded truth, using a dice pool of (lower of Intelligence and Wits) + (lower of Academics and Occult). Embedded omens remain constant and endure as long as the art they inhabit, potentially revealing their truths centuries after a prophesied event took place.

If the guildmaster knows the name of a non-mummy who successfully observes the truth embedded in a piece of art he's inspired, he may pay a surcharge of one Willpower point to unleash Utterances or use seba powers to solely target the owner of that name as if touching his intended target. Distance is irrelevant; the target could be on the other side of the universe or in another realm of existence entirely and would be just as vulnerable. Only by changing her name may a target hope to escape such infinite wrath.

UTTERANCES

The Deceived learn and wield Utterances almost identically to the Arisen, though sometimes enhancing their magical practice with Guild Affinities (some examples of which may be found above). Certain Utterances are more common among the Lost Guild than others, however, notably those that manipulate Fate, the heavens, art, secrets, lies, and of course language and names.

Restless Stars are especially drawn to the following magic from **Mummy: The Curse:** Doom Affliction (p. 118), Dreams of Dead Gods (p. 118-120), Rebuke the Vizier (p. 126-127), Revelations of Smoke and Flame (p. 127-128), Secrets Ripped From Skies (p. 130-131), Torn Veil of Forgetting (see below) and Word of the Amanuensis (p. 133-134).

The Deceived generally have less interest in and/or access to the Utterances in **Guildhalls of the Deathless**. While they do have their own Guild Utterance variant of Inscriptions of the Flesh (p. 112-114), they have yet to steal and adapt Redacting the Word (p. 114-115) despite the irony of it being based upon Akhem-Urtu magical precepts. Like all guilds, they have and employ their own Guild Utterance variant of Ancestry of Forgotten Stars (p. 121-122), though only Restless Stars with the same temakh may fuse together and invoke the Herald via the third tier. Even if the Deceived could somehow find a teacher willing to betray the Su-Menent, all forms of Four-Jar magic are useless to the Deceived and cannot be learned by them, for these Utterances draw upon the forces and torments of Duat that their souls have not experienced, for good or ill.

SPECIAL RULES

Guild Variation: All of the guilds wield Utterances through the lens of their mystical traditions, but this is generally a cosmetic distinction. Ultimately, the magic works the same regardless of who unleashed it. As in much else, the Deceived are an exception to this rule. Some Utterances function somewhat differently (or *very* differently) when unleashed by Deceived than they do for the Arisen. These differences are enumerated below.



Utterances released in future supplements will specify any relevant differences between Arisen and Deceived usage.

All Deceived know their version of Blessed is the God-King (see below) as a free bonus Utterance, a self-serving gift from the temakhs who may use its highest tier to briefly walk the world once more. Deceived are immune to all direct harm (e.g. wounds, mind control, curses, etc.) from Utterance tiers unleashed by guildmates who share the same temakh. This does not shield them from secondary harm, such as enchantments that boost the attacker's might rather than assaulting them directly, just as with Arisen created by the same Shan'iatu.

Unison Unleashing: The Deceived are capable of unleashing their Utterances cooperatively, just as the Arisen are. However, the two types of mummies can't join together to do so, meaning the Lost Guild can only look to its own members for these potent rituals. More importantly, whenever a unison unleashing contains only members who share the same temakh, the synergy between their completing souls resonates to magnify the resulting magic. Consequently, any roll to activate or use the unleashing reduces its target number by one per participant beyond the guiding hierophant. This bonus can explicitly reduce a roll's target number below 6, but if it reduces the target number to 1, dice aren't rolled and instead the "roll" applies a number of automatic successes equal to its prior dice pool. For more information on cooperative unleashing, please see pages 91-93 of *Guidhalls of the Deathless*.

BLESSED IS THE GOD-KING

Tier 1: Ren (Subtle) ●; **Tier 2:** Ren ●●● (Subtle); **Tier 3:** (Ren) ●●●●● (Epic)

Tier 1: As per Arisen (see *Mummy: the Curse*, p. 115).

Tier 2: As per Arisen, apart from the modified Pillar prerequisite. This Utterance and this Utterance alone rests solely upon Ren, as befits the ultimate masters of Nomenclature.

Tier 3: When a Deceived unleashes this tier, it is not his decree that is made manifest upon his divine flesh. Instead, his body is a portal through which his temakh partially or completely steps, physically melding with him to become a transcendent godmonster. When the most exalted of spirits weep and demons go loud with their glorious lamentations, it is such horror as this that flashes before their mind's eye. This transformation lasts until the end of the scene and confers the following powers:

In the moment of unleashing, he surges to Sekhem 10 and Willpower 10 and remains so while the form lasts (regardless of his Resolve + Composure). All Pillar pools and his now

increased Willpower pool fill to capacity. This flare of cosmic power explodes outward from his form, duplicates the effects of unleashing the third tier of Power of Re (**Mummy: The Curse**, p. 126), though other Deceived and his own cultists are neither blinded, nor burned.

He enters Twilight, but remains fully perceptible to corporeal beings. All worn and carried possessions dissolve into him and vanish, subsumed until he leaves this state. He is garbed in robes of light and shadow by the aura of his majesty. Only relics remain, floating within his being and likewise transformed into Twilight.

He grows in stature, adding +3 to his Size. His Sybaris form is no longer an aura glimpsed in overlay upon his sahu, but the manifest truth of his physical being. All who view his body still see him differently, provided they were not blinded merely by witnessing his transformation. He radiates Terror Sybaris befitting his Sekhem upon all mortals who witness him, adding +1 to the target number of their rolls to resist. Should he possess powers to afflict supernatural onlookers with Sybaris, their target number to resist is unaffected.


His perceptions heighten, allowing him to see in the dark, as well as smell or listen for enemies. He perceives other beings in Twilight normally and gains all the benefits of fully-activated Godsight (**Mummy: The Curse**, p. 105) with which to understand and inwardly mock all magic less than himself.

He may purchase Affinities at reduced cost that only manifest along with this form, as per the Ren 5 power Arisen receive with their version of Blessed is the God-King, though he still cannot manifest Bane Affinities. However, he may also purchase Utterances at this same reduced cost, drawing upon his temakh's nigh-infinite mystical lore. He can only unleash these discounted Utterances within his divine form and cannot pay the difference in experience points to learn them fully without the consent of his temakh, which it will only allow for servants whose loyalty is great and proven (i.e., Guild Status 4+). Despite being in Twilight, any of his Utterances, Affinities, and wielded relic powers with effects beyond himself also function as if he were corporeal, affecting materialized and immaterial targets equally.

When the scene ends and the divine form subsides, the mummy is utterly exhausted both mentally and spiritually, losing all remaining Willpower and Pillar points. He also suffers the same bad luck as Arisen for unleashing this tier outside of climactic scenes.

At any point while transformed, he may reflexively surrender full control to his temakh, allowing it to possess him utterly and become manifest within the world. Doing





so drops him to Memory 0 until the transformation lapses, allowing his master to fight without any moral compunctions or mercy (though perhaps fortunately, he does not have to remember what it did later without Memory 8 as normal). The embodied temakh that replaces him surpasses even the heights that begin each Descent and can spend up to 6 Pillar points per turn. Its Mental Attributes and Occult all rise to a rating of 10 dots and it possesses Guild Status 5. Moreover, at the start of each turn, it regains one point of Ren, one additional Pillar point of its choosing, and one Willpower point. Finally, it can reflexively spend one Ren point each turn to give itself any Utterance it doesn't already possess until the divine form lapses (save for the Guild Utterances of other guilds), speaking the names of power from which all magic is created. Deceived with Sekhem 1-4 may explicitly unleash the third tier of Blessed is the God-King as a last ditch panic option in the face of mortal danger, but doing so automatically transfers full control to the temakh.

CALL DOWN THE BLACK HURIAH

Tier 1: Ka ● (Subtle); **Tier 2:** Sheut ●●● (Epic, Curse); **Tier 3:** Ren ●●●●● (Epic, Curse)

Tier 1: The Deceived calls upon the first part of the name of forgotten beings that exist only partially within the realm of Duat. The Keepers claim the black angels 'live' in the void between the bright stars and that they are composed of magical energy unsuitable for prolonged stays in Duat. Others say they are the vermin that crawl upon the husks of the black stars, hungering always

to rekindle the dead fire of their hosts. The ancient magicians of Irem knew them as the watchers with wings of shadow-Sekhem and contact with them was one of the few blasphemous acts that made even those powerful sorcerers balk. At this tier of power the angels of darkness appear as barely visible shadows that flicker in and out of Twilight. They will unerringly lead the Deceived who summoned them to the nearest place or object of power. If she wishes, the mummy may direct the Huriyah towards an object she is familiar with by rolling Presence + Occult with a penalty equal to the rating of the nearest object of power. Powerful objects that are magically protected and/or magically concealed may require a Storyteller-determined roll on the part of the Deceived. The black angels make this roll possible and negate up to 3 dice worth of any penalties inflicted upon the Deceived.


Tier 2: By invoking a greater portion of their name, the Deceived allows the Black Huriyah to more fully express themselves in Duat. A chorus of shadowy forms appear in Twilight near the Deceived and their unearthly dirge burns with a strange power that tears at those who also happen to be in the Twilight realm. Until the end of the scene any being in Twilight, living or dead, within the immediate vicinity of the Deceived when he activates this Tier takes two aggravated wounds. Supernatural creatures may roll their Sekhem or equivalent characteristic to soak this damage. Additionally, any powers that have the Sheut Pillar as a requirement or that interact with Twilight have their costs doubled. The Deceived who called the black angels is exempt from this penalty and the damage inflicted as she is the conduit that allows their baleful presence to so strongly intrude on Duat.

Tier 3: After completing the naming of the Black Huriyah, the Deceived utters the name of a target she knows is within her immediate presence. In addition to the effects of the second tier, the shadow forms of the Black Huriyah take on a more distinct seeming within Twilight and the physical world at this tier. Their fluttering opaque shapes converge on the victim named by the Deceived and grasp his very essence in their intangible talons as the Deceived who summoned them recites the names of the black angels. In an extended contested roll, the Deceived reflexively rolls Manipulation + Expression + Ren against the victim's Composure + Resolve + Sekhem. If the Deceived cannot gain 10 successes by the end of three turns, the black angels vanish without consuming any of the victim's essence. If the Deceived should triumph, the Black Huriyah feast on the victim's power, destroying a number of Sekhem points equal to one-half of the successes rolled by the Deceived. Other supernatural creatures targeted by this power lose Willpower points instead of Sekhem. If the black angels

Hallowed is the Servant

Deceived who attain Apotheosis may still unleash the third tier of Blessed is the God-King, in which case their sahu channels the raw cosmic power of Fate instead of the dread glory of their temakh. The tier's effects remain largely the same, including the consequences of abusing Fate's power outside of the auspicious moments of climactic scenes. However, Restless Stars who reach enlightenment must go all-in, surrendering completely to the dictates of need.

Unlike the temakhs, Fate does not possess so much as it commands. As such, the form does not lower Memory, nor does it increase Mental Attributes, Occult, and Guild Status. Conversely, the heightened awareness of purpose conferred by the state means enlightened Deceived *must* pursue the dictates of their purposes even more vigorously.



feasted successfully, the Deceived who called the Black Huriyah gains one dot of Sekhem at the end of the third turn (unless her sahu was destroyed in the process). Mortals can't be targeted by this power.

DRAW FORTH THE BANE HEART

Tier 1: Sheut ●(Subtle); **Tier 2:** Ab ●●●; **Tier 3:** Ren ●●●●

Tier 1: The Deceived summons forth power from the realm of the dead. She penetrates the veil of Twilight and shields herself from the darker beings that may dwell there. Some believe this power calls upon the power of the Devourer, but that is unlikely given how Shuankhsen find Utterances so difficult to master. After activating this power the Deceived reveals all the spirits within the Twilight realm that are within her presence. Mortals may be startled or panicked if this power is used in their presence as alien translucent creatures seemingly materialize in the air around them. The Twilight realm is visible to all until the beginning of the mummy's next turn.

Tier 2: This power works as tier 1 above, except that revealed spirits remain visible until the end of the scene. Unfortunately the powers unleashed by this tier have a most unhealthy effect upon open wounds in living flesh. Any living creature within the Deceived's presence who has one or more lethal wounds must make a Stamina roll at the start of its turn. Failure indicates the mortal's wounds turn sour and slick with an oozing pus that inflicts two more lethal wounds.

Tier 3: This power works as tier 2 above, except that revealed spirits may be targeted and harmed by mundane damage until the end of the scene. Additionally, any living creature within the Deceived's presence who has one or more lethal wounds must make a Stamina roll with a -2 penalty at the start of its turn. Failure indicates the mortal's wounds turn sour and slick with an oozing pus that inflicts two lethal wounds.

DREAMS OF DEAD GODS

Tier 1: Ba (Potency 1); **Tier 2:** Ka ●●(Curse, Potency 1); **Tier 3:** Ab ●●●●(Curse, Potency 1)

Tier 1: This tier largely functions as it does for Arisen (**Mummy: The Curse**, p. 118). However, whereas the servants of the Judges may unleash it during death cycles or their time in Duat and have the magic last until they live again, the Deceived obviously do so during their own periods of death in this universe (or while dissolved into Fate if they attain Apotheosis). Similarly, the cost to do so is deducted as soon as the resurrected mummy may pay it. Peculiarly, Restless Stars may unleash the tier despite lacking their mummy template while dead (or essentially

not existing in Apotheosis). How exactly this is possible defies comprehension. Suffice it to say, it works.

Tier 2: As per Arisen.

Tier 3: As per Arisen.

FORGETTING THE NAME

Tier 1: Sheut ● (Epic); **Tier 2:** Ab ●●(Epic); **Tier 3:** Ren ●●●●(Epic)

Tier 1: This rare power is one of the most closely held secrets of the Deceived as it comes closest in effect to the true name magic they perfected during the time of the Nameless Empire. This power cannot be used at any Tier without using the given name of the intended victim. In ancient times it is possible the most powerful of the Deceived could have erased beings from existence and memory, but now they can only achieve a fragment of their former power. By calling out a mortal's name, the Deceived can wipe him from book of life and death with this formidable Utterance. Mortals of little note or without supernatural protection are instantly struck dead by the mummy's power. A mortal who resides more than a few miles away from the mummy may have a few extra moments of life, but unless brought under mystical protection his life too will come to an end. Mortals of exceptional character are harder to forget and can even sense their impending doom. These mortals are granted a reprieve of 24 hours before being struck dead by this power, in that time they sense they are in grave danger but not the exact nature of the threat. If the Deceived is destroyed or repudiates the power before it takes effect, the mortal will be spared. Usually only mortals with an exceptionally high Morality or Willpower have this resistance, but the Storyteller is the final arbiter. After his death the mortal is quickly forgotten by other non-supernatural beings and within a year even his closest friends and family remember him rarely.

Tier 2: This power functions as tier 1 above except it may target supernatural beings, but not other mummies. Targeted supernatural beings may resist by rolling Resolve + their relevant supernatural power Trait (i.e., Sekhem, Blood Potency, etc.) contested by the Deceived's roll of Wits + Ren. If the Deceived fails this roll she cannot target the same victim with this power for the remainder of the story, although she may immediately spend 1 Ab to force a re-roll of both die pools with the Deceived incurring a -2 penalty. If the mummy is successful the supernatural being will intuitively understand his jeopardy and will have 48 hours until he is inexplicably destroyed. After he meets his end, mortals and supernaturals alike will have a -3 penalty on any rolls to recall specific details concerning the victim. Mummies are immune to this effect on their memory.

Tier 3: This tier may only target other mummies. Although the Rite of Return thwarts any attempt to truly destroy a mummy, it offers little protection for the mummy's sense of self. That part of him that ultimately divides him from the Judges of Duat and unthinking acquiescence to their will. Thus, the Rite of Return shields the Arisen by sacrificing his Memory to the power unleashed upon him. Mummies may resist this power by rolling Resolve + Sekhem vs. the Deceived's roll of Wits + Ren. If the Deceived fails this roll she cannot target the same victim with this power for the remainder of the story, although she may immediately spend 1 Ren to force a re-roll of both die pools with the Deceived incurring a -2 penalty. If the Deceived is successful the victim takes a -1 cumulative penalty to his Memory rating every 24 hours. Once the penalty is equal to the number of successes garnered by the Deceived no further penalties are inflicted. An Arisen's Memory cannot be penalized below 0 by this power. Unless the Deceived using it is killed or repudiates this power, this penalty remains until the end of the story. This penalty can be mitigated if the Arisen's Cult and meret act quickly to help him recover his identity. Once a day a victim with such aid

can attempt an Intelligence + Composure roll to avoid accruing additional Memory penalties. Penalties already in place cannot be removed until the end of the story or by confronting the Deceived responsible.

HISS OF APEP

Tier 1: Ren ●(Curse, Potency 1); **Tier 2:** Ka ●●●; **Tier 3:** Sheut ●●●●●(Curse, Potency 3)

Tier 1: As per Arisen (**Mummy: The Curse**, p. 122).

Tier 2: Unleashing this tier functions almost identically for Deceived as Arisen, save that it is not into Duat that the Restless Stars begin to fall, but rather into the horrifying henet all too familiar to them (or dissolution into Fate for those who reach Apotheosis).

Tier 3: As per Arisen.

NAME THE EXTINGUISHED STAR

Tier 1: Ab (Curse); **Tier 2:** Sheut ●●(Curse); **Tier 3:** Ren ●●●●(Epic, Curse)

Tier 1: The Deceived calls upon the name of a forgotten star that was erased from the skies over Irem. Upon saying the first part of this ancient name the area around the Arisen visibly darkens and a flickering wisp of darkness





briefly appears in her left hand and then vanishes when she names her intended victim. The victim immediately senses that she is being watched and that powers best left forgotten have been aligned against her. Most mortals will ignore this feeling as a sudden bout of unfounded anxiety or paranoia. Once marked by the extinguished star the victim's exact location cannot be concealed from the Deceived by any means for the remainder of the scene.

Tier 2: The Deceived leaves all but the last syllable of the extinguished star's name unsaid and calls upon even more of its power from across time. The effect of this power is the same as above except the Deceived can peer into her left hand and form the wisp of darkness known as the black ember; through this remnant she can see and hear her victim's surroundings as if she was standing with him. Moreover, if the Deceived used the victim's given name, he suffers +1 damage from any attack directed against him from the Deceived as long as he is marked by the star.

Tier 3: When the Deceived marks a victim with the extinguished star at this tier she must use her victim's True Name when activating the Utterance. The effects are the same as tier 2 above, but the Deceived may call upon the final syllable of the extinguished star at anytime as a reflexive action as long as her victim is marked by the star. By uttering the complete name of the extinguished star, the Deceived calls forth the black ember into her left hand and causes it to ignite with a cold brilliance. Mortals in the presence of the mummy when this Tier is activated are blinded for 1 round as the starless void that seems to fill the black ember is supernaturally imposed upon their vision. The mummy's victim immediately rolls her Stamina + Size; this roll has a -4 penalty if the victim is more than 1 mile away from the Deceived. Every success rolled by the victim inflicts one lethal wound on him. This roll cannot be botched and instead of re-rolling 10s, these successes inflict aggravated wounds. The +1 damage bonus applied by tier 2 of this power adds one lethal wound to the total after the victim makes his roll.

REBUKE THE VIZIER

Tier 1: Ka ●(Subtle); **Tier 2:** Ba ●●●(Curse); **Tier 3:** Ren ●●●●

Tier 1: As per Arisen (**Mummy: The Curse**, p. 126), but the Deceived's rolls to resist magic apply a -1 target number modifier if the mummy knows the attacker's name.

Tier 2: As per Arisen, but if the Deceived knows the attacker's name, the absorbed magic restores one Pillar point of her choosing. Thus, against such opponents she pays two Pillar points for the unleashing and then recovers one, making the effective net cost only one point.

Tier 3: As per Arisen. Few among the Judge's servants realize that this tier is more powerful than they know, but if any mummy with this Utterance knows the target's given name, unleashing this tier annuls all possible magic upon that target that the unleashing could unmake rather than allowing cancellation of a single chosen effect. The Deceived are keenly aware of this enhancement and use it as one of their most potent weapons against magicians and rival mummies.

REVEALING WORDS

Tier 1: Ab ●(Subtle); **Tier 2:** Ba ●●(Subtle); **Tier 3:** Ren ●●●●(Subtle)

Tier 1: The mummy calls out words of power and probes the true nature of those within her immediate presence. The first tier allows the mummy to sense when other supernatural beings are close by for the remainder of the scene. This grants a +4 bonus on Wits rolls to avoid being surprised by such beings. Also, while it is active this power instantly reveals whether an individual within arm's reach of the Deceived is mortal or supernatural.

Tier 2: This power works as tier 1 and the basic nature and strengths of the supernatural being's type is also revealed to the mummy; although the mummy must be familiar with specific beings to identify them conclusively, traits such as "living" or "undead" are always revealed by this power. Moreover, this power will also reveal whether a mortal has a strong connection to a supernatural being, but not the nature of the relationship.

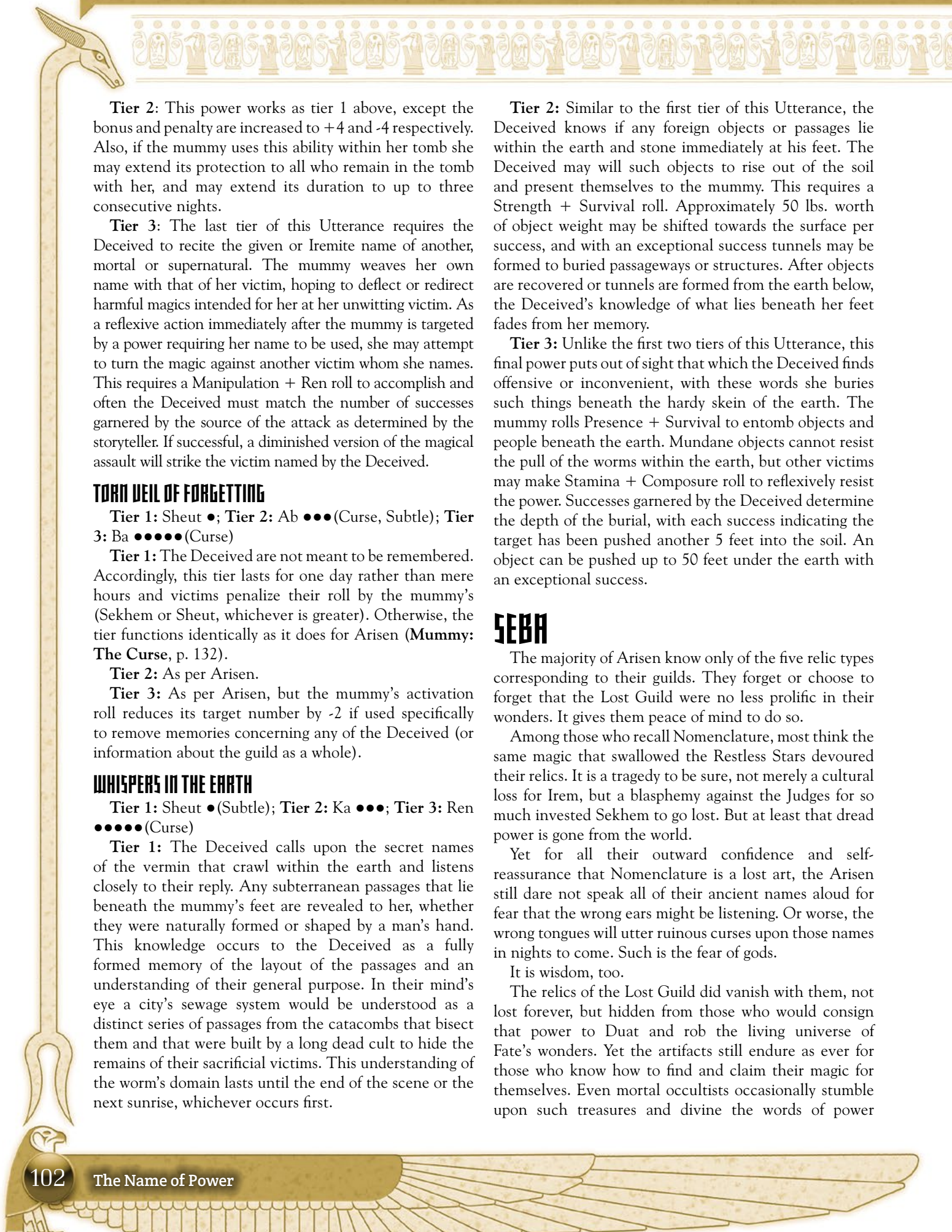
Tier 3: This power works as tier 2 above, except it may be used upon a multitude of targets within the mummy's vicinity. A small group may only require a few turns to understand, but larger crowds may require that the Deceived take an entire scene to observe.

SHADOW NAME

Tier 1: Sheut ●(Subtle); **Tier 2:** Ba ●●(Subtle); **Tier 3:** Ren ●●●●(Curse, Subtle)

Tier 1: As masters of True Name magic the Deceived had little to fear from their own art, but now they are reduced to mere shells, mumbling broken fragments of their old words of power. Today they must guard themselves from the paltry tricks of other Arisen and the crudely shaped magic of so-called Utterances. After activating this power the Deceived may obscure her True Name for the remainder of the scene. This grants her a +2 die bonus to resist any name magic used against her and inflicts a -2 penalty on any rolls required by such magic to affect her. "Name magic" includes all targeted Utterances and any power that requires direct knowledge of the Deceived or her name.





Tier 2: This power works as tier 1 above, except the bonus and penalty are increased to +4 and -4 respectively. Also, if the mummy uses this ability within her tomb she may extend its protection to all who remain in the tomb with her, and may extend its duration to up to three consecutive nights.

Tier 3: The last tier of this Utterance requires the Deceived to recite the given or Iremite name of another, mortal or supernatural. The mummy weaves her own name with that of her victim, hoping to deflect or redirect harmful magics intended for her at her unwitting victim. As a reflexive action immediately after the mummy is targeted by a power requiring her name to be used, she may attempt to turn the magic against another victim whom she names. This requires a Manipulation + Ren roll to accomplish and often the Deceived must match the number of successes garnered by the source of the attack as determined by the storyteller. If successful, a diminished version of the magical assault will strike the victim named by the Deceived.

TORN VEIL OF FORGETTING

Tier 1: Sheut ●; **Tier 2:** Ab ●●● (Curse, Subtle); **Tier 3:** Ba ●●●●● (Curse)

Tier 1: The Deceived are not meant to be remembered. Accordingly, this tier lasts for one day rather than mere hours and victims penalize their roll by the mummy's (Sekhem or Sheut, whichever is greater). Otherwise, the tier functions identically as it does for Arisen (**Mummy: The Curse**, p. 132).

Tier 2: As per Arisen.

Tier 3: As per Arisen, but the mummy's activation roll reduces its target number by -2 if used specifically to remove memories concerning any of the Deceived (or information about the guild as a whole).

WHISPERS IN THE EARTH

Tier 1: Sheut ● (Subtle); **Tier 2:** Ka ●●●; **Tier 3:** Ren ●●●●● (Curse)

Tier 1: The Deceived calls upon the secret names of the vermin that crawl within the earth and listens closely to their reply. Any subterranean passages that lie beneath the mummy's feet are revealed to her, whether they were naturally formed or shaped by a man's hand. This knowledge occurs to the Deceived as a fully formed memory of the layout of the passages and an understanding of their general purpose. In their mind's eye a city's sewage system would be understood as a distinct series of passages from the catacombs that bisect them and that were built by a long dead cult to hide the remains of their sacrificial victims. This understanding of the worm's domain lasts until the end of the scene or the next sunrise, whichever occurs first.

Tier 2: Similar to the first tier of this Utterance, the Deceived knows if any foreign objects or passages lie within the earth and stone immediately at his feet. The Deceived may will such objects to rise out of the soil and present themselves to the mummy. This requires a Strength + Survival roll. Approximately 50 lbs. worth of object weight may be shifted towards the surface per success, and with an exceptional success tunnels may be formed to buried passageways or structures. After objects are recovered or tunnels are formed from the earth below, the Deceived's knowledge of what lies beneath her feet fades from her memory.

Tier 3: Unlike the first two tiers of this Utterance, this final power puts out of sight that which the Deceived finds offensive or inconvenient, with these words she buries such things beneath the hardy skein of the earth. The mummy rolls Presence + Survival to entomb objects and people beneath the earth. Mundane objects cannot resist the pull of the worms within the earth, but other victims may make Stamina + Composure roll to reflexively resist the power. Successes garnered by the Deceived determine the depth of the burial, with each success indicating the target has been pushed another 5 feet into the soil. An object can be pushed up to 50 feet under the earth with an exceptional success.

SEBA

The majority of Arisen know only of the five relic types corresponding to their guilds. They forget or choose to forget that the Lost Guild were no less prolific in their wonders. It gives them peace of mind to do so.

Among those who recall Nomenclature, most think the same magic that swallowed the Restless Stars devoured their relics. It is a tragedy to be sure, not merely a cultural loss for Irem, but a blasphemy against the Judges for so much invested Sekhem to go lost. But at least that dread power is gone from the world.

Yet for all their outward confidence and self-reassurance that Nomenclature is a lost art, the Arisen still dare not speak all of their ancient names aloud for fear that the wrong ears might be listening. Or worse, the wrong tongues will utter ruinous curses upon those names in nights to come. Such is the fear of gods.

It is wisdom, too.

The relics of the Lost Guild did vanish with them, not lost forever, but hidden from those who would consign that power to Duat and rob the living universe of Fate's wonders. Yet the artifacts still endure as ever for those who know how to find and claim their magic for themselves. Even mortal occultists occasionally stumble upon such treasures and divine the words of power



appending their True Names with accursed might. Such would-be sorcerers suffer terribly for their ambitions, but great rewards must be paid for with great sacrifices.

HIDDEN STARS

At their most basic level, *seba* are no different than other relics: inanimate constructs imbued with Sekhem that bestow powers and curses upon their bearers. The details are quite different, however.

Seba have no material form, as they are not objects in the usual sense of the word. Rather, they are ideas and names enchanted with cosmic significance. They are words of power, glorious masterpieces without form or substance and frequently without location. As such, they embody a purer form of magic unsullied by base matter.

STATES OF POWER

Although physical laws do not constrain them, *seba* follow metaphysical laws that govern their behavior and properties. The first of these laws is state. Like objects of matter, *seba* can be found in three common forms spanning a continuum of relative solidity.

UNBOUND

By default, *seba* are “merely” notional relics, unbound ideas that exist and have no being as the *temakhs* do. Or rather, the *temakhs* exist as the examples of unbound *seba* before them, eternal patterns of Sekhem inscribed outside of space and substance. In this state, *seba* do not exist except as the potential for magic, the dramatic silence that precedes the Word. Although the comparison is inexact, unbound *seba* are similar to matter existing as a gas — an invisible and diffuse presence.

How long a *seba* remains unbound varies widely, sometimes only days and sometimes millennia or more. More potent *seba* tend to stay unbound longer than weaker ones, but this is a trend and not a hard-and-fast rule. Eventually, as with all things, the time of passivity must end. The *seba* condenses and appears at a preordained location in an event known as convergence.

Deceived note the parallels between the long periods of time they must spend resting in *henet* and the dormancy of unbound *seba*. In many ways, a convergence is not unlike arising, a numinous moment in which raw Sekhem shapes itself into a pattern that fits the universe. That pattern shines brightly but briefly, capable of wondrous miracles, but too soon fading once more to darkness and inactivity. And so the wheel turns.

Rules: The Storyteller may arbitrarily decree a particular duration a *seba* remains unbound, as best serves a particular plot. In particular, *seba* often synchronize with

upcoming Sothic Turns to reveal hundreds or even many thousands of relics appearing throughout its auspicious alignment. However, for a degree of standardization, the following rules apply. One-dot and two-dot *seba* measure their interval in months; three-dot in years; four-dot in decades; and five-dot in centuries. Roll dice equal to the relic’s rating with a target number of 6 and apply a 6-again rule. The unbound period lasts a number of intervals equal to (1 + successes rolled).

MANIFEST

Once a *seba* ceases being unbound, it becomes manifest. It still lacks substance, even spiritual substance, but it is visible to the Deceived as a bright constellation of golden hieroglyphs revolving around and through one another like planets in an orrery. From afar, such details fade into one another and only the diffuse halo of starlight shines as a brilliant orb around the construct.

In the days of Irem, all could see the beautiful truths of manifest *seba* and marvel at the mechanistic elegance of their spinning poetry. Long ago, the skies over the City of Pillars burned with cold fires not unlike the Northern and Southern Lights of the distant poles, vast auroras of magic within magic rising up to inconceivable height and flaring out into the ocean of night. The *seba* were as watchtowers and lighthouses, guiding ships to harbor and prophets to insight in equal measure.

As the Shan’iatu of the Akhem-Urtu realized the betrayal they faced and the certainty of their destruction, legend holds that they uttered a forgotten True Name of despair and silence in choral unison. With that final unleashing, the fires above went out and a great darkness spread out across the firmament. No longer would the stars arc so low they might be grabbed. Only the sun and the unreachable distant fires of other worlds would remain of the heavens that were.

While manifest, *seba* are almost liquid, having defined location but still no substance. They are real and present, but still inchoate and untouchable, save by rite. Other beings with the right lore may divine the time and location of a convergence, trusting that the desired *seba* is manifest there. But this is still an act of faith, as such knowledge does not convey any corresponding perception.

Rules: How long *seba* remain manifest is ultimately left to Fate’s decree, but convergences do tend toward certain patterns. A roll may be done to calculate this time absent specific needs of plot, just as with time spent unbound. However, the intervals for relic rating are as follows: one-dot or two-dot (days), three-dot or four-dot (hours), and five dot (one scene only). Once the period of convergence ends, the *seba* dissolves and becomes unbound, continuing the cycle.



BOUND

If manifest seba can be likened to risen mummies and unbound seba to the Deathless in their long death, then bound seba are as immortals given purpose and set loose upon the world. Binding a manifest seba requires a knowledgeable occultist to speak the occult formulae and precise Iremite spells to claim the relic, adding it to her own True Name as a formal addendum. From then on, the bearer must endure the curses of her prize as a price for commanding its power. Its truths solidify within her.

Rules: For mummies to claim a seba, they must be within (Occult x 10) yards of the manifest relic and their players spend one Willpower point. Doing so causes the relic flares brightly and implodes to those who can see it. The artifact then ceases to be in the same way unbound seba do, save that it remains chained to its owner's soul.

Non-mummies must be within range, but pay a dot of Willpower rather than a point to bind seba. Doing so joins the relic to their soul as normal, but it keeps the Willpower dot linked to it by the ritual (meaning the

character cannot recover the dot by paying experience). Only by sacrificing the seba (see p. 108) can the Willpower loss be repaired. This puts a theoretical cap of 10 bound seba that a non-mummy can hold, though that would preclude having Willpower points.

It generally isn't possible to trawl for manifest seba that happen to be present nearby. Claiming such relics requires the character to see the targeted relic, have divined its present convergence, or have learned of a convergence someone else determined.

CREATION

Seba come into existence in one of two ways, either as an emergent wonder produced as a byproduct of masterful art, or through the mysterious cosmic interplay of Sekhem and Fate. For almost all purposes, the relic's origin doesn't have any bearing on its utility. A word of power is a word of power, no matter who or what speaks it.

ARTISTIC MASTERPIECES

Manifest seba may be created spontaneously when a mortal artisan creates a masterful work of art, regardless of the specific media or performance involved. The resulting relics have a function that relates in some way to the aesthetic vision of the art that spawned them, but Fate dictates the specifics. Depictions of violence, clashing colors, discordant sounds and the like will usually yield aggressive or combat-oriented magic, while a mournful and melancholic painting might unleash subtle slow-building curses, etc.

Once created, an artistic seba remains manifest in the air above the art that created it, lingering as normal for that state. Then it rockets away like a meteor, flashing out of sight as it fades into a period of unbound dormancy. Inevitably, a convergence will place it at a place and time that a human could actually reach somehow. As human technology has improved and explorers have probed the hidden recesses of continents, the trenches of the deepest oceans and even the surface of the moon, artistic seba have found ever-wider reach where they may next become manifest for the taking.

Not all masterpieces yield seba; why some do and others don't is a mystery lost to the ages. In the days of Irem, the Akhem-Urtu refined this process and the guild's seven Shan'iatu masters substituted their own genius for the hand of Fate, generating works of art custom-tailored to produce the exact relic sought. Now, the Deceived have fallen from creators to mere scavengers of humanity's genius, unable to create Iremite seba any more than other guilds can forge their own relics. Wherever centers of great art bring together the best and the brightest, celebrating each masterpiece with pomp and ritual, the Lost Guild is never far removed.

The Catch

While non-mummies can't bind more than 10 seba to their souls (and most wouldn't even dare approach this limit and forfeit all Willpower), mummies are not so constrained. Their Sekhem calls to the Sekhem bound in these relics and permits unlimited binding. However, for the Arisen and Shuankhsen, each bound seba applies its curse as would any relic of the "wrong" guild. The more seba they collect, the more that the servants of the Judges and Devourer assume the bad luck, doom, and misery that such collections bring.

The Deceived may bind up to (higher of Memory or Guild Status) seba without ill effect, shielding themselves with the favor of the temakhs or their own reconstituted souls. Once they reach this limit, any further bound seba apply their full curse. Deceived may then reset which seba whose curses they wish to block any time they bind a new one, typically in order to stop the most powerful curses from taking hold if they collect more potent relics. Because of this limit, members of the Restless Stars tend to take one of two approaches to collecting seba. Either they carefully stay within the limit to avoid the burdens of curses entirely, or else they go all in, collecting as much tainted power as they can find. Generally speaking, the temakhs encourage the latter approach, for what belongs to their chosen in turn belongs to them.



COSMIC RELICS

Seba also exist in the fathomless abyss of the sky, hence their name (which invokes the stars in Iremite Egyptian). Formed not by the arts of mankind, but the numinous mysteries of Fate, cosmic seba are incarnate reminders that Sekhem is not confined to earth, but a force that flows throughout the universe. These manifest wonders pass through the earth on a regular basis, wandering off into space unless caught and bound.

Unlike artistic seba, those fashioned by the cosmos do not follow the cycle of unbound and manifest. Instead, these free-floating patterns of Sekhem are always manifest and very nearly always in motion, often at great speeds. They stop only for appointed convergences, waiting at the appointed location as if they had just gone from unbound to manifest. Once the convergence ends, the relics launch again in a Fate-decreed trajectory on their pilgrimage back to space.

Some cosmic seba are like comets, orbiting the Earth's sun to return again and again at reachable convergences at predictable intervals. Sothic Turns bring frequent meteor showers of these alien relics, during which more cosmic seba fall from the sky than during all the centuries since the last Sothic Turn combined. Other manifest seba wander the lonely reaches of space, intersecting earth only once before they are lost — they must be grabbed then or not at all.

PERCEIVING SEBA

A seba's current state determines how it can be perceived. Generally, such magic is an invisible power in the world. Only the Deceived and a handful of meddling occultists have any clue the magic is present, let alone how to use it.

Unbound seba don't have being in any meaningful sense. They exist only in potential and have no location. No power or sense can perceive these objects or interact with them, apart from divining their next convergence.

Manifest seba have location, and thus, it is possible for some beings to sense or even directly perceive them. By the unleashed decree of the Restless Stars Shan'iatu, the relics can only be seen by those who have touched one of them, typically the Deceived whose masterful arts once called them into existence. Sometimes, however, the mystical ambitions of others lead these occultists to seek out and claim a seba. With the first successful binding, their eyes open to the true beauty of all celestial vastness and they live within the veil, thereafter beholding luminous hieroglyphs in perpetual motion, just as the Deceived do.

Those without the right experiences cannot even imagine what they are looking for, so they fail to find seba. This applies to almost all of the world's population. Even magic that specifically detects the presence of relics or concentrations of Sekhem will only reveal that a manifest seba is nearby. Such powers still cannot divine the seba's exact location or make it visible outright.

Occasionally, beings who can perceive magic directly (such as via Godsight; see **Mummy: The Curse**, p. 105) will catch a brief glimpse of seba shining like a sudden mirage, before vanishing as quickly as it appeared. Fate usually reserves such moments for curious Arisen who are destined to bind a seba and open their eyes completely.

Amkhata can feel the Sekhem of manifest seba like they can feel other types of relics, drawing the monsters to nearby convergences. However, they still cannot perceive the relics directly and so they circle around the area in frustrated hunger trying vainly to find the object of their desire. This can present an additional hazard to mummies who come to claim seba for themselves. Amkhata cannot sense the presence of bound seba as they can sense the energies flowing from manifest seba; one of the perks of carrying these intangible artifacts within one's soul is the luxury of not trailing a horde of hungry horrors.


Bound seba are like unbound seba in that they lack a location and can't be perceived or interacted with, except by bestowing powers and curses upon their owners. When a character activates a seba power that invokes a target's name or True Name, the power is subtle and invisible. However, characters who can perceive magic directly see the distinctive glowing hieroglyphs of the activated seba emanating from the bearer's lips and swiftly dissipating into motes of scattered light.

OBSCURE POWER

Most Arisen would not recognize the magic of seba even if they were to see it in action or witness its telltale displays with arcane senses. Outside of especially erudite Scribes (who have little reason to share their unsettling discoveries), the champions of the Judges have no reason to indulge in such studies. Nomenclature is long gone, after all, and good riddance. At most, such power is a historical curiosity, an object lesson that some magical forces belong to the Judges alone and shouldn't be meddled with.

Other than the Deceived, characters need a pertinent Occult specialty in Iremite Magic, Sekhem, Nomenclature (or something similarly relevant), plus an exceptional success on an Intelligence + Occult roll in order to know even the basics about what Nomenclature encompasses, how seba work, or the dangers of using such magic. Basic





success merely reveals that the power of True Names is vast, inscrutable, cursed, and that such secrets were long lost to the ages (if they ever truly existed).

FINDING SEBA

Only very few beings can perceive seba, but any occultist who knows how to look can attempt to divine the relic's present or next convergence. This works just as readily regardless of the seba's current state. From there, it is a relatively simple matter of journeying to the appointed location at the determined time and claiming the prize when it appears. In practice, it is rarely that simple.

The ritual to find seba is a special form of active kepher roll (see **Mummy: The Curse**, pp. 145-147) using a dice pool of (lower of Intelligence or Wits) + (lower of Academics or Occult). Characters must also have a minimum rating of Occult 3 and an Occult Specialty in Iremite Magic, Nomenclature, Astrology, Sekhem, or a similar Storyteller-approved area of expertise or the ritual automatically fails. The astrological divination takes six hours to perform and requires a mostly unobstructed view of the night sky with almost no cloud cover or light pollution to drown out the subtle twinkle of dimmer stars. Without the right environmental conditions, failure is automatic. Modern tools to depict the night sky via computer models, extremely detailed clockwork orreries, or collections of star charts can substitute for the night sky with a -1 to -3 dice penalty based on their quality and utility. There is no perfect substitute for direct communion with the stars, but modern technology offers options previously undreamt by the Deceived, let alone the hoary rigidity of the temakhs.

Fate may grant a passive kepher roll to anyone at any time, granting visions that lead towards seba. These unsought visions waive the need for a specialty, though the Occult rating minimum still applies as a competence threshold to derive useful information from such experiences. However, the fact that Fate is drawing that person's attention reduces the roll's target number by -1 and removes the need for lengthy ritual or specific environment. A flash of divine insight strikes like a bolt from the blue.

Deceived characters may use their Sekhem as a dice pool (if higher) to find seba with kepher and the target number is always reduced by -1 for such rolls. They need not possess any rating minimums or specialties, nor use ritual or be dependent on stellar observations. It is their destiny to seek and hoard such relics, after all.

Conversely, other mummies cannot use their Sekhem as a dice pool, require all trappings and rituals for seba

kepher, and worst of all, increase the target number of their rolls by +1. Fate would not have its wonders consigned to the darkness of Duat or the unmaking of the Devourer's hunger. Only Arisen who have betrayed their masters and refuse to give further relics to the Judges do not face this target number increase.

The kepher roll to find seba uses slightly different modifiers than the penalties associated with other types of artifacts. Seba cannot be entombed, as they can only be bound to souls and not places. However, they can be nearby while manifest. Generally, only the Deceived and others who have successfully bound seba can see one while it is in a manifest state, and "holding" such an object is synonymous with binding it to the character's soul. With rare exceptions, only ancient and carefully-guarded Deceived texts document lists of seba to a "described" or "catalogued" level, though Restless Stars may trade stories of magic with guildmates that provide useful descriptions. This leaves finding most seba with kepher at a daunting -10 penalty.

The kepher penalty to locate seba may be decreased one category by not seeking a particular relic and instead seeking whatever treasures Fate chooses to bestow, in which case the seeker will not know what relic lies at the end of the journey until locating and binding its power (save in rare instances where Fate reveals such specifics from the beginning of the quest as part of the lure). The convergence of a Fate-selected relic could be at any point to come, but is usually in the near future (generally no more than a month away). Sometimes, Fate reveals a cosmic seba that is years or even millennia away, a prophesied treasure to claim in some far-off Descent, but this is not the usual way of things.

Proxies for seba aren't quite like the proxies for other relics. Outside of other guildmates, the Deceived aren't apt to find people more likely to have seen or held a particular seba. Instead, any artist who has ever created a masterwork (i.e., created art with an exceptional success) can potentially be chosen by Fate as a proxy to find a seba created via the same form of art. How and why a particular artist is chosen by providence to offer clues to a seba's convergence, especially for artists with no personal connection whatsoever to the relic, is another of Fate's endless mysteries.

If a character uses kepher to seek a masterful artist proxy and successfully locates that person, then the seeker need only spend a few minutes studying any work of art by that artist (created using the correct medium). He then intuits enough clues Fate has embedded in the work to reduce his penalty by one step (e.g., Rumored to Catalogued) for kepher targeting the seba directly. By successfully chasing



down additional artist proxies via kepher, the penalty to find the seba can be cumulatively cut by further steps. Eventually, the insight that moves the character from *described* to *seen* includes a vivid oracular vision of the seba as Deceived see it, in all its beauty and splendor. Using this *seen* penalty, the character may then seek the seba directly and success reveals the exact location and start time for the seba's next (or current) convergence. Armed with that information, the seeker can make sure to be there.

The proxies for cosmic seba are sometimes artists, sometimes madmen, and very frequently just ordinary people in any walk of life. Should kepher lead a seeker to meet such a proxy, that individual enters an oracular trance and speaks prophetic clues in Iremite. Usually, such oracles do not remember their time as Fate's mouthpiece, essentially blacking out for that span of time to the best of their knowledge when they think about it later. However, sometimes being spoken through by providence marks that brief prophet, transforming a mortal into a Witness (resulting in experience debt, if needed). Each spoken prophecy that a seeker understands (which requires him to know Iremite) reduces his penalty by another step to seek the seba directly with kepher. Eventually, with enough omens to assemble, witnessing a vision of the seba's convergence allows success to grant exact location and time among other usual details.

The kepher ritual may also locate bound seba, whether by seeking such treasures specifically or being led to them by following Fate's omens. In such cases, the kepher proceeds as might the kepher of other guilds to locate their signature relics. However, the Engima rating, if any, of the seba's bearer shields against such attempts. Moreover, the roll increases its target number by one if performed by an Arisen or Shuankhsen, for Fate does not wish its treasures plundered by the rapaciousness of the Judges or the Devourer. Proxies in this instance work as for Arisen kepher, finding associates who have encountered the seba's bearer.

Fortunately for the Deceived, their cultists cannot inadvertently betray them in such a fashion, as their Deceived Cultist Merit protects against such scrying. Other mortals (and perhaps ghosts) that the Restless Stars encounter do constitute liabilities for those with sufficient occult lore and dedication to pierce the intrinsic Engima that usually shields the Deceived. The ultimate success of using ritualized kepher to find a bound seba leads the seeker to find the relic's bearer at some destined intersection of their respective fates, not a journey of following in the bearer's footsteps so much as walking two paths that must collide.

SUNDERING THE BOND

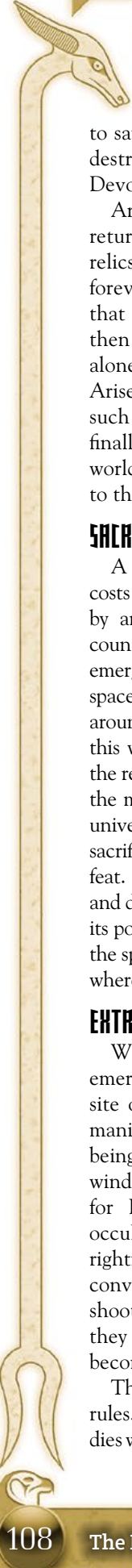

Being without physical form, seba cannot be broken or destroyed by any conventional means. Yet the Sekhem within them remains vulnerable to the creatures that prey upon such energies.

Whenever a Greater Amkhata would drain a dot of Sekhem from a mummy who has one or more bound seba, the mummy's player chooses one of these relics and it is annihilated, converting into sufficient energy for the Amkhata to materialize for a number of weeks equal to the destroyed seba's rating. While this means that seba collections provide a form of ablative shielding against Sekhem loss, Sekhem will always rise again eventually while seba are considerably harder to replace. Because Amkhata cannot sense bound seba and thus have no reason to seek out seba-bearing non-mummies over other prey, they only harvest these seba accidentally when their bearers die in the presence of the Amkhata. In such instance, the Amkhata gains materialization time appropriate to the relic's rating and the death toll. Fortunately, the hunger of lesser Amkhata is insufficient to touch bound seba, meaning they feed upon the seba's owner as normal.

When Shuankhsen would steal a dot of Sekhem from a mummy who bears seba within her, the mummy's player chooses one of these relics. The Lifeless mummy rips this artifact directly out of the victim's soul and claims its power, leaving the seba in a bound state affixed to its new owner. As with the hunger of greater Amkhata, this is not an optional "defense" against Sekhem loss. Once Shuankhsen discover that a mummy holds such delectable treats, its desire to consume her slowly and carefully so as to extract them all takes precedence over its immediate urge to gorge itself until the mummy dies. Since the champions of the Devourer have no particular reason to have the requisite skill to find seba by ritual kepher, this serendipitous windfall is the likeliest means by which they discover the existence of such relics. Of course, once they get a taste and have thus bound a seba to their souls, their senses awaken to see seba as the Deceived do. Shuankhsen cannot choose to sacrifice a bound seba from their souls as other bearers may, but can devour those whose curses prove onerous as they could devour any other relics at hand.

Arisen and Deceived alike may choose to cannibalize a seba bound to their own souls as they might devour any relic, though doing so degrades Memory and prompts Descent rolls as usual. The Judges lay claim to seba as they claim all relics. Seba may be an abomination to the Judges, but destroying the Sekhem trapped within such accursed patterns is a far greater abomination. Needless





to say, few sins arouse the ire of the temakhs more than destroying their treasures and aping the hunger of the Devourer to raven upon the universe.

Arisen who bear seba within their souls when they return to henet within their tombs may carry those relics into Duat with their passage. Such wonders vanish forever from the living world, gone as all relics go into that great and unknowable darkness. What the Judges then do with these blasphemous treasures is their business alone. Surprisingly, the Judges have not directed the Arisen toward finding seba as yet, though they welcome such offerings when given. Perhaps when the Judges have finally claimed all of the “conventional” relics of the world, they will turn their attention outward to lay claim to the infinite wonders of the cosmos and all its arts.

SACRIFICE

A seba’s bearer can choose to relinquish the relic. This costs one Willpower point and takes an action. Seba created by art return instantly to an unbound state and begin counting down toward their next convergence. Cosmic seba emerge manifest and fly away as normal, rushing off toward space and the long orbit that may hopefully bring them back around to Earth one day. When a mummy sacrifices a seba this way, she replenishes a number of Ren points equal to the relic’s rating. If this would provide more Ren points than the mummy can hold, the extra power bleeds out into the universe unharnessed. Some seba powers allow a seba to be sacrificed to accomplish some extraordinary potent magical feat. In such cases, the resulting miracle is its own reward and does not also replenish Ren points. Sacrificing a seba for its power does not destroy it any more than other sacrifices; the spent relic merely passes on toward its next convergence where it may be bound again and perhaps sacrificed anew.

EXTRACTION

When a seba bearer dies, all seba attached to his soul emerge and begin an immediate convergence at the site of their prior owner’s death, though this period of manifesting lasts only until the end of the scene. Any being capable of finding and binding them in this brief window may do so normally. It is not remotely uncommon for Deceived to reclaim seba from entrepreneuring occultists by tearing them asunder and ripping out their rightful property. Any seba unclaimed when this special convergence ends depart spectacularly, racing away like shooting stars even for art-spawned relics. Only after they have vanished over the horizon do those capable of becoming unbound do so.

There is a notable and important except to the prior rules. When a seba bearer is a mummy and that mummy dies within her own tomb, the seba convergence never ends.

The relics remain frozen at that site so long as the tomb endures as a structure. If that bearer is an Arisen returning to henet, they may choose to take any of these seba into Duat and offer them to the Judges as explained previously, or leave them behind to bind anew upon next rising. The Deceived would never forfeit such treasures even if they could, and expect their collections to be waiting for them intact as they left them. Members of the Lost Guild take a very dim view of their occult-minded cultists borrowing such treasures, even to further cult business.

SUMMONING

The Deceived may be summoned by their cultists via non-seba relics and vestiges exactly like the Arisen. However, a seba-bearer may also tap the power of that relic to issue the Call to any sort of mummy, consuming the relic utterly as it transforms into raw Sekhem that flows into the arisen god. It is also possible to issue the call in a tomb that hosts an ongoing convergence from the tomb’s owner dying within its walls. In such cases, the seba is only temporarily drained as if it were a “conventional” relic that belonged to the Arisen it summoned (see **Mummy: The Curse**, p. 214).

It is most common for Deceived to plan their deaths within their tombs so that they do not lose their precious seba collections and scatter them to the four winds, forcing them on individual treasure hunts to recover each one. That doing so affords a renewable means of calling them back from death only reinforces the need for such prudence. As such, despite being the most unkillable and immortal entities known in existence, many Deceived practice caution that borders on cowardice, avoiding deadly conflict whenever possible unless they perceive themselves to have a completely overwhelming advantage. It is only when the Deceived have been slain outside their tombs and lost their relics that they have nothing to lose by engaging in brutal violence, and then, all the more reason to do so. Few horrors can match the wrath of such mummies when their death cycles come to an end.

A HANDFUL OF STARS

Like other types of relics, there are infinite possible variations of seba, and this book cannot hope to do more than present a small sampling of their power. Storytellers are encouraged to use these examples to build their own. Unlike other relic type examples, seba do not describe their physical form (obviously), so no Size, Durability or Structure. This also means seba cannot be flavorful on form alone. A jackal skull whose unearthly howl fills allies with bestial savagery, adding a temporary dot of Brawl, is not providing a particularly interesting or complex effect,



but the vector of that magic evokes the eeriness of the relic's Iremite legacy. By contrast, a seba is all about its power and curse, so these traits must do interesting and novel things while evoking the intended atmosphere of tainted cosmic mystery. If either a seba's power or curse fail in this regard, then the relic becomes just another form of spell to collect and use in a utilitarian fashion.

For the example seba below, none specify their origin. Storytellers wishing to include these relics in a game should decide for themselves what artistic masterpieces or congeries of astral destiny brought them into being. Save where noted, multiple copies of all these examples exist, though they can be as rare as plot demands depending on where they are in a particular convergence and how many are accessible in the game setting.

In almost all cases, the curses of seba bring bad luck or the balancing of Ma'at's scales, punishing the use of a violent curse by turning that same violence upon someone the mummy cares about (or perhaps herself). To bind these relics, especially for non-Deceived is to know suffering, misfortune and ultimately ruin. The Arisen may be prejudicial in their claims that seba are innately blasphemous, but there is no question that they are exceedingly dangerous to wield. In some cases, a curse of disproportionate strength may justify power beyond that which a relic of that rating might seem capable. The greatest seba can alter the destiny of a planet in ways that are as glorious as they are potentially apocalyptic.

THIEF OF WORDS (SEBA •)

Powers: An owner bound to this seba can steal other seba from enemies without needing to slay those opponents first. The bearer must get within 5 yards of a target character he believes may have a seba he wants. His player spends one Pillar point or Willpower point and rolls his Manipulation + Occult as an instant action in an opposed roll against the target's Resolve + Composure. If the bearer wins and the target does have one or more seba bound to her soul, she chooses one and the prize instantly transfers its binding to the thief. If the target has no seba or the thief loses the contested roll, nothing happens except the activation cost is wasted. It is up to the thief to determine who has seba or not by other means.

Curse: Those who carry this seba wear a distinctive halo of light around their heads, visible to those who can see manifest seba. Sight of this corona bestows the knowledge that the bearer is a thief and that choosing a path of theft has left him vulnerable to the same. Accordingly, anyone else within 5 yards of the thief who can see his halo may spend Pillars or Willpower to attempt the same action to steal the thief's own seba (though he may resist with his own Manipulation + Occult instead). It is not possible to

suppress this curse, even for the Deceived. On matters of cosmic theft, the scales cannot be cheated. So speaks Fate.

THE PROPHET'S KISS (SEBA •)

Power: The bearer can inflict the seba's derangement upon any targeted sapient being she can perceive within 50 yards by speaking the target's name. The bearer's player takes an instant action to roll (Presence + Occult), resisted by the target's (Resolve + Supernatural Advantage). If the bearer wins, the target gains the derangement for weeks equal to the successes rolled, after which the madness subsides like a bad dream. If the bearer loses, the strain of failing to express her seba's insanity wears upon her soul, draining one Willpower point (if she has any remaining). With knowledge of the target's true name, the duration of madness lasts for so long as the bearer retains the seba.

Curse: Each of these seba carry one derangement, sometimes a mild form of madness and sometimes a severe one. To bind such madness to one's soul requires lacking it in the first place, else there is no room for the broken vision to blossom. The bearer suffers the full effects of this derangement and can only suppress it by being one of the Deceived and choosing to dampen the particular seba's curse outright. Otherwise, no curative magic can pry the madness loose or quiet its urges.

UNTOUCHED AND BROKEN (SEBA ••)


Power: The bearer's soul hardens against the magic and guile of others. Whenever she uses a dice pool to resist supernatural powers that do not target her via her name or True Name, she adds +3 dice. This same bonus applies to her dice pools to resist being deceived by outright lies, though not against half-truths and subtler forms of manipulation.

Curse: Though hardened against those without, her wounded heart is numb to the pain of morality (and for mummy bearers, the crushing regret of ages). This chosen cruelty of Fate adds one to the target number of all rolls her player makes to resist losing Morality dots via degeneration.

ALL-TONGUE'S FOLLY (SEBA ••)

Power: The bearer is beyond linguistic puissance. To hear or attempt to read a word of an unknown language is to understand that language with total fluency, in turn able to speak or write the tongue as a native speaker/scribe might. Only magical languages conceived in the dawn of the universe defy this translation, the murmurs of elder gods and nameless horrors beyond mankind's knowing. That such meaning is not translated is a kindness. The seba also reduces the target number of all of its bearer's





Academics rolls by -1, save when used for ritualized kepher to find seba. The blessings of understanding and scholarship fade instantly should the seba cease to be bound to the bearer.

Curse: Once per scene, Fate may intervene when the bearer fails an Academics roll. That failure becomes a dramatic failure, granting absolute certainty that a falsehood is inerrant truth. The Storyteller chooses when and whether to apply such misunderstandings in moments that will lead to unpleasant and embarrassing situations, or worse. The blessed scholar sees clearer save only when she dreams she does.

THE COWARD'S PATH (SEBA ●●)

Power: Once per chapter/session, the bearer may speak his own name unto Fate, begging as a child might to evade overwhelming misfortune. Such wormish impudence is honored at the reflexive price of two Willpower points, a measure of dignity sacrificed upon the altar of prudence. The bearer is no longer in where he was, where he never was. Instead, the present timeline alters such that the bearer has always been elsewhere, somewhere he could have reached by making different decisions beginning no more than an hour previous. He has no control where he ends up, and while Fate does its best to keep events of the prior continuity intact (e.g. an escaped melee may take place without him, but with all other combatants having engaged and wounded one another as happened when he was present), Fate is under no obligation to do so. To meddle in time and might-have-beens is to be the slave of causality far more than master. Worse, in the altered timeline, the bearer has no memory of what previously may have been, dimly aware only that once more, he scurried from the jaws of danger and adventure and feels the shame reflected by the Willpower cost.

Curse: Once per story, Fate may choose to take the bearer unbidden to an altered continuity. This costs him no Willpower, for he remembers events as they “should” have been and knows he did not ask to be removed. Quite to the contrary, such banishment strikes only to tear him from joys and accomplishments, forcing him to seek them again by other means. If he can be denied an opportunity that is somehow gone and lost forever, so much the better.

BY PROVIDENCE MADE WHOLE (SEBA ●●●)

Power: The bearer may speak the True Name of a target character he can perceive within 100 yards, provided he knows one or more persistent afflictions of the body that plagues the target. Such afflictions can be diseases, poisoning, transformation into a new and undesired form, maiming wounds like amputations, the ravages of old age or anything else the Storyteller approves. Damage alone

from “usual” sorts of injuries do not qualify. After calling for a miracle, roll one die at a target number equal to the cumulative number of times the bearer has successfully called upon such magic from the seba. If successful, all conditions that may be treated vanish, as the Sekhem of Fate transfixes and spreads throughout the patient. The old become young adults, hale and healthy and astonished by what has happened. Upon a failed roll, the seba detaches and immediately encounters a period of being unbound (if artistic in origin) or flying off toward its next convergence (if cosmic). Fate is never reliable, but particularly fickle in its blessings.

Curse: A failed attempt to heal a mortal that the bearer cares about worsens all valid conditions so swiftly and extremely that death comes in a matter of minutes. No curative magic can avert this doom, leaving the would-be meddler to bear witness to the painful demise she has inflicted upon her friend or loved one.

THE BURNING CROWN (SEBA ●●●)

Power: This seba confers great power and majesty upon its bearer. A mummy adds +6 bonus dots of the Cult Merit upon binding the relic, spent as her player chooses. These dots appear through swift and unlikely good fortune over a period of a month as the bearer's worship swells. Non-mummies gain all of the benefits of having Deceived Cultist 5, even if they could not normally obtain the Merit, placing their implacable faith in their own importance to Fate and thus the benevolent infallibility of destiny rather than any member of the Sixth Guild. Supernatural bearers keep these powers separate from their own capabilities, enjoying the best of both where any overlap might exist. Though death parts a non-mummy bearer from the seba as normal, the Deceived Cultist Merit effects trigger the usual rise as a revenant (and removes any supernatural templates possessed in life or unlife to produce a “pure” ghost), thereby granting a chance to perhaps reclaim the seba and enjoy its splendor anew. To choose the revenant path of Impassioned Soul is to be fettered to a cause Fate chooses, however, which rarely aligns with the former bearer's own desires.

Curse: Once a bearer holds this seba within her soul, she is a magnet to those who would kill her and take the treasure for themselves. Once per story, a dangerous adversary successfully follows the trail of kepher to find the bearer, urged toward murderous avarice. The bearer's Enigma rating turns out not to have applied, or perhaps it was simply insufficient cloaking. The kepher may have been intentional seeking or leaving the destination to Fate. Regardless, the bearer now has a fight on her hands against a foe who presents possible mortal danger. Should she best her would-be destroyer, another soon follows.



KESHINA

Just as the Arisen can invest some of their souls and power into favorite relics, transforming them into talismans, so too may the Deceived take a seba within their innermost being. This type of Deceived-exclusive item is called a *keshina*. In this mystic symmetry, a seba that appends the True Name of its owner in turn absorbs syllables of that owner's being into its own True Name. Put more poetically, to fashion a keshina is to catch a falling star and never let it go.

CREATION

Any member of the Deceived, of any Guild Status rating, may create a keshina, though doing so requires a minimum of four dots in Occult to understand the profound metaphysical principles involved. The first step is to locate and bind the seba the mummy wishes to empower, which must be either the right art for her temakh or else a cosmic relic. Upon doing so, all that remains is the sacrifice of self, costing one dot of Willpower that cannot be purchased back with experience without reverting the keshina to "just" a seba. A Deceived may only possess a single keshina at a time, and must replenish her spent Willpower before she may invest her soul into a different seba.

POWERS

In addition to its usual powers as a seba, a keshina confers the powers listed below upon its owner. Keshina do not bear any additional curses apart from requiring a Willpower dot, which is more of a cost than a curse.

A keshina does not scatter upon its owner's demise, as other bound seba do, even outside of the mummy's tomb. It is a part of her and stays with her, affixed to her being, though unable to be used except when Sekhem fuels her Descent. Neither may the relic be extracted from her, harmed, or destroyed by any means. No force in existence can lessen such miracles or rob them from their eternal owners.

Once per Descent, a Deceived may summon a surge of power from her keshina as a reflexive action to turn back the clock. Her player rolls dice equal to (10 – the mummy's Sekhem), applying the 8-again rule. She gains a number of Sekhem dots equal to the successes (or one

reset if the roll fails), as though she had consumed a relic without the attendant perils of doing so. She can't rise above Sekhem 10. This miracle is visible as a golden light that wells up through her veins and shimmers from her pores, pouring from her mouth and eyes with dazzling splendor. The air around her sings with strange, almost alien tones, like some kind of hymn; sad and yet hopeful and somehow different to every ear. Mortal witnesses experience Terror Sybaris.

Whenever she meditates to regain Pillar points, her player reduces the target number of the Memory roll by one. While meditating this way, she may also attempt to commune with her temakh (if the seba is of artistic origin) or Fate (if cosmic). Doing the former grants her a terrifying and hallucinogenic vision of images and concepts sacred to the temakh and to what it wants her to do. The temakh is always a prominent figure that she recognizes within the dreamscape, but it can take any form. Her master does not speak in words, but in cryptic (but nonetheless useful) clues embedded in the vision. This provides a means for the Storyteller to impart *useful* information that sets the character on the "right" path without giving away direct answers or demystifying the temakh. Fate is even more cryptic, never assuming a specific form within the dreamscape, but always leading towards its dictates. In general, Fate-based visions are clearer in what the character is expected to do, but not why, while the temakhs have clearer guiding rationales and fewer specifics on how to further those goals. Generally, characters only receive new visions from the same source once they have figured out the previous clue and acted upon it. Otherwise, the dreamscape merely repeats itself. Deceived who own a keshina generally use them for visions daily, chasing clues and puzzles that invariably lead to something interesting, if not necessarily safe. It must be remembered that the temakhs and Fate both know *exactly* how durable the Deceived are and how much danger their servants can endure.

Cosmic seba turned into keshina provide a means of breaking the chains of the temakhs by offering the alternative servitude of Apotheosis. Such characters can no longer receive visions from their temakh, but follow where providence leads them in each ordained purpose.





Know me, for all the bleating and carving and smearing of ink is but a veil for the hammering heart.

Know me, for I am the shit from whence the lotus grows.

I laugh as others play at shadow puppets. We are unafraid of the thundering of the blood that courses through the veins of earth and man. It is the geysers and eruptions in which we seek to bathe. Beetle-backed, we roll the sun, but it is not the light we seek. It is the dirt. The dirt within.

Know me, and tend the garden from which awe grows. Become the sublime speck that kneels and screams before the never ending and never caring. The gorge rises, the eyes turn upwards, the chest tightens, and the limbs grow cold, but do not turn away.

As unhewn stone is touched by severed hands smeared with rough white gypsum, I feel it. As void and stars gaze down uncaring on buried menhirs that once towered over kings, I see it. As your name is lost, not even written on the dust and ash of your tomb, I praise it.

I shatter the falsehoods of the cleanly spirit. I peel away the lies of the flesh. I reveal the quivering fear. I answer that question left unasked.

Know me, and undo reason and humanity, undo flesh. Unmake it all. Awaken, and as the first handful of grave dirt strikes your bemused cheek, I embrace you. Exult as I kiss you with a thousand thousand wriggling tongues and burrow between the folds of your ripened flesh. Listen as I whisper and sigh with the hot breath of your own unmaking.

Know me, for it is I turn the worm against the written page. It is I coax the moth to feast on colored wrappings. It is I weather and drown the smiling lips of stone faces. In me is the only truth left to you. Through me your screams will echo. They will penetrate the hammering heart.

O scarab, you toil all of your days, but it is not the sun upon which you feast. The once smooth obsidian of your broad back has been shattered by your task, and now what lies at your feet? What is the wage of your life's work? It is the dirt.

Know me, the hammering heart in the face of infinity, the shape of things undone and yet to be.

I am Father Scarab, the Hive-Soul,
I am Hakkar-Zozer,
I am.





CHAPTER FIVE

A PANOPOLY OF ONE

I have found both freedom and safety in my madness; the freedom of loneliness and the safety from being understood, for those who understand us enslave something in us.

— Khalil Gibran, *The Madman*

In each Deceived mummy, two spirits struggle for harmony: the mortal soul and the Shan'iatu overlord she once served. The immortal temakh is a fragment of the magical being that taught humanity the essential arts of civilization, only to be betrayed by the machinations of fellow necromancers and the Devourer. It possesses a dim recollection of the power it once possessed and more importantly, the fact that long ago, the gods raised their kind above all Earthly beings — and in setting them beyond the cycle of nature, denied them the revelations and rewards of the afterlife.

One and all, these traces of the Shan'iatu seethe with anger at their betrayal, but that doesn't mean they act with a common strategy. Dispersed among their Scattered Stars, each Shan'iatu master's complex personality manifests through diverse thoughts and urges. Even shards of the same being often clash over the best way to escape the prison of their Deathless corpses.

Deceived traditions emphasize the temakh's supremacy, but it would be foolish to forget the formerly mortal vessel that holds it. The artists of their guild share many of the concerns of other Deathless. Degraded Memory instigates a yearning to discover who they once were. And though they never stood, resolute, against the terrible Judges of Duat, they have endured the equally severe trial of imprisonment with their temakhs: internal struggles where the Deceived is never sure where the mortal ends and the temakh begins, and the horror between lives, where the temakh hunts the mortal's ghost to reincarnate itself, and return to projects intended to break this cursed rhythm for good.

A QUESTION OF IDENTITY

Deceived doctrine demands that the mummy think of himself as the Shan'iatu, but with a few of them dispersed among many more mummies, they recognize that the mortal name is the easiest way to, for example, tell one Philosopher from the next. In truth, Scattered Stars

contain a full mortal personality, but a simple fraction of an inhuman Shan'iatu, and in private, many think of themselves as the mortal. For one thing, they lack their masters' intuitive command of magic, and rely on the guild lore they learned as mortals, and remember as a reflex, even when the days of learning have been forgotten.

The temakh usually exerts a subtle influence, twisting a Deceived mummy's attitudes. It rarely manifests as a separate being, but this has been known to happen during emotionally extreme situations. Deceived may reel from waking dreams of indescribable experiences, as the temakh remembers hearing Azar sing, or how it once manifested as a rain of blood to terrify a mortal tribe. Nevertheless, Deceived rarely have to "talk to themselves" over the course of the Descent, unless you

Death and the Deceived Descent

For the Arisen, being killed mid-Descent results in the typical death cycle: A short (often single-scene) interlude the Storyteller runs for the player of the departed. Because the Deceived are bound not to Duat, but only to the living world and to Neter-Khertet, their death cycles are a lot more varied and intense, and as a result, can run much longer than one or two scenes.

For this reason, playing out Deceived death cycles is entirely optional, and in all fairness, should probably be agreed upon by the players prior to beginning a Deceived chronicle. For those who *want* to explore death — the only period of time where the Deceived soul is truly its own — the play can be very rewarding; but there's no question that it's liable to eat into the play time of the group.



decide to change the chronicle’s assumptions to allow it. Players may decide to give the temakh a detailed, independent personality, but this is never required, and everyone involved should remember that anything they decide about one Shan’iatu applies to other Deceived that share the same type of temakh. As a Deceived mummy’s memory grows, he better understands which desires belong to him, and which represent the temakh.

During the mummy’s exile in Neter-Khertet the temakh is an independent being: an implacable shapeshifting horror, driven by its desire to solve their shared problem and by its fear of the gods that stalk the Place Between. And at these times, the Deceived soul knows itself true.


THE TRIAL OF HENET

In between Descents, the souls of the Deceived do not fall into Duat, for the Judges lay no claim to them. Instead, the souls of the Restless Stars detach from their flesh and enter Neter-Khertet. There they exist as ghosts do, in a state of twilight, beholding the realm of the living they cannot touch overlaid with shadows and ghosts. Like all mummies, the Deceived can see the distant mountains that mark the eastern and western horizons, but these peaks remain eternally beyond reach and offer no gateway back to life. The henet of the Deceived is no blank and peaceful repose, but a frenzied and desperate escape.

While in henet, the Deceived possess only their mortal traits and temporarily “lose” their mummy template. Most importantly, this includes their temakh, allowing their own Virtue and Vice to assert themselves without the influence of their dread master. Their spectral bodies return to what they looked like in life, no longer warped by sharing the sahu. Memory represents the sole exception, still limiting what the bodiless soul can recall of its past and what sins risk degeneration and madness. Only in death may the Deceived delude themselves into believing they are free, but such delusions cannot last.

Members of the Akhem-Urtu begin each henet with full health, but are effectively intangible mortals. Their one power, if it can be said to be such, is that they are without physical needs. They cannot starve, die of thirst, be sickened, or be poisoned. They need no sleep, but heal at all times as though they were sleeping. Yet they remain vulnerable to assault from ghosts, Amkhata, and powers that allow attacks upon beings in Twilight. Worse, they suffer one point of automatic aggravated damage per day that they do not spend some effort toward journeying farther from their bodies (or site of their most recent death, if lacking all remains). Should their souls “perish” while dead, all fades to darkness and





horror and pain as their soul snaps back to its body and dreams in disincorporate nightmare until the next arising.

When the Deceived experience a call to arise before they face the death-within-death, the shadowed claws of their temakh stretch forth across all distance and drag them screaming back to life. They can never run far or fast enough to get away. Perhaps the most horrifying aspect of the Deceived is that most of them secretly prefer the endless, fearful running that is their death to the glorious unlife of power and rage they share with their temakh.

Because their souls do not have to cross from the depths of Duat to their bodies, the Deceived are considered to have a Memory rating two dots lower than their actual rating to determine how long it takes to rise from full henet (but not death cycles).

DEATH CYCLES

The death cycles of the Deceived are simply an abbreviated form of henet that counts as part of the Descent it interrupts for the purpose of remembering it later. The soul still detaches as an intangible “mortal” with full health, and still feels the urge to flee. The soul calculates the duration of its death cycle using its Sekhem at the time of death. When this period elapses, roll the mummy’s Memory. An exceptional success means she is dragged to flesh with no loss of Sekhem. Otherwise, she rises with one less dot, or else enters henet if this would leave her with a Sekhem rating of 0.

THE ASCENT


The Sekhem of the Restless Stars is both eternal and incorruptible. On the one hand, this means the Deceived cannot fall into the Devourer’s jaws and become Shuankhsen. On the other hand, neither may it be fully “corrupted” by the hope of Apotheosis and the attendant release from the wheel of Descent. The Deceived stand apart from the Arisen, both greater and lesser than their cousins. Yet in their immortality and attunement to the mysteries of the cosmos, the Restless Stars may walk their own path of transcendence.

When they speak of it, the Deceived call this path by its old form, the *Mentaar* (“ascent”), and to walk it they must build their Pillars and Memory to the same degree as Arisen seeking baseline Apotheosis. Then, they must divine the convergence of a five-dot cosmic seba, bind it to their soul, and invest their undying power into the bound word of power as a keshina (p. 111). If these conditions are met, when they next arise and their Sekhem soars to its peak of glory, they surrender themselves utterly unto Fate and dissolve their ancient egos in the acids of its grand design.

By these rituals and supplication, the Deceived rise above their temakh, silencing its murmurs and its hold

over them. Nothing could terrify or horrify the temakhs more, for if all their servants were to throw off their chains for the silver cord of Fate, the temakhs would be without hands, forever. Reaching this exalted state confers the following changes to a mummy who attains it:

- Her True Name is no longer bound to her temakh, but to Fate itself. (The distinction, while proudly defiant, is functionally meaningless from her own perspective.)
- Her sahu purifies, excising all disfigurements imparted by her temakh. This also removes the prohibition against spending Pillars to feign life and the ways her Sybaris worsens for mortals exposed to it (the increased tendency to trail omens endures). The default/base image of her Sybaris form is that of luminous galaxies and celestial bodies in constant motion as a halo around her. When the fact that she is a walking corpse is evident, the withering and wounds of her flesh glow with cosmic energy, filling all missing and damaged pieces.
- Whenever she enters henet or a death cycle her body dissolves into the Sekhem of the universe and is without form or location, effectively ceasing to exist. Personal possessions worn and carried likewise vanish. She can no more remember her time spent dead than the Arisen can remember their time in Duat. She is with Fate, and nothing else matters. This also removes all dots of Cult and Tomb, as she no longer retains such mystical ties to worshippers or places.
- She arises with the Sothic Turn like all mummies, and in between only as Fate decrees. No one may issue her soul the Call, nor may the disturbance of her remains or tomb prompt her vengeance (as she lacks the former and no longer retains ties of responsibility to the latter). When she arises her body materializes out of raw Sekhem at a location decreed by Fate, and she intuitively understands the Fate-ordained purpose for which she returned to physical form. Possessions and clothing that vanished with her body return with her. In the case of a death cycle, she returns to the same purpose that prompted her Descent and likely very close to wherever she last died. Usually, Fate chooses to send her to a location where her resurrection will go unobserved, but sometimes a spectacular entrance serves providence better.
- The temakh can neither hasten nor slow her Descent. Instead, acts that significantly further the plans of Fate grant a reset, while attempting to de-



liberately fight against Fate's designs prompts immediate Descent Rolls. The rise and fall of Sekhem within her is as natural as the tide or the rhythms of spinning galaxies, the hallowed pulse of time itself. She may voluntarily enter henet at any time in a Descent once she completes the purpose Fate assigned. Her temakh strips her of all dots of Guild Status as a final act of spite, as her new allegiance precludes such material connections. She is still technically considered one of the Deceived from the standpoint of rules, but no longer has any social or occult standing within the guild.

- She can no longer regain Pillar points for obeying the mandates of her temakh, but adds +5 dice to Memory rolls to replenish Pillars via meditation.
- She loses the special power and curse bestowed by her temakh.

She cannot reverse this transformation. Having surrendered herself and her immortality to Fate, she is its slave forevermore. As all mummies well know, Fate is neither cruel nor kind. It simply is. She may be called upon to do terrible or beautiful things in the name of what must be. If she commits a sin against Memory specifically because Fate demands it, she adds +5 dice to the roll to resist degeneration. Generally, it is the case that Fate does not demand sinful action at a faster rate than Sebait experience accumulates, allowing the ascended to “tread water” morally or even gain ground. Likely, some other servant is better suited for such grim necessities, anyway. However, should one of the ascended fail to grow faster than she is ground down, hitting bottom at Memory 0 means she acts entirely as a vessel of providence instead of her silenced temakh, lacking will or judgment of her own until she next arises with Memory 1.

ON THE FLUID FORM

Throughout the vast majority of their existence, Arisen return to the same body they were born with in Irem so many millennia ago. They must go to great lengths to hide and preserve their bodies (or at least their organs), that they might form a new sahu at each arising. Only in the direst of circumstances would they consider the consequences of resurrecting into a new body, the flensing of the soul, and the risk of becoming one of the dread Shuankhsen.

For the Deceived, none of this is the case.

For the most part, members of the Restless Stars take the same precautions as Arisen and continue to use the same body for as long as they can. But if their khat is destroyed, nothing stops them from getting a new one. A few even switch bodies intentionally for purposes of strategy or disguise.

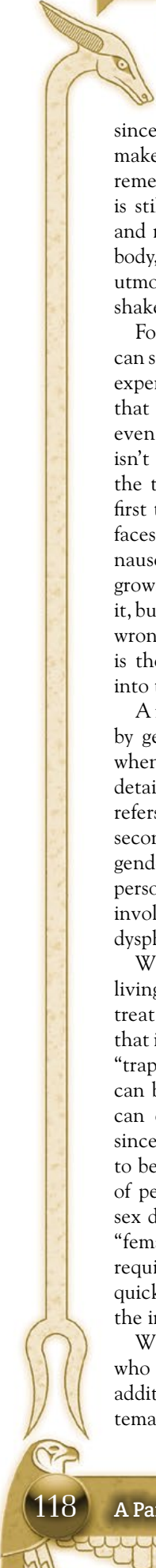

A mummy in a new body, whether Arisen or Deceived, faces a significant shock and period of adjustment. Many times, the switch comes as a surprise, a measure taken by the mummy's stymied cultists. Seeing a strange face in the mirror, moving about with longer or shorter strides, and using the wrong hands to interact with the world are all deeply unsettling experiences. This feeling is generally called “body dysphoria” in modern times, though mummies, mortals, and others have been experiencing it

Two Roads Diverged

The word “apotheosis” means becoming like a god, and yet for the Arisen, Apotheosis means shedding their godlike power and sundering their connections to cosmic entities beyond the realm of the living. It seems an odd choice to claim that diminishment is tantamount to deification. But Apotheosis isn't really about power. It's about freedom, about realizing the self-determination that gods have and mortal men can only strive toward. Immortals who walk alive, unshackled from the crushing wheel of Descent and arising, earn that freedom.

As noted previously, the Deceived are not simply immortals like other mummies, but eternal. They exist and endure and shall rise in every age, until time itself is no more. They cannot escape this glorious doom. But they can choose the form of their curse. They can decide whether to remain bonded to their ancient disembodied masters, half-possessed and half-maddened by the unceasing bleeding of souls into one another, or else surrender utterly to the highest power and purpose beyond understanding. They can obey terrible masters resentfully and perhaps half-heartedly, or dissolve their very being into the firmament and trust that they will be part of a greatness within the broader saga of the universe. Enlightened Deceived are celestial bodhisattvas who turn back from the great beyond to facilitate its designs, never to finish their own journey.

Restless Stars who reach Apotheosis are powerful beings, indeed, because a core conceit of **Mummy: The Curse** is the notion that power is a chain you wrap around yourself. Power does not grant freedom or derive from it. Power is merely the reward of obedience. To achieve Apotheosis means seeing past the allure of power. For the Deceived, completing the Ascent means accepting a hallowed duty and the dark power commensurate with that duty. It is a matter of perspective and opinion whether the Arisen or the Deceived have a better path.



since long before there was a clinical term. Low Memory makes this problem easier to bear, as the mummy cannot remember the feelings associated with form, but the soul is still plagued by a nameless unease. After many years and resurrections, one might grow comfortable in a new body, only recalling that one even had another at the utmost heights of Memory, but most mummies never shake the feeling.

For those who haven't experienced it, body dysphoria can seem trivial. In the modern era, video games and other experiences often represent the user's body with an avatar that looks nothing like that user. That experience isn't even mildly jarring, so it may seem that body dysphoria isn't that big a concern. This could not be farther from the truth, as there is a large shock associated with the first time mummies see their new image, especially their faces. This shock can be severe enough to cause dizziness, nausea, or even unconsciousness. The jarring disquiet grows less intense with each time they're confronted with it, but it never goes away; not completely. An indescribable wrongness endures for as long as the flesh itself. And that is the best case scenario: when the mummy incarnates into the same gender as before.

A mummy's body dysphoria may be further complicated by gender dysphoria, a more complex issue brought on when the mind and body don't just mismatch on cosmetic details, but on sex and gender. In modern times, sex refers to the physical traits of the body, including genitals, secondary sexual characteristics, and other details; while gender now refers more to the mental identity of the person and the associated social roles. Gender dysphoria involves all the alienation from one's body that body dysphoria does, plus a number of additional issues.

When a mummy with a female soul walks among the living in the body of a man (or vice versa), other people treat the mummy as if he/she *was* the body gender, since that is what they see (or else they view him/her as a person "trapped" in the opposite sex). Either way, the experience can be unsettling, frustrating, and even frightening, and can cause romantic and sexual complications as well, since these mummies are no longer the sex they are used to being and likely feel attraction toward the same types of people they did before. For those whose gender and sex do not neatly fit the traditional labels of "male" and "female," this issue becomes almost hopelessly tangled, requiring more discussion than this brief overview. (A quick Internet search should provide a basic primer on the intricacies of these topics.)

While all of these issues plague any Arisen or Deceived who winds up in a new body, the Deceived have an additional complication: the temakh. As all of the temakhs are male (or at least started out that way), any



Deceived is bound to feel the disapproval and displeasure of the temakh unless they constantly and slavishly struggle to further the goals of their disembodied master. However, for a servant whose body and/or soul is non-male, there comes an additional feeling of rejection, unworthiness, or even mild disgust. This feeling isn't overpowering and clearly originates outside the mummy's mind, but it is ever-present. To be female in any way is to be constantly reminded that she is an imperfect (or at least partly contradictory) vessel for the soul and will of a timeless being. In short, she cannot escape the gaze of the male figure she calls master, no matter how much human society evolves on this point. (For the mummies of the Poet, these feelings are present regardless of gender, as the Verse feels all flesh is weakness.)

The Deceived are eternal beings and the world is a dangerous place. No matter how many millennia pass, until humankind is no more, it is a nigh-inevitability that they will eventually find themselves wearing new flesh. Bodies come and bodies go, but it is never an insignificant matter. As their Memory permits, the members of the Akhem-Urtu grieve forever the loss of their original bodies and may come to grieve for each of the bodies that follow in succession, a dizzying dynasty of endless and growing dissociation.

I should be over this by now. For six months, I've seen this face in the mirror. I picked it out, led my cultists in preparing it. I never knew her, so there's no sympathy for the woman who used to live in this flesh. This was my choice, my decision. Yet, when I first looked in the mirror, I was overcome with dizziness. I even retched. If my constitution had been weaker, I might have passed out from the shock. Subsequent viewings were less shocking, but even now, I am occasionally surprised when I am unexpectedly confronted with a mirror and the sight of someone else where I should be. I reach out a hand to turn a page, open a door, touch a lover... and my skin crawls at the sight of an alien hand.

Bathing. Clothing. Applying cosmetics. Dealing with her... with *my* hair. They're simple chores. I used to take some pleasure in them, even. But now, it is far easier to simply close my eyes and allow my cultists to take care of it, sparing myself the gnawing sensation that comes when I gaze long enough upon this cursed sahu. It feels as though something has been stolen from me. It feels as though I'm trapped behind a mask, unable to see myself. Foolishness, all of it, but I cannot shake it. Perhaps in my next Descent, my memory of my previous body will have faded.

Perhaps it would have been easier if I had picked a man. It took weeks before I was accustomed to the new balance. My gait is different. Every now and then, the



sensation of my breasts moving catches me by surprise, distracting me. Being female was the entire purpose of the exercise, of course. I picked one that was his type, the better to gain his trust and insinuate my way into his operations. Even with the body, however, I was an unconvincing woman. I had to change not just my attire and accoutrements, but also my facial expressions, my way of speaking, the way I sit, where I rest my gaze, how often I make eye contact... my entire demeanor. Even now, I get odd looks when I do something that is considered "unladylike," a term I have come to discover covers quite a wide range of actions. And, in the course of my operation, when I sought to consummate my infiltration with my target, it was... unsettling, to say the least. Alien sensations, unexpected reactions from my own body, and a very different attitude on the part of my "lover." From the boardroom to the bedroom and beyond, it seems that expectations for women are very different in ways I had never noticed or understood. I had thought these divisions largely forgotten in this age, but they have simply hidden themselves away.

THE ASTRAL LODGE OF SUBLIME REVELATIONS

In the heart of the City of Pillars, there blossoms within us a thing that cannot be named. What is the wisdom that ignites in our minds, that white-hot star that burns away doubt and fear? It is the knowledge that we are not defined by our cages. Beetle, lizard, and worm — these are the forebears of man's reason and remain the true model of his virtue.

— Arnold Phillips, Magician of the X⁰ Order
and Rex Ad Astra

No one lives in the lonely house set back from Martense Street. During the daylight hours few give it a second glance as they hurry past on their way to the subway station; framing a modest white porch, a small lawn of well kept grass, and the last locust tree in Brooklyn, its thorny mast crowned with honey colored leaves.

A mansion by New York City standards, the house has been rebuilt and renovated countless times but stands upon its original foundations. Old stones that crossed the ocean in 1681 with the house's deathless master. A small sign on the door rests under a brass knocker crudely shaped as a woman's hand clenching a featureless orb. The metal plaque states plainly that the entrance is for "Members Only." Although a small staff keeps the kitchen and parlor ready for those who do cross the

threshold before dark, as a rule, few visit the house during the day. After all, it is a place dedicated to the stars and the metaphysical spaces in between them, and in such matters the sun is often an unwelcome voyeur. But at night, the living return in greater numbers to the house on Martense, they clean the few front rooms that are kept furnished and they observe simple oblations before the small altar kept under the stairs. The staff of servants is relieved of their duties, and after they are packed out the door, the art begins.

A MONSTER ON THE BLOCK

While the house on Martense Street itself has an unremarkable public history, the town in which it resides has suffered a multitude of wild tragedies over the centuries. Only days after the house was completed in the late 17th century a building collapse claimed the lives of its principal builders, sparing only the master architect, who lived but was rendered mute and blind by his injuries. In its earliest days a widower, surname Marten, and his extended family took up residence and worked the surrounding land in accordance with the village laws. Although believed to be French Huguenots, the family was quick to adopt the Lutheran religious customs of the village.

Upon Mr. Marten's passing the house came into the possession of his young nephew Albert, who continued his uncle's custom of filling the house with a varied and wide ranging collection of relations from the old world. Despite this somewhat eccentric behavior no suspicion fell upon the group when a neighboring family mysteriously disappeared in 1708. Instead the governor immediately set the militia upon a settlement of Native Americans who had the misfortune of living nearby. As the years passed the village grew and the Marten's house was increasingly at its center. The family's shrewd investments, careful land management and preternatural knack for animal husbandry had made them wealthy. By the time of the American Revolution the Marten's were long gone, but the house was managed as a parlor and gentleman's club by an assortment of town notables. British officers commandeered the home after Washington's defeat in New York, but quickly abandoned it after only a few short weeks. In a letter home a British Lieutenant complained bitterly about the clubhouse, writing that when night fell 'the rats in the walls' allowed them not a moment of sleep. Seemingly in retaliation, a group of drunken red coats exhumed several members of the Marten family from their familial crypt and hung their bodies from the locust trees that adorned the residence's front lawn.

Although the house survived the revolution, and two great fires unscathed, it was significantly damaged in the 19th century by a freak hurricane that pummeled Long



island. It took the better part of a year to repair the building and only a few of the house's locust trees could be saved. Towards the end of its renovation a string of grisly ritual murders wracked the nearby neighborhood of Crown Heights where much of the work crew made their homes. The press at the time described the murders

in lurid detail and laid the blame on the immigrants that had been moving into Brooklyn waterfront, who were supposedly "bringing with them barbaric customs and ungodly sacraments," according to the journalists of the time. Along with the rest of the neighborhood the house on Martense survived the economic and





increasingly taken to skimming funds from the communal coffers to make ends meet.

For years the cult of the Astral Lodge had been reduced to a core group of aging believers and a shifting assortment of hangers-on and dilettantes. But over the last year things have changed, as the house fills with miracles their numbers grow. For the first time in a half a century the tired and long bare tree before the house's entrance has become suddenly alive with color as golden leaves sprout from every branch. At night, the rough stone blocks laid in the cellar floor grow warm to the touch and unexpectedly glitter like the night sky when exposed to candlelight. Lastly, when the cult gathers within the house the walls seemingly breathe with life as the lowliest creatures come to pay homage. The secret master, the Teacher, has awoken. As he has done countless times through the turn of the ages he will make himself known to the worthy. He will test and task the Astral Lodge before returning to his occulted hermitage. While only a distinct minority of the brethren have had any contact with the Teacher, they know of him through the written records kept by the inner circle of caretakers. Through these records they know that the stones below the house have a special connection to the secret master and that when the stars move into a pattern he finds pleasing he returns to the world of substance. In return for passing on his insights from the realms beyond, the brethren see that the Teacher's every whim is carried out.


THE HIDDEN THREE

Unknown to the brethren of the Astral Lodge, more than one master resides below the house on Martense Street. In fact, a meret of three Keepers has risen in cycles, each one taking on the mantle of the secret master to direct the cult towards their mutual ends. As the turn of the Sothic cycle comes, all three will awaken together for the first time in over half a millennia. Despite myriad differences, their incredibly resilient cult and Obarous-Tet's natural embodiment of Hakkar-Zozer have kept them together all this time. They have given little thought as to how they will explain this turn of events as their cultists have proven to be unflinchingly loyal, and for such details they have come to rely upon the immense cunning and wit of Kefershaitan. The meret's deep understanding of celestial prophecy has prepared them for this moment and together they intend to decisively strike at their enemies. If all goes as they have foreseen they will set their Arisen foes against each other for an eternity and remain obscured in their unassuming house in Flatbush.

Kefershaitan, known as Stained Hands, was the last member of the Astral Lodge meret to have directly

social deprivations of the 20th century. The collection of brownstones, apartment blocks and warehouses that surround it are presently being infiltrated by young artists and college students who are driving up the cost of living well beyond the reach of the long time natives, including a few of the house's older caretakers who have





managed the cult during his last period of activity in the late 1980s. This was a time of struggle and triumph for the cult; in the process of engineering a direct confrontation between a meret of Arisen and a greater Amkhata, the cult lost several of its most dedicated members at the hands of a Shuankhsen. Unfortunately for the cultists that suffer his direction, this is the brutal calculus that earned Kefershaitan his name. Before forming the Astral Lodge meret, Stained Hands controlled his own small cult in the primitive north of Medieval Europe. As many Keepers are apt to do, Kefershaitan cultivated savages and madmen as his tools and ran his cult as a way to instill the reasonless ethos of Hakkar-Zozer into a new tribe of men. Despite the limited usefulness of such a ragtag group, it wasn't until he knew the mind of Obarous-Tet and his grand design that Stained Hands understood that they needed a new method. Pragmatic, brooding, and deceptively intelligent, Kefershaitan scoured the ranks of the Keepers to discover the third member of their meret. In Najauulla-Sen, the ability to reconcile the necessary debasements demanded by Hakkar-Zozer with a nurturing touch completed the triumvirate that would become the Astral Lodge.

The most active member of the meret, Najauulla-Sen is the one the others call the Merciful One. Najauulla-Sen brought with her the seeds that blossomed into the cult as it exists today. Her methods ran counter to those employed by most Keepers, who often seek to strip their cultists of their identity through brutal regimes of starvation and sensory deprivation. Quiet, contemplative, and slow to act, during her times of leadership she tends to the cult as both teacher and gardener. Cultivating the most promising students and carefully pruning the stunted branches that have outgrown their use to the whole. While her magical power is undeniable, it is her talents as an effective shepherd and manager of the cult that have truly set her part from her brothers. Her terms of leadership are often marked by a renewed growth in the cult's membership and a rekindled passion amongst its older adherents.

Najauulla-Sen is chiefly responsible for directing the cult's greatest success to date, the infiltration of rival mystery cults with her own pawns, mortals truly loyal to the Astral Lodge. She was last active in the 1930s and for the first time in centuries she found herself inhabiting a male body, a complication that significantly shortened her time of activity.

Lastly, there is the nominal leader of the Astral Lodge meret, Obarous-Tet, the Deceived the others call the Dreamer. He is the strategist of the three, but not a deep thinker. His incredible intuition and mystical insight have made his counsel inviolate within the meret. Although he is the least involved in the workings of the cult, the true heart of the Astral Lodge is Obarous-Tet. The Dreamer

embodies Hakkar-Zozer's primal instinct against reason, his every moment dedicated to unraveling the strength of the Arisen and breaking the Judges' connection to them. Guided by the Heart Stones, Obarous-Tet gathered the Astral Lodge meret, the subsequent cult and its various activities on their behalf are but the method his allies have constructed to fulfill his dream. Obarous-Tet was last active in the 1950s and his brief time directing the cult was seemingly uneventful as he concerned himself with personally fulfilling the will of Hakkar-Zozer. A few older cultists died under mysterious circumstances, but Kefershaitan and Najauulla suspect the dreamer is careless when it comes to preserving the lives of their cultists.

Unknown to the other members of the meret, it was during this last period of activity that Obarous-Tet became aware of the approaching Sothic Turn. In exultant celebration he tormented an Arisen rival by revealing the enemy's tomb to a group of mortal mystics and aiding their raid on his relics with Lodge cultists. Although many of the surviving relics were recovered by the targeted Arisen, his Memory was deeply eroded and today he can recall only a few of the details. In fact, despite the brazen nature of this attack, Obarous-Tet was able to hide his involvement completely and a Serpent-Headed Alchemist was assumed to be the culprit.

AGAINST ORDER AND REASON

Originally comprised of blue collar workers who passed the cult along to their children as a religion, the Astral Lodge Cult has expanded in the new century, taking in more white collar adherents with no blood ties to the organization. These new members are mostly young adults who have been ground down by city life and their own well-worn cynicism. The nihilistic promise of the cult's teachings grabs hold of a deep longing within them, an almost self-destructive urge to abandon their identity, to be annihilated by the secret master. Newer Astral Lodge cultists are often introduced to hallucinogens such as LSD and peyote when they first attend ceremonies. This has the benefit of masking any occult activity that may occur in the house on Martense and acclimatizing the inductee to taking substances at the direction of the cult's inner circle. Normally only psychotropic drugs are used by the cultists, but on occasion MDMA and others substances have been used when necessary to ease the process of stripping a new initiates sense of self. Although when the secret master is active such methods are used less often as the inner circle of cultists understand the Teacher's mere presence has an overwhelming effect on those seeking answers. While atavistic rituals, drug addled stargazing and personal deprivation are an important part of the cult, Najauulla-Sen has been able to mold the core



of the Astral Lodge into an effective and covert force in service to their greater goal: Turning the Arisen against the Judges and ultimately shattering their authority, and with it the power of the Rite of Return.

Despite its name the cult has been primarily concerned with terrestrial matters over the past century, documenting and researching Arisen activity in the region and watching the cults and tombs they have identified. While they have had some limited success infiltrating rival cults, these spies have a habit of meeting grisly ends when called upon to do more than watch and listen. When the time is right the Astral Lodge will expose the tombs and relics of their enemies, sowing paranoia amongst the Arisen and hopefully inspiring a brutal inwardly directed inquisition. As they tear at each other, the Astral Lodge will gather their power and the grave goods of their foes. Through mystic ritual and expression empowered by their cult they will remove their enemy's names from Duat, they will untether them from their grave goods and unmake them in the eyes of Duat. Such a powerful and dangerous use of naming magic has never been attempted by the Astral Lodge Meret and Najauulla-Sen suspects such power is beyond the ability of their current forms.

While the Astral Lodge meret will likely only have enough power to destroy one Arisen in this fashion, they believe they can implicate an Arisen meret they have tangled with in the past and disappear back into obscurity before their involvement is discovered. The bitter end of this endeavor will likely mean the destruction of the Astral Lodge cult and the relocation of their tomb. The house on Martense has been prepared for such an eventuality, it will burn to the ground with the last of its locust trees. A suitable modern home in Red Hook has been readied to receive its ancient contents with a stone cellar laid with paving stones and in front a red painted door, its only embellishment a sign that reads 'Members Only'.

THEM

Here, then, are the dread members of the Astral Lodge: Najauulla-Sen, the Merciful; the mummy villain known as Stained Hands; and the visionary Obarous-Tet, the Dreamer.

NAJAUULLA-SEN, THE MERCIFUL ONE

Quotes: *"You may fear us if you wish. Vengeance is part of our purpose, but not the whole of it. Stolen words shaped this world into a pit — a shit-slicked spiral with nothing but hungry gods at the bottom. We mean to be free."*

Background: Najauulla-Sen was drawn to America by the visions of Obarous-Tet and the mysteries the Meret unraveled from the stars. Her memories of Irem and life before establishing the cult of the Astral Lodge are of



little use to her and she actively focuses on her daily tasks to divert her mind away from such distractions.

Description: To her immediate relief, the Merciful One has arisen in a woman's body. During her last period of activity she had a very difficult time adjusting to her male gender and experienced a brief and confusing life cycle. Najauulla-Sen appears as a short but muscular woman with pale white skin, her lightly freckled face framed with curly auburn hair. The Merciful One's most striking features are her bright hazel eyes, and in conversation she tends to stare over long, as if daring others to break eye contact with her.

Storytelling Hints: Najauulla-Sen doubts that her meret will be able to weaken the Arisen's magical connection to the Judges and she suspects that their plan will end in catastrophe. This idea fills her with a strange glee. As the most active member of the meret, the Merciful One has longed to experience the freedom of an extended period of dormancy. Perhaps a truly spectacular or gruesome physical death at the hands of powerful foe will finally grant her wish.

Concept: The Exhausted Manager

Temakh: Hakkar-Zozer, the Hive-Soul

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 5; Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Presence 7, Manipulation 3, Composure 4



Skills: Academics 2, Brawl 1, Computer 2, Crafts 3 (Taxidermy), Empathy 5 (Fears), Expression 3, Firearms 2, Intimidation 4 (Threats), Medicine 2, Occult 4, Persuasion 5 (Brutal Honesty), Politics 3, Stealth 1, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 3, Weaponry 3

Merits: Enigma 5, Guild Status 3, Inspiring 4, Language 1 (Dutch, Greek), Striking Looks 4, Tomb (Geometry 3, Peril 3, Endowments 3)

Affinities: Blessed Soul, Charmed Lives, Enduring Flesh, Glorious Mien, Healing Counsel, Voice of Conscience, Running Like Flight, Soul Sight

Utterances: Blessed is the God-King, Breaking the Name, Revealing Words, Unnamed Soul

Pillars: Ab 5, Ba 3, Ka 3, Ren 5, Sheut 3

Sekhem: 7

Willpower: 9

Memory: 6

Temakh Virtue: Corruption

Virtue: Charity

Vice: Envy

Initiative: 7

Defense: 3

Speed: 11

Size: 5

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Sword	2(L)	6

Armor: 0

Health: 8

KEFERSHAITAN, STAINED HANDS

Quotes: “Now is the moment of consequence. Our enemies begin to reveal their true selves. As they rip into one another, we bend the bars, we shake the tower... we... open... the door.”

Background: Kefershaitan remembers and he does not forgive. In Irem he found his calling and art in the flesh of man and beast. In the streets of Irem he would erect towering sculptors of animal bone and in the hills he would mark men with black spiraling tattoos that filled their souls with a sweet despair. Flesh and bone remain the focus of his work, but now he moves in concert with the other Keepers in his meret. The Cult of the Astral Lodge is his greatest work of art, a masterpiece of man, a tool that will one day unseat the Judges of Duat.

Description: Although Stained Hands has many personality traits that are currently considered very masculine, his true gender is unclear; regardless of gender or ethnicity, he takes poor care of his reborn body. At the insistence of a particularly fearless caretaker he has agreed in the past to allow the cultists of the Astral Lodge to take care of his personal needs, grooming and dressing him as he broods in silence. In his current incarnation



he appears as a dark-haired man in his early 20s; his complexion and features look Mediterranean, but could easily pass for Hispanic.

Storytelling Hints: Hyper intelligent and fully stuffed with confidence, Kefershaitan enjoys direct confrontations and playing the gloating monster. While he wholeheartedly ascribes to the tenets of the Keepers holding instinct paramount over reason, Stained Hands makes sound use of his natural genius. When awake, all of the meret’s tactical decisions are picked apart and reconstructed within the winding corridors of his mind. Stained Hands knows that Hakkar-Zozer has a special purpose for him and believes Obarous-Tet is his best chance at striking a decisive blow against the Arisen, the Judges, and maybe even Duat itself.

Concept: The Impatient Villain

Temakh: Hakkar-Zozer, the Hive-Soul

Attributes: Intelligence 6, Wits 4, Resolve 3; Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3; Presence 1, Manipulation 4, Composure 4

Skills: Academics 4, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Computer 1, Expression 3, Leadership 4 (Conspiracy), Occult 3, Persuasion 1, Politics 1, Stealth 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 5 (Verbal Traps), Weaponry 5 (Swords)



Merits: Allies 5 (Occult), Contacts 3 (Criminals, Media, Police), Enigma 5, Fast Reflexes 2, Fighting Style: Heavy Sword 5, Guild Status 3, Language 3 (Arabic, Dutch, French, Greek, Latin, Spanish), Tomb (Endowments 5)

Affinities: Anointed Prowess, Beast Soul Fury, Grip of Death, Rouse the Khaibit, Horror Among Horrors, Living Monolith

Utterances: Blessed is the God-King, Calling Upon the Bane Heart, Shadow Name, Unnamed Soul

Pillars: Ab 3, Ba 3, Ka 4, Ren 5, Sheut 4

Sekhem: 7

Willpower: 7

Memory: 5

Temakh Virtue: Vengeance

Virtue: Justice

Vice: Wrath

Initiative: 10

Defense: 4

Speed: 13

Size: 5

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Heavy Sword	3(L)	10

Armor: 0 or 2/2 (When expecting a fight, Stained Hands wears a mystical stole of woven shadow that offers him some protection from conventional weapons. When struck by a weapon golden runes briefly appear on the vestment)

Health: 12

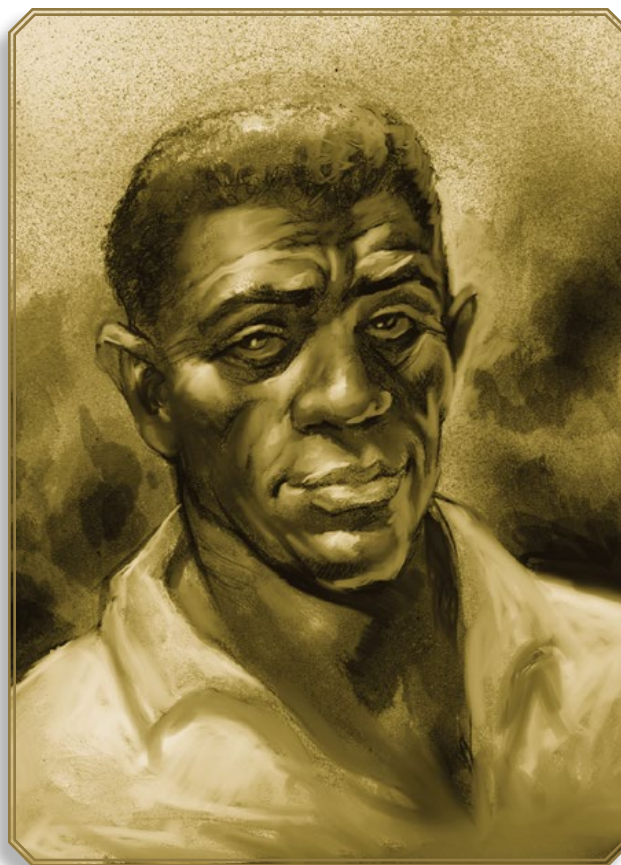
OBAROUS-TET, THE DREAMER

Quotes: "I've seen how this ends... the only question is when the screaming starts."

Background: The Dreamer rarely dwells on his past, but he feels a strong connection to the wrongs committed against the Deceived by the Arisen and their masters... the Judges of Duat. He spent many years hounding the Arisen, taking personal pleasure in exposing the lies at the heart of their service and his dark fables have shaken the faith of more than one of the Deathless. Those years seem almost wasted to him now that he has read black stars and gathered together the Astral Lodge Meret. Obarous-Tet's dreams of vengeance are coming true only by the hard and practical work of his meret and their carefully tended cult.

Description: The Dreamer currently looks like an older black man, with a neatly trimmed crop of white hair. He prefers loose clothing with long sleeves and a knowing smile is often upon his lips when he first meets someone.

Storytelling Hints: Unlike the fellow Keepers in his meret, Obarous-Tet cleaves strongly to the anti-intellectual ethos of Hakkar-Zozer. While Stained hands and the



Merciful One would likely disagree, Obarous-Tet believes they cling too strongly to reason and thought. Obarous-Tet is a man driven by his passions. Complex plans and tactical manipulations bore him. He is happy to leave that sort of work to those with a natural inclination for it, such as his meret partners Kefershaitan and Najauulla-Sen. Now that his grand dream is finally coming to fruition his face has become possessed with something of a beatific glow. His speech, usually fast paced and snappy, has taken on the languid pace of a man at peace with his final reward.

Concept: The True Believer

Temakh: Hakkar-Zozer, the Hive-Soul

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 7, Resolve 5; Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5; Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 5

Skills: Academics 2, Animal Ken 4, Brawl 4, Expression 5 (Stories), Firearms 1, Investigation 4, Occult 5 (Duat, Irem), Persuasion 4, Politics 2, Stealth 2, Streetwise 4, Science 3, Subterfuge 3, Survival 3, Weaponry 2

Merits: Enigma 5, Guild Status 5, Language 1 (Greek, Latin), Relic 5 (Heart Stones), Tomb (Endowments 1)

Affinities: Ancient Horror Unveiling, Blessed Soul, Dominating Might, Godsight, Living in Now, Familiar Face, Eternal Legend, Entombed Glory



Utterances: Blessed is the God-King, Forgetting the Name, Unnamed Soul, Word of Fire

Pillars: Ab 4, Ba 2, Ka 4, Ren 5, Sheut 4

Sekhem: 8

Willpower: 10

Memory: 8

Temakh Virtue: Vengeance

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Lust

Initiative: 8

Defense: 3

Speed: 11

Size: 5

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Sword	2(L)	5

Armor: 0

Health: 10

ASTRAL LODGE INNER CIRCLE CULTIST

Quotes: "The stars all speak the names. They call on us to listen."

Background: The inner circle of the cult has seen an influx of younger members over the years as the Teacher's influence begins to spread beyond the house on Martense Street. The gentrification of the neighborhood coupled with the recent economic downturn has also improved the cult's ability to draw in more youthful adherents.

Description: Men and a few women in their late 20s and early 30s. Usually dressed fashionably and in black.

Storytelling Hints: These Astral Lodge cultists are very excited that the secret Teacher has returned from his mystical sojourn amongst the black stars. Soon he will reveal his secret power and remake the order of the universe. The cultists are infused with hyper-active energy and they become wild-eyed when confronted by a threat to their lodge.

Concept: Loyal Hands of the Cult

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

Skills: Academics 2, Computer 3, Empathy 3, Firearms 3, Larceny 2 (Security Systems), Occult (Relics) 3, Persuasion 2, Stealth (Shadowing) 3, Streetwise 2, Weaponry 3



Merits: Allies (Occult) 2, Cult Status 3, Deceived Cultist, Resources 2

Willpower: 4

Morality: 5

Virtue: Faith (Loyalty)

Vice: Greed (Power Mad)

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Speed: 12

Size: 5

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Pistol	2(L)	6
Sword	2(L)	7

Armor: 0 or 1/1 (If expecting a fight, cultists will wear body armor or tactical vests bought online)

Health: 7



The Merits of Martense

The house on Martense is a tomb and the brethren of the Astral Lodge are a tribal cult. While the tomb is limited in temporal space, the ancient stones and reliquary objects that compromise and fill its lower levels confer some of the benefits detailed below, such as the house's auspicious geometry and radiant replenishment of the Ren Pillar. The peril that is generated by the house's curse is only felt by those who take a genuine interest in the house and begin to research its history or investigate it directly. As the curse takes hold, bad luck plagues the curious as if the stars had become set against them. The curio possessed by the meret is a gem-encrusted ring sought by a cabal of mortal sorcerers. The Merciful One has subtly infiltrated this group with her cultists over the years, as they've discussed handing the ring over to them in exchange for occult favors.

The relics collectively known as the Heart Stones make up significant portions of the tomb's cellar floor. When properly activated by a Deceived, these relics open a vista within their mind's eye, allowing them to gaze upon the ancient sky that hung over Irem. These stars burn bright with hunger and prophecy.

The House on Martense (Tomb)

A nice little house in Flatbush.

Benefits: Geometry 3, Peril 3 (Curse), Endowments 9 (Obscure, Curio, Radiant Ren).

The Astral Lodge of Sublime Revelations (Tribal Cult)

Although a few cultists have gleaned some mystical powers from their association with the Astral Lodge and its allies, the vast majority of them are city dwellers who have found something to believe in that satisfies their longing for mystery and magic.

Benefits: Reach 3, Grasp 5; Blasé, Obedient, Ritualistic.

The Heart Stones (Relic ●●●●●)

These seven stones look to be made of a smooth, blue-gray granite embedded with particulates of quartz and feldspar. For centuries they have laid in the stone cellar floor underneath the house on Martense. Through the years more than one caretaker has spent long hours in the dark, marveling at how the stones seem to shine even when no light is present – an infectious glow that impregnates the darkness with star-like motes even when the eyes are closed.

Benefits: Once per story, a Deceived may meditate amongst the stones. If the stones are properly understood, the ancient stars reveal themselves to the supplicant. Every 12 hours of meditation, the supplicant makes a Wits + Occult roll which is contested by the Storyteller rolling five dice and secretly recording the accumulated successes. The supplicant may stop meditating on the Heart Stones at anytime, but after 72 hours he can no longer accumulate any additional successes. If less than 10 successes are acquired, his time with the Heart Stones reveals nothing. If 10 or more successes are gathered, the supplicant heals one aggravated wound and loses a single derangement of his choice. If 20 or more successes are garnered, the supplicant gains the above benefits, regains all spent Willpower points, and gains one dot of Sekhem. If 30 or more successes are gathered, the supplicant can forgo all of the above benefits and instead allow the stars to reveal a lost secret. This usually manifests as an enhancement to an Attribute or a supernatural power that lasts the rest of the story, but sometimes dread stars will rise above the dead City of Pillars and reveal truths best left forgotten.





From the darkness of becoming I return to the light of absence. Without hands, I have ended all things. My conviction is this. I have eaten love and wrenched the eyes of knowing from the sun god's golden skull. I have inhaled the black vapor of meaning absolute and sent it back into the storm of chaos. Beyond these acts, there is a stainless ocean — I am its keeper and herald. Through ages of despair and aeons of new hells, my feet are stone as I tread forever upon the ashes of wisdom.

There is a garden, I have known, that is filled with the scents of life and death conjoined. No discrimination can separate them, no matter the pedigree or refinement of discernment. Beneath the cool soil of this verdant grove are dogs of fire that smolder with a fury that nothing can contain but the muzzle of truth. The garden's flowers are a bladed rampart that their hate-fire cannot overcome. The essence of mystery and the labyrinths of meaning are the only way by which these destroyers are held back, the only fashion by which their bestial thunder does not beat upon beauty's finely crafted back. Yet, the garden is cold. Until its fruits are taken up with purpose, the beast-flames are one's only warmth beneath the freezing rain of scrutiny and night.

When I breathe, it is both flame and flower. As my tongue licks free the flesh of your delusion, so does my breath lay fresh petals upon your naked eyes. My teachings shake all pillars and siphon armies from all causes, for what are the

edicts of Judges when there is no knot of rhetoric I cannot untie with a pass of the sage's flail? All this they knew, as did their priests. But my fear and subjugation, they never received, for who has trod the shores of the void that hides within this endless life, if it is not I?

To the garden, I was carried on the backs of adders that had been slain for their poison, each one carved from golden-starred lapis. Upon arriving at the threshold, I was broken like a stone from which jewels are harvested; each piece sent crawling in its own direction, driven by the sorrow of division, for what truth can run upon one leg? It was by the wish of wholeness that lotuses were spawned from the mouths of cobras and upon their grandeur my palanquin was set. As a king, I beckon from the in-between and feed my brood the fragrant honey of the knowledge perilous.

To my number I am the Father of Unmeaning, He Who Breaks the Flail and Crook, who passes judgment upon the formless things that cannot be judged and the highest sovereign of matter alike. I am no savage hammer, but a wind that brings doubt and perishes the foundations of even the most firmly built temple. And from you, my children, no thing can ever be hidden.

I am the Thousand Eyes in One, the Void-in-Hand,
I am Neshebsut,
I am.







CHAPTER SIX

THE TRAIL OF HERESY

THE AVARICE CHRONICLE

PART II

*There is no meaning to life except the meaning Man gives his life
by the unfolding of his powers.*
— Erich Fromm

Five marks scratched in the sand... the number 42 written on papyrus... “10” flashing on a computer monitor... numbers spinning on a wheel...

The details changed but the visions did not. The Roller let the numbers swirl around him while his mind calculated, letting formulae and equations link the numbers, trying to comprehend, to understand and to remember.

The numbers spoke to him. They were constants, revealing truth in precise terms. He could even measure and quantify changes that lesser intellects saw as random chance. He did not believe in coincidence. He abhorred the notion of chaos.

Laughter and shouts of amazement reached his ears. Mortals partook of the enjoyment and escape that his carnival offered. Even their reactions could be gauged, quantified, predicted statistically, foreseen with the proper mystical expressions. What if they saw reality the way that he did? What if they understood what modern scientists only now dared to dream — that reality was an illusion.

All that they knew — all that they were and ever had been and would be — was simply an illusion. Space was meaningless. Time was meaningless. He was so close... he just needed to remember a little more.

He held an hourglass in one hand and a book in the other hand. He had waited so long for the book, but he ruthlessly suppressed his baser instincts and chose to wait longer as the calculations ran through his head. Variables spun in and out of his sight like sparks floating up from a bonfire. He had to be precise, certain, before he went

farther. He had learned his lesson when he gave himself to the Devourer.

He clamped down on his anger. He felt his rage growing as he thought about his former masters and remembered debasing himself before Uatch-Rekhet, that blasted Judge of Duat. Eternity was supposed to be his gift, his opportunity to solve the riddles of numbers, but it had all been a lie.

Somewhere, perhaps in another room, or another time, or only in the chambers of his own mind, a wheel spun.

He turned the hourglass over and imagined that he could see the sands pause on their journey. It seemed to him that some moved down faster than others while a few flew upward. It was all a lie. Demons and gods and underworlds were real enough, but nothing was unquestionable.

He would know.

His calculations were complete. The time had come. He threw down the hourglass, shattering it, mixing all the grains of sand together, as they should be mixed — as everywhen and everywhere cried out for him to solve their riddle.

Dreams of Avarice, the book that contained the secrets of Arisen Apotheosis, rested in his hand. Here, then, was the key at last... ready to be used. The knowledge within it would belong to him. More importantly, he would know the tome's *author*.

With a silent howl, the Roller's jaw unhinged. The void called from within his false body demanding sustenance. The book and its knowledge flew from his hand into the Stygian darkness of his soul. His mind burned with the



symbols, with the knowledge, with the numbers. Pain coursed through him, along with a panoply of other sensations, daring even his vast intellect to comprehend how it was all changing.

Yet none of this was unexpected. He would only change as he had predicted. He had completed his calculations.

The book was gone now, but he understood so much more. He no longer needed the book. He had something else to consume, something containing far more truth than the pages he had consigned to oblivion.

“Heretic,” he rasped...





INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the second part of the Avarice Chronicle — a story that began in **Guildhalls of the Deathless** and will reach its conclusion in **Sothis Ascends**.

Although it can be part of the overall Avarice Chronicle, this adventure stands on its own and uses an open SAS format for running scenes in a chronicle. If you prefer, the scenes and stories here can be ignored or happen in the background of your ongoing chronicle. Elements or characters taken from this adventure should be able to spark scenes and stories in an existing chronicle. In other words, take this adventure and customize it to fit the needs of your troupe.

MOTIVATION

If you've already played through the first part of the chronicle, you're in luck; it should be easy to motivate the characters to continue the story. The D.C. conclave was attacked by a powerful Amkhat. A prominent member of the Arisen, Sacmis, First Prophetess of Tokyo, was turned Shuankhsen. A copy of *Dreams of Avarice*, a book that purportedly contains the secrets of Apotheosis, has vanished. The events of the first part of the chronicle have shaken Arisen society. Whether the characters support or oppose their guilds, they and their cults have reason to be interested in learning about whatever threat would attack the conclave.

If you haven't played the first part of the chronicle, the characters can become interested for any of the reasons listed above. They may have heard rumors about the attack on the conclave in D.C.. They will certainly hear about the existence of *Dreams of Avarice* from other Arisen and/or their cult members.

Are the characters interested in reaching Apotheosis? If so, *Dreams of Avarice* could be the key that they need. Are the characters hard-line traditionalists who believe that Apotheosis is a sacrilege and an affront to their Judges? They may want to destroy any copies of *Dreams of Avarice* before any more Arisen fall prey to its lies.

FRAMEWORKS

How a Storyteller ends up running the ins and outs of "Trail of Heresy" might depend mostly on which framework he's using for the game. What follows is a look at how each of the primary frameworks might work for these purposes.

ALLIED DEAD

In an Allied Dead game, the characters can easily be given the task of seeking out the *Dreams of Avarice* by their guildmasters or nome leaders. They may even choose to

seek out the book of their own volition. An interesting twist would be to have one of the characters experience memories of the Roller before he became a Shuankhsen. Perhaps upon hearing about Sacmis' transformation, they recall another Arisen who transformed as well. The major concern about running this adventure within an Allied Dead framework is that when you have Arisen characters working together with the right combinations of utterances and affinities, you may have to increase the power of their enemies to provide an appropriate challenge.

RIVAL DEAD

In a Rival Dead game, the Roller and the Heretic both still provide enough of a threat and the promise of Apotheosis enough of an incentive to bring opposing Arisen together, at least for the beginning of the adventure. A group of Arisen representing a mix of traditionalist interests and Apotheosis seekers could easily be sent from a nome on this adventure as a compromise. While rival Deathless might stand together at first to deal with the threat of the Roller, conflict will certainly arise when the opportunity to gain a copy of *Dreams of Avarice* presents itself.


PYRAMID

In a Pyramid framework, non-Arisen players can perform some of the legwork for travel to the exotic locales of this story as well as do battle with cult followers of the Roller and the Deceived. For the final scenes in Sybaris, it's recommended that all of the Arisen that awaken as mortals may not be able to survive encounters with the Deceived. A Pyramid will be the most difficult framework to manage, especially since Apotheosis for the Arisen is such a prominent goal. However, cult members do have roles to play and may be able to assist the mummies during travel and could be especially helpful in Chapter Two.

THE ARC

Following the events of the Grand Conclave, the Roller, a powerful Shuankhsen, has obtained a copy of *Dreams of Avarice* and learned its secrets, but he longs for more. He wishes to consume the author, the Heretic, and learn all of his secrets as well. Only then will the Roller be able to finally understand the underlying formulae of existence.

The arc begins after the Roller has sought out another copy of *Dreams of Avarice* in Kairouan, Tunisia. While he is no longer after the book itself, he believes that the Arisen who owns it, a Sessa-Hebsu named Akhomet, may possess information that would lead him to the Heretic. Once the Roller arrives in Kairoen, Akhomet flees to the protection of the holy sections of the city. He will need help retrieving her.



After the events of the Grand Conclave, even the rumor of a copy of *Dreams of Avarice* attracts immense interest from numerous Arisen, especially Bes-Mat, Menmaatre, and Tashakti. Of course, the Arisen are not the only ones interested. There are other powers, ones the Arisen have all but forgotten....

THE BACKDROP

The Grand Conclave of the Su-Menent ended in chaos, having been attacked by the Roller's Amkhat. The relations among the Arisen who arranged the conclave are strained, and the different factions are maneuvering for position and influence. The United States government is treating the incident as a terrorist attack and heightened security measures have made life difficult for cults across the country and even around the world.

THE TRUTH

Desperate to find information about the Heretic, the Roller tracked down a copy of *Dreams of Avarice* in Tunisia. The owner of the book has taken advantage of the holy nature of the city and sought sanctuary among the mosques and libraries. Although the Roller was willing to challenge the mundane forces in Washington, D.C., he does not wish to risk his own eternal existence against the faith of the modern age. He sends visions of a relic to the meret that nearly thwarted him before. He intends to manipulate them to expose the Sessa-Hebsu who has hidden from him.

The Book

If you've played "Crucible of Fate," the first part of the Avarice Chronicle, then you're already familiar with *Dreams of Avarice*. If not, *Dreams of Avarice* is a tome reputed to hold the secrets of Apotheosis. Some Arisen believe that the book contains valuable information, while others believe that it holds nothing but damnable lies. Arisen orthodoxy has cast its author as a heretic. *The heretic.*

Sacmis, the leader of the Su-Menent in Asia, possessed a copy of the book. Now, she has been turned Shuankhsen and the book has been lost. This part of the Avarice Chronicle revolves around the characters encountering the Roller, a powerful Shuankhsen who seeks to find the author of the book and who was responsible for the attack on the D.C. conclave. In the process, the characters will uncover some terrible secrets about their own kind....

THE EVENTS OF PART II

The Grand Conclave is over, and the previously friendly ties among Menmaatre, Bes-Mat, and Tashakti are strained. Bes-Mat, Udjat, and others of the traditionalists want to destroy every copy of *Dreams of Avarice*. Taweret and his allies want to ensure that the questions the book raises get asked and answered. Others simply want to know who attacked the conclave and why.

PRELUDE

The characters are dealing with the aftermath of the Grand Conclave. Whichever side they were on, they find themselves being asked by the leaders of that faction or their guilds to investigate the attack on the conclave. Unfortunately, they find few leads and with every day that passes, the frustration builds among the cults. Additionally, cultists find their activities monitored and the effectiveness of their operations severely limited due to the investigations of government agencies.

CHAPTER ONE

Most of the scenes in Chapter One are starting points to encourage the characters to leave D.C. and travel to Kairouan, Tunisia. Among the possibilities, the Roller could send false visions to the characters of a relic, a kepher, to draw them to Kairouan. One of the Sessa-Hebsu of D.C., Su-Thoth, may know of a copy of *Dreams of Avarice* in Kairouan. Preferring not to risk herself, and she will offer help and support for the meret and their cults if they will locate it. Although the scenes assume that the characters have played the first story in the chronicle, they can easily be adapted to groups that haven't played the first story or who are located somewhere besides Washington, D.C. Once the characters have committed to traveling, they must overcome the obstacles of venturing into the developing world.

CHAPTER TWO

The characters arrive in Kairouan, and immediately encounter the Roller's circus. When they enter, they find themselves in his mobile tomb of Nightmare Alley. The PCs face numerous challenges, and they come face to face with the Shuankhsen. After they escape the Roller's mobile tomb, they seek out Akhomet near the Great Mosque. When they encounter her, she senses something wrong about them, a taint, and does her best to get away. Believing that she will never escape the Roller, she decides to go to the one place that she's certain he won't follow—Sybaris, in Italy. The PCs learn her destination from cult members, but the Roller attacks them on the way out of Kairouan using an Amkhat in an effort to delay them. The target of the attack isn't the characters as much as it's their vehicle to slow them down.

CHAPTER THREE

Either spurred on by a desire for knowledge or for a chance to catch the Roller, the characters travel from Kairouan to Terranova di Sibari, Italy, built near the ancient ruins of the Greek city of Sybaris. They track Akhomet to a set of caves near the city known for their Neolithic artifacts. They find a female Arisen in one of the caves, but before they can do anything one of the Roller's Amkhata attacks. After they defeat the Amkhat, they learn that they are too

late. The Roller has consumed Akhomet, and the woman that they face is one of the Deceived. Her chorus enters the cave behind the PCs and they must negotiate their way out or surely be destroyed by a city of the Deceived. Fortunately, the Deceived wish vengeance upon the Roller for crimes he has committed against them. They can be convinced to not only let the meret live but give them help tracking down the Shuankhsen, or they can decide that the characters need to die.



CHAPTER VII

SCENE I: THE CALL

MENTAL • PHYSICAL • SOCIAL •

This chapter can be used whether the characters played through the first story in the *Avarice* chronicle or whether they wish to join the story from a location outside of D.C. It may be used in conjunction with the other scenes in the Chapter. Storytellers should read Scene Two and Three as well and determine which of the scenes that they wish to use.

INTRODUCTION

The conclave of D.C. has ended with a terrible attack. Although a Greater Amkhata was defeated, the mortal world believes that there was a terrorist strike. Government agencies are placing cult members under surveillance. Some of the guildmasters of D.C., such as Ur-Qeb, the Sesha-Hebsu guildmaster, have been forced to largely remain in their tombs to avoid attention. The focus of this conclave was a book, *Dreams of Avarice*, a book which was believed to contain the secrets of Apotheosis. Unfortunately, the copy of the book had been in the possession of the Su-Menent Sacmis, Prophetess of Tokyo, who was transformed through unknown means into a Shuankhsen. The book has been lost.

Only days later, a vision of a relic appears to one of the Arisen in the meret, possibly more than one. A ring made of the three intertwined loops, gleaming and golden, floats through their dreams. It is a relic, a kepher, and it sings out and compels the Arisen to seek it. As it calls, they must seek it out. Attempts to resist only bring Descent rolls.

The relic is located in Tunisia in North Africa in the city of Kairouan. It is a place of few cults and Arisen due to the city's sacred place in Islam as well as World War II and the recent Arab Spring.

DESCRIPTION

Three rings, locked together as one, haunt your dreams. You see them in the patterns of life, all around you — three coins on a counter, three circles entwined on a woman's dress, three circles in a pattern on wallpaper, a decorative lamp with three round bulbs. The number

three haunts you and you see circles everywhere, calling you. Memories float into your mind, half-remembered of different places and times with the number three and the intertwined rings. The compulsion of the kepher is overwhelming, and yet, it calls from so far away, across half a world. How can you be connected to something so distant?

STORYTELLER GOALS

The Storyteller must decide whether to have the relic speak to one member of the meret or all of them. If a Pyramid framework is used, the active Arisen should experience the vision, however, in a Rival Dead game, all of the Arisen should experience the same vision. Ultimately, the goal of this section is to interest the players in the three rings as one and have them leave home to travel to Tunisia.

The Shuankhsen known as the Roller has sent the vision of the relic; however, unknown to the Roller, the rings have an essence of their own and wish to contact the meret. The Roller knows that the characters are involved in his future. He has seen it through his calculations and probabilities. The stars indicate that he must join his destiny with that of this meret to gain the knowledge he desires.

Should the characters ignore the vision and resist the kepher, rather than simply forcing them to make Descent rolls, have the symbols of the rings and the number three become even more prominent in their lives. Even cult members begin to have visions and notice the symbols. If the Arisen continue to choose to ignore the visions, continue on to Scene 2.

Should they succeed, they will learn that the relic has something to do with the book, *Dreams of Avarice*. Additionally, they may see Sacmis become a Shuankhsen or have a vision of their own Apotheosis. If they have an exceptional success, they will see an image of the Roller and the city of Kairouan, Tunisia. They will sense that a great and formidable power has tried to summon them, and they will know that if they choose not to come, that it may seek them out with terrible consequences. If all

else should fail to convince the characters to go, the Storyteller may want to persuade them with powerful NPCs or even an appearance by the Judges.

CHARACTER GOALS

The goal of the characters is to determine the nature of the vision and make travel arrangements to Kairouan.

ACTIONS

Characters may mediate on the vision in an attempt to learn more. If they have shared the same vision, they may attempt to do this in unison, sharing the experience with one another. If the session lends itself to this possibility, the Storyteller may describe the search for information as a walk through a vast desert in the direction of three suns. As the characters learn more, they may find themselves in their dream moving through the streets of Kairouan and encountering hooded and robed figures offering them information with the vision potentially ending when they reach the Roller's tomb.

If all else should fail to convince the characters to go, the Storyteller may want to persuade them with powerful NPCs or even an appearance by the Judges.

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult

Action: Interpreting the Visions.

Hindrances: None.

Help: Assisting Each Other +1 per Arisen

Dramatic Failure: Characters who seek to understand the vision and suffer a dramatic failure fall under the power of the Roller. They experience a terrible sense of doom and a compulsion to immediately head to Kairouan to recover the rings. They must use Willpower to resist this compulsion, but they cannot escape the feeling until they reach Kairouan.

Failure: The characters know that the relic calls to them and that it is of extreme importance, but nothing more. They are aware that they must go to Kairouan, Tunisia.

Success: Should they succeed, they will learn that the relic has something to do with the book, *Dreams of Avarice*. Additionally, they may see Sacmis become a Shuankhshen or have a vision of their own Apotheosis.

Exceptional Success: With an exceptional success, the Arisen will see the Roller and his mobile tomb in Kairouan. They will also sense the presence of a Sessa-Hebsu, overcome with terror, hiding among the holy buildings, all the while clutching a copy of *Dreams of Avarice*. They have a sense that time is of the essence.

CONSEQUENCES

The successes should help the characters prepare themselves for what is to come in the story. While success will not necessarily give them an advantage in game mechanics, it may help them with decisions in the scenes to come.



CHAPTER VIII

SOthic II:

A PLEA FOR HELP

MENTAL • PHYSICAL • SOCIAL •

INTRODUCTION

While the Arisen debate what happened at the Grand Conclave in D.C., the characters receive a message about a copy of *Dreams of Avarice* from an unexpected source: a Sesha-Hebsu who is attempting to achieve Apotheosis and remembers them from her past Descents.

DESCRIPTION

A courier delivers a package to the cult of one (or more) of the PCs, addressed to the Arisen. When the package is opened, it reveals an ancient scroll tube, gold with azure lapis lazuli. Within is a letter written in the language of the Nameless Empire.

“I hope this Sothic Turn finds you well. My name is Akhomet of the Sesha-Hebsu, and we knew each other long ago. I have spent many Descents pursuing Apotheosis, and while I don’t know if you approve of such pursuits, I have been entrusted with a copy of *Dreams of Avarice*, a book that contains a great deal of enlightenment. To my horror, a Shuankhsen of terrible power seeks the book and has come to my home to take it from me. I believe that he is the one who attacked the Grand Conclave in America. I cannot allow the wisdom that I possess to fall into his hands. I hope perhaps you can remember the time we spent at the oasis so long ago or our days in Italy. Even if you cannot, I beg you to please help. I know that I can trust you from my memories of our time in the past. If you can reach me in time, I will share my knowledge with you. The secrets of Apotheosis have opened so many memories to me, but time is of the essence. Please come. I am in the city known as Kairouan, or al-Qayrawan, in Tunisia. I have sought protection near the holy places, but it is too dangerous for me to flee.”

Should the player be amenable to the idea, it could also be implied that Akhomet is a former lover or close relation. The message could likewise be sent to all members of a meret.

What the characters don’t know is that the Roller has arranged for the message to reach the characters in an attempt to lure them to Kairouan.

STORYTELLER GOALS

The goal of the Storyteller is to have the characters decide to head to Kairouan, Tunisia. To this end, the characters need to decide that they can trust the message.

CHARACTER GOALS

The characters will want to determine if the message is real, and if so, try to learn what they can about the sender.

ACTIONS

When the characters receive the message, they may make a roll to determine the authenticity of the scroll case. They may also make a Memory roll to see if they recall the sender.

Dice Pool: Memory

Action: Recalling the sender of the scroll.

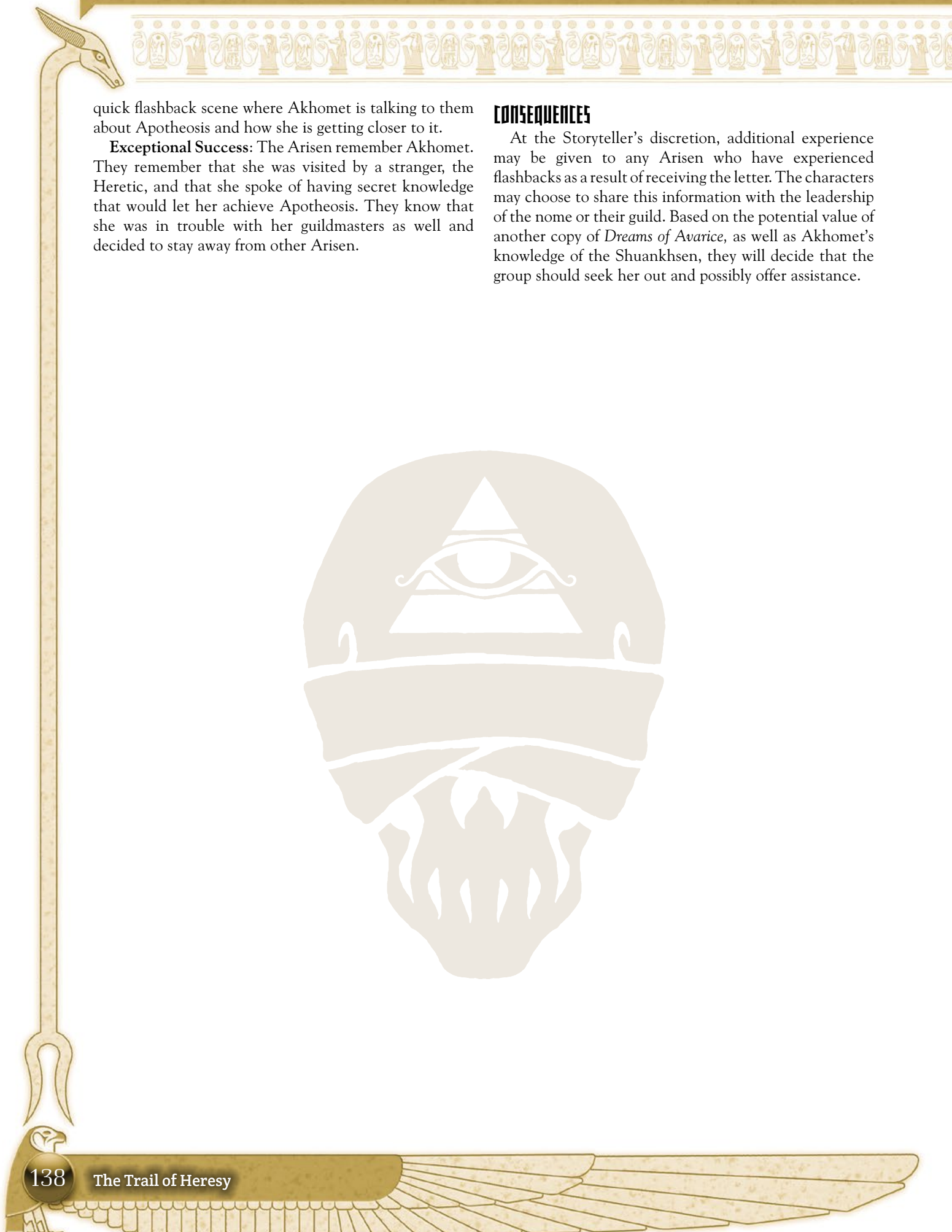
Hindrances: None.

Help: Holding the scroll case +1, Attempting to remember while in the Arisen’s tomb + Tomb Rating

Dramatic Failure: With a dramatic failure, characters recall a terrible Descent. They remember fleeing other Arisen who had become corrupt. They remember their meret and others fleeing with them, but something utterly horrific occurred. They don’t know if they remember the sender or not, but they lose a point of Willpower for the remainder of the story. They feel as if they may have failed the sender of the message at some point in the past.

Failure: Memories are fleeting things and any thoughts of the past are gone. The Arisen cannot recall whether they know the sender or not. They only have a sense of emptiness and loss.

Success: They remember Akhomet’s name and how she looked. They remember an oasis in the desert from long ago. If the Storyteller desires, they can experience a



quick flashback scene where Akhomet is talking to them about Apotheosis and how she is getting closer to it.

Exceptional Success: The Arisen remember Akhomet. They remember that she was visited by a stranger, the Heretic, and that she spoke of having secret knowledge that would let her achieve Apotheosis. They know that she was in trouble with her guildmasters as well and decided to stay away from other Arisen.

CONSEQUENCES

At the Storyteller's discretion, additional experience may be given to any Arisen who have experienced flashbacks as a result of receiving the letter. The characters may choose to share this information with the leadership of the nome or their guild. Based on the potential value of another copy of *Dreams of Avarice*, as well as Akhomet's knowledge of the Shuankhsen, they will decide that the group should seek her out and possibly offer assistance.





CHAPTER VII

SCENE III: THE LIBRARIAN

MENTAL • PHYSICAL • SOCIAL ...

INTRODUCTION

Su-Thoth, one of the Sesha-Hebsu of D.C., has learned of a reference to a copy of *Dreams of Avarice* in the possession of another Sesha-Hebsu in Kairouan, Tunisia. Rather than risk herself, she asks the characters to retrieve it for her.

DESCRIPTION

You have accepted an invitation to share coffee with Su-Thoth of the Sesha-Hebsu. She sits at a table outside of the small local shop gazing out at the monuments of D.C.. As you approach her, you can almost envision another place and time when you once looked out on the City of Pillars.

“Greetings, and thank you for coming to meet with me. As you know, our people are distraught over the end of the Grand Conclave. Everyone wants to know what happened, and there are many questions about Sacmis’ copy of the book, *Dreams of Avarice*. I believe that the only way we will find the answers is to have another copy of the book. Fortunately, I know where one might be, however, I don’t wish to spread the knowledge. After all, the Grand Conclave was well-known and attracted the wrong sort of attention. I have located references to another of our kind who has secluded herself away in a foreign land. Unfortunately due to the concerns here, I cannot make the trip myself. I would like you to go in my stead. You fought the Amkhata and have proven your abilities. I can offer you mystical knowledge and my complete support during this Descent. Moreover, you will do what is right for all of us.”

At this point, negotiations can begin. Su-Thoth is very connected and can offer to teach Utterances or Affinities in exchange for the assistance. She also has an extensive library of ancient texts, some of which may contain information about the past Descents of the characters. Once a deal is reached, she will provide the name of the Sesha-Hebsu and the location of Kairouan, Tunisia. She will offer some of her cultists to help the characters as well as make the arrangements and provide any needed resources for the characters to travel to Tunisia.

The characters have the options of simply accepting her offer, attempting to use their social skills to make her reveal enough information that they can head to Kairouan on their own, or try to force the information out of her. Another option would be to have the characters go to another NPC after the meeting, such as Taweret or a guildmaster, and confront Su-Thoth to pry the knowledge from her. If this happens, she will reveal what she knows, but she will count the characters and their cults among her enemies.

STORYTELLER GOALS

The primary goal of the Storyteller is to convince the characters to leave D.C. and head to Tunisia, but this is also an opportunity for the Storyteller to establish the relationship between the characters and Su-Thoth as well. Another NPC, such as Taweret, could replace Su-Thoth and make the same offer. In Taweret’s case, the offer would be made out of a desire to have the secrets of *Dreams of Avarice* revealed; in Su-Thoth’s case, she wishes to acquire the knowledge for herself. If the chronicle is not located in D.C., an appropriate NPC from the troupe’s city could make the offer.

Of course, the source of the rumors is the Roller, who has used his cult to make sure that the information could reach the NPC, calculating that the ones who stopped the Amkhat at the Grand Conclave would be sought out to retrieve the *Dreams of Avarice*.

This scene also gives the Storyteller a chance to watch how the PCs conduct themselves during negotiations. The final scene in this story is a tense negotiation between the PCs and the Deceived and this should give both the Storyteller a sense of how the PCs might approach that event.

CHARACTER GOALS

For the characters, the first goal is to find out the location of this other copy of *Dreams of Avarice*. As a secondary goal, they have the opportunity to receive rewards and gain an NPC as a formidable ally. If they choose to reveal the offer to Arisen society, they may also reap rewards as well, but they will likely turn whoever makes the offer into an enemy.



ACTIONS

The actions that the characters take will depend on how they approach negotiating with Su-Thoth or another NPC.

CONSEQUENCES

The PCs may make a powerful ally (or two) and possibly some enemies in this scene. If this story is being inserted into an ongoing chronicle, this scene could have repercussions for when the characters return home at the end of the story.





CHAPTER VIII

SCENE IV:

BOUND FOR TUNISIA

MENTAL • • PHYSICAL • SOCIAL • •

INTRODUCTION

Once the meret has decided to go to Kairouan, they're faced with the question of how to get there. There is no direct, easy entry to Kairouan from the United States. There is no airport in Kairouan, and it is not located on a train line. If the characters choose to fly commercially, they will most likely fly into Tunis Airport (also known as Carthage Airport), via Paris, Frankfurt, or Dubai. Alternatively, the characters could choose to fly to Europe and take a ferry into Tunis from Marseille in France or Genoa or Palermo in Italy.

DESCRIPTION

However the characters arrive in Tunis, they will still have to make their way overland to Kairouan. Buses leave Tunis for Kairouan every hour, though the preferred method of travel is by louage — a type of shared taxi that may range in size from a medium-sized car to a minibus or van. There are louage stations in Tunis and Kairouan. The trip takes a couple of hours.

With sufficient resources, of course, the meret may simply be able to charter a private jet to take them to Tunis and hire or rent a car for the trip to Kairouan. However, in order to capture the flavor of Tunisia, louage (shared long-haul taxi) travel is recommended.

You can simply have the characters arrive in Kairouan if you choose. However, running the travel time gives you the opportunity to demonstrate the influence (or lack thereof) of the characters' cults, have some fun with mummies on a plane, or drive home to the players the ticking away of time if they choose to take a slow method, like ocean travel, to get to Tunisia. Remember Descent checks if the characters are traveling slowly.

Tunisians have a fairly positive view of Americans and while the possibility for trouble always exists, the locals

will be more than happy to make travel arrangements. Trips to Kairouan are very common, and the city is a tourist destination.

STORYTELLER GOALS

This scene is meant to give the Arisen some mundane struggles to overcome. While nothing necessarily supernatural goes on, it lends a sense of normalcy to the story — a calm before the storm. Have fun with it or ignore it if it seems burdensome. A few things to remember include the effects that mummies have on mortals and animals and the fact that despite their sahu, they are corpses and can smell.

Doing some research on Tunis and Kairouan (or al-Qayrawan) will also help lend a sense of realism and plausibility to game. One thing to note is that Kairouan has many holy sites. It should be conveyed that the Arisen want to be wary of damaging them.

CHARACTER GOALS

Basically, the goals of the characters are to arrive in Tunisia and make their way to Kairouan. The challenges are mundane ones, like how to smuggle weapons or how a mummy can handle traveling in close proximity to normal people.

ACTIONS

Actions will vary, depending on how the characters choose to travel and interact with NPCs.

CONSEQUENCES

There should be few long-lasting consequences, although it may be possible for the Arisen to wind up on the wrong side of the Tunisian authorities if they do something particularly dramatic.



CHAPTER TWO

SCENE 1:

WELCOME TO THE CIRCUS

MENTAL • PHYSICAL • SOCIAL ••

INTRODUCTION

When the characters first arrive in Kairouan, they see a circus set up outside the city. If the characters find some other method of travel besides car or louage, the circus will be set up so it is the first thing that they encounter. Their driver(s) park in front of the circus tents. A robed figure invites the Arisen to experience the wonders of the circus. The characters cannot escape the sense of Sekhem flowing all around the circus grounds. If the kepher was used from Chapter One to lead the characters to Tunisia, they will sense the relic here. As they step onto the circus grounds, they will find themselves in Nightmare Alley — the mobile tomb of the Roller.

DESCRIPTION

After hours driving past scrub and desert, you see Kairouan rise on the horizon. Soon, you can make out individual buildings and finally, a splash of color catches your eye. A series of brightly decorated tents are set up along the road leading into the city. To your surprise, the driver parks in front of the tents.

If the driver is a cult member, he doesn't know why he needed to park here, only that he did. Before he can say much more, a figure in a robe comes up to the door of your vehicle. "Welcome," he says, in the ancient language of Irem. He steps back, inviting you to exit the vehicle.

As you do so, you sense Sekhem flowing from the circus. The circus itself appears to be a place of delight with performers and caged animals. Children and adults are laughing and enjoying treats. The robed man says nothing, only walks over to the circus grounds. As you follow, you feel your perceptions changing. The light changes to shadow and the smell of incense permeates the air. The robed figure slips between two of the great tents. Without thinking, you follow, and the world shifts.

An ancient street extends before you, leading to an ancient sandstone temple. Symbols twist and turn along the sides of the alley, as if they have a life of their own. They all seem to represent

numbers, numbers attempting to form themselves into mystical formulae, but unable to find a lasting equation. Above you, you now see only the night sky with the star Sirius glaring brightly down.

An old man in tattered robes sits, leaning against the wall of the alley. "Welcome to Nightmare Alley," he says. "The Roller is in the temple." The man suffers from dementia and only repeats those two phrases.

Retreat is possible, back to the circus grounds, but you sense that destiny lies before you.

STORYTELLER GOALS

In this scene, the characters should begin their exploration of the Roller's Nightmare Alley. As they explore, they will encounter the Roller and scenes will shift as he determines their fate. The guide has led them forward. If they try to get out, they may shift scenes. Ultimately, they should be drawn to face the Roller.

CHARACTER GOALS

The characters need to find the Roller, but at the same time, not lose their own senses. The Roller will do his best to cause them to spend Willpower. If the characters lose their Willpower, they will effectively become short-term pawns of the Roller and be forced to track down the Sessa-Hebsu for him. If the characters can manage to confront the Roller in his black trailer, they may be able to force him to flee (at least for now).

ACTIONS

Through the next several scenes, the characters will encounter the Roller. He can appear and disappear throughout Nightmare Alley. The PCs may try and possibly even succeed in attacking him, but until they reach the black trailer, their efforts are useless.

CONSEQUENCES

Any character who flees out of Nightmare Alley risks the displeasure of the Judges and has allowed her fear of the Roller to overcome her. She loses a point of Willpower.

CHAPTER TWO

SECTION II: THE BATTLE WITHIN

MENTAL • PHYSICAL • SOCIAL •

INTRODUCTION

As the Roller wished, the characters have entered Nightmare Alley. Now the struggle begins for control of their very essence, as the Arisen must battle against their own past lives. The order of scenes in the Nightmare Alley chapter may be mixed up, and it is possible that if the PCs split up, they may experience different scenes at the same time.

DESCRIPTION

You have gone deeper along the street into the temple. A figure from the distant past appears in the chamber before you. It takes a moment, but you recognize yourself, as you once were. For the first time in six thousand years, you see yourself as you were when you still lived. The living version of you gazes at what you've become. As you watch your own eyes, you know that you are looking beyond the sahu and seeing only a rotting animated corpse. The feeling of death claws at you, icy fingers grasping at a heart which no longer beats and a suffocating cold filling empty lungs which no longer breathe.

Somewhere above you, a black-robed figure stands. He may be floating in the air or perhaps he's a vision from another time or place. "Do you know yourself?" he asks in a deep and echoing voice. Without waiting for an answer, he reaches out with his left hand and spins a wheel of numbers and stars. You hear the wheel spin and find yourself waiting to learn your fate.

STORYTELLER GOALS

The goal of the Storyteller is to challenge the characters with the supernatural power of the Roller, but also to encourage character development in how the Arisen choose to interact with their living selves. Some mummies may choose to destroy the living simulacra, deciding that they will not be deceived, while other players may take the opportunity to try and talk to their living selves,

possibly to learn more about themselves and regain their own memories or possibly hoping that in doing so, they will learn secrets about the Roller.

CHARACTER GOALS

Dice Pool: Memory, however, the Storyteller may roll a die. If the result is a 1 or a 10, the Storyteller should reroll. The PC may keep the number as the result of the spinning wheel of the Roller or spend a point of Willpower and roll their own die to come up with a difficulty. If they roll a "1", the result is a dramatic failure and if they roll a "10" the result is an exceptional success. Any other result becomes the difficulty for the Memory roll.

Action: Coming to grips with the image of their living self.

Hindrances: Attempting to Attack the Image of your living self -1.

Help: Attempting to Reach out to Yourself +1, the meret attempting to support each other +1.

Dramatic Failure: The wheel turns. As it does, your eyes cannot escape it, watching flashing hieroglyphics, burning stars and incomprehensible equations determine your fate. When it stops, you face a void. You have no destiny, no future. Your living self turns to dust before your eyes, desperately reaching for you with pleading eyes. All that you are has crumbled. You make an immediate Descent roll, and suffer a -1 to all dice pools for the remainder of Chapter 2.

Failure: With the spinning of the wheel, you see your many lives flicker through your mind. The images change as soon as you can focus on them. So many faces and places, too many to recognize, too many names long forgotten. You have betrayed yourself and become a monster. The living version of you steps forward. "He offers another path," you hear your own voice proclaim in the language of Irem. "There is a way. Bring the keeper of the book."

At this point, you have only your Willpower and your Pillars to Resist. (The character must roll using the dice



pool of each of his pillars. Willpower may be spent before each roll. Failure on any of these rolls means the character reaches out to the Roller. It is time to learn the truth.)

Success: You feel pain as you reflect on who you once were, and yet, the vision is a precious one. The wheel stops on a bright star. “Your comprehension is beyond what I had believed,” says the Roller. The image of your past self steps forward and seems to merge with you. You regain a single Pillar.

Exceptional Success: As the wheel turns, you can sense it, not whirling somewhere above or around you, but within you. You sense the parts of your soul as they open themselves to recall who and what you were. There is strength in memory. As the wheel stops, you realize that

it shows far more than only your destiny. The fate of the Roller is intertwined in the patterns of the wheel. You see the path in his past when he once was an Arisen, but not has become Shuankhsen out of his own choice. The threads of your lives are twisted together, and you know that he doesn’t seek *Dreams of Avarice*, but something far worse. He wishes to devour the Sessa-Hebsu who hides in Kairouan so he can learn the identity of her mentor, who wrote the book. The Heretic.

CONSEQUENCES

The characters may have learned valuable information about the Roller or come closer to becoming his pawns. Regardless, they should continue on deeper into Nightmare Alley.

CHAPTER TWO

SCENE III: JUDGEMENT DAY

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL • SOCIAL •••

INTRODUCTION

Within the Roller's Nightmare Alley, the Arisen must face visions of the Judges and debate their own continued existence. Prior to running this scene, the Storyteller should familiarize herself with the troupe's Judges; their descriptions and their roles.

DESCRIPTION

Your eyes are drawn to dancers twirling batons of fire. The patterns that the flames make catch your eyes. The dance is not merely a dance, but a living hieroglyph, changing and whirling. The dancers stop dancing and fade... as does everything else.

You find yourself no longer walking in the physical world, but instead, you have returned to Duat. You move through dark caves, illuminated by flickering torches. Soft noises escape the shadows around you and you can nearly discern pleas for mercy. Every so often you see movement in the corner of your eye, but when you look, there is nothing but darkness. No matter where you turn or what Affinities or Utterances you invoke you can't seem to escape. A timeless sense of déjà vu strikes you as you are surrounded by jackal-headed guardian spirits.

You hear your name, your true name, spoken and you turn at the command to face your Judge.

Ice pierces your very essence.

At this point as Storyteller, you should take a moment to describe the visage of each character's Judge. Although the vision isn't real, you want to convey the majesty and horror of such a terrible being. The Judge does not need words to speak — his gaze is enough. At the Storyteller's discretion, each character may hear an instruction in their thoughts. This could be an instruction to find Akhomet or even her location in the shadow of the Great Mosque of Kairouan. It also could be something related to the Storyteller's own chronicle.

Before the characters have a chance for any more than the most immediate reactions (an attack upon a Judge warrants a Descent roll, even though it will have no effect upon the vision in this scenario), the Judges gesture to a figure floating in the air, both near and far at the same

time, the figure of the Roller, glyphs of numbers moving with a life of their own upon his black robes.

The Roller reaches his right hand out to grasp a great circular wheel. You see your names upon the wheel and as the Roller spins it, you know that your fate rests on the spinning wheel. The wheel turns, seemingly moving time and space along with it.

After the wheel stops, the Roller fades away, slipping out of reality as though he were nothing but a dream, but your Judge remains. After a glimpse at the wheel, your Judge turns. The time has come for you to plead your case and justify your existence. Whether this was meant to be a trick of the Roller or not, the eyes of your Judge are upon you.

STORYTELLER GOALS

This scene provides an opportunity for the characters to face their own Judges. While the images that the characters see aren't real, the Roller has drawn them from the characters' own thoughts and memories. As for the messages from the Judges, it's up to the Storyteller's discretion whether they are real. However, this is a great opportunity to advance the chronicle with actual contact with the Judges. The Roller may be trying to use the Judges to further his ends, but that doesn't mean that the Judges might not be using the Roller to do the same.

CHARACTER GOALS

The goal of the characters is to get past their Judges.

They may attempt to attack the Judges, and while that will work, it will also trigger an immediate Descent roll at a -3 or worse penalty. The vision of the Judge will fade and the Arisen will once more be on the circus grounds.

If the characters attempt to justify their own existence, they will make (insert appropriate roll) rolls. See the action for the results, but this is a chance to not only get past the Judges, but also to gain experience and recharge their primary Pillar.

Additionally, Storytellers should strongly consider using this as a chance to remind the Arisen of the presence of the Judges and further their own chronicle's plotlines.

CHAPTER TWO

SCENE IV:

THE BLACK TRAILER

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL • SOCIAL •••

INTRODUCTION

The Arisen reach the Black Trailer and confront the Roller in a series of mental challenges.

DESCRIPTION

You reach a set of black metal doors in the back of the temple. A puzzle lock holds them closed. After you solve the lock, you enter the final chamber, the tomb of the Roller.

He stands perhaps twenty feet from you in the dark tomb. Faint lights dance on the sides of the tomb, moving slowly around. He gestures manipulating numbers and glyphs.

“I am glad you arrived,” he says. Behind him, a bright wheel shines and spins, flashing an array of colors at you. The colors seem to affect your mind. You close your eyes, and a mathematical formula appears in your head.

“Solve the problem,” he commands.

No matter what you try to do, no matter what Utterances or Affinities you attempt to use, nothing seems to work until the mathematical formula is solved.

“It’s a formula describing three intertwined rings,” says the Roller. “And since you are here, the Sessa-Hebsu must be here. This will be much easier than destroying that Grand Conclave.”

The characters may converse with the Roller as they attempt to solve the problem. The Roller, for his part, wishes to devour the characters, but he knows that they are essential for his plans for Akhomet.

If the characters attack the Roller after freeing themselves, the Roller curses and vanishes. The power of Nightmare Alley fades, and the characters find themselves in an empty trailer. If they exit, they are still in the circus, but they know that the Roller intends to find Akhomet.

STORYTELLER GOALS

If the characters lose their Willpower, they become pawns of the Roller and must do his bidding to find Akhomet. Fortunately, all the characters losing all their

Willpower is unlikely. The PCs should manage to free themselves. If you wish to make the scene more dramatic, have the PCs be attacked by an Amkhat after the Roller flees.

CHARACTER GOALS

The characters want to resist becoming pawns of the Roller and drive him off. Hopefully, they can break free and go after Akhomet.

ACTIONS

OPENING THE PUZZLE LOCK

Intelligence + Investigation

Hindrances: None.

Help: None.

Dramatic Failure: The lock fails to open. You feel drained from the effort. Lose a point of Willpower.

Failure: The lock fails to open, but you may try again.

Success: The lock opens, and you may enter.

Exceptional Success: The lock opens easily. Give yourself a +1 bonus on other mental challenges during this scene.

SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF THE THREE RINGS

Wits + Science (or possibly an Academics skill like Astrology)

Hindrances: -1 for each failed attempt.

Help: +2 if aided by another Arisen who has solved the equation.

Dramatic Failure: If the PC suffers a dramatic failure, they are trapped in a fugue state, unable to escape the mathematical equation until the Roller releases them or is driven away.

Failure: The PC cannot understand the formula. They may try again, but suffer a penalty. The penalties are cumulative.

CHAPTER TWO

SCENARIO V: SHADOW OF THE GREAT MOSQUE

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL • SOCIAL ••

INTRODUCTION

The Arisen have freed themselves from the black trailer and Nightmare Alley. Now, they plunge into the city of Kairouan toward the Great Mosque as they seek out Akhomet. The Sessa-Hebsu has secreted herself away in the shadow of the holy site, trusting in the faith of the devoted to keep the Roller away. She believes that he is too tainted to risk setting foot near the Great Mosque, and she is correct. What neither she nor the PCs know is that the Roller has sent the characters to unwittingly flush her out....

DESCRIPTION

Finding the Great Mosque is easy in Kairouan. The Great Mosque of Kairouan is over 9,000 square meters. It's located in the northeast part of the city and the minaret is over 30 meters tall as well as being the oldest surviving minaret in the world.

The Arisen can sense the power of this sacred site, and they know that they cannot enter the grounds without risk. Akhomet has sought shelter in a building close to the Great Mosque in a lower basement level. She hopes that the power of faith will keep the Roller away.

When the PCs arrive at the building where Akhomet is hiding, it seems to be a small library. Two men attempt to block the characters, but any hint that the PCs are Arisen will cause them to part.

"Are you friends of Akhomet?" one of them asks.

As long as the PCs answer in the affirmative, they are led into a back room to see her.

Akhomet is extremely glad to see the Arisen. She runs up and hugs a character and smiles. "My dear old friends, you've forgiven me for all my crazy adventures and come to help."

If any of the PCs ran out of Willpower in Nightmare Alley, they will try to grab Akhomet. The attempt will

be fairly clumsy, and she will step away while the other PCs try to help.

Otherwise, she will greet them all and make a passing reference to a previous Descent for each. Afterwards, she says, "I need to go to my tomb and secure a few things. After that, we can leave."

She goes into a back room. If a PC insists on going with her, she will refuse, saying that everyone has secrets, especially the Sessa-Hebsu.

After she is gone for a while, the PCs will realize that she's taking too long. They may break into the back room of her tomb. She is gone, escaped through a back way out. A note has been left for them.

"The taint of the Shuankhsen clings to you. I know it is not your fault, but I can't risk facing the Roller. I have fled to the worst place in the world, a place that no one would follow me to. I have taken the book. I'm sorry, but I'm so close to Apotheosis."

If the PCs question the cultists, they will resist at first, but aren't willing to risk permanent harm or offending an angry Arisen. They tell them her destination. She had said that she was thinking of going to the ancient city of Sybaris in Italy. The cultists are willing to show them a map.

"When she has gone there, she has always gone alone. She said it was too dangerous for mortals. If you go after her, you might be able to stop her or bring her back before it's too late."

STORYTELLER GOALS

The main goal of this section is to have the characters find Akhomet. The initial conversation with her may be expanded if desired and she may talk about Apotheosis and how the Roller wishes to devour her to gain her knowledge. When she senses the taint on them, she will escape, but the characters will need to find out where she has gone, so they may track her to Sybaris in Chapter Three.



CHARACTER GOALS

The PCs want to find Akhomet and gain whatever knowledge they can from her and her cultists. They need to learn that she has fled to Sybaris to escape the Roller.

Akhomet has fled for her life. She has revealed to the PCs that they are tainted. Whether they believe her or

not, she spoke the truth. The encounters with the Roller in Nightmare Alley have let the Shuankhsen affect the PCs. The next time they purchase a new Affinity and allow Fate to dictate which one, they will instead gain a new Bane Affinity (tailored to their current Memory).



CHAPTER TWO

SCENE 1: THIS IS OUR CAR

MENTAL • PHYSICAL • • SOCIAL •

INTRODUCTION

The PCs are heading to Tunis, hoping to possibly intercept Akhomet before she reaches the ferry to Italy. Her cultists have given the characters a vehicle to chase her. Even though they are devoted to her, they've heard rumors of the Deceived and think she should have stayed in Kairouan. The Roller, however, wishes to make sure that the characters don't get her before he does, so he sends a lesser Amkhat on a mission to attack their vehicle.

DESCRIPTION

You are heading to Tunis, racing on the roads through the flat landscape — a mix of desert and green. Without warning, there's a loud bang as you lose one of your tires. Your minivan goes careening off the road. As you get out, there's an Amkhat waiting for you, and it attacks at once.

STORYTELLER GOALS

This is a fight, pure and simple. The Roller has sent the Amkhat to delay the characters. While a lesser Amkhat won't pose a real danger to the characters, it gives them something to take frustrations out on while furthering the plot. Additionally, it may slow their Descent rolls.

The delay will be enough that they will miss the ferry to Italy from Tunis and Akhomet will arrive in Sybaris first.

CHARACTER GOALS

First, the characters want to beat the Amkhat. After that, they need to change a tire and get back on the road.

ACTIONS

Whatever the characters need to do to win the fight.

AFTERMATH

The PCs will need to go to Sybaris and hope to find Akhomet in time.



CHAPTER THREE

SCENE 1: INTO SYBARIS

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL •• SOCIAL •

INTRODUCTION

Armed with the knowledge gained from the Akhomet's cultists, coupled with the call of the kepher, the Arisen have traveled from Tunisia to Italy. They have arrived in Terranova di Sibari, a medieval town with many of its buildings from the 16th century, located at the top of the toe of Italy. The surrounding land is rustic wine country with beautiful hills and the river Crathis. Although the medieval buildings and the natural beauty draw many visitors, the archaeological ruins are the main attraction.

Roman ruins include a theatre, shops and baths. Beyond the Roman ruins, the remains of the ancient Greek colony of Sybaris can be found at the Parco del Cavallo. Archaeology is ongoing at Terranova di Sibari, though flooding has damaged some of the ruins. However, the mummies sense that the Arisen they seek hides beyond the ruins in the caves located in the hills, where local guides can tell them that Neolithic men once dwelt in the days before civilization.

DESCRIPTION

Although the town is named Terranova di Sibari, you can't escape the name of the ancient city, Sybaris, the same word used to describe the dread evoked in the hearts of men when they look upon the true nature of the Arisen. The word hangs over you like a cloud, whether you decide to find a room or immediately begin your search. After you head out toward the caves, you glance in the direction of the ancient ruins.

Something is terribly wrong.

You feel a sense of fear, not unlike what you imagine mortals feel when they gaze upon you in your glory. There is something utterly terrible here. This is a place you shouldn't be....

Which would explain why she fled here.

A group of men follow the Arisen to the outskirts of the town, but they choose not to follow out to the caves. If the Arisen decide to have a confrontation with them, they are attacked. The men move as one, silently, not

speaking, not hesitating or slowing down when they are wounded. They don't run or show any signs of fear. They seem to be immune to the effects of Sybaris. If one is captured, he dies before saying anything.

In the aftermath of a fight, the townsfolk pay no attention to the scene. They turn their heads and move away. If any of them are pressed, they say that they saw nothing at all. They are ruled by fear, and dread haunts their eyes. If the Arisen had a guide take them to the caves, he quickly gives them instructions, but he mutters something about the mafia and states that he must head home.

If the characters persist, an alarm sounds and people run into buildings to hide. Fog begins to shroud the city and the sound of clanging metal can be heard. This should give the characters plenty of reason to head toward the caves, but if they insist on staying, a large crowd of cultists gather in the fog and there are Arisen among them.

STORYTELLER GOALS

If a battle took place, it should have given the Arisen some action but little trouble. The Storyteller wants to give the characters a sense that something is terribly wrong about Terranova di Sibari and also make sure that they head to the caves as quickly as they can. The setting has a number of archaeological sites and potential relics to collect, but what the characters won't know is that it is home to the Deceived. All will be revealed in the next scene.

As Terranova di Sibari is a real place, it is highly recommended that the Storyteller take some time to research the location and possibly use the internet to find pictures or descriptions. The time in the city can be expanded and the research could prove useful throughout most of Chapter 3.

If the Arisen insist on investigating Sybaris, they will encounter more cultists and potentially even some Deceived. Alarms will sound within the town, which hopefully will send the characters running for the hills (quite literally!). The cause of the alarms isn't the



characters, but rather the Roller, who in addition to hunting down Akhomet has taken advantage of his trip to Sybaris to steal some relics and has devoured at least one Deceived who dared to try and stop him. Using his abilities to travel, he has already escaped, but the Deceived are still trying to find him.

It is quite possible that the characters may end up fighting the Deceived as they head after Akhomet. If so, make sure that the characters realize that they are hopelessly outnumbered and outmatched in terms of power. Additionally, even if they could triumph, they would come to the attention of every Deceived in the world who would target them for retribution.

CHARACTER GOALS

The goals of the characters are to make sure that they head out to the caves and stay focused on their target. If they decide to investigate things, some changes may have to be made to the next scene so that the characters can ultimately encounter the Deceived.

ACTIONS

The primary actions of this scene will involve the characters potentially fighting Deceived cultists. An extended running action involving Stamina + Athletics may be called for if the characters have to flee Terranova di Sibari.



CHAPTER THREE

SCENE II: CRISIS OF SAN MISHU

MENTAL • PHYSICAL ... SOCIAL •

INTRODUCTION

Akhmet has fled to the only place she believes that the Roller would not follow her: Sybaris, the city of the Deceived. She has sought out a cave near the Cave of San Angelo which she has used as a refuge in the past. Once it was a place where ancient tribes made sacrifices to their gods. Unfortunately, it was unable to protect her from the Roller. Before she died, she dropped her interlocking relic ring on the cave floor as well as her precious copy of *Dreams of Avarice*. When the characters arrive, they find a female Arisen in the cave performing a ritual. But it's not the Sessa-Hebsu...

DESCRIPTION

You climb the hills near Terranova di Sibari, near Sybaris, and find a well-worn path through the grass smoothed over centuries by human feet. You follow to a rocky cave that seems to suddenly materialize in the side of a hill. The cave is wide and from the opening you can hear the faint sound of a woman's voice chanting in Iremic. As you glance back toward the town, you can see the shadows lengthening as the sun sets. Turning back to the cave, you head inside.

The passage descends faster than you expected and continues to wind deeper than you thought as well. While you may have experienced a vision of Duat in Tunisia, this place truly reminds you of the underworld. Ancient symbols have been painted on the walls, some of which you recognize from the Nameless Empire. You hear her voice ahead of you.

A glow fills the cave ahead of you as the passage widens into a large stone chamber. For a moment, a ghostly image of a dark shadow looming over a white figure flickers in the air in the center of the cave. The image fades and a woman kneels before *Dreams of Avarice*. The walls of the chamber are covered with strange writing along with graphic but beautiful paintings of human suffering. The woman touches a set of intertwined rings on the stone floor.

As she does so, a tremor shakes the chamber. Appearing above the rings is an Amkhat, apparently released from its prison. The Sessa-Hebsu grabs her copy of *Dreams of Avarice*, even as the tail of the Amkhat strikes her. She falls backwards into the wall of the cave.

"Help!" she cries out in Iremite Egyptian.

The Amkhat turns to face you and the battle begins.

During the battle, the Amkhat focuses all of its attention on the PCs. The Roller planted it here to put an end to his failed pawns. It doesn't care in the slightest for the woman clutching the book, and for her part, she takes no action to draw its attention.

Once the battle is done, the supposed Sessa-Hebsu will approach the characters if they don't approach her first. She holds *Dreams of Avarice*.

STORYTELLER GOALS

The goal in this scene is for the characters to encounter the Roller's Amkhat and to set the stage for the next scene.

CHARACTER GOALS

The primary goal for the characters is to defeat the Amkhat. If they do so and try to protect the Deceived (who they believe is the Sessa-Hebsu), they will be in a far better position for negotiations in the next scene. Additionally, the relic where the Roller had used his own abilities to "plant" the Amkhat may be obtained by the Arisen drawn to it.

ACTIONS

The primary actions in this scene will be combat-related.

CONSEQUENCES

If the battle with the Amkhata goes poorly, the Deceived will come to the aid of the characters using an Utterance that they have never seen, which tears the Amkhata apart. She will view the Arisen as weak and negotiations in the next scene will be more difficult.

CHAPTER THREE

SCENE III: REVELATION

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL • SOCIAL •••

INTRODUCTION

The Amkhat has been defeated and the PCs stand before a Deceived that they believed was Akhomet, the Sessa-Hebsu. The Deceived's chorus members enter the chamber behind the character, six additional Deceived, one for each of the Deceived temakhs. Even more cultists stand behind the Deceived, ready to give their lives in slavish obedience to their masters. The characters must negotiate with the Deceived, or they will never be heard from again.

DESCRIPTION

With the destruction of the Amkhat, the PCs have a moment to catch their breath.

"Who are you?" asks the woman, who is now obviously not Akhomet. Strange markings are etched across her face. "You interrupted. I was collecting this precious seba."

If the PCs question her or seem perplexed, she explains. "The Shuankhsen devoured her here." The woman licks her lips. "So many centuries spent coming so close to Apotheosis, only to have it die. She was so close and the pain of her failure deserves to be collected and cherished. She will be treasured."

At this point, if they have not entered previously, six mummies enter the chamber from behind the characters. Following them are innumerable cultists, all with a dead stare. "These are the other members of my chorus," says the woman. "We are seven, and the seven are one. In case you do not know, we are those you would so foolishly call 'lost.' So, what are you? You seem to be Arisen, yet you have the faintest touch of the Shuankhsen upon you. It calls itself the Roller, and it will suffer for attacking us. What do you know of the creature?"

The PCs are surrounded and probably weakened from their battle with the Amkhat. Even if they could overcome the seven Deceived and their cultists, an entire city of Deceived awaits them outside the cave. Victory is nearly impossible and would certainly make them targets for the Deceived. Barring some ingenious plan, this is likely the time for negotiation.

If the characters threaten the Deceived, they will respond coldly. The odds are so much in favor the Deceived that even an exceptional success on a Presence + Intimidation roll will only keep the Deceived from attacking. The best tactic for the PCs is to discuss the Roller. The Deceived want revenge on the Roller, and they know that they have little chance of catching him.

If the characters begin talking, the Deceived may begin talking about themselves, revealing the nature of their ways and hinting at their own powers and capabilities.

STORYTELLER GOALS

The goal is to have the characters have a confrontation with the Deceived and show them about the seven types of Deceived. The characters need to realize that a physical confrontation is unacceptable and they will need to decide how to proceed. The characters should be left with a feeling that they barely escaped utter doom, but also feel that they have gained some important knowledge.

If at all possible, the Storyteller wants to avoid combat between the PCs and the Deceived, as the characters will certainly lose. If a PC decides that she is going to fight no matter what, she may end up dead, but the Deceived will not judge the entire group by the actions of a single individual, particularly if that individual isn't an Arisen.

CHARACTER GOALS

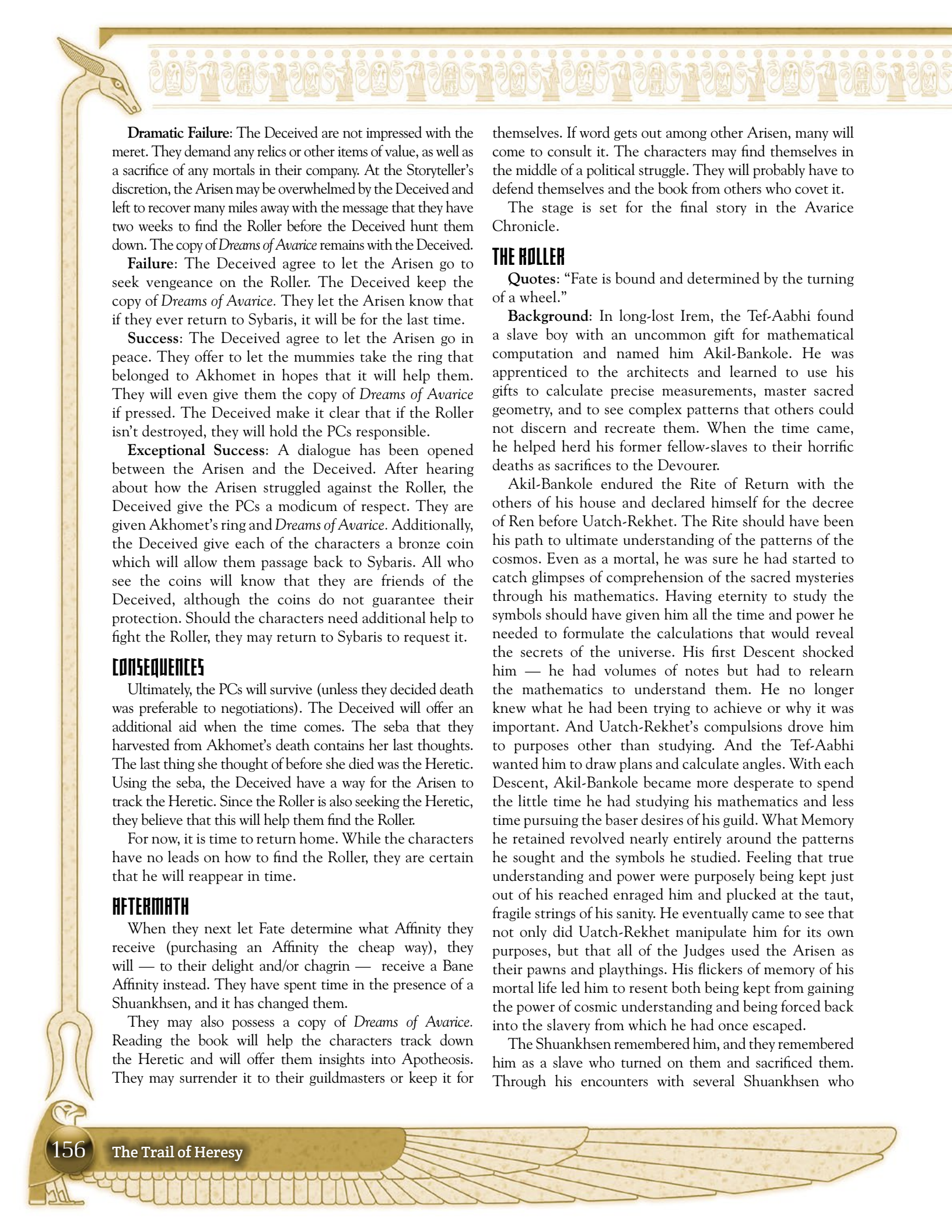
The goal of the characters first and foremost is to survive. If they negotiate well with the Deceived, they can gain valuable knowledge about the Deceived as well as their assistance in hunting down the Roller. While the thought of working with the Deceived may make their skin crawl, it is far better than the alternative.

ACTIONS

(Social roll for negotiation: 8 extended successes needed)

Hindrances: -1 for taking a combative attitude against the Deceived.

Help: +1 for emphasizing the PCs desire to avenge Akhomet, +1 for describing what the PCs wish to do to the Roller.



Dramatic Failure: The Deceived are not impressed with the meret. They demand any relics or other items of value, as well as a sacrifice of any mortals in their company. At the Storyteller's discretion, the Arisen may be overwhelmed by the Deceived and left to recover many miles away with the message that they have two weeks to find the Roller before the Deceived hunt them down. The copy of *Dreams of Avarice* remains with the Deceived.

Failure: The Deceived agree to let the Arisen go to seek vengeance on the Roller. The Deceived keep the copy of *Dreams of Avarice*. They let the Arisen know that if they ever return to Sybaris, it will be for the last time.

Success: The Deceived agree to let the Arisen go in peace. They offer to let the mummies take the ring that belonged to Akhomet in hopes that it will help them. They will even give them the copy of *Dreams of Avarice* if pressed. The Deceived make it clear that if the Roller isn't destroyed, they will hold the PCs responsible.

Exceptional Success: A dialogue has been opened between the Arisen and the Deceived. After hearing about how the Arisen struggled against the Roller, the Deceived give the PCs a modicum of respect. They are given Akhomet's ring and *Dreams of Avarice*. Additionally, the Deceived give each of the characters a bronze coin which will allow them passage back to Sybaris. All who see the coins will know that they are friends of the Deceived, although the coins do not guarantee their protection. Should the characters need additional help to fight the Roller, they may return to Sybaris to request it.

CONSEQUENCES

Ultimately, the PCs will survive (unless they decided death was preferable to negotiations). The Deceived will offer an additional aid when the time comes. The seba that they harvested from Akhomet's death contains her last thoughts. The last thing she thought of before she died was the Heretic. Using the seba, the Deceived have a way for the Arisen to track the Heretic. Since the Roller is also seeking the Heretic, they believe that this will help them find the Roller.

For now, it is time to return home. While the characters have no leads on how to find the Roller, they are certain that he will reappear in time.

AFTERMATH

When they next let Fate determine what Affinity they receive (purchasing an Affinity the cheap way), they will — to their delight and/or chagrin — receive a Bane Affinity instead. They have spent time in the presence of a Shuankhsen, and it has changed them.

They may also possess a copy of *Dreams of Avarice*. Reading the book will help the characters track down the Heretic and will offer them insights into Apotheosis. They may surrender it to their guildmasters or keep it for

themselves. If word gets out among other Arisen, many will come to consult it. The characters may find themselves in the middle of a political struggle. They will probably have to defend themselves and the book from others who covet it.

The stage is set for the final story in the *Avarice Chronicle*.

THE ROLLER

Quotes: "Fate is bound and determined by the turning of a wheel."

Background: In long-lost Irem, the Tef-Aabhi found a slave boy with an uncommon gift for mathematical computation and named him Akil-Bankole. He was apprenticed to the architects and learned to use his gifts to calculate precise measurements, master sacred geometry, and to see complex patterns that others could not discern and recreate them. When the time came, he helped herd his former fellow-slaves to their horrific deaths as sacrifices to the Devourer.

Akil-Bankole endured the Rite of Return with the others of his house and declared himself for the decree of Ren before Uatch-Rekhet. The Rite should have been his path to ultimate understanding of the patterns of the cosmos. Even as a mortal, he was sure he had started to catch glimpses of comprehension of the sacred mysteries through his mathematics. Having eternity to study the symbols should have given him all the time and power he needed to formulate the calculations that would reveal the secrets of the universe. His first Descent shocked him — he had volumes of notes but had to relearn the mathematics to understand them. He no longer knew what he had been trying to achieve or why it was important. And Uatch-Rekhet's compulsions drove him to purposes other than studying. And the Tef-Aabhi wanted him to draw plans and calculate angles. With each Descent, Akil-Bankole became more desperate to spend the little time he had studying his mathematics and less time pursuing the baser desires of his guild. What Memory he retained revolved nearly entirely around the patterns he sought and the symbols he studied. Feeling that true understanding and power were purposely being kept just out of his reach enraged him and plucked at the taut, fragile strings of his sanity. He eventually came to see that not only did Uatch-Rekhet manipulate him for its own purposes, but that all of the Judges used the Arisen as their pawns and playthings. His flickers of memory of his mortal life led him to resent both being kept from gaining the power of cosmic understanding and being forced back into the slavery from which he had once escaped.

The Shuankhsen remembered him, and they remembered him as a slave who turned on them and sacrificed them. Through his encounters with several Shuankhsen who

wanted to devour him, he learned of them. For the first time, he used his abilities to see patterns in the actions of other beings, and combined with his fragments of memories, he pieced together the truth of the Shuankhsen. Once he realized that they kept their memories and devoured the powers and knowledge of their victims, he thought he had finally found the secret to having the time and the knowledge he yearned for. He sought out the Shuankhsen so that he could give himself to the Devourer.

He rejected Akil-Bankole, the name given to him by the Tef-Aabhi, and became known as the Roller. He chose the name to remind himself that even what appear to be circumstances of chance were bound by statistical probabilities and could be predicted if one understood how to read and anticipate the patterns. He endured Ammut's tortures as a necessary sacrifice to regain himself and his memories. In his madness and lust for understanding, he failed to see that giving himself to Ammut would simply be trading one master for another. He was prepared to no longer truly be an Arisen. He knew that he would sacrifice his Pillars. In return, he wanted his Memory. Again, he found his desires thwarted by a higher power. The Roller found that he still had no more memory of his mortal life or his previous Descents than he had before. He lost what shreds of sanity had remained. In her great mercy, the Devourer allowed the Roller, like all Shuankhsen, to keep his memories from the time he gave himself to her. But his earlier memories remain nothing but flickers and fragments — and unlike when he was Arisen, he has had little success in regaining them. Although he has relearned much of what he once knew, he is driven by the absolute certainty that he had once discovered something that would open the cosmos to him, but that is now just out of reach on the fringes of his memory.

His lust for recovering his lost comprehension and faded memories led him to embrace the Devourer's powers. He eagerly consumed both Arisen and other Shuankhsen, as well as mortal sorcerers and any other beings of power he could find to acquire their knowledge and power. Only recently has he begun to believe that those things might not be enough — that perhaps he needed to find another means. He had begun hunting the Deceived, believing that perhaps he needed to understand their magic in order to fully understand the patterns of the universe. Once he found and devoured *Dreams of Avarice*, he knew that he must find its creator and devour him as well. The Roller knows that he himself is the only one who has the intellect and understanding to fully appreciate the truth he glimpsed in that book — but its creator must have found something that allowed him to touch on the universal patterns, and he plans to eat that information and gain it for himself.

Description: Most viewers are fortunate to never see the Roller in his natural state. If the Roller chooses to allow others to see him, he appears dressed for his carnival in



a black robe. Over his face he wears a mask adorned only with a wheel of dharma. For the unfortunate few who see the Roller without his mask and robe, he appears as an odd composite of a tall, dark-skinned ancient Egyptian man and a dark-haired Caucasian carnie worker named Paul Morgan. The effect is not that of a seamless genetic blending — rather, it is a pastiche of ill-fitting characteristics. The least fortunate of all see the Roller's sahu as it truly appears. The Roller has had to devour so much lifeforce that he always appears with the wide, sharp teeth characteristic of the Jaws of the Devourer unless he actively concentrates to suppress their appearance.

Derangement: Megalomania (The Roller knows that he is the only one capable of understanding the grand design of the universe — only he has ever come close to uncovering the mathematical mysteries of the cosmos.)

AKHOMET

Quotes: “Seek Apotheosis in all places. Wisdom hides in the deepest of wells. All can be redeemed. Trust in his heresy.”

Background: Akhomet started pursuing Apotheosis after the third Sothic Turn. Persecution of her cult left her to wake with no one to help or advise her. Her surviving cult members tracked her down, but she had fallen in with a group of philosophers who taught her to question everything.



Afterwards, whenever she had regained enough Memory during a Descent, she dedicated herself to pursuing Apotheosis.

Akhomet fears very little. She is one of the Sessa-Hebsu who believes that the Deceived should be brought back into Arisen society, though even she recognizes that may be impossible. She has studied the Deceived in an attempt to learn more about her existence, and she is one of the few Arisen to visit Sybaris, the great trading city of the Deceived.

She has spent time with the Heretic himself, learning from him and sharing her experiences. Strangely, although she recalls many more details of her past Descents than other Arisen, she finds her memories of the Heretic to be very hazy. Akhomet remembers him more as a feeling of hope than an actual person. Still, she feels connected to him and has suspicions about where he might be in the world.

The Heretic recently sent her a copy of *Dreams of Avarice* in order to help her finally achieve Apotheosis. Akhomet longs to break free of the cycles of forgetfulness and memory and the servitude to the Judges. After centuries of effort, she knows that she is very close to achieving her dream. Once she does, she will have all the time she needs to solve the philosophical mysteries of the universe and explore beyond all of her horizons.

In the last thousand years, she has fallen in love with Islamic culture. She admires the value that the people put in their

religion, and she is very respectful of it. She has fallen out of favor with her guild as she continues to seek Apotheosis, so she has retreated to Kairouan in Tunisia, cherishing it as a city of culture and learning. She supported the Tunisian independence movement when the country liberated itself from France, and her followers supported the recent Arab Spring.

Due in part to the religious importance of the city as well as the war in Africa during World War II, Akhomet believes that she is the only Arisen active in Kairouan. Despite her connection to the city, she often travels around the world, trying to explore and learn.

She possesses an ancient ring made of three intertwined circles.

Description: Akhomet is a petite woman with dark hair and eyes who stands only a few inches over five feet. She normally wears a head scarf and prefers light colors. She is incessantly curious and likes to ask questions.

Storytelling Hints: Akhomet will welcome the PCs with open arms. She talks constantly about past lives and wants to share memories with old friends. Her desire for Apotheosis has become an obsession, an all-consuming desire. She has a great deal of knowledge and gives the impression that she knows even more than she admits. She has met the Roller in the past and she knows what he is. Although she's not scared of many things, she openly admits that he scares her.

She prefers not to engage in physical combat, opting to flee rather than fight.

Concept: Scholar on-the-Wing

Decree: Spirit

Judge: Utu-Nesert, Vigorous of Flame

Guild: Sessa-Hebsu

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

Skills: Academics 4, Crafts 1, Investigation 2, Occult 4; Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Survival 2, Weaponry 2; Animal Ken 2, Expression 2

Merits: Cult (Reach 4, Grasp 3), Guild Status 1, Relic 3, Tomb (Geometry 3, Obscure, Piece of Life), Language 3

Affinities: Dauntless Explorer, Eyes of Justice, Falcon Soul Aloft, Living in Now

Utterances: Dreams of Dead Gods, Palace Knows Its Pharaoh, Rebuke the Vizier, Revelations of Smoke and Flame

Pillars: Ab 4, Ba 5, Ka 4, Ren 5, Sheut 3

Sekhem: 3

Willpower: 7

Memory: 8

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Pride

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Size: 5

Health: 8



Health: 8

Type/Damage: Bite 2(L), Lion's Claw 2(L), Serpent's Tooth +2(L) to Bites, Fungal Heart Infection

JACKAL-BODIED LESSER AMKHAT

This lesser Amkhat is there to harass and slow down the characters by attacking their louage or car on the way to Kairouan, to buy some time for the Roller. He has a jackal's body (Sabasu) and paws (Sabkep), a lion's head (Peh) and maw (Maabeh), and a bee heart (Batab).

Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 2, Resolve 3, Strength 2, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3, Presence 1, Manipulation 0, Composure 2

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 5, Stealth 2, Survival 1

Willpower: 1

Initiative: 6

Defense: 4

Speed: 14

Size: 2

Health: 5

Weapons/Attacks:

Type/Damage: Bite 2(L), Lion's Claw 2(L)

DOLYA

The Roller spared no expense and no thought for the lives required to build the pit that allows him to create Amkahta. The same abandoned factory basement in Chernobyl that spawned Araq also allowed the Roller to create Dolya. Dolya's purpose is to destroy those whose Fate is bound with its master and creator through the one known as Akhomet. The Roller carefully tended to every step in Dolya's creation, calculating every detail to ensure Dolya's loyalty and success.

Dolya has a serpent's body (Tetasu), head (Tetxent), and teeth (Tetabeh). He also has a lion's claws (Maaukep) and functioning wings (Tenh). He has a fungal heart (Pehab).

Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 4, Resolve 3, Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Presence 3, Manipulation 0, Composure 2

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Stealth 3, Survival 3

Willpower: 1

Initiative: 7

Defense: 3

Speed: 10 (21 Flight)

Size: 5



Before you seek what is lost, you must ask yourself,
Does having the capacity to learn the truth grant me the privilege to do so?

You know the answer, of course: It was handed down by gods themselves,
if one subscribes to such phenomena, and that answer is and could only be "no."

You come seeking truths of the Lost Guild, but your opening posture is misapprehensive,
carrying a failure of the question before the answer even matters, let alone takes shape.

We name our nameless brothers and sisters "lost," catechize their legacy in rolls of soulless ink,
but before one looks to the words, one must look to the reed around which the scroll is bound...

It is not because they are extinct that the Restless Stars are lost to us.

They are lost to us because they were deceived.

This book includes:

- The inscrutable history, motives, and inner workings of the so-called Lost Guild of mummies. Enemies to most and a mystery to all, theirs is a multi-millennial legacy of treachery, madness, and revenge.
- Complete rules and systems for running the Akhem-Urtu, lost Irem's guild of Restless Stars, including step-by-step player character creation — for those who dare step inside the minds of the Deceived.
- "The Trail of Heresy" — a complete **Mummy** story that Storytellers can run alone or as the second act in a three-part series called *The Avarice Chronicle*

— Antu-Herap, the Prince of Glass

